

To those who need *avec*-type services
and those who seek to
provide them

AVEC

AGENCY and APPROACH

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

GEORGE LOVELL

with a Foreword by
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AN AVEC PUBLICATION

First published 1996
An Avec Publication
125 Waxwell Lane
Pinner, Middx HA5 3E3

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ISBN 1 871709 02 4

Set by TuKan, High Wycombe, Bucks.
Printed by Redwood Books, Trowbridge, Wilts.

Contents

Foreword	11
Acknowledgements	13
Introduction	15
I AVEC	19
II TOWARDS HARVESTING THE AVEC EXPERIENCE	21
III ENABLING FACTORS	25
Context	
1. A context favourable to the advent of Avec	30
Content/Substance	
2. Avec's stance on church and community development attractive to people from a wide theological spectrum	31
Commitment to the church and ecumenical collaboration	31
Commitment to involving churches as institutional entities in community development	32
Commitment to promoting the interrelated development of churches and communities	33
Commitment to action for local development from all levels	34
Commitment to work for the overall development of socio-religious communities	36
The practice of the profession of lay and ordained ministries in secular and religious settings	37
By way of summary	37
3. Five basic methods that worked	38
The non-directive approach	38
Work study methods	39
Ten-day in-service training courses	41
Work consultancy	44
Action-research	45
The methods in operation	45

4. A combination of technical and interpersonal engagement and behaviour	46
5. Theory and theology made explicit	47
Services	
6. Commitment to working with people in any and all forms of work in any community in all denominations	50
7. The provision of a wide range of user friendly services	50
Self-induced change	53
Freely chosen and supported participation	53
A situational based approach to contextual issues	58
Well-tested ways and means of analysing and designing "people work" in churches and communities	60
Courses and consultancy services were effective and economic work study units giving immediate and long-term returns	60
Staff	
8. Use of qualified ecumenical staff with a sense of mission	62
Vocational commitment informed by experience	66
Faithfulness to the core concepts, approaches and processes of Avec	67
An ecumenical team of associates and part and full-time staff members	67
Denominationally multi-lingual	71
Continuing professional development of staff and associates	71
Staff-managers, trainers and consultants	73
9. Professional, administrative, financial and moral support	73
An ecumenical trust	73
Professional and consultancy support	77
Collaborative and supportive co-consultancy working relationships	77
Financial and moral support with conditions but without "strings"	78
Agency and Programme development	
10. Avec was an independent ecumenical service agency focussed on the vocations of others	78
An independent agency	78
A service agency	80
Avec's vocation the vocation of others	86

11. The refinements, development and extension of training and consultancy services through ongoing evaluation and research	87
12. Preparation, action, research and training kept together through strategic forward planning	88
13. Avec's good name and promotional networking	90
IV DISENABLING FACTORS	
93	
Service Problems	
1. The shortage of people to staff ten-day courses and consultancy projects	94
2. Work flow and recruitment difficulties	94
3. Failure to organize personal field work services before and after courses	96
4. Unreasonable expectations, unfair judgements and lack of trust	97
5. Mismatch of work cultures and the mistrust it generated	99
6. Limitations of the premises	100
Agency Problems	
7. Failure to get a third full-time staff member	101
8. Financial difficulties and crises	101
Avec did not become self-financing	102
Search for permanent funding failed	106
Inadequate reserves	108
Failure to get new money	109
Root problem: churches' failure to fund training and consultancy services adequately and fairly	109
9. Limited inter-organizational and ecumenical co-operation	110
Staff Members' Problems	
10. The director's intensive engagement in training, consultancy and project work	111
11. Failure to publish adequately	112
12. Dysfunctional stress and strain	112
A tentative comment	114

V TOWARDS USING THE AVEC EXPERIENCE	115
A reflective summary	115
Servicing the <i>Avec</i> movement beyond <i>Avec</i>	119
1. Effects and contributions	119
2. The current situation	121
3. Needs	123
4. Resources	125
But why the need for these services?	129
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 131
Books and papers about the <i>Avec</i> approach to church and community development	
 APPENDICES	 139
I The Participants in <i>Avec's</i> Training, Consultancy and Project Work Programme, September 1976 - August 1991:	
Fifteen-year statistical summary chart	140-143
Graphs of features of the programme as a whole	144-145
Graphs of features of the ten-day courses	146-147
II <i>Avec</i> Consultancy Work and Projects from 1976 to 1991	148
III <i>Avec</i> Personnel, 1976-91:	
trustees and staff	154
tutorial and consultancy staff and the work they did	155-157
IV MARC Europe's Survey of <i>Avec</i> Training and Consultancy Services, 1990	158
V Some Theological, Educational and Sociological Developments Favourable to <i>Avec</i>	172
VI The Mission of the Church and Community Development	177
VII <i>Avec</i> Briefing Paper for Staff Engaged in Ten-Day Courses	187

LIST OF FIGURES

1. Interrelated Development	33
2. Workers, Church Authorities and <i>Avec</i>	35
3. Schema for Analysing and Designing Church and Community Work	40
4. Issue and Situational Based Approaches	59
5. Joint and Shared Responsibilities	64
6. Affecting Change Without Power to Impose	80
7. Working with Churches rather than General Networking	81
8. Working with Churches and other Agencies rather than General Networking	82
9. <i>Avec</i> , Soul and Bodies	118
10. <i>Avec</i> : Fusion of Energies in Work Engagement	118

LIST OF DISPLAYS

1. Eight Thinking Stages	40
2. Nature of the <i>Avec</i> Approach	48-49
3. <i>Avec's</i> Primary Objective and Services	52
4. The Course and Your Churches	57
5. Getting Free and Supported Participation	58
6. Initial Functions of Trustees in 1976	74
7. Principal Responsibilities of Trustees, Staff and Associates of <i>Avec</i>	76
8. Course and Consultancy Fees, 1991	105
9. The Pattern of Enabling and Disabling Factors	117
10. The <i>Avec</i> Association Mission Statement and Aims and Objectives	127

LIST OF GRAPHS

1. Grants, Fees, Income, Expenditure and Reserves, 1976-91	103
2. Fees and Grants as Percentages of Expenditure and Income Respectively	104

Foreword

Dr George Lovell was the founder-Director of Avec, "A Service Agency for Church and Community Work" from 1976 to 1991. On his retirement from the Directorship he was appointed research worker with an initial brief to "harvest the Avec experience and make its intellectual assets more readily available". This study is one part of his response. In it he attempts to "draw out and to comment on principal enabling and disabling factors in the struggle to provide badly needed training and consultancy services". In doing so, with his customary diligence, he not only gives a summary of the history of Avec, and an introduction to its underlying thinking and practice, but also raises issues related to the Church which others who work in it may recognise and so find valuable in their own situations.

Avec was not born in the study or lecture room, but is the result of the search for practical, relevant and theologically appropriate ways of exploring and expressing the Christian faith in the late twentieth century. George Lovell is a committed Methodist minister and, as such, is concerned about promoting effective Christian mission and developing Christian spirituality. These concerns led him to the awareness that a significant key to both lies in the central Christian truth of the value of individuals and so their fullest involvement in the life of the Church and community. Catherine Widdicombe is a Roman Catholic, a member of the Grail, a Christian lay community. By a different route and in a different context she reached a similar understanding. Both developed skills which others found helpful and were subsequently harnessed to produce Avec.

Their respective Churches were sufficiently impressed by their insights and abilities to share in the establishment of the ecumenical agency to serve all the churches, with a body of Trustees representing many of them, and with grants from some Churches and some non-Church charities. In many ways, as the author writes, the time was ripe for such a venture. The 70's saw much social and community work undertaken by the Churches, most Christians talked about "the ministry of the whole people of God", and training in new methods was growing. Avec's approach is "non-directive", or, in the writer's words, "a Church-centred holistic development approach" with its roots in the New Testament, and so not merely relevant to any one period of time.

A wide range of courses was provided, for parish clergy and Church

leaders, for community workers and religious communities, for returned missionaries and overseas workers. Consultancy services were made available, for individuals and groups. Widespread commendation was received. But there were difficulties. Grant aid was never wholly adequate to meet all the opportunities. Churches and church workers could not, or were not willing to pay economic prices despite their appreciation of the services, and recession hit us all. Some people may have been challenged or threatened by new understandings of authority. No doubt we made mistakes. It was certainly with great sadness that in 1994 we had to cease to trade.

This study is, as the writer says, a case study. I hope that lessons will be learnt from it. Much of what Avec stood for is already embodied in the life of the Church, and in people like me who owe it a great debt. There are those who will ensure that its principles continue to be affirmed. It has been a privilege to work with Avec and, in this way, to commend it, and so pay a richly deserved tribute to its author.

Nigel L Gilson
Chairman of the Avec Trust
Former President of the British Methodist Conference

Acknowledgements

I gladly acknowledge the help I have received in researching and writing this book: A Leverhulme Emeritus Fellowship, the Victoria and Chelsea Circuit and the Avec Trustees provided financial resources which helped me to do the research. I was constrained to make it a manageable task by my Research Support Group: Michael Bayley, David Deeks, Leslie Griffiths, Peter Russell, Moira Sleight and Catherine Widdicombe. Mrs Valerie Tredinnick typed and re-typed the entire book and did much detailed work on the charts and graphs. Malcolm Grundy, the director from 1991 to 1994, Molly Lovell, my wife, Charles New, Margaret O'Connor, Peter Russell and Catherine Widdicombe read an early draft of the book and made helpful suggestions. Miss Catherine Widdicombe also did the research for Appendices I, II and III. I am deeply grateful for all this help and for grants toward producing the book from Church and Community Development Work Trust. I am also indebted to T & T Clark Ltd, Publishers, for permission to reproduce an article I first wrote for the Expository Times. And I am deeply grateful to Teresa and John Rees of Tukan Desktop Publishing, for the professional and patient way in which they have typeset the text and diagrams. It has been a joy to work with them.

My heart is full of gratitude to the vast number of people who gave life and significance to Avec. The impossibility of expressing my enormous debts to them specifically and personally frustrates me. To single out some courts the danger of being invidious. But I must.

Avec would not have been possible without the support of and financial backing from an anonymous trust, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, the Edward Cadbury Trust, the Grail, The Methodist Church, the Roman Catholic Fund, the Voluntary Services Unit and countless private donors.

Almost from the beginning of Avec in 1976 the Methodists of Chelsea and Victoria have made enormous contributions. Avec became part of their work because they believed in it. The Circuit became and remains my spiritual base and home. Erstwhile Avec colleagues – Catherine Widdicombe, Charles New, Howard Mellor, Michael Bayley, and the associates, too many to name here but listed later – have been there through some great experiences and some terrible ones. Gordon and Gill Franklin worked through some dark periods with Molly and me. Edward Rogers was a shrewd chairman and a

father in God for twelve years. Nigel Gilson has been a loyal and enthusiastic supporter from the beginning of Avec. As Chairman he faced great difficulties. I am thankful for his support and for generously agreeing to write the Foreword. Associates gave of themselves year in year out unstintingly at considerable personal cost. The secretarial and administrative staff, full and part-time, made enormous contributions through dedicated work, continually acquiring new skills and creating an office environment conducive to what Avec was all about. Without these and many more, Avec would have closed in the eighties. Reg and Madge Batten were towers of strength.

Turning from the staff to those who used the services of Avec, recalling the privileges they accorded us, humbles me. They allowed us into both the mundane and holy places of their vocational aspirations and the situations in which they were ministering. By allowing staff and associates to work with them and to minister to them they made Avec what I believe it was, a service agency in the kingdom of God.

Introduction

Avec, an ecumenical service agency for church and community work, was formed in 1976. It provided in-service training courses and consultancy services to a wide range of clergy, religious and laity of many denominations, religious orders and organizations. Logistical and financial difficulties (including the difficulty of financing the research) led the Trustees reluctantly to the decision that it should "cease to trade" in 1994. A group of people who staffed these courses and services for many years have now formed "The Avec Association" to continue some of Avec's work and to support each other as they variously continue the tradition of helping workers to be reflective practitioners who work *with* as well as *for* people in the analysis, design and practice of church and community work.

MARC Europe carried out an independent survey of Avec's work in 1990. One of their recommendations was:

It is vitally important that Avec's knowledge, experience and resources be made widely available to aid those engaged in church and community development to stimulate theological and practical understanding, and take advantage of their current intellectual assets.

The Trustees took this suggestion seriously. In 1991 they appointed Canon Malcolm Grundy to succeed me as the Director. They appointed me as research worker and commissioned me to make contributions towards "harvesting the work of Avec and to making its intellectual assets more readily accessible". The totally unexpected changes that have subsequently occurred in relation to Avec add to the importance of this task. I have been working at it ever since, latterly through a Leverhulme Emeritus Fellowship. This book is one result.

Avec was a very small independent service agency of which Catherine Widdicombe and I were founder directors. It had few resources – two full-time workers, the use of what had been a caretaker's flat in the Methodist Church in Chelsea, a small office staff, no capital resources. The staff were itinerant, using other peoples' premises for courses and conferences and financing its work in part through charging fees. By common consent Avec made some impact upon how the main line denominations, and some voluntary organizations, and their practitioners work with people.

From the details of Avec's experience of working with thousands of people during the period when I was director and the results of evaluative research, I have attempted to answer the question that, in one form or another, has been put to me by many people during the past few years, "What enabled Avec to promote these changes and provide these services from an inadequately funded base independent of the churches and organizations it served with only slender resources upon which to draw?" Then I tease out the disabling factors and show that some of the things that enabled also disabled. I conclude by reflecting on the implications of this experience and research for the contemporary situation.

Essentially, therefore, this book is a case study of the enabling and disabling factors of a small agency, from within the organization, by one of the principal workers. It has the strengths and weaknesses of such an analysis: on the one hand, for instance, the advantage of the intimate subjective knowledge of events and on the other the difficulty of being impartial and the danger of special pleading. To minimise these dangers I checked out an early draft with associate staff and trustees – that is, with people who had been on the receiving end of Avec services as well as on the giving, organizing and monitoring side. Whilst that led to significant revisions there was substantive agreement with my analysis. But, regrettably, it was not possible to hold the consultations which would have produced a collective analysis. Of necessity it remains my analysis of a collective enterprise, the work of a team and an organization in which I had a part. I have restricted myself entirely to the period during which I was director.

This book is in no way a history of Avec although it gives some insights which may illuminate its history. Nor is it a systematic exposition of the theory, theology and practice of the approaches adopted by Avec. That has been done in other books. Concepts and methods are described only in as much as it is necessary to do so to explain the enabling and disabling factors. Nor is it a description of the parts played by all the people involved, although it inevitably describes what some individuals and groups contributed in order to establish the factors. Wherever possible, I have attempted to depersonalise the factors so that others can critically appraise them. Going into print about things to which one has contributed can appear to be self-congratulatory. I take that risk, but only after some hesitation and with some apprehension, in order to present for wider critical consideration information and an internal analysis that otherwise would simply not be available.

Telling the story of Avec, the agency, from 1976-91 could well be of interest to other small under-resourced organizations seeking to serve large constituencies. Indeed, as an organizational case study it has some implications for churches and allied organizations. They are in a similar relationship to the constituencies they seek to influence that Avec was to them – independent,

comparatively small, without power to impose change. And, as the kind of developments they wish to see in people and their environment can only come through self-induced change, they, like Avec, are bound to take non-directive action. But the main purpose of the book is to see what can be learnt from the Avec experience about the services needed by practitioners in church and community development work and what is involved in meeting them.

For the most part I have written in the past tense even though some of the activities I describe continue. Sources have been acknowledged but I have kept references to a minimum by not cross referencing the text with other writings. Instead I have provided a bibliography of the books and papers which describe and develop the theory, theology and practice upon which Avec worked.

Avec

Avec emerged from ten years of practising the non-directive approach to church and community work and rigorously testing and researching it. I did this from 1966-72 whilst I was the minister of Parchmore Road Methodist Church Youth and Community Centre, Thornton Heath. My doctoral thesis showed how this approach was instrumental in bringing a dying church alive and causing it to become vitally engaged in its neighbourhood.

Independently Catherine Widdicombe, a Roman Catholic and a member of the Grail came to the conclusion that the findings of Vatican II could not be put into practice without priests and laity having the ability to act non-directively. An ecumenical team, of which I was a member, was formed in 1969 by Catherine Widdicombe. Through an action-research programme, Project 70-75, this team worked with the clergy and laity in one typical Council of Churches area in North London on their schemes and projects and it ran training courses for them. The ministers, priests and laity of the sixteen churches involved concluded that the non-directive approach is highly applicable to all aspects of the work of their denominations: Anglican, Baptist, Congregational, Church of Christ (a combined church), Methodist, Moravian, Roman Catholic and United Reformed.

All this convinced Methodist and Roman Catholic authorities, the Gulbenkian Foundation and other charitable trusts and the Voluntary Services Unit of the Home Office that an agency was needed to promote this approach throughout the Church. Avec was inaugurated in 1976 to do that. By common consent it was recognized that until 1994 it made notable contributions to the life and work of all the main denominations, from 1991 under the directorship of Canon Malcolm Grundy.

Avec started with two full-time staff members, plans for two or three courses and promises of grants to cover the short-fall for the first two or three years. The staff, Catherine Widdicombe and George Lovell, were working from their homes. It soon became a well-established service agency with a group of associate and part-time staff, a London base – offices, seminar room and a small specialist library. By 1991, the end of the period covered by this book, it had conducted 357 courses ranging from half-day conferences to a

Towards Harvesting the Avec Experience

There are three main aspects to harvesting/researching the work of Avec in which Catherine Widdicombe and I are engaged.

1. Researching the approach and methodology associated with the non-directive approach to church and community development

The emphasis in this aspect of the programme has been on the non-directive approach in action: upon precisely what is involved in putting it into practice with particular groups of people in specific work situations. This has meant concentrating on methodology. But practice and the use of methods is variously influenced by the attitudes, beliefs, theoretical assumptions and theological assumptions of practitioners. So inevitably it is about all of these things and the interplay between them in a practitioner's engagement with those with whom he/she is working for development. Some would describe this aspect as *praxis*.

Both Catherine Widdicombe and I have been researching the methods we have used since the mid 60's and writing books which will help practitioners to use them more effectively. Three books* have emerged:

Group Meetings That Work: A practical guide for working with different kinds of groups by Catherine Widdicombe (1993)

Analysis and Design: A Handbook for Practitioners and Consultants in Church and Community Work: by George Lovell (1994)

Parchmore Partnership: George Lovell, Garth Rogers and Peter Sharrocks Malcolm Grundy (Editor) (1995)

Also, I am working on a book on work consultancy, a companion volume to *Analysis and Design*. Catherine Widdicombe is working on a book of

*Full details of these and other publications are given in the Bibliography

two-year part-time post-graduate diploma in church and community development, with ten-day work and theory courses as the central core of the programme. It had also provided consultancy services to or worked on 139 projects mostly in this country but some in Africa and Ireland. All this meant that Avec had worked with over 7,500 people of ten denominations – almost 4,000 Roman Catholics, 2,000 Methodists and 1,500 Anglicans. (The courses are charted in Appendix I.)

These services were used by people at all levels (5,000 at local and 2,500 at regional and national levels) by clergy (2,800), religious, deaconesses and church workers (3,800) and lay people (1,000). The subject matter was varied – it included most forms of local church and community work and specialist work with, for example, the profoundly deaf and travellers. There were courses for specific groups such as missionaries (on furlough and returning), religious (for superiors and provincials), people working regionally and nationally.

Appendix II gives a fuller view of the work consultancy and project work programme. This work was undertaken by the two full-time staff members along with one and then two part-time staff, associate trainers and by a loyal administrative staff – a part-time bursar, a full and part-time secretary and a group of part-time voluntary staff. (cf Appendix III.)

"Avec" is not an acronym. It is simply French for "with", chosen to represent the central concept of working *with* people for human and spiritual well-being and betterment through church and community development. Avec embodied, represented and promoted this way of working and the spirituality it engenders. Its primary aim was to get clergy, religious and laity, churches and Christian organizations to do the same. "Avec" soon came to be used in two distinct but complementary ways: to refer to an ecumenical organization for church and community work in the King's Road, Chelsea; and to describe what Avec is all about as there is no single term that describes it adequately. In fact the "avec" approach has become a byword for church and community development approaches, methods and processes, for a particular way of analysing and designing work programmes and a distinctive mode of work consultancy. When referring to the first meaning I use Avec and to the second *avec*.

The second of these meanings is important because it is of far wider significance than Avec as an organization. *Avec*, as an approach and philosophy, as an aspect of pastoral and applied theology, as a movement and a means of mission, outlives Avec as an organization. It has a life within and beyond Avec the agency. And that is what I try to elucidate in this book.

practical aids to the formation and development of small religious communities pursuing various apostolates in local communities. These aids are designed to help religious to form communities which, in line with the principles of subsidiarity, are self-directing and self-determining, and which, in line with the grand traditions of religious community life, obedience and accountability, are interdependent units of an order properly integrated into its apostolic charism.

2. Researching the effects upon practitioners and their work and working lives of the use of the non-directive approach

This work is completed. It involved exploring just what happened, positively and negatively, when practitioners had good creative experiences of the non-directive approach. Experiences, that is, of two kinds: of someone using the approach in relation to them and their work; of using the approach themselves in relation to their work and that of others. (This research complements an extensive survey of Avec's work by MARC Europe, cf Appendix IV.) It involved structured conversations of a reflective nature with twenty people who have had such experiences in various settings: courses, consultancy sessions, church and community work situations in the UK, Ireland and West Africa. They represent five denominations, very different theologies and lay, ordained (diaconal and presbyteral ministers) and religious practitioners. Some of them had experienced the approach for only a few months, others continuously for periods up to twenty-three years. The recordings have been transcribed and I have edited them into a book entitled *Telling Experiences: Stories About a Transforming Way of Working*. This emphasis on the effects upon the working lives of practitioners makes it an ethnographical study which will help to fill a gap in the literature.

3. Researching Avec as an agency from 1976-91

This involved researching what enabled Avec, a small underfunded independent agency, with only two full-time technical staff members, to provide a wide range of courses and consultancy services. This book is a result of identifying the factors which enabled and disabled the agency during the period 1976-91. (I make no attempt to research the developments beyond that period because I have not all the information necessary to do so nor have I the objectivity required.)

