

PART 9:4 AVEC, AN ECUMENICAL TRAINING AND CONSULTANCY AGENCY, 1976 – 94

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To my deep regret and sadness much of the detail of my life in Avec – places, events, names and faces of participants – I remember only when meetings and discussions with colleagues and/or participants in the prompts my memory, and then often only slowly, and even then some I simply cannot recall at all. Fortunately, however, the essential story of my involvement with all its highs and lows I remember and re-live the emotions over and again. Sometimes this is painful but the overwhelming feelings are of joy, a warm heart and a deep sense gratitude to God for the vocational ministry I was privileged to pursue. And an equally deep sense of gratitude to the numerous colleagues and to the vast number of people who over a period of eighteen years allowed me to enter into their vocational lives and to stand alongside them on the holy ground of their work and ministries, some for a prolonged period others but briefly.

I SOME KEY EVENTS IN THE LIFE AND DEMISE OF AVEC

The following list of the key events in the life and demise of Avec and its continuing impact contextualise what is to follow.

1975 Decisions to form a training and consultancy unit

1975/6 Inauguration of Avec: formation of a body of trustees and charitable trusts

July/August 1976 Avec up and running

1982 Funding Bodies, Trustees and Staff attempt to establish Avec as a unit in an institution of higher education

May 1987 Avec's 10th anniversary

January 1990 review of my future role in Avec and its implications

January 1991 Conference on Marc Europe's Report of Survey of Avec Training and Consultancy Services

January 1991 consultation on MARC Europe's Report

August 1991 I retired as Director of Avec and became the research worker to Avec

August 1992 Catherine Widdicombe retired as the Associate Director of Avec

August 1993 I became a supernumerary minister

1994 Molly retired as a bursar

August 1994 Avec ceased to trade

II ASPECTS OF THE AVEC STORY THAT HAVE BEEN TOLD

Aspects of the story of Avec have been told in several different ways as the life and work has developed. Books, papers and articles have been written and records made describing:

- Avec as an agency
- Personal experiences and testimonies to the efficacy of the approach and Agency
- Examples of the approach to church and community development work in practice
- Practical aids to working with practitioners, groups and communities and to non-directive work consultancy
- Basic concepts related to working with people in church and community
- Action-research projects and programmes into the non-directive approach to church and community development
- Personal stories.

When I came to detail the material related to these aspects of Avec's story I was quite amazed at its extent. It really does illustrate the multifaceted aspects of Avec's exciting and complex story as an agency and as an approach. Also, it shows how the praxis of training and consulting evolved naturally from a very important way of working with people. Consequently the detailed list itself pictures the story of Avec and makes an important contribution to these Notes in general and the telling of my story in particular. However, I found that placing it at this point in the Notes seriously interrupted the continuity of the narrative. So I decided to place it in Appendage I. Anyone wishing to contextualize my story can do no better than browse through the several pages of this Appendage: compiling it has certainly helped me to do just that more profoundly than I had previously.

III AVEC'S FOUNDATIONS AND INITIAL FORMATION

Here I described briefly the firm foundations upon which Avec was built and the early critical stages of its formation.

1. Foundations

Sound foundations were readily available upon which to build Avec: the Battens' community development courses in the University of London; the Grail group work training programme; Parchmore; Project 70-75; the Methodist Community Development Group; courses on church and community development in the Methodist in-service training programme. Connections between these are set out in part of the diagram presented in Avec's Annotated Catalogue p14 which is reproduced below; the books and papers related to and resulting from these programmes provide a rich bank of resource material. Also, and more importantly, participating in some of these programmes proved to be ideal preparation and training for me – and for Catherine Widdicombe and Barry Heafford.

Avec was a natural successor to Project 70-75 which had established the need for an ongoing training and consultancy help:

The key to the situation is an in-service training programme so organised that it will: enable ministers and lay people to practise the community development approach to working with people in their church and community work and to reflect theologically about what they are doing; support those involved in this kind of work; train more trainers; provide information to help determine the most effective forms of orientation, pre-service and in-service training. If this training is effective it will create a climate of opinion in which it will be easier for those trained in these approaches to practice what they have learned.

Organising such an in-service training programme is feasible and would best be done ecumenically. ...Without that support the Church may find itself regarded by many as a patronising agency and its own life stultified by out-worn notions of spiritual autocracy. (*Churches and Communities* p 211)

In fact, project 70-75 was the keystone to the foundational structure of Avec.

Strangely, some years earlier, whilst I was still minister of Parchmore, the idea for an independent national in-service training unit. (Much earlier I had the idea of establishing a training programme at Parchmore. But I did not get local support for it. I distinctly remember the occasion. It was at the entrance to the park near our home in Norbury on a Sunday afternoon when Molly, Dorothy and I were taking a walk. The idea came to me suddenly and caused me to stop and share it. Molly and Dorothy said as it would be enormously difficult and the idea was left at that.

2. Methodist and Roman Catholic commitment to the formation of a church and community development unit

As I said earlier, there was already agreement between Derek Worlock, Christopher Bacon and Owen Nankivell that it was important that the vocational partnership between Catherine and me should continue. A meeting in Portsmouth between these three people with Catherine and me in attendance was arranged. At that time Derek Worlock was the Bishop of Portsmouth and we met in his house. The conversation was between Worlock, Bacon and Nankivell; Catherine and I were privileged observers whose presence was required to provide information. Convinced of the need, they quite quickly came to an agreement that an ecumenical training and consultancy unit should be formed and committed themselves there and then to do all that they could to get the Roman Catholic and the Methodist churches to sponsor and to help find the funding for such a unit and laid initial plans for doing so. (With hindsight it would have been judicious and shrewd to have made approaches to the Anglican and the United Reformed Churches at this juncture. As will become clear the Anglicans never became as committed to *Avec* and financing it in the same way that the Catholic and Methodist Churches did. Undoubtedly this contributed to the premature demise of *Avec*. Consulting them, however, would have delayed the inauguration of the agency. See *Avec Agency and Approach* particularly p 108.)

I was deeply impressed and moved by the way that Chris and Owen had contributed to the discussion and decision-making. As we left the house and stood talking outside, I remember glowing with pride in what they had done and how they had done it and in the Methodist Church. Further discussions led to the two denominations, the Gulbenkian Foundation, other charitable trusts and the Voluntary Services Unit of the Home Office inaugurating and funding the new unit, *Avec*, the French word for 'with', because of our commitment to working with rather than for people (see *Avec Agency and Approach*, p 19).

3. Forming Avec

At the suggestion of Chris Bacon, a small interim ecumenical committee was formed and convened and chaired by Alan Jacka, who had succeeded Pauline Webb as the Secretary of the Board of Lay Training. Its brief was to set up a body to manage the unit. They were unanimous that the ideal person to chair this body was the Revd Edward Rogers and they

commissioned Catherine and me to approach him to see if he was willing to undertake this role. He agreed to see us in his home in Shirley. (We knew each other because he lived in the Croydon Circuit and therefore he had first-hand knowledge of the work I had done at Parchmore.)

He being a man of few words, we had hardly taken our seats before he got down to business. We told him about the plans to form a training and consultancy unit and the proposals to form a managing body or trust. His immediate response was: ‘So you want me to be the chairman, do you?’ (We had not mentioned this!) He immediately proceeded in very quick time to check out a number of things with us – What were the chances of such a unit succeeding? Was work and funding going to be forthcoming? ... Satisfied with our responses he was quiet for a moment indicating that he was checking out that he had covered all the things he needed to. His right hand was raised and one by one he moved his fingers to indicate the points that were in his mind had been covered. Satisfied he had, he said yes, he would become the chairman, much to our delight; it hadn’t taken much over half an hour. At this point his wife, Edith, entered the room to see how we would like to take our tea. Without any ceremony whatsoever, Ted said, ‘They won’t be having any, we’ve done our business. I’m going to take on the chairmanship of the new unit and I will give up the post I have on the World Council of Churches to find the time to do so do so.’ Edith remonstrated saying surely they have time for a cup of tea and it is ready. Without asking us whether we would like a cup of tea or not he said quite abruptly to Edith, ‘No they’re going.’ We had no say in the matter and neither did Edith! I knew him of old, but it was the first time the Catherine had met him and she was quite nonplussed. Surprisingly we were not offended. This was typical of my exchanges with him over the years. In fact he was God’s gift to us. For thirteen years he served us and Avec magnificently. He was the rock upon which the Trust and the administration of Avec were built. He was so widely respected in the Christian world and in churches of all denominations that we and Avec were acceptable to people, churches and organisations to whom otherwise we would not have been. (There is an interesting biography of Ted Rogers: *Edward Rogers a Portrait of a Christian Citizen* by John Prichard, a Wesley Historical Society publication, 2008. See pp 26 – 27 about his ministry to Avec.)

This was a critical step.

4. Founding directors

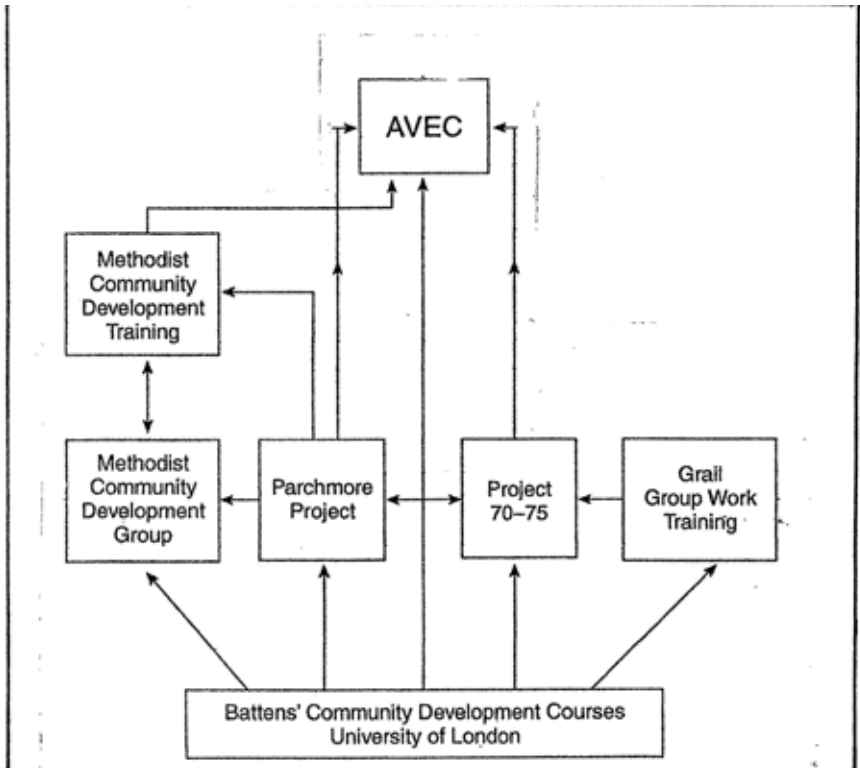
Catherine and I were the founder directors of Avec; I retired as director in 1991 and was appointed as research worker for two further years retiring

from Avec in 1993; Catherine retired in 1994. In *Avec Agency And Approach* I distinguish the work which I engaged in Avec from that of Catherine Widdicombe (pp 63-64).

5. Basic conditions

Basic conditions determined by the funding bodies and the Trustees were that it should be self-funding and that it should not own property; the training staff should be itinerant in order to provide courses and services where ever they could be readily accessed. Therefore, establishing Avec as a viable agency involved Catherine and me working concurrently at several complexly interrelated and challenging tasks including the following.

- *Finding places in and from which to do the work.* It had been decided that Avec would not own any property and that its work should be itinerant. Consequently venues had to be found for the courses. Initially, Catherine worked from the Grail and Molly and I from our home. Eventually our London base became Chelsea Methodist Church.



- *Developing a work programme.* The programme had to achieve our training purposes, generate the income required to bridge the gap between grants received and costs of running the Agency and progress towards it becoming self-sufficient as soon as possible. Amongst other things this involved charging fees which churches were simply not used to paying and which they found offensive. (See *Avec Agency and Approach* p103.) An irate chairman of a district, for instance, wrote to me demanding that explain how much of the fees I was receiving personally and to fund my research
- *Building up a staff team.* A team, that is, to do the administrative, secretarial and training work.
- *Forming organisational structures.* This included, inter-alia, forming a Trust and organising staff and trustees meetings.
- *Finding finance.* I have discussed this at some length in *Avec Agency and Approach* pp 101-110.
- *Building up ecumenical interest, participation and cooperation in Avec and its work.*

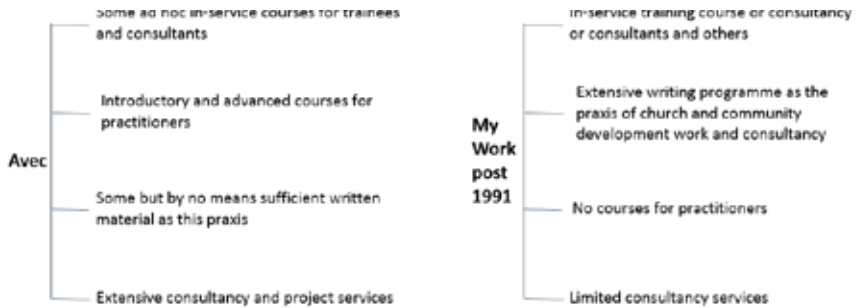
In various places I have written extensively about how we went about this and the subsequent work in which I was engaged with Catherine and others during my time in Avec, first as its director and then as its research worker and advocate. Similarly, I have written about my/our approach to church and community development and work and training. In the light of this and taking it as read, in the next section I reflect on my thoughts and feelings about my experience of Avec.

[Yet Another Writer's Block Experience!]¹

I am struggling to find a meaningful and useful way of writing about Avec after several months of working on other things and I am not sure why or how to recover. So much has been written about it, mostly by me and I find myself drawn to reworking old ground even though I have identified the danger of doing so and determined not to do so. My hunch is that at some level I am resisting opening up the wounds of my deep disappointment that Avec did not survive and facing up to thoughts and feelings that recur about things I did/did not do which contributed to its demise. Then there is assessing the rightness and value of what I have done since to try to redeem the situation or at least to retrieve something that was lost – possibly trying to retrieve the irretrievable. Unexpectedly in one of those flashes of insight I suddenly saw what I had done in a different way. Essentially what I have been doing is helping or aiming to help two groups of people: those engaged directly in church and community work and those providing

¹ 7.1.14

them with consultancy and support services. Helping them, that it is to understand and master the praxis and theology of working non-directively with people for human and spiritual development. Basically, I have done this in three ways: through writing books about this way of working for practitioners and consultants; through in-service training courses for consultants; through providing formal and informal consultancy services to a wide range of people. Avec may have gone but books about the Avec approach remain a permanent and accessible record of it and there is an ongoing course training consultants. I have been underestimating the continuity of the Avec work in my work or more precisely misconstruing it. Like my work with Avec, it has to do with servicing practitioners rather than engaging in directly in church and community work. What is missing from my work post 1991 is courses for practitioners – except for preachers! But it provided substantial books about the praxis which were sadly absent during the life of Avec because there simply wasn't an adequate writing programme. The loss of courses was, of course (pun unintended) a tragedy; the gain of text books of inestimable value. Diagrammatically this can be expressed as follows:



So, to a limited degree, loss of training facilities is compensated by texts on the praxis and handbooks/manuals produced by Catherine as well as by me.

So what could be the implications of this for writing about Avec in these Notes? I think it indicates several things: my desire and impatience to get on with the overall reflections; underlines that this section, unlike the others, is about me and Avec rather than about Avec; that what I really need to grapple with is to do with what I now feel and think about Avec the work I did in and through it critical aspects of which are emotionally charged and therefore writing honestly and incisively about them is going to be painful but hopefully it will also be therapeutic; that, given the amount written about Avec, I need to write as little as is necessary about it and concentrate on what I now feel and think about it now 38 years after its inauguration and twenty years after its demise. Also, I need to get what comes to mind down on paper without worrying whether I have covered every point and angle and allowing my concern for completion to hinder me. What comes to mind subsequently can always be added – and much may come out of a meeting with Fred and Henry.]

IV THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS ABOUT MY EXPERIENCE OF AVEC

After several false starts, I have settled on writing about the impact of Avec upon me now, some 38 years since its inauguration and 20 years since its demise, i.e., how I think and feel about it now in contradistinction to how I did at various points of its life. Of course this will involve considering how I saw things and what I felt about them as they happened.

When I decided on this approach a wide range of conflicting emotions surged through my mind; some positive and deeply satisfying, others negative and depressing; they oscillated between gratitude and resentment verging on bitterness because the contrast and amplitude of these feelings is disturbing. My emotions are the subject matter of the first few sections, the others focus on crises and good and bad developments, or more precisely desirable and undesirable ones. In these sections I reflect on my experiences as a director of Avec and the period after my retirement when I was involved in Avec as a lecturer and researcher and then in attempting to salvage Avec after it ceased to trade and the early stages in my work on ‘realizing its intellectual assets’? The research already carried out, describes the way in which the archives are organized and classified and references the archival material?]

1. Humble Gratitude²

Throughout my ministry and through Avec I felt greatly privileged to be engaged in work which was so important and fulfilling and to which I could and did give myself totally without reserve or concern about my own well-being – and to my shame at times to that of Molly and the family. The satisfaction was of the kind experienced when you are doing something that is unmistakably and undeniably of real importance, it was unalloyed because it was to do with authentic human and spiritual needs and issues, not imaginary and superficial ones; it derived from engaging in the economy of the Kingdom in a realized partnership with Christ. Therefore, the satisfaction, like the work, was theologically sound: pragmatically effective and spiritually fulfilling. What more could I expect of my ministry? Certainly I did not deserve it nor had I earned it. It was a gift of God. That humbles me and fills me with gratitude and deep thankfulness first to God and then to a host of people given to me of God. Retrospectively, I realize that this sense of satisfaction and gratitude and privilege was a substratum

of this period of my ministry. It contributed greatly to my spiritual well-being, my self-worth and my stability; it helped me to weather the storms of disappointment; crises, failures and set-backs. Now, as I reflect on this period of my ministry as a completed whole in the context of what has followed as a consequence of it, I am 'lost in wonder love and praise' at my vocational good fortune and the providence which enabled it for a period of twenty years.

My gratitude to God is matched by that which wells up in me to so many people, far too many to name them all but some I must even though at this point I do not feel able to substantiate my gratitude (I have done so in various places and will return to this later, Molly, Catherine and T R Batten head the list. Then there are my colleagues, a large number of people who contributed so much in so many different ways, the Trustees and particularly Ted Rogers, Trevor Rowe, Owen Nankivell, Margaret Brown, Gordon Franklin, Nigel Gibson, John Pater and the secretarial staff especially Alex Newman and Valerie Tredinnick. (See *Avec, Agency and Approach*)

Writing this has profoundly affected my remembrances of *Avec* which tend to be clouded by what happened after I retired as Director.

2. Amazement at the work done

Earlier I noted the work that Catherine and I undertook to lay foundations for *Avec* and to form it into a viable organisation. I was amazed that we contemplated such an enormous and risky venture, committed ourselves to it and found the courage and energy to do all that it involved. Would we have gone ahead had we known just how much it would cost us? I am sure that we would: the urge to do so and the driving forces deep within and between us were so strong; we were convinced that God was calling us through the need for such an agency which we saw with great clarity (see *Churches and Communities* pp 209-11). When I call to mind the work we did in, by and through *Avec* (there are telling overviews of this in *Avec Agency and Approach* see particularly pp 87-90, Appendices I-III) I am even more amazed at what we were able to achieve with such sparse resources and against great odds. There are clues to how we did this in a piece I wrote in 1996:

Both of us had a strong propensity to commit ourselves totally to causes and tasks and to become obsessive about. Also we drew and drove each other on

to greater effort – there was vocational traction in our relationship which could be a very powerful force. Combined these characteristics had both positive and negative consequences: we achieved things otherwise would have been impossible; we became unbalanced in our preoccupation; we overtaxed ourselves and those with whom we lived and worked. Progressively we were able to help each other to guard against some of the dangers. Our families, the Grail community and Avec part-time staff also helped us to do so. But so strong were the inner driving forces that nothing saved us completely from the negative aspects. We were motivated by a deep and inescapable sense of mission: we felt ourselves to be missionaries of the non-directive approach to the church and the community. (*Avec, Agency And Approach*, p 63)

3. My work ³

Throughout the time that Catherine and I worked together in Avec there was a deep sense of shared responsibility for the development of the work and of the agency –when all is said and done it was ‘our baby’. Nonetheless, rightly or wrongly I felt that I was primarily and substantially accountable and answerable for both the work and development. That is how it seemed to be at the time and continues to remain so. A sense of personal overall responsibility went with a very heavy workload even though and Catherine took primary responsibility for the day-to-day administration of Avec, the secretarial staff and recruitment. She was quite brilliant at establishing and developing new contacts, extensive networking and getting people interested in Avec’s work and signed up for courses. At times this cost her dearly. As she combined this with an extensive training programme and supporting me with my work, she too had a very heavy workload. At times this was quite stressful for Catherine and, by association and through empathy, for me. For most of the time, like Catherine, I willingly accepted the heavy workload and rejoiced in what I had been given to do. Part-time staff members and the associate trainers also had heavy workloads which at times were quite stressful, and again by association and through empathy for Catherine and me. Concentrating as I am on my work does not mean that I am unaware of all of this.

Dysfunctional tensions

Involved as I was in directing and managing Avec and fully engaged in training, consulting and research work and writing, it is not surprising that

³ I struggled to get the proper orientation to this section over the period 1-16 January 2014 but wrote it in a flow in three or four days completing it on the 16th of November.

tensions developed in my being what I described as a 'working director'. In no way did I want to become a 'managing director' of an agency in which others did the training, consulting and writing work and I had overall responsibility for organising, administering, promoting and developing the agency. In 1996 in an examination of the issues involved I wrote:

Intensive engagement in training course, consultancy and project work detracted from my ability to discharge my responsibilities as the director of Avec as well as I would have liked. I simply was not able to attend to the work of the agency as a whole and the context in which it operated [as thoroughly as was required, I would add] this caused me considerable stress and reduced my sense of job satisfaction.....What was required was a more creative balance between the effort I put into the training and consultancy work and performing the functions of a director. (*Avec Agency and Approach* p 112)

Basically, there were two aspects of my work. For want of better words I will describe one as 'professional' (concerned with the praxis and theology of church and community development work and training, consultancy, research and writing about it) and the other as 'organisational' (that is, administration, maintenance and development of Avec). My heart was in the professional but I did not dislike the organisational except that is for recruitment and begging for money; in fact I gave myself to it wholeheartedly, found satisfaction in it and enjoyed some aspects of it. In the early days of Avec I engaged in these two parts of my work quite happily; they were seamless parts of the appointment. Tensions between them resulted from the following combination of events and developments, which engendered dysfunctional stress and strain (which I discussed in *Avec Agency and Approach* pp 112–114) and eventually led to a crisis which ultimately resulted in my resignation as director in 1994.

- i. The increase in the number of training courses and consultancy projects and the proportion of these conducted by part-time staff members and associates.

This increased my personal training programme considerably. Also it meant that increasingly I acted as a consultant to the staff of the courses which I did not conduct particularly those which were based in London. Amongst other things this involved reading the work papers, meeting with the staff at the beginning and end of courses and at the end of the first week to help them to establish the programme for the second week and ways of conducting the sessions. Also, as some of the staff members stayed with us during the time of the courses, they frequently consulted me in the evenings. Whilst I found this very interesting, stimulating and satisfying

it was demanding and added considerably to my workload. (As I recall it Batten recommended that full-time staff members did no more than sixty-five face-to-face training and consultancy days a year in order that they could give time to servicing the organisation and particularly to reading, research and writing up the work as it proceeded. I think at one time Catherine and I were doing well over double that number. The statistics relating to this are not to hand.)

ii. The action taken to meet the felt need for advanced training.

In the early 80s I became convinced that it was essential that we provide a more advanced training course to establish a core curriculum of the praxis and theology of church and community development work and to provide courses which, *inter alia*, would enable practitioners, particularly those acting as part-time trainers to our courses to become more competent through studying the discipline more fully. Our emphasis had been on ten-day theory and practice courses supplemented by two to three day follow-up courses and seminars. At first TR Batten was not convinced that this was what we should do but once convinced he helped to formulate a syllabus and design a two-year postgraduate diploma course which Roehampton Institute of Higher Education agreed to validate. (We were ably assisted by the director of the sociology department at Roehampton, the editor of the *Community Development Journal* B. K. Taylor and John Stevinson.) I took primary responsibility for initiating and conducting the courses which had three 5-day residential sessions per year. Amongst other things this involved me in an extensive programme of reading and preparing lectures on such topics as community and organisational studies, development and underdevelopment, authority and power. Consequently this occupied much of my time and energy from 1984 – 91. Also, whilst engaged in this development I headed up a major project between the Methodist church in Britain, Sierra Leone, Ghana and Nigeria. Amongst other things this involved leading consultations in West Africa for each of three successive years. See *Avec Agency and Approach* p 111. [Another subject was voluntary organisations. Working at these subjects for months of my time when I little to spare. During this time I worked with them whenever I could.]

Catherine Widdicombe, Charles New and Howard Mellor also took action to meet the need for advanced training in research by doing research masters degrees which they successfully completed. At various stages I found myself supporting and helping them in their research programmes.

iii. Attempts to establish Avec as a unit in a higher educational establishment.

Throughout its life Avec faced agency problems namely to do with the failure to get a third full-time worker and finance; these are discussed in *Avec Agency and Approach* p 101 – 111. The failure to become an affiliated and funded unit of the Roehampton Institute of Higher Education in 1982 was a bitter blow from which Avec never completely recovered (see *Avec Agency and Approach* p 107). Much time and emotional energy was swallowed up in overcoming some of these problems and trying to do so with others.

iv. The much-needed writing programme.

The failure to publish adequately between 1982 and 1989 – 92 was demoralising and seriously impeded the development of Avec's praxis, wider debate about it and achieving its purposes.

Without doubt, a heavy work programme

A note on my contribution

In relation to Avec's training, consultancy and project programme I made various contributions and adopted several different roles. Essentially they were permutations of a non-directive practitioner and church and community development praxis. They included: policy formulation; designing, organising and developing the programme; conducting courses, acted as a consultant and working on projects; in-service and in-house training for staff members and associates; reading, studying and researching Avec's core curriculum and allied subjects; preparing handouts, writing occasional papers and a limited amount of publishing. Also, I prepared agendas and position papers for Trustees and other staff members and meticulously wrote records of all the critical discussions and meetings.

The nature of my work

Here however, I want to reflect on the nature of my contribution to the work that I made to Avec and its development in contradistinction to that which I made to the implementation of the training, consultancy and project programme. I must preface my attempts to do this with a disclaimer because it is proving to be difficult for me to do it without feeling and appearing to be intellectually arrogant or superior or dismissive of the contribution of my colleagues. The thought that I might do any of those things distresses me greatly. Nevertheless, I am driven by feelings that I

must try as honestly and openly as I possibly can to examine thoughts and feelings which, apart from some discussions with Catherine and Molly, I have by and large kept myself not least because they are difficult to discuss without generating misunderstanding but which I consider need to be thought through.

My contribution was quite distinctive especially in relation to thinking things through, studying and researching church and community development work and allied subjects to set it in context. In relation to these aspects of my contribution I believe I was *de facto* in the vanguard or more precisely I was the vanguard: the foremost theoretician and practitioner if not theologian. Inevitably, in one sense this set me apart and meant that I did a considerable amount of grappling with issues and thinking through their implications on my own. In another sense, however, I was anything but on my own. I was enormously privileged to be in exciting creative dialogical and collegial working relationships with others and enjoying wonderful *koinonia* with some of the finest people that I have ever worked with. Relationships, that is, in which I could discuss and further explore my ideas, insights and thoughts with very able and widely experienced people in church and community development who were willing and eager to engage with me in breaking new ground in the praxis and theology of work to which we were similarly committed. Providentially, these relationships providing were readily available forums to pursue my thinking in ways that I could not have done on my own. Forums, that is, that were congenial and creative because there were non-directive encounters respecting, valuing, building on and enhancing everyone's contribution. Whilst my contributions primed many of these exchanges, the outcomes were converted by the interaction into outcomes which were invariably other and richer than the inputs. Consequently, developments from my contributions were the product of intensive personal effort and collective creative interaction with my colleagues, the associates, the trustees and people on the courses to whom I acted as a trainer/ consultant. Processes of multidirectional interaction in and through which we stimulated and developed each other's thinking. In short the developmental and creative work of Avec was a collective outcome of non-directive working relationships between us: the product of deploying and enjoying the approach we espoused.

Nonetheless, my life and work and that of Avec and the church and community development movement would have been greatly enhanced if there had been a colleague – in Avec or elsewhere – similarly engaged with whom I could have worked with. I found such a person many years later in Helen Cameron and to a lesser extent in David Dadswell. It has just

occurred to me that Ken Howcroft would have been such a person and he been engaged more directly in the same field of work. Writing this piece has caused me to recall that two people did fulfil this kind of role in part. One was Michael Bayley who introduced the idea of an external survey of the work of *Avec* by MARC Europe (See *Avec Agency and Approach* p 88 and Appendix IV). Unfortunately, he was only with us for two years and therefore was not available to work out the implications of this survey.

