CHAPTER THREE

Working on Situations

Periodically Avec organizes ecumenical consultations for people with regional and national appointments. Amongst other things each participant makes a study of his/her work. The first part of this chapter describes the one made in 1988 by a Suffragan Bishop of the Church of England who had been in post three years after a prolonged and distinguished ministry as a parish priest in England and Africa.* Brief observations on the substance of the work study are then given in part two and notes on the work-study process in part three.

I. WORKING WITH A BISHOP ON HIS SITUATION

In order to illustrate the work-study process I describe each of the stages and what emerged from them: the bishop's preparation; the analysis of his situation in a sub-group during the first week of the consultation; the work done between the first and the second week held a month later; the designing and planning done during the second week in the same sub-group.

1. The Bishop's Work Paper

Prior to the consultative sessions the Bishop wrote what we call a "work paper" based on the outline given in Appendix I. To encourage people to get at the essentials we suggest that they aim to make them about 2,000 words long. In this section I quote extensively from the four parts of the Bishop's paper because what he wrote greatly helps us to understand his perspective on his work—and in the first instance we must work to that.

Part One: My Working Life, Journey and Story
Looking back over his life as a priest in the Church of England he identified three landmarks.

   Landmark 1. After conversion to Christianity at University, and then ordination, I arrived in the centre of a large English city still full of the enthusiasm of conversion. In a centre-city/inner-city area, I found with some

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*The Bishop generously gave permission for me to use the study for this book, which I deeply appreciate. For various reasons we decided to disguise his identity and that of his Diocese.

alarm that I only seemed able to share my spiritual experience with people of a similar background to myself—commuting church-goers, not those who lived locally. With those young people with whom I was particularly connected locally, there seemed to be a sheet of plate glass between us on any matters to do with the Christian faith. I was happy in their company in general, and I think they with me. Why the blockage?

Landmark 2. This was followed by my ministry in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) from 1960–1970. Because of seeing Christ through the eyes of people of another culture, race, and language, I had to dissect those things in my own faith that were essentially English rather than Christian. The Bible seen through African eyes reveals its deeply corporate understanding of human nature and the world. In the same mix was a rapidly growing political awareness.

Landmark 3. On return to work again in the centre of the same English city, I realised that the plate glass screen that I had experienced before was about cultural division between middle-class Christianity, and the people of that inner city. Its depth and importance was no less than the cultural and racial gap that I had met in Rhodesia. I began a continuing process of exploring ways in which the structures of our society mould people's perceptions of faith, and either block it off or open the door to very attenuated forms.

During the third of these phases of his ministry he was influenced by the approach to urban mission by people such as David Sheppard, Neville Black, Jim Hart, and Roger Dowley, all members of the Evangelical Urban Training Project. They helped him to grapple with the question: "How is the Gospel communicated to communities that are not middle-class and professional, who can read but don't, whose style is much more corporate?"

Part Two: My beliefs and purposes
The Bishop expressed his beliefs and purposes in this way:

I became a Christian part-way through doing a degree in modern languages, then went to a theological college at which were many students with absolutist views of scripture. I found my new faith (with many old roots to it) articulated in two evangelical emphases: the uniqueness of the scriptural revelation, and the experience of justification by grace through faith. I found myself equally sceptical of the fundamentalism of other students and the various forms of biblical criticism to which we were introduced. The Church did not figure very much in my thinking, and I had difficulty in taking various "religious" activities seriously. Since then I have been concerned with the corporate aspect of the Christian faith, through ministry in Africa, and in exploring how far the Christian faith has been imprisoned by European culture and concepts. The Old Testament has become more and more important to me, both in my own understanding and in preaching and teaching. I have come to respect "religion" in a way I found difficult at first, but usually folk-religion rather than the religiosity of the Christian Church.

I have had to face my own pragmatism, in the sense that most of the thinking I have done since becoming a Christian has been retrospective. My instinct has always been to do a thing in what seems to be the most immediate practical way, and it is then hard work to conceptualize or think in long-term strategies. I have been relieved to discover a lot of theology is (like mine) retrospective thinking (at its best), and self/Church-justification (at its worst); that, however, does not let me off the hook of having to work hard to stop myself being satisfied with hand-to-mouth practicalities.

I spent the 1960s, so strong in their secular drive in the U.K., in a highly religious society in Rhodesia. I found the only way I could cross the culture gap there was in attempting to do good "in minute particulars", as Blake so clearly saw. Generalities like "God is everywhere" seemed little different from "God is nowhere"; Anglican inclusiveness, "God bless everybody", seemed little different from not caring about anyone. If God did his work in the minute particulars of the life and death of Jesus Christ, then communicating that faith came from amidst the minute particulars in people's lives. "God bless everybody", in a nation where power was so unjustly divided between black and white, meant getting involved in things that were a very long way from "blessing". From that experience came a new struggle with the meaning of justification by grace through faith: I have become increasingly convinced that as a Church we seek to be justified by decency and trying to live a good life, and no independent observer would ever believe we were justified by grace through faith. How can we bear a truer witness to what to me is at the heart of the Christian experience?

Here, too, lies the key to the corporate questions. Until we discover the depth and reality of our corporate responsibility—i.e. the impossibility of disclaiming our share in the destructiveness to others of things which benefit us—we will never know how much and how desperate is our need for justification by grace. The main thrust of my ministry in this country since 1970 has therefore been to interpret these facts to the powerful and the wealthy, through known and observable alliances with those on the wrong end of things (embarrassingly, the dispossessed in this country are usually folk religious but not Christian—in Rhodesia they were often Christian). I believe whatever happens that is creative must come from a real sense of justification by grace, ridding us of the guilt that is often the motivation for doing almost the same things.

Part Three: My present job
Becoming a Bishop involved changing dioceses to work in another English city, one of the largest. He described the job and his feelings about it in this way:

In the 1980s the Diocese was divided into three areas, and I was given the eastern block, which covered three local authority areas give or take a bit. The area division meant that the diocese was not to be lumbered with three synods, three office centres etc., but to work as one in those respects, while giving area bishops, with two archdeacons, full responsibility for the care of clergy and full-time lay staff, relationship with the parishes concerned, replacement of staff in vacancies, relations with secular bodies.