It was possible to research the first and third aspects (ie, methodology and Avec as an agency) in a thoroughgoing way because from 1976-1991 Catherine Widdicombe and I had treated our Avec work as an action-research project and

kept full records of developments. Consequently we are able to analyse what happened not only through our memories of events but also through re-reading papers and notes. This process has been checked out, supplemented, informed and illustrated by interviews and structured discussions.

Considerable progress has already been made in establishing the *avec* way of working in religious and secular organizations and in the provision of consultancy services. That was Avec's *raison d'être*. The aim of this research and writing programme is to consolidate and build upon this by making the essentials more readily accessible to people who differ significantly in their commitment to the approach and services and their reasons for wanting to know more about them. Students, practitioners, consultants, trainers and researchers will have various technical interests in the three aspects of the research and all of the publications. Others, such as those with overall responsibility for training policy and support services, may wish to have information which will inform their decision making. They may not intend to practise the approach or use the services themselves although they are relevant to all who work with and for people in church and society.

The stories in *Telling Experiences* provide an easy entry into the practice and theory of the *avec* approach for those who have little knowledge of it. At the same time they contain important insights into the approach for experienced as well as inexperienced practitioners, vital case study material for trainers and consultants and scarce data for researchers. *Parchmore Partnership* serves similar interests. Whereas *Group Meetings That Work* and *Analysis and Design* are handbooks for practitioners and consultants, text books for trainers and resource material for researchers. All these books are for those concerned in any way with the policy, provision, administration and research of in-service training and consultancy services. In short, there is a growing body of written material to aid those who wish to practise the *avec* approach and embody it in the work culture of churches and organizations and those who wish to provide *avec*-type training and consultancy services.

Enabling Factors

Surveys and evaluations of Avec's work programme indicate that it was largely effective both in relation to what participants wanted to get out of it and what the agency wished to achieve through it. This happened because the objectives of both parties complemented each other and, through the approach adopted by the staff, they converged to help practitioners find ways of meeting some of their substantive needs. Clearly it is not possible to quantify the extent and quality of Avec's effectiveness/ineffectiveness. Fortunately this is not necessary for the task of establishing the enabling and disabling factors. As the factors go hand in hand with the effects they induce it is possible to deduce them from the evaluations and to discern them through the accumulated experience of the associates and staff.

Basically, Avec aimed to promote and develop reflective practice in church and community work. It wanted to help individuals, churches and organizations to become ever more effective reflective practitioners and churches and organizations to become better reflective communities. Practitioners and communities, that is, able to analyse, design and evaluate their own work; to work *with* as well as *for* all kinds of people for human and religious development in and through churches, communities and organizations. Working for these aims involved working with participants in the Avec programme on their needs and wants and their beliefs and purposes in the light of the actualities of their working situations. It also involved getting them to examine critically in relation to themselves as workers and their situation anything the staff had learnt from their experience, studies and researches which they considered could be relevant to participants, their concerns and their situations.

What the participants of the Avec programme said they wanted and needed emerged from the position papers they prepared for courses and projects, what they said they wanted to get through their participation, and the study of their situations and the input by the staff. Amongst the many things they said they wanted from courses several items recurred. They were the need:

- to stand back, take stock, examine their situation in order to get a more profound understanding of themselves and their work;

- to tackle a wide range of pressing problems;
- to design new projects;
- to get a better understanding of the theoretical and theological bases of their work so that they had a better intellectual and emotional grasp of things through mental maps and models;
- to enhance their human relations skills and particularly those related to working *with* people for development, promoting egalitarian participation, non-authoritarian leadership and the management of self, conflict, and complex organizations;
- to be challenged and affirmed!
- to renew their commitment, to be more competent and to be more adequately equipped;
- to set themselves and their work in a wider contemporary context;
- to meet others with needs similar to their own;
- for Christian fellowship and light relief!

However, some participants, a significant minority, did not know what they wanted, they were disturbed and dogged by a vague sense of dissatisfaction or a feeling that something was missing. Most course members said that progress was made towards meeting one or more of these needs. There were formal evaluations towards the end of courses. (Members filled in evaluation forms saying what was helpful and unhelpful. This enabled the staff to get at enabling and disabling factors. Summaries were made by the staff and shared with the members who were encouraged to discuss those things which had been experienced as unhelpful and those things about which there were significant differences of opinion.) What people felt in the longer term was discovered through unsolicited comments, through follow-up seminars, through people returning for further courses or consultancy services, through the independent survey by MARC Europe in 1990 and more recently through selected interviews. As would be expected, these show that Avec courses and services did not meet with unqualified success. This is clear from Mr Peter Brierly's summary of the MARC Europe survey and the overall recommendations presented in Appendix IV. Nevertheless this survey and all the other evidence shows that Avec did have positive effects upon practitioners, churches, religious orders and allied organizations. Two of Mr Brierly's overall conclusions in the MARC Europe survey report reflect this:

Avec courses and consultancy services are generally very well received. They are still appreciated years after clients attended them, and are found to be helpful, practical and life-changing. There seems little doubt that

customers would wish to see Avec's work continue, as its key skill techniques are valuable for the ongoing work of church leaders.

Avec's philosophy has clearly been well understood. There is a "powerful internal consistency between what is taught, the way it is taught and how it is received".

This survey report makes interesting comparisons between what people felt they needed and wanted, see Appendix IV.

Whilst there is now widespread acceptance that working *with* people, as distinct from working *for* them, is an essential in any religious or secular development programme, it is easier said than done. Avec provided technical assistance, consultancy help and moral support which helped practitioners to examine the practical, theoretical and theological implications of the two ways of working in relation to the work in which they were engaged; to make any changes they wished to make from working *for* to working *with* people; to design development programmes by which they could promote in their situations self-directed participation, self-determination and self-induced change; to work at practical and theoretical problems they subsequently encountered. Avec offered such help to clergy, religious and laity of all denominations. By acting as non-directive workers to people Avec created environments in which people could think things through and assess the value of the approach which had helped them to do so. David Herrick, the parish priest of an Anglican church on a council housing estate, described his experience in the following way.

One of the things that surprised me was that the Avec courses were experiences of a different kind of forum. Most of the places in which I had been involved in sharing ideas... as an ordained and before that as an undergraduate but also the normal way of discussing things was essentially what you might call disputational. It was to do with argument and counter-argument and with success in arguing in order to carry the day. What was happening on the courses which I value greatly was that we created a different kind of forum in which I could express my own ideas and understandings without being thought foolish, without being valued as an individual on the basis of the ideas that I'd expressed. That was very important.... The courses gave me a freedom to participate which I had not experienced anywhere before, and in turn I saw that as something which I would like to offer other people – the people in my parish who essentially don't have the kind of confidence that enables them to participate.*

* This is a quotation from a recorded interview that I had with David Herrick, cf Lovell, George (1996) *Telling Experiences: Stories About A Transforming Way of Working With People*

Courses and consultations became forums for creative thought through Avec staff working with people non-directively and using "thinking tools". The approach created environments within which members of courses felt it was safe to speak freely, to think aloud and to discuss things openly with others. The tools enabled them to objectify their thoughts and to think critically, imaginatively, systematically and creatively about their own ideas and those of others. Freedom to think aloud induced inner freedom to re-think old thoughts and to explore new ones. Practitioners and staff stimulated and challenged each other, at times quite forcefully, about critical issues they were inclined to side-step and supported each other as they did so..

Basically the tools were a series of questions or a sequence of tasks which helped to sort out problems and to examine work situations step by step. Approach and tools combined to enable practitioners to look afresh at themselves as church and community workers, to conceptualise complex situations and explore them, to put their thoughts and ideas into the best possible working order in relation to their purposes and as much theory and theology as they could handle and to decide how to work with specific individuals and groups for the common good. Thinking affected doing. And practitioners and their work were transformed when they themselves practised the approach in their situation and used the tools in private and in public with the people with whom they worked. So courses and consultancy sessions both enabled and equipped practitioners. When this happened they experienced satisfaction and fulfilment and found new energy, enthusiasm and confidence.

It was, I believe, the accumulative effect of thirteen interrelated factors which enabled Avec to become established and to provide a wide range of services for so many different people, churches and organizations over such a comparatively short period of time. First, I list them and then I discuss them and the sub-factors which cluster around them.

Context

Factor One. The context was favourable to the advent of Avec.

Content/Substance

Factor Two. People from a wide theological and ecclesiastical spectrum were attracted and receptive to Avec's stance on the theology and practice of church and community development and to Avec being a thoroughgoing ecumenical agency actually at work with people from most denominations.

Factor Three. Avec's five basic methods worked: the non-directive approach, the use of work study methods; work and theory in-service training courses; work consultancy; action-research.

Factor Four. At the heart of Avec's effectiveness was a combination of technical and interpersonal engagement and behaviour which pervaded all the work done and which owed as much to pastoral theology as to the non-directive approach.

Factor Five. Reflective practitioners in churches and allied organizations valued Avec's systematized formulation of the growing body of knowledge associated with the emerging discipline of church and community development and the presentation of the essence of it in short courses and consultancy sessions.

Services

Factor Six. Commitment to working with people in any and all forms of work in any kind of community in all denominations.

Factor Seven. Avec provided a wide range of highly relevant, effective and "user friendly" services economically tailored to a diverse ecumenical and theological constituency and work force.

Staff

Factor Eight. Avec staff and associates were qualified and seriously committed practitioners and missionaries of the non-directive approach to church and community development. They remained faithful to the core process. They formed an ecumenical team which was denominationally multi-lingual. They helped each other to develop professionally. Together they accepted responsibilities for Avec and its work.

Factor Nine. Avec staff had professional, administrative and moral support.

Agency and Programme Development

Factor Ten. Avec serviced churches, organizations and practitioners of many denominations as an independent service agency not as an internal or in-house specialist service department.

Factor Eleven. The refinement, development and extension of training and consultancy services through ongoing evaluation and research.

Factor twelve. Preparation, action, research and training and the development of Avec's service programme went hand in hand through vigorous forward planning.

Factor Thirteen. Avec's good name and promotional networking.

Directly and indirectly all these factors enabled Avec to help practitioners to meet some of their wants and needs. They, like the ones in the next chapter, relate to three aspects of the life of Avec: forming and maintaining an agency; organizing and providing consultancy services; working with people who used Avec; setting the agency in context. These aspects were interwoven. Consequently the factors are interrelated. For instance, the attributes referred to in factors two to six enabled Avec to provide relevant training courses and consultancy services. They also became enabling factors for practitioners in their work.

The factors gradually emerged through reflecting with others on the Avec experience and its qualified success; through reviewing internal assessments and evaluations by the trustees, staff and associates, reports, records, minutes and personal notes; through the research described in the previous chapter; through reflecting on the responses to Avec courses and services by those who used them; through the independent survey by MARC Europe in 1990; and more recently through selected interviews.

CONTEXT

1. A Context Favourable to the Advent of Avec

Avec soon found its niche in church and community affairs because there was already in existence an environment friendly towards church and community development and receptive to Avec's approach. This environment was formed by schools of theological thought and experiments in church based social outreach which emphasized the developmental role of Christians in the world and saw that the social sciences could make their work more effective in the church and in the community. These schools of thought were becoming more influential and pervasive. By the mid 70's when Avec was being formed these ideas were common currency and had a considerable following. Increasing numbers of ministers and churches were influenced by them and many put them into practice. At the same time secular reports claimed that churches had significant contributions to make to community development. (In Appendix VI discuss the various theological and sociological movements that influenced me and Avec.) Thus, in both theological and practical terms, within the church and beyond it, there was a ready made place for Avec in the scheme of things; a place Avec was in a position to occupy because the staff had relevant experience and training and had done the necessary research. Someone remarked, "Avec was an idea whose time had come".

CONTENT/SUBSTANCE

2. Avec's Stance on Church and Community Development Attractive to People from a Wide Theological Spectrum

At the heart of Avec there were profound vocational commitments to:

- (a) the Church and to ecumenical collaboration and development;
- (b) involving churches as institutional entities in community development;
- (c) promoting the interrelated development of churches and communities;
- (d) action for local development from all levels;
- (e) work for the overall development of socio-religious communities;
- (f) the practice of the profession of lay and ordained ministries in secular and religious settings.

These commitments and the methods associated with them were attractive to ordained and lay from an extraordinarily wide theological and ecclesiastical spectrum.

(a) *Commitment to the church and ecumenical collaboration*

Avec staff believed in the church, its ministry and mission. They were committed to serving each and all denominations equally and to promoting ecumenical collaboration and development. The church was their organization, they loved it even though they were aware of its deficiencies. They held office in one or other of its various denominations. They were variously commissioned, supported and employed by it. It was the base from which they sought to work for betterment in the same way as others worked from their organizational bases. Through their action, studies and research they had discovered that the church – its resources of plant and people – could make unrivalled contributions to human and spiritual development especially when it drew upon the insights, approaches and methods associated with the newly emerging discipline of community development. They had also discovered that this discipline could help clergy, religious and lay people to work far more effectively with their own members and to promote theological reflection. They remained staunchly committed to working *with* the church for the common good through a "church-centred holistic developmental approach". They did not waver from this even though it proved to be more difficult than they had imagined. Some community development enthusiasts got on with meeting pressing community needs and left the churches to their own devices. Understandably, they simply

could not see people suffering whilst the church was preoccupied with theological niceties about social involvement and the non-directive approach.

(b) *Commitment to involving churches as institutional entities in community development*

Some years ago I was discussing the possibility of an extension to a government grant for Avec with consultants to the Voluntary Services Unit (VSU) which is a department of the Home Office. They wanted more people from the churches to get involved in voluntary social welfare and community work without strings. What we in Avec wanted was churches engaged as institutions, as entities, in coherent development initiatives in their neighbourhoods. At best this would enable all the resources of the churches to be brought into use. Community action would be informed by critical thought about situations and the practical, theoretical and theological implications of the work done. It could, for example, lead the church to campaign for policy changes. Those directly involved would have the material, moral and prayerful support of others. Community work would be an integral part of the churches' development programme, not an adjunct to it or a poor relative. Such an approach would build religious and secular communities committed together to care and development. The consultants were not convinced. They wanted volunteers not churches engaged in community work – and that right quickly. The grant was not extended!

It is all too easy to fall for an individualistic rather than an institutional approach. Recruiting individuals is easier than mobilising a church which is a community development task. My understanding of the difference and my commitment to the latter came through mistakenly opting for a task force rather than a church approach in a major research project. (cf *Churches and Communities: An Approach to Development in the Local Church* pp38f and 200f.)

Institutional involvement is achieved in various ways in different churches, religious orders, ecumenical and voluntary organizations. Often it is through the enthusiasm and commitment of individuals and groups involving the whole church. For Avec this meant working hard at getting clergy and laity, officers and people of local churches to determine what "their" church was all about and the precise nature of its ministry and mission in their situation and context. It also meant working with the wider church because whilst most local churches are largely self-determining, they are not autonomous, they belong to regional and national structures. Consequently getting churches involved as churches on the widest possible institutional basis, involved working on these issues with people engaged regionally and nationally. And that is precisely what Avec did to maximise the institution's contribution to development through local, regional and national units. [I pursue this further in section (d).]

(c) *Commitment to promoting the interrelated development of churches and communities*

Another aspect of Avec's stance was that the staff worked for the "interrelated development of church and community". This involved ministers, religious and lay people working purposefully together with others in society for the interrelated development of:

- church and community;
- Christians and non-Christians;
- people and their environment;
- the human and the spiritual in secular and religious settings.

I express this diagrammatically in Figure 1.

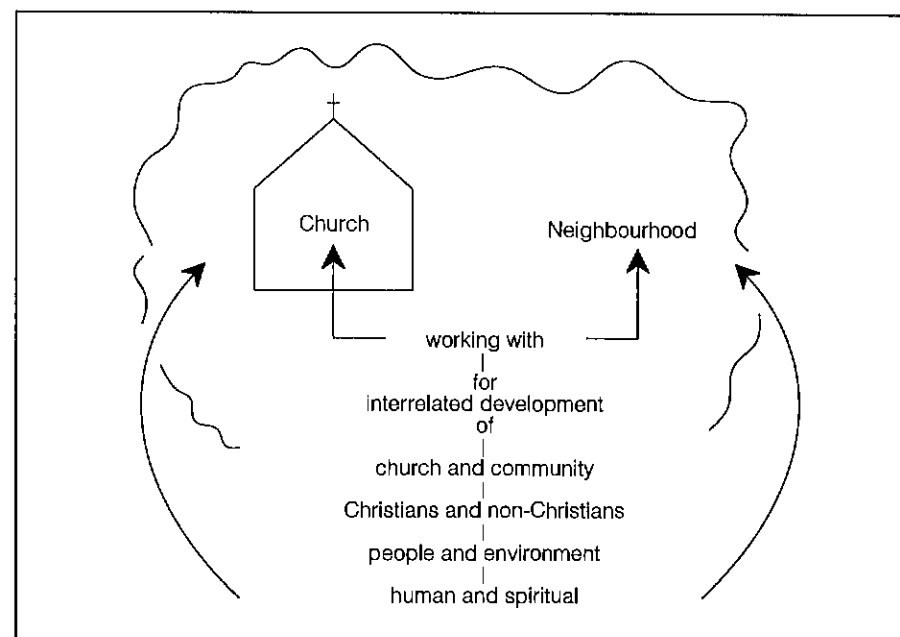


FIGURE 1: Interrelated Development

In practice this means accepting the need for improvement in both church and community, not simply in the community. It also means that people in the community can contribute to the development of the church and Christians, just as Christians contribute to the development of the community and non-Christians. In turn that means that the church and the community are of mutual help to each other in relation to their respective beliefs and purposes.

Commitment to an interrelated approach reduces the danger of “do-gooding”, and from acting as though the church were a citadel of perfection commissioned to put the world right. Equally it gets away from the idea that the “world writes the agenda”: church and world together in partnership “write the agenda”. Basically it means getting involved with others on equal terms in a relationship of mutual openness which enables all parties to make their contributions to development.

Many people valued this approach, as I do, because it is integrative and comprehensive; because it means people work with each other as equals; because it allows for the free and full use of theology; because it requires the use of the non-directive approach in church as well as in community work; because it avoids an unhealthy dichotomy between church work and community work; and because it leads to a consistency of approach in all work areas.

Some time ago I had a conversation with a priest who had for several years been heavily involved in promoting “church related community work”. I asked him if he were still involved in this work. “No”, he said, “I am in a suburban parish in which it is no longer relevant”. Clearly he had seen community work as an additional church activity in areas of deprivation. Sadly he had not seen that the approaches and methods were relevant to the development and well-being of *all* forms of community and church life.

(d) *Commitment to action for local development from all levels*

Local work was Avec staff’s primary area of expertise. Most of the people who came to the early courses were working in parishes and circuits. We did all that we could to help these people to introduce the ideas described above into their work and their organization. Generally speaking they were able to do so in relation to their own work. Their effectiveness in introducing innovative ideas into their churches and organizations were influenced by: their standing and status with the people with whom they worked and their superiors and the respect accorded to them; the mood and responses of local people; the attitudes and action of those who had influence and power over them and the people with whom they worked; the prevailing environment of thought and the fashionable things to do and be in church and community work. Occasionally all these things came together favourably in relation to what a practitioner wished to do. More often than not, however, one or other of the factors caused practitioners difficulties. Even so, to a greater or lesser extent, we could help practitioners – especially those in good standing as most of them were – to see ways in which they could work for self-induced change. What they found most difficult to deal with was action from above which by design or default made it more difficult for local workers to change the ways in which they worked for development. Often this happened because those with authority simply did

not understand the methods or, worse, because they thought they understood when they did not.

Progressively we became unhappy about what we were doing: we were, in fact, stimulating practitioners, – most of them without overall authority and influence and some in junior appointments, to work for far-reaching changes in their own work and in their institution. This involved them “taking on” their organization in bottom upwards development programmes. Considerable ideological importance is attached to such action but it is extraordinarily difficult and can be very costly to those at the sharp end. Avec felt some responsibility to work with church authorities with the aim of creating a better context for such practitioners. We conceptualised what we were doing in Figure 2.

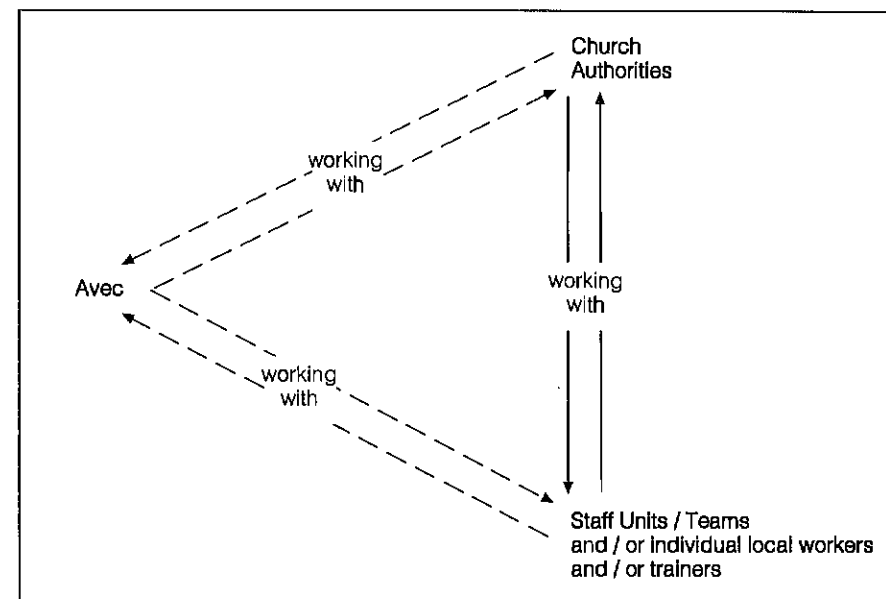


FIGURE 2: Workers, Church Authorities and Avec

The idea was to build up the vertical relationship so that it had a vital life of its own when the Avec “sides” were removed. (These sides are “dotted” to show that, whilst they were lines of strong interaction they were meant to be temporary whereas the others were permanent.) One of the ways in which we did this was through working with a diocese on developing shared ministry through team-work. Over a five year period, for example, in an Anglican diocese, we worked concurrently on ideas for shared ministry with the bishop’s staff meeting, a group of clergy and deacons, and three people attending diploma courses. Then, all concerned met in conference to decide on future action.