Felt need for a third colleague

Catherine and I have often talked about this. On several occasions and with considerable feeling she has said that she wished that she had been a more equal partner to me in the thinking work. She regretted that we had not been able to find a third full-time member of staff who would be able to effectively to enter into this aspect of the work and to relieve me of some of it. But she was one of the people who actually helped me to flourish: from the beginning and throughout she sacrificially provided unique support; she did everything she could to make sure I could make my contribution as effectively and efficiently as possible; she helped me practically by doing all she could to ensure that I had the help that I needed; as far as she could she may sure that I had the time I needed to do the work. Above all she believed in me and considered I had an important contribution to make and did all she could to make sure that I made it. She was a true colleague – and still is – without guile or any form of jealousy. She was a true Christian professional partner and a soul friend: collaborated with me rather than competed with me. Whilst at Parchmore I had experienced full-time colleagues whose commitment to the work and to me left something to be desired. They made me feel insecure by indicating in ways which I felt rather threatening that they may be moving on to some other better job. From the time that I met Catherine I knew that she was totally committed and would never play those kinds of games. And so it has been. She has been one of the most important primary facilitators of my ministry. Reg Batten was another. (See interview pp 8-9)

When I set out to write this piece I had very much in mind to say that there was loneliness in living and working out this avant-garde role and to say that I felt a little deprived – thoughts which have been with me for some considerable time. But these thoughts are in some ways spurious and do not represent the richness and wholesomeness of my experience: in fact they misrepresent it. I was extremely happy and fulfilled in the role in which I was cast. I found it very fulfilling to be the leading thinking thinker. It made me feel good. It gave me a great sense of well-being and self-worth. And to

be ruthlessly honest I do not know how I would have coped with someone who eclipsed and compromised my leading role. Other experiences of that happening would indicate that I could have responded rather badly and not coped with it very well. That certainly did not happen in relation to Helen and David but then they deferred to me and I was not in competition with them. Perhaps there was a hidden providence in the ways things evolved and I was placed in a role and setting in which personally, professionally and organisationally I could and, I am bound to say, did flourish. The more I think about this the more it changes my reflections about this aspect of my work with Avec. How incredibly adept we are at building self-serving myths about ourselves on half-truths and eventually believing what we have duplicity constructed and used! I deceived myself and felt sorry for myself when there was nothing to feel sorry about, in fact quite the opposite. What I have written is nearer to the truth of my situation than anything I have come up with previously and is highly corrective. What I really regret is not being more able – but more of that below.

Collegueship with Peter Lang

A person who had a profound impact upon my thinking and my Praxis

A notewas Peter Lang. We met as a result of discussions in which I engaged about a new course which would bring together and examine the relationship between the disciplines of pastoral counselling and non-directive church and community development work as practised by the Westminster Pastoral Foundation (WPF) and Avec. The idea for this course was the brainchild of David Horton, at that time the superintendent minister of the Victoria and Chelsea Methodist circuit – his predecessor was the distinguished founding director of WPF, William Kyle, who sadly died prematurely. At that time WPF and Avec had offices and seminar rooms in Chelsea Methodist Church. After months of talks with Canon Derek Blows, at that time director of WPF, we concluded that a joint course would be a significant learning experience for both agencies. Throughout the discussions I had assumed and been given every reason to believe that, having established a working relationship and an understanding about the nature of the course, Derek Blows and I would staff it. So I was amazed and angry when Derek Blows and his director of training who had been involved in the conversations said that whilst the course had their blessing (!) they could not participate in the course in any way due to the pressure of work. I felt betrayed, deliberately misled and manipulated. This was yet another unfortunate experience of the downside of my dealings with the Anglicans (see, for example, *Avec Agency and Approach* p108). They eventually

suggested that Peter Lang, a freelance Anglican priest who was a part time member of their counselling and training staff, would be willing to explore the possibility of staffing the course with me. Working under pressure as I was, the thought of another round of discussions was most unwelcome. However, with some reluctance, warily and circumspectly as my confidence in the staff of WPF had been seriously undermined, I agreed to meet him and explore the possibility of us jointly leading the proposed course. To my surprise my misgivings were quickly overcome. Agreement to work together emerged naturally and immediately from our conversations at our first meeting. Moreover, we had formulated ideas and plans for the course about which we were both become quite excited. Publicity for the course attracted a most interesting group of people eminently suitable for the first such course. In the event the course was successful in generating invaluable all-round learning about the two disciplines and suitable separate and joint programmes of in-service training for practitioners of both disciplines especially in relation to the areas where they overlap and intersect.

For me it was a profound learning experience that introduced me to invaluable concepts and ways of working with people that have influenced my praxis enormously. I now realise that the impact upon me was of the same order but not quite of the same magnitude as my introductions to experiential education and the non-directive approach. Paradoxically, Peter was not an easy person to work with: at best he was an incredible colleague; at worst he was unpredictable and difficult to work with. Equally he could facilitate, dominate and demean colleagues and students alike and in equal measure be gracious, courteous and curt. He had a brilliant mind, incredible ability and courage as a counsellor. Frequently, he opened up the most incisive and exciting insights into human behaviour in personal relationships and in group and institutional settings. Discussions with him could be exhilarating. But the cost of working with him for me was very high. Nonetheless I thank God for what I learned from him and I rejoice in the magnificent work he has done subsequently (see *KCC Foundation, London website*).

Essentially they introduced me to the praxis of thinking and working systemically and to work in disciplines of which I had no previous knowledge which proved to be highly relevant to non-directive church and community development work. Some years before I met Peter Lang, an *Avec* trustee, Raymond Clarke, asked me if I had studied systems theory. He was a little surprised that I hadn't because he said the ways in which I worked had led him to believe that I had. He suggested that it might be useful for me to do so. With hindsight I realise that in some ways I had been working

systemically without realising that I was doing so. One of the ways in which I was doing this, for instance, was by drawing upon what I had been taught in my engineering training about the importance of considering a joint in a complex structure in relation to all the forces acting upon it through its interconnection with other parts of the structural system of which it was a part. So, quite naturally, I followed the same procedure in relation to the forces and influences upon individuals, groups and organisations from their interconnectedness. Before I formally formulated the practice theory of what I was doing I was following my engineering praxis and differentiating between linear, multiple and systemic forms of causation in human behaviour and relationships. (See *Analysis and Design* p 189.) But I was doing this without a working understanding of systems theory and the praxis of working and thinking systemically – except, that is, by following St Paul theologically by using the analogy of the systemic nature of the human body to understand the nature of the church as the body of Christ.

Peter Lang introduced me to the work of Gillian Stamp, Mara Selvini Palazzolli and her colleagues in the Centre for Family Studies in Milan (they developed what became known as the Milan model of systemic family therapy (see *Consultancy Modes and Models*, pp 44-48) and that of Humberto Maturana. Through Peter I met Gillian Stamp who became adviser, consultant and friend to me and to Avec and Humberto Maturana (I attended a two-day seminar led by him and had a meal and an evening of interesting discussion with him). I didn't feel I mastered some of Maturana's concepts but those I did greatly influenced me whereas I felt I mastered the insights of the other people and they became integral parts of my praxis. Together they introduced me to the praxis of thinking and working systemically. The concepts and practices that I most valued related to: autopoiesis, circularity, systemic hypothesising and different forms of questions and modes of questioning. What I learnt and its influence upon me and my praxis can be discerned by following through the index reference to the people named and the subjects noted in *Analysis and Design*, *Consultancy Ministry and Mission* and *Consultancy Modes and Models*.

These books indicate that what I learned about the nature of personal and collective human systems, how they operate and ways and means of working with them for human and spiritual development greatly enhanced the efficacy of my subsequent ministry and work with people in church and community. For me, it revealed new ways of looking at and understanding the realities, nature and authority of the dynamics of churches and communities, how they function and malfunction. This, like all insights into human behaviour, provides those working with people with better

understandings of them and how they interrelate in groups and institutions. It is therefore to workers generally and to non-directive workers, particularly those with whom they work, an aid to understanding and analysing human interaction and working situations and designing developmental programmes what understanding the human body and brain is to doctors, an aid to diagnosis and treatment.

A Note to myself about my propensity to allow the shadow to become the picture!

I worked late for me last night.⁴ Having completed with some satisfaction the above section and struggled with formatting *Reflections of Life and Ministry*, I watched two episodes of Father Brown! Not surprisingly I overslept. On waking I felt depressed. In relation to what I have written above and the paper *Reflections*... I had allowed the shadow sides of life and work in Avec and in retirement to overshadow the overall very positive experiences of these periods. Fairly quickly this gave way to a much more positive stream of thought on a range of things.

The first of these was about my propensity to allow and possibly encourage the shadow sides of my experience – setbacks, disappointment, failures etc – to overshadow the fulfilling sides of it which over long periods of time have been qualitatively and quantitatively the far greater of the two aspects. From my call to ministry my vocational life has been overwhelmingly satisfying, exciting and fulfilling and to my great joy productive and creative in its two principal phases: pre- and post retirement. There was a difficult period between my retirement from Avec and finding my vocational work in retirement and another when Avec ceased to trade. (But more about these later in these Notes). It has suddenly occurred to me that both of these turbulent and distressing periods were contextual vocational factors rather than intrinsic to my vocational life and work. Similarly the things that have most disturbed and distressed me have been contextual ones mainly located in events and developments in the Methodist Church locally and nationally.

My work and life in Avec was extraordinarily satisfying. I was greatly privileged to work with all kinds of practitioners engaged at all levels in the principal denominations. Recently I wrote about one stream of it, “Work Consultancy for Missionaries, 1975-95” and was moved by the remembrance of it. And that was only one stream. Another was work with Religions culminating in the enormous privilege of leading consultations with and for the CMRS and a two-day conference/retreat on the relationships between contemplative and apostolic religious life (See *Signum*, 26 October 1990, Vol 18 No 20 and 25th April 1989 Vol 17 No8). *Telling Experiences* gives a picture of the range of the work. I feel I would like to give an overall picture of it. Whichever way I look at this period, I consider myself favoured of God and extremely fortunate. Similarly my ministry in retirement has been a wonderful experience. Unbelievably, I have had two privileged periods of ministry (so far!) spanning respectively thirty five and twenty years.

In view of this propensity I must reread the paper on retirement before launching it on its next phase and possibly edit my theology reflection section.

Another stream of thought emerged flowing from the question but insistently presented itself to me: What do I really want to do with remainder of my life? (Or possibly it should be What does God want me to do with my life? That is the more fundamental question – but I would hope that it will be ‘suitable to (my) natural inclinations and material interests’! Whether it is or not, what I desire is the assurance that what I am doing is God’s will and destiny for me.) Dwelling on the question(s) several thoughts emerged: if I have 3-5 years as active as I now am I will be blessed and should possibly think and plan for that period of time; the answer that was in focus was ‘another satisfying phase of ministry’, somewhat out of focus was ‘satisfying and fulfilling companionship and leisure time including holidays’. I need to pursue this diligently; it is important that I finish the work on *Notes from Retirement* as soon as possible and sort out the archival material, this phase has gone on long enough and may well be blocking me from entering into a new phase of life and ministry.

The question also led me on to an exciting flood of thought related to Maggie Patchett’s appointment as a consultant to two Yorkshire circuits from September. I saw great potential in this and felt I wanted to be involved in it as a consultant to her and the project. My mind went racing ahead. I saw the possibilities of her doing the work of an action-research project – either for a PhD or a book or both – to promote interest in such appointments and their potential. I started to work out what this would involve, a research/support/reference/monitoring group who will not only work with her but also report out about it and enhance the credibility of her conclusions. Would I be a member of such a group? Geographical proximity opens up all kinds of possibilities. Should I get her to meet Helen Cameron and David Dadswell and get copies of their books for her? It really would be an extension of my ministry and application of what I have been into. I need to talk to her about all this. It might point to the kind of things that I should be doing. It almost seems a providential gift which has emerged both for Maggie and me. However, I must beware of the dangers of being intrusive and even of taking over.

4. Working Relationships

My Colleagues

In and through Avec I was greatly blessed and incredibly fortunate and privileged to work with a large number of extraordinary colleagues. Together they constituted a formidable, gifted, deeply committed and very creative and effective work force which I describe in detail in *Avec Agency and Approach* (AAA). They were: my erstwhile full-time colleagues, Catherine Widdicombe (AAA 62-64) and variously in these Notes); T R Batten (77 & variously in these Notes) consultant to CW and to me; part-time staff members, Charles New, Howard Mellor and Michael Bayley (64 and variously in these Notes); Trustees (73-76 & Appendix III); associate part-time staff members, ‘associates’ (64 – 73 & Appendices I and III). The statistics are awesome: all in all 82 members of the training staff from six denominations who delivered an extensive training and consultancy programme.

Catherine Widdicombe

⁵Not surprisingly I have written much about Catherine and our working relationship as she has been the most important and significant of all my colleagues over a very long time and in fact since c1969. Moreover she has been my soul friend for most of that time and we remain in those relationships. Consequently, I am likely to repeat myself because I write this section without revisiting what I have already written. Both aspects of our relationship are precious to me. They interact creatively, the one deepening and enhancing the other to form a unique loving vocational partnership which I believe to be a gift of God. Without our soul-friendship I think it would have been difficult if not impossible for us to have survived as active colleagues because we could not have been able to cope constructively with the tensions in our personal and working relationships from time to time (some of them acute and temporarily debilitating) which were variously engendered by the downsides of the differential in our abilities which was always with us, the complimentary roles and functions, the stresses and strains of working together intensively with people in intellectually, spiritually and emotionally challenging human situations and predicaments and the occasional relational clumsiness and inept behaviour in relation to each other often arising from thoughtlessness, taking each other for granted and working under pressure. Remarkably these things did not happen as often as they might but when they did they were painful and debilitating. I have written about one of these incidents and I intend to write about another in sections 8 or 9).

A procedure we established early in our working relationship made significant contributions to minimizing or ameliorating the bad effects of factiousness between us when we were working together in private or in public or at key meetings or events. It was a strategy which we pursued as follows: we acknowledged and owned the over-factiousness with as few words as possible and sometimes non-verbally; put it into abeyance as fully as were able in our own ways on the understanding that we would work at it as and when we were able to do so with impunity; reverted to and fell back on our substantive good/excellent working relationships; got on with whatever we had to do with as good a grace as possible; tried to face up to and resolve the difficulties as soon as we could. Declaring temporary moratoriums in this way worked well; we were both agreed about that and it saved many tricky situations. Eventually we were able to practise it with a knowing glance and gesture or simply automatically. However, we were to discover that it had not been completely successful but not until September 2013.

The denouement occurred during one of our co-consultancy sessions here in Leeds and took us both completely by surprise. We were discussing an early draft I had produced of the section above on 'core vocational relationships' with a view to me editing it. Without warning, we suddenly found ourselves in one of the deepest, most honest and painful exchanges we have ever had about the shadow side of our relationship; possibly the most searing. Each of us shared experiences of the other which had hurt us deeply, wounded us, and which despite the quality of our relationship we had kept to ourselves and, whilst we had not allowed them to despoil our relationship, we had harboured and nursed them unhealthily.

An experience I described triggered off the discussion. It occurred a few years into our working together in Avec. Catherine had had quite a long stretch of time off Avec duties in order to prepare for some qualifying exams related to her doing a M Phil research degree at the Institute of Education, University of London. Holding the fort had been very taxing but I had done it willingly and I was really looking forward to her return not least because there were some things which needed attention rather urgently but which I had kept from her whilst she was doing her studies and exams. A few days before I was expecting her to resume duties, we were travelling back on the train from the North to London; I'm not sure what we had been doing. The journey had been pleasant; I remember reminiscing about my earlier life. As she was about to disembark at Watford, she stood up and blurted out that she was going to the Isle of Wight for a couple of weeks to recuperate as she was worn out. And she was gone! I was shattered that she had made the arrangement unilaterally when I thought we were in a collaborative relationship and presented me with a *fait accompli* at the end of a journey when she could have done so earlier so that I had no redress. I felt well and truly manipulated and used. I was angry and hurt. It was painful because it made me feel insecure and vulnerable in the relationship. I had experienced similar things – or things which had similar effects upon me – with several previous colleagues. Catherine was the last person I expected to do anything like that. I felt betrayed. There was another side to it all as well. I had observed that some religious could and did simply withdraw temporarily or permanently from things when they were stressed. Living in community enabled them to do this in ways in which my personal and domestic situation did not. If I am honest I felt a little resentful and/or envious about this.

Catherine then shared with me negative feelings she had endured. They related to a most traumatic series of experiences she had through and with one of our secretaries, or administrative officer as he preferred to

be called. Graham Brandreth-Wills came to us through Robin Green, an Anglican priest with whom he had a gay relationship for a time which was somewhat turbulent. He made Catherine's life hell for some time, he tried to dominate and intimidate (which he did successfully) and manipulated her and played her, Gordon Franklin and me off against each other. Ostensibly Gordon and I got on with him quite well. Graham convinced Gordon that Catherine was treating him very badly, unfairly and unprofessionally, Gordon offered to meet Catherine and Graham to try to sort things out. I thought Catherine and Gordon accepted the offer. The meeting took place but far from solving things it exacerbated the problem. However, providentially and mercifully, much to Catherine's credit she got right on top of the situation and took charge of it. She told me how she had many sleepless nights over this difficult if not impossible relationship and the acute problems it was causing and deep distress. Sitting up throughout one night in great anguish and wondering how she could possibly go on like this she had a wonderful experience. I cannot describe it as she did but it amounted to a cathartic experience through which she knew that Graham had lost all his power over her – he did/could not intimidate and undermine her any longer. She had risen above it all and was now in control of her own emotions, of the situation and her relationship with Graham. She was free and at peace. Her prayers had been answered and so it was. Graham was impotent but he continued to undermine Catherine and take control. One day this came to a head and after warning him that he had to change his behaviour or go and not getting satisfactory assurance I dismissed him with immediate effect. He left the building very soon after this. Catherine told me she tried to speak to him but he refused to do so. That I thought was the end of a very sorry business but how wrong I was.

Catherine told me that afternoon in Sept '13 how she had felt, and still did, that I had set her up and sent her to that meeting with Gordon. She said that she did not feel any sympathy from Gordon. In front of Graham he took his side and made it clear that he thought that she was primarily responsible for the relationship not working. That was unpardonable. The last thing I expected him to do. Catherine said she had felt negative towards Gordon and me about this ever since and betrayed by us. Her feelings against Gordon had changed when he had greeted her with great affection, hugging her, at Molly's funeral. As to me they had simply been buried until that moment. I was able to say that Gordon may have been influenced by an incident in the new Chelsea Kitchen when she, Catherine, had apparently upset a group of Chelsea women who had felt it was their kitchen including Gill, Gordon's wife, by acting officiously towards them. Gill had been deeply offended and I think told Molly about the incident.

These exchanges and revelations were extremely painful for both of us as we told of our experiences and listened to those of the other. But there was a spirituality about them which not only made them bearable but also profoundly therapeutic. There was no anger nor accusation. They were not recriminatory. Apologies were not sought but they were willingly given and accepted gracefully and kindly. They were heard and received, I think, as representative cases of any and all such experiences that had occurred throughout our relationship as part of a purging and cleansing process. There was a quietness and stillness present. We were entering into each other's pain and feeling it acutely as much as describing and reliving our own. It was a sublime experience of confessing, forgiving and reconciling in Christian love. At various points we asked each other whether we wished to continue and we did and became very close. Our relationship was bonded at even deeper levels.

This awesome experience shows the quality of our relationship and ways in which it can be enhanced through working at its flaws constructively alongside building on its strengths. Also it shed light on a previous consultation when we were discussing far reaching changes in a draft of Part 5 of Catherine's which I had suggested and with which she was finding it difficult to cope because of the way she felt I was 'going on and on' about an aspect of doing this writing. She withdrew and bottled up some anti-feelings she had about me. She did share them in this session I think. We resolved to try to avoid this happening as far as possible and rehearsed phrases which might help us to do so 'I think you have said enough on that'; 'I am getting worked up/agitated by what you are saying/how you are saying it....'.

Part-time Members of Staff

Charles New

Charles New was the first part-time member of staff and the one who served in this capacity for the longest period, 1978-93/94. Fifteen years was a long time to sustain such a demanding ministry which combined a strenuous training job with dedicated commitment to local circuit ministry. And it was during this time that he completed an MPhil action-research degree on an aspect of his ministry. Charles came on the first course Catherine and I conducted under the aegis of the Methodist Division of Ministries whilst we were engaged in Project 70-75. We had no further contact with him for two or three years when he was seconded by his Chairman to an Avec course.

⁶ The idea was that he would be able to promote church and community development in the District. (The Chairman was Norwyn Denny.) I was amazed and thrilled to discover from this second meeting that he had been practising the non-directive approach in a most effective way in his church work immediately following the first course.

I knew that the first course had had a great impact upon him because of a rather dramatic incident which occurred during a session when I was at a blackboard expanding and illustrating the differences between working with people directly and non-directively. Suddenly he got up from his seat, came to stand beside me and took the chalk out of my hand. I wondered what was going to happen next. He is a big man and towered over me! It was all quite intimidating. My description of the non-directive approach, apparently, had come to him as a dramatic disclosure of an approach that he immediately recognized as utterly different from the traditional ways of going about church and community work and absolutely essential to it. Undoubtedly it was a Damascus Road experience for him. "Do you mean this?" he said going over my diagram to make sure he had heard me aright. "Yes", I said, "that is precisely what I mean". "That is revolutionary", he said, gave me the chalk and returned to his seat in a state of shock and excited animation.

In a conversation on the 3rd April 2014 with CW, Fred Graham and Henry Grant, Charles said that what he realized was that adopting this non-directive approach meant that he did not have to have all the answers. Up to this point he had felt that he did and this weighed heavily upon him. Consequently this was a moment of enormous relief which opened up his ministry in incredible ways. He saw that it was right to involve others in finding 'answers' and ways and means of doing so responsibly and creatively. Catherine said that it was this which attracted her to Batten's teaching about the non-directive approach.

When I realized at the second course what had happened I was deeply moved and excited. Instinctively I knew that this was providential, a gift of God. Very soon he helped on a course which confirmed that he would make a good part-time member of the training staff. The Trustees agreed we should discuss the idea with Charles and found him willing to take up

6 Correction! The time between the courses was in fact 6 years. How my memory plays and deceives me! The first course was in fact whilst I was at Parchmore. I realized my error when I re-visited the interview with Charles in *Telling Experiences*. I refer to the incident on p29 in my introduction to the interview. On pp 35-36, he reflects on his work and the relationship which evolved between us which enabled us to work in things at depth at any time.

such an appointment. John Pater and I travelled to Moreton to explore the possibility with people from the circuit and the church of which he had pastoral charge and the Chairman none other than Norwyn Denny. Arrangements, fully acceptable to all parties, were reached and he worked with me/us in this capacity throughout my time as Director.

[An aside! Dr John Pater, Avec's Treasurer, was normally a man of few words. Our train to Liverpool was seriously delayed and somehow or another I got him talking about his role in the formation of the NHS. As the senior civil servant responsible for the administrative side he worked alongside Nye Bevan, the minister who inaugurated it. He told me of his running battles with N. B. over critical issues. The mind boggles at the thought of these encounters between the two such different men: Nye was a large, forceful man whereas John was small, slight, quiet, precise and as I have said he was a man of few words. On one sheet of A4 he produced perfect summaries of the most complex issues and discussions overnight! During his retirement he wrote a doctoral thesis at either Cambridge or Oxford on the Civil Service's contribution and part in the forming of the NHS. It was later published as *The Making of the National Health Service*, 1981. In this book he 'describes the currents, the initiatives and the compromises that led to the setting up of the NHS and the form it took.']

⁷[An incident which occurred during JP's retirement when he was not well and losing his sight. A Methodist minister very close friend was visiting him in hospital had a conversation with the ward sister as he was leaving. He asked if she knew the contributions that John had made to the founding of the NHS. She said not so he told her. Her immediate response was we will put him in a private ward (he was in one of those large dormitory like wards) with the inference that she would see he had the attention he deserved. "No, you won't", the minister said, "he would not allow you to because it is against all his principles and what he worked for – equal treatment for all regardless of who or what they are." John P stayed in the ward. To my shame I think/know that I would have indulged in using any influence I might have had to my advantage.

To return to Charles, he made enormous and invaluable contributions to Avec training and project programmes and the development of Avec as an agency. Interestingly in the interview I referred to above, he says that our thinking had moved on over the six years especially in relation to a much more balanced approach to the use of non-directive and directive ways of working with people. (p 35). Two of the many contributions he made were of especial importance. One was through participating in staff meetings whenever possible. He enriched the team work between Catherine and me by his presence and contribution: the dynamics between three people can be much more creative than between two; and so it was with Catherine, Charles and me. The other contribution he made was through becoming an invaluable co-consultant colleague to me personally and a soul friend. As Charles notes, instantaneously and without any great economy we could help each other to work through complex and difficult emotionally

charged issues face to face or over the 'phone. (p 36). Automatically we moved into appropriate roles either as consultant or consultor roles to each other and acted non-directively or directly to each other as appropriate. Providentially and amazingly we are still in that kind of relationship thirty six years later: we meet in a co-consultancy group of four three or four times a year for a day's work each other's and our joint interests and concerns. Our last project was a paper on ministry in retirement.

Moreover, Charles became a very special person to Molly. He stayed with us whenever he was engaged on Avec business in London. She held him in the highest regard and greatly valued his friendship. He was a very close friend to Molly as well as to me but he was also one who ministered to her and helped her greatly with many things as long as they knew each other. Sadly he was unable to attend her funeral because he was in the Bahamas.

Howard Mellor

Howard Mellor made enormous contributions to the life and work of Avec even though he was very much a full-time staff member for one year only. His participation in Avec and the impact it had upon his ministry and the work in which he was engaged in Addiscon's and Cliff is described in *Telling Experiences* pp 42-47. We too became soul friends. Howard was and remains deeply committed to and active in evangelical ministry and known to be so. He represents and practises a liberal, broad based and inclusive form of this kind of ministry. He is in touch with and acceptable to a wide range of evangelical ministry and different theological approaches to ministry in the Church generally and Methodism in particular.

His evangelical and theological stance combined with his commitment to the non-directive approach and Avec was enormously important. It demonstrated that the non-directive approach and Avec are as relevant to evangelical ministry as they were to more liberal forms. This broadened out Avec's theological profile significantly. Howard's stance was so different from Charles' (he had been actively involved in the Alliance of Radical Methodists and campaigns against injustice in Church and society, *op cit* p29), Catherine's or mine and yet we worked extremely well together. And Howard was able to work well with all kinds of participants and reassure evangelicals that they had nothing to fear in the non-directive approach, quite the contrary.

Howard's testimony to the beneficial effects upon him and his ministry of adopting the non-directive approach and of the consultative ministry

of Avec in particular, influenced the Home Mission's Department in general and Donald English in particular to look favourably upon Avec and its work. Donald English was acquainted with and well disposed to my work and, I think, to me. Whilst he was a tutor in Didsbury Theological College, he had worked through my PhD thesis with one of his students who was interested in church and community development work. And he participated in sessions I led for all the general secretaries of the Methodist Division. Unfortunately these experiences did not lead to Home Missions Dept supporting Avec by awarding it grants. But it did lead to it using the services of Avec in several ways. One was by seconding Howard to be a part-time staff member of Avec for one year to help prepare him to take up a new post established by the Home Missions Department (or Division) that of the Director of Evangelism for the Methodist Church in Britain. The express purpose was for Howard to learn anything he could about how a small organization could provide nationwide services (*ibid* p49). It helped him, he said to build up an evangelism team of five as a department of Cliff College which became very effective. Soon after he was appointed he invited me to help him and his team to prepare for a mission in Belfast. Members of the team were initially somewhat guarded in their acceptance of me (I was clearly not evangelical!) and of my approach (they were anything but non-directive in their evangelical zeal and purposes!). Howard notes that the seminars I took were helpful (*ibid* p49). I was deeply moved towards the end of the sessions and a fervent prayer time about the plans and the event, when one of them turned to me and said with considerable feeling, 'Brother George, God has sent you to us' and the others endorsed what he had said with heartfelt 'amens'. I knew I was accepted.

A second development relates to Howard's appointment as Principal of Cliff College. On the basis, I believe, of a submission I had made to Donald English supporting Howard's candidature for the post and what Howard had said at the interview arising from conversations we had had about how he could use his Avec experience, the committee decided that, in offering him the post, Bill Davies (retiring principal), Donald English (General Secretary of the Home Mission Division and Howard should have consultancy sessions with me before he took up the post (*ibid* p52). We did have those sessions. If I remember rightly two of the issues concerned with 'leadership' and Howard's ideas of introducing degree programmes alongside the traditional college courses open to all people regardless of their ability or qualifications. Donald English was very concerned – and rightly so – that the introduction of degree courses and postgraduate courses did not adversely affect the existing programme. He was concerned that the academic students could make the non-academic ones feel inferior and that a dominant ethos would

dominate and destroy the non-academic one. I helped them to see that the aim should be to develop a learning community of academic and non-academic students co-existing in an egalitarian ethos and culture in which they accepted each other as different students, evangelists and ministers with various gifts and abilities who accepted each other as equals, with complimentary contributions to make and were helping and supporting each other in their studies and growth in and learning from each other; And, that the praxis of community development could make significant contributions towards realizing these aims. These aims were adopted. Howard and I worked out ways of working to achieve them. Howard implemented the programmes brilliantly. And I lived to see and to contribute and participate in such a comprehensive learning community for ministry and mission.

Notwithstanding all of this, Howard and I had what I can only describe as a thorough dressing down by Donald English. Having read a paper Howard had submitted about which he had consulted us on how he saw his role as principal, DE summoned us to his office in Westminster Central Hall. His objection was to what Howard had said about his role as a 'manager'. When we went into his office we found him irate. There were no greetings or preliminary pleasantries, he hardly looked at us. Immediately and angrily he denounced the concept of management and asserted that what was needed from the Principal was leadership, strong charismatic leadership; Howard must forget all ideas of being a manager (I'm not sure Howard had suggested he was a manager); he must think again; he wanted to see leadership at Cliff. We were not given an opportunity to speak; we had no redress. The leader had spoken; we were to obey; we were promptly dismissed. We retired to lick our wounds and to decide what action to take. I never saw DE in that mood at any other time before or after. I was appalled. So much for his encouraging my use as a non-directive consultant! Howard did give some powerful leads including the lead for staff and students to think for themselves and together and in many ways saw himself as a non-directive worker. (see pp49, 51, 55).

Howard and Rosemary his wife became close friends, soul friends. Howard and I became colleagues and consultants to each other. He described our working and personal relationships much as Charles did (see p52). And, as I will explain later, I became a colleague and a member of his staff as well as a consultant!

The third consultancy project was to a major development in Wales the formation of a large team ministry in a newly constituted circuit to some of the South Wales mining valleys, the Mid Glamorgan Mission. I served in this capacity for several years.