I find the framework a satisfactory one in that it does not over-burden us with triplicate structures, but does give considerable freedom to act within the area and in the context of an episcopal team. It so happens that I find the present team one which is very easy to work with, that we have an area of agreement which is essential for co-operative work, and yet we are widely differing personalities and outlooks.

It is necessary for the diocesan-wide bodies to be divided out between the four bishops, and this means chairmanship of boards. This is a much more difficult part of the work to handle in a diocese of over 300 parishes, and a massively dense population area. My brief is the Board of Social Responsibility (B.S.R.) and an ad hoc policy group on ministry issues. The B.S.R. has grave difficulties in communication with a large diocese, and considerable frustration in how the considerable abilities of a number of the delegates (representing six archdeaconries) can best be deployed. There is no full-time officer, but a number of agencies which relate to it from a very independent position. Under social responsibility in this large city, the issues are many and vast, and raise the question of the best use of very small resources.

Community and Community Issues in the Area: In a diocese in which a third of the parishes are urban priority, my area has over 100 churches with fifty-six UPA, and sixteen marginal UPA parishes. It is heavily inner city and council estate. Just over two-thirds raise all the issues of deprivation, and the congregations are usually small, hard-pressed, and tenacious. Responses to the urban priority issues range from the exciting to the cataclysmically bad. I see my role as affirming, and standing with, small communities in such situations, particularly where exciting things are happening, but the style is totally contrary to the professional, middle-class style of the Church of England.

It was experience in urban work which made it seem good to respond to the invitation to come to this diocese. I find relationships with such people easy and their continuing lack of response to the Gospel a stubborn fact which goes on engaging me. I find contact with people in this area enjoyable, opportunities to preach and teach around a hundred-odd churches and congregations very satisfying, the wide range of people in the secular world who are ready to have contact with the bishop good. Particular difficulties are the enormous amount of paperwork, lack of immediate local community, pastoral pressures of an over-large organization (140 full-time staff). I want space for thought and experiment in evangelism, more resources to tackle social-responsibility issues, alternative styles of ministry to the parochial.

Ecumenical Relationships: I represent the diocese on the City Churches' Group (social-responsibility orientated), and attend the City Church Leaders' Group. The latter is the sponsoring body for ecumenical projects in the area, and handles a great deal of business with considerable difficulty. I groan at the cumbersomeness of the present procedures, but look with complete disbelief at the heavy load, in this respect, carried by other church leaders covering so many different ecumenical regions.

The Diocesan Organization: The Church of England carries within it uncomfortably two kinds of government—episcopal (monarchical in origin) and synodical (democratic in aspiration). As an area bishop I am part of the following structure: parish—parish priest—rural dean—archdeacon—area bishop—diocesan bishop (note this line has a distinct break between rural dean and archdeacon, reflecting to some degree the gap between shop steward and line management). In this line, I meet with the diocesan bishop and the other two area bishops regularly, with the bishop's staff meeting (diocesan officers, and all archdeacons), with my two area archdeacons, and with the area rural deans. At present there is no other area meeting, although we propose a meeting of deanery synod lay chairpeople, together with the rural deans as an expression of the area identity.

The second line is parochial church council—deanery synod—diocesan synod—bishop's council—diocesan bishop, and in this line I am a member of the diocesan synod and the bishop's council. Historically there is a direct link between the bishop and the churchwardens in each congregation, which looks like part of the democratic line but is part of the older episcopal system. Today, the churchwardens or other parish representatives have got the final say in all clerical appointments.

The four bishops have recently been using a business consultant to help in facilitating their own meetings, and he has pressed consistently for more strategic thinking and less time spent on nuts and bolts. The fact that we do not meet daily in any one building, and relate to the two differing governmental processes, means that we have to do a lot of business that others would do during the morning tea break.

One of the astonishing obstacles is the lack of processes of communication in the diocese. The bishop can make statements in synod, which is really only heard by the delegates present, and rarely communicated to anyone else. The diocesan newspaper handout (four times a year) is a newly created means of communication, but many are left in church porches unread. The monthly notice paper that goes out to all clergy is but rarely made available in any effective way to lay people. This (typical of the Church of England in general) means that congregations are still struggling with "new" pressures upon them, i.e. the necessity of paying clergy from weekly offerings, and the need for co-operative ministry—both of which have been obvious and harsh realities for the last two decades.

Members of the Board of Social Responsibility recently drew diagrams of the diocese as we see it, and the most typical picture was of a large circle symbolizing the parish, an arm to a small circle standing for the deanery, and an arm to a tiny dot in the distance called the diocese. The Church of England as a whole did not get into the picture, and this is both the strength and the problem of the parochial system—everyone outside the parish being "them", and many inside!

My Place: I work very happily in two *primary teams* of four bishops, and myself and two archdeacons. I see these as both working relationships, and supportive ones, in shared worship, discussion and mutual concern. This has taken some while to develop, and it was a shock to my personal system to leave the primary community of the parish after thirty years and enter this

kind of role. It has also been a problem for my wife, who has tried to solve it by belonging to the local parish where we happen to live.

In analysing a year's work, relations with the clergy and the working of the *parochial system* occupies a very large percentage of my time. I seek to meet all clergy and full-time lay staff (together with the archdeacons), for appraisal/support annually, and try to visit each parish for two days on a five-year cycle. I meet clergy for many other interviews on particular issues, and all who are in training. Parish groupings help to reduce the load of Confirmation services, and are about a third of some ninety liturgical occasions (including ordinations and the licensing of new appointees).

As an evangelical bishop, I am part of a number of national networks, especially those dealing with urban issues (Evangelical Coalition for Urban Mission, and Evangelical Alliance urban group). I feel a particular responsibility in this, as evangelical churches of all denominations have not been notable for urban involvement, so many being suburban and/or pietist in style. I am actively involved in the Evangelical Urban Training Project, which, while inevitably managerial, has also got considerable input from shared vision and fellowship.