Another way in which we worked at this from 1977 onwards was through a series of work consultancy courses exclusively for people working regionally, nationally, and internationally. They attracted an admixture of people variously engaged in promoting local work from "above" through: providing educational, training and technical services for local people; administration; overall pastoral management of local work in a region.

These courses were most effective when the majority of the members were engaged in pastoral management. Such people – bishops and provincials – were at the nexus of much that impinged on the local from the institution.

Quickly it became clear that the approaches and methods were as relevant to a bishop as to a curate, to a chairman of a district as to a probationer minister, to a superior general as to a religious in a local religious community. Having experienced the approaches and methods first hand they understood what it was all about and they were much better able to facilitate local work based on the *avec* approach, to act as work consultants to their local practitioners and to promote development from "below" through action from "above".

That was not all. They studied their own work in relation to the overall context. This led them to consider the kind of regional and national context and environment for local work that they must seek to create – the kind of associations, communities, networks, structures that were required. In short, they worked at the regional and national entities for which they had especial responsibility in relation to local work.

This work demonstrated the universality of the methodology. It sharpened *Avec's* focus on local work and extended its understanding of what was involved locally, regionally and nationally (and in the case of religious orders internationally) in promoting it.

(e) *Commitment to work for the overall development of socio-religious communities*

Adopting the approaches sketched out above led practitioners to see and set their work in a wider setting – and to see their church or organization and their position in it as the base from which they worked for the human and spiritual well-being of all the people in their organization and area – and that could be a parish, a circuit, a diocese/district, a denomination.

This gives a broad based perspective on ministry and mission which leads to working holistically with different religious and social systems. Clearly it is quite different from working in the church, for the church and with the church and from serving a congregation only. It includes doing these things and all that goes with them such as Christian education, pastoral care, good management. It is also different from getting churches and their members engaged in community work simply to get more people to attend church. It is

about getting people themselves to make those places, churches, communities and organizations in which they live, work, worship, relax and die the best possible places that they can be – places in which people find satisfaction for their personal, social and spiritual needs and love and care for one another. It is about building human and spiritual community and the social and religious organizations which sustain and service it. In short it is working to and for the whole through "our" part of it.

(f) *The practice of the profession of lay and ordained ministries in secular and religious settings*

Putting these ideas for holistic ministry into practice draws heavily upon secular disciplines, community development and adult education in particular and the social and behavioural sciences in general. From the outset *Avec* staff were searching for ways by which useful secular methods could be assimilated into the practice, theory and theology of ministry and pastoral management. They were, in fact, able to help people to do this in relation to their diaconal, episcopal, lay and presbyteral ministries or religious apostolates. Increasing the repertoire of their skills greatly enhanced their competence to work for development in church and community in the ways I describe later. We were at pains to avoid ministers seeing themselves as community development workers, consultants or action-research workers. Such vocational changes might have been right for a minority, but certainly not for the majority if our purposes for the church were to be achieved.

By Way of Summary

There are two principal thrusts in these approaches. The one secures practitioners in their organizational base and in their basic profession of ministry. The other sets practitioners and churches in a wider field of developmental activity and enables them to make their unique contributions without compromising their identity. At first sight it might seem that these things would work against each other. The stance and approach mean that they do not; they become complementary. Over and again the wider involvement helps churches and practitioners to find their identity in ministry and mission.

Most of the practitioners from all the major denominations with whom we worked got excited about this stance and the ways in which we were formulating it. Quite often they said that it was precisely what they had been reaching out for and that they had been intuitively practising it in one way or another but, because they had not got a sufficiently clear conceptual and theoretical base for what they were doing, their efforts were not as effective as otherwise they might have been.

An article which I wrote in 1971 set out my approach to church and community development and to researching and promoting it. As it has influenced all my subsequent work it is reproduced in Appendix VI.

3. Five Basic Methods that Worked

Five "discoveries" made in the 60's and early 70's made Avec possible, necessary and effective. They were:

- the non-directive approach;
- work study methods useful to practitioners, consultants and trainers in analysing and designing church and community work;
- ways of training people in this approach through in-service training courses of short duration;
- work consultancy processes;
- action-research.

The first we owe to TR Batten; the second and third evolved from his training courses; the fifth comes from the social and behavioural sciences; the fourth derives from the use of the other four. By the time that Avec was founded the relevance of these to the work, ministry and mission of the Christian Church had been thoroughly tested by putting them into practice and researching them exhaustively in relation to their theological soundness and effectiveness in local church work in all the main denominations. This took over twelve years. Only then was it felt that the time was ripe to promote their use in the church at large through Avec.

- *The non-directive approach*

The first of these discoveries was the non-directive approach to working with people individually and in groups, churches and communities. At the heart of this approach is the desire and the commitment to get people to think, decide and act for themselves in the light of as much information as they can handle. This involves emphasizing the need to work *with* people as well as *for* them. Dr TR Batten coined the phrase, developed the theory and practice associated with it and tested it out widely as indeed we did before setting up Avec.

Practitioners who use this approach aim to help all kinds of people, separately and together, to think seriously, deeply, analytically, imaginatively and purposefully for themselves about the substance of work, life and faith and

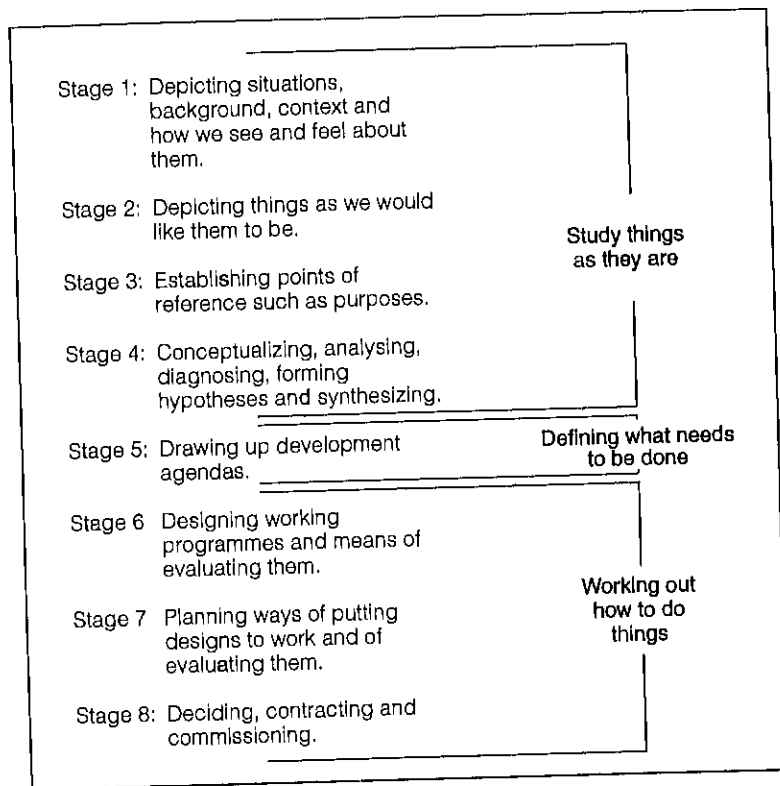
to act upon their conclusions. It takes their work and ministry to the very heart of human life. Thus they could not be in a better position from which to reflect, nor could they have more relevant information, knowledge and insights upon which to do so. Those who habitually take directive action are less likely to get into such privileged positions because they are inclined to overlay the thoughts of others with their own thinking and plans and thus obscure them.

Another important feature of this approach is that it helps practitioners to get people to think about other people's ideas as well as their own and especially those which they need to think about but do not want to – this is what we Christians are trying to do all the time. In as much as this is achieved the danger of exclusivism is minimised. One of the important effects of all this is that those involved in the processes are more likely to listen to the voices within themselves including that of God, and to have those inner dialogues with themselves which can be so creative.

- *Work study methods useful to practitioners, consultants and trainers in analysing and designing church and community work*

Avec aimed to help people themselves to effect any changes they needed to make in the ways in which they thought and went about their work. To achieve this objective staff had to be committed to the non-directive approach. Essential as this commitment was it only issued in effective action when ways and means were available which enabled consultants, trainers and consultants, separately and together, to think analytically and creatively. Sequences of questions and tasks and thinking stages were the bases of the ways and means used by Avec. They were the elements of "facilitating structures" for studying problems, cases, situations, projects. One of the simplest examples is three questions used to study problems: What is the problem? Why does it occur? What can I/we do about it? This basic structure was elaborated and refined.

Avec staff built up a wide range of facilitating structures: they borrowed and adapted some and created others. Each of them could be used by all concerned. This was important. Examining all the facilitating structures we used I found that in all of them there was a dynamic and thrust from experience through critical and imaginative thought to creative action. Also there was an underlying analytical structure, what I called a generic schema. It was developed and refined by staff members and associates. It contained a clearly defined series of eight thinking stages but it was flexible. They are set out in Display 1. Practitioners, consultants and trainers were encouraged to think, reflect, pray and meditate their way through the stages in relation to purposes, things they wished to avoid, beliefs, resources, needs. The schema is modelled in Figure 3. For me this schema is a mental map. Sometimes I use it as it is; at others I use it to design facilitating structures for particular situations.



DISPLAY 1: Eight Thinking Stages

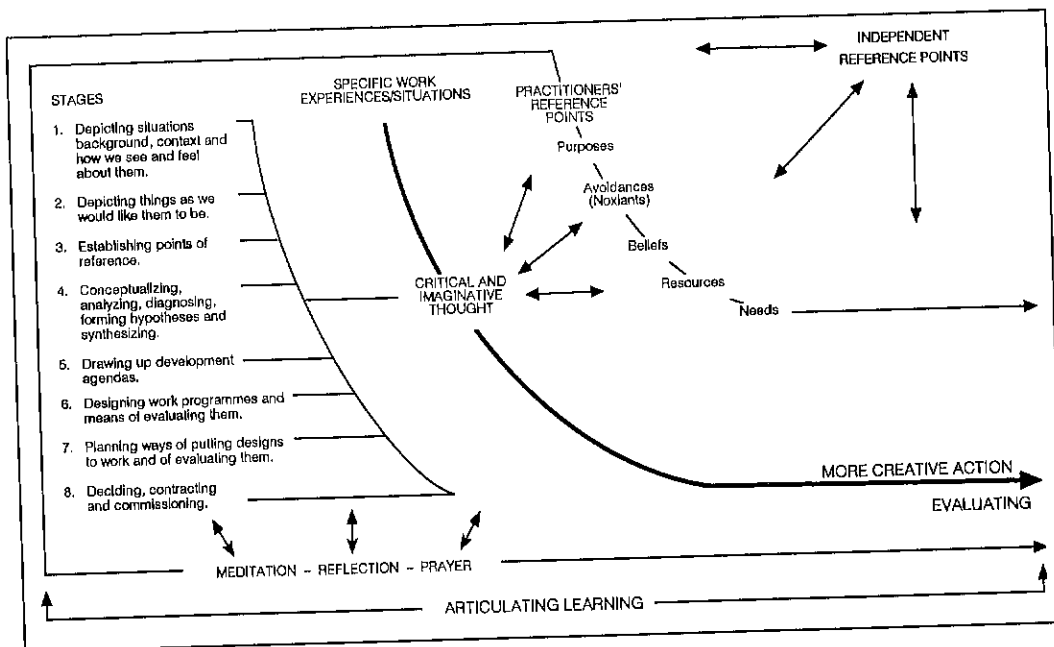


FIGURE 3: Schema for Analysing and Designing Church and Community Work

Genuine interest and caring confidential pastoral concern are as necessary for the effective use of this schema as analytical skills. Helping church and community work practitioners with their vocational work is of necessity a pastoral office as well as a technical consultancy and training service. Approaching it as such engenders a particular forum of spirituality. Using the schema effectively is anything but a mechanical exercise. Artistry is a word I would use to describe it. The aim is to use the stages of the schema and the different kinds of activities to promote creative interplay between practitioners and the realities of their work. For this to happen the schema must be subordinate to, and the servant of, creative processes *within and between* practitioners about their work. This involves deciding which stage or aspect of the schema to bring into play at a particular time and which of the activities to use. It might be, for example, appropriate to get people into a meditative and reflective mood in order to draw up a development agenda. On the other hand the right thing might be to do some hard disciplined thinking about alternative agendas. Selecting from the variables is a matter of judgement and style. Consultants and trainers need to give direction to thinking processes whilst being non-directive about the outcome of those processes. Essentially this is an exercise in applied theology.

Before using these approaches and methods with people we checked them out for acceptability. In a new working relationship the acceptance was more an act of faith than of understanding simply because their agreement was not informed by experience. Such agreement opened the gate to experience of the method, a critical appraisal of it, decisions about what use, if any, they wished to make of it and to modifications in the way it would be used in future.

- *Ten-day in-service training courses*

In 1970 the Revd Michael Newman, at the time in charge of the newly formed arrangements for the further training of Methodist ministers, wished to see as many Methodist ministers in circuit work as possible trained to do the kind of work I was doing in Parchmore. He invited me to design a fourteen day in-service residential training course which would induct Methodist ministers into the use of the non-directive approach in local church and community development work. Drawing upon some of the essential elements in the Battens' course I did produce a design. Catherine Widdicombe, Barrie Heafford and I ran four courses. The design worked. These courses provided opportunities for participants to examine the non-directive approach to church and community development in relation to Christian ministry, the mission of the church in contemporary society and their work. The courses also provided opportunities for members to practise the approach in small groups. Refined and developed, this design provided the basic model for the

ten-day courses which were Avec's stock-in-trade in-service training units. They were work and theory courses, they were not exercises in "group dynamics", or "T groups" or "sensitivity training", although, like consultancy sessions, they involved examining the anatomy of working, personal and socio-religious relationships between practitioners and people and between the churches, religious and community groups to which they belonged and with which they were engaged.

Ten-day courses had certain basic elements in common but each was tailored to the particular needs of its members. They were generally held in two periods of five days separated by a month or so. Ideally they comprised a group of twelve to eighteen people with two or three staff members. All participants had to undertake to be present throughout because the sessions were progressively interrelated and they had to undertake to treat discussions on work situations as confidential. These conditions were necessary to the consultancy process at the heart of these courses. Beforehand members were required, by way of guided preparation, to write a paper on their work, either that in which they were currently engaged or that which they were about to take up. During the course, members and staff studied systematically each work situation in turn. Members and staff acted as co-consultants to each other as they focussed on the analysis and then on the design of each person's work programme. They also examined practical, theoretical and theological subject matter inherent in the work in which the members were engaged, things of common concern to members and staff and representative problems and cases. Another principal aspect of this kind of course was the critical examination of ideas about the theory, theology and practice of working with people in churches, organizations and communities for spiritual and human development. Combined with this was a critical evaluation of the course members experience of the approaches and methods used by Avec staff. Throughout the aim was to enable members to decide precisely what implications all this could have for them, their work and their churches and organizations. Catherine Widdicombe developed a system of note-taking which enabled participants to give themselves to discussions knowing that a list of the main points would be available.

There were about a hundred of these courses over a period of twenty years. By common consent the most significant part of them was the study of the papers members wrote about their work situations. This was done in what we called "work paper" groups which had around six members. Time was allocated exclusively to each member in turn and his/her work situation (normally a short tutorial, and a one and a half hour, and a 20 minute group work session during each of two weeks separated by about a month). They followed a set sequence of tasks. First they sought to understand how the practitioner thought and felt about his/her work. (To see it through her/his eyes. To stand in her/his shoes. To empathise with her/him.) Second they analysed the underlying

dynamics of the situation. Third they helped the practitioner to determine what action s/he could and wanted to take – note, not what they would do if they were in the situation which is of little value because they were not the person concerned and they were not in the situation!

In order to maximise learning about the consultancy processes, members acted as observers in turn and discussed their observations with the members of the group after the consultancy process was concluded. Invariably, these discussions were lively learning sessions. Members took notes for each other so that those presenting papers could give themselves freely to the discussion.

Studying situations in this way was a fascinating but demanding discipline. It involved the creative interaction of the practitioner's and the group members' perspectives of his/her situation. Once people got the hang of this it was quite exciting to see them trying out this and that suggestion for a fit, teasing out why a suggestion did not fit and then trying another one until something fell into place.

Working in this way involved members and staff of these courses committing themselves to be present at all sessions. This enabled them to pursue the process stage by stage together, to cross reference things and to address issues as they arose. This paid enormous dividends but it is costly because it is labour intensive: three staff to twelve members for ten days.

I never ceased to be amazed at the rapid development of reflective skills and consultancy expertise which practitioners acquired after participating in six 1½ hour consultancy sessions over a period of five days in a group in which the staff member used the method and maintained the discipline of concentrating on one situation at a time, following a sequence of analytical stages and avoiding anecdotes.

I have been privileged to see some exciting and radical developments occur during these sessions. In some cases people have been converted to a very different way of working or thinking. One that stands out occurred in Belfast. The Troubles were active. I was working with an ecumenical group of four people: a Methodist lay woman, two Roman Catholic priests (a Jesuit and a Redemptorist) and a Church of Ireland priest. The Catholic priests were in the most casual dress, the Church of Ireland priest was dressed in black jacket and waistcoat, stiff collar, black tie and pin striped trousers. It was his turn to present his paper. We were sitting around a table. To my surprise just as we were about to start the session he stood up. In build and in voice he was much like Ian Paisley but not as tall, he put his hand on my shoulder holding me down with unnecessary force and bellowed: "No Catholic, especially a Jesuit can understand my situation. But I am a good Protestant and I have committed myself to this exercise and so, being a man of my word, I will go through with it". The atmosphere was electric. What a start for a work consultancy session which depended upon mutual openness!

Surprisingly the session went well. Starting from nothing on a deprived housing estate, no church building and no members, the Church of Ireland priest had built a large church with a membership of 1,000 families in less than twenty years. We were able to help him to conceptualise a confusing situation and see ways of dealing with the problems of rapid growth. At the end of the session he stood again, placed his hand on my shoulder (a little more lightly this time) and said (not bellowed), "As a good Protestant I am bound to say that this group, and especially the Jesuit, has understood my situation better than I did myself and better than any of my own denomination. Thank you". I feel the emotion again as I tell the story. The mind boggles at the learning that took place in the priest about his work and about people of other denominations and the psychological, cultural and religious barriers that had been taken down in the group. Not all sessions were as dramatic as that, but they were events which invariably affected change and development.

As the work of Avec evolved adaptations of this basic model formed the basis for courses for specific groups. There were courses for missionaries, for instance, and for other groups. But the greater majority of these courses were for mixed ecumenical groups of people working at various levels in different kinds of work. (See Appendices I & II).

- *Work consultancy*

Broadly speaking work consultancy is to practitioners and their work what counselling is to people and their lives. It is a particular application of the non-directive approach. Consultants (those who are consulted) help consultors (those who are consulting) to think through aspects of their work and what they feel about it and to decide what action to take and how to take it. Non-directive work consultancy enables consultants and consultors to be vigorously proactive in ways which help consultors to be more creative. It facilitates the bonding of consultants and consultors necessary for consultancy sessions and the freedom necessary for consultors to be active independent practitioners beyond and between consultancy sessions.

My first experience of this was through discussions with Batten about my work at Parchmore where I was the consultor and he the consultant. (I still see him from time to time in this capacity.) I used the underlying principles when acting as a consultant to other people. Gradually I worked out my own practice theory.

On the courses referred to in the previous section, work consultancy methods were used extensively in the study of each member's work situation in small groups. One member was the consultor and the others were co-consultants.

- *Action-research*

Action-research is a way of continuously assessing work done in church and community for what can be learnt from it, and ploughing back whatever is learnt to inform future decisions and actions. Practitioners collect data through their role as non-directive "participant observers", sometimes active, at other times passive. They are ideally placed to explore from within the processes by which positive and negative changes occur and the sequence of events which lead to them. They are their own research instruments.

Action-research methods were widely used in Avec. They helped staff and associates to develop Avec as an organization and to evaluate and refine its courses and services. Full and part-time staff members used them to research their work for higher degrees. Each member of the two-year part-time Avec/Roehampton Institute Diploma in Church and Community Development undertook a programme of action-research on an aspect of their church and community work [see section 8(e)].

The Methods in Operation

The non-directive approach enables all kinds of people to work *with* others for human and spiritual development. It creates an environment conducive to thought within which practitioners, consultants and trainers can use work study tools to promote thoughtful developmental action. It enables people to use their experience and their understanding of human beings and how they function. Avec's ten-day work and theory in-service training courses gave participants experiences of the non-directive approach and the work study tools and opportunities to assess them as they learnt about them through using them. Courses and work consultancy sessions enabled practitioners to study critically their working situations at a particular moment of time. They also enabled them to draw upon anything which might help them from the body of knowledge which Avec had accumulated from their experience of and studies in church and community development. And they helped them to formulate their own practice-theory. Thus these activities facilitated the analytic punctuation of on-going work programmes. Many people did, in fact, attend more than one course and had a series of consultations. Action-research, on the other hand, enabled people to monitor and study analytically the flow of work over a period of time. Therefore, action-research was a longitudinal study of the work flow, whereas courses were a cross sectional study.

The five methods are complementary, the one leading to or following on from the other. The non-directive approach is a common denominator to the others but it has a life far beyond them. They are all ways of learning in depth about human and spiritual development and of promoting it in specific times and places. They were effective because, as already noted, they were always

practised in the context of pastoral care for practitioners: they were never used in a cold clinical way which left people to handle any personal distress caused by disturbing disclosures that from time to time occurred. Avec staff and other members of courses provided moral and spiritual support to people as they helped them to work through the implications of such disturbances. That was part of what was involved in integrating the methods of the social sciences into the profession of ministry.

Several things flowed from the persistent and consistent use of these methods. Practitioners became more reflective and effective and found deeper satisfaction in their work as did their organizations. Methods were continually tested, researched and refined for their usefulness to consultants, trainees and practitioners. A body of experience and knowledge about church and community development practice, theory and theology was gradually built up and modified to incorporate new insights. There was a continuing dynamic interaction between the methods, the subject matter upon which they were used and the body of knowledge that was accruing. This interaction was a creative life-giving process and force.