Michael Bayley

⁸Michael Bayley, an Anglican priest, was the third part-time member of staff for two years, 1988-90. At the time he was a 'freelance writer and researcher'. Formerly he was lecturer in Social Administration, University of Sheffield. His major work was on social care in action. Along with two other colleagues they conducted a large and important piece of research under the title of The Dinnington Project. (See, *Local Health and Welfare: A study of the Dinnington Project*, 1989) A full set of the working papers were in the Avec Archives. This was an impressive piece of work costing, I think, 1/3 - 1/2 million pounds.) Other work related community care for people with learning difficulties and elderly. An interesting piece of action-research which we carried out related to churches engaging in sustained and sustainable community care of people in need of help and integrating them into secular and religious communities. He did some very interesting work on the moral issues of welfare and a critique of the National Health Service. Michael was an academic passionate about promoting the praxis of good sound community care and getting churches actively and purposefully into community care, welfare and development.

Our work first came to his attention through Project 70-75 and *Churches and Communities* published in 1978. He was impressed by this book and extracted sections for use with his students. Michael was a leading member of the 'Board of Social Responsibility' of the Sheffield Diocese. Through the sale of premises previously used for their work with mother and babies, the Board had a considerable amount of money which they decided to use to encourage and help clergy and their parishes (mainly Anglo-Catholic and high Church) in mining villages around Sheffield and Doncaster to engage in social welfare and community development in their localities. Michael recommended that the Board used the services of Avec which they did and consequently Michael and I met for the first time and worked together quite extensively during the period 1980-83. We got on very well as we worked together to good effect with priests, parishes, the Board, the Bishop and his Council.

Michael was a good colleague and made notable contributions to the work of Avec especially through his contributions to staff and Associates meetings. It was Michael who came up with the idea of the Marc Europe Survey, 1990 and played a major role in organizing and conducting it. (Somewhere in the Avec Archives there is a copy of a letter I wrote to him after he had resigned which I think described his contribution.) He

was an extraordinary good colleague to me proffering much intellectual stimulus and encouragement and moral support. It is not surprising that it was in his presence that I unburdened myself. In fact he performed some of the functions of the third staff member we sought and yearned for. Our active association continued long after he ceased to be a part-time member of staff. He chaired the research support group associated with my Leverhulme Emeritus Fellowship and the research which led to the publication of *Telling Experiences*. And later I acted as a consultant to work in which he was engaged in St Marks (?), Sheffield.

I hold Michael in high regard and notwithstanding he was an invaluable colleague.

Associates⁹

All in all some eighty people helped Catherine and me staff the Avec courses and consultancy and project work: the three part-time staff members and some seventy-seven Associate staff members or 'Associates' as we commonly referred to them. A table in *Avec Agency & Approach* gives their names, denominations, the period when they were active associates and the work in which they were engaged. Some of them did large numbers of face to face training days (for 60 to 200 face to face training days) others did very much fewer days. A number of these people reflected on their experience of working with Avec staff on courses, consultations and projects in *Telling Experiences*. In the order in which their stories appear in that book they are: Leslie Griffiths, Charles New, Howard Mellor, Fred Graham, Nelson Charles, Dowdridge Williams, Gabriel Robin, Maureen Conner, Brian Woodcock and Rosalind Colwill. Unearthing and recording the stories of the involvement of each and all of the Associates would undoubtedly be a fascinating, revealing and rewarding thing to do. But it would be a massive undertaking which I simply don't feel I can undertake here and now. Possibly someone else will. What I am going to attempt is to get down in paper the thoughts and feelings and memories that have surfaced as I have revisited and reflected on working with this incredible group of Associates. Much of what I say, therefore, is impressionistic rather than comprehensively analytical.

Barrie Heafford, who had been on one of TRB's three month's courses and was the minister for a number of years of one of the Ten Centres and a founder member of the Community Development Group of the Methodist Church, helped enormously with the courses we did before Avec was founded which have already been described and was the first Associate – in fact probably the only one for the first year or so apart from John Budd. He gave us sterling service until 1981 when other work prevented him continuing. Howard Booth and Graham Fawcett also helped in those early days but only for a short time – Graham tragically died at a very early age. Gradually we recruited more Associates from people who attended courses. All our Associates were in part 'home grown'. Slowly but surely a cadre of Associates was formed who were able to help with all the aspects of Avec's programme and some eventually could head up courses, importantly ten-day ones. A critical ability required of core Associates was to lead and act as consultants to work paper sessions, during which small groups helped each other to analyse and design or redesign their work in short to engage in 'situational analysis' as consultants to consultants. Members of this group met on a frequent and regular basis to engage in: discussions about the Avec training programme and its development; in-service training sessions. Key and long term members of this group were: Michael Bayley, Maureen Connor (?), Keith Davies, Fred Graham, Henry Grant, Leslie Griffiths, Howard Mellor, Charles New, Peter Russell, Catherine Ryan, Mark Sanders, Peter Sharrocks, John Stevinson, Margaret O'Connor and Brian Woodcock. An awesome group, gifted, widely experienced and highly committed practitioners and trainers.

Various groups of 2-4 Associates were formed as teams to staff courses and projects. These were normally led by a full-time or part-time staff member in the later stages of Avec's life. Sometimes they worked together just for one course. But several of these teams worked together on several courses. Catherine, for instance, worked with some Associates and others with religious.¹⁰ A team I led worked on annual courses for people working at regional, national and international levels which included Catherine, John Stevinson and on the later courses, Michael Bayley. I also headed up a team which staffed Diploma courses which variously included Margaret O'Connor, Mark Saunders and Catherine Ryan. Then there were teams for courses and projects for missionaries. Recently I wrote a paper on this which is presented as Appendage II, 'Work Consultancy Services for Missionaries, 1975-95, provided by the Methodist Missionary Society

10 See for instance piece by Maureen Connor in *Telling Experiences* and particularly p140. See also Catherine's book, *Small Communities in Religious Life: Making them Work..*

(MMS), The Methodist Church Overseas Division (MCOD) and Avec.’ (How interesting it would be to write similar papers on other aspects of the work!).

I must mention the work we did with and through those Associates and which they themselves carried on in Northern Ireland. They became and remain very dear colleagues. In fact two of them we are due to meet for a couple of days here in Leeds at the beginning of April. They are: Fred Graham, a priest in the Church of Ireland who was at the time the Rector of Stoneyford, a parish on the outskirts of Belfast, Henry Grant, SJ a Roman Catholic priest who had done some original research into the ‘Troubles’¹¹; Elizabeth Hewitt, a Methodist lay secretary to the Youth Department in the Irish Methodist Church and then a minister.

As early, I think, as 1976 members of the Peace Movement had some experience of our work and through a small ecumenical group of which Fred, Elizabeth and, I believe, Henry were members, invited Catherine and me to conduct a course in Northern Ireland. Deciding to follow up this overture was a big decision for Molly and me. It came only two or three years after the Tower Bomb and Molly was still undergoing hospital treatment for her serious injuries. And Belfast and other cities were dangerous places at the time. Eventually, but not without apprehension we decided that I ought to follow through opening because Avec might be able to make a contribution, however small, toward the reconciliation of the political and religious parties locked in such bitter and cruel conflict. But it cost Molly dearly through anxiety and worry during the many assignments over several years which it led to. Knowing and feeling her anxiety caused me pain.

Fred’s account of this work is in *Telling Experiences* and of his experiences as an Associate, pp 58ff.

Aware of the danger of being seen as foreign ‘experts’ presuming that we had solutions for complex and apparently intractable problems of which we had no direct experience which we could deliver in short courses in a country in which we had not even visited let alone lived in, we declined to conduct courses but offered to lead seminars to enable church leaders and workers of different denominations with relevant knowledge, experience and influence to examine and assess whether what we could offer from our

11 Henry’s PhD thesis was on the Troubles. He drew heavily on the work of Herbert Blumer (Director of his PhD), Roger Kaufman and David Feldman and their insights into how groups interact and the concept of ‘Social behaviour as symbolic interaction’. These are notes on his work in my file, Henry Grant and much more material in ‘The Avec Archives’.

experience in England would be useful to the churches and ecumenical organizations in Ireland and if so in what way and under what conditions. Our offer was accepted. We led seminars in three or four major cities in Northern Ireland ending with an open forum in Belfast. This series of seminars paved the way for our acceptance on extensive ecumenical courses and projects in Northern Ireland and Eire. Involvement in this work was a great privilege and a richly rewarding experience.

Memories flood back as I write. One goes back to our first visit to conduct the seminars. Fred Graham picked Catherine and me up from Belfast Airport on a glorious but cold winter's day and drove us to his rectory where we were to be based. The journey was a culture shock – lurid more than life sized threatening pictures of armed men covering the gable ends of houses, bomb damage, poverty stricken areas and obvious deprivation, military and police check points... When we arrived he showed us into a room with a lovely peat fire blazing away. (The grounds of the rectory were a smallholding in the tradition of Irish country parishes. The rectory had out-buildings. One was a hangar-sized shed stacked high with peat which Fred had cut from a moor area which was part of his land as rector!). He went to get coffee. When he came back he said with a sigh of great relief, 'Thank God you are not whizz kids!' Then there are memories of Patrick Scott, a Redemptorist priest for a short period an Associate, driving us from Belfast to Dublin and regaling us with dates and stories of Irish history associated with places en route. I also remember being deeply moved by Patrick singing Danny Boy in Irish sitting cross-legged on the hearth in the house of a member of one of the members of a course – she was a grandmother in her late 50's who was a voluntary community worker in one of the most violent areas of Belfast. Amongst other things her work involved her in confronting and challenging IRA members active in the troubles and in acts of violence. She had enormous courage. But I must desist from reminiscing after the next incident.

On one of the ecumenical ten-day courses in Belfast, Henry gave a presentation of his findings about what happens to groups and communities when 'a dramatic event of the worst kind' occurs. It was extremely telling; the group was deeply involved and moved. They had seen and recognized the socioreligious dynamics in a new way and one in which enabled them to see things they could do, but at some risk and cost. I was leading the discussion when it turned to what they were going to do about the implications for them which had emerged. There was an awesome silence charged with palpable tension. It was broken by a tall gaunt bearded Irish Presbyterian, a man in his late fifties, I should think, standing. Up to that point members

of the group representing no fewer than four denominations, protestant and catholic, had remained seated during the discussion. Standing therefore was a dramatic gesture. Directly addressing me, with much emotion and anger, he said that where was I in all this, here today and gone tomorrow, when, if they had followed through the implications with appropriate action they would have exposed themselves and put themselves at risk in a dangerous place. Before he could discuss the implications, he needed to know what my commitment was. He sat down. I cannot recall in detail what followed. It may well be in Catherine's notes of the session – she was meticulous – or the daily record I used to produce but those pages are in the Avec Archives in Oxford. But my memory of the nature of the subsequent exchanges is deeply embedded in my memory. They were intensive, honest, therapeutic and creative heart to heart conversations about our respective commitments and contributions and the costs of making them as a proper and essential prelude to any discussions to what action we might take in relation to them – first between the Presbyterian minister (sadly I cannot remember his name) and me and then between all members of the group. Rightly, of course, I accepted the validity of the points he made and my respect and appreciation of his courage and honesty in making them. Obviously I could not be in his position or he in mine nor would we be open to the same risks and dangers but we could and must be sensitive to them. I explained I was as committed as I could be to him, the group and following through the implications of what we did and decided but I could never do what he/they did, that was their work, I had mine. I told them how and why I was committed to making any contribution to remedial and palliative action in relation to the Troubles and how it derived from my commitment to Christian ministry, broad based church and community development and from what had happened to my family and Dorothy through the Tower Bomb. Also I told them about what Molly and I felt about this work in which we were sharing in Ireland and the cost of my doing it to Molly. Tears were shed in an emotional session as we entered into each other's experience. Howbeit, when we turned to working at the implications we were clear and realistic and, I believe, creative.

Following my thoughts and feelings as they emerge means this section about the Associate staff is somewhat discursive. However that might be it is revealing something of richness of our collegiality and experiences of working together and the deep relationships that evolved and became very precious to us.

Fred with the group of Irish Associates went on to do much work on their own as well as with Catherine, Charles, ? Howard and me. In fact it

led him and his colleagues to set up an agency based on the Avec model, 'A Service Agency for Consultation and Training', 'ACT'. (*Telling Experiences* p65)

I am somewhat painfully aware that this is not a comprehensive and balanced picture of the Associate staff members. It is loaded towards those with whom we did most work and to whom we became closest and with whom we still remain in contact. But, somewhat reluctantly and unsatisfied, I must leave it at this at least for the time being because I do not know how to continue and do not have the desire to do so! Apologies to those whose contributions have not been acknowledged.

Trustees

The Trustees played important parts in the life and work of Avec in general and of the staff especially. They were very much committed to the Agency and to the staff; they were in fact colleagues and friends making various and complementary contributions to the well-being of the staff and the effectiveness and development of Avec as an agency and its work. Trust meetings were on the whole well-informed erudite discussions of key issues particularly those related to strategy. I took great care of the briefing I prepared for each meeting and setting out the agenda. I saw myself very much as the 'worker' to the meetings. (Ted Rogers, the chair, used to tease me meeting by meeting by one of the first items I always included about whether the agenda was acceptable. In his wide experience he had never come across it before!). Those who served and the period during which they did so are set out in the table on the next page. In total they represented five denominations. They had an incredibly wide knowledge and experience of the life and work of these denominations and were well acquainted with and committed to ecumenical development. Many were distinguished and some had held several high offices in their churches and the ecumenical movement. Several were recognized authorities in their field. Disciplines represented included economics, organizational theory and behaviour, management, social responsibility, current affairs, social work and administration, industrial studies, religious life, community development, missionary work, theology and so much more. An amazing collection of people.

Ted Rogers was the ideal chairman¹², an office he held for thirteen

¹² For an interesting but all too short overview of his life, work and Christian character see *Edward Rogers: A Portrait of a Christian Citizen* by John Pritchard. A Wesley Historical Society Occasional paper, 2008. (32p). John interviewed me when he was drafting this paper. Many of the anecdotes he included are from

years. He chaired meetings magnificently: by way of preparation he had read, absorbed and mastered all the relevant papers, and remembered and could quote them; he was focused and concentrated during meetings (until the tea arrived when he would call out, 'No milk and one sugar'); he presided authoritatively allowing everyone their say until their contribution became irrelevant and then he would bring them back in line – including me!; he listened intently, sometimes with his chin in his hands on the table and, when he considered the discussion had run its course he would, with incredible succinctness and precision, summarize what had been said and note the issues and the conclusion and the decisions to be made. But he lacked social graces and was a man of few words. He supported Catherine and me through thick and thin. His resignation in 1989 was an enormous loss, indeed a tragedy for me and for Avec because I think things might have gone better had he been able to exercise the chairmanship he did in the early period in the 1970's and early 80's. But possibly not.

The Rev Edward Rogers and Avec

An extract from *Edward Rogers: A Portrait of a Christian Citizen* pp 25-27

'It was not many months after he retired that he had a visit from George Lovell and Catherine Widdicombe, the founding geniuses of a new organization which went by the name of *AVEC*, for its purpose was to encourage and equip its clients to work WITH individuals, groups and communities to promote church and community development. They came at the appointed hour and invited him to become the first chair of *AVEC*'s board of trustees. His name had been suggested by an ad hoc ecumenical group including Derek Worlock, then Bishop of Portsmouth, and Owen Nankivell, the high-flying economist who was a Treasurer of the new Division of Ministries. Rogers asked a few shrewd questions and, satisfied with the answers, agreed there and then. At that moment Edie came in to ask the visitors how they would like their tea. "They won't be having any," said Ted. "We've done our business so they are leaving." Such behaviour, ungracious if not unfriendly, was typical of one who generally had more time for the business in hand than for the people he dealt with.

He chaired the *AVEC* Trustees from 1976 to 1989, and remained on the Trust when Nigel Gilson took over for a further four years. Over that period, *AVEC* helped thousands of clergy, religious and laity to analyze and reflect on their work, to understand and practise the non-directive approach in working with individuals, groups and communities, to design their own programmes and projects, to become more reflective and collaborative, to

me as is the piece on Ted's association with Avec pp25-27. On reflection I have decided to copy them on the next page -,

promote egalitarian participation, and to build reflective and collaborative churches and communities. Lovell found in Rogers a very willing supporter, who was quite ready to correct him but: who never put him down. A typical phone conversation went something like this: "Is it convenient to have a word?" "No." "When will it be?" "It won't." "It's important Ted." "You've got three minutes." Ted understood what *AVEC* was doing, and it was helpful that he could express it in quite different language from Lovell's.

When *AVEC* was well established, there came a point when two of its main funders, the Gulbenkian Foundation and an anonymous trust, suggested the future lay in association with a Higher Education institution. After some consultation with the Department of Education and Science (as it then was) and the Home Office, an approach was made to the Roehampton Institute. When the negotiations were well advanced, a meeting was arranged with a large group of Roehampton staff and governing body members. It was on a Monday morning; George was to pick Ted up, but only after the courier from the *Methodist Recorder* had collected his weekly copy. As a result they arrived at the meeting at the last minute. Rogers, without so much as a by your leave, made his way to the platform, sat at the top table, called the meeting to order and described how it would proceed - first Lovell, then Widdicombe, then himself would speak. Kevin Keohane, the Rector of the Institute, did not allow himself to be fazed by this take-over. Rogers later defended his high-handed action saying "I've given evidence before too many Royal Commissions and we weren't there to give evidence but to set out our stall." Afterwards, on the way to lunch, the Rector said to Lovell, "I don't know what to do with you Methodists." "What do you mean?" "About pre-lunch drinks." Immediately a voice from behind said "Mine's a sherry, dry - and he won't be drinking because he's driving." An agreement was all but reached when the Thatcher government changed the rules about the funding of Higher Education, and the affiliation plan was aborted.'

All the Trustees made useful contributions to the work and life of Avec. They varied considerably from knowledge of churches and ecumenical agencies and strategy to finance and advocacy and promotion. Some attended courses including Bp Konstant, Nigel Gilson, Jackie Rolo, Bp Selby, Sir Winifred O'Brien, Bp Guazzelli, John Walton, Bp Waller, John Oldenshaw, Father Feltzman, Ann Sutcliffe to get first hand experience of the training programme or in some cases, such as Nigel Gilson, before they became trustees. (I had not realized it was so many 11 out of 33.) So they could speak from direct experience of the course. Some people had considerable experience of either community development or allied disciplines. Raymond Clarke, a founding Trustee. All the Trustees had intimate knowledge of Christian churches. Additionally a few had professional knowledge directly relevant to Avec's field of work and expertise.

¹³John Walton was knowledgeable about and involved in community development and work and was the secretary of a Department in the BCC on that subject. Ann Sutcliffe headed up at national level the URC's highly effective and growing programme of 'church related community work'. Raymond Clarke had been involved since 1957 in community work and then from 1963 in social work and social administration holding senior posts including chief officer of the Personal Social Services Council and first full-time Clerk to the National Council of Voluntary Child Organizations. Though serving on various government and Home Office commissions and committees and his work he did research on these areas of work. But (see *The Guardian* obituary, March 2010 on line and our file.) Two of the Trustees, Lady Margaret Brown and Professor Gillian Stamp, gave generously of their time and knowledge in actually working with us in various ways on our work and that of Avec.

Lady Margaret Brown came to us through Archbishop Runcie following a discussion with him about the possibility of the Church of England helping to fund in 1984; he asked Lady Brown to report to him. She presented a very positive report – in fact she was very excited and enthusiastic about Avec and its work – urging the Archbishop to appoint someone to represent him on the Trust, to find substantial grants for its work and to second a full-time staff member. (See *Avec Agency and Approach* p 108). He appointed Bishop John Waller to the Trust. Some time later we – Ted Rogers, John Pater, Catherine and I – met the Archbishop. He said he was ashamed of the lack of financial support, suggested we made application to the Church Urban Fund and as a gesture of intent he gave us a modest donation from a fund he controlled. Apart from grants to enable people working in areas to attend courses despite the Archbishop's support and that of Canon Eric James neither financial support nor a staff materialized. (*Avec Agency & Approach* p 108.) The Trust invited Lady Margaret to serve as a trustee and she gave Avec her full support until it ceased to trade i.e. from 1986 to 94 – or when the Trust wound up its affairs. She wrote papers about the work took up various duties and helped Catherine with her book, *Meetings that Work* and was an enthusiastic supporter of Avec and Catherine and me¹⁴.

Gillian Stamp made enormous and far reaching contributions to the development of Avec's and of my church and community development

¹³ 29.1.14

¹⁴ Her approach to leadership and management in public and private organisations is set out in a book she wrote with her son, *Empowered: A Practical Guide to Leadership in the Liberated Organisation* by Rob Brown and Margaret Brown (Nicholas Breally, Publishing, 1994)

TRUSTEES

The Revd Edward Rogers (Chairman until 1988)	M	1976 - 1989
The Revd Sebastian Charles	A	1976 - 1982
Mr Raymond Clarke	URC	1976 - 1986
The Revd Brian Green	RC	1976 - 1977
The Revd David Wainwright	A	1976 - 1979
Dr John Pater (Treasurer)	M	1976 - 1986
Mr Owen Nankivell	M	1977 - 1988
Most Revd Derek Worlock	RC	1977 - 1986
The Revd Michael Atkinson	A	1979 - 1988
Mr Bob Walsh	RC	1979 - 1988
The Revd George Mann	B	1980 - 1983
Miss Philippa Craig	RC	1983 - 1986
Mr John Walton	URC	1983 - 1988
The Revd Richard Hamper	B	1983 - 1988
Rt Revd David Konstant	RC	1984 - 1986
Rt Revd John Waller	A	1985 - 1988
Lady Margaret Brown	A	1985 -
The Revd Trevor Rowe	M	1985 - 1986
The Revd Hilary Clark	RC	1985 - 1990
The Revd Cyril Franks	URC	1986 - 1988
Mr Gordon Franklin (Treasurer)	M	1986 -
The Revd Nigel Gilson (Chairman from 1988)	M	1986 -
Miss Jackie Role	RC	1986 -
Professor Gillian Stamp		1986 -
The Revd Dr Vladimir Feltzman	RC	1986 - 1988
Miss Pauline Butcher	M	1988 -
The Revd Dr John Taylor	M	1988 -
Mrs Ann Sutcliffe	URC	1988 - 1991
Rt Revd Peter Selby	A	1989 -
The Revd David Staple	B	1989 -
The Revd John Cidershaw	URC	1989 - 1991
Sister Winifred O'Brien	RC	1990 -
Rt Revd Victor Guazzelli	RC	1990 -

FULL-TIME STAFF

The Revd Dr George Lovell (Director)	1976 - 1991
Miss Catherine Widdcombe (Associate Director)	1976 -

CONSULTANT

Dr TR Batten	1976 - 1991
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PART-TIME STAFF

The Revd Charles New	1977 -
The Revd Howard Mellor	1983 - 1984
The Revd Dr Michael Bayley	1987 - 1989

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF*(Those who served longer than a year)*

Mrs Molly Lovell (Bursar)	1976 -
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Full- and Part-time Secretaries
(At various times over the period)

Miss Alex Newman
Mrs Elizabeth Scollard
Mrs Valerie Tredinnick
Mr Graham Brandreth-Wills
Mrs May Farine
Miss Marian Esling

Voluntary Staff*(At various times over the period)*

Miss Mary Dowling
Mrs Irene Picton
Mrs June Gould
Mrs Vera Lewis
Miss Joan Loring
Mrs Sadie Douglass
Mr John Douglass
Miss Joan Blandino

1976 - signifies those who served beyond 1991

Avec Trustees and Staff, 1976-91
From Avec, Agency & Approach p154.

work and consultancy praxis. The extent of this can be discerned by my references to and my use of her concepts and work in *Analysis and Design*, *Consultancy Ministry and Mission* and *Consultancy Modes and Models*. She became a consultant to me and to Catherine, a colleague and friend, took a great interest in and concern about my professional well-being and development, supported and encouraged me, helped with the in-service training of the staff and Associates. An extraordinarily busy person in much demand, yet she gave of herself generously and freely to Avec. She worked with all kinds of organizational groupings from large multinationals, the Pentagon staff and small groups of Aborigines in the Australian outback. She was Director of Brunel Institute of Organizational Studies (BIOSS) 1981 – 2005 founded in the 100's by Elliott Jacques.¹⁵

¹⁶Gillian was incredibly gifted in analysing aspects of behaviour and relationships of people engaged purposefully in the life and work of groups, organizations and churches, identifying critical factors and describing and modelling them in telling diagrams. She did this, for instance, in relation to:

- The matrix of Working Relationships', a way of looking at a mosaic of levels of work and connectedness in working relationships.
- The tripod of work: tasking, trusting and tending.
- The four journeys: the journey of the self; the public journey; the private journey; the personal journey.
- Well-being and stress at work: charts setting out the relationships between challenge and capabilities in relation to work 'flow' and effective decision making.
- Knowledge and appreciation.

And so much more.¹⁷

In a never to be forgotten Staff and Associates training session at Chelsea in January 1991, she got us engaged in a most creative exercise. It involved each of us filling in a triangular piece of paper subdivided into four triangles (the one I completed is reproduced below).

Then folding it to form a trihedral, a triangular pyramid. The 'faces'

¹⁵ Jaques set out the praxis upon which BIOSS was originally based in a much acclaimed book, *A General Theory of Bureaucracy* (Heinemann, 12pp, 1981).

¹⁶ 30.1.14

¹⁷ There is a file of all the papers by Gillian that I/we used. She was married to Colin for 40 years. He was a son of Lord Stamp, a very prominent Methodist lay man in his day. Lord and Lady Stamp lived in Beckenham and were killed tragically at the end of the war by a flying bomb or whatever it was.

represented the individual, work, culture and social aspects of our lives; the sides beliefs and values; the points leadership, tasking, trusting and tending. I have used the basic model extensively and applied it to a trihedral of relationships I had developed and used with all kinds of groups and in my preaching (it led to George Stokes conversion!). See the next page. When we had folded the paper to form a trihedral she asked us what it was which was inside for us, what motivated and empowered us? The space within us, our souls, our being. The trihedrals are, of course, not static 'bodies', they are dynamic, ever changing the shape as the entities represented on the faces, the edges and the corners change. They are malleable, responding to the dynamics of our work situation, vocational lives....

Above is the model I had established some time before the session with Gillian. For me it summarized human and divine relationships. (See *Analysis and Design* pp 234-6). Using Gillian's method and model I produced the trihedral below.

Gillian Stamp urged me to consider broadening/extending the Avec training and consultancy programme to include work with secular organizations, businesses and industrial concerns. She said that the work of Avec was highly appropriate to aspects of the life and work of secular organizations. It would broaden our experience, build bridges between secular and religious institutions and increase our income considerably and probably solve our financial problems. Whilst I found the case she was putting had much in its favour my commitment to work for human and spiritual well-being and development in church and community through working in and through the Church prevailed. My/our resources was stretched to the limits in working out that commitment and there was far more to do than we could ever complete. So, reluctantly in some ways, I declined to follow her lead and to the best of my knowledge it never went to the Trust – or did it? Nonetheless for some reason which I cannot recall I did go for an interview for a consultancy project post, I think it was related to organizational ethics. It was very much a part-time commission. In the event Donald Reeves was appointed. I took this to be providential confirmation that my commitment to work with or through the church was my God given vocation. Interestingly David Dadswell consults in the commercial, public and voluntary sectors and in the church sector. (See Introduction, e.g. to his book *Consultancy Skills for Mission and Ministry* (SCM Press, 2011). He came to consultancy work with churches and religious organizations from his work in the secular sector and through teaching on the post-graduate course on consultancy, ministry and mission first at Cliff College then York St John University.

¹⁸Two other Trustees I simply must mention, Gordon Franklin and Trevor Rowe. Gordon (and his wife Gill for that matter) have been intimate friends for almost forty years both to me and to Molly. I first met him when with a small group he came to our house in Forrest Hill one evening to consult about the radical refurbishment of Chelsea Methodist Church. That was the beginning of a long and rich association with Chelsea and with the Franklin family. Gordon followed John Pater as Treasurer to Avec and served us with distinction in that capacity (except for the Brandretter-Wills debacle that is). He was enormously supportive of Molly in her capacity as Bursar, she greatly appreciated his help and the working (and personal) relationships between them. She felt at ease with him and that was very important. Gordon was personally generous. I suspect that an ‘anonymous’ donation which covered a substantial shortfall in Avec’s finance came from his pocket. Apart from and beyond all he contributed as Treasurer, he was unfailingly an enormous support; he believed in me and my vocation. He was a secure rock on which I could trust. How well I remember the after lunch (and what delicious lunches they were!) conversations about things of concern about Chelsea and the Circuit and Avec in their flat in Marlborough House Mews, Pall Mall. They were enormously helpful and always constructive.

Trevor I first met at Conference when we were seated next to each other. (It was early in my ministry. I don’t think it could have been in 1960, possibly in the late 60’s). From the beginning we got on and had much in common. I knew his brother, Colin, before I knew Trevor, Colin was the minister in Cove when we lived in Aldershot and I took youth fellowship meetings. I was a little intimidated and overawed by him at first. He was so accomplished academically and already a Connexional figure and very confident about his ideas which were quite radical. He took a great interest in my ministry when I became involved in church and community development. He did some original creative work as a circuit minister in Moseley Road and Sparkhill churches, mixed ethnic communities in Birmingham, 1965-70. He had embraced and deployed community development principles. It was whilst he was the lecturer in Pastoral Theology, and Senior Methodist Tutor at Queen’s College Birmingham that I got to know him better. At that time he was a prominent member of the Board of Lay Training. In fact it was Trevor who, when the Board members could not agree on just what constituted lay training and how to define it, proposed that the way forward was to set up groups on disciplines which in one way or another related to lay workers and lay their deployment and training and see where that led to. So groups were set up on adult education, community development,

sociology and others which I cannot recall with certainty. The idea worked; the Board started to make highly significant contributions to lay work and workers and developed new understanding of and insights into the whole field under the gifted leadership of Pauline Webb and Trevor Rowe and a small group including David Clarke, Albert Gilliver and of which I was privileged to be a member. Trevor was an informed and experienced practitioner of a range of these disciplines and an able theologian.

As a trustee he supported me personally in my professional work and took a keen pastoral interest in my deployment and development. It was Trevor who encouraged and enabled me to spend time at Tantur in the West Bank during my sabbatical in. But then when he followed Chris Bacon as General Secretary of the Division of Ministries, we had the continuing and full support of the Division—financial and informed support and advocacy of Avec. How enormously fortunate and blessed I have been vocationally and in my colleagues. Greatly privileged I am.