My Working Relationships: My relationship with the local area authorities has been considerably helped by the "Faith in the City" report. Each of the three local authorities with which I am involved took the initiative in organizing conferences, assuming automatically an ecumenical basis, and bringing together people in all the churches who had never met before. A traditional left-wing suspicion of the Church has been set aside, mainly because all three local authority areas are desperate for allies. It has, however, enabled much more speedy confidence to be built up both with party leaders and with the executives. Relationships with MPs are reasonable, surprisingly four are conservative, in contrast to the local authorities. Four out of the nine affirm specific Christian commitment, which cuts across the political divides sufficiently to establish confidence.

Relationships with the police are on two levels—through the City Church Leaders' and Anglican bishops' meetings with the city police and locally with the consultative groups. I was deeply involved in trying to resolve the breakdown in relationships between the local communities and the police. Relationships with the city police, however, are considerably more difficult than my previous experience with the police in another metropolitan area.

Part Four: My Aims for the Consultation
The work paper concluded with a statement of what the Bishop wanted to get out of the consultation. These are described in the next section.

2. Studying the Situation Over the Period of the Consultation

Writing the paper involved the Bishop's thinking, reflecting and writing about his ministry personally and in private in a way he had not done previously. The paper was circulated to the members of the consultancy group with whom he

was going to work on his situation: a Chairman of a District (subsequently the first woman President of the Methodist Conference); a Church Army officer with national responsibilities; two provincials of R.C. religious orders, one male and the other female, and the President of an R.C. lay community of women; and two staff members, an Anglican and myself a Methodist. (The members of the group were not previously known to the Bishop and they had no experience of his diocese.) The Bishop had a one-and-a-half-hour and a twenty-minute session with this group during the first week exclusively on his situation and the same in the second week: no anecdotes or references to other situations were allowed during these sessions. Also, he had private consultations with me before and after the longer group sessions to prepare for them and to follow them through. A member took notes for the Bishop during the group sessions. After each session the Bishop wrote and shared notes of any developments in his thought. Each participant took a turn in acting as observer to the group and fed in their observations on process or content before the end of the session. Their observations on content are subsumed in this section, and those on process in Part III.

The consultancy process took various twists and turns: it was discursive and focused; it was bemusing and exciting; it eventually led to a most important disclosure about the Bishop's theological approach. Quite deliberately, I have described the process stage by stage so that the reader might sense and feel the realities and messiness of it.

The Bishop's Aims for the Consultation
In his work paper the Bishop had said that he would like to get the following out of the consultation:

1. Help in balancing a pragmatic temperament with the need for analysis and strategy.

2. How to handle the vast range of relationships in which anyone in my position is now involved—perhaps the best example being the difficulty of the ecumenical relationships in the city Church Leaders' Group.

3. How to handle the vast quantity of paperwork which passes through my hands—nothing can be addressed without proper research.

4. How to give space for my personal pilgrimage in relation to this role (I have not gone into this aspect, as it is not the prime purpose of the consultation—the issue of how to give space for it, however, seems to me to be relevant.)

The process in which we were engaged made contributions towards achieving Aim 1. The third aim, a problem members of the consultation had in common, was dealt with in a plenary session. We approached the two other aims via an analysis with the Bishop of his situation: quite deliberately we did not tackle

them as problems; we used them to help us to understand the Bishop and his situation and to discern with him just what was needed to promote development.

The First Consultancy Group Session

Studying the paper and the Bishop's aims for the consultation before I met him led me to an hypothesis which was very much in my mind as I entered the consultations: the Bishop's capacity for reflecting, conceptualizing and thinking out long-term strategies would improve and he would have more time to think and experiment *if* he were able to work to the diocesan system as well as he could to the parochial system *and* if he worked primarily to the diocesan system.

We, the group members, committed ourselves to three tasks in this session. The first was to understand how the Bishop saw and felt about his work and situation—to see it through his eyes; to stand in his shoes; to empathize with him. The second was to analyse the underlying dynamics of the situation with the Bishop to discover what made things work and what prevented them from doing so. The third task was to help the Bishop to determine the action most likely to promote overall development. Wide-ranging discussions led us to explore the following three aspects.

(a) The Parish Perspective: Two principal concerns emerged from exploring with the Bishop his experiences of working with the parishes. First, he was finding it very difficult to get the parishes to take seriously what he saw to be their responsibilities for social issues and concerns. Generally speaking, he said, they did not engage with what emerges from diocesan and national social-responsibility boards and committees no matter how much he tried to get them to do so. He felt bad about this because the needs were great and because the time he spent on the parishes (he estimated 85 per cent of his working time) prevented him becoming as involved as he would have liked with various non-church people who wished to explore social issues and concerns with him. The second concern was identified by considering the hypothesis I had formulated. In fact the Bishop did find that once he was in a parish the parish perspective would take over. Similarly, he said that when he was working with other units their perspectives took over. Empathizing with them in this way was important. (It was what we were doing in relation to him and his work.) But, we saw, he had also to work to another perspective because these sub-systems together formed a complex system in its own right, the Area of the Diocese for which he was responsible. Essentially this was his working entity and a sub-system of the Diocese and other contingent systems. He had a unique perspective on his area which in turn was an important part of the context of the parishes and other sub-units.

It became evident that the Bishop needed to be clear about his own overall perspective, the perspectives of the people in the sub-units and how the two related to one another.