4. A Combination of Technical and Interpersonal Engagement and Behaviour

The fusion of two modes of engagement in the behaviour of staff towards participants created productive working relationships between them and participants in courses and consultancy sessions. To differentiate between them I refer to the one as "technical engagement" and the other as "interpersonal engagement". The technical engagement occurred through adopting the approach and using the tools described in the previous section with practitioners in relation to their work and to them as workers. This engagement enabled staff and participants to be rigorous in analysis and realistic in design. Usefulness depended upon staff and participants working through these phases which are invariably rewarding but at times disturbing and painful. Practitioners were flesh and blood and the work under consideration was their vocation and life. Technical engagement was essential but the quality of the interpersonal engagement determined whether it could be initiated and, if so, whether it could be sustained to the point of creativity. Behavioural characteristics of this mode of engagement are:

- acceptance of people and their situations as they are for what they are;
- the guarantee of confidentiality;
- genuine, not feigned, interest in others and their work;
- single-minded concentration on people and their work;
- empathic relating along with controlled emotional involvement;
- standing by people without attempting to take their place;

- respecting privacy and "no-go areas";
- treating people as equals;
- accompanying people pastorally.

This kind of behaviour had profound effects upon people engaged in work study processes. It generated human and spiritual relationships within which the use of analytical processes was most effective. Very quickly extraordinarily deep and open relationships were established between people and creative working environments were formed. The fusion of the two modes of engagement energised participants and led them to share anything apposite to the tasks in hand – thoughts, feelings, beliefs, insights, knowledge, experience, hopes and fears. People differing significantly in personality, beliefs, purposes and experience collaborated creatively rather than competed even when struggling with their differences. Heads and hearts engaged together. At the same time, partly because of the emphasis upon mutual accountability, the freedom of all participants, including trainees and consultants, to be their own person in interdependence was maintained. The incident I quoted about the Church of Ireland priest illustrates this. Participants who experienced this at its most effective in co-consultancy work paper sessions said that it was like being at a Eucharist because it was a "sacrament of work".

Unfortunately there is no one word known to me which encapsulates the combination of the two modes of interpersonal engagement and behaviour, the *avec* approach, which was key to Avec's effectiveness. Display 2 is an attempt to list subtle nuances of this endlessly fascinating but complex human and spiritual way of working with and relating to people.

5. Theory and Theology made Explicit

Many practitioners said that intuitively and by touch and feel they had been doing some things in ways very similar to those used and advocated by Avec. For instance, many were practising one method or another that they had gained from the social and behavioural sciences such as "management by objectives" and "group centred leadership". For the main part, however, they had not integrated it with their other ways of doing things into a coherent code of practice. Therefore they were open to a systematic introduction to the practice, theory and theology associated with the non-directive approach to church and community development and help to integrate it into their theology and practice of ministry.

Making practice theory explicit through a systematic presentation of the underlying theory and theology excited practitioners. This presentation met a real need. They said it was just what they had been searching for. It immediately helped them to understand their own practice and that of Avec. They found they could use it to link theory with practice more effectively, to develop their

The nature of the core process (from experience through critical and imaginative thought to creative action) is fascinatingly complex; discovering some of its facets has been one of the exciting privileges of living and working with it. I can best summarise it in the following way.

In its application it is –

- a human and spiritual activity;
- focused and centred on workers and their work, however mundane it is;
- proactive, and stimulates and facilitates others to be proactive;
- outwardly directed to wider socio-religious contexts and issues;
- interventionist, provocative and perturbing but respects the autonomy and privacy of others;
- structured and systematic-not to impose order and shape but to enable others to order and shape their working world as they need to;
- logical, affective and intuitive, giving equal attention to thoughts, feelings and hunches;
- specific but systemic and holistic, concentrating on people, situations and issues;
- practical because it is theoretical and theological;
- collaborative and generates mutual accountability;
- both a private and a public activity;
- reflection-in-action, and, when used rigorously, a form of action-research;
- hard but rewarding work!

In its effects it –

- uses and promotes theological understanding;
- engenders interdependency which properly respects independence and dependence;
- distributes power;
- empowers people;
- mandates equal opportunities to participate;
- promotes creative consensus by revealing and working constructively at differences, factions and conflicts;
- promotes self-induced and interrelated human and spiritual development in secular and religious contexts;

DISPLAY 2:

- is educational without being didactic – it leads to perceptive ways of “knowing” about the human and the divine;
- helps build socio-religious learning communities that can live and work for human well-being and the glory of God;
- equips people to work for development with each other and to be co-workers with Christ in the church and in the world;
- is œcumenical, bringing together in common endeavour all kinds of people;
- makes contributions to all stages of human and spiritual development;
- is deeply satisfying!

In its intention, orientation and approach, it –

- starts with people where they are, accepting them and their situations as they are;
- stands by people without attempting to take their place;
- works to the rhythms of people;
- stimulates people to do all they can for the common good;
- is both inductive and deductive;
- is an act of faith in the abilities and willingness of others to pursue their own well-being and development and to work for the common good;
- is non-directive – religiously so in relation to the decisions people need to make for themselves;
- is complementary and integral to that which is done for us by God and other people;
- is inclusive rather than exclusive;
- contributes to all aspects of the ministry and mission of the church;
- makes unique and essential contributions to the work economy of the kingdom of God.

It can be embodied in people (individuals and collectives) and their work through their –

- love of people and God;
- inner commitments, human graces and technical skills.

Unfortunately there is no word or phrase that points to the richly endowed nature of this approach. What a travesty it is, for want of a better word, to have to call it “non-directive”.

Nature of the Avec Approach

own practice and theory, to explain it to themselves and others and to induct others into new ways of working with people. Books listed in the Bibliography illustrate the ways in which we did this through publications, the first of which came out in 1972.

SERVICES

6. Commitment to Working With People in Any and All Forms of Work in Any Community in All Denominations

All that we had learnt through our own experience and research and that of others about the *avec* approach had convinced us that it was relevant to work of any kind with people in any situation. But in the 60's and 70's there was a tendency to associate community development with disadvantaged urban areas and to think of church and community development as that which the church did in the community. Consequently it would have been all too easy for *Avec* to have been identified with urban development.

From the outset a conscious decision was made that *Avec* would be an agency for people in any and all forms of work in all denominations and in any kind of community. We were determined that it would not be exclusively an urban or a rural church and community development unit. This decision was strategically important and infinitely rewarding. It led to *Avec* working with practitioners engaged with people in culturally diverse and widely differing churches and communities in many different countries and with some who were working with special groups of people such as Travellers and people with handicaps. This meant that those on most ten-day courses could well study the work of people of five denominations variously engaged with small and large rural and urban churches, religious communities and deaf people. Consequently these courses were invariably experiences of rich and rewarding multi-dimensional learning- much of it by osmosis. Evaluations, surveys and unsolicited comments show that participants put great value on these ecumenical and variegated work experiences. (A minority of courses were exclusively for groups of people in the same organization or engaged in the same kind of work.)

7. The Provision of a Wide Range of User-Friendly Services

Avec offered a range of training courses and consultancy services in London and in centres throughout the United Kingdom more readily accessible to people. (*Avec* was founded on the understanding that it would not own any property and that the training staff would be itinerant, taking courses and

services to people: there were any number of centres in which courses could be held; the nature of the services did not require the transport of equipment; some of those who needed the services most would or could not travel to receive them. Chelsea Methodist Church provided a London base which proved to be necessary for administration, courses and consultations.) Details of venues are given in Appendices I & II. In the event, excluding the 40 courses for missionaries most of which were in missionary training colleges, 45% of the courses were in provincial centres in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Eire. Including the missionary courses the figure is 55%. Large numbers of people preferred London and a considerable number of those who used *Avec* services worked in Greater London. Almost all the consultancy and project work involved travel throughout the UK and Ireland, and to West Africa and Zimbabwe. These arrangements added greatly to *Avec's* effectiveness.

Introductory seminars, lectures, demonstrations of the approach, consultations and short courses on *Avec* and its work provided opportunities for people to make an assessment at firsthand of the relevance of *Avec* for them and their work in a comparatively short period of time and without prior commitment to further work. Ten-day courses, follow up courses and group work practice courses enabled people to study their work and the application of the non-directive approach to it. The two-year part-time diploma courses (1986-1993) enabled people to write their own study and research proposals, to examine the theory, theology and practice of church and community development and to research aspects of their work as they were doing it and to write it up as a dissertation. These courses generally helped people to become better reflective practitioners and enabled them to develop their ability to act as trainers and consultants.

Alongside this basic programme *Avec* staff were busily engaged in working out with organizations the in-service training courses and consultancy services they needed and the arrangements that would best suit them. One result of this was an annual course for missionaries. The staff were also working on projects* with many different groups. These tailor made courses and services were greatly valued. Building the necessary flexibility into the overall programme could be problematic but it was eminently worthwhile. It facilitated collaborative action between churches and organizations and *Avec*. And that had all kinds of spin-off, not least was the understanding the staff gained about the constituency they sought to serve which informed work and publications.

* Consultancy and project work involved *Avec* staff members working *with* rather than *for* people on their work. In consultancy work staff members were not involved in any of the action required to implement in the worker's situations any of the ideas that evolved from the consultancy sessions. Such action was entirely the responsibility of the consultors. Project work, on the other hand, involved *Avec* staff working with people in their organization on agreed tasks and programmes. This included consultancy sessions and sometimes training courses.

The range and details of these services is set out in Appendices I and II. Avec's primary objective and a summary of services is set out in Display 3.

Avec's primary objective is to help churches as churches to make fuller use of what the staff have learnt from community development and allied disciplines about the practice, theory and theology of working with people for human and spiritual development. At the same time they seek to help them to become increasingly self-sufficient in working in this way and in training their own staff to do so. Basically, in relation to this objective, the staff of Avec offer three kinds of services.

First, they help others openly and critically to come to their own conclusions about the *avec* ways of working and to act upon them. They do this through helping people to examine the approach in relation to their work, to those with whom they work and to themselves – their beliefs, purposes, their natural style of working with people. Courses and seminars are arranged to provide opportunities for this.

Second, they act as "work consultants" to clergy, religious and laity in relation to the whole gamut of their work or to parts of it... Generally speaking, in terms of its nature this consultancy service is more like that of a building consultant than a medical consultant. It is help towards "building up" people, neighbourhoods, communities and churches and their human and spiritual resources. In style and approach work consultancy is to people, their working relationships and their work, what counselling is to people, their relationships and their lives. This consultancy service is offered through work and theory courses and through staff and associates acting as consultants to individuals, groups and projects.

Third, they help people themselves to acquire any of the skills associated with this approach which they may come to value... All courses and seminars give people first-hand experience of the staff putting the approach into practice. Short practice and theory courses give people chances to have a go at trying out the non-directive approach. Ten-day work and theory courses give participants opportunities to act as co-consultants to each other. Seminars and courses are arranged specifically to enable people to increase their work analysis and consultancy skills. Also there are a limited number of opportunities for people to gain experience through assisting on courses and projects.

DISPLAY 3: Avec's Primary Objective and Services
(An extract from *Avec: Its Courses and Work Consultancy Services*, 1985)

Avec was user-friendly because it provided this choice of ready made and tailor made courses and services and because the staff:

- (a) aimed for self-induced change;
- (b) promoted freely chosen and supported participation;
- (c) worked with practitioners, churches and organizations on the specifics of *their* work and the issues that impinged upon it rather than on generic issues generally;
- (d) used well tested ways and means of analysing and designing "people work" in churches and communities;
- (e) did all they could to make courses and consultancy services effective and economic work study units.

(a) *Self-induced change*

All Avec's courses and services were based upon the conviction that self-induced change is essential to human and spiritual creativity and development. Every effort, therefore, was made to promote this kind of change in people who came to Avec so that, in turn, they could do so in the organizations and communities to which they belonged. Conversely every effort was made to avoid imposing change or any suggestion of it. Imposed change is, of course, a part of life and under some circumstances leads to betterment. That does not invalidate the emphasis upon self-induced change. This made Avec services user friendly at deep psychological and spiritual levels. Most people rejoiced in it and the freedom it gave them. Some, however, experienced dependency withdrawal symptoms as they moved from imposed to self-induced change.

(b) *Freely chosen and supported participation*

Our experience in Avec was that, generally speaking, courses, work paper groups and consultancy sessions were most creative when all the participants really wanted to be involved. Conversely, we invariably encountered difficulties when one or more members of a group or course were reluctant participants for one reason or another. People who were involved of their own volition gave more of themselves to the work, supported and cared for each other as they examined each other's work and carried out collaborative tasks. So, we did all we could to ensure that everyone participated of their own free will on the basis of a clear understanding about what was involved. So, for example, in talking about courses with people in authority we discussed the importance of freely chosen participation and possible ways of achieving it.

Also, it was much easier for those with the support and backing of their churches and organizations to feed back and to put into practice what they had gained from courses and consultations than it was for those engaged with people unsympathetic or antagonistic to the *avec* approach. So we worked hard to maximise organizational support (outer freedom) as well as personal free choice (inner freedom). When these freedoms combined they formed powerful mandates for creative change in individuals and in their churches and organizations.

Efforts to get people freely involved were largely but not entirely successful. MARC Europe's independent survey said that most of those who responded came on Avec ten-day courses "either from their volition or willingly when someone else suggested it. The number coming with a sense of compulsion... is very small – not more than one in fifty". Only a small minority of those who attended courses for missionaries felt that pressure had been put upon them by their missionary organization but they did not regret it. Referring to those who worked with Avec on projects or used its consultancy services the Report summarised the responses in this way: "Almost a half said that the decision to employ Avec was that of the majority (about a fifth said that the decision had been carried by the majority and that they had not been in full agreement) or that a minority insisted that Avec be employed". "Only 3% gave a definite answer 'Yes' to the question, 'Did you feel that working with Avec had been imposed on you in any way?' But a further 20% said that this was true to some extent".

These figures and comments reflect the messy realities of groups making decisions which adequately respect the freedom of the group and its members whether they belong to a minority or majority. The difficulties are associated with different kinds of situations in which decisions were made for or against using Avec.

Frequently decisions were made through one-to-one discussions between someone enquiring about courses or consultancy services and an Avec staff member. Even though we were committed to freely chosen participation, the temptation to persuade was ever present especially when we felt a course could help the person and/or we were desperate to get a sufficient number of applicants to make a course viable. Occasionally we applied persuasive pressure, and that was regretted even though there was generally a good outcome. For the most part, however, we genuinely tried to help people to make a decision which was good for them, if not for Avec's immediate needs. I particularly recall deeply satisfying exploratory interviews with people who had shown interest in our two-year part-time diploma course. Most of these interviews became vocational consultancy sessions in which the diploma became one of several options all of which we considered openly, realistically and disinterestedly. More often than not they chose to apply for a place on the diploma not least

because of the value they placed upon this kind of discussion. A few did not, but I always felt satisfied and at peace even when we needed applicants, because there was integrity in what had happened.

The MARC Europe Report refers more directly to problems experienced in some instances when a team or group was trying to decide whether or not to use the services of Avec. They occurred when there were significant differences of opinion. Those in the minority could feel pressurised to "resolve" the dilemma by going along with the majority view; those in the majority could feel they were being held to ransom or blackmailed by the minority. Frequently we, Avec staff members, were present at one stage or another of these discussions. Often members of the majority expected us to persuade the minority. Again it was tempting to fulfil this expectation and at times sadly we did by default, but we never deliberately manipulated people.

At our best we got all the members of a team to assess alternative choices as amicably, honestly and openly as possible in relation to their individual and collective beliefs and purposes and the likely effects upon them and their work. And, at the same time, we discussed with the team, the conditions necessary for us to be useful to the team and its work. (We too had decisions to make about whether we could work effectively in a given situation.) Quite often this was all that was required: it enabled members to move from a "yes/no" argument and confrontation to a consideration of the choices and their effects. But sometimes there was a stalemate. Then we tried to get them to discuss how they proposed to deal with the stalemate. If they got into a stalemate over how to resolve the first stalemate we would get them to discuss how they proposed to deal with this second order stalemate – and so on until a way forward was discovered or we reached an impasse. Adopting this approach helped people to get to the heart of the problem by reducing the destructive power of deadlocks and of the dynamics engendered when the majority bullies the minority and when the minority holds the majority to ransom. It didn't always work! Nothing did. But it often did because all of us are experienced in the underlying art of overcoming such human relations problems. Solutions reached were ingenious and depended upon members caring for each other's well-being.

Other situations which led people to feel that Avec had been imposed upon them were those in which it simply was not possible for all participants to be consulted before consultants and facilitators were appointed.

The MARC Europe Report conclusions on this matter came as something of a surprise. We were at pains to get freely chosen participation. Our overall experience was of people willingly, openly and freely participating in Avec courses. Evaluations by the participants at the end of courses and consultancy sessions were overwhelmingly positive and rarely did the question of imposition arise. The MARC Europe Report does not provide explicit information about the effect that imposition had upon their participation. However, as we have

already noted, it does say, "Avec courses and consultancy services are generally very well received. They are still appreciated years after clients attended them, and are found to be helpful, practical and life-changing". It seems reasonable to me to assume that the high rate of satisfaction with the courses and consultancy services owes something to the following factors.

- Avec did not have any power or authority over participants. At an early stage it was decided not to use any influence to get those with authority to "send" or direct people to courses.
- The incidence of imposition and manipulation was small in comparison with that commonly experienced in religious organizations.
- It was widely known that Avec preferred freely chosen participation and worked hard to get it. Occasionally Avec was implicated in processes which led to imposition, but only by default, never by design.
- Feelings about imposition could be freely and openly discussed with Avec Staff with impunity just as could all other subjects.
- It was normative practice for Avec Staff to accept people as they were and work with them at realities as they experienced and perceived them including experiences of imposition.
- Whatever happened up to the point of working with Avec Staff, thereafter, by common consent, participants had experiences of free participation, a real say in all that was happening and freedom from imposition, manipulation and judgmental attitudes. They rejoiced in this thoroughgoing use of the non-directive approach, especially those accustomed to being imposed upon.
- Participants were drawn into what was happening because they saw it to be not only interesting but of vital importance to them, their vocations and organizations and they valued interdependent working relationships between equals.
- Course members quickly formed cohesive and highly effective task groups. Over and over again people said how lucky they were to get into such a group. Groups jelled too often for it to be a chance factor. They were formed through a random process of accepting applications as they came in – there were never sufficient people to select. The open secret was in emphasising freedom of choice and the use of non-directive processes from the moment of first encounter with individuals and groups. It was not in well attuned selection procedures as some thought.

Now to the question of support. Our experience and the MARC Europe Report suggests that most people got financial support from central funds for further training. Informed support from the people with whom they worked was a different matter. A few people had fully informed support and most got tacit support. Some, however, came privately, paid the fees themselves and used their holiday time to attend because they had no support at all. Indeed one of the reasons for seeking Avec's help was to find ways of dealing with people who were apathetic about or antagonistic to development programmes. They simply did not know how to get support from such people. (Incidentally observance of confidentiality was vitally important to them. Without it they simply would not have felt sufficiently secure to examine their situation openly.)

Face to face discussions with people before courses enabled us to consider the question of support in relation to their situation. Making idealistic statements on course leaflets about the importance of getting support could put some people off the course who knew that they could not get such support or it could lead others to take action to get it which exacerbated their problems. So we did not require or advise people to get local support. We left it to their own judgement. Those who had decided to discuss it with their church were alerted to things which could help and hinder them from getting local support – see Display 4. Display 5 is a story about getting free and supported participation.

The way in which the course is presented to people in your church or church council could considerably influence the effect it has for good or bad. The influence is more likely to be for good if, for instance, they understand from the outset that the course is about what clergy and church workers can do to help all concerned to evolve and implement programmes of church and community work most likely to fit their situation. The influence is more likely to be for bad if, for instance, they feel that clergy and church workers are meeting to determine independently plans for church work which subsequently they will try to impose.

Informing people about the course, therefore, presents very real opportunities for taking people into your confidence; telling them something about the course and what you hope to get out of it for the church and for yourself; disabusing them of any false ideas; creating a desire to hear about the course when it is over and to consider its implications; for enlisting their support during the time when you will be on the course. In short, for getting people to have a real stake in the course and its outcome.

With all this in mind, therefore, you and your colleagues could help each other to consider: Who should I tell about the course? Why? What should I tell them? How? When? Then, test out your ideas by looking at them from the point of view of your parishioners and leaders – really try to think and feel your way into their situation.

DISPLAY 4: The Course and Your Churches

An Anglican diocese with whom I worked for several years wanted to get clergy in Yorkshire pit village parishes where there was considerable deprivation to consider what they could do in co-operation with the diocese to promote social welfare and development. On principle these clergymen, mostly Anglo-Catholic, did not normally attend courses or use consultancy help. Nor did they ask for grants from a substantial social development fund. Getting a group of twelve to participate freely and willingly in a work study training programme took over a year, several open consultations attended by almost seventy people and many private discussions. Quite extraordinary developments occurred in and through this group. They extended the course, arranged a consultation for their parishioners who had never been involved in such an event and prepared and organized a diocesan consultation to work out the wider implications of their experience.

The bishop asked for a live demonstration of the work consultancy method we had used so that he and his diocesan officers could assess why it had been so highly valued by the priests. The bishops and archdeacons and social responsibility officers who initiated the scheme could have got together a group of pressed men in a very short time. But it is very doubtful if it would have been anywhere near as productive as the one to which priests chose to come freely with the support of their parishes which they consulted before agreeing to attend. They also had the support of their diocese which respected their autonomy. Consequently it gained the valued prize of interdependent collaborative working relationships.

DISPLAY 5: Getting Free and Supported Participation

(c) *A situational based approach to contextual issues*

Critical generic "issues" form an important part of the context of church and community work. Issues such as racism, sexism, clericalism, injustice are all pervasive. They variously impinge upon and affect workers and their work. One way of tackling them is through what is sometimes referred to as an "issue based approach". This involves using the methods of theology, psychology and the social sciences to examine such issues and their nature, to reveal their effects and to discover ways of overcoming them. Avec staff took all this very seriously and followed as much of it as possible. They found it informed their consultancy work. Studying critical issues in church and community development was a significant part of the diploma and the ten-day course.

Centring and concentrating on practitioners and their work in the ways described earlier led to a situational based approach to issues. That is, to an examination with people in specific situations of the impact of contextual issues upon them, their work and what they could do about them. This was Avec's speciality. Information from general issue based studies helped them to pursue this approach more effectively.