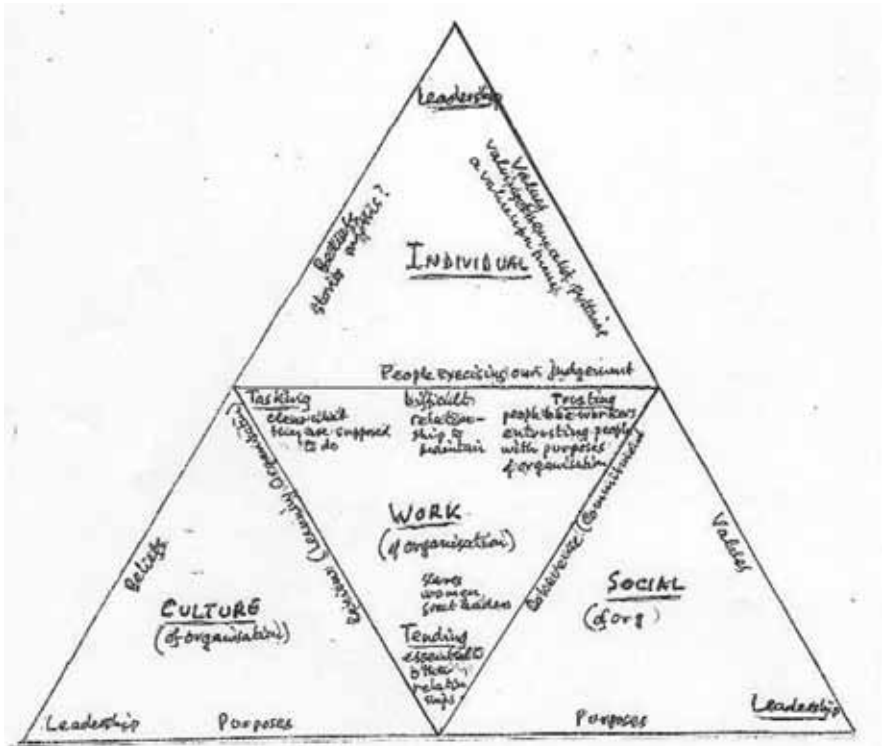
It has been heartbreaking to lose him through a serious dementia. During his retirement he lived for several years in Malvern where John Budd of P 70-75 lived. They knew each other and attended a theological group together. When John died in Dec 2010 I rang Trevor to see if we could meet when I attended the funeral in January. I was distressed to find he could not hold a conversation for more than a minute or two without losing his train of thought. We arranged to meet but in the event we didn't because he had to leave the service before the end. I rang him to see if we could meet but nothing came of it. I understand from Colin that he has now deteriorated and is in a home. And he had such a brilliant mind.

Consultant, T R Batten (Reg)

Writing about Reg's consultancy to me and Catherine in *Avec, Agency and Approach*, I said:

‘Throughout this period, 1976-91, Dr TR Batten provided non-directive consultancy support for Catherine Widdicombe and me whenever we required it. A review of these consultancies showed that he particularly helped us with tricky issues and problems related to:

- creating and developing Avec as a viable agency
- designing the overall training, consultancy and project work programme, staffing it and evaluating it.
- specific issues and problems to do with courses, consultancy services and working relationships;



- staff development;
- researching and writing about Avec and church and community development;
- establishing priorities.

Over the fifteen year period we had over seventy consultations of approximately three hours duration with Dr Batten. Going through the notes of these sessions recently I was impressed to see just how often he had helped us to be much more creative than we would otherwise have been and helped us to avoid and overcome problems. There can be no doubt that he profoundly affected the quality and quantity of the work done in a most economical way for him and for us.

At the same time he gave us great moral support, as did Mrs Madge Batten who is his colleague as well as his wife. They believed in what we were doing. They were enthusiastic about it. They shared our joy and our pain. They were beloved partners.' (p 77)

That measured summary does not adequately describe the enormity of his contribution nor my deep heartfelt appreciation of all that he and Madge contributed to my vocational life and my ability and confidence to pursue it. He was my tutor, mentor, consultant, soul friend and colleague. Some idea of my indebtedness can be gained by tracing through my references to him

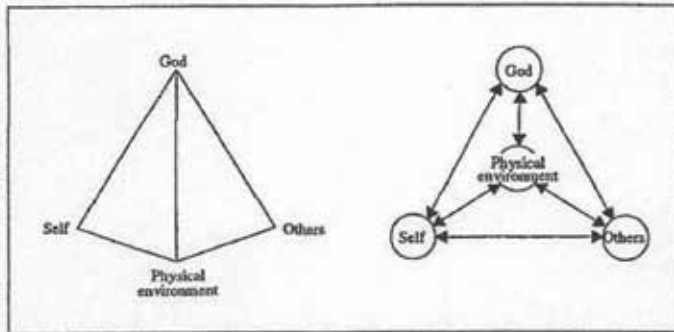
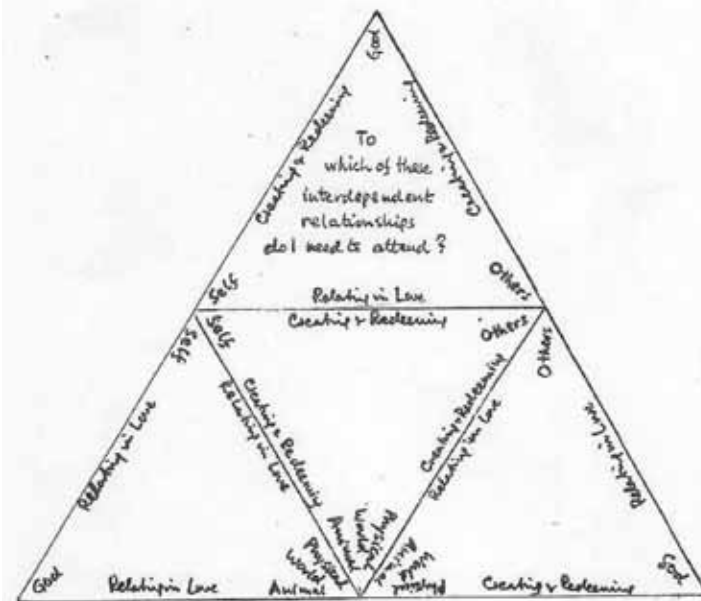


FIGURE 10:1. A TRIHEDRAL OF RELATIONSHIPS

and his contributions in these Notes in my books, in the Foreword to the Avec publication of *The Non-Directive Approach* by TR and M Batten (1988) and by what I have written about Reg and Madge in:

- *Essays in the history of youth and community work: Discovering the Past*



A Critical

Appreciation of some Outworkings in Christian Churches and Organizations of TR Batten's Non-directive Approach to Community Development.

- tr (reg) batten and madge batten, non-directivity and community development. <http://www.infed.org/thinkers/batten.htm>

I will return to this in a later section.

The Community Development Group of the Methodist Church and Avec

Earlier I described how the Community Development Group came into being and indicated the contributions that it made to the church and community development movement. It made significant contributions to Project 70-75 and backed my appointment to work on it full-time. Pauline Webb's support of my application to serve as a sector minister was very important. Undoubtedly the Group greatly helped Catherine and me in what we did. Here I simply note the contributions the Group made to Avec as follows:

- It, the Group that is, made significant contributions to Avec coming into being, backing and supporting it from the beginning.
- It provided a forum especially in the first few years of Avec's life in which we could share our thinking about Avec and its programme and test it out with people widely experienced in and knowledgeable about church and community development and discuss problems with impunity and to our great advantage and that of Avec.
- It monitored the work of Avec, taking a deep interest in every facet of its development, gave invaluable feedback, advocated and promoted its work.
- It was a most effective support group to Avec and members of the staff who attended the Group. Joe Rimmer and others were unwavering friends through thick and thin.
- Possibly its most profound contribution was through promoting and participating in the study of and research into the theology of church and community which led to the publication of *Involvement in Community* and *Diagrammatic Modelling: An aid to Theological Reflection in Church and Community Development Work*. The latter went through several reprints and was by far the best seller of all of Avec's occasional papers.

The Community Development Group was a very important resource group to Avec's staff throughout its life, a reference and reflective group. Also it was doing work in its own right and providing a forum for workers.

My Avec work load eventually meant that I could not attend meetings but Avec was always well represented.

All the papers relating to the Group are in the Avec archives – or more precisely a set of them. They constitute rich research material. Researching them and writing up an account of the history of the group and the work it did could be very profitable and cast much light on the church and community development movement.

Creative Dynamics: internal and external

Reflecting on the overall pattern of the working relationships which I experienced and engaged in during my work with Avec I found myself distinguishing between those which were internal and those which were external and the creative dynamics in and between them i.e. those generated within Avec structures and work programme and those generated by my/our engagements with people and organisations in the wider field of church and community work and development. I have conceptualised these as two concentric circles representing the internal and external dynamics with much interplay between them (see diagram below). In this section I describe what emerged from my exploration of these dynamics.

Internal dynamics

Together – staff members, consultant, associates and trustees – constituted a wide-based ecumenical workforce of diverse people with a wide representative experience of church and community work; a complex of creative working relationships. They were variously purposefully focused through Avec upon the application of the non-directive approach to the contemporary life and activities of churches and communities in which they were set. This approach and the methods associated with it were at the heart of the ways in which we worked and learnt together as well as the approach we advocated and said that manner in which we provided training courses and consultancy services. Fundamentally our aim was to use the approach to help practitioners to do their work more effectively, to understand its praxis, to have some satisfying experience of it being used and hopefully to adopt it themselves in their work.

Of itself the interaction between the members of the Avec workforce and their expertise and experience was extra ordinarily developmental. It facilitated: multi dimensional learning from each other and the wide and diverse experience of church and community development work we were engaged in and are accumulated experience; informed planning of training programmes; testing out ideas and hypotheses, reflection and research;

working together at the praxis and theology of church and community development; and it grounded Avec in the realities of the church and community work in which the workforce itself was engaged; it generated the flow of creative energy so necessary to achieve our purposes in situations where so much had the potential to frustrate us doing so. We energised each other and built up our confidence and morale. Not surprisingly this deep purposeful interaction built up many precious relationships and gave us profound experiences of *koinonia*. Working together was in fact a living experience of community development generated by the non-directive approach in action between us. The quality of these working relationships was a key factor in the effectiveness of Avec's programme. They facilitated and empowered the work programme. Doing this and working at the implications of the feedback we experienced stimulated new cycles of creative activity between members of the workforce in relation to the development of our praxis and strategy.

External dynamics

I was further stimulated as was the workforce in general into creative thought and action by what I will describe as my 'external engagement' in the wider field which took several different forms.

Engagement between the participants in the inner circle was predicated upon the acceptance of the non-directive approach as our normative approach to church and community development work. This is described in the previous section. Engagement in the outer circle was between advocates practitioners and theoreticians of a wide range of understandings and approaches to community work, community development and community organising and the role and function of the religious churches, institutions and organisations in relation to the acceptance and deployment. Almost all of my wider experience related to the place of Christian churches and organisations. My position was based upon the conviction that Christian churches and organisations should and can work for the interrelated development of their churches and the communities in which they were set (see, for instance, *Human and Religious Factors in Church and Community Work*, pp 12 – 14). Equally I was committed to making my contribution from within the Methodist church which was and remains my working base. Others were committed to doing this through working, full-time or voluntarily, in and through other organisations. (Harry Salmon, a fellow Methodist minister, did so, for instance, through professional appointments he held in secular organisations. As noted above, the United reformed Church promoted 'church related community work'.)

Interrelated and all overlapping dynamics

The internal and external dynamics interrelated and overlapped: the activity and interactions in the one circle impacted upon those in the other through those of us involved acting as contra flow feedback loops (see the diagram). However, as with all such conceptual devices, this one has limitations and potential to distort reality. It distinguishes significant differences between the natures of the interactive dynamics which occurred in the two circles. Additionally, both forms of interactive dynamics were also a common feature of the internal dynamics of Avec's workforce and work programme: for instance, interactions of both kinds occurred in work paper studies, in consultancy and project work, and in trustees meetings when the Avec approach was compared, contrasted and critically considered in relation to other approaches some of which were similar whilst others were radically different and in conflict with Avec's approach. The ways in which the dynamics operated was an inevitable consequence of Avec's commitment to the non-directive approach, its purposes and programme and the constituency with which it was working. It meant Avec was doing its job – getting people to think and discuss critically for themselves as widely as they needed and could do and coming to the wrong conclusions job!

Details of those with whom I and my colleague interacted in the inner circle are given in *Telling Experiences*, *Avec Agency and Approach* and *Avec Archives Annotated Catalogue*. The next section is about those with whom I/we engaged in the outer circle.

My External engagement

Overall the external engagement of the Avec staff and associates with religious and secular activities and movements related community work and community development was enormous. It is simply not possible for me to give anything like a fair let alone a comprehensive account of their involvement and interaction with people engaged in these fields. Nor is it possible for me to give such an account of my own engagement for several reasons: the papers that would enable me to recall the details of it which are fading from my memory are in the Avec archives and therefore not easily accessible to me; to do it would take interest, time and energy that I simply do not have at the moment. Fortunately I do not think it is necessary for my present purposes. What is necessary is for me to describe the nature and range of these interactions and the importance of them to my own professional development praxis and to that of Avec. I think I can do that by restricting my survey to the interaction in which I personally was engaged even though the creative internal – external dynamics was generated in part

by me and by a large number of other people. The profile of my interaction will give some idea of the overall pattern. Certainly I would not want to give any idea that I was the sole promoter of these dynamics in *Avec*; it was very much a collective effort.

Basically my external engagement with community work and community development activities and movements was twofold: one was in the secular domain and the other was in the religious domain with Christians whose approach variously overlapped and differed from my own. I discuss these under the following headings.

Community development, organising and work in the secular domain

Community development and community work

Community work vs. community development in the 1960s

Failure of educationalists to succeed in becoming the
primary discipline

Process and product

The non-directive approach

Proliferation of activity and publishing

My interaction with community work

My interaction with community development

Community organising

The National community development project

Other forms of engagement

Development of churches and communities

The British Council of Churches (BCC) and the Community
Work Resource Unit (CWRU)

Church related community work

Church growth

Urban ministry

Church management and administration

Group work

Clinical Pastoral Praxis

The nature and features of my engagement and interaction with
these disciplines

Attempts at modelling my internal and external engagement

Community development, organising and work in the secular domain

This is the first major section, the secular in contradistinction to the religious domain.

Community Development and Community Work

Community development (CD) and community work (CW) are closely related but significantly different disciplines with many different schools of thought. Consequently it is difficult to generalise about them without misrepresenting them and presenting distorted pictures of them. They operate in the same field of human activity and their overall objectives are not dissimilar but their approach to and strategies for achieving them differ considerably.

Community work versus community development in the 1960s

David Thomas in his excellent book, *The Making of Community Work* (1983) traces a critical stage in community work becoming the preferred discipline to community development in the consultations about the future of this area of work in British society to discussions in the first Gulbenkian study group in 1966 which led to the epoch making and highly influential Gulbenkian Report, *Community Work and Social Change: A Report on Training* (1968). He summarises ‘what happened in the 1960s was an attempt to establish proprietorship of community work between social work and education.’ (p19) Later he gives a fuller account of the different concepts, disciplinary backgrounds and approaches in contention gives a picture of the nature of the conflict. In a discussion with David about the book soon after it was published he told me that he had discussed what he had written about CD and CW with Reg Batten who said that he thought it was a fair and balanced account.

The interests in contention were: those related to education (educational institutes of universities were attracting people skilled in community development returning from the former colonies, example Reg Batten, Hywel Griffiths, Peter du Sautoy, p 25); social work (social worker had already established community work as one of its three means of intervention pp 44-5); community development. Thomas says that the interests of these disciplines overlapped.

Throughout the time I knew him Batten was concerned to maintain the

distinctiveness and autonomy of community development as a discipline and of the non-directive approach to it howbeit drawing on the insights of other disciplines. He commented very sharply to me that community development was not adult education in relation to something I had written which he took to infer that it was. I agree with him that it is important to maintain the distinctions of community development as a discipline and to be clear about the interdisciplinary boundaries but I think now, as I did then, that, amongst other things, CD is a means of adult education and community work. I don't think he would disagree with that.

Two major issues in contention were territorial and conceptual (page 29). Defining both the territorial and the conceptual can be problematic. Establishing, communicating and gaining acceptance of a conceptual understanding of the theology of the non-directive approach and its praxis has, I think, been more demanding and difficult than establishing its praxis which has been difficult enough at times. Progress was made (see, for instance, the work done by the core group of the William Temple Foundation pp 9.2.18 – 25, 51; 9.8.3, 21) but it remains a 'work in progress' in relation to unresolved issues. Most practitioners with whom I worked act out of a more convincing and profound grasp of the praxis that of the theology of the non-directive approach, myself included. By and large the territorial issue has not been in contention in relation to the work in which I have been engaged.

Failure of educationalists to succeed in becoming the primary discipline

Thomas gives several reasons for this. He claims that:

- the educationalists did not develop the idea of community work anything more than a philosophy or an approach and did not provide a rationale for community work as a method;
- the educationalists failed to convince that the education service could provide employment opportunities for community work;
- the purist views of Batten about the non-directive approach 'tended to isolate him in the study group offending both educationalists and social workers, and weakening the case of the former.' (p 30);
- the urgency felt by the group for action regarding the mounting crises in the inner-city worked against considering community work as a long-term process.

On reflection I find it difficult to understand why Batten agreed with the first point. Even though the conversation with Thomas was some

seventeen years after the event when he was eighty years of age his mind was extremely sharp. I don't think that the point was valid. The following list of publications shows that prior to 1966 the Battens had published significant books and reports about the concepts and their application and the methods associated with community development and the non-directive approach to it.

Communities and Their Development: an Introductory Study with Special Reference to the Tropics, 1957, fifth edition 1965 (Thomas actually mentions this book cf p20)

Training for Community Development: A Critical Study of Method, 1962

The Human Factor in Community Work, 1965

Impressions of the Indian Training Programme and Some Suggestions for its Improvement, 1959

Report on Community Development in Southern Rhodesia, 1964

Report and Recommendations by Dr T.R. Batten and Mrs M Batten to the Rhodesia Government on Implementing the Policy of Local Government Through the Concept of Community Development, 1965.

The first three of these publications were in the public domain and well-known; Thomas may well not have known about the others. Certainly the claim could not have been made some five years later, see Appendage III. By then there was the *Community Development Bulletin* published by the Community Development Clearing House, University of London Institute of Education, predecessor to the *Community Development Journal*. This publication, edited by distinguished people in the field, published first-class erudite articles on the evolution and praxis of community development from c 1949 – 66.

Process and product

I have already referred to the urgency felt by the group for the need to respond quickly to the mounting crises in the inner-city which worked against the members considering community work as a long-term process. (p 30) Process vs. product was a frequent source of concern in the work in which I was engaged. An induced creative process is of itself a vitally important product of CD as it gets people themselves engaged in promoting their betterment and development. Short circuiting such processes can produce environmental changes for the better with all the advantages

that that brings more quickly and there are occasions when it is absolutely essential to do so. But, it can be at the cost of the development of people and their control over their circumstances. The non-directive approach to community development is committed to inducing processes which lead to the development of people and environment whenever and wherever possible. But this does not preclude, as Batten pointed out very clearly in his writings, the necessity of taking directive action in circumstances which required it i.e. focusing on product rather than process when it is imperative to do so.

The non-directive approach

Later in his book Thomas says this about the non-directive approach:

The 'community' theorists and practitioners were linked to another major orthodoxy of the 1960s and 1970s – the non-directive approach, associated primarily with the work of Reg Batten. It was an orthodoxy that influenced the training of cohorts of youth and community workers but remains one of unfilled promise. Its adherents (with the exception of George Lovell) wrote little after 1970 and non-directiveness remained more as a guiding principle or philosophy than a clearly defined statement of tasks and behaviours. It was, too, an approach that was quickly put aside by the radical new recruits to community work in the 1970s whose concern was more with class than with community and who were extremely suspicious of the connection of the community and non-directive theorists with colonialism. (p 91)

The approach may have been quickly put aside by the radical new recruits to community work but the Battens were busily engaged through their courses at the Institute of Education, London University, and through their writings in: defining the approach, codifying the tasks, behaviours and methods associated with it; describing the factors affecting the choice of the directive and non-directive approaches; illustrating the praxis through case studies; and outlining training courses. See for instance the following books, papers and reports:

Training for Community Development: A Critical Study of Method, 1962

The Non-Directive Approach in Group and Community Work, 1967

The Human Factor in Youth Work, 1970

Impressions of the Indian Training Programme and Some Suggestions for its Improvement, 1959

Community Development Training: A Condensation of the (July 1965) Batten Report, 1967

Suggestions for Increasing the Effectiveness of Training and some Other Activities of the Community Development Department, Ministry of the Interior, Thailand, 1966

The Non-Directive Approach in Training, An Account of the Recommendations arising from the Rose Garden Seminar for Officers of the Training Division and Technical Services' Division of the Local Administration Department, Thailand, from February 5th–16th 1968.

There are however significant limitations in codifying this approach; because of what it is, the essence of its nature cannot be reduced in its entirety to a neat list of methods and techniques; it is an approach, a way of being as well as of doing, a way of life and of living, attitude and behaviour. Subtle nuances of its existential nature are difficult to capture except in the experience of them.

Proliferation of activity and publishing

During the remainder of my time at Avec there were enormous developments in both community work and community development disciplines; and the number of publications about the praxis increased exponentially. It is simply not possible for me to trace out these. However, there are one or two points I wish to make. In the same year that Thomas published *The Making of Community Work* he edited an important companion publication to it, *Community Work In The Eighties* (published by the National Institute for Social Work, which was deeply involved in the community work movement in the development of the community work and discipline, running courses and publishing texts on praxis. This publication had a range of distinguished contributors and was, in fact, setting the agenda for developments in the eighties in the context of the history of the movement and with a special reference to action programmes, deployment of workers and their training and the funding of community work relation to future developments (Richard Mills contributed a chapter on this). Thomas made enormous contributions to the development and promotion of community work. (He was a very close colleague and friend of Richard Mills. They were Welsh speaking Welshmen – I used to enjoy seeing them conversing in Welsh!) Unfortunately, I do not think there is a comparable book on community development. I suppose the issues of the community development Journal outlines significant aspect of its history.

I followed the developments in both disciplines as carefully as time permitted. There is in what I have written an indication of the books and reports that influenced me. As indicated above, in relation to community work, the work of David Thomas and his colleagues David Jones and

Marjorie Mayo including *Community Work One* (1974) and *Community Work Two* (1975) were amongst two of the many books that stimulated me. Then there was the second Calouste Gulbenkian report, *Current Issues In Community Work*, 1973. Not surprisingly I read much more widely in the field of community development.

My Interaction with community work

At the end of this section on my external engagement with a wide range allied disciplines I reflect on the nature and features of the diverse interaction in which I was involved. Here I flesh out my interaction with community work and then in the next section with community development and those involved in these disciplines.

My interaction with community work was through my reading as much of the literature as I could and through working relationships which evolved with people in and associated with the field. Richard Mills and Hywel Griffiths were two of the most significant of these relationships.

I was in regular and frequent contact and conversations with Richard Mills from the early discussions about the funding of P 70-75 in 1971 and throughout my time at Avec. For several years I met Richard Mills with Catherine Widdicombe (his greeting invariably was, 'Still hunting in packs then?!') and then in the 80's I saw him more often than not on my own. Our conversations were always serious and highly significant for me. Richard was extremely knowledgeable, erudite and insightful. He made highly significant contributions to my understanding of the field of community work and community development and to the evolution and work of Avec as well as to its funding. Our discussions were first about the work and then financing it. From the outset he treated me/us respectfully as partners in an enormously important movement related to human betterment, development and well-being – even when discussions were about funds and funding and he had the purse strings in his hand. That was a mark of his remarkable and gracious character. Indeed at times he made me feel that, as I/we were doing the work, I/we were the important partners in work which he was privileged to help find the necessary finances. Given such an approach on his part it is not surprising that we became professional colleagues and friends. Having written this I came across the following paragraph in his obituary in the Guardian written by David Thomas David:

Mills saw grand-seekers as equal partners, and helped make the process of grand-giving more equitable and transparent. Warm and approachable, kind and open-minded, he often helped prepare applications – nurturing

people whom he appreciated were ‘good at doing, but not at writing’. The faith that he placed in those he helped made them want to do their best for him.

I agree completely and would add that he was extremely sharp and penetrating in his insights and judgements – and that of course enabled him to proffer real help and contribute significantly to the success of projects.

I was moved when I was invited to a dinner in his honour – I’m not quite sure the occasion but I rather think it was his retirement from full-time employment as a Deputy Director of the Gulbenkian Foundation in Britain in 1980 – and more than a little overwhelmed when I found myself seated opposite Michael Young, Baron Young of Dartington at the dinner! He was a man whose work I greatly admired and respected and through which I had found much help and inspiration. He had come straight from a debate in the House of Lords. I felt greatly honoured when I was invited to join the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation working party on, ‘a national centre for community development’, which met fourteen times for long meetings (mid-morning to mid afternoon with a delicious working lunch, usually curried chicken and Portuguese wine) from October 1982 to February 84. It was an enormous privilege to discuss the issues with the prestigious group widely representative of community work and allied disciplines at considerable depth under the chairmanship of Prof Hywel Griffiths. (See report on file, *A National Centre for Community Development: the Report of the Working Party to the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation 1984*, and my papers in the Avec archives.) Consequently I really did become well-informed about the field and got to know and to be known by the circle of people involved many of whom I would not otherwise have met.

Hywel Griffiths I knew from early in my involvement in church and community development work. When he was a lecturer in Manchester he invited me to lecture at a conference he was running. I think it was during my Parchmore days. That was the first occasion that I shared in such a gathering the diagrams I had constructed to illustrate the various ways in which churches could put community development into practice through different kinds of projects and which I later included in *The Church And Community Development: An Introduction*, 1972, see chapter 8. He was enthusiastic and complimentary about my approach and my diagrammatic way of presenting it. I met up with him again when he became one of the senior consultants in the Voluntary Services Unit (VSU) of the Home Office (which had funded Project 70-75 and continued to do so with Avec) and particularly during the discussions about Avec and Roehampton Institute of Higher Education. One afternoon I went to the Home Office

for a consultation. He arrived late for the meeting somewhat drunk after a business lunch. I remember his colleague joining us with a large pot of black coffee to sober him up and sitting in on the consultation in order to redeem it from disaster. I liked Hywel very much. We got along well, he was a lovable, affable larger-than-life character deeply committed to the work and extraordinarily able with a profound understanding and deep practical experience of the community work and community development fields.

Michael Bayley became an important link with community work and workers during the time he was a part-time staff member of Avec. For a considerable length of time he was in actively engagement with them and I attended some of their meetings with him.

The Rev Tony Addy, who eventually joined the staff of the William Temple Foundation, was another person with whom I had extensive discussions about community work, community development, church related community work and church and community development work and with whom I worked on various groups. Our stances were somewhat at variance. He wrote quite a lot. One of the papers that is on file is *Community Work in the New Context: Addresses to the 1989 Church and Community Work Conference*.

Also I remember having extended discussions with the staff of the Department for social and community work in Goldsmiths College. I have long forgotten the details but as I recall it was about developing cooperation between the department and Avec in relation to interests we had in common. My papers related to it are now in the Avec Archives.

My Interaction with community development

At a very early stage I was greatly influenced by the publication of a series of national secular and religious reports on community development, social services, youth and community services, immigrants and the youth service and Christian commitment in education as can be seen from chapter 6, 'The Church, The State And Community Development', in *The Church and Community Development: An Introduction*, 1972,

My studies in community development – naturally much more extensive than those in community work – were first through Batten and his work and then through many other theorists and practitioners in the field. Amongst those I found most inspiring and helpful were: William W and Loureide Biddle, George W Goetschius, David Brokensha and Peter Hodge. (More comprehensive lists of the authors who helped and influenced me up to 1973

and well beyond are to be found in *The Church and Community Development: an Introduction* and the bibliography to my Ph.D.) Selective reading of the *Community Development Journal* was one of the ways in which I kept myself informed and up to date with the evolution of the discipline. (The CDJ succeeded *The Community Development Bulletin*. Batten helped to found it and was chairman of its Editorial Advisory Board from 1966 to 1981. When he retired from the chairmanship he also retired from the Board. One day when I arrived for a tutorial at his home in Wimbledon I found him deeply engrossed in writing something. He told me he had spent a week saving the CDJ. Later he expressed real disappointment in the editorial stance which he considered had become dysfunctionally political and left-wing. Nonetheless, for me, it contained some outstanding articles during the 40 – 45 years I took it. One of the most outstanding and moving was one written by Reg Batten in April 1974 entitled ‘Major Issues and Future Direction of Community Development’. It was a penetrating overview of his experience and realistically insightful about the achievement of community development. In a conversation about it he said to me that it nearly killed him to write it, he agonised over his disappointment that so little betterment had been achieved for those most in need of it. I believe he took the whole of the previous summer to write it.

Community Organizing (CO)

Community Organizing, sometimes referred to as Broad Based Community Organizing is a process by which community organizers get local people living in proximity to each other to come together to act in their shared self-interest generally in relation to environmental concerns. An underlying general assumption is that social change necessarily involves conflict and social struggle to generate collective power for the powerless. This is a fundamental difference between CO and consensual based community building and work. According to Fisher and Romanofsky its history in the United States goes as far back as 1880. (It was also known as ‘social agitation’.) They identify four periods: 1880-1900; 1900-1940; 1940-1960; 1960 to the present. Saul Alinsky was the first to codify key strategies and aims of CO in *Reveille for Radicals* (1946) and *Rules for Radicals* (1970). But CO was not promoted in the UK until the late 80’s. (See Community organizing – Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.)