(b) Justification by Grace through Faith: Members wanted to understand just what it was in the experience of "justification by grace through faith"[1] that led the Bishop to attach such importance to this aspect of Christianity.* He said that the more that he had got involved in the messiness of life, the more important justification by grace through faith had become to him. Essentially it pointed to inner transactions between himself, God and others which made unique contributions to restoring all his human and spiritual relationships.⁺ These transactions were based on grace.⁺⁺ Attributing and accepting culpability can take us only so far. Getting our moral sums roughly right does not of itself bring reconciliation; it can have quite the opposite effect. Christian grace is required. This released him from trying to justify himself publicly and privately through works and through demonstrating and proving himself to be in the right. It was an effective way of dealing with debilitating residual guilt— the guilt that lurks around even when you have done all you can to make amends for your failure and sin. It helped him to acknowledge his culpability openly and with dignity rather than smoothing things over with superficial apologies and casual "forgiveness", and to avoid self-righteousness and defensiveness—all things that inhibit human and spiritual well-being and development. In short, the continuing experience of justification by grace through faith gave him the freedom to get involved with people even though he knew that no matter how much he tried, his behaviour and that of others would be flawed. Many people with whom he worked, including police officers, valued the doctrine for similar reasons.

Protestant privatized Christianity, he felt, emphasizes the restoration of relationships between individuals and God through justification by grace through faith but neglects its application to collectives. He wished to see this imbalance corrected. He wanted to get people to see the relevance of the doctrine to their work in church and community for development as well as for their own personal spiritual well-being. The group was aware that this doctrine could be corrupted into an easy "spiritual" way of avoiding accepting responsibility for our actions and culpability. For the Bishop, as with the New Testament, it is quite the opposite: it is a God-given way of taking our failure and sin so seriously that we wish it to be dealt with radically. What the Bishop was aiming for was for workers and people, individually and corporately, to be living out this aspect of the Christian faith.

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* They were also very interested in the relevance of what the Bishop was saying to them and to their work: they had not previously thought about it in the way in which he was presenting it. The Roman Catholic members were particularly intrigued. But they held to the discipline and stayed with the task of studying the Bishop's work with him.

⁺Somewhat confusingly justification by grace through faith is about restoring relationships rather than making people just.[2]

⁺⁺"Justification is that immediate getting-right with God which God himself accomplishes by his grace when a person has faith".[3]
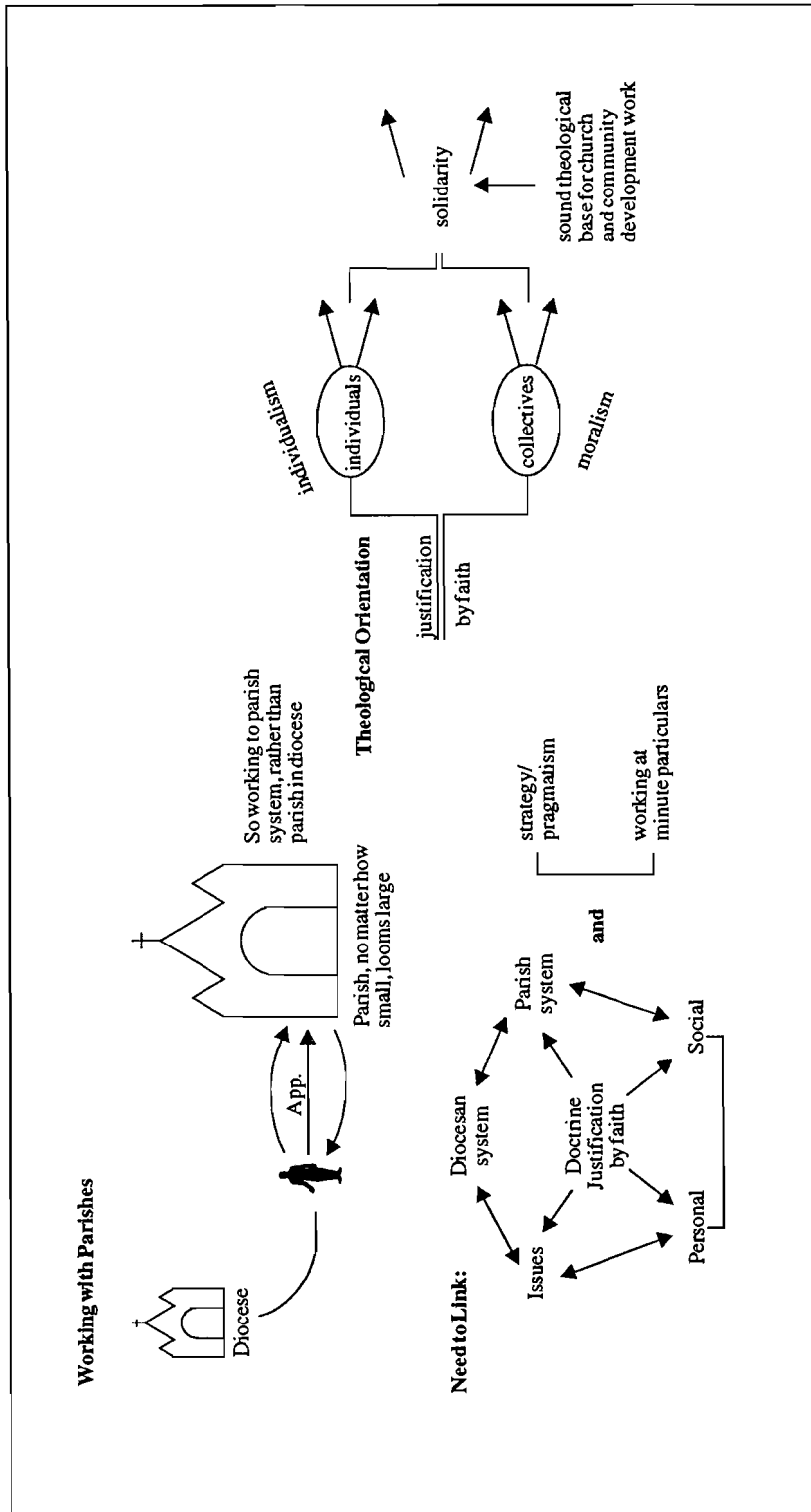
FIGURE 3:1. SOME DIAGRAMS FROM THE FIRST CONSULTANCY GROUP SESSION

(c) **Strategic Thinking and Planning**: Members of the group turned their attention to the kind of strategic thinking and planning that was going on in the Diocese. The discussion led to a chart which showed the various groups with whom he worked on a general continuum from those who were most effectively involved in strategic planning to those least involved. From the most to the least involved it read: the four Bishops, the National Evangelical groups, his area team, the Diocesan Social Responsibility Board, the police, the parishes, ecumenical teams and groups. Making this explicit led the Bishop and the group to a deeper understanding of the situation which provided important information for development planning—and it generated much excitement.