Consequently staff members worked at the leading edge of a wide range of ecclesiastical, moral, social and theological issues with many different

practitioners from *within* their situations. Profound understandings of issues, their effects and what is involved in dealing with them was gained through these specific studies of them in concrete situations.

Differences between these approaches are sharpened by considering the kind of courses they lead to. Issue based courses (which Avec did not organize) enable practitioners to study the issues but generally leave them to work out the implications for themselves in their situations. Situational based courses and consultancy services enable practitioners to study the particularities of the impact of issues upon them, the people with whom they are working and their work and what action they plan to take. Moreover, on the Avec courses practitioners helped each other to do this in relation to each of their situations. This meant that they learnt at first and second hand about the different ways in which the same issues impacted and affected different people and situations. This is represented in Figure 4.

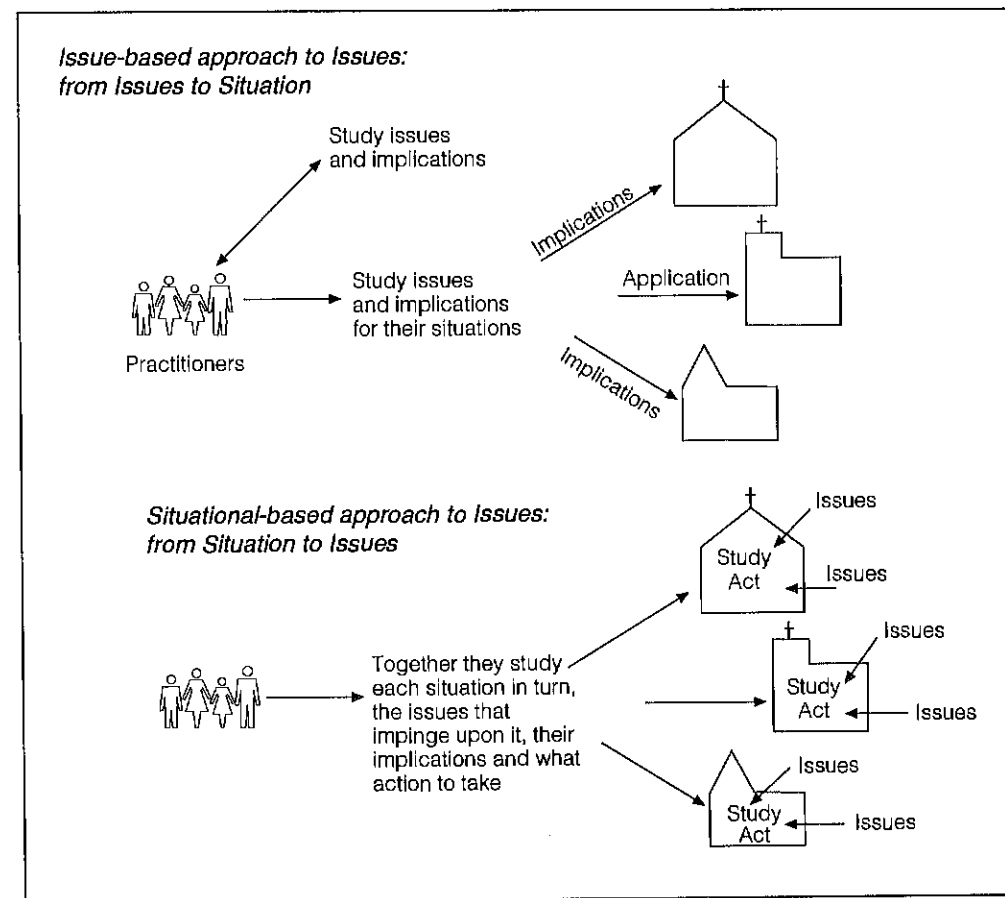


FIGURE 4: Issue- and Situational-based Approaches

Nevertheless, there were two generic issues which Avec worked at both situationally and generally: the directive and non-directive approaches; the role of the church in community development. In the early days conferences and seminars helped to get these issues more widely considered and to establish Avec's position. However, the main work on these two issues was done as critically as that on the other issues through examining with practitioners their relevance to them. Interestingly, more progress was made by considering different ways of doing things in situations without naming them as directive or non-directive: that is through an inductive rather than a deductive approach.

Staff and practitioners concentrated on the situational study of critical issues for several reasons. *Theologically* speaking it is incarnational, an approach embedded in particularities, and therefore in line with the heavy investment all denominations have in local church and community work in neighbourhoods and parishes. *Pragmatically* speaking it works – it concentrates on what particular practitioners want and need at a particular time and place in relation to the issues having an impact upon them and their situation. *Methodwise* it models ways in which practitioners can work in their situations for development with others. *Economically* speaking it pays high dividends for a comparatively small investment. Practitioners get the maximum advantage immediately of all the relevant knowledge and information available. Avec staff selected relevant information from their experience and their theological studies and those in the behavioural sciences. Other participants did the same. This meant they got much from several disciplines without studying them. At the same time everyone was gathering important data about issues, their impact on different situations and workers and ways of tackling them.

(d) *Well tested ways and means of analysing and designing "People Work" in churches and communities*

The approach to analysing and designing is described in section 3 above. This approach and the methods associated with it had been well tested over a long period of time in local church and community work, in training courses and consultancy sessions. The various publications listed in the Bibliography describe how this was done.

(e) *Courses and consultancy services were effective and economic work study units giving immediate and long-term returns*

There is a considerable amount of evidence that Avec's courses and services were valued because they were effective: unsolicited testimonies; formal course evaluations by participants; the independent survey by MARC Europe (cf Appendix IV); a series of interviews published in *Telling Experiences: Stories*

About A Transforming Way of Working With People. The returns were immediate and long-term. They were immediate because all the time in consultancy sessions and a significant proportion in courses was spent on the actual work in which the participants were engaged. Courses and consultancy sessions could be described as work study annexes to a practitioner's work situations: they were not time off work; they were time spent rigorously examining work in a reflective mode. They were designed to be self-contained analytical cycles of work study. Great care was taken to ensure that by the end of courses and consultancy sessions practitioners felt confident and comfortable about putting the ideas that had emerged into effective practice in their situation. So practitioners' work situations flowed into consultancy sessions and what emerged flowed directly back into the ongoing work stream. Long-term returns included things that they had learnt about technical and interpersonal modes of engagement in the analysis and design of church and community work and the theory and theology associated with them.

Consequently these courses made good economic sense – as did consultancy sessions which were tailored to the needs of consultors. Each participant on a course benefited from other participants and staff giving considerable amounts of time to studying their work situation with them and bringing their experiences and knowledge to bear upon it. In a recent book I describe in detail the work done on a typical ten-day course with a bishop on his situation. Then I assessed the time given to this task as follows.

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. (*Analysis and Design: A Handbook for Practitioners and Consultants in Church and Community Work* p. 91)

This thoroughgoing study of his work led to some radical changes. One was in his approach to getting clergy working in urban and suburban parishes (he referred to them as "UPA, urban priority areas, and BUPA parishes") sharing and reflecting on the ways in which they thought theologically about their ministry and the mission of the church. That was in 1988. The course

fees were about £250. Rarely was time wasted. Most people left courses satisfied but exhausted and somewhat amazed at what had been achieved in such a short time.

Various arrangements helped to make Avec services more profitable and economical to those using them. Some organizations, for instance, built up training and consultancy services for their own work force by making arrangements for a select number of their members to prepare to act as trainers and consultants by attending courses or by helping to staff them. Also, experience proved that when people had studied the practice, theory and theology of the *avec* approach they made much more effective use of consultations and were better collaborators in project work. Courses were effective and economical ways of studying and experiencing the approaches. Therefore, when negotiating contracts for consultancy and project work with churches which had no previous experience of the *avec* approach, the advisability of key people attending courses was always raised and wherever possible arrangements made for them to do so. This meant that training complemented consultancy and project work in economic and effective ways. So, to refer to one of many examples, whilst he was the Abbot of Worth, the late Dominic Gaisford attended a ten-day consultation to prepare for a process of discernment in which all the monks of Worth Abbey were to participate and Avec staff were to act as facilitators.

STAFF

8. Use of Qualified Ecumenical Staff with a Sense of Mission

Many people have said that the partnership between Catherine Widdicombe and myself was key to the effectiveness of Avec. Deep commitment to church and community development brought us together in the late 60's. Our partnership was formed through working together on an action-research project from 1969 to 1976: from 1972 we were the principal and only full-time workers. In the discussions leading up to the inauguration of Avec great importance was placed upon maintaining our partnership by Archbishop Worlock and the late Revd Christopher Bacon and Mr Owen Nankivell of the Division of Ministries of the Methodist Church. They saw it as an ecumenically unique working relationship with considerable potential. Such relationships, they said, are given for purposes, they happen, they are not created at will. They felt strongly that nothing should be done to break up the partnership and everything should be done to secure it for the ecumenical and community development movements. And that is what happened.

One or two things need to be said about the partnership during 1976-91

without any pretence at exploring it comprehensively in any depth. (I will write in the past tense although we still do some work together.)

Although we came from very different Christian backgrounds there were deep and satisfying resonances between our spiritualities. We were soul friends. We gave each other consultancy help. Each enhanced the ability of the other. Work-wise, and speaking generally, Catherine was naturally more assertive and extrovert than I was – in the best sense she was a go-getter when she got on to something. Whilst I was naturally more reserved, critical, reflective and analytical than she was, Catherine was more proactive and outgoing than I was. For most of the time our partnership used these differences creatively: together we were incredibly more effective than either of us would have been separately. Nevertheless, living with the differences was at times painful for both of us because of the friction and faction they periodically caused.

Both of us had a strong propensity to commit ourselves totally to causes and tasks and to become obsessive about them. 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 which 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.

Catherine had more of an appetite and aptitude for running and organizing proven courses than I had. And, in the early days especially, I had more of an appetite and aptitude for designing new courses and projects and re-designing old ones. I was inclined to introduce my latest thoughts and ideas sometimes to the neglect of basic ones. Catherine was happy to go over the basics indefinitely.

Jointly and equally as directors, we were responsible for Avec's programme. Interestingly, but not surprisingly, the overall division of responsibilities took account of our different temperaments, interests and abilities. We were both engaged in face to face training and consultancy work, in developing, planning and administering Avec and its training and consultancy, in promoting Avec and recruiting for courses, and in researching and studying the field of work. But Catherine headed up the promotion and recruitment and the administration whilst I headed up the more advanced training, the research and writing things up. Sorting all this out and coming to terms with our respective contributions and limitations was painful but productive. The diagram in Figure 5 helped us to do so and consequently became important to us.

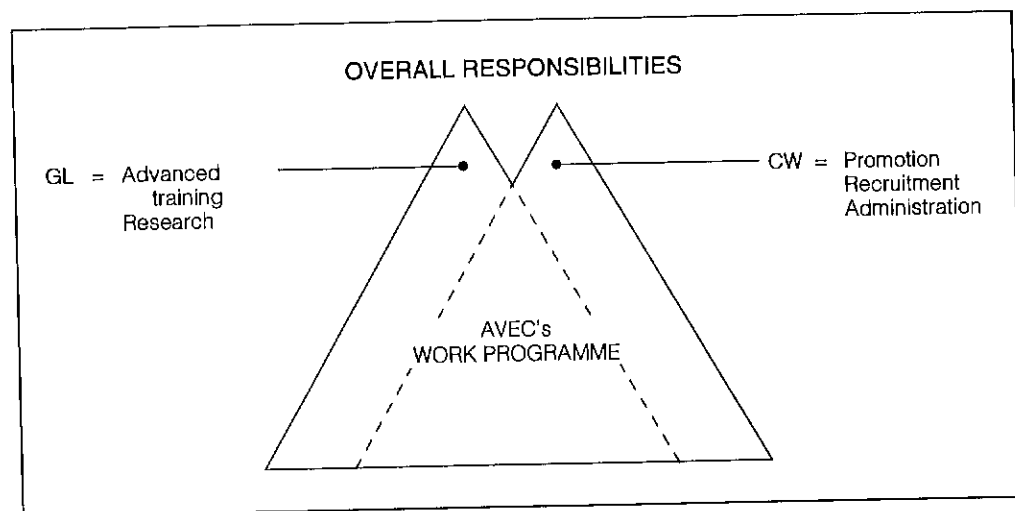


FIGURE 5: Joint and Shared Responsibilities

Building up a staff team adequate to the task was an enormous challenge, deeply satisfying and most rewarding but not without its difficulties. For instance throughout the period money was not available to appoint a third full-time worker and, as we shall see, that was a major disadvantage (cf chapter 3 section 7).

Throughout this period Catherine Widdicombe and I were the only full-time workers. Starting in 1976 with one associate staff member, three part-time and forty Associates in all were recruited over the period up to 1991. They are listed in Appendix III. The Revd Charles New was a part-time staff member for fourteen years and the Revd Dr Michael Bayley for two years. The Revd Howard Mellor was a part-time staff member for one year in order to gain experience from Avec which would help him to build up a national service when he took up the newly formed post of Director of Evangelism in Cliff College in 1984. Some people have been Associates for many years and helped to staff one or two courses a year. Most of them were employed full-time by churches or Christian organizations in one capacity or another. They were "paid" modest honorariums, others, a small minority, were paid at the "going rate".

Part-time and full-time staff members met regularly and frequently. This was invaluable. Together we worked at all the key issues and problems related to developing Avec and its work. These meetings transformed the Catherine Widdicombe and George Lovell partnership into a team, widened the perspective and introduced more resources.

Associates and staff members formed a larger ecumenical team representative of six denominations (cf Appendix III). Together we staffed

courses and provided consultancy services. We worked together in different partnerships and groups of up to four people. We supported each other, acted as consultants to each other and helped each other to continue our professional development. At least once a year we met together for two days of evaluation, problem solving, planning, training – and for fellowship and fun! Most of the staff and associates were in their 40's and at the peak of their powers.

The availability of associates and part-time staff determined how much work could be undertaken and that in turn determined whether sufficient income could be generated to make Avec financially viable. Without the associates only a fraction of the programme would have been possible. Recruiting suitable people was a slow business. The unusual range of skills, gifts and graces required were in very short supply. Those who had them were extremely busy. Conducting courses called for high levels of commitment to other people, their work and their problems which devoured time and energy. To be a staff member of a ten-day course involved a minimum of fifteen days – and ten of those could be 12/13 hour days. (A paper is reproduced in Appendix VII setting out precisely what was required of associates. This was a discussion paper at an annual staff/associates' meeting.) Clearly, the amount of this kind of work that Associates could take on was strictly limited. This created its own problems for those who helped with only one ten-day course a year. They found that between courses they forgot some of the standard procedures. In spite of these difficulties they all put great value on the experience of helping with courses and would have liked to have done more.

Sheer necessity compelled us to pursue this staffing policy but we quickly realised its enormous developmental potential. For one thing, it meant that the services were provided by people engaged in church and community work in the parishes, circuits and dioceses in partnership with people who were specialising in training and consultancy work. This helped to earth the work of Avec in all kinds of ways. It helped people identify with and relate to those conducting courses and providing services. It gave authority to the organization and its work. Another advantage was that staff and associates helped each other to become more skilled and knowledgeable as practitioners, trainers and consultants. Thus, in many ways they became more useful to their own churches and organizations. Some associates became members of denominational training teams. Charles New caught some of this in a recorded discussion I had with him about his experience of working with Avec over a period of years.

Sometimes I came back from courses absolutely bone weary but always excited and challenged. There is absolutely no doubt that my own local work has been fed immeasurably by them – the one feeds the other and my neighbourhood work enabled me to feed the courses. It was clear that I was coming as a practitioner to the courses and so from that point of

view it was good. From a professional point of view, I got out of it ideas, insights, intellectual and theological challenges – all those things that are inevitable consequences of being with a relatively small group of people and getting to know them and their work quite deeply. From a personal point of view I think I also got out of it the challenge of a different dimension to my ministry. I was very, very happy to do the training. I counted it a great privilege to have a foot in both camps for as long as I was able to. Anybody who can be engaged in both will find it enhances them and their work.

The full-time and part-time staff and our consultant gave high priority to recruiting, inducting, training and supporting the associate staff team. Competent staffing of courses and consultancy services was the single most important factor in the effectiveness of Avec. It enabled Avec to remain true to itself and its unique contributions. The quality of the services provided was closely related to the abilities of those who staffed them and the dedicated ways in which they gave themselves to those whom they served. I now describe key characteristics of the Avec work force.

(a) *Vocational commitment informed by experience*

Associates and staff were committed to the convictions and purposes underlying Avec and its work. Avec pulsed with an all pervasive sense of mission. Those most closely involved felt they were bonded to the tasks by profound vocational and missionary obligations. Catherine Widdicombe had been fired and called through being present at the Second Vatican Council; George Lovell, Charles New, Howard Mellor and others by the crying needs of local Methodist churches and communities for the *avec* approach. Not surprisingly Avec was an extended family of church and community development enthusiasts committed to the non-directive approach. It generated its own spirituality, created a galvanising atmosphere of urgency, induced a propensity to obsessive application to the tasks in hand, released surges of energy which shifted mountains of work but left staff drained frequently to the point of exhaustion. For long periods the staff did three times the recommended face to face work partly to meet the need and partly to raise the necessary income.

This motivation was doubly strong because it had two intertwined sources, the one to do with spiritual and theological insights and the other to do with new ways of working with people. The first of these was about how God works with us in the church and the world; the second was about how we can work with people in ways which complement God's activity. Separated, these are weakened and distorted because they are either theology without practice or practice without theology. Combined they motivate and enable.

This motivation was so strong that it led to considerable personal and professional risk taking. For instance, it led Catherine Widdicombe, the Grail and my wife and I to commit ourselves to Avec when there was no guarantee of permanent funding and continuing employment. Fortunately the risks paid off.

(b) *Faithfulness to the core concepts, approaches and processes of Avec*

Associates and staff were highly committed to the core concepts, approaches and processes of Avec and to acquiring the knowledge and abilities required to pursue and promote them. Transforming this commitment into effective action involved acquiring the ability to get all kinds of people thinking separately and together – people with different kinds of education and native intelligence, people with and without power in organizations, people with different theologies.

(c) *An ecumenical team of associates and part-time and full-time staff members*

Catherine Widdicombe and George Lovell, the two full-time staff members, worked together on all the early courses and projects. Then they worked separately with other people in order to multiply the number of working partnerships. Not only did this help to build up the team but it enhanced the quality of the services offered by drawing upon the diverse and wide experience of clergy, ministers and religious of six denominations.

Some people were recruited to help staff short courses (1 to 3 days) in non-directive group work skills, others to help with projects. Recruiting and training these people was not too difficult. It was much more difficult to recruit trainers for the ten-day work and theory courses. The need for an increasing number of these courses was a major stimulus to recruiting for the team. Fortunately they proved to be the best training ground for all forms of work, through conducting them staff and associates gained the experience to design other courses and development projects, to practise as work consultants and to be increasingly more effective practitioners in their own work. Ten-day courses were central and crucial to the development of Avec and its work. Not surprisingly they were Avec's most effective in-service training units for associates.

Staff members had to have certain basic abilities and qualities. These were the criteria which guided recruitment and selection. I mention them in an ascending order of complexity. They had to be able to help individual practitioners of different denominations and organizations to analyse their work and to synthesize the implications of their findings into more effective work procedures, designs and plans. They had to be able to introduce

practitioners to apposite approaches and methods which were new to them. They had to be able to get small groups, of say six people, to do these things for each other in turn. That is, they had to act as work consultants to individuals and to facilitate co-consultancy groups. In addition to working with individuals on their work, they had to be able to act as work consultants to the course group and the whole work that they represented and to help course members to do the same to each other. Amongst other things this involved establishing with the members common purposes, identifying and defining the key issues and problems to be tackled to promote development, finding ways and means by which course members would be able to get to the heart of the issues and problems raised, introducing carefully selected subject matter for critical examination and getting the members to become equal partners in managing the learning processes.

These technical skills came into their own only when staff and associates related to people in ways which built up trustful empathy. To do this they needed the interpersonal skills described earlier. They had, for instance, to be genuinely interested in the members and their work, give them single minded concentration, show that they really did understand them, affirm them when they had to raise critical issues, respect their privacy and autonomy and guarantee confidentiality. Such interpersonal behaviour built up relationships necessary to in-depth consultancy on vocational work which is of such enormous importance to people that it is holy ground. Staff and associates had to do all this with people with similar and with very dissimilar backgrounds, experiences, theologies, ecclesiastical settings, organizational procedures and liturgical practices.

Not surprisingly it was difficult to find people with these qualities and abilities who could make time available to give to the work of Avec even though the full-time and office staff relieved them of administration so that their time could be used to best advantage. One of the reasons for this was that no other organization known to us was training people to do this kind of consultancy work and to run courses of this kind. Consequently we had to train people ourselves. High priority was given to this task which was seen to be key to Avec's effectiveness.

Building up a team of part-time and associate staff members was a corporate effort. It was continually discussed, at first between the full-time staff and their consultant, TR Batten, and then with the trustees. Procedures for appointing part-time and associate staff were established: the trustees appointed part-time staff; full-time staff recommended to the trustees people to be appointed as associates. Recommendations were discussed with part-time staff members and whenever possible with the associates. (The policy and practice was that associates should be increasingly more involved in building up the staff team.)

Over the years various things helped us to be more effective in recruiting and training new associates and giving them the experience they needed to acquire the required skills and confidence whilst honouring our responsibilities to the people on the courses. They were:

- recruiting only those who had been creative members of ten-day courses;
- working out with associates their personal orientation, induction and training plans and reviewing and revising them frequently;
- giving associates initial experience of staffing courses through employing them as auxiliary staff members;
- breaking down what was required of those leading ten-day courses into its component parts (see above) and working out with associates precisely how and when they were going to acquire and/or develop them, ie, through making learning contracts;
- providing detailed lists of the tasks to be done at each step and stage of preparing for and conducting ten-day courses, ie, by codifying practice; (cf Appendix VII)
- organizing apprenticeships for potential associates and appointing consultants to those leading courses;
(Trainee associates would, for instance, assist a more experienced associate or staff member in the work paper consultancy sessions. Then the roles would be reversed: the more experienced member would assist and support the trainee associate. The same process was pursued in relation to leading courses. So in an emergency there was someone in the group to come to the apprentice's aid. Experience showed that this should only be done when absolutely necessary because some learning only took place through apprentices struggling and even foundering. Indeed this was a reason for apprentices working alone. It was then that they learnt things they would not have done with a backstop. When they first worked alone arrangements were made for more experienced people to be available to them between sessions to give help and moral support as requested. Later we appointed consultants to courses who organized their work load so that they were available as required to those leading courses.)
- providing in-house, in-service training for associates and staff through:
 - introductory seminars,
 - eight day courses,
 - discussions about what was involved in running the courses and problems encountered at annual 2/3 day meetings for associates and staff, (Appendix VII grew out of one of these discussions.)
 - a two-year part-time diploma.