It was at that time that I first encountered CO and entered into serious discussions about it through Alan Twelvetrees. During the 60’s and 70’s he had distinguished himself as a practitioner and theoretician in youth, social and community work. Having taken an MSc in Community Development

at Edinburgh in 1970 he was when I met him a lecturer in community work at Swansea University. He arrived on our doorstep at the crack of dawn on his way home from a sabbatical in the USA doing research on community development corporations. If my memory serves me right that must have been in 1984. I remember Molly giving him breakfast! I knew of his work and found a 129pp Occasional paper he had written on 'An Integrated Approach to Community Problem Solving' interesting and helpful. He was on fire about his studies and experiences of community organizing and committed and widely enthusiastic about establishing an Anglicized version of it in the UK and did everything he could to persuade me to give this venture my support and to commit myself and Avec to become active partners in it. Whilst I expressed interest in what he was saying and admiration and respect for what he said was being achieved I expressed some reservations about the approach which was not compatible with principal features of that adopted by Avec (—early in the days of Avec I had had conversations with Michael Elliott about Saul Minsky's approach and my reservations about it—) and declined to enter into the kind of working partnership he was pressurizing me to enter into. Notwithstanding in an article he wrote about CO he said that he had my backing and support for the action he was proposing to take to introduce it to the UK. There was a sharp exchange between us about this. (The papers and correspondence are, I think, in the Avec Archives). In 1989 he published a book about the subject and speculating upon the lessons for the UK of the USA experience, *Organizing for Community Development: A Comparative Study of Community Development Corporations and Citizen Power Organizations* (Avebury, 203pp). Not surprisingly, contact between us petered out. I do not know whether his ideas were ever implemented. In 2008 I see from the Internet he established 'Twelvetreets Community Consulting.'

A few years later I was consulted by the members of working party commissioned by Rev Dr John Newton, Bp David Sheppard and Archbishop Derek Worlock to assist them in making a decision about whether the Churches should sponsor an initiative in the field of Community Organizing in Merseyside at the present time'. (The report of the Working Party, *Broad Based Organizing on Merseyside*,¹⁹ April 1991 p1) Again the papers related to this consultation are in the Avec Archives. However, Jay MacLeod in a Christian Action paper published in November 1993, *Community Organising: A Practical and Theological Appraisal*, quotes from the letter I wrote to the Merseyside Working Party which covers the first two points referred to in Broad Based Organising.... On p 16:

19 These reports are on file.

Although he has much to say in support of broad-based organizing, George Lovell crystallizes the difference between community work and organizing in his letter to the Merseyside working party:

Some of the CO case studies I have read achieve desirable ends by 'manipulating people with power to effect desirable changes into public situations where they are pressurized to make those changes. My concern is that changes for the better to the environment will not be accompanied by the kind of changes in the people with power which would lead them, of their own free will, to take disadvantaged people seriously and act in relation to the best interests and felt needs of those people. Indeed it could be argued that confrontational action of the kind associated with IAF and CO projects could have adverse effects. It builds up a confrontational dynamic as a normative procedure. In some circumstances this is an essential procedure but there are great dangers in it being standard practice. Community development requires that people move from confrontational and competitive modes of behaviour to collaborative and co-operative ones. (Lovell 1990:1).'

Broad-based organizing insists that disadvantaged people sit at the decision-making table as equals rather than as supplicants to those in power. Once people have built up their power through community organizing, then bona fide co-operation and collaboration with political and corporate leaders is possible.

Community organizing sees a world where people act out of self-interest and respond to power. Community work, at least in the tradition pioneered by Lovell, wants to assert the ability of decision makers to transcend self-interest and act for the common good. These deeply divergent ways of understanding the world and human nature are ultimately rooted in different theological perspectives'

The other point quoted in the Merseyside report was:

'Sadly people with whom I have discussed CO appear to see it as an alternative to the kind of church community development we promote. And some have indicated that it invalidates our approach. It does not, of that I am convinced. At best it increases and enhances the repertoire of methods available. What is desperately needed is active co-operation and cross fertilization between those engaged in the field...' (p22)

These quotations give a good idea of the stance I took in relation to CO during my time at Avec which I wanted to do here, not to give an account of the development of CO in the UK.

There is, however, a postscript I must add. My feelings about CO

became much more positive and my admiration for Barack Obama – already very high – increased enormously when some six years ago I read about his involvement in CO as a community organizer in Chicago in his book *Dreams from my Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*. (Canongate, 2007, particularly chapters 7-10). The sheer humanity of it all was so moving. What an important experience for a politician and a President! And for it to take place in Alinsky's city, Chicago!

The National Community Development Project^{20 21}

In 1970 the Government established a five year national action and research programme comprising twelve community development projects in areas of stress identified by Local Authorities. I followed the progress of this Project carefully through the interim reports. Again, I must say that the papers are not to hand – this is beginning to sound like a litany! – they are, I promise, in the Avec Archives. The project was centrally funded and locally controlled and monitored by a research unit. It variously focused on such issues as housing, welfare issues, employment, produced much useful information about community development processes and problems and limitations of national intervention in relation to them. As I recall it, it was associated with controversy and did not realize its potential. The report of a working group set up by the BCC and the Conference of Missionary Societies in Great Britain and Ireland, *Community Work and the Churches* in 1976, made the following assessment:

15. One criticism of the programme is that not enough was done by way of alerting Local Authorities to the implication of the establishment of a Community Development Project within their areas. Some Authorities viewed the local project as a threat to their power base, and control of the project quickly passed from the locality to the Authority itself. In Batley, a section of the Project staff (community workers) disagreed with Local Authorities directive and went on strike. The staff of the Coventry project has questioned whether there has been any significant impact on deprivation and poverty in its area, and is now establishing an independent agency to explore the effectiveness of political alliances between local groups and the labour movement.

16. As this programme draws to its close, Government has announced the testing of an alternative strategy which it describes as Comprehensive Community Programmes. These are designed to involve local representation in deciding in priorities, including budgetary priorities, for a locality. Government is also making funds available through such organizations

20 25.2.14

21 Reports were published by the CDP Information and Intelligence Unit I believe

as The Youth Volunteer Force Foundation, for the establishment of local Resource Centres to provide local groups with advice and help for community work initiatives. The reservations already expressed over the resource centre in Manchester highlight again the difficulty of any national intervention which does not have the confidence of local community groups. Any initiative the State may take, however, is bound to expose the tension between encouraging radical grassroots action on the one hand, and maintaining the status quo on the other. (p6)

That rings true to what I remember. The CDP also promoted discussion about models of social change operative in this country. This led to discussion about these models and the approaches to community work.²² This, of course, was of great interest and importance to me. If my memory serves me right the CDP also led to controversy about the praxis of action research – the SSRC Conference on action research also raised these issues and I may be in danger of confusing the one with the other. Some were arguing that community development or community workers could not research their own action effectively and reliably: their subjective involvement rendered it quite impossible for them to engage in objective research; the two functions were incompatible; they had to be separated by locating them in different agents. Other were arguing, as I was, that the two functions could be performed by one person, i.e. practitioners could be effective action-research workers just as they could be effective reflective practitioners. Providentially this has proved to be a viable mode of praxis, admittedly with limitations in some measure dependent upon the rigour with which it was or could be practised.²³ Had this not been the case providing action and research teams in church and community development work would have proved to be very difficult if not impossible. Action-research became key to the work of Avec and to all the subsequent further training for postgraduate diplomas and MA's. Of course this does not call into question the validity of or the need for other forms of research in church and community work. Indeed action-research often provides the data and the hypotheses and the rationale for it.

Other forms of engagement

By and large I concentrate in this section on the forms of engagement in which there was some interpersonal interaction. There was a much wider

²² Op. cit. pp4-5

²³ See discussion of it in my various publications and in particular in a working paper I produced when working on my PhD, Notes on Community Development and Action Research, c1972 (unpublished, copy on file) and my PhD thesis chapters 7-11.

engagement with other people's work through reading and studying their publications, for instance I read widely in 'community studies' (see pp6.32-3). This I will pursue much further later especially in Section 10.2, Working disciplines and other fields of study.

Development of churches and communities

During the 1960s through to the 1990s various individuals and groups were discovering new ways and means of improving and developing how churches and allied Christian organisations and their staff did their work and exercised their ministry. Some of them focused on what they considered to be of fundamental and primary importance to improving the performance of practitioners and religious and secular organisations: factors such as administration; approach to working with people; leadership; management etc. In doing this they drew heavily on the new insights, understandings and methodologies emerging from the behavioural and social sciences which burgeoned during this period. They were, in fact, inspired and empowered by new secular thinking and understanding about human behaviour and the praxis of working with people for personal and communal development.

Some of these methodological entrepreneurs were also involved or associated with other individuals and groups who were pioneering new forms, modes and patterns of church work, mission and ministry, different approaches to it and the use of new ways and means of going about it and evaluating it. Examples of the areas of work in which these people were engaged are: community development and community work; pastoral counselling; urban ministry. This group of entrepreneurs were inspired and motivated and drew up upon: contemporary missiological thinking; experiments in new forms of humanitarian, social and evangelical church outreach especially in areas of deprivation; professional approaches to work consultancy and pastoral counselling; radical theology about church and society. They too drew upon the insights emerging from the social and behavioural sciences and the rapid expansion of secular community development, community work and social work and other disciplines. Indeed, in many instances churches, local authorities and secular organisations collaborated in community work programmes and some became allies and partners in projects and schemes. (The Ten Centres and the Parchmore Church Youth and Community Development Schemes of The Methodist Church were two of a large number of such partnerships. *Avec* was another.) All these people in various ways drew upon Christian and secular movements and the praxis that was evolving from.

Consequently there were several strong movements directed at changing

the way in which church work was done and/or extending and modifying the range of work which was done in churches and by churches in local communities. Through these and other similar movements church work experience a renaissance during this period. I count myself greatly privileged to have been actively engaged in so many different ways for a significant period of my ministry in this extraordinarily period of renewal and transformation of a wide range of church work with its own members and with other groups of people and organisations. New and creative working relationships were established with secular organisations and statutory bodies as they too adopted new approaches to their work. The Praxis and theology of Christian ministry interacted with the praxis of other professional disciplines. Professionals from different disciplines engaged with each other in relation to the practice and the theory of their respective subjects and for Christians this meant theological engagement and spiritual and theological dissonance as well. They collaborated and became partners; the term ‘allied disciplines’ was coined and became meaningfully expressive of religious/secular collegial relationships. It was a time of ‘interdisciplinary’ and ‘multidisciplinary’ collaboration. (See *Analysis and Design*, pp 146ff and 251f; *Consultancy Ministry and Mission* pp 288 – 90 and 339.)

Here I note and comment on the people and organisations variously committed to and involved in a range of these movements with whom I was privileged to engage directly. I also engage with the subject matter through my reading, study and research as can be seen from my books, papers and lectures. The one form of engagement enriched the other; the writings and ideas of professionals in other fields and disciplines came to life through these face-to-face encounters and in turn their writings took on new meanings. I variously engaged with ‘movers and shakers’, followers and practitioners of the following movements.

Church and community development

The British Council of Churches (BCC) and the Community

Work Resource Unit (CWRU)

Church related community work

Church growth

Urban ministry

Church management and administration

Group work

Clinical Pastoral Praxis

Church and Community Development

As already noted, church and community development was a new discipline and movement. Reg and Madge Batten had developed and articulated the praxis of the non-directive approach to community development but along with others I had to work out its application to church work. That involved establishing the praxis and theology of church and community development. I worked assiduously at the praxis and the theology making better progress with the former than with the latter. During the *viva voce* for my PhD, the external examiner, The Rev Dr Fred Milson, questioned me about the theology of church and community development in general and the non-directive approach in particular; he would have liked to have seen more on this in my thesis. TRB, also present, was somewhat dismissive of this. He did not think it necessary and suggested it was self-evident in the concept of the brotherhood of all men (sic). For this and as he was not a practising Christian, although he was very knowledgeable about it, I did not get any help from Reg in any attempts to establish a theological basis for church and community development.

Significant progress had been made towards establishing a theological base for this work and movement during my time at Parchmore particularly through the in-service training group for the minister and staff engaged in the Ten Centres. Enormous progress was made at a two-day conference we had in July 1970 at the Friars, Aylesford in Kent.²⁴ By common agreement the Conference led to a breakthrough in our thinking about and understanding of the nature of the praxis and especially of the theology of church and community development.

Notwithstanding the importance of the understandings achieved and the excitement we felt about them, we remained convinced that we needed to do more theological reflection – not least because some people in the church, including key leaders, continued to question the theology of what we were doing and were not satisfied with our answers – and that we needed help to do so.

Help came from the Community Development Group (featured above) because it hovered between being in the external and internal circles especially during the early days of *Avec*, and through it, the William Temple Foundation. I have written at some length about the progress made through William Temple Foundation above and do not need to add more here.

An incredible opportunity to explore the praxis and theology of church and community development with the officers of the Division

24 Copy of the Report, some 37 pp on file

of Social Responsibilities of the Church in Wales Board of Mission and with a conference they convened arose in 1987-8. The Church in Wales was involved in an extensive and impressive work through a 'Community Development Partnership'. The thorough going discussions were written up in a detailed report, *DSR/Avec Development Consultation, 3rd – 5th May, 1988*. In the lovely town of Llandrindod Wells (not that we saw much of it during the consultation but it had warm memories for me of my ministry in Wales) and discussed in the Journal of the Division, *Adjfent, Advent*, No 3, August 1989. (Copies of both of these papers are on files). I cite it as an example of one of the many stimulating external experiences of creative thinking about church and community development.

The British Council of Churches (BCC) and The Community Work Resource Unit (CWRU)²⁵

The British Council of Churches set up a Working Party to build on two previous reports: *The Community Orientation of the Church*, 1974, and the survey, *Church Property and People*, 1971. The findings of this Working Party were published in 1976 in a twenty five page report, *Community Work and the Churches*. Events were to show that this report made significant contributions to the development of the Community Work Resource Unit of the BCC, the provision of support for its secretary, the establishment of church and community work as a legitimate and important aspect of ministry and mission for local churches and means of resourcing it. I came across it when I was sorting out papers in preparation for writing this section at around 9 p.m. last night. At about 3 a.m. after two or three hours of fitful sleep I awoke disturbed and agitated that I had not been in any way involved in the discussions of the Working Party. Irrational as this might have been it was real and painful.

For the best part of a decade I had been engaged in church and community development work and in researching it, first in a church of one denomination (my own) and then in churches of seven denominations. Consequently I had a significant contribution to make of a kind few others were in a position to make. A member of the Working Party, Raymond Clarke, who later became an Avec trustee, knew about my work because we had consulted him about Project 70-75 and the Social Responsibility Department of the British Council of Churches knew because it had been a consultative group to P70-75 (see *Churches and Communities* p 214). So I had well-researched relevant experience related to the Working Party's brief.

The strength of my negative feelings after all these years took me entirely by surprise especially as I thought I had effectively worked through similar issues earlier in these Notes in relation to the William Temple Research Core Group on the praxis and theology of community development and work. In an attempt to quieten my feelings and thoughts and to think more constructively and rationally about the issues, I wrote notes hastily of anything that came to mind and debilitating feelings as they swirled about the suspicion which was nigh on a conviction that I – and others too such as Harry Salmon and Fred Hilson – who were active in the field were kept out by an exclusive group dominated by Anglicans (no fewer than seven of the thirteen members of the Group were Anglicans). And there may well have been some truth in this. Gradually, I broke out of what was something of any emotional fantasy or illusion. Realizing that the groups in and through which I was working on church and community development could be seen by others as exclusive groups – as could those through which John, Vincent, Fred Milson worked – helped me to be more realistic and to gain a less emotive perspective. Forming groups of this kind of people similarly engaged and committed and in some association was clearly the way in which things got done and progress was made through manageable sized, focused task groups of compatible member: there is a time to be selective and a time to be exclusive; there is a time to be open and a time to be inclusive. Aiming to be inclusive inappropriately could cause a group to lose its focus and drive.

This led me to see that in relation to church and community initiatives the 1960s and 70s were two decades when a range of different developments occurred, each of which required enormous amounts of energy. In any case, although I had published *The Church and Community Development* in 1972, we did not publish *Churches and Communities* until 1978. Our time had not come. And, at a more personal level, my nature and propensity which was both my strength and my weakness, was to give myself to the work in hand and to neglect networking and promoting myself. Molly often said that I did not put myself forward enough.

Working through these negative dysfunctional feelings is essential and a significant part of what these notes are about. They come from a deep seated sense of insecurity which I have already addressed – or attempted to – in Section 6. And still I struggle with them! There was an interesting and happy sequel to this middle-of-the-night reflection. To help me to disengage from this stressful episode I turned to Eric James' book *Collected Thoughts*, the Radio 4 Thought for the Day Broadcasts Turning to the next one for me to read I found to my joy and surprise it was entitled 'If you dig deeper' (which

of course I had been doing). He tells the story of Wittgenstein at one of his rare appearances at High Table in Trinity College helping himself to a very creamy pudding. A servant bent over him and said softly, 'if you dig a little deeper, sir, you'll find a peach!'. Wittgenstein said that was the kindest thing anyone had ever said to him in all his years at Cambridge. I had found a peach! I went on to read about Wittgenstein on my iPad for the next hour and was fascinated to find he started his professional/academic life studying mechanical engineering, went to Manchester to study aeronautical engineering which led him to becoming absorbed in mathematics and philosophy.

However, to return to the BCC and community work. Some seven years after the publication of *Community Work and the Churches I/we* were in good working relationships with the Community Work Resources Unit of the BCC. From 1983-88, John Walton, Secretary to the CWRU, was a Trustee of Avec, I believe he attended an Avec course. In 1987 the CWRU, in conjunction with the Board of Studies in Pastoral Studies of the Collegiate Faculty of Theology of the University of Wales College of Cardiff, appointed a working party which *inter alia* published a book, *Issues in Church Related Community Work*, edited by Paul Ballard in 1990. I was not a member of the working party but I was privileged to be asked to contribute a Foreword, which I did. This publication contained significant articles already published by the CWRU and organized them to focus on theological issues, what is involved in working with congregations, community work and spirituality it reflected on 'community', tackling stress and professional and amateur issues and community organizing. A most important publication casting light on the formation and evolution of church related community work in the 1980's, a key period. It takes a broad and inclusive approach to community work and the various expressions of it though: community development; community organisation; community action; community centres; community service.

Church Related Community Work²⁶

During my time at Avec the United Reformed Church was making highly significant contributions to community work, as they still are. The Church as a church through its social responsibility department pioneered what they described as 'church related community work'. Our approaches had much in common and we had stimulating and helpful conversations with the Rev John Rearden and Ann Sutcliff who had overall responsibility nationally for the programme. One of the differences was that they aimed to ensure that

community work was related to the church whereas we were concerned to get local churches engaged in interrelated development programmes aimed at promoting church and community development. Also over the years five lay and ordained people represented the URC and its approach to the involvement in community work in the Avec Trust. Their imaginative and professional approach was put into practice through carefully managed and monitored projects and programmes and their workers were trained and supported. The work continues as indicated by the following extract from the current website.

Church Related Community Work is a distinctive and recognised ministry within the United Reformed Church and CRCWs play a vital role in the denomination's community involvement. URC CRCWs are called by God, professionally and theologically trained and then commissioned to help the church to live out its calling.

They use the principles of community development to respond to and challenge the issues facing their particular neighborhoods and communities. CRCWs work alongside a wide range of individuals, groups and organisations, development initiatives and projects to transform individuals, churches and communities.

There are currently 16 CRCWs ministering throughout the synods of the URC. Between them, they enable churches to widen their mission by:

- identifying local needs and opportunities;
- confronting injustice;
- organizing community action;
- developing and supporting initiatives that improve the lives and wellbeing of local people;
- and theologically reflecting upon that action.

CRCW ministry brings many new challenges to existing church congregations. Engaging with the local neighbourhood opens up the possibility of seeing and hearing God for those outside the church, whilst allowing such Good News to transform and enrich our own churches and communities.

Church Growth²⁷

Difficulties I am facing in accessing my papers which are lodged in the Avec Archives are frustrating but it is saving me from doing more work on this (and possible other) sections than I need to or should do; nonetheless I feel hampered and frustrated.

27 26.2.14

I studied the literature on church growth, corresponded about it with various people committed to it and discussed it some. The conversations I had with three people come to mind. Jeffrey Harris, a good friend was one of them. He was a secretary in the Home Mission Division during most of my time in Avec and promoted our work extensively. He wrote a 70pp Home Mission's publication on the subject, *Can British Methodism Grow Again?* Peter Graves was another Methodist minister with whom I had discussions. Like Jeffrey he was committed to but more extensively involved in its development through acting as a consultant and staffing training courses. The third person was David Wasdell, an Anglican priest based in the East End of London who, as part of an Urban Church Project was an advocate of a particular approach to church growth about which he had published papers. Later he became involved in a "Unit for Research into Changing Institutions, URCHIN".

He produced mathematical formulae to express the relationships between key variables in church growth. Being unsure about the maths, I sent two of Wasdell's paper to Norman Heaps, a soul friend about whom I have already written in these notes and an eminent applied mathematician who had made original contributions to oceanography.²⁸ Overleaf I reproduce a note I wrote of our correspondence and conversation. I do so because this represents my approach to church growth in general. In short I did not think that the attempts to give a scientific basis to church growth was sound.

Later Norman, in another letter, said that I would know more about the reality of church growth from direct experience. He also said in correspondence and conversation that in dealing with human beings a basic problem is that via the social and behavioural science we have not got anything comparable to Newton's laws in physics.

Whether or not I was right in this stance I find myself unsure. In various ways, as noted, I draw extensively on the social and behavioural sciences. Much later, whilst on the staff of the MA in Evangelism, I was introduced to the idea of the life cycle and stages of congregational development and the extensive work done upon this. I found the models useful in consultancy work not least because they resonated with the work of Piaget, Kohlberg and Fowler on intellectual, moral and faith development and threw light upon my experience of the growth, maturation, redevelopment, decline and aging of congregations. (See my file on 'Congregations').

On re-reading the correspondence I noted that I said that, 'our own researches would indicate that some of the things [Wardell] has written are pertinent to the problems of the Church.

28 The correspondence is in Norman Heap's file.

Urban Ministry²⁹

This heading is included for the sake of completeness. In previous sections I have discussed the important movement towards new forms of ministry in urban areas and especially those which were deprived and my approach to it. I was most in touch with John Vincent and his pioneering work based in Sheffield on urban ministry and theology. As I have already said, some people wished to see Avec more closely allied with John Vincent and the Urban Theology Unit (UTU). Much as I admired his work, I would have found it difficult to work with him because I found him somewhat domineering and anything but non-directive. I feared he would have taken over. We had very different ideas about the nature of church and community development and its praxis. He was somewhat jealous and resentful that the Division of Ministries was funding Avec rather than UTU or rather that he considered the funding of the two organisations disproportional – on one or two occasions he rang me going up to midnight to tell me so in no uncertain terms. I did not find myself drawing on his work. In more recent years he has most graciously and generously gone out of his way to tell me that the thought my work was most important. But the main reason why I/we resisted too close a relationship or identification with Urban Ministry movements was that we aimed that Avec should service work done by churches in all kinds of areas from rural to inner city and for it to be recognised that the praxis of church and community development is relevant to work in any and every kind of sociological context and community.

³⁰Christian Social Action was a formidable force in Great Britain and well beyond from the early post 1939-45 period under the leadership first of Canon John Collins and then Canon Eric James. The story of the first fifty years is summarized in an article by Mrs Diana Collins in *Christian Action*, 1946-96 (pp 2-5, copy in file). In its first phase it was closely associated with CND. One of its many significant contributions to Christian social action was through action taken by Robert Runcie whilst he was Archbishop of Canterbury and through his promptings Eric James who was the Honorary Director of Social Action in relation to Urban Life and ministry which led to the publication *Faith in the City: A Call for Action By Church and Nation: The Report of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas*. (Popular version on file; report on my shelves). Eric James described what happened in *Christian Action*, 1946-95 (pp 33–37). ³¹

29 27.2.14

30 3.3.14

31 See also the spring/summer 1996 issue of *The Christian Action Journal* dedicated

[Eric James was a good friend to Avec and supported us in our work. Catherine saw more of him than I did because he was a great friend of Mrs Rhymmer and her daughter, Gwen, also engaged in the social and community work of the Anglican Church, who lived next door to Catherine. Was also a great friend of Avec and it was through her that we secured the tenancy of 40 Dacres Road during my P70-75 days].

Faith in the City had an enormous impact on the Church urban ministry programmes. Many people who came on Avec courses were involved in this programme at local level or their work in urban areas was resounded by it. Consequently we learnt much about it and through work consultancy services we were able to introduce insights from church and community development theory and practice into specific pieces of work and projects.

One of my inputs was input I made to a development inspired by Faith in the City, Faith in Leeds, a most impressive development. Mrs Hilary Willmer³² and a colleague whose name I cannot remember came in Chelsea for consultative sessions. The papers are, I believe, in the Avec Archives. Two reports are on file or in my personal archives: Faith in Leeds: Searching for God in our City (March 1986) and Faith in Leeds: Searching for God in Our City, Phase II (October 1987), Reports of the Leeds Churches Community Involvement Project. If my memory serves me right, Margaret O'Connor, who was inspired and excited by the Leeds Project, wrote an outstanding essay on it during the time she studied for the Avec / RIHE post graduate diploma. It will be in the Avec Archives.

Other people with whom I had significant discussions with about urban ministry with special reference to the non-direction approach to church and community development were: John Gladwin and David Sheppard. John Gladwin, I knew through Lydia Adams, they married in 1981. I worked extensively with Lydia see was a senior social worker in Sheffield and heavily involved in by Diocese in relation to the work I did in the Diocese of Sheffield, 1980-83 (Avec Archives box E1963). Earlier I described the work I did with him when he was director of the Anglican Board of Social Responsibility. Both Lydia and John stand in the open evangelical tradition. Consequently their approach to social action and urban ministry

to 'The Future of Social Action in Great Britain'. On file. This Journal, edited superbly by Eric James, made enormous contributions to the development of the praxis and theology of social action and Urban Ministry. I took the Journal for 9.4.9.4 many years and some copies are on file or in my archives.

32 Her husband is a distinguished Baptist Theologian, Professor Haddun Willmer, who spent over thirty years of his professional and academic life in Leeds University.

broadened my understanding and experience of that theological approach to those forms of ministry. Later, in 1985, when Lydia was the director of the London Diocesan Board for Social Responsibility, I did a considerable amount of consultative work with her and the Board in which there were very sharply differing opinions about and approaches to their work which merged on them being in faction. (See Avec Archives box [92]).³³

Another person with whom I had discussions was David Shepherd when he was Bp of Woolwich about my approach to Church and Community Development. On one occasion John Lane ³⁴ invited us to dinner and I remember David taking extensive notes at the table of what I was saying! Another open evangelical with extensive experience and commitment to urban ministry.

But these are only a few of the people and I must bring this section to an end!

33 At this time I remember having discussions with Lydia about John's book, *God's People in God's World: 914.95 Biblical Motives for social involvement*: IVP 1979. I stayed with her in the early stages of the Sheffield Project.

34 At the time he was the Methodist minister working in an urban centre in Woolwich or in a nearby area. He had been on Avec courses and considered during an MSc with me as tutor. He was/is a soul friend of Brian Woodcock's from the time when they were ministers together early in their ministries in Great Harwood. It was during that time that I met John first. He was the minister of the Church which Kathleen (Molly's sister), his husband Rob and family attended and they were very friendly. It was at the time that I was at Parchmore. Bob was trying to persuade John and the Church to undertake a similar project. His particular interest was to re-model the church so that the chapel was on the first floor and the ground floor rooms for church and community activities. Bob arranged a meeting between John and me to discuss and explain Parchmore when we were on one of our visits to Rushton. I explained what we were about at Parchmore – a church and community development project, interrelated dev, the non-directive app..... I knew I wasn't getting through. The Church was re-modelled. Years later when John was really committed to these approaches. I reminded him of the meeting. "Yes", he said, "I wondered what the bloody hell you were talking about!" He lived nearby to us in Beckenham in Ravenscroft Road but sadly he was divorced. He did some incredible work with St Mungos Trust and we had consultations about that. I last met him at a service in Lichfield Cathedral – he left the Methodist ministry and become an Anglican priest and in his retirement he was on the staff of the Cathedral. On our way home from holiday we went to a service there. We were late. It was packed. We had a job to find a seat. Who should be sitting in the other side of the isle but John – we only recognised each other as we returned to our seats from taking communion.

Urban Church ProjectDavid Wassell

In June 1974 I asked Norman Heaps to comment on the mathematical approach used in this Project. I sent him copies of the papers: Project Purpose (Paper 1 in my file) and The Urban Church : its Growth, Structure and Life-Style, Principles and Propositions (Paper 2 in my file). He replied in December 1974 saying:

"I have been through your account of the Urban Church Project (Aims, Principles, etc.) and have found it to be a very orderly, concentrated and explicit paper. Not being on working terms with the subject, many of the facts simply passed through my head without making the impact they no doubt deserve to make. I expect you mainly wanted my comments on the 'Mathematical Treatment of Church Growth', in an Appendix. I do not think it is a very helpful analysis. I find the average member life (L) to be quite an odd concept - and why should the annual growth rate of the Church ($\frac{dN}{dt}$) be inversely proportional to it in the equation:

$$\frac{dN}{dt} = \frac{N}{L} (k-1) ?$$

In any case, L does not feature in the discussion of the solutions of this equation. The particular definition of the factor k is also something of a puzzle. Why not simply work from

$$\frac{dN}{dt} = aN$$

Where, in your notation, $a = (k-1)/L$? No doubt we can profitably discuss these points further, perhaps when we meet next year. Note, however, that I am arguing from a position of relative ignorance!

Church Management and Administration

During my time at Avec a growing number of people were firmly convinced that improving the ways in which churches and religious institutions managed and administered their organisations and their work was *a* if not *the* key to overall development. Moreover, their experience, studies and research convinced them that they could be helped to do this from what was being learnt from the newly emerging disciplines related to the praxis of management and administration in the secular world and through the social and behavioural sciences. These subjects were aspects of Gillian Stamp's work which I have already described and whose help I have readily acknowledged. But I hasten to add that her work set these two aspects in a much broader and more profound approach to organisational studies and behaviour. For some time I engaged with several other people and movements focused on improving management and administration in churches and allied institutions.