Roughly equal amounts of time were given to discussing these three subjects. Constructing diagrams on large sheets of newsprint helped us to work at them. Copies I made of some of them after the session are reproduced in Figure 3:1 by way of illustration of the use of diagrams. They do not communicate as effectively in their final form as they did to those engaged in the discussion.

Settling on Development Tasks
A few days after the analysis session the group met the Bishop again to consider with him what he felt he needed to do in order to develop his work. By way of preparation for the meeting the Bishop had let us have a note of his subsequent reflections. Sharing the reality of justification by grace through faith, especially its corporate aspects, was, he said, a primary thrust of his ministry because it affects all we do: for instance guilt-free use of "personal space" and participation in social responsibility depended upon it. But he saw real difficulties in sharing the reality because of the "extreme individualism of the dominant suburban culture", the practice of "many other forms of justification", the difficulty of communicating justification on a broad front. Thinking about these things led him to list the contacts he had with people in his Area, the different ways in which he communicated with people and the roles he performed. (As we shall see, this information triggered off a sequence of thought which eventually led to Figure 3:2 and the chart in Display 3:2.)

Mulling this over in the light of what had happened in the first session led the Bishop and the group to settle on the following tasks to be tackled in a session a month later:

1. To discover ways in which I can better express my theological orientation to ministry (justification by grace through faith), apply the doctrine and pursue my purposes in the parishes.

2. To test out the relevance of this doctrine to parishes diverse in theology and in different kinds of social areas.

3. To determine the theological and practical implications for my ministry to the parishes of any conclusions that I reach.

1. *Personal qualities in regard to my work connected with the parochial system (85% of my workload)*
    *   29 years' experience as parish priest
    *   people use me as a leaning post
    *   slow to react to people (not sharp)
    *   give people plenty of space (which some experience as lack of direction)
    *   instincts about people fairly accurate (gut, not reasoned)
    *   people can understand what I am talking about
    *   *but* I do not show my hand, I can be devious and assume others are.

2. *What effect does the reality of justification have on me in these relationships?*
    *   reinforces a natural tendency not to explain myself
    *   allows me to risk getting my hands dirty and allows me to "free wheel" on both doctrinal and moral issues
    *   leads me into alliances of a corporate kind (political, minority group, issue-based) which opens door to criticism/alarm/embarrassment at parochial level (e.g. photographed in protest surrounded by banners saying "Get the Fuzz!")
    *   makes me under-estimate/underplay what significance is placed on a bishop's presence/doings.

3. *What do parishes want of me?*
    *   affirmation—especially struggling urban congregations, or strongly aligned groups in churchmanship terms (catholic, charismatic, evangelical)—often feel that nothing else is wanted!
    *   shared experience in parish problems which leads to sympathy
    *   understandable preaching—which affirms them as part of something much bigger, and of God
    *   speaking with and for them in diocesan, secular and public settings
    *   seeking all possible resources that can encourage the life of the parish—primarily staff
    *   being a "focus" personality, with whom to identify.

4. *What do I not want to happen?*
    *   to affirm the parishes in conservative and individualist stances justified by my own tendency to let people lean, give space, not react sharply, have parochial sympathies
    *   to create ever more "churchy" dimensions in people's lives which become means of justification - either ecclesiastically or morally
    *   to find that upset in the parishes (about bishops who do not exercise discipline over deviants, and are perceived to be engaged in societal change) removes the very open possibility which flows from justification.

DISPLAY 3:1. A NOTE PREPARED FOR THE GROUP BY THE BISHOP

It was suggested that the Bishop could prepare for the session by noting anything that occurred to him in relation to his felt need for a "strategy for the parishes" and the other points made in the first consultancy-group session which concentrated on the analysis.

Working on the Development Tasks
We orientated ourselves to this phase of the work study by agreeing that our dominant activity would now be designing and planning; analysis would be restricted to that which we had to do in order to do the designing. Our job was to help the Bishop to decide what he must and could do. Ideas and plans must fit him and what he could do and what would work in his situation.

Private Preparation
Reflection on the work done so far and the agreed tasks led the Bishop to write and circulate to the members of the group the note presented in Display 3:1.

As part of my preparation for the work group session on the development tasks (a month after the first session), I found myself classifying and cross-referencing the different forms of interaction between the Bishop, the clergy, full-time workers, church wardens and parishioners in his area and the three principal contexts in which this took place:

— **parishes** (during "pastoral visits" and when sharing in special local occasions such as confirmations and patronal festivals);

— **church meetings** (councils, consultative and training sessions);

— **ad hoc consultations** (dealing with things like appointments, human and spiritual problems, major policy matters).