As the team took shape annual meetings were organized. The first was in 1979. This meant, that in addition to associates contributing to training and consultancy services, they were able as a group to help:

- build up Avec as an agency;
- design the overall training and consultancy programme;
- recruit and induct associates;
- monitor and evaluate the work;
- develop supportive working and co-consultancy relationships;
- promote each other's professional competence and that of the staff;
- support, comfort, challenge and affirm each other.

These developments meant that staff and associates became members of a team with responsibilities for the whole enterprise, not simply trainers and consultants employed on an individual and ad-hoc basis by Avec. Comparing this list with the areas of work described in Section 12 of this chapter indicates the respective responsibilities of staff and associates.

Over the years twenty two people were members of this team. At any one time the numerical strength of the team was about fifteen. The sequence of developments is interesting: two full-time staff staffing all courses together; two full-time staff working separately with part-time staff members and associates; part-time staff members and associates running courses with full-time staff members as back-up staff and consultants; part-time staff and associates running courses on their own; part-time staff and associates working with new associates much as the full-time staff had done with them. This was a slow process. After fifteen years there were, for instance, only six people (two full-time staff, two part-time staff and two associates) capable, willing and with time to head up ten-day courses. But alongside this some sixty others served as course tutors and/or helped to staff projects. In all they represented six denominations. Details are given in Appendix III.

Each stage was a risk-taking adventure in development. It is easier to work in proven working relationships than to form new ones. Breaking up well established and satisfying partnerships in order to form new ones was emotionally demanding and took a lot of effort. But it paid incalculable dividends, every member of the team developed their abilities, and grew. The team was not a collection of exclusive partnerships. Most people worked with the others at one time or another. This pattern of interaction and multiple bonding in the team meant that it had an inner strength and flexibility and yet was open to newcomers. It was, in fact, an inclusive rather than an exclusive team albeit with clear conditions of membership. The interaction also meant that there was cross-fertilization and maximum learning from each other. These characteristics and the ethos of deep collegiality and affection they engendered

made the team a primary force in the development of Avec as an organization and as a movement.

(d) *Denominationally multi-lingual*

Staff and associates became denominationally multi-lingual through working in depth in the ways described with people from all the major denominations and many Christian voluntary organizations. They came to really understand and get the feel of a wide range of belief systems, different forms of ecclesiastic structures, various ways of thinking theologically and different forms of organizational behaviour. Some of the differences were comparatively easy to understand. Others, such as ethos and spirituality, were easier to experience than to comprehend and describe. Understanding and speaking these languages greatly helped to build up mutual confidence. Clergy, religious and laity continually expressed surprise and joy when they found that a person of another denomination spoke their "language" naturally and fluently.

Being multi-lingual helped us to work more readily and effectively with those whose theological beliefs differed from ours significantly. As we saw it, our task was to help people to work increasingly more effectively within and through their beliefs and ecclesiastical structures. This often involved getting them to look critically and constructively at their beliefs and their denomination. Having their language helped us to do that. Another task was to help them to work critically and constructively with people of other denominations. We were not about the business of converting people from one denomination to another. But we were in the business of converting people to ecclesiastical and theological tolerance and of getting people of different denominations working with each other in ways which took proper account of their theological and cultural differences. So our orientation was away from xenophobia towards creative theological and denominational pluralism and ecumenical sharing. Within certain boundaries, our theology was inclusive rather than exclusive. Courses modelled this.

(e) *Continuing professional development of staff and associates*

Much effort went into what I can best describe as our professional development, ie, that of the staff and associates. Studying work situations and researching the issues was an education in itself. But we were careful not to let it rest at that. We all read as widely as possible. Catherine Widdicombe, Charles New and Howard Mellor carried out action-research programmes which led to higher degrees. The annual two or three day meetings for associates and staff, already referred to, were occasions when we learnt from each other. We shared with each other anything we had found helpful from

books, lectures and courses. We examined the work in which we had been engaged and how we could do it better. We tackled problems which had beaten us. We worked out codes of good practice. We arranged for people to give talks and lead discussions on subjects about which we had decided we needed to be better informed. However, by the early 80's we had come to the conclusion that the arrangements for training trainers and work consultants needed to be supplemented. It was unrealistic, we felt, to expect that most associates would enrol for research degrees, although they both needed and wanted more training. Eventually it was decided that:

Something is needed in the middle ground between short in-service "work and theory courses" and research degrees; something, that is, which enables as many of those practitioners as possible to fulfil increasingly more of their potential as practitioners, trainers and consultants. Without it there will be severe restrictions upon Avec and the churches achieving their objectives. Already the felt need for trainers and consultants is exerting considerable pressure.

This need was met through a specially designed two-year part-time diploma organized by Avec and validated by Roehampton Institute. Designing this diploma meant working out the core curriculum of church and community development for the first time. The course had two main aspects: study modules and an action-research dissertation on work in which the members were engaged. There were four modules. The first module gave a brief overview of the history of church and community development work and highlighted contemporary theoretical, organizational and practical issues. The second and third modules aimed to help participants to formulate theological and sociological frameworks which would help them to understand, evaluate and interpret their work, set it in a broader context, and enhance their ability to practise their profession. The fourth module aimed to help students towards a more coherent and comprehensive understanding of good practice and the theory on which it is based. It also aimed to help them to acquire the skills to formulate practice theory through habitually using action-research approaches and methods and evaluating their work in relation to purposes and beliefs. Members of these courses committed themselves to collaborative learning and, with the help of each other and the staff, to formulating the study and research programme they needed to pursue.

From 1986 to 1992 thirty four people completed this diploma course. Ten of them were or became associates and others helped to staff courses. Another outcome was a wide ranging and an extraordinarily useful array of papers and case studies on the theory, theology and practice of church and community development written by practitioners (lay, religious, diaconal and

presbyteral ministries) of six denominations working in all kinds of situations, churches and organizations at all kinds of levels. (This material is documented in a review paper of these courses.)

(f) *Staff-managers, trainers and consultants*

Catherine Widdicombe and I were working directors. We conducted courses; we organized and promoted the training and consultancy programme and recruited for it; we built up and administered the organization and its finances; we helped raise the finances; we supervised the office.

This arrangement, born of necessity, was both a strength and a weakness. It worked well for a small organization. But it meant that we, the directors, had too many things to do some of which were not our forte, for example money raising. When we were preoccupied with courses other things tended to be neglected.

During the 80's it was suggested by someone interested in Avec's work that I should do a modicum of training and consultancy work and concentrate on recruiting and organizing others to do it, ie, to become a managing director. The shortage of people to undertake training and consultancy work made the suggestion impracticable. And, in any case, the idea did not appeal to me. My first love was the training and consultancy work. The existing arrangements meant that Avec was all of-a-piece, in its totality as well as in its courses and services it exemplified the non-directive approach to church and community development. Avec had evolved through a team working on the organization and its work holistically. That was how we decided to continue.

9. Professional, Administrative, Financial and Moral Support

The Staff received various kinds of professional, administrative, and moral support and Avec received financial support. Four principal sources of support are described in this section.

(a) *An Ecumenical Trust*

A small group of clergy and laity, representative of all the principal denominations and the British Council of Churches, supervised and managed the formation and inauguration of Avec as a registered charity and an independent service agency. They became founder members of the Avec Trust. Their initial functions are set out in Display 6.

They were highly regarded in their own and other denominations. Several of them had held high office as can be seen from the list of the trustees given in Appendix III. The Revd Edward Rogers, chairman from the founding of Avec

The functions that the Trustees originally agreed to perform in 1976 and 1977 were:

1. To arouse interest in and support for the work of the unit among the leaders of churches and ecumenical organizations by, for instance, stimulating them to determine the training needs of their clergy and church workers and to make use of the agency to meet them, and by sponsoring initial contacts of the staff with church leaders.
2. To advise the staff about where they could most profitably concentrate their efforts.
3. To provide information about the life and work of the churches which will enable the staff to plan how best to promote training.
4. To help to make the agency self-supporting.
5. To help find sources from which students may get help in meeting course fees.
6. To supervise the use of funds.
7. To receive reports and monitor the work.
8. To help the staff, the churches and ecumenical organizations to review the work periodically.

DISPLAY 6: Initial Functions of Trustees in 1976

up to 1988, for instance, was a former President of the Methodist Conference, ex-Moderator of the Free Church Federal Council and ex-Vice President of the British Council of Churches (B.C.C.). The late, the Most Revd Derek Worlock, Archbishop of Liverpool, was also a founder trustee.

In the early days especially, they did much to make Avec and its staff credible to people in the churches who would otherwise have been dismissive. They helped to get training needs of clergy, religious and laity reconsidered and to get church authorities to make funds available to cover or subsidise course fees. Also, at various times the trustees obtained grants from the Methodist Church (the Advance Fund and the Division of Ministries) and from the Roman Catholic Church (the National Catholic Fund). They failed to get grants from the Anglican Church even through the intervention of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Grants from charitable trusts were quite a different matter. They were granted because of the importance of the programme, the consultancy support of Batten and the ability of the staff to do research, promote church and community development work, and to train others to do the same. But obtaining funds was difficult and we never had enough. I return to this later.

When Avec was formed the staff were part of a wide network of people who were already committed to or interested in community development.

What the trustees did was to introduce them to much wider networks of people known to them in the churches who could promote and support Avec, many of whom subsequently used their services. This was very important. It demonstrated from the very beginning that the non-directive approach to community development is relevant to all church work at all levels and not simply a narrow specialism for those who saw their ministry in the community as well as the church. This helped to establish a wide based programme which included courses and consultancy services for clergy and laity in rural, urban and inner city and suburban church settings, missionaries, teams, people working at regional and national levels in churches, ecumenical organizations and voluntary Christian organizations such as the YMCA. (Cf Appendices I & II.) Thus Avec avoided becoming associated with one kind of work which would have been a denial of the universality of the approaches and methods and the need for them. Edward Rogers described the approach as "a seminal word for our time!" During the first year trustees played an important part in helping the staff to build up an initial training programme: they commended the work through charring seminars about the work of Avec.

When Avec was inaugurated, the churches and trusts which provided the initial funding required of the trustees that they critically review Avec and its work. They did so in December 1978 in a thorough-going manner and concluded that Avec had "an important and continuing role in promoting church and community development work in Great Britain". They identified themselves closely with the aims and objectives. They commended the work done so far and committed themselves to finding ways of developing and extending it and establishing a sound financial basis for the next phase of Avec's life. This endorsement was important. Churches had appointed trustees held in high regard and whose judgements in such matters were respected. They were not seen as church and community development enthusiasts. Their endorsement helped to establish Avec.

Trustees followed with great interest the work that was done. They examined the regular detailed reports submitted by the staff and provided valuable information and gave some good advice. But they did not interfere with the training and consultancy work: the trustees managed the staff and Avec; they left the management of the work to the staff and associates with the help of their consultant, Dr TR Batten. This arrangement freed the staff to get on with *their* work. At the same time they provided moral support and what I can best describe as pastoral care to the staff. There was one other contribution the trustees made which I wish to mention. They gave continuity to all that was involved in developing Avec at a time when it was needed. The Revd Edward Rogers, for instance, was the chairman for twelve years. We owe him a great debt. The principal responsibilities of the trustees, directors, part-time staff and associates as revised in 1990 are set out in Display 7.

I Trustees

The basic responsibilities of the Trustees are:

1. to supervise the programmes and policies of Avec;
2. to appoint and deploy, support and care for the full-time technical and administrative staff;
3. to advise on future developments;
4. to have final responsibility for budgeting and finance.

II Director and Associate Director

The basic responsibilities of the Director and Associate Director are:

1. to service and brief the Trustees;
2. to see that Trust policy is carried out;
3. to formulate and carry out Avec's research, training, consultative and project work in partnership with the part-time Staff, the Associates and the Trustees;
4. to induct, train, service and support Associate Staff Members;
5. to promote Avec, to recruit people for courses and to make contracts for consultancy and project work;
6. to research and write up the work done;
7. to establish and develop working relationships with other organizations and agencies in the field;
8. to supervise the administrative and secretarial work.

III Part-time Staff

The basic responsibilities of part-time Staff Members are:

1. to assist and support the Directors;
2. to contribute to the formulation of policy and the design and content of the work programme;
3. to share in the conduct of specific parts of the training programme, consultancy and project work;
4. to help to induct, train, service and support Associate and Staff Members;
5. to undertake any other tasks agreed with the Directors.

IV Associates

The basic responsibilities of Associates are:

1. to assist and support the Directors;
2. to contribute to the formulation of policy and the design and content of the work programme;
3. to share in the conduct of specific parts of the training programme, consultancy and project work;
4. to help to induct, train, service and support other Associate Members;
5. to undertake any other tasks agreed with the Directors.

DISPLAY 7: Principal Responsibilities of Trustees, Staff and Associates of Avec

(b) Professional and Consultancy Support

Throughout this period 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.

From the early 80's onwards the Roehampton Institute and the Rev David G. Deeks gave Avec considerable professional help and support in designing and running the diploma course.

(c) Collaborative and Supportive Co-Consultancy Working Relationships

The hallmark of working relationships and especially those between staff members and associates was that they were collaborative and supportive. Competition was noticeable by its absence. Power struggles for leadership were not a feature of group activities – leadership moved freely round staff meetings and course sessions resting on the person best able to give a lead at that point. This ethos did not happen by accident. It evolved from practising in our working relationships what we "preached" about the non-directive approach as previous sections illustrate.

(d) *Financial and Moral Support With Conditions but Without "Strings"*

Avec never had sufficient funds. Financial problems bedevilled Avec throughout the time about which I am writing and beyond. There is more about that in Chapter IV of this book. Qualitatively grant giving was superb. One thing that struck me forcibly as I went through the records was that I never felt constrained to adopt policies nor to act against the interests of the work simply to please or placate those who were giving money to Avec. Nor were we required or obliged to provide services at reduced fees to the Methodist or Catholic Churches who were our most generous and consistent donors. Naturally there were conditions to the grants because they were given for specific purposes but there were no "strings". The grants came from a wide range of sources: an anonymous trust; The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation; the Grail; the Methodist Church – the Advance Fund, the Division of Ministries; Mission Alongside the Poor, Victoria and Chelsea Circuit; Private Donations; the Roman Catholic Church -bishops, the National Catholic fund; the Voluntary Services Unit of the Home Office. Those associated with making these grants had examined Avec and its work very carefully and were committed to what it was about.

Without these grants, and the ways in which they were magnanimously and trustfully given, Avec would not have existed and the work would not have been done.

AGENCY AND PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

10. Avec was an Independent Ecumenical Service Agency Focussed on the Vocations of Others

Avec serviced churches, organizations and their practitioners as an independent service agency not as an in-house department providing specialist help. The Trust was an ecumenical body. The services were provided by an ecumenical team and used by people from all denominations. As already noted the financial support it received to meet the shortfall between fee income and costs was "without strings". Avec had charitable status. Several things followed from these arrangements which were key to the effectiveness of Avec. In this section I consider them under three heads: an independent agency; a service agency; Avec's vocation was the vocations of others.

(a) *An Independent Agency*

The serious disadvantages of Avec being an independent fee paying service agency with the unrealised aim of being financially self-supporting are considered

in the next chapter. Here we concentrate on the advantages, which outweighed the disadvantages.

One of the major advantages was that the staff did not occupy positions of influence and power in the institutions they served. Most part-time and associate staff members had local appointments and were also without power. Several things flowed from this and from the way in which the staff kept confidences and avoided taking sides.

Avec was seen as a safe place where people could examine their work openly without fear of what they disclosed being used by their organization against their interests and that of others.

People soon discovered that Avec was a place which got people thinking constructively about all situations and the people in them – and especially those which were difficult and destructive. Consultancy sessions were not simply opportunities for participants to carp or to pull other people to pieces: they might be the starting point but the thrust was always towards loving creativity.

Another advantage was that churches and allied organizations could buy in the services of Avec to do specific jobs for which they themselves had not qualified staff and which did not justify the appointment of full-time staff. Thus they got the services economically under conditions they could control without the costly business of appointing specialist staff and setting up departments. Avec therefore prefigured practices now common in commerce and industry and predicted to be a significant feature of future work development. Even if churches had offered something similar to that offered by Avec our experience indicates that many practitioners would be chary about using them for reasons already given.

For the staff of Avec to be without institutional power and the authority institutions confer upon people, was important in yet other ways. It purified the action they took to generate self-induced change in practitioners and their organizations. They simply did not have any power to enforce any changes upon people and the ways in which they worked or behaved towards each other. Non-directive action was, in fact, the only way by which they could achieve their purposes. The authority of the situation redeemed the temptation to impose and manipulate and strengthened their efforts to generate self-induced change in practitioners and their organizations.

Avec modelled vital aspects of the mission and ministry situations in which churches and allied organizations operate. They and their leaders are in a similar position to the constituencies they seek to influence that Avec was to them – independent, comparatively small, insignificant and without power to impose change. The only power that they have is that which they acquire through merit. Admittedly they can enforce changes upon their own members and particularly upon their paid workers and those who have made vows.

Whether such imposed changes lead to self-induced changes and human and spiritual development depends upon many factors. But what is not in question is that they have no power to impose the kind of development they wish to see in people and their environment beyond the boundaries of their institutional territory, which is a very limited area of community and social life in the modern world. To achieve their purposes, therefore, they are bound to take non-directive action as *Avec* was. Consequently, much can be learnt from the *Avec* experience about what is involved in very small independent organizations profoundly influencing what people at large believe, how they behave towards each other and what they do with their resources. I represent this diagrammatically in Figure 6.

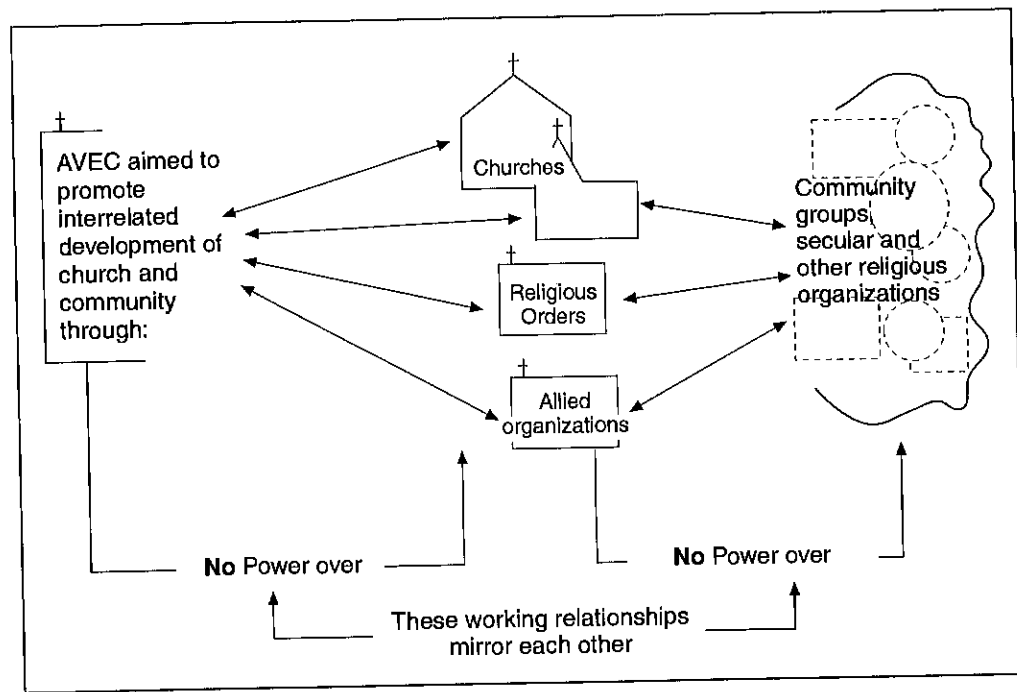


FIGURE 6: Affecting Change Without Power to Impose

(b) *A Service Agency*

Servicing practitioners and their churches and organizations was *Avec*'s first priority. By far the greatest amount of its energy was spent working with people on their work through courses and consultancy services in the ways I have described. As a result *Avec* generated an unusual and widespread ecumenical network of reflective practitioners variously committed to the *avec* approach. *Avec* was at the hub of this network which could be variously described as a

movement or fellowship of people pioneering this way of working. Consequently there was very little time or energy for general denominational and ecumenical networking and attending inter-agency committees. The overall effect is illustrated in Figure 7.