One such organisation was The Christian Organisations Research and Advisory Trust (CORAT). Early in the 1990s Michael Graham-Jones

(MGJ) approached me about the possibility of closer co-operation if not if affiliation between our agencies. A small group met³⁵ in our seminar room in Chelsea to consider possibilities and this was followed by correspondence with MGJ and the Anglican priest responsible for CORAT's programme (sadly I have forgotten his name). A very good relationship evolved between MGJ and me. I greatly admired and respected him; he was a most perceptive person of great integrity; he was cultured and gracious; he spoke and wrote in elegant sentences; his handwritten letters were in a most attractive script. (Soon after writing this I read a tribute by Charles Handy to MGJ on the Internet. It was only then that I realised just how great, distinguished and incredible person he was. I also discovered that he worked in the Ministry of Health drafting part of the NHS Bill in 1948: So he must have known John Pater! The tribute along with one by Anne Louise A very is on file.)

Sadly, however, I failed to establish a satisfactory working relationship with the priest, whose professionalism I found to be shallow and I do not think he wanted to develop a relationship between our organisations anyway. Eventually, MGJ and I came to the conclusion that a closer working relationship would not further our respective purposes significantly. A conclusion subsequently endorsed by Avec staff and trustees and by CORAT.³⁶ Meantime, CORAT had established wider consultative processes which eventually led to the formation in 1993 of MODEM, Managerial And Organisational Disciplines For The Enhancement Of Ministry in the way described by MGJ in an article he contributed to MODEM's Newsletter on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of its foundation reproduced on the next page.

This brings me to my engagement with MODEM of which I was a founding member. I was deeply involved in the discussions that led up to the formation of MODEM. During these discussions I was a lone voice arguing for MODEM's terms of reference to include attention to the discipline of church and community development as well as managerial and organisational ones. I was consistently assured that this would be the case but in the event it was not so. In retrospect I realise I should have recognised that it wouldn't and couldn't possibly be part of its brief; it just wasn't realistic for it to be so. Important as management and administration are, they are not obviously compatible with church and community development praxis,

35 As I recall this meeting it was a small group including the Earl of March, Michael Graham-Jones, the Anglican priest responsible for the work programme from CORAT and I think Ted Rogers, John Pater, Catherine Widdicombe and me from Avec.

36 I see from the Internet that CORAT is still very active in one or two countries in Africa.

which, as I have said, is not about managing people not working with them. Possibly what I should have stood out for was commitment to giving proper consideration to what is involved for the churches in managing and administering non-directive church and community development projects, programmes, work and workers. That would have been feasible and an important unrealistic objective for MODEM.

Howbeit, I remained a member of MODEM and attended its meetings for several years pursuing my agenda whenever it was possible and appropriate to do so but not to much effect. My last attendance was at a two-day seminar (in Whalley, a time near my childhood home) organised to review the work of MODEM which Richard Garrard and I had been asked to facilitate.

Over the years MODEM has done an enormous amount of work and made significant contributions to the understanding and promotion of what makes for good praxis in relation to the organisation and management of churches and religious institutions. Also it has published a series of books which have been well reviewed.

And it is still active.

Group Work

All forms of church work and community work involves working with a wide range of groups. Indeed, most of this work is done through engaging with groups and working with them. Similarly training for this work is done through groups to a greater or lesser extent. Through Avec's consulting and training programmes we encountered and engaged with many different approaches. Also we had discussions with Bruce Reed about our respective approaches.

Clinical Pastoral Praxis³⁷

I have already described work we did with the Westminster Pastoral Foundation. Another creative relationship was with Professor Willem Berger who was teaching psychology of religion and pastoral psychology at the University of Nijmegen in Holland. He visited the Grail frequently and provided consulting services to them as a community and as individuals which were highly valued. He had a most interesting approach to these services.

Later I describe how one of his articles helped me to see the relationship between what I did as a non-directive group and community worker that I did as a preacher (A book he wrote, *The Last Achievement*, 1974 about ministry to families when one of their members is dying greatly impressed me and revolutionized my approach to counselling the dying and their families and getting them to work at the event together). We was most interested in our approach to church and community development and the work we were doing.

William headed up a department in the University dedicated to helping pastors to develop their ministerial pastoral and church work praxis by drawing upon relevant insights energizing from the behavioural and social sciences. He arranged for Catherine and I to visit Nijmegen for discussions with his colleagues and other members of the University and to lead a seminar on our work. Molly accompanied us on this trip from the 5th – 14th April 1981 when we combined pleasure with business having a few days in Amsterdam. (On the first day, indeed the first few hours, Molly and I were fined heavily for travelling on a tram without a fare. It was so crowded we simply couldn't get to the ticket machine and in any case we didn't know the procedure and there was a conductor on board who proved to be a letter man full of his own importance and power. Despite the intervention of passengers who explained our position and that they had assured us we would be able to pay him he insisted on a fine after a dramatic scene!). William was very keen that we should meet one of his colleagues, a layman, a sociologist, I believe (William was a RC priest), Bert de Loor³⁸. I think we stayed with him and his family, we certainly had some meals with them. Bert attended one of our ten-day courses for people working at regional and national levels, I think, but I am not sure whether it was before or after our visit to Nijmegen.³⁹

I cannot remember the conversations we had except that we were privileged to lead a seminar with a considerable number of academics. We were well received and they were extremely interested in our work and the

38 I intend to put in my personal archives an English translation of a book published in Dutch by De Loor and Berger Willem *Ik bouw een huis (Build my House)*, 1979 Hilversum. This is a book demonstrating advanced thinking about the use of the behavioural sciences in relation to Christian ministry. The authors write about 'pastoral sciences' and 'clinical pastoral education'. Using these insights to the book contains retrospective analyses of actual cases from pastoral practice.

39 Also on this visit we visited a Dominican priest who had done interesting work on the Irish Troubles.

kinds of courses we were running. They commanded and warmed to our commitment to the non-directive approach. After one of the sessions I was deeply moved and surprised when one of the professors confided in me that he had had a conversation like experience, I think, to the approach and to Christianity or a different understanding of it. But there was not an opportunity to pursue the conversation.

However, it was the work of Willem Berger that had the greatest impact upon me through his writings and the many conversations I had with him when he visited the Grail. Sadly Bert De Loor died suddenly and prematurely only a few years after I first met him.

The nature and features of my engagement and interaction with these disciplines

The range and variation of my engagement with different disciplines and schools of thought surprised me as it unfolded as I wrote; one thing simply led to another and I thought I was never going to get to the end of it! It variously related to practical, technical, theoretical and theological aspects of praxis of the different disciplines and the approaches and secular and religious stances of the practitioners and theoreticians. And in different ways, at different depths and in different combinations these factors are active in working situations and in training programmes from local to national levels. In turn this indicates just how complicated community development and work interventions can be.

Throughout my interaction with people variously committed to this wide range of associated disciplines I aimed to:

- show genuine interest and respect for their approach and professional stance;
- gain empathetic understanding of their approaches;
- form and build up collegial relationships;
- forage for concepts, methods and insights which would enhance the praxis of church and community development work; (see *Consultancy Ministry and Mission* p 289)
- help them to understand and empathise with my approach and praxis and hopefully to respect it;
- discuss differences in approach, issues and problems critically and constructively;
- discuss and realistically consider any ways in which we could help each other and possibly collaborate.

This indicates that whilst I was unwaveringly focused on the non-directive approach to church and community development I was open to slash aware of and interacting constructively with a wide and varied range of disciplines with many schools of thought in what can be roughly described as secular and religious interventions aimed at promoting in society at large human betterment/development through local community, social and political interventions.

Throughout I was concerned to retain my personal, professional, theological and spiritual autonomy and integrity; to be my own man as it were.

I now discern three stages in my involvement these processes:

- first, during my working life in Avec, i.e. in real time;
- second, through the work I did to harvest the insights of Avec;
- third, through writing these notes.

Each stage has taken me deeper and more profoundly into the heart of the matter.

I consider myself fortunate and blessed to have had the inclination, and the ability and opportunities to test out and further refine and develop my thinking and to come to more profound conclusions about my own praxis. My regret is that I was not able to apply myself more vigorously to these processes of interaction— revising — codifying practice, practice theory and theology in the light of the conclusions reached — assimilation. (We put a great deal of emphasis on our courses on the importance of the processes of assimilation new learning through careful reflection and then through putting it into practice reflectively.)

This was only one aspect of my interactive processes others were related to theology, sociology, missiology, education.

Modelling my internal and external engagement

Earlier I indicated the difficulty that I was experiencing in modelling diagrammatically my internal and external engagement. At various stages in writing this section I have made several unsuccessful attempts to do so. However having completed it I found I was able to construct the diagram on the following page to represent the complex pattern of interaction. What emerges for me is the way in which the systemic internal and external working relationships between those engaged in Avec facilitated an incredibly wide range of experience, knowledge and insights gained from



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MODEM'S Newsletter for Networking & Dialogue

SPECIAL FIFTH ANNIVERSARY SUPPLEMENT

1993 - 1998

Managing in Churches

By Michael Graham-Jones

Founder Member and a former Chairman of CORAT

First... CORAT - The Christian Organisation's Research and Advisory Trust



Michael Graham-Jones

It is hard to believe today that in England in the 1960s the idea of applying research methods and rigorous reasoning to problems of organisation and management was, in many quarters, a novelty. Thanks to the grandeur of nineteenth century successes, people had come to assume that the main organisational structures of society, including (perhaps especially) those of the churches and great charitable

bodies, were somehow inevitably proper. The activities of members of a new, self-styled "profession" called "management consultancy" were looked upon, rightly and understandably, with scepticism.

Conception

That was the atmosphere when Stuart Saeff (Lawyer and Priest, later the Bishop of Croydon) and the Earl of March (Chartered Accountant, Director of Industrial Studies at William Temple College and now Duke of Richmond) conceived of developing consultancy work tailored to the needs of churches and Christian charities. They consulted widely with Christians in their own and related professions, and with people from firms with a tradition of working with and for churches and charitable bodies. After a consultative gathering in 1967, CORAT was born - a Charitable Trust designed to undertake, for Christian bodies, research, consultancy and training in matters of organisation, direction, management and administration.

Frustration

After a quarter-century of innovative work in the United Kingdom, and its commitment in India, Africa and Australia, CORAT's Trustees decided, in the early 1990s, that its trust structure was tending to hamper operations - particularly in consultancy. Times had changed. The pioneering stage was

over. Management consultancy was well established as a useful activity and an acceptable profession. Churches and Christian bodies formed a proper part of the clientele. It was time for CORAT to reflect upon its own structure and to take stock of its options.

The conception of the Trust in the 1960s, albeit essentially an ecclesiastical body, had been influenced by Dr. Michael Ramsey and Dr. Donald Coggan, both Archbishops of Canterbury. It was no surprise therefore that, when taking stock in the 90s, the governors should turn again to Lambeth. The Archbishop's chief staff officer (Bishop Ronald Gordon) met with CORAT's Chairman (Michael Graham-Jones) to consider the options.

Consultation

The outcome of their discussions was a major Consultation at Lambeth Palace in December 1992. It was attended by some 50 interested professional people presided over by CORAT's President, the Duke of Richmond. At the Archbishop's suggestion, the Rt Rev'd Chris Mayfield (then Bishop of Wolverhampton, now Bishop of Manchester) took the Chair. Those present came from many and diverse fields of activity - churches, voluntary organisations, relevant professions, business schools, various academic disciplines. But each person attended as an individual, speaking only for himself or herself, not for any organisation; and it was an occasion for exchanging views, not for taking decisions. That was CORAT's job. Warm appreciation of its reputation and pioneering achievements was expressed. Its role remained vital but its structure was not sacred.

and again Conception

At the end of the consulting was a proposal from CORAT's governing body that interested professional people, firms and other parties should consider establishing a voluntary association to care in the future for the research, consultancy and training needs of the clientele hitherto regarded as the Trust's core. And so, MODEM was conceived, to develop and harness necessary skills and resources to meet those needs.

Now... MODEM

many disciplines as well is that of the non-directive approach to church and community development to be creatively focused on one work situation after another presented on courses and in projects by the participants. That is not properly represented in the diagram but it can be read into and out of it. This was a key factor in making Avec's training programme and consultancy projects so relevant and effective and seemed to be so.

Another organisation with which I engaged was Administry, an evangelical organisation providing practical help on church administration. We had various conversations with the John Truscott who directed and staffed Administry, and his colleagues about the possibility of closer co-operation if not affiliation. Administry was providing much-needed and valued services. However, in the end it was decided that whilst we provided complimentary services little would be gained by closer cooperation. Administry, I believe has been superseded by DCAN, UK Church Administrator Network which WqS set up in 2009.

5. Reflections on Avec as an Agency, 1976 – 91

In this section I reflect on Avec as an agency and what I felt and thought about it at various critical points in my reflections now in 2014.

A critical analysis in 1996 of Avec as an agency

Soon after Avec ceased to trade in 1994, I set to and wrote in the white heat of my feelings (a mixture of a sense of betrayal, impotence to influence the future of something that I had helped to create, despair, disappointment and anger) an account of Avec's life and work during my time as director. What I wrote I described as: an internal perspective on the things which made and marred a small ecumenical training and consultancy service agency for church and community work during the period 1976 – 1991.

As I remember it, I wrote at what was for me a great speed completing the first draft in about two months. A desperate hope motivated me. It was, I think, that the book would strengthen the resolve and the actions of small group of people who were making strenuous efforts to reinstate aspects of Avec's programme which I describe and discuss later in these notes. Despite the fact that Malcolm Grundy, my successor as director, strongly advised me not to publish it other counsel prevailed and I did so in 1996 under the title of, *Avec Agency and Approach* (AAA).

This book provided the evidence to support what was widely recognised

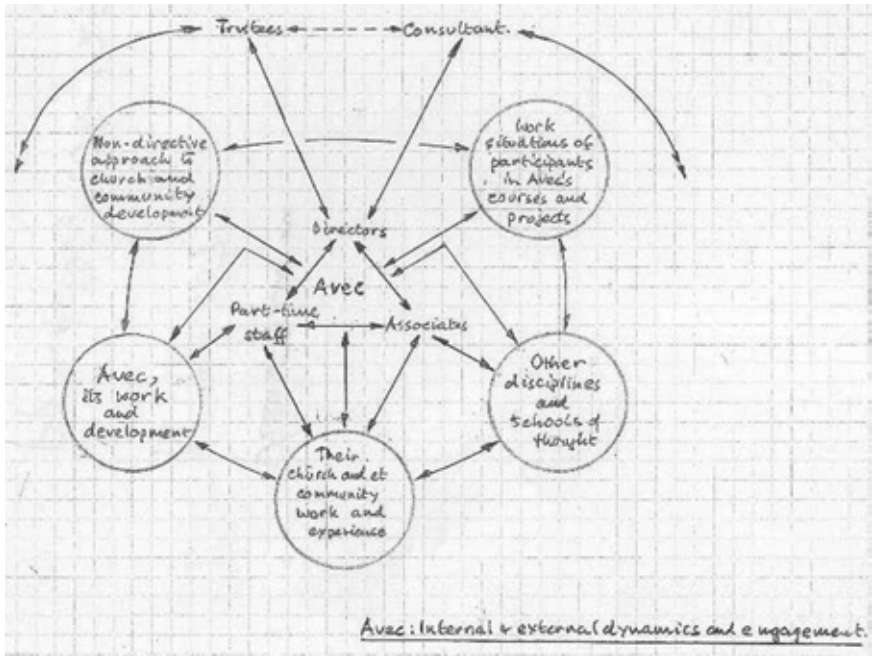
that Avec's training and consultancy programme was highly effective and generally regarded as successful during the period 1976 – 91: participants in courses and consultancy projects almost without exception evaluated their experience highly; I cannot remember anyone being disgruntled; it made notable contribution to the life and work of the main Christian denominations. By common consent, therefore, it was desirable that Avec was a much-needed Agency and it was important that it continue to do the work for which it was admirably equipped and suited. Also in AAA I described in some considerable detail thirteen interrelated factors which enabled Avec to be effective (op cit pp 30 – 91). Then, I followed this with an equally detailed description of what I considered to be the twelve disenabling factors (ibid pp 93 – 114). In summary form, I charted both set of factors (ibid p 117). This chart is reproduced on the next page to present an overall view of this factorial analysis.

Revisiting AAA now some twenty years after I wrote it, I am amazed that, given my emotions at the time, I was able to write what I considered to be such a comprehensive balanced, analytical and objective account of the life of Avec as an agency and the work it did during that period. My feelings of deep disappointment are evident in places in the text but I do not believe that they distort it nor does it display the bitterness except that I must confess I felt the time – except possibly in relation to the Anglican failure to play its part in making Avec financially viable Agency and thus ensuring its future.

I do not think that I can now improve on what I wrote then back in 1994 nor do I have the desire or energy to do so. Not least because, when I wrote AAA I was still close to my direct experience of Avec as it was only three years after my retirement as director and one year after I completed my stint as research worker and tutor to The Postgraduate Diploma in Church and Community Development Work which inevitably kept me close to the life and the ethos of Avec as did the fact that Molly continued as Bursar until, I think 1993. What I attempt here is to supplement the account in AAA with thoughts and insights which have surfaced as I have reflected on Avec as an Agency (rather than its work which I have already described) during the period when I was most intimately associated with it, i.e., 1976–91.

Human issues: major difficulties encountered

In AAA I described and discussed the major difficulties we faced in Avec under several headings: service, agency and staff member's problems. What I write here complements that description and analysis; it relates to aspects of the human factors and costs of the work Catherine, Molly, Catherine



and I did in Avec. On the whole the training and consultancy work was most interesting, exciting and deeply satisfying and fulfilling. Nevertheless, it made heavy demands upon us and drew deeply upon our resources and, at times, stretched our own knowledge and ability of church and community development praxis in many different ways. We encountered a wide range of technical and interpersonal problems: those of designing and delivering training courses and consultancy services; those that members of courses and consultancy projects were struggling with in their work and which they came expecting immediate significant help if not 'solutions' to problems they and their churches and organisations had coupled with for years without much success!

These problems were absorbing and endlessly fascinating but, some of them, because of their complexity, intractability and intransigence and the dysfunctional approaches and like of the required competences of those who brought the problem, they were extraordinary difficult to analyse and even more difficult to come up with viable ways of tackling them and researching and designing apposite work programmes which members of courses and consultancy projects felt they themselves could put into practice (in contradistinction to what we, the training staff and consultants, felt we could do) and which they felt would be effective. By and large, to my joy deep

satisfaction, I found that I had a natural capacity and gift for these aspects of the work which developed considerably with practice. Consequently, I revelled in doing it myself and, in a consultancy capacity, helping other members of staff to do it. (I have described this earlier.) Nonetheless, much as I love this work, doing too much of it, partly to meet the demand for our services but mainly to boost Avec's income, could become over demanding upon my resources and stressful to me and to Molly my late wife, especially when the problems were extremely complicated.

This leads me to major causes of stress and strain, not least because it was ever-present throughout the whole period of our involvement in Avec. It was maintaining the income level required to balance the books. Doing this involved Catherine and me principally in two ways: justifying and securing our ongoing grants and seeking new ones; keeping up the fee income level. The latter led us to mounting more courses and taking on more consultancy work than we should have done or should have been required to do: consequently for most of the time we did well over the number of face-to-face training days recommended by Reg Batten – as much, I think, as up to three times as many. Justifying and securing our ongoing grants and seeking new ones involved me more than Catherine – although she did get monies from a private donor which helped us survive several minor financial crises. On the other hand, Catherine was more involved than me in the unenviable, stressful and soul destroying business of drumming up support for courses through contacting people personally in order to make courses viable and to keep up the income level. She was extremely good at this and most effective, which I wasn't, but it cost her dear. My main contribution to recruitment and attracting work was through informal and ad hoc discussions with people and officers in the churches and allied organisations about their work and the development of their praxis and about staff development and training and consulting projects.

There were two main reasons for this continuing dilemma. One of them was a structural fault caused by one of the principles laid down by those founded Avec: that as soon as possible it should be self financing from income received from fees. For various reasons this simply was not possible in providing services for churches and allied organisations (see AAA pp 102 – 106 et al). The other reason was that we failed to secure adequate permanent funding to make up the shortfall between costs and fee income (see AAA pp 106 – 109 et al). In AAA I discuss the reasons for this in a section entitled *Root Problems: Churches' Failure to Fund Training and Consultancy Services Adequately and Fairly* (see pp 109 – 111). Consequently, throughout there was a fault line in the financial structure

of Avec. This became clear to all concerned that it simply was not possible however hard we worked to make to make Avec a financially independent and viable agency from fees received for services rendered even though those services were highly valued.

My experience of reflective and reactionary depression

In some of my dark moods about Avec's closure, I blame myself for what I perceive to be my part in the failure to solve the financial problems which meant that I contributed, howbeit by default and at a distance from the event, to the closure of Avec. Deep within me I knew that it was financially flawed. In these moods I feel guilty about my failure to face this intrinsic and apparently intractable problem which, self evidently, we, Trustees and Staff simply couldn't solve by our own efforts no matter how much we tried. What I feel I should have done was not only to face up to them and their implications head-on and more rigorously but to get the Trustees to do the same and to take the radical action necessary to revoke the financial self-sufficient principle and to put Avec on a better financial footing. Coping with the situation in the ways in which Catherine and I did – some of which I have described above – actually masked the problem and let the Trustees off the hook and took the pressure off them to face the problem more seriously – when all is said and done it was their ultimate responsibility, although we had our part to play. Basically, our part was to do the operational work of Avec and to get people to use its services and therefore to generate as much income as was commensurate with deploying the staff responsibly so that it could engage in the studies and research essential to them keeping up with developments in the field, developing their technical competence and being on top of their subjects and thus able to provide the best kind training and consultancy and contribute generally to those who use their services and more broadly make their contribution to the church and community development movement and discipline. As I have already said aspects of that suffered because of the financial constraints and the failure to get a third worker. From time to time – but possibly decreasingly so – when I am low, in spite of all that Avec achieved, these things depress me and made me feel guilty on several scores and lead me to question myself in the following ways: (1) Did I do enough to get all concerned to face up to the financial fault line? (2) Was it right for us to collude in keeping Avec afloat at all 'costs' (apologies for the pun)? (3) Was I in-flight from a situation I knew to be financially precarious? (4) Did I/we make the financial situation clear enough to my successor before he was offered the post by the Trustees and accepted it? In the darkness of

depression and disappointment at the premature closure of Avec my self-punishing answers to myself are: to the first two and the fourth questions it is a resounding, 'No'; to the third question unequally resounding, 'Yes'.

However, my answers to myself in my more rational and realistic moments are as follows.

In relation to question (1), I think I did and there is evidence for this in various reports and position papers that I submitted to the Associates and Trustees. In relation to (2) I honestly do not know but doing so meant that the primary objectives of Avec were achieved and Staff and Associates at some considerable personal, and at times sacrificial, cost made highly significant contributions to the life and work of the main Christian denominations in this and several other countries and to many Allied organisations. Of the value and importance of the work I/we did, I am in no doubt and I am proud of what was achieved and thankful to God that I was able to contribute to it.

In relation to question (3), I think the subconscious realisation of this and the frustration and worry it caused me was certainly a factor in the outburst in my conversation with Michael Bayley which led to my retirement from the directorship of Avec which I have described earlier and will feature again later. So, yes, I was probably in-flight from this aspect but I do not think that I was fully aware of this and consequently I could not have acknowledged it to myself or others. In any case it was only one of the factors in play at that time.

In relation to question (4), notwithstanding my response to the previous question, there is no doubt whatsoever that I played my part in making sure it was made clear in the job description for the post and in the interviews with Malcolm Grundy. This becomes clear in my discussion in a later section about his appointment and what followed.

Avec and Roehampton Institute of Higher Education (RIHE)

Undoubtedly the failure of Avec to become an affiliated and funded unit of Roehampton Institute of Higher Education (RIHE) at the point when everything was in place for us to do so was a major blow: the future seemed bleak. For some time I felt this would have been an ideal arrangement but I have come to have my doubts about that. Becoming part of an academic institution, notwithstanding that it was a federation of Anglican Methodist and Roman Catholic Colleges and Secular one, would to a greater or lesser

The media through which the avec process operated viz the "bottles" through which the "soul lived and worked"	Factors related to	Enabling Factors	Disenabling Factors	Va /ous degrees of failure to realise the conditions necessary for the enabling factors to be fully effective
	The avec concept, philosophy, approach and process viz. the 'soul' of Avec.	<p>The non-directive approach</p> <p>Stance on church and community development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to the Church • Commitment to involving churches as institutional entities in community development • Commitment to the interrelated development of churches and communities • Commitment to action for local development from all levels • Commitment to work for the overall development of socio-religious communities • Commitment to working with people in all forms of work • The practice of the profession of lay and ordained ministries in secular & religious settings <p>Mode of interpersonal engagement and behaviour</p> <p>The body of knowledge</p>	<p>Failure to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comprehend • be faithful to convictions • put beliefs into practice 	
	Theology	Theological coherence with God's activity in the world and ways with people. Theory and theology made explicit.	Idio	
	The approach, methods and tools	<p>Basic methods that worked</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The non-directive approach • Work study tools • Ten-day in-service training courses • Work consultancy • Action-research 	<p>Short difficulty of making these work</p> <p>Degree of incompetence</p>	
	The programme	<p>Wide range of user-friendly services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-induced change • Freely chosen and supported participation • A situational based approach to contextual issues • Well-tested ways and means of analysing and designing 'people work' in churches and communities • Courses and consultancy services were effective and economic work study units • Ongoing refinement and extension of the programme through evaluation 	<p>Unreasonable expectations and judgements and lack of trust</p> <p>Mismatch of work cultures and the mistrust it generated</p> <p>Failure to organize personal field-work services before and after courses</p> <p>Work flow and recruitment difficulties</p>	
	The staff, the human factor	<p>Mode of technical and interpersonal behaviour</p> <p>Qualified ecumenical staff with a sense of mission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocational commitment informed by experience • Faithfulness to the core concepts, approaches and processes of Avec • An ecumenical team of associates and part- and full-time staff members • Denominationally multi-lingual • Continuing professional development of staff and associates • Staff managers, trainers and consultants <p>Collaborative and supportive working relationships</p>	<p>Shortage of people to staff 10-day courses and consultancy work</p> <p>Failure to get a third full-time staff member</p> <p>Director's intensive engagement in training, consultancy and project work</p> <p>Dysfunctional stress and strain</p> <p>Failure to publish adequately</p>	
	The organization	<p>Professional, administrative, financial and moral support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An ecumenical trust • Consultancy support • Financial and moral support with conditions but without 'strings' <p>Avec was</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An independent agency • A service agency <p>Avec's vocation the vocation of others</p>	<p>Financial difficulties and crises</p> <p>Limited inter-organizational and ecumenical co-operation</p>	
	Context	<p>Avec's good name and promotional networking</p> <p>Favourable to church and community development</p> <p>Felt need for the approach</p>	<p>Indifference, antagonism</p> <p>Ignorance and suspicion of the non-directive approach</p>	

DISPLAY 9: The Pattern of Enabling and Disenabling Factors

extent have distanced Avec from the churches and church life; by design Avec would have become, or have been seen to do so an academic unit in what much later became a University; and that may easily have compromised what it was designed to be, and did become, was a successful independent ecumenical training and consultancy agent clearly located within church networks without being an integral part of official church or ecumenical structures. Avec's independence was extremely important because it meant that staff members and particularly the tutors were not seen to be part of the authority structures of any church or Christian organisation. The negotiations were not entirely without benefit to Avec because it became an associated institution and I was appointed as an honorary research fellow. This arrangement worked extremely well during my time as director of Avec: it enabled us to draw upon the academic resources of RIHE and to collaborate on a two-year postgraduate diploma in church and community development work: Avec staff is responsible for organising the course, recruiting members for it and conducting the sessions and providing tutorial oversight. RIHE and Avec examined it; RIHE validated it. (A description and discussion of the negotiations between Avec and RIHE is presented in AAA PP 106-8.)

Evaluations and reviews, 1987 and 1990/1

By May 1987 when the tenth anniversary was celebrated Avec had, through securing grants and the backing of the Methodist Church for my Ministry, established the agency as a financially viable, howbeit, based on the original model i.e. funded by grants and fee income but by then the expectation of it becoming self funding from the income it earned had had been dropped, with its inbuilt insecurities. (See the paper I prepared, tracing key developments from 1981 to 1987 which I prepared for the anniversary celebrations, a copy of which is presented as an Appendage IV. Two other papers were prepared for this event: one was an anniversary reflection of the Chairman's address to a very well attended consultation which was very impressed by what had been achieved and sanguine about the future. The other was a theological view by the Rev Michael J Atkinson, an Anglican representing the Church of England. Confidence had been restored (both papers will be placed in my archives and are already in the avec archives.)

Shortly after the Anniversary the Trustees and staff commissioned MARC Europe to carry out a major survey. The idea for this was the brainchild of my colleague Michael Bayley. A report was published under the title *Viva l' Avec: An Evaluation of Avec's Training Ministry* (MARC Europe, December 1990, 188 pages +52 pages of questionnaires). It was

presented in January 1991 by Mr Peter Brierley the director of MARK Europe to the Anniversary consultation which was representative of the Christian churches and Avec's funding bodies and its constituency; the Report and its recommendations were received enthusiastically. A synopsis of it is given in Appendix IV of AAA. Brierley saw Avec to have an impressive and important future but sadly that was not to be. His recommendations are presented on the next page. And in Appendage V of these Notes there are some papers about this period which give some idea of the nature of the discussions.

The beloved Bursar

This section would be incomplete without a note about and a much deserved tribute to my late wife, Molly, who was Bursar to Avec from 1976 to 93. She made great contributions to the smooth running of Avec's finances which she dealt with in a quiet unassuming but meticulous and exemplary manner. She was a valued member of the Avec office staff. She found balancing the books and producing the annual accounts very demanding and stressful at times. Further, quite voluntarily and graciously, she provided extensive hospitality to staff members and students for up to 10 days a time in our home. This was much appreciated especially by Charles New. And throughout, she supported me in many important ways although she found my absence for a week and longer when I was conducting courses very trying and on some occasions, stressful. However she was committed to Avec and to the part I played in it; she was proud of Avec and its reputation; at no point did she suggest that because of the difficulties she experienced that I should leave; she believed it was my vocation; she supported me when things were difficult; she enjoyed being associated with it; rejoiced in successes. One of the things to which she was entirely committed beyond her job Bursar was the work we did with the Roman Catholic profoundly deaf not least because she had been deafened by the tower bomb in 1974. Therefore she empathised with the deaf people and they are with her. She attended some of the conferences. Another thing that she greatly valued was the work I did in Zimbabwe and being together in that country in 1980 just after the war had ended.