Significant differences between modes of interaction associated with these contexts struck me as important to the task. The geographical location of the first is the parish, the second and third can be sited anywhere. The first is open to anyone, the second and third are open only to those who qualify to be present by virtue of their office or status and are mainly clergy, full-time workers, church wardens or lay workers. The first has generally to do with joyous liturgical events, the second with business and with training (routine and special), the third with important events in the lives of clergy, workers and churches, extraordinary business, critical events and pastoral crises. The first involves churches, congregations, preaching and visiting homes; the second involves committees and councils and formal and informal training sessions; the third involves face-to-face meetings with one person or small groups, interviews, pastoral counselling sessions. Events associated with the first and the third contexts are extraordinary and special to the people whilst they are part
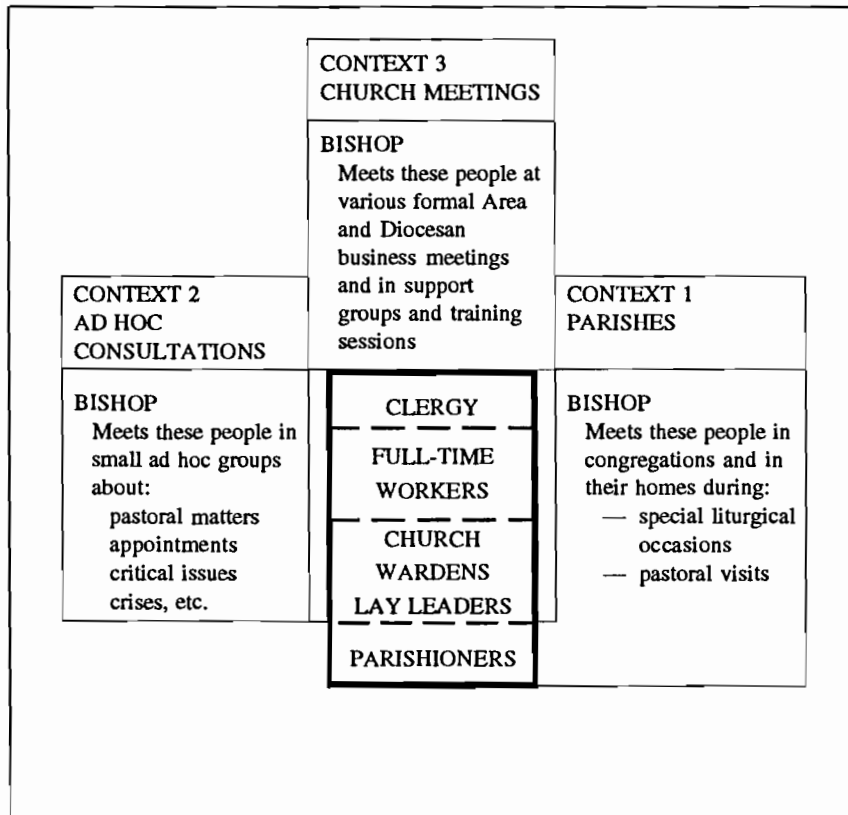
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│                    │ CONTEXT 3            │                  │
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│                    │ BISHOP               │                  │
│                    │ Meets these people at│                  │
│                    │ various formal Area  │                  │
│                    │ and Diocesan         │                  │
│ ┌──────────────┐   │ business meetings    │ ┌──────────────┐ │
│ │ CONTEXT 2    │   │ and in support       │ │ CONTEXT 1    │ │
│ │ AD HOC       │   │ groups and training  │ │ PARISHES     │ │
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│ │ BISHOP       │   ┌──────────────────┐     │ BISHOP       │ │
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│ │ people in    │   ├──────────────────┤     │ people in    │ │
│ │ small ad hoc │   │   FULL-TIME      │     │ congregations│ │
│ │ groups about:│   │   WORKERS        │     │ and in their │ │
│ │  pastoral    │   ├──────────────────┤     │ homes during:│ │
│ │  matters     │   │   CHURCH         │     │ — special    │ │
│ │  appointments│   │   WARDENS        │     │   liturgical │ │
│ │  critical    │   │   LAY LEADERS    │     │   occasions  │ │
│ │  issues      │   ├──────────────────┤     │ — pastoral   │ │
│ │  crises, etc.│   │   PARISHIONERS   │     │   visits     │ │
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FIGURE 3:2. THE BISHOP'S WORK CONTEXTS

of the Bishop's normal round of ministry. Roles, functions, responsibilities and the form and the nature of the exchanges vary significantly from one context to another, as do the abilities required. I modelled it in Figure 3:1.

I shared these ideas with the Bishop in a private consultation to prepare for the next session with the group on the development tasks. He found the distinctions helpful and suggestive of other categories and so we decided to share them with the group.

The Consultative Group's Work With The Bishop on the Development Tasks
As I entered into this session I felt I ought to keep the following things in mind:

— What could be the implications for the Bishop of the different work contexts as he pursues his work generally and his concern about "justification" in particular?

— Is there any danger of the Bishop appearing to justify the doctrine of "justification" and, if so, how can it be avoided?

Context & Features		People		Setting
1. Bishop in Parishes				
official		clergy	in	groups of
festival	with	full-time workers		varying sizes
liturgical		lay leaders		one-to-one
		congregation		
2. Critical moments in Parishes				
face-to-face	with	clergy	in	small groups
consultations		full-time workers		
		church wardens		
		lay leaders		
3. Meetings				
(a) UPA Parishes:				
conferences	with	all clergy and lay	in	large groups(?)
		representatives		
		in diocese		
(b) Deanery Clergy Chapters:				
business	with	clergy	in	medium-sized
meetings				groups
social events	with	whole deanery		groups of
				10-20 people
(c) Area Leaders' Meeting:				
weekly	with	2 Archdeacons	in	groups of three
3 times a year	with	various	in	groups of
		transparochial		various sizes
		officers and rural		
		deans		
4. Appraisal Interviews:				
interviews	with	clergy	in	one-to-one
annually		full-time workers		relationship

DISPLAY 3:2. THE BISHOP'S WORKING RELATIONSHIPS & SETTINGS

— I am clearer about the application of "justification" to individuals than to collectives.

— How can the dangers intrinsic to the use of a dominant theological model be avoided?

The group noted the tasks already agreed and proceeded to work towards them from what had emerged so far about the working situation and the Bishop's ideas about it and his approach to it.

The members found the notes that the Bishop had written between the sessions (cf. Display 3:1) most helpful because they took the thinking forward and enabled them to start closer to the position to which he had now moved. They were struck by the inner freedom that the Bishop had gained through living and working by "justification". Nevertheless, they noted that, misunderstood, this aspect of Christianity can weaken moral effort and responsibility—people can substitute justification indiscriminately for effort they should have made and use it to cover moral lapses they could have avoided. That is a perversion of the doctrine. Pursuing the Christian faith seriously involves working assiduously for the truth in human and spiritual affairs knowing that we are justified, not by works but by grace through faith. Continuing in a state of "justification" is hard work.

The presentation of my classification of the different working contexts animated the group. Quickly the Bishop and the group extended and refined the classification of context 3 and produced the chart presented in Display 3:2.