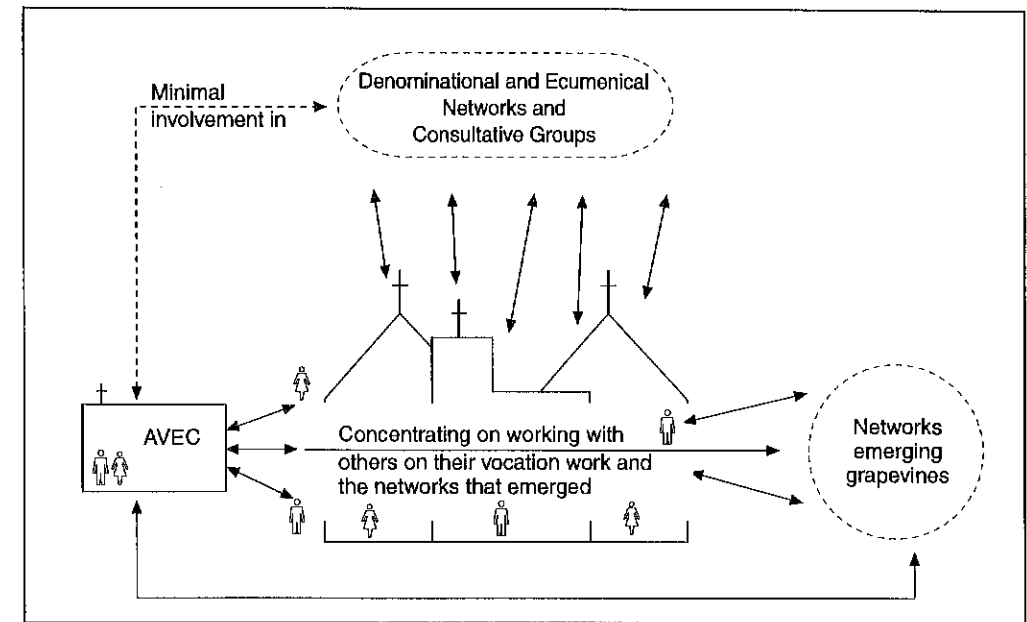


FIGURE 7: Workingw

There were many positive effects of deploying *Avec*'s resources in this way. Interacting directly with practitioners, churches and organizations on the actualities of their work was a more effective way of achieving our purposes than general networking. We got on with doing things rather than talking about them generally and abstractly, putting our approaches and methods to the test rather than speculating about them. Our energies were used to promote change outwards in every direction from the heart of many different work situations. This was much more effective than attempting to do so from outside and at a distance from such situations. The major thrust was towards effecting change from below rather than from above, from working units rather than central committees. This also helped to avoid any suggestion of imposed change. Deploying *Avec*'s resources in this way built up new networks and extended old ones between practitioners and agencies in relation to church and community work. *Avec* cultivated and used these networks which led to all kinds of important developments. All this kept *Avec* in a service role; the staff did not become pseudo-church leaders or politicians.

Nevertheless there were major negative effects. Consideration is given to these in Chapter IV section 9 but some need to be mentioned here. The interaction with other organizations was muted. Avec was seen by some to be an exclusive organization carefully guarding its boundaries and its staff to be somewhat stand-offish and intent upon building up their own empire. These disadvantages were ameliorated in part by Avec's relationships with other research, service and training agencies. Here again, Avec used what energies it had to work with them on things of common concern rather than for general networking. This led to inter-agency co-operation which:

- examined the basics of church and community development;
- provided joint training courses;
- set up allied agencies.

Figure 8 adds this aspect to Figure 7. Now I consider examples of these inter-agency activities.

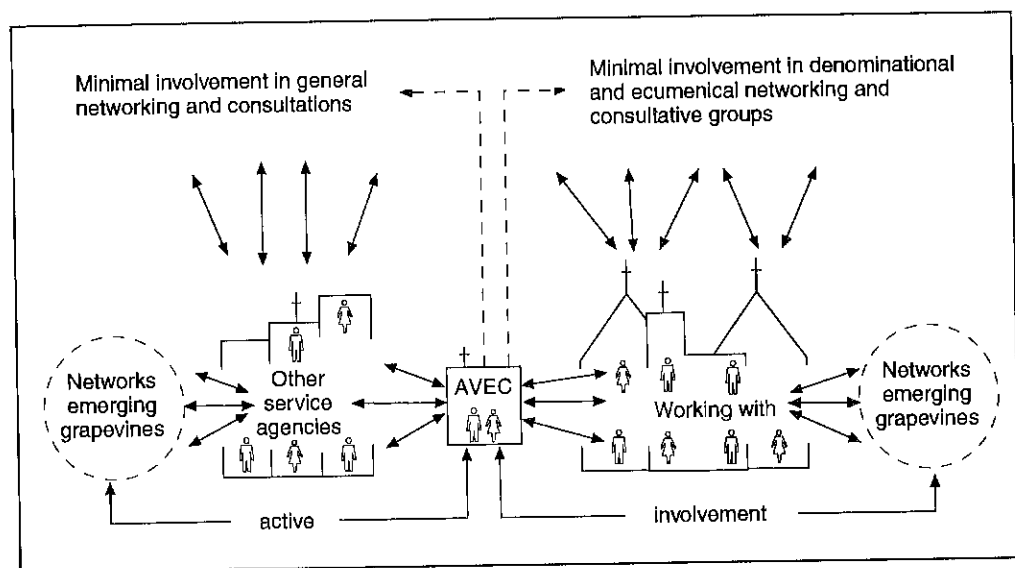


FIGURE 8: Working with Churches and Other Agencies Rather than General Networking

Examining the Basics of Church and Community Development

In 1975 the Community Development Group of the Methodist Church (of which Catherine Widdicombe and I were founder members) and the William Temple Foundation agreed to work together on a project. The aim was to establish an adequate theological base for the work of the churches in the new and rapidly expanding sphere of community work in order to present

challenges and possibilities to the churches, and to contribute to the understanding of community development and social processes.

This aim was achieved by bringing together from the main denominations a group of Christians variously experienced in community work and church and community development with theologians skilled in relating faith to society.* It was out of their dialogue – actively pursued over three years (1975-1978) and involving eight residential meetings, the writing of a large number of papers and dialogue with other groups (of which the Community Development Group was the most significant) – that a report emerged – *Involvement In Community: A Christian Contribution*. A paper I wrote described this project from the perspective of the Community Development Group – *Diagrammatic Modelling: An Aid to Theological Reflection in Church and Community Development Work*

During the first few years of Avec, Catherine Widdicombe and I put quite a lot of energy into this project through the Community Development Group and the William Temple Foundation Group. The whole process was highly disciplined, Bishop David Jenkins led all the meetings personally, the examination of the issues was rigorous, the thinking exciting and creative. It was the most profound and prolonged experience that I have ever had of thinking and reflecting on the interaction between pragmatic, ideological, theological and philosophical aspects of church and community development work. This experience and the ideas that emerged which I cannot begin to summarise here, have informed and underpinned the whole of my subsequent work. It made major contributions to the theoretical and theological underpinning of Avec as an organization and as an approach. The reports became standard texts for the diploma course. The project is a model of collaborative thinking about fundamentals. The investment of time and energy paid high dividends in many ways and not least by generating deeper inter-agency understanding and co-operation.

Providing Joint Training Courses

During the first ten years, ie, up to 1986, Avec staff and associates concentrated exclusively upon using its own approaches and methods in its own training and consultancy programme. They needed to do that to become competent and confident in their own way of doing things and to develop a style with which they felt comfortable. Once they had done that, and established

* The members of the group were: Revd Tony Addy, Revd Dr John Atherton, Revd Alan Gawith, Revd Dr George Lovell, Revd Prof. David Jenkins, Revd Harry Salmon, Fr Austin Smith, Mr Richard Tetlow, Revd Clifford Wright.

Avec as a going concern, they felt better able to respond to opportunities to co-operate with other agencies to provide joint training courses. There were two principal ventures during the period 1986 to 1990.

One of these was with the Westminster Pastoral Foundation (W.P.F.). The intention was to get an ecumenical group of experienced full-time practitioners to consider their work in the church and community from the twin perspectives of pastoral counselling and community development. We were interested to explore with practitioners the interface between these disciplines and how they themselves fitted them together in their ministry. In the event this did not happen because, after long discussions with the W.P.F. directors, they said they were unable to help staff a course. They nominated a part-time member of their staff, The Revd Peter Lang, who was the Director of the Kensington Consultation Centre. He used systemic family therapy methods as developed by Professor Mara Selvini Palazzoli of Milan and applied them to organizations of various kinds. These methods had much more in common with Avec approaches than the clinical counselling methods used by W.P.F. So whilst much of value emerged, the original aims were not achieved.

The other course grew out of a "Consortium for Church and Community Work Training in association with the British Council of Churches Community Work Resources Unit" of which Avec was a founder member. A course for middle managers of church related community workers was organized by Avec, and another by the William Temple Foundation.

Whilst I find it quite impossible to assess the value and cost effectiveness of these courses- and I cannot provide the information here for others to make their own judgement - I am left with six indelible and affective impressions.

First, these courses were extremely costly, financially and personally. Both courses involved countless exploratory, planning and preparation meetings of the officers of the agencies, those who staffed the course and of support groups. Working with staff members on the courses was intellectually and emotionally very demanding and called for tolerance, compromises and personal discipline. I had experienced some of this when working with new associates. But this was different. It was not inducting others into our ways of working; it was finding ways of working in partnership which properly respected two or more ways of training people which were self-contained systems and which differed significantly although they each had some principles in common. I was amazed at the vast amount of energy which was required to invent and sustain authentic creative training procedures which respected the professional integrity of each of the trainers and generated an ethos conducive to experiential learning programmes. It meant, for instance, learning the languages of different disciplines. This was particularly confusing because similar terms sometimes meant different things in relation to method and approach (e.g., purpose, objectives, aims and the non-directive approach) and

sometimes different terms referred to the same things (e.g., situational and contextual analysis).

Second, judging by what the members of these courses said in their evaluation of them and by my comparison of what was achieved through Avec courses, the outcome for the members in relation to their work was not significantly different from those run exclusively by Avec. Apart, that is, from what they learnt from the interaction of people of related but significantly different disciplines and their perspectives.

Third, Avec staff gained enormously from the experience in ways which profoundly affected all their other work. This was particularly true of the first course. We were introduced, for example, by the Revd Peter Lang to the methods of systemic family therapy and the use of systemic hypotheses and by Professor Gillian Stamp to models for working with people in organizations. At first these different ways of working were a considerable challenge and somewhat threatening. Facing them, however, paid high dividends. It has profoundly affected all my future practice.

The fourth impression is that the working relationships and the networks that were built up were extremely valuable. They deepened and widened the interaction between trainers and consultants and thus provided continuing means of support, stimulation and challenge.

Fifthly, I do not wish to see the standardisation of approaches to in-service training and consultancy services. The variety of ways and means is more likely to meet the different ways in which practitioners think and work and the kind of services to which they are most likely to respond. Much more is likely to be learnt and achieved through a plurality of provision and research. Nor do I wish to see trainers using a collection of methods indiscriminately - such eclecticism can blunt the cutting edge of all the methods. So, it is, I believe, necessary to keep on using our own languages and learning each others' languages because much is lost in translation.

Finally, I do wish to see more co-operation between different disciplines and schools of thought, no matter how costly this is, because the rewards are great. Working together on training courses and consultancy projects is an effective way of getting at generic bases. Discovering those could be an important development for practitioners, educators, trainers and theoreticians.

Working With and Setting Up Allied Independent Agencies

In the late 80's and early 90's Avec co-operated with the Conference of Major Religious Superiors (C.M.R.S. now Conference of Religious, C.O.R.) in working out how they themselves could provide some of the training and consultancy services that had previously been provided by Avec. This led to

setting up an Association of Facilitators and Consultants and a Community Development Unit under the aegis of C.O.R. One of the things which led to these arrangements was that religious were making more requests for the services of Avec than the staff could meet. A more fundamental reason was Avec's commitment to "embodiment". In the late 80's this became a key concept which was pursued assiduously. It referred to getting the non-directive approach to church and community development structurally incorporated into the work culture of churches and organizations and into their training and support systems. This complemented and reinforced the induction of practitioners into the *avec* approach.

About the same time Avec staff became actively involved in the consultations which led to the inauguration of the "Churches Community Work Alliance" in 1991. The Alliance's broad aim was "to support, celebrate and help develop ... community work" and its "relevance to the Christian churches". Again, the time involved in these two ventures was considerable, but it was time well invested.

Earlier in the 80's I spent a considerable amount of time on three other inter-agency projects. I was a member of a Calouste Gulbenkian Working Party which produced a report, *A National Centre for Community Development*. It was meant to be a successor to two earlier highly influential reports on community work and community development, one published in 1968 and the other in 1973. I was also a member of a working group which was promoting dialogue between people engaged in community development in different countries in Europe, "European Exchange". I attended a lot of meetings but I was not sufficiently involved to benefit from the work. Then I became marginally involved in discussions about the Methodist organization, Mission Alongside the Poor (M.A.P.). But again, the time I could give to this benefited neither M.A.P. nor Avec. Our consultant, TR Batten, was highly critical of my involvement in the two latter ventures. He challenged me quite sharply about it because he felt I was neglecting the essential work of Avec, or in danger of doing so. This painful interjection caused us to think very critically and productively about the nature of the most effective involvement. It led us all to reassert the primacy of the direct training and consultancy encounters with practitioners, churches and organizations on *their* work and the problems and issues with which they were grappling.

(c) *Avec's Vocation The Vocation of Others*

Avec staff gave themselves to others and their vocational work, to being alongside them without taking their place: the work of others was a significant part of their vocation and their vocational work. This was a fundamental reason for their effectiveness. But, these bald statements need qualifying because

the staff did have their own vocational purposes. These were determined by their understanding of what they should be doing under God and in and through the church to promote human and spiritual development in the world and how and why they should be doing this. These purposes were very strong as can be seen from the earlier sections of this book. In working with others on their vocation they shared their own vocational understandings. But, because of their commitment to the non-directive approach they took great care to get others to examine them critically. For the most part the vocational vision and aims of the staff and those with whom they worked had much in common. They differed most significantly in the ways they went about working with people. Generally speaking, therefore, the subject for consideration was vocational work and not vocational commitment and vision.

11. The Refinements, Development and Extension of Training and Consultancy Services Through Ongoing Evaluation and Research

Four interactive processes gradually shaped, refined, developed and extended Avec and its programme: the design of courses by the staff and associates to meet known needs or to test out the response to a new form of course; the design of courses, project work and consultancy services in response to requests; ongoing evaluation and research of the services provided; forward planning. Here I concentrate on evaluation and research.

Almost everyone associated with Avec contributed to the evaluative processes. Before the completion of courses, for instance, each member completed an evaluation form. The staff summarised the positive and negative points and listed any suggestion for improvements. These were then discussed with the course members as a group. Mention has already been made of the ways in which the associates and staff discussed and evaluated their experience. Reports and position papers were prepared annually by the staff for both associates and trustees at their request. Reference has already been made to the first evaluation carried out by the trustees of Avec (see the discussion on enabling factor 9 above).

Two far reaching reviews and evaluations need to be mentioned. The first was a request from the trustees that I, as director, produce a paper drafting "plans for the next five years as a basis for joint discussion and subsequent action". This request was made after a considerable period of uncertainty about the future. After wide ranging consultations I produced a thirty page paper, *Towards a Plan For Avec: 1986-1991*. It led to re-organizing the Trust, inaugurating the two-year diploma and forming teams for aspects of the work programme. But, as will become clear in the next chapter on disabling factors, three key recommendations were adopted and not implemented: the

appointment of a third full-time worker; the recruitment of an administrator for a programme of local introductory training courses; a writing programme. The second review was an independent survey of Avec's work programme by MARC Europe. (cf Appendix IV.)

Alongside this the research that staff members carried out deepened our understanding of the non-directive approach we had adopted and the methodology we were using. This is described in the bibliography. The research I did for the 1981 Beckly Social Service Lecture resulted in a classification of the basics upon which Avec was operating (cf *Human and Religious Factors in Church and Community Work*).

12. Preparation, Action, Research and Training Kept Together Through Strategic Forward Planning

Kurt Lewin, widely regarded as the father of modern experimental social psychology, said that action, research and training must be treated as a triangle that should be kept together for the sake of its corners. Avec staff were committed to this principle and to embodying it in their own work and that of the agency. It was vital that Avec's training programme had an adequate infrastructure of preparation and ongoing research, both of its own service programme and of the non-directive approach to church and community development, and that it was informed by continuing field work experience. It was also vital that those acting as consultants and trainers should be in training themselves, practising what they were teaching and doing some research and/or benefitting from the research of others. (Mention is made at various places in this book about the research undertaken by staff and associates, see the Bibliography.) Tenacity and the expenditure of a lot of energy were required to keep all these activities going. Differentiating the following eight interdependent key work areas greatly helped individuals and the agency to do so.

Area I – Basic Preparation of Staff and Associates

Recruiting part-time and associate staff, inducting and training them. Providing moral and consultancy support. Continuing development of professional competence of staff and associates through reading, study, evaluating work done and research. Writing books and articles.

Area II – Promotion

1. Discussions with church authorities and training agents about ways in which they could make use of Avec and find funds for fees.

2. Broadcasting the work of Avec through:
 - the press, lectures and talks and orientation meetings;
 - publicity material, leaflets, handouts and articles;
 - sale of books.

Area III – Designing, Conducting and Evaluating Standard and Tailor-made Training Courses and Seminars

1. Introductory: seminars, consultations and conferences on church and community development.
2. Basic Training:
 - (a) Ten-day work and theory courses for:
 - people at any and every level with emphasis on local workers;
 - senior personnel and especially those in "pastoral management";
 - specialist groups.
 - (b) Practice and theory courses.
 - (c) Courses for specialist groups, e.g., missionaries on furlough.
3. Further training of practitioners and trainers.
4. Follow-through.

Area IV – Projects viz working with people, churches and organizations on their projects.

Area V – Work Consultancy viz analysing and designing work with practitioners but not doing the work with them.

Area VI – Servicing Allied Training Organizations

Area VII – Servicing and Developing Avec as a Viable Ecumenical Agency

1. Administration.
2. Financing and Staffing.
3. Organizational maintenance and development.
4. Forming, servicing and developing supportive working and consultative relationships between trustees, associates and staff.
5. Evaluating and researching the work of Avec and preparing position papers and reports.

Area VIII – Maintaining a Creative Dynamic Between all Work Areas and Their Various Aspects, ie, between the professional development of all staff members (I), the training and consultancy work programme and its promotion (II to VI), the tending and development of the agency (VII).

To keep *all* these work areas before us in our reviewing and programme planning we produced charts. Using large sheets of paper a grid was formed by listing on the left in a vertical column the eight work areas and constructing parallel columns for given periods of time (generally a year) and for each staff member and associate. Then we filled in the work undertaken/planned by Avec and by each staff member and associate. These charts helped us to see clearly and precisely what work had been done/was planned by Avec and by individual staff members and associates over a given period. The blanks were obvious and challenging! Thus it enabled us as an agency and as individuals to review and to plan. Getting the timing of the forward planning right was crucial. Comparing charts of the work that had actually been done in different years helped us to evaluate what was happening over a period of years and make any necessary adjustments.

Charting the work in this way could give the false impression that the work done in each area flowed smoothly and in harmony with that of the others. This was far from being the case for it went in fits and starts. When staff members were running courses or engaged in tricky and stressful pieces of project work they simply had to let everything else go for days and sometimes weeks at a time. Charting helped us to keep things in balance, to embody the Lewin principle and then to pursue a programme of holistic development in the light of the actualities of the working context. The whole programme developed systemically and systematically. Courses were developed. The body of knowledge upon which the services were based was refined and extended. Associates looked forward, they said, to seeing what new developments had occurred when they came to meetings. Charting also helped us to extend the overall training, consultancy and project work programme in a constructive way. Area VI for instance was a comparatively late addition.

Much of what was involved in tackling these key areas has emerged through considering the enabling factors. More will emerge in the next chapter through examining the disabling factors.

Avec's short and long-term effectiveness was a function of the accumulative effect of the progress made in the eight areas. My overall impression is that we were more effective in developing the technical services than the organization and in training and consultancy than in promotion. Also, we were much more successful in doing the work than writing about it. But that takes us into the next chapter on the disabling factors.

13. Avec's Good Name and Promotional Networking

A large number of practitioners, churches and organizations were sufficiently attracted by various of these factors that they attended Avec courses

and sought the help of the staff for various projects. As we have seen they invariably valued the experience: the enabling factors enabled them in their vocational work and ministry. People who felt good about their experience talked to others about it. Avec got a good name which had a good effect upon its development.

Basically there were three modes of recruitment for Avec courses. One was through broadcasting services that were available. This was done through Avec and church mailings and networks. Only occasionally was the press used but not to any great advantage. Another mode was through personal recommendation of ex-course members or through organizations suggesting, or requesting or requiring that their members attend courses as part of their contract. The third mode was through exploratory discussions with people about their work and Avec's courses and services. These were mentioned earlier. They were non-directive work and vocational consultancy sessions aimed to help people discern what kind of training they needed and whether Avec courses were apposite. In fact they were sample experiences of Avec's essential approach to courses and services. Of itself this helped people to decide about courses. Some of these discussions led to major projects, and courses especially for a religious order or a diocese.

Recruitment depended very heavily on Catherine Widdicombe developing and maintaining a wide range of personal contacts and using these by letter or telephone to get people to consider courses or to get others to do so. This was time and energy consuming but she was always amazed at how pleased people were to be contacted and to discuss Avec courses. Many of these conversations caused ex-course members to think again about the application of *avec* approaches to their work. They certainly infused life into the Avec networks and provided invaluable information about what was happening "out there" and the long-term positive and negative effects of courses on people.

Disabling Factors

To a lesser or greater extent we continually failed to realise the conditions necessary for the enabling factors to be fully effective. This was the major disabling factor. Also some of the enabling factors had a downside. For instance, the full-time staff had a propensity to obsessive involvement with Avec. This meant that Avec and its work was a function and product of obsessive rather than normal staff work-patterns. Consequently things were achieved that simply would not otherwise have been achieved, but possibly at the cost of Avec becoming over dependent upon this kind of core input. Thus what was its strength was also an inherent weakness. Again, a major enabling factor was in staff members being present throughout courses. Such labour intensive services were difficult to staff and fund. Apart from these things, I have identified the following twelve disabling factors which I have grouped under service, agency and staff members' problems.

Service problems

1. The shortage of people to staff ten-day courses and consultancy projects.
2. Work flow and recruitment difficulties.
3. Failure to organize personal field work services before and after courses.
4. Unreasonable expectations, unfair judgements and lack of trust.
5. Mismatch of work cultures and the mistrust it generated.
6. Limitations of the premises.

Agency problems

7. Failure to get a third full-time staff member.
8. Financial difficulties and crises.
9. Limited inter-organizational and ecumenical co-operation.

Staff members' problems

10. The director's intensive engagement in training, consultancy and project work.
11. Failure to publish adequately.
12. Dysfunctional stress and strain.

SERVICE PROBLEMS

Six of the disabling factors were problems in providing and developing training and consultancy services and sustaining programmes.