6-12: Some Key Dates

The following list helped me to sort out my confusion about dates and sequences of events that led up to my retirement from the post of Director of Avec to the work I did on realising Avec's assets.

November 1989 through to 1990, discussions about Avec's, Catherine's and my futures

August 1991, my retirement as Director of Avec

September 1991, Malcolm Grundy succeeded me as Director of Avec

September 1991 - August 1993, appointed and served as research worker to Avec and the continuation of my role as tutor to the Avec/RIHE postgraduate diploma

September 1993, I became a supernumerary minister working on realising Avec's assets and as a part time appointment in the Victoria and Chelsea Circuit

1992 -6, supported by a research group

1993 - 6, my work in part supported and financed by a Leverhulme

Emeritus Fellowship

1994 - 99, part-time senior research fellow Westminster College, Oxford; continuing to realise Avec's assets and inaugurating diploma/MA courses in consultancy in ministry and mission

6. My Retirement as Director of Avec

An entirely unexpected dramatic event that occurred in the autumn of 1989 triggered off the processes which lead up to my retirement as Director of Avec in August 1990. I described it in the following way in 2011 when I was interviewed by David Dadswell and David Read for the Avec Archives records:

Now, to return to your question about my coming out of Avec, spending some serious years harvesting that experience, publishing and setting up the MA in consultancy ministry and mission. How did that come about? I think that period of my life was a messy business. It started dramatically through an entirely unexpected conversation with Michael Bayley. He was an Anglican priest from Sheffield, who was a part time member of Avec staff. We did quite a lot of work together. We were together in the upper room at Chelsea talking about some work we were going to do and I suddenly burst out, saying with much emotion that I was finding it extraordinarily difficult

to hold everything together in my work as a director of Avec in relation to money, the course and consultancy work, writing, everything. I didn't even know the tension and very deep feelings were there. The expression of them came as a complete surprise. Michael said, 'I think you ought to do something about this. We ought to talk and you possibly ought to hand over the leadership to someone else.' (*Prompted Reflections On My Life And Vocation*, 2011, p15 in the printed version in My Archives p 15.)

Another account which I wrote some time ago when I drafted a section of these notes which does not appear until Part 9:8 is reproduced below .

... I was feeling the effects of grossly continuously overworking and overtaxing myself for over twenty-five years. I was exhausted. An incident in 1990 or thereabouts brought this to a head. Without any warning at a private meeting with Michael Bayley, I gave way to pent-up feelings about the pressures related to the work and worry of exercising my responsibility for Avec, raising money for it and trying to write up the material. It was a very distressing and disturbing experience for both of us. I had no idea that I been suppressing so much emotional and mental stress and strain. The emotional force with which it was released took me aback. Clearly, I had been working at my intellectual, psychological and spiritual limits for some considerable time. Some would say 'living off my nerves'. How near I was to break down I do not know, pretty close, I would guess. This outburst was a relief valve, which probably averted my experiencing something [of that kind]. Michael was deeply concerned and upset and thought I was exhausted and said that I ought to resign as director and let others take it forward. He urged me to talk to Catherine Widdicombe and Charles New, and the Chairman of the Trustees, which I did.

After discussing things with Molly, I did have the conversations Michael suggested. They led to discussions at the next Trustees meeting about my appointment, future and the work and future of Avec (November 1989). It was decided that the Executive with the Rev John Taylor, General Secretary of the Division of Ministries of the Methodist Church, should review the situation with Catherine, Molly and me. That was done in a forty-eight hour residential consultation at the Grail. In April 1990 I summarised the various discussions that took place over that period in a paper for the Trustees. It was entitled *Avec, the Staff and Their Futures*; a copy is presented in Appendage VII.

The Grail consultation was carefully and sensitively organised. As I recall it, Lady Margaret Brown structured it drawing upon her extensive personnel experience in industry. Throughout, a very good atmosphere suffused. Aware of the gravity of the situation we were united in our concern to find a way forward which would be in the best interests of all concerned

and implicated: Avec and its work; my vocational deployment and that of Catherine and our well-being and that Molly. While some of the detail of what happened is beyond my recall, the emotions are not. Bringing them to the surface is difficult painful and disturbing but I must; facing up to them is part of what writing these notes is all about.

On the first evening, after dinner and an introduction to the consultation we divided into two groups one focused on Catherine and her vocational future in Avec and/or beyond and the other upon Molly and me and our vocational futures in Avec and/or beyond. Gordon Franklin, John Taylor and I think Nigel Gilson were in the group that interviewed Molly and me. The concern for us was sincere, palpable and moving. Undoubtedly they asked us what we felt and wanted but I cannot remember that aspect of the conversation. Various ideas emerged. What resurfaces quite powerfully is what they thought and felt: that I ought to retire as Director in 1991 and somebody be appointed to succeed me. Two possibilities were considered. One was that I became a research worker to Avec and concentrate on harvesting Avec's experience and making it more generally available. The other came from John Taylor, who was the Divisional Secretary of the Methodist Division of Ministries and a trustee of Avec. He thought there would be no difficulty at all in my taking a post in one of the Methodist theological colleges and that it would be appropriate for me to do so and spend a few years teaching non-directive church and community development work to ministerial students and to members of the college staff! (see Appendage VII p 3). Furthermore John Taylor he gave me/us the assurance that this was possible and that he could arrange it. (Throughout, Gillian Stamp was very keen that I should take up an academic post and discussed this with me on several occasions.) They asked us to consider this overnight - and that we certainly did and little else!

To our surprise, even though the possibility of my retirement had been mentioned at various times in the discussions that led up to the consultation, when it was put to us as a formal proposal it actually came as a shock to both of us. By the time we got to our room we realise that we were in a highly emotional and excited state about what had happened. Our feelings and thoughts were in a whirl. We were very excited about the possibility of pastures new; emotional and conscience stricken by feelings of betrayal and guilt at the thought of leaving Avec; concerned and worried about what might happen to the beloved agency in which we had unstintingly invested so much of our lives for some fifteen years. We oscillated between finding the proposition very attractive - not to least because it would relieve us from so much stress and strain - and our utter commitment to and sense of

responsibility for Avec. We slept little and talked much. I cannot remember just what we felt and thought in the morning - probably still vacillating - or precisely what response we made when the consultation resumed. Appendage VII leads me to think that that we agreed to the retirement proposition being seriously considered along with the other options but the remainder of the consultation is a blur to me and sadly Molly is not here to supplement my memory. Both Molly and I eventually decided, yes, I ought to move on. The wisdom of the group and my/our own feelings were saying to us that it was time for me to resign and to move on and for somebody else to take over.

Later, I talked to the Associates about what had transpired and what Molly and I felt about what we should do. With heavy hearts, they reluctantly agreed with the conclusions that had emerged.

After much tortuous reflection and discussion I did retire as director in August 1991 and was appointed as research worker to Avec with continuing responsibilities as the tutor of the postgraduate Avec/RIHE diploma up to August 1994 (when I want be entitled to become a supernumerary Methodist Minister and to receive my state pension) and that I remain stationed in the Victoria and Chelsea Circuit.

Tragically, putting the plan into was a messy and disturbing period for Molly, Catherine and for me. However, before I reflect further on the ups and downs of that period, a note about the occasion of my retirement and a section on my successor, Malcolm Grundy.

My retirement was well and truly marked in very moving ways. The Trustees made a presentation to me from monies subscribed from over one hundred of those who had attended Avec courses and used its services. In addition they presented me with a two volume copy of the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary - Nigel Gilson carried these heavy books all the way from Oxford! The Associates presented me with a very fine reclining garden chair. Complimentary speeches were made and I received appreciative letters. It was all very moving. (Some letters are on file.) To mention one thing, some people said that I was humble. Reflecting on this I wonder if what they were referring to is really is an expression of lack of self-confidence and reluctance to push myself forward.

7. Research Worker and Post Graduate Tutor to Avec, 1991-1993

Some of the aspects and sequences of the critical events of this period are blurred and the papers related to them are not readily accessible to me as they are in the Avec Archives. This is not surprising because it was one of the most messy and painful times in my career. Emotional turbulence – and that was certainly a feature of the period – can make recalling and revisiting difficult as well as painful. Fortunately, yet once again, the validity of what I need and want to describe and reflect upon does not depend upon getting some of the historical detail correct. To be as faithful as possible to what happened and to address the issues I need to address I approach this section by focusing upon the following features:

- My appointment
- My work and ministry
- Problems, stresses and strains
- Emergence of a viable research programme
- Research group
- Levenshulme Emeritus Fellowship

*(a) My Appointment: Research Worker and Post Graduate Tutor*⁴⁰

Speculations⁴¹ about what I should do post my retirement as Director of Avec in August 1991 resulted in my being appointed by the Avec Trustees to be the Research Worker and Post Graduate Tutor to Avec from September 1991 to August 1994⁴² when I would be entitled to superannuate and receive my State pension. I continued to be stationed in the Victoria and Chelsea Circuit which had become my spiritual base and home.

(b) My Work and Ministry

⁴⁰ 31.3.14

⁴¹ See Appendix VI p3 for a note of the various ideas about my future employment. It was even suggested that I might take up a professorship in my field, an idea which John Taylor pooh poohed by saying, 'Let's get real!'

⁴² In *Telling Experiences* I said the period was for three years. I think it was for four years as will become apparent.

I was happily engaged in organizing and teaching the third post-graduate courses in church and community development. All in all it was a good course except for a short period when Mark Saunders and Catherine Ryan colluded against me instigated by Catherine I believe but that was resolved amicably. My relationship with Mark had always been a more relaxed one than the one I had with Catherine. As explained earlier, that was the last course of its kind. I cannot remember whether or not I did any other work for Avec.

My other work related to making contributions towards “harvesting the work of Avec and making its intellectual assets more readily accessible” which the Trustees had commissioned me to do.⁴³

My ministry in the Victoria and Chelsea Circuit involved me in preaching regularly especially in Victoria, a small inner-city congregation and in Chelsea. Also I attended church and circuit meetings and took an active part in them including the Local Preachers’ Meeting.

(c) Problems, Stresses and Strains⁴⁴

I did not expect this period to be without problems but it was much more stressful and unhappy than I had anticipated. Teaching the diploma course was as fulfilling as ever. The causes of the dysfunctional stress were the writing programme, any relationships with Malcom Grundy & Catherine Widdicombe and the premature curtailment of my travel allowances and subsequently my appointment. The first two of these I discuss in this section; the other in (g).

Getting into the writing programme I found difficult very much as I did when I came to write the final report of Project 70-75 and for similar reasons. There were, I think, two causes, the first was the enormity and complexity of the task of realizing Avec’s intellectual and pragmatic assets – where and how was I to start? What was an appropriate style? How should I research the effects of the work of Avec and codify and present its praxis? (cf *Telling Experiences*, p ix). Finding a suitable/appropriate writing voice involved teasing my way through these and a cluster of associated issues and questions. A second cause was bereavement; in writing up Project 70-75 I had to struggle with grieving for Dorothy; in tackling this task I had to contend with bereaving my loss of the directorship of Avec, an outstandingly fulfilling vocational position. The result was an experience

43 See *Telling Experiences* p ix.

44 13.5.14

of writer's block and unsatisfactory attempts to get something on paper which were criticized by Malcolm Grundy in something of a dismissive manner which I found upsetting and difficult to cope with.

My difficulties were exacerbated in other ways by Grundy who was pressurizing me to write something quickly to promote the work of Avec and to do so in a popular rather than an academic style. He was good at doing that kind of writing and I am not. And in any case I was convinced that in the long term something more serious and profound was required. Consequently, tensions between us had negative effects on our working relationships and upon my ability to resolve the difficulties inherent in discerning an appropriate writing programme and finding my voice.

Another cause of stress was that Catherine withdrew from me almost completely after some twenty three years of a very close and intimate working relationship which had evolved into a deep and precious soul-friendship. That was devastatingly painful. She distanced me to the extent that communications were formal, stiff and basic. (Writing this is so painful that I am struggling to continue. Her recent illness and my feelings that I was losing her in a different way add other emotional layers to what of itself was emotionally highly charged). My interpretation of what was happening was something like this: that she found Malcolm's approach to church and community and development and to the kind of training programme required much more acceptable than mine because it was more eclectic and less analytically rigorous; it was much more akin to her natural way of doing things; consequently she was more fulfilled; that she had given herself to a working relationship with Malcolm as she had with me; she had freed herself from me and the demands I put upon her and gladly so. I had lost her. This interpretation was reinforced by – or did it arise from? – what I had seen over many years of her working relationship with Brian Woodcock. She loved working with him and seemed to be a free spirit when doing so. Brian was eclectic methodologically and spiritually embracing a wide range of approaches including new age spirituality and Catherine seemed so much at one with all this. I was quite bereft of a precious relationship without doubt. But my interpretation of it could not be further from the truth as will become clear.

It impacted me quite differently from the ways in which Grundy did. I missed her moral, spiritual, personal and practical support enormously; I had enjoyed it and benefitted greatly from it for such a long time. But what hurt most that I felt she had abandoned, rejected, renunciated her commitment to the concepts and approach praxis, theology, etc, upon which our work together had been based. I had lost the closest collegial

ally that I had, just as though murder I had lost Dorothy. Certain I had lost her, I tried without much success to come to terms with the situation and reposition myself.

Just how long this went on for, I cannot remember. The best part of a year I think, i.e. towards the end of Catherine's time as a co-director and the point at which she retired. I cannot recall when or where it came to a climatic end but I can remember how. We had been at some meeting together – or had we met by-chance? I am not sure. My memory is that we were outside a café; there were tables and chairs. I tried to talk to her and she turned and walked away; I moved towards her and called out that we had to talk and I may have caught her arm. I was quite worked up and I think I said something to the effect that if we didn't talk that was the end of our relationship. Providentially, she turned, faced me and we sat down at one of the tables and started to talk. I cannot remember the details of the conversation but it was the beginnings of a sharing, somewhat haltingly, which brought us back together again. Had Catherine not talked to me then I was quite determined that I would not try to break through the impasse again.

What emerged was that she was deeply unhappy about the way things were going and how Malcom was changing things and that the only way she felt she could cope was by cutting herself off from me and doing what she could to redeem the situation. She knew I was unhappy about things and critical and could not face being the go-between Malcolm and me and the tension she would experience if she tried to relate to both of us. She felt cutting herself off from me was the only way to be loyal to Malcolm and that was a primary concern. Gradually we got on to a better working and personal relationship. More came out last September and especially when we met in Leeds at the beginning of April this year.

During these discussions we were very open with each other about this period in our relationship and others already described. Both of us approached them in deep concern for the other and for healing through mutual understanding. Consequently they were healing experiences which deepened our love and respect for one another. I explained how I had felt which was very painful for both of us. Catherine described what was happening to her very much as above. She said that she was shattered by her experience of working with Malcolm on a ten day course soon after he became director. His approach was entirely different from the one we had carefully developed. Everything she said had to come from the students; the only input from the staff was basic structures to facilitate this approach and help to help participants process the content they had contributed. It

was an approach which abandoned that which had been so successful and shaped the character of Avec type training. She vowed not to be a co-worker to him again on such courses. She felt impotent to do anything to redeem the situation and gave herself to continuing courses in the way in which we had always done and raising money to balance the books. She felt resentful and angry that she had been put in this invidious situation and very negative to all those involved and implicated including me and especially to Charles New. Her expectation was that he would continue to be a part-time staff member and an invaluable ally in the transitional period. To her utter amazement he resigned and left her feeling abandoned and betrayed (see my notes on the discussions about the closure between Catherine, Charles, Fred, Henry and me on 3rd April 2014).

We apologized to and commiserated with each other and wept together. Although it was searingly painful for both of us there was something wonderful and holy about the experience; it was profoundly therapeutic. Later we exchanged the following emails which speak for themselves and with which I conclude this piece except to say that in view of Catherine's subsequent illness and delirium I am doubly thankful to God that we had the discussions in April – those between Catherine and me and those with Charles, Fred and Henry. I fear it may be some time before I can have that depth of exchange again with Catherine.

From: Catherine Widdicombe [mailto:mjc.widdicombe@grailsociety.org.uk]

Sent: 14 April 2014 14:15

To: George

Subject: an apology and blessings for Easter and address for GPO on Caldey

My dearest George,

I realised overnight that I owed you an apology, from way back especially.

I am deeply and sincerely sorry for 'walking away from you' and thank God and you for chasing after me and not letting me go without turning back. I also realise that other times over the years have been very disappointed in me and at times ready to let me walk away and not return.⁴⁵ I am so grateful for your God-given patience with me down the years since we first met each other. ...

Warmest love,
Catherine

45 1. We had discussed incidents of this kind.

My dear Catherine,

Thank you very much for your latest email.

Your gracious apology is accepted but I did not think that you owed me one after the discussions that we had whilst you were here. By the same token I too must apologise to you for things that I have done which have hurt and harmed you and our relationship.

I can only renew my sentiments of my previous email.⁴⁶

Every possible blessing

Go well.

Love

George

Thank you George! Accepted of course! My mind is at rest.
much love as always

Catherine

⁴⁷I simply must add, that I found myself feeling immensely proud of Catherine's personal and spiritual qualities and capacities in general and her ability to engage in depth so creatively with complex and painful inter-personal issues. I count myself extremely fortunate to have her soul friendship and love.

(d) Emergence of a viable research programme

Relief eventually came from a year in which I struggled with this mishmash of emotions, floundering to establish a research programme which would help me to start to make contributions towards harvesting the work of Avec through the formation of a research support group: Michael Bayley (chair); David Deeks; Leslie Griffiths; Peter Russell; Moira Sleight; Catherine Widdicombe. This group helped me from 1992 - 96 to:

- establish and make a good start on a viable research programme;
- carry out a discrete piece of research and publish a book on the effects of Avec's work on the vocational lives of eighteen very different people (*Telling Experiences: Stories about a Transforming Way of Working with People*);
- prepare a submission for funding through a Leverhulme Emeritus Fellowship.

They also helped and supported me in the work related to other

46 2. Frustratingly I cannot find this email.

47 14.5.14

publications: *Analysis and Design* (1995) and *Avec Agency and Approach* (1996).

Their help and that of others I gratefully acknowledged in *Telling Experiences* pp ix-x. In all these ways they made considerable contributions to the emergence of a viable research programme.

I desperately needed the help of this group. I remember well the occasion on which we prepared the application to the Leverhulme Trust. We were sitting around the large table in the Avec seminar room. I felt so depressed, weary and debilitated that I couldn't reach across the table to take hold of the papers. Seeing the state that I was in, David Deeks kindly took hold of the papers and, in discussion with the others, completed the application in a much more realistic way than I would have done if I had been left to my own devices. Under pressure from Grundy I might have applied for a grant towards my salary even though the application form did not have a section for such expenses (see Appendage VII). Wisely the group applied for a grant towards secretarial and research assistant costs and expenses. The result was that the application was successful. When I told Grundy that I had been awarded the Fellowship and the uses to which the award had to be put, he was furious that we had not applied for monies towards my salary.

The Leverhulme funds helped enormously towards the costs involved in the work that I did; the status gained from the award made incredible contributions towards reinstating my confidence and assisted me to pursue my work by opening up vocational opportunities.

Some key papers related to my Leverhulme Emeritus Fellowship are presented in Appendix VII: others are on file in my archives.

Financial Crises Leading Up To My Retirement (Written 11 March 2015)

This is a corrective note about the financial crises leading up to my retirement from full-time ministry described in the section following. It is prompted by some notes that I unearthed when I was organising my papers for the Archives after completing NFR. (The notes are filed in the Background Papers to NFR.) Soon after I was appointed research worker to Avec for three years, 1991-94, it became apparent that Avec was in financial difficulties which made it first difficult and then impossible for the Trustees to honour the contract they had made with me. That led to the following developments in relation to me, Molly and my appointment.

First, Nigel Gilson and Margaret Brown on behalf of the trustees met me to say that they had decided to cut my allowances as I no longer needed the car. They also questioned my need for ongoing secretarial help and any other savings. They conducted the meeting in a strident, harsh and business like manner which was

entirely out of character with previous relationships and the respect with which they had previously treated me; they dictated terms to me in a way which I found demeaning and made me feel that I had become an unwanted liability. In part the cuts were justified; their manner was not. I was, in fact, generating considerable income for Avec which greatly reduced the costs of my service to them. Molly and I agreed the terms.

Secondly, to become less dependent financially upon the Trustees and to relieve them of some of the financial difficulties they were experiencing in finding the monies to discharge their financial responsibility for my appointment, with the invaluable help of my Research Support Group I obtained a Leverhulme grant. Malcolm Grundy and the trustees were highly critical of the grant received and angry because we had not included in the grant application a grant for the loss of earnings due to my early retirement. I conceded that this was a mistake; see my letter to Nigel Gilson, 1.6.93. In retrospect I think I should not have done this. My Research Support Group, who were mainly responsible for drafting the application and the success in getting it were convinced that to include such an item would have made the grant application unacceptable. Ironically, the trustees did not attract any grants in spite of Grundy's claims when interviewed for the post that his track record showed that he was capable of raising large sums of money for agencies such as Avec.

Thirdly, it soon became apparent that, even with these economies the Trustees could not maintain their contract with me beyond the second year of the three-year appointment. This led me to taking early retirement as described in the following pages. Malcolm Braddy, my Superintendent Minister, and Martin Broadbent, my District Chair, argued strongly that I should sue the Trustees for breach of contract. Neither Molly nor I would do this as it was against everything that we had worked for the very good relationships we had had with the Trustees over many years.

This was an extremely difficult and painful period of Molly's life and mine and my ministry. In one sense it was generated directly by the failure of the Trustees and Malcolm Grundy to raise the finances necessary to maintain the commitment that the Trustees had entered into quite freely. In another sense it was created by my determination and that of Molly to continue and complete the work which the Trustees had commissioned me to undertake and to which we were totally committed. Consequently, we were prepared to put up with arrangements that were far from satisfactory. Looking back, theoretically, we should not have felt it necessary to accept any responsibility for raising funds for my stipend. But the reality was that had we not done so and become actively involved in making the necessary financial arrangements, we would never have been able to get on with the work in the way in which we did. (The story of much of my vocational life!) Combined, our commitment and the authority of the situation in which we found ourselves, put us under enormous pressure and stress and in a position in which we felt disempowered and marginalised. I thank God for those who helped us to redeem the situation in the ways I have already described.

8. Premature Retirement in 1993⁴⁸

After I had retired as Director of Avec in 1991, agreement was reached that I would serve as a research worker until 1994 when I would be eligible to retire on two pensions, one from the State and the other from the Methodist Church. In the event Avec was unable to fund the appointment beyond 1993 without crippling itself financially. An arrangement was eventually made by the Victoria and Chelsea Circuit which enabled me to carry on with my research and writing programme until 1994. I set out the reasons for seeking early retirement and the arrangements made to enable me to continue my work in a statement in November 1992. This is reproduced on the next page.

The arrangements for 1993-4 were very satisfactory but the processes of arriving at them were punctuated by bitter/sweet experiences and were quite stressful. First to note the unpleasant and unhelpful experiences. My Superintendent, Malcolm Braddy, and my Chairman, Martin Broadbent, were extraordinarily supportive and helpful but in the early stages they were urging me to sue Avec for breach of contract. Under no circumstances could I have done that; it would have injured an Agency I cherished and betrayed my relationship with it. And, in any case, I could not have done so because it was I not they who chose to withdraw rather than cripple Avec financially. They accepted my decision and could not have been more helpful. John Taylor, having reneged on his offer to help me find a place in a college and his assurance that this was eminently possible, offered me a post as an assistant to him in his position as General Secretary of the Division of unclear. I thought was a sop. I rejected it for many reasons, chief of which were: it would not have allowed me to continue the work to which I was committed; I did not want to work with him because I did not like him nor the ways he worked. One idea was that I should go into a circuit for a year as a circuit minister, but that was not a realistic option.

It was, however, a meeting convened to help solve the situation which upset me most. A small group representative of the Division of Ministries and Home Missions and the London South East District met with me in the office of the General Secretary of the Home Mission Division, George Sails, who chaired the meeting. He was unsympathetic to my situation and the work of Avec and made that clear. He terminated the meeting abruptly and before we had made any progress saying that he/we had given enough time to this matter and he had his mail to sign before going home! I felt humiliated and rejected. Brian Hoare was standing in for Donald English

who was on Sabbatical. He did not speak throughout the meeting. Sails and Hoare could have had the funds required available at a stroke! And for the first and only time I was upset by Colin Rowe's suggestions and expressed my anger but that led to a deeper conversation and understanding.

Set against this I was supported and helped profoundly, for which I will be always thankful: Malcolm Braddy, Colin Rowe and Martin Broadbent helped me enormously by making local arrangements and securing district and commercial support for me to take 'retirement' a year early. Roy Foulds⁴⁹ in collaboration with Gordon Franklin helped to sort out the best possible pension arrangements and then Gordon introduced us to Stuart (I cannot remember his surname) who gave us excellent financial advice for several years. My application to take early retirement had to gain the approval of the Ministerial Appointments Advisory Committee. John Cooke⁵⁰ could not have been more helpful. His approach was pastoral rather than administrative: I greatly valued his superb pastoral support combined with administrative skill which he clothed in ministerial brotherly loving care.

The panel they set up was equally caring (I think one of the members was Diane Clutterbuck or was it Jan Sutch?). The chair was Ian White. The group treated me with deep respect and understanding and with gracious empathy for my predicament. I was moved almost to tears by their pastoral but practical care. As the interview came to an end I asked them to pray with me. They were very responsive to my spontaneous response to how I felt about the 'interview', but a little surprised by such an unusual request⁵¹.

But it was the Victoria and Chelsea Circuit through which all these negotiations and the ideas and possibilities resulted in a viable proposition. Magnanimously they invited me to become an active supernumerary in the Circuit for one year and to make up the shortfall in my stipend and allowances. Moreover they said they were delighted by this arrangement. Over the years I had been associated with Chelsea and Victoria, Chelsea had become a very special place to me, my spiritual home and it remained so for many more years. Sadly, that is no longer the case as my visit to take a service recently showed⁵². Only two or three people there remember me and the character has changed to be more of a down-town church doing

49 Secretary of the Methodist Retirement Fund at the time.

50 Secretary to the Committee at the time.

51 What a contrast to the appalling meeting chaired by George Sails!

52 On the 27th April I was invited to take a service during the year celebrating the 30th anniversary of the opening of the narthex and the new chapel and refurbished ancillary rooms.

magnificent outreach work and care for the homeless but with a depleted congregation without the great Sunday morning services that were such meaningful events.

These arrangements enabled me to continue the first phase of researching and harvesting the assets of Avec and, importantly, to reposition myself for the next phase of my vocational life in retirement, which I describe in Parts 9:6-9 below.

I can think of no better way of bringing this section to a close than by introducing the notes from which I addressed synod when I requested permission 'to sit down'⁵³.

Notes from Which I Addressed Synod On The Occasion Of My Requesting Permission 'To Sit Down', 1st February 1993⁵⁴

I see this juncture as a semicolon to my ministry and not a full stop. Until 1994 I will be an active supernumerary in the Victoria and Chelsea Circuit reflecting upon, researching and writing up my experiences of the past twenty years in church and community development.

I can scarce believe that Avec, the organisation of which I was a founder member, has studied in depth with some 3500 clergy, religious and laypeople the work in which they were engaged. They belonged to 7 denominations and almost equal numbers of Anglicans, Methodist and Roman Catholics. I can scarce believe the privilege of:

- working with missionaries on their work;
- helping monastic and apostolic orders to work out the implications of Vatican II;
- helping apostolic and monastic religious to understand each other better.

At the beginning of my Ministry I would never have believed it possible.

It all started with my pursuing the Methodist Youth Department's pursuing emphasis on open youth work which led me into church and community development work - putting it into practice at Parchmore, studying, researching and teaching it through extensive programmes

53 A traditional Methodist term for requesting permission to retire. I understand the URC phrase is 'lie down'!

54 The notes were written in pencil and dated 31st January 1993. They required very little editing to make them understandable. The originals are on file along with the other papers related to my retirement.

of collaborative learning. The Methodist Church did not see the course upon which it was setting me when it appointed me to one of the Ten Centres in 1966 - neither did I! Consequently, my ministry has not taken the normal course. Parchmore, was followed by Project 70 - 75 and then by Avec. I realised the other week that what had happened is that I had been constrained - I believe by God - to work at a particular need: to help people to work with rather than for people is a simple statement of it. I worked at it first from this and then that angle. One effect of that is that I personally have been on the margins of the institutional work of several denominations and organisations whilst working at the core of their mission.

What I am grateful for and rejoice in, is the support of the Methodist Church at critical moments. It has been magnanimous through:

- the President's Council and the Division of Ministries. How well I remember Chris Bacon's and Owen Nankivell's discussions with Archbishop Worlock about setting up Avec;
- the Victoria and Chelsea circuit who have believed in what I am doing and supported me and it enormously;
- Nigel Gilson, chairman of up Avec
- and latterly the ministries Martin Broadbent and Malcolm Baddy to me as I worked my way through many difficulties to this point.

The church that called me honoured their responsibility's magnificently under difficult circumstances as I moved into Avec and out of it with difficulty.

As I come to this position I have been conscious of my many mistakes and I am encouraged by an incident that happened some years ago. Or Therese Vanier, sister of the founder of the L'arche communities, was on one of our consultations to study problems they were facing in developing their communities. She was a consultant at Guys. As we were sitting waiting to start after lunch, she said that she had just been to see one of her patients, an elderly lady who was dying. Dr Vanier asked her out she was feeling about death and dying. She said that she had enjoyed her life, was not afraid of dying but that she regretted so many of the stitches that she had dropped. At that precise stage in the conversation, believe it or not, the granddaughter burst through the door saying, 'Grandma, I've got your knitting and I picked up the stitches you dropped here it is. How are you?'

I have time to do a bit more knitting and to pick up a few stitches. But I am greatly comforted that a new generation is already picking up my stitches and knitting new patterns of ministry. I am glad that my ministry

overlaps theirs.