This classification led the Bishop to see the significance of the distinction between what he referred to as "UPA" parishes (urban priority area parishes, 65% of his Area) and "BUPA" parishes (i.e. more affluent parishes characterised by people belonging to British United Provident Association). UPA parishes get more of the Bishop's attention than the BUPA parishes because they are the majority and they need it; because of the developments following *Faith in the City*;[4] and because of the Bishop's deep commitment to them. Some in the BUPA parishes feel that the Bishop gives an unfair amount of his time to the UPA parishes and that he is more sympathetic to them. This had created tensions. Examining this classification led us to see that most of the work with BUPA and UPA parishes was done quite separately. BUPA and UPA people did not meet; clergy met only at the Area Leaders' Meeting (context 3(c)). Consequently the Bishop, the Archdeacons and the Diocese were the main unifying forces holding the two sections of the Area together. The Bishop and the group felt that creative interaction between clergy, church workers and people in these different kinds of parishes could break down the divisions between them and lead to holistic development. (Meetings planned for deanery, synod, lay chairpeople, and rural deans might help to promote such interaction.) The Bishop said, "clergy and full-time workers are a critical group if anything is to happen" and that a primary need was for them to think together

about their theology and its implications He said that he had not had formal discussions with them about "justification" because he had not so far felt he could without causing theological faction through people taking up churchmanship and doctrinal positions in relation to each other and to him.

The group started to think about how he might get this doctrine over to others. Gradually we saw that getting clergy and workers to think about the Bishop's theological thinking was a one-sided process. What was needed was to get them to think about their own theological ideas and about each other's as well as about the group's. At best such many-sided theological exchanges would affirm everyone, and lead to multi- rather than mono-theological modelling. It would reveal the other theological realities to which the Bishop needs to work from his own theological position and give others the chance to do the same. It could build up collective effort. But it could cause theological confusion, faction and suspicion.

All this convinced the Bishop that the tasks must be changed from discovering ways of expressing, testing and determining the implications of *my theological orientation* to ministry to discovering ways of expressing *our theological orientation*: a radical change which involved taking risks but avoided dangers already foreseen.

Attention then turned to the kind of approach most likely to gain the advantages and minimize the chances of falling foul of the dangers. The Bishop and the group felt that it was necessary to adopt a non-directive approach because it helps people to think about their own ideas and those of others, to give proper weighting to all views regardless of the status of those who hold them and to examine ideas and beliefs non-judgmentally. Discussions of this kind, it was felt, need to take place formally and informally. Alongside this the Bishop and the group saw the need to create opportunities for clergy and full-time workers from UPA and BUPA parishes to meet together with the express purpose of exploring their theology. Groups in which there could be genuine affirmation of people and their thought were seen to be essential because the ability of clergy and workers to sustain their involvement in a critical theological exploration would be related to the quality of the affirmation they received.

Soon after this consultancy session a two-part plan of action which he felt could make generic contributions towards the development of his work and that of his area was forming in the Bishop's mind. The first part involved considering appropriate ways in which he could, formally and informally, share the reality of justification by grace through faith in the areas of work outlined in Figure 3:2 and Display 3:2. Each context called for its own approach. Basics of the other part of the plan he outlined as follows.

1. If anything is to happen the 120 clergy/full-time workers are a *critical group.*

2. Therefore gather clergy and full-time workers:
   — in *borough* groupings?
   — in ways that give reasonable-sized groups and theological variation (prevents forming theological cliques and blocks).

3. *Task*: each of us to articulate our central theological conviction/thrust which determines/moulds our work.
   Caution: must be structured to avoid sterile, fixed-position conflict and to release clergy from threatening/competitive relationships.
   Possible method: people who differ theologically pair off; each explains to the other important aspects of their beliefs/theology; each articulates the beliefs of the other to the satisfaction of the other. This engenders deeper mutual understanding.

4. *Within shared tasks*: my own central conviction is able to emerge non-threateningly; likely to be a number for whom similar convictions are important; some general theological shape may well emerge which allows us freedom to re-examine the theological under-girding of our work.

The objective was to discover ways in which Bishop, clergy and church workers can better express to each other their theological orientations to ministry, examine them critically and determine the implications for them personally and collectively.

II. NOTES ON THE SUBSTANCE OF THE WORK STUDY

One of the striking things about this study is the centrality of an aspect of Christian theology and experience rarely discussed in relation to the church at work in contemporary society amongst the most deprived: justification by grace through faith.* It was tempting to ignore or dismiss it because it was not our common theological currency and because we had to think quite hard to see just what it contributed. Significantly, it was our commitment to the non-directive approach that led us to accept the Bishop's theological thinking and to work at it with him (cf. what the group said about the need for the non-directive approach). Essentially the Bishop presented to us the story of an evangelical minister of great integrity who had found "justification"

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*I have thought much about it in relation to church and community development because my experience and understanding of both justification by grace through faith and of the non-directive approach convince me that they are linked because they share the same nature and quality of acceptance, people being accepted as they are, for what they are and for what they can become. Both are about an acceptance that establishes egalitarian relationships which enables, stimulates and facilitates growth and development.

indispensable to a long and distinguished ministry for justice and the common good in the church and in society.* True to what he said about his pragmatism, he valued and argued the importance of this aspect of Christianity from the practical contributions it had made to him and his ministry.

From his own experience, he was convinced that the quality of church and community work and of the lives of workers depended upon their embracing this doctrine. For several reasons I believe we were right to stay with his concern. First, because it was his concern. Second, getting at the theological heart of our approach to our work in church and community, keeping it in view and reviewing it is very important because of the positive and negative effects it can have upon us and our work. Third, there was no point in questioning the obvious value and importance to the Bishop of "justification", but there was every need to explore how he was going to share his experience and convictions. Doing that led the Bishop quite naturally from a programme based on sharing *his* theology to one based upon people sharing *their* theologies which he "owned". This was a substantial shift in orientation from communicating "my" theology to doing theology together, which had more development potential. (I illustrate and discuss these design models in Chapter 6 section V.) It also led to differentiating and classifying work areas and their significant characteristics and to seeing the dichotomy between UPA and BUPA parishes and the need to promote creative interaction and also finding ways to do so. The classification has many uses. It helps, for instance, to establish programmes that fit the different parts and the whole. Thus it helps the Bishop to think strategically and it helps him to help others to do so.[5] (Having written this up I can see how useful a chart of all the Bishop's work situations could be. I am tempted to try to do it!)