1. The Shortage of People to Staff Ten-day Courses and Consultancy Projects

The number of associates needed to staff Avec's work programme invariably outstripped those available to undertake it. Frequently we were stymied by a shortage of people able to lead work paper sessions and to head up ten-day courses. To do the first they needed consultancy skills which were in short supply. Progress was made in overcoming this problem. Finding people with the ability and the time to head up ten-day courses was much more problematic. Earlier we noted that after fifteen years there were only four people other than the full-time staff capable, willing and able to find time to lead one or two courses a year. This was disabling because, as we have seen, ten-day courses were effective training units and generated considerable income. Similarly whilst people could be found to help with consultancy sessions and projects, it was difficult to find sufficient people to undertake overall responsibility for such work. For much of the time, and particularly during the middle period, staffing the work programme strained our resources to the limit and beyond in spite of the enormous effort put into recruiting, inducting and training new staff.

2. Work Flow and Recruitment Difficulties

Organizing a work programme which met needs, achieved Avec's purposes and raised the required income, a tricky, and, at times, a fraught business. Roughly speaking the work programme had two aspects: courses initiated by Avec; consultancy and project work initiated by others which could include courses for specific groups. In relation to the former Avec staff was vigorously proactive. Courses had to be planned about a year ahead and in the case of the diploma eighteen months. In relation to consultancy services Avec staff had to be creatively responsive.

Maintaining courses and consultancy services was important. This was not too difficult in relation to long-term consultancy work such as the four year project with Methodist Churches in Britain and West Africa. But there were problems with requests for consultancy services which required staff to be available at short notice. To be free to take advantage of such opportunities staff time had to be reserved. That meant planning fewer courses. This involved

taking considerable financial risks: Avec was financially embarrassed if the consultancy work did not materialise or courses did not attract sufficient people. (Later we will see that we always seemed to reach the budget figure for fee income but only through scrambling around and at the cost of much anxiety and worry.)

Consultancy and project opportunities seemed to come in unpredictable surges. Often, there was a dearth when they were needed, and a surfeit when staff members were fully occupied with demanding courses! Associates were not generally available at short notice, they were better able to organize themselves to run courses when they had longer notice. Combined, these factors meant that, for instance, in May and June in 1988 we had to decline exploratory discussions related to ten requests for consultancy help which would have been central to our purposes.

Some courses filled up without difficulty. Others were difficult to fill or it was hard to get a viable number for them. Surprisingly few had to be cancelled but some had to be postponed or combined. But the underlying anxiety and insecurity were ever present, not least because financing Avec depended upon maintaining a high level of fee income. One of the overall recommendations of the MARC Europe Survey was:

Avec courses are not widely enough, and perhaps not well enough, marketed. Too few know of them, and relying on personal recommendation or denominational pressure, may no longer be sufficient. It is suggested that the marketing mechanisms employed by Avec be reviewed with the intention of making Avec's image, standing, and success widely known so that its services will be used to their full potential (cf Appendix IV).

This may well indicate a major disabling factor. Clearly in our own way we generated a market for Avec, but not a large enough one for courses. However, I suspect that we did not have the kind of marketing skills to which MARC Europe referred. If they are those associated with modern commerce we would have no stomach for them as they would be at variance with the *avec* approach. Nevertheless, some more effective way of marketing Avec consonant with its philosophy was needed but not found. That was a major disabling factor.

What we actually did, using the approaches and methods we did know about, was to treat the planning and recruiting as a development project. Using the chart of principal work areas (see Chapter III section 12) we designed a core curriculum for a given period (normally one to one-and-a-half years) as a framework which would enable the staff to shape the most creative work programme out of the standard schedule of courses and services and respond to opportunities as they occurred and events as they unfolded.

Essentially, therefore, through an admixture of proactive and reactive action, we were shaping our programme to achieve our purposes for Avec. This meant creating a market for things which were needed but often not wanted. We were not as successful as we needed to be.

3. Failure to Organize Personal Field Work Services Before and After Courses

From the outset we, staff and associates, attached great importance to people preparing for courses and having support afterwards. As far as possible we made ourselves available to people before and after courses and, as we have already seen, people were only admitted to ten-day courses when they had prepared themselves by producing a position or "work" paper. But we knew that ideally much more than this was needed.

To meet the need to build on the ten-day courses, six- and eight-day follow-up courses were organized. The first was in September 1978, ie, two years after the inauguration of Avec. There were seven of these over the next five years. They enabled people to review their work situations, their experiences of using the approaches and methods they had learnt through Avec and to study work analysis, design and consultancy and to practise the associated skills in groups under supervision. Participants became better practitioners and some acquired the skills to become associates.

This catered for only 15% of the people who attended ten-day courses. So during 1979/80 trustees, staff and associates gave much thought to ways of helping people to prepare for courses and of supporting them afterwards. Associates and staff prepared what proved to be an over ambitious scheme. It involved dividing the UK into ten regions and finding someone to act as a "regional link officer" in each region. Their job would be to provide "field contacts" who would discuss courses with people and organizations and help those who had enrolled to prepare for them. They would also organize local back-up to courses. By this time 262 people had attended ten-day courses and the number of ex-course members in any region varied from 12 to 63.

Before launching this scheme half- or one-day seminars were arranged in each region including Ireland which were attended by 40% of the ex-course members, another 20% wanted to attend but could not do so. By common consent these were extremely profitable meetings. Further seminars were arranged with Avec staff, and the people continued to meet for some time on their own in several regions.

These meetings and seminars provided opportunities to examine the usefulness of courses and progress made and problems encountered in putting what they had learnt into practice. A thirtysix-page report was published

describing the initial round of these seminars. Organizing them proved to be an enormous task. With deep regret we were forced to the conclusion that we simply had not the human nor financial resources to service these meetings nor to carry out the original plan. Removed from the pressures, not least of which was the need to raise money, I consider that to be a mistake. The failure to establish preparatory and back-up field services was a major disabling factor. I can now see just how much it could have enhanced the work we did. For one thing, I believe this would have made significant contributions to principal points of weakness identified through the MARC Europe survey in 1990: marketing, keeping in touch with ex-course members, showing members how to present Avec to others, getting "repeat business".

All was not loss. Many people had seen the possibilities of supporting each other locally. To facilitate this, lists of people in each region who had been on courses and were willing to be approached by others about the experience were compiled, regularly updated and made generally available. They were offered to course members at the end of each course. A few people used them to get local support and to form "work paper consultancy groups". Those considering courses who wanted to talk to someone who had been on a course were provided with lists. A quarterly news bulletin was another thing to emerge from the regional seminars.

Other ways of following up courses were established. Some people did so through making use of Avec's work consultancy services; others by inviting Avec staff to work with them on *their* projects; yet others attended a second Avec course. Then the diploma course provided opportunities for people to study their work and church and community development over a two-year period. All these and ad hoc conversations, provided valuable follow-up but were not adequate substitutes for the idea of field work services.

4. Unreasonable Expectations, Unfair Judgements and Lack of Trust

For the most part the outcome of courses, especially the ten-day ones, and consultancy work far exceeded the expectations of members and consultants. Occasionally, however, we suffered from unreasonable expectations mainly in relation to project work and consultancies with groups. This occurred when practitioners and organizations expected us, Avec staff, to solve their problems that they, with greater resources, had failed to overcome – and to do so painlessly, in a very short time and at a very low cost. Similarly churches and organizations expected us to convert ineffective workers, selected and trained by them, into effective reflective practitioners through short in-service training courses. We were inclined to collude with such expectations. More often than not we were able to help people to make progress towards overcoming problems

and becoming better practitioners. When, however, we were unable to do so, some people wrote Avec off.

The irony in all this was occasionally galling. And the fact that we had compromised our integrity in colluding was demeaning. As we gained experience and confidence we were better equipped to spell out at the contracting stage what could be involved for them and for us in the work we planned to do; the risks involved; that an entirely successful outcome could not be guaranteed; the importance of making our respective and unique contributions. Discussing things in this way paved the way for committing ourselves to contracts that were potentially creative. All this helped. But, although we used these and other procedures, from time to time we failed to transform unrealistic and unreasonable expectations, ours and theirs, into realistic and reasonable ones. Pride played a part on our side. When you know you can be of some help, the temptation to take on the mantle of a guru is insidious, debilitating and disabling.

Occasionally Avec was blamed unfairly when consultations and project work had not achieved the desired results. Two of the things which led to this were difficult to counter for different reasons.

For one thing there were occasions when consultants said that analyses and designs fitted the realities they experienced in their working situations when in fact they did not in ways which could not be discerned by outsiders. Failure to make creative connections disarms the processes of analysis and design. Consultants and consultants have separate and shared responsibilities for making these connections. Consultants must check out with consultants whether they have been made and not assume, because they have made such connections, consultants have done so too. Consultants must test out the connections, no-one else can do that for them, and be honest with themselves and others about what they think and feel. Culpability for failure to deal adequately with this hidden factor is sometimes difficult to determine and generally shared. I certainly have failed in these matters both as consultant and consultant. At times Avec has been blamed for failure when consultants had not made the contribution they alone could make towards making sure that analytic thought resonates with reality as they perceive it. It is difficult to counter such injustice. Preventative action through discussing the issues at an early stage is important.

Another thing that happened occasionally was that Avec was held responsible for the failure of projects which had stalled because consultants had failed to implement viable plans worked out during training/consultancy sessions or had implemented them in ways never intended and which simply would not work. I have had bad experiences of both things happening and of being blamed for the failure. (There are, of course, occasions when plans which seemed workable when they were made are proved impossible or inadvisable because of neglected or new factors. Sticking to the original design out of

misplaced loyalty seriously disables.) To minimise the chances of these things happening I now clarify at an early stage that the responsibility for what happens to any ideas or plans that emerge from consultancy processes is that of the consultant. Drawing diagrams showing the boundaries of responsibilities helps to clarify this. Also, I discuss the action implications of consultancy and project work.

But all these problems still popped up periodically in unanticipated guises and tripped us up!

5. Mismatch of Work Cultures and The Mistrust it Generated

Working where there was faction and conflict beneath the surface was a tricky business. No matter how careful they were, the possibility of Avec staff being misunderstood and mistrusted was never far away. Maintaining sufficient integrity to work effectively could be problematic. I had two particularly painful experiences of this. One was with a diocesan bishop and the other with the head of a national voluntary Christian organization. In both cases I was working with members of their staff at their request. They poured out very negative feelings and criticisms about some of the actions of their "bosses" and at the same time asserted their loyalty to them and their admiration of them.

In both cases we (I was working with others) got them to clarify just what the issues were as objectively as possible and to see things from the point of view of the bishop and the head of the organization. We did not take sides. Having defused the emotion and objectified the issues through these procedures, we worked out with them just what they were going to do to improve the situation. In both cases this involved them speaking with their boss. In one situation to clarify the issues we had made notes and drawn diagrams. These were deliberately leaked to the boss in a manner which led him to misunderstand what we had done and to believe we had betrayed his trust. The bosses lost confidence and trust in us. Providentially we were ultimately given opportunities to work through the issues with both bosses. Trust was restored between the bishop and ourselves but not, I suspect, in the other case.

These were painful learning experiences. One of the things that emerged was that the bosses had wanted and expected us to persuade their staff to do what they had wanted them to do although they had assured us that they wanted open, frank and free participation. With hindsight we should have worked through some of the possibilities that could emerge from such openness, what we would try to do in relation to various eventualities and tested for acceptability. Undoubtedly this would have helped but whether it would have resolved the root problem is questionable. They talked of open exploration whilst thinking of persuasion and manipulation. They lived in a work culture

in which people were accustomed to forming what Mara Selvini Palazzoli called "denied coalitions".* A coalition is an agreement *against* others. If it is queried it will be denied. An alliance *for* is an association in pursuit of openly declared purposes. We were trying to form an alliance with bosses who were trying to form a coalition. Fundamentally the conflict was between mutually exclusive elements in our respective work cultures which led to a mismatch of expectations. We believed we were doing what was needed, we thought we were doing what they wanted and we assumed they knew what we were doing. They expected us to do something other and discovered that what we were doing was a challenge to, and a judgement upon their work culture – and, of course, it was.

The events confounded and distressed us. We felt vulnerable, greatly disadvantaged and badly positioned to effect the changes in their work culture and practices which is basically what we were about. We did not succeed, mainly, I now see, because of our failure or inability to conceptualise the situation as I have done here. Had we been able to do so, we would have seen that we had much more work to do with the bosses before undertaking the commissions.

I can now see why working with The Methodist Church Overseas Division was so different. Throughout the period 1976-91 they employed us to work with missionaries on furlough and those returning to work in the UK. They encouraged us to discuss with them any problems they had with the church and the Divisional Headquarters and gladly received whatever the missionaries opted to say to them directly or through us – and some of it was critical. What was different was that our work cultures were sufficiently in harmony for these exchanges to be constructive.

6. Limitations of the Premises

Generously and graciously Chelsea Methodist Church made premises available freely to Avec throughout this whole period. They were committed to what Avec was all about and saw their support for the organization as a part of their contribution to the wider ministry and mission of the church. The atmosphere was welcoming, friendly and warm. It was an excellent base. The decor was just right and the Kings Road neighbourhood was interesting and attractive. The accommodation, however, was cramped when a course was on. It was difficult to run more than one course at a time even when the Church generously offered more premises. The library had to be in the seminar room. It could not, therefore, be used when a course was in session.

* Cf Palazzoli, Mara Selvini et al (1981) *The Hidden Games of Organizations*, Pantheon Books, New York pp. 149ff

AGENCY PROBLEMS

Three disabling factors relate directly to Avec as an agency.

7. Failure to Get a Third Full-time Staff Member

From the early days of Avec, trustees and staff wanted to appoint a third full-time staff member, preferably an Anglican priest. We failed to get such an appointment. The Church of England simply did not co-operate: they neither seconded a person nor provided grants even though 1,500 Anglicans out of a total of 7,500 used Avec's services, ie, almost 20%. Avec would have been much more effective had the full-time staff been representative of three principal denominations using its services. This was apparent when the Revd Dr Michael Bayley, an Anglican priest in the Sheffield Diocese, joined the staff for two years as a part-time member. He made all kinds of new connections between the Anglican Church, Avec and the other denominations. And he helped to get aspects of the work evaluated and written up and established on a better academic basis.

Numerous and strenuous other attempts to find new monies to fund such an appointment failed.

A third staff member, whether Anglican or not, would have made the core staff a team of three rather than two. Catherine Widdicombe and I worked together well and complemented each other, but dyadic teams have peculiar problems. As we have seen, part-time staff alleviated these problems, but they were present only spasmodically. A third member would have created at the heart of Avec a continuous new ecumenical and team dynamic and enabled me to be a more effective director (see Factor 10). The right person would also have contributed intellectual stimulus, helped to produce articles on the work, and could have eased the transition from the first to the second generation of Avec.

8. Financial Difficulties and Crises

Examining Graph 1 could give the impression that financing Avec was relatively trouble free. At no point did Avec go into debt. On three occasions only did expenditure modestly exceed income (1978-79, 87-89 and 90-91) and that was covered by reserve funds. In truth the accounts gloss over several serious financial difficulties and incalculable worry and stress. Financial problems stemmed from several things: insufficient fee income to make Avec self-supporting; income insecurity in relation to fees and grants; failure to attract new money and to get additional staff; inadequate reserves. In fact Avec failed

to establish a sound financial basis under its own control; financially it was never self-sufficient.

Fees and grants were insecure forms of income. Sources of grant aid easily dried up. Fee income could all too easily fall. Courses could fail to attract sufficient people; pastoral duties, illness and bad weather could prevent substantial numbers of people from attending courses at the last minute; staff could fall sick. Cancelling a ten-day course meant some 10% of the annual income would be lost and that had to be earned in some other way. This did happen, but fortunately not too often. The trustees explored the possibility of insuring against loss of earning from fees and against staff members being ill for an extended period. It was not possible. So we had to live with the risk and the anxiety and the thought that our reserves could be used up quite quickly.

As the story unfolds it will become apparent that many organizations and people helped Avec to overcome or minimise the financial difficulties. Four people must however be mentioned for the outstanding contributions they made: The Revd Edward Rogers, (Chairman from 1976 to 1988), the late Dr John Pater (Treasurer from 1976 to 1986), Mr Gordon Franklin (Treasurer 1986 to 1991) and Mrs Molly Lovell (Bursar 1976-1992).

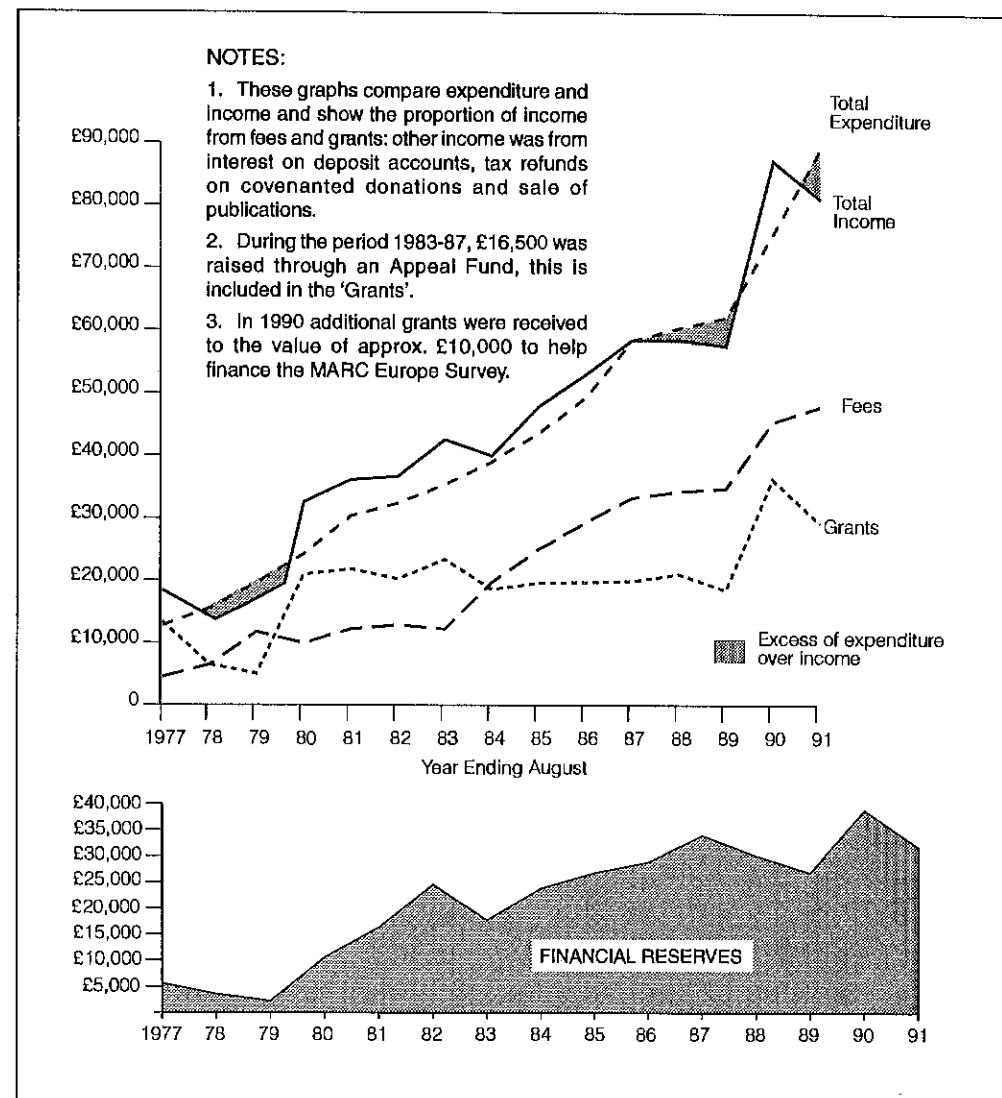
Tracing out all the intricate and complicated negotiations, financial manoeuvres and arrangements that led to Avec surviving is beyond the scope of this book. My objectives can be reached through a description of the major issues which show the disabling human cost of continually struggling with the problems of financing Avec.

(a) *Avec did not become self-financing*

Intellectually I was committed to the idea and strategy that Avec would become a self-financing service agency whose costs would be wholly met by fees derived from those attending courses and using its services. It was good sense. Emotionally I was ambivalent and apprehensive about it and the problems it posed. In the event it did not become self-financing. At best we raised 60% of the expenditure from fees. The average over the fifteen years was 50% and over the period 1984-91 it was just over 56%. During 1985-91 the percentage was quite consistent. People with wide experience felt that it was a high percentage of the expenditure to raise from an educational and service agency working in the churches. Earning these fees was enormously hard work. To do so the staff took on three times more work than they were advised to do and neglected research and writing. Explaining and defending the scale of fees and negotiating the financing of contracts was at times embarrassing.

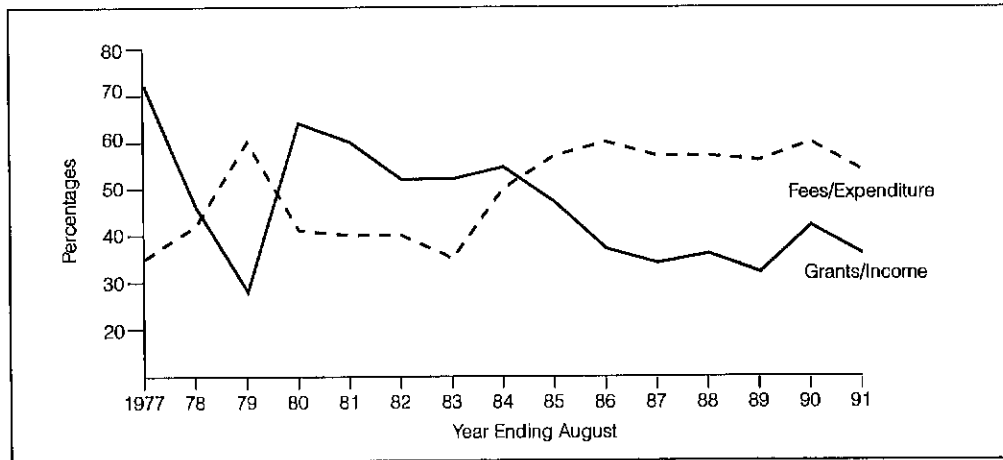
The average income from grants per year was 46%. Additional grants were received in 1989-91 specifically for the MARC Europe Survey.

Graphs 1 and 2 give an overall picture.



GRAPH 1: Grants, Fees, Income, Expenditure and Reserves, 1976-1991

Charging fees was problematical for several reasons. When Avec started people in the churches were not accustomed to buying in such services. Things have changed