My chairman, sisters and brothers in Christ I ask permission to sit down so that I may stand up for the next round of my ministry

9. Avec Ceases to Trade, 1994

Tragically Avec the Agency ceased to trade in 1994; providentially Avec the approach lives on. The agency was mortal; the approach is immortal; I still bemoan Avec's closure but I am proud and grateful for what it achieved and my privileged part in it. I rejoice in the indestructible nature of the Avec approach and that through the work of the agency it lives on deeply embedded in some practitioners, organizations and churches and their work and ministries. I thank God that in the 85th year of my life, the 55th of my ministry and the 48th of practising and promoting the non-directive approach, I am able to continue to work in this field. Thanks be to God. [I set out to write a very different introduction to this section but this simply emerged unrehearsed. It is a much more balanced statement than the responses I normally make to the closure of Avec, which tend to be regretful and resentful. One thing that struck me in a way that it has not done before and brought me up with a start is that almost 90% of my ministry has been dedicated to practising, researching and promoting the idea. That is incredible!]

The only papers related to Avec's closure that I have to hand are in Appendage VIII. Fuller documentation of what happened and our responses to it are in the Avec Archives. Reading the papers in the Appendage revealed my memory of them was selective and faulty. I fear they were distorted by the trauma of the event was distorted by the trauma of it and the ways in which it scarred me. Real as some of my present feelings are, they do not relate to reality as I am beginning to see it. I do not have the energy nor the desire to research the events and get a more accurate picture still. On the one hand I do not think that it would be well spent and on the other I do not think it necessary because the papers to hand are sufficiently corrective to achieve the objectives of these Notes.

Over the years I felt resentfully that the Trustees and Nigel Gilson as chairman in particular did not apply themselves as rigorously as they should have done to finding ways of continuing the work of Avec because they were not sufficiently committed and underestimated the importance of its relevance in the scheme of things. (Clearly they were not as committed and attached to Avec as Catherine and I – how could they be? And they didn't have the feelings we had. Catherine, I discovered when we met with Charles

new, Fred Graham, and Henry grant earlier this year, having heard the news early one morning she lay on her bed until noon sobbing uncontrollably. My desolation took me quite differently but equally powerfully.) Also I felt they acted peremptorily in refusing to see Catherine and me to consider a paper I had drafted very carefully urging further exploration of possibilities and spelling out the irreversibility of closure and the enormous difficulties that would be faced in trying to form agency to take its place at a later date. (Batten said it was a good letter.)

All this rankled in my mind and in my soul over the years. To my surprise I found that the papers in Appendage VIII present a quite different picture in relation to significant aspects of the views that I have harboured for far too long. Expressed concisely the corrections are as follows:

- (a) Nigel Gilson's letters show that presiding over the closure was an extremely painful, distressing and most unpalatable experience for him personally and for the trustees.
- (b) These letters also show that Nigel was deeply sensitive to the distress and pain that the closure of Avec would cause Catherine and me.
- (c) I was consulted by Nigel and the Trustees and Don Picard (who accepted the post I had declined and became John Taylor's assistant), Keith Davies (an associate staff member of Avec who headed up attempts to prevent Avec closing) and I attended one meeting in October 1995 in which we participated fully in the discussion but, rightly so, not in the decision-making. However, a subsequent request to attend a further meeting was declined. To make my case against Nigel and the trustees I conveniently forgot the first meeting and harboured the refusal to attend a second in my mind. How perverse I was.
- (d) from c 1994 – 66/7 there were real grounds for thinking/hoping/believing that Westminster College would adopt Avec to form a training consultancy unit. Discussions from c 1994 with Westminster led to me becoming an emeritus senior research fellow. In turn that led to Westminster hosting a prestigious consultative conference in 1996 and consultancy for ministry. Productive as these various discussions were they did not lead to Westminster forming the unit *à la avec*. (See part 9:6 for a fuller discussion of this period.) Again I had deviously forgotten this.

Clearly, this shows beyond any doubt that my coveted story of the culpability of Nigel and the Trustees was in serious error; some of my negative feelings were unwarranted. Later I describe how in my anguish I

used Nigel and the Trustees as scapegoats. I feel rightly self-censured and apologetic. At the same time I feel relieved and cleansed of some negative feelings. Consequently overall I feel much better. Nonetheless, I do feel that Nigel was not strong enough. And long after these events he told me how deeply he regretted that he was not able at the time of the closure to find the energy and drive to work at the issues more profoundly and to rise to the occasion in the ways that were necessary – at the time he would be 72 years of age. And it is indisputable that that invaluable capital to contribute to the training of people in community development work and proffering consultancy services, accrued at great cost, were plundered and squandered. That I continue to regret, but, as will become evident I have come to a better understanding of the comprehensive nature of the causes for the closure.

10. Analytical Reflections of Some Ex Staff Members on The Closure, April 2014.

⁵⁵Early in April, Fred Graham and Henry Grant, with whom we had worked extensively in and through Avec, visited Catherine and me in Leeds. It was a most moving and creative reunion after many years. (It was some twelve years or more since Fred's last visit and well over twenty since I had last met Henry.) On one day (Thursday the 3rd) Charles New joined us. During the afternoon we discussed the closure of Avec and how we felt about it and how we 'explained and tried to come to terms with it'. It was a deeply moving, insightful conversation for which I am more grateful than I can ever adequately acknowledge. For me personally it was cathartic and healing. Remarkably after all these years I came to a new understanding of the causes of its closure and the multiple nature of the culpability for its ceasing to trade. Essentially its failure was holistic and systemic and that is what I came to see and in doing so found immediate release from focussing the blame almost exclusively upon Malcolm Grundy and one or two other people including myself. (See earlier discussions.)

A period of deep sharing of thoughts and ideas about what happened, during the last phase of Avec's life, profound gratitude for Avec and our parts in its life and work, for the ways in which the effects of it live on; painful feelings related to its demise and so much more led up to the moment of disclosure. This took over two hours of intense conversation. Some of it was analytical; other parts were about unresolved retentional issues. Catherine, for instance, told Charles how disappointed she was

when he resigned soon after Malcolm Grundy was appointed. She felt betrayed and abandoned to try to keep Avec on track on her own. Charles responded graciously and magnanimously saying that the reason for his retirement at that point was that he had taken on the added responsibilities of superintendency of a Circuit. Catherine said that what had hurt her was that he did not discuss it with her. Charles could not remember whether he did or not but he reminded her that they had had this discussion many years ago, possibly soon after Malcolm Grundy's appointment, when they were working together in Liverpool on a course or project. Catherine had no recollection of the conversation. Catherine told how when she heard of the closure early one morning, she was overwhelmed by her emotional response and could do no other than take to her bed where she lay all morning weeping bitterly and sobbing inconsolably. In turn we shared our feelings and ways in which we tried to come to terms with the closure. Explanations for and insights into what happened were shared. Our sharing was punctuated by attempts to console each other by testifying what we and others had gained and reassuring ourselves that the impact of Avec would continue and reverberate through many future generations through changes in people that had been achieved and the books published and the archival research facilities. All this had extent potential to feed a renaissance of the work.

First one and then another sourced failure and liability emerged from these moving exchanges. Quite suddenly I was startled by the awareness that my mind had formed this previously unconnected rich accumulation of insights into a coherent mental pattern in diagrammatic shape of systemic failure and liability. Immediately and in only a few minutes I sketched this out, describing it as I did so. The result is presented on the next page. Now I will reconstruct it more accurately and annotate it! Before I do so, I need to say that as I presented the diagram, the others added or reinforced one or two points. The resultant diagram, they agreed, represented accurately the outcome of our discussions.

ANNOTATIONS OF THE CHART

⁵⁶The chart on the following page chased out critical aspects of the systemic pattern of the causes of and the culpability for Avec's closure and notes some of the consequences and post Avec developments. Significant features of each stage were indicated and discussed as the original chart was sketched out. Drawing upon what was said then and in the discussions which led up to the drawing of the chart, I now annotate the revised chart,

using the bracketed numbers to locate the notes on the chart.

Prior to the discussions with Catherine, Charles, Fred and Henry, I had written up to Section 7 above. The remainder of the sections will be influenced by this on and amplify it further.

When I come to write the following notes they fell under various headings.

Avec was a highly successful in-service training and consultancy operational model (1,2 and 3)

Beyond question this was so. Staff and Trustees were able to proffer high quality creative agency services. This was exciting and deeply fulfilling. But, as the work increased exponentially, it made enormous demands upon the staff mainly because the financial structure was flawed and did not allow for full-time staffing to be increased to keep pace with the expansion of the work programme.

Significance of GL's crisis (4)

Fred made the point and the others agreed that the crisis I experienced which led to my retirement was an indication that the Avec overall working model was not viable; it was deeply flawed. Financially and the director's role, function and workload were not sustainable in the long term – something had to give. What we all failed to recognise and act upon was that my crisis was a warning signal that the system was faulted, the overall operative/working system that is: the 'weakness', that is, was in Avec's working model not in me. As soon as Fred made the point, instantaneously, I recalled work I had read many years ago which had impressed me and I had used in my work, that the 'burn out' of an individual in an organization could be, and often is, the fuse to the system in which they are engaged. The failure was not to see this was the case and to address the implications. In fact, by appointing my successor they put someone else in an untenable job or one which few could sustain responsibly indefinitely.

The realization of this relieves me some feelings that I failed Avec, Avec in fact and especially the Trustees failed me. At the same time I am annoyed with myself that I did not recognize what was happening when I had helped others to see similar things in their situation time and again!

My redeployment was messy (5)

I will be writing about this especially in section 8. What I need to note

here in relation to the pattern of liability and failure is that, whilst I felt the Trustees failed me in some respects and one person betrayed me, I should have taken a more independent part in discerning my future. Also, I should have had a better judgement on the relative importance of my contribution and that of Avec to the church and community development movement.

Overarching or overriding failure to get substantive institutional support for Avec (6)

There was a strong feeling amongst us that the overarching or primary failure was to get substantive institutional support for Avec. Few organizations, it was suggested, can survive in the religious work field without church or ecumenical support, i.e. without well established and adequately funded religious institutions covenanting themselves to accept real responsibility for underwriting and maintaining agencies such as Avec. We did try to do this in relation to RIHE (see Section 5 above). The Methodist Council undertook funding me up to my retirement but not Avec.

On the one hand I am reminded about what D. J. Niles said to me in the mid-1960s about churches only accepting responsibility for well-tested pieces of work but once they do maintaining them forever and ever; on the other hand it is hardly likely that had Avec gained full institutional support of the Methodist Church that it would have survived the draconian cuts associated with Fruitful Field! However this might be, we, Trustees and staff, failed to get the institutional support in the 80s and 90s which would have extended Avec's life at least into this century. That is one way of apportioning culpability, another, and possibly more profound way is to say that the churches as institutions failed to see the significance of Avec to their work and those that did failed to take the necessary action to ensure that it could continue to provide the much needed and valued services for as long as it was necessary to do so and that it was adequately staffed so that staff members were stretched but not stressed to breaking and burn out.

⁵⁷Subsequently, further work showed that from c 1994 – 66/7 there were real grounds for thinking/hoping/believing that Westminster College would form a training consultancy unit. Discussions from c1993 with Westminster led me to becoming an emeritus senior research fellow with the brief that I explore the possibility of forming a consultancy service for MTh students. In turn that led to Westminster hosting a prestigious consultative conference in 1996 about consultancy for ministry. Sadly, as productive as

these various discussions were they did not lead to Westminster forming a unity à la avec. Also, I unearthed correspondence with Nigel Gilson at the time of the closure of Avec in which this featured as a possibility. Thus must have had considerable weight in the consideration by the Trustees. All this had slipped my memory – Freudian! It does change my assessment of culpability.

Trustees failed miserably to manage Malcolm Grundy adequately and to rise to the crises that followed his premature departure from the directorship (8 to 12)

I have written about this at some length (cf section 7 above) and I will write more when I return to section 10. This was an enormous failure of nerve and betrayal of Avec's heritage which led them to plunder and squander Avec's capital and promise whilst charging me (but not adequately funding and supporting me) to realize its intellectual assets. How hypocritical and unjust and irresponsible! I find it difficult to forgive them. Even if they could not have found the ways and means to sustain Avec, they could have made the churches feel and accept some responsibility for the vandalism of causing Avec to cease to trade.

Widespread movements in working praxis and culture from directive to non-directive approaches.

We noted that over the lifetime of Avec, widespread changes had and still were occurring in the praxis and culture of working with people in churches from directive to non-directive approaches. Working collaboratively, promoting involvement and egalitarian participation, being open and transparent, for example, were becoming normative acceptable and politically correct ways of going about church and community work. Whilst these were not generally seen or acknowledged to be derivatives of a non-directive approach they undoubtedly are. It is arguable that one of the primary influences over their development was the advent of non-directivity in community development and in counselling and that Avec made a contribution to these movements.

We found ourselves wondering what effect these movements had upon the felt need for Avec and a thoroughgoing overt presentation of the non-directive approach. I am convinced of the need whilst recognising that the felt need might well be weakened – indeed there is evidence for that. Amongst the reasons for the ongoing need I would suggest that there is need for an overarching theoretical rationale for these derivatives such as collaboration, participation. The non-directive concept contributes significantly to that.

Such a rationale is essential to the understanding, praxis and development of these derivatives and making creative connection between them.

Avec inspired follow-through developments (13)

A number of the follow-through developments were named. Here I simply note them because they are described and discussed elsewhere in these 'Notes From Retirement'.

- Some Associates ran a number of Avec type courses for some time but failed to maintain them. (14,15)
- Intellectual assets of Avec were harvested through a number of books and through post-graduate courses. (16)
- Avec Resources Trust founded and continues to provide material and promote Avec and care for the Archives. (17)
- Postgraduate courses in consultancy, ministry and mission established and are continuing. (18)
- Avec Archives organized and established. (19)
- In-service training of preachers undertaken and a book on it published. (20)
- And so much more including Catherine's work and mine (see *Archives Catalogue*), that of Henry and Fred in mediation in Ireland, Charles' consultancy work...

The past, present and future impact, influence, inspiration of Avec is incredibly impressive and immeasurable.

Throughout the conversation was punctuated especially by Fred and Henry with statements about the enormity and invaluable contributions that Avec had and continues to make and will do so into the distant future. They were also reminding us that by the very nature these contributions cannot be qualified, measured, calculated... They were making these contributions to balance out as it were our preoccupation by design on the failure of Avec and the loss that came from its closure. A necessary correction, the closure was factual and tangible; the real abiding contributions are also real but hidden.

Setting the closure of Avec in this wider context was revealing and liberating. Amongst other things it helped me to see more clearly the authority of the situation in which I (and others) operated and know my sphere of

influence and freedom to act constructively diminished considerably once I had resigned as direct. From that position I made significant contributions to salvaging the heritage of Avec and making its praxis and what had been learnt widely accessible. Others too have made and continue to make significant ongoing Avec type/inspired contributions to church and community development work. But the redeeming and resurrection of the Avec's contribution is in God's hands. (See my theological reflection in *Reflecting on Life and Ministry in Retirement*.)

Theological cum Spiritual Post Script

⁵⁸I thought I had completed this section until prompted to go deeper by one of those meaningful coincidences. As I approached my morning devotions I was constrained to a book of devotional pieces by Gerrard W Hughes, *God of Compassion*, which I used to my great advantage but left uncompleted some weeks ago. Returning to the book at the point at which I had left it, I found myself moved and challenged by his reflections on Peter's conversation about forgiveness with Jesus: 'Lord, how often must I forgive my brother...?' Jesus answered, 'Seventy-seven times'. (Matthew 18: 21-22; pp 87-88). Immediately I knew that this was speaking to me about forgiving myself and others over Avec's closure. As I read further Hughes' reflections I was taken to new levels of understanding about the processes of challenges of forgiving implicit in Jesus' command to forgive endlessly. This is the passage:

Our offenders can become, unwittingly, our greatest benefactors, for they make us aware of our inability to forgive, or to do anything virtuous. They therefore force us to ask God to take over and to forgive through us. So the first benefit of the offender is to set us on the path of spiritual poverty. The other benefit is that we come to understand more clearly the meaning of Jesus's advice to Peter, that he must forgive seventy-seven times. This advice used to seem to me not only excessive but singularly ineffective. If I forgive, and my brother continues to offend another seventy-six times, then my forgiveness does not seem to be helping him! But in trying to forgive, we become more aware of the many-layered nature of our consciousness. Having forgiven once, we find further layers of consciousness within us which have not yet forgiven; not just seven layers, but seventy-seven, and as we reach deeper layers, we have to learn to forgive the one offence again and again. So our offender has helped us to understand the nature of faith and of Jesus's teaching.

Some things came to me very forcibly. This section is a serious exercise in the systematic analysis of culpability. What I was now being challenged

to proceed to was a further exercise in forgiveness. Analysis does not equal forgiveness. Understanding and apportioning culpability, which is what I/we tried to do, may help it or may hinder the act and processes of forgiving or it could be used as a means of justifying oneself. Whilst there was an element of that in the analysis we did it was by no means dominant or pervasive. Overwhelmingly, I wanted to understand – or more precisely the new insights I gained were the aspects I valued and treasured and they came unexpectedly. In fact what I gained from Gerrard Hughes was his idea of the ‘many-layered nature of our consciousness.’ The analysis took me to a deeper and more profound level of consciousness of what happened, how and why it happened and the multiplicity of culpability including my own. In doing so it revealed more clearly who and what has to be forgiven and thus refined the processes and the act(s) of forgiveness. In short, the analysis is a potential facilitator of forgiveness by preparing the ground for it to take place at a more profound and realistic and therapeutic levels of intellectual and spiritual consciousness. That does not necessarily make the process easier! I will have to work at it seventy times seven and at seventy times seven levels of consciousness possibly for the remainder of my life. God help me.

11. My Overall Thoughts and Feelings, 2014

As I come to the end of this Part my overwhelming feelings are of relief and gratitude. Relief because it has taken me much longer to complete it than I ever anticipated. Unbelievably I started it at the end of August last year. Admittedly I have put it to one side in order to do other things – papers on ministry in retirement and on work consultancy services for missionaries, 1975–95, work on Catherine’s book, consultations, Christmas correspondence, holidays in the USA, London and Cyprus and reorganising the house! So it is not surprising that it has taken me so long to reach this point. At times I felt I was not going to finish it, but thank God that I have. I am full of gratitude because it has been as rewarding as it has been demanding and for the help of the stimulus I have received especially from Catherine, Charles, Fred and Henry: see the discussions written up in the previous section.

Each of the sections of this Part has in one way or another been reflective: I have described events and expressed my thoughts and my feelings about them as openly as possible; I have noted positional and affective shifts in my understanding of various aspects of my vocational life which occurred during this period; I have also described shifts in my thinking and feelings engendered by researching and writing up this Part.

Summarising and classifying what has emerged would be an interesting exercise. However, in this is not an exercise I want to undertake at this point. Reflecting on this period has gone on for far too long already and I want closure of the reflective processes in order to allow me to assimilate the new insights. So, I have opted to try to capture what I am thinking and feeling now about this period as a consequence of revisiting it openly and in-depth and to make sense of the rough notes I have made as I did so. This has led me to describe my feelings and the impact this period has had upon me and how I emerged from it.

One of the dangers of such a long drawn out process is that I forget what I have written and repeat myself because I have not yet indexed this material!

Thoughts and feelings about the period 1976 – 94

This period had three phases. It is convenient to describe my thoughts and feelings in relation to each and all of these phases. They were

I 1976 – 91, during this period I was the Director of Avec;

II 1991 – 93, during this period I was a research worker to Avec and tutor to the diploma in church and community development;

III 1993 – 94, during this period I continued my research and was an active supernumerary minister in the Victoria and Chelsea circuit.

Phase I

Being involved in such exciting worthwhile and rewarding vocational work was an enormous privilege. I am humbled by having been called and entrusted by God to direct this work and participate in it. I am moved and deeply thankful for what God made of me through doing this work and the status conferred upon me through it. I count myself fortunate and blessed. My gratitude knows no bounds.

The work of Avec frequently took me to the limits of my physical, intellectual, theological and spiritual abilities and capacities – and not infrequently beyond them. How often I wished that I had greater powers and resources! One of the things that struck me about Ted Rogers was that he always seemed to be working comfortably within his abilities and capacities; his limits, competence and confidence seemed to be well beyond any intellectual challenges that he faced no matter how great they were. I mentioned this to him one day and with disdain he said something to

ConfidentialREASONS FOR SEEKING EARLY RETIREMENT

Since 1976 I have been working with Avec, an ecumenical service agency for church and community work, first as founder director and then since 1991 as research worker. The past three years have been a prolonged period of painful uncertainty for my wife and myself, latterly because of the failure to secure the funds for the research work. When the new director, the Revd Canon Malcolm Grundy, was appointed in January 1991 the plan was that during '91-'94 about half my time would be spent on research and half on self financing work: running a two-year part time diploma, two short courses and some consultancy work. The aim was to make Avec's services and experience more widely available through an extended programme of work (which the new director would head up) and through "harvesting" what was being learnt from the work done 1976-1991. A grant was expected to cover the research. That did not materialise. So in July '91 the Trustees set up a research fund and appointed me as the research worker from '91 to '94 (the planned date of my retirement). Attempts to raise the money for the research have failed. To sustain me in the work the Trustees have had to draw heavily upon their reserve fund. Earlier this year it became clear that to fund me and my research for '93-'94 would exhaust Avec's reserves, prevent the Trustees appointing someone to succeed Miss Catherine Widdicombe (a founder director) when she retired in August 1992 and adversely affect development of the mainstream work of Avec. I felt very bad about this. I feared that it might undermine the good working relationship that I have had with my successor who has been very supportive and understanding so far. I know that he was feeling the stress of the financial problems that came from the lack of research funds. Increasingly I felt that I had to produce extraordinarily good results to justify the cost to Avec of funding this research. The accumulative effect of all this was (is) both stressful and debilitating.

These difficulties have caused me to re-think the conviction that I should do this "harvesting" but it remains firm. I have examined it as carefully as I can for myself and with the Trustees and the research advisory and support group they advised me to form (The Revd Dr Michael Bayley, the Revd David Deeks, the Revd Dr Leslie Griffiths, the Revd Peter Russell and Miss Catherine Widdicombe).

At long last a plan has emerged which would enable me to get on with the work I believe under God that I should do by freeing me and Avec from the tangle of difficulties we are experiencing. This plan now depends upon the Methodist Church giving me permission to retire in 1993 instead of 1994 and to become an active supernumary for one year in the Victoria and Chelsea Circuit. Avec and the Circuit have a financial plan in hand to cover such an arrangement which will cover my costs and those of the research. Also I have applied for a Leverhulme Emeritus Fellowship. The financial plan does not depend upon this because of previous failures to get research grants. If I do get such a grant it will reduce the costs to Avec. Attached is an extract from the application which sets out the area of research and the nature of the proposal. (My research support group fully supports this proposal.) This plan would enable me to continue to serve the Victoria and Chelsea Circuit and to do the research.

Paradoxically, therefore, I am seeking permission to become a supernumary so that I can get on with what I believe is an essential phase of my ministry.

Basically the financial arrangement is that Avec and the Circuit will bring my pension up to stipend level and provide a housing allowance. Should the Leverhulme application fail, Avec has agreed to underwrite the costs of the research up to £6,000.

George Lovell
George Lovell
23rd November 1992

the affect, ‘Well, of course!’ He seemed to know nothing of the kind of struggles that I had experienced in trying to get my mind around things. I felt quite inadequate and rebuked.

Undoubtedly I got a better perspective on things through writing these notes and so I feel the effort it has taken is well rewarded.

Overall I feel much more reconciled to the closure of Avec and those engaged in it; I think I have forgiven them and myself for what happened not least through gaining a deeper understanding of the multiple and systemic nature of the causes. Nonetheless I deeply regret the closure and all that was lost through it.

Phase II

Eventually, the difficulties in getting started on harvesting Avec’s assets were overcome and during this and the next phase I made good progress in this task. In a later section I described the various ways in which Avec’s assets have been and continue to be made available.

I had insufficient opportunities to write during phase I; this was corrected in Phases II and III; from then and until now, writing has been the central fact feature of my working life. This aspect of my life is very important to me and very fulfilling.

My collegial relationships with Catherine were fully restored for which I was and remain deeply thankful.

During this Phase I came to the conclusion that during Phase I had made the mistake of assuming the life and work of Avec was more important than my own vocational life and work. I think this thought first appeared around the time that it was agreed that I should retire as Director of Avec and was firmed up when it was proving difficult to decide just what I should do to continue what I believed to be my God-given vocation to work out – in, with and through the Church through my calling as a Methodist minister – the implications of the non-directive approach to church and community development. I have been troubled by it ever since. It became an unexamined mantra, the repetition of which expressed something of my frustration and anger about the vocational limbo and confusion in which I found myself. Various I have felt that I made the mistake of putting Avec’s interest before mine, that in the divine scheme of things it was more important than me; that unhelpfully I confused or equated my vocational life with that of Avec’s. I came to believe that this was a cardinal error and I

felt annoyed with myself for making it and guilty for having done so.

I have become convinced that I must consider this critically before concluding this part of my notes. Throughout my Parchmore, Project 70 – 75 and Avec appointments I have felt firmly held, constrained, by God to those ministries – as I explained this warmly and enthusiastically, I used to hold out my cupped hands to demonstrate and emphasize what it felt like to be in the creative hands of God. I was absolutely sure that it was these were the things that I should be doing at that time, where I should be; at no time did I think of seeking alternative appointments – nor was I approached about any! I loved what I was doing in the sense of being caught up in my vocational destiny. I have testified to this on many occasions. I considered myself blessed to be in this privilege vocational position; I did not pursue my ministry as a career in the hierarchical structures of Methodism and abhorred those who did. Spiritually and professionally, I was double locked into my vocation and to this sequence of ministries which evolved mysteriously. Undoubtedly it was this deep assurance of being where God wanted me to be that enabled me to give myself totally and without reserve to these ministries through this single-minded vocational existentialism. To have considered other vocational possibilities would have disturbed the spiritual cohesion of it all and my vocational poise; I think I would have felt it to be vocational sacrilege and flirting with careerism to even look at other possibilities.

So, why did these thoughts which became convictions arise and is there anything to be learnt from them? One possibility is that there were an attempt to explain to myself and others how I had got into the vocational predicament which ran through this phase; or, again, possibly it was way of blaming and chastising myself for my stupidity which led me into it. An unstated assumption in the thoughts was that had I been clearer about the vocational relationships between Avec and me I would have avoided the undesirable position in which I found myself. To say the least, this is a questionable assumption.

The more I thought about it the more convinced I become that, given the circumstances, a clinical examination of my vocational commitment to Avec during my time as director, i.e. phase I, was neither possible nor desirable: it was not possible because I was so sure that I was where I should be until it became clear that God was calling me to something else; undesirable because I think it could have seriously disturbed my vocational equilibrium in the situation and the work in which I was deeply engaged.

Reflecting on what I have just written led me to see that, in fact, the idea

of taking charge of my vocational deployment and destiny in a rational calculating sort of way would have been in direct contradiction to my experience of the ways in which my vocation actually evolved and developed. The way in which in reality I found and pursued my providential way was: by waiting upon God's promptings and callings; responding to events and opportunities and openings which seemed to be of his doing. I did not plot my vocational career; I discovered it as it was revealed to me stage by stage, sequence by sequence. This helps me to see just what an aberration the thoughts I had were and that I had confused the relative importance of my vocation and the life and work of Avec. The way in which my vocational path had been revealed to me and I discovered it can be described as an existential process: and as somebody once said it is not possible to argue your way to an existential proposition – and that is what Christian vocation has been all about for me. I did not plot my vocational career; I discovered it as it was revealed to me. This helps me to see the errors of the thoughts I had and consequently to see phase I in a very different light, and much more wholesome way.

Inevitably my withdrawal from Avec and the transition to the next phase in my vocational life were going to be traumatic. However, I think they could have been managed better than they were and I think that they would have been had Reg Batten and Ted Rogers being involved in the processes. But sadly that was not so.

Phases II and III

Through writing these sections I have come to see the awful mistake that I made during this period in thinking of my life and work and that of Avec as separable and possibly in a competitive relationship vocationally. In fact they were in and an extra ordinarily reciprocal creative relationship. Along with others I brought Avec into being and developed it into an agency with an outstanding track record of creativity. In turn the life and work of Avec and those with whom I worked became an extra ordinarily creative influence upon me throughout its existence – and as these notes show remain so. There was in fact a powerful creative synergy between Avec and me. Amongst other things this is a sober reminder of the ways in which distress, disappointment in bereavement and the emotions that accompany them can generate distorted ideas and concepts and engenders

spurious feelings about reality.

Alongside these reflections, which make much sense to me, I found myself thinking about my vocational life (and that of others) and the work and life of Avec in relation to the nondirective approach to church and community development workers being a movement. I wrote about this earlier. Avec – and any other organisation – is that it has a life cycle just as I have (see *Sustaining Preachers and Preaching*, chapter 3). Movements have an ongoing life, flowing like a river through the past into the present and future. Movements that are of God – and I believe the nondirective approach to working with people for human and spiritual development is of God – moving inexorably through time and space and history. Countless vocational lives and organisations feed this movement – like tributary streams for a time. I think it would have been helpful for me to have been able to conceptualize my contribution to this movement – and that of others: Batten, Catherine the Avec staff and countless others and that of Avec which became a flagship of this movement – in this way. He changes radically the discussion about my vocation versus Avec's – or anyone else's and if I model this movement as one of those which make up the kingdom of God (the rivers of the kingdom) in all the contributions which come into being and cease and die are part of the vocational economy of the kingdom.

This extended period continued the powerful formative influence Parchmore and project 70 – 75 and made upon. The cumulative effect made me into a highly professional widely experienced professional church and community development, researcher, trainer and theoretician. Moreover, I became a national figure in this field of work and discipline with considerable status ecumenically. Catherine realized one of her ambitions, 'to release me for the work of the whole Church!) In fact I emerged at the end of this period uniquely equipped for a further 20 years (to date!) of extended creative activity in the same and related fields of church and community development work described in parts 9:5 – 9.

Phase III

Eventually and providentially during this phase the next stage in my vocational life began to open up in the most exciting way as will become apparent in Part 9: 6.