It is intriguing to see how the different lines of exploration and aspects of the analysing and designing came together and looped back to development tasks and aims which once established tended to be in the back rather than the front of our minds: we started from them and returned to them but we did not work at them face on, as it were. In this way progress was made towards the objectives the Bishop had for the consultation particularly in relation to:

— balancing a pragmatic temperament with the need for analysis and strategy—he sustained the analytical process over a period of several months;

— handling the vast range of relationships—we enabled him to differentiate them in ways which helped him to handle them;

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*The biographical outline and the notes about the Bishop's beliefs helped us to see that his experience of "justification" was a powerful thrust in his ministry, a well-established theological trajectory central to his vocation. This longitudinal discussion informed the cross-sectional analysis of his present work.

— reducing the tension and bridging the gulf between UPA and BUPA parishes because of the time he spent on the former—the theological programme had potential to do that;

— improving the theological foundations on which members of the Diocese were building individually and collectively—the theological programme had potential to do that;

— creating more "space" for the Bishop—I think that the approaches will create more work and therefore less space for him, but it will give him the opportunities to experiment that he wanted;

— applying "justification" to collectives—this was not worked out but arrangements were suggested for people to work on it together.

The analysis, systemic but partial, provides a basis and much information for further analytical and design work.

III. NOTES ON THE WORK-STUDY PROCESS

Basically the processes used in this situational study are: a written presentation; exploration and analysis leading to establishing what we were going to work on; designing and planning action programmes which the Bishop felt he could and wanted to carry out. (The process is examined in some detail in Chapter 5.) It involved working throughout to the Bishop's perspective on his area of work and using our perspectives on his analyses and design. This meant there was a creative interaction of perspectives. A primary reason why these consultancy processes were effective was that the Bishop gave himself to them eagerly, openly and industriously.

The process is one of putting things in order (in papers and notes); exploring and taking things apart and putting them together again in a new shape.

Progress was made through the interplay between several kinds of work: the work done personally and privately by the Bishop and other members of the group; the private consultations I had with the Bishop and the group work; writing and talking. The Bishop's work paper was indispensable. Writing notes after each phase of the process gave a creative dynamic to the consultative process. Preparing notes stimulated the Bishop himself to continue the thinking process and enabled the group to start at the position to which the Bishop had moved. My reflections and my thinking had similar effects. What both of us did enabled members of the group to make their best contributions. Writing up can, of course, be a bit unnerving because it exposes weaknesses and gaps in the work done. (I have experienced this as I have written up this study as honestly as I could!) Of itself, this is, of course, a strong argument for writing up studies in some detail. Such records check out analysis and design

and can lead on to further analysis and improved design.

An important part of my preparation was working out things that would act as foils to my thinking when I got caught up in the discussions. One example of this is the systemic hypothesis that I formulated entirely from the Bishop's work paper; I had not previously met him. It proved to be a reliable analytic tool and guide. Another example is the dangers I noted part way through the process. The dangers of appearing to justify justification and of making it the dominant theology were avoided. The question I noted about working to contexts was answered satisfactorily, the one about the application of justification to collectives was not. Diagrams and charts were important thinking tools.

Studies of work situations always reveal more things to do than can be done. The art is to identify what needs to be done at the particular time and especially those things that are the key to widespread developments—and the discipline is to stay with them even when there are other things to do that are more attractive to us.

Even though it is not possible to determine accurately the time given to this process (people did not keep accounts and the time given at odd moments is difficult to quantify) it is interesting to make an estimate. The actual time that the Bishop (the principal person) gave to the formal discussions was four-and-a-half hours. Treble it for reflecting and writing up and we get thirteen-and-a-half hours. It was of course supplemented by the time of the staff members (twenty hours) and that of the group (say six hours to reading papers, attending sessions and reflecting). In total some one hundred hours of people's time. An economic use of the Bishop's time: overall an efficient use of time because everyone is learning things of value about process and working with people for development.

IV. SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENTS

After reading this account in August 1992 the Bishop wrote:

Lastly, long-term effects. I have no doubt that the consultation has coloured the way that I have done my work ever since. I have faltered in working through the precise strategy which we identified, both by the impact of new and urgent pressures (particularly financial), and by trying several different shapes in which to enable clergy to articulate their theological insights and bring my own together with theirs (i.e., using borough groups, diocesan training staff, deanery clergy groups, diocesan conferences, lay and clergy). None has worked as well as I would have hoped, but on the other hand, there is little I do that has not been touched with the insights I gained from the consultation.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Cf. Paul's Epistle to the Romans: Chapter 3 and especially vv. 24, 26 and 28.

2. Snaith, Norman H., "Just, Justify, Justification" in *A Theological Word Book of the Bible,* ed. A. Richardson (London: SCM Press, 1950). Snaith says, "The verb *dikaioo* (justify) does not mean 'to make just', and indeed is not so much an ethical word as a word which belongs to the vocabulary of salvation. On man's part, the essential condition for justification is faith in Christ. This involves a complete trust in him.... On this condition every repentant sinner is brought by God into fellowship with him. This is the working of his grace, the undeserved favour with which God welcomes all who truly turn to him.... Justification is the first step in the process of salvation, that first reconciliation to God which is the beginning of a steady growth in grace and the knowledge of God (II Peter 3:18)".

3. *Op. cit.,* p. 119, I have substituted "person" for "man".

4. *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* (Church House Publishing, 1985).

5. Another example of this is to be found in Lovell, George and Catherine Widdicombe, *Churches and Communities: An Approach to Development in the Local Church* (Tunbridge Wells: Search Press, 1978, reprinted 1986), p. 60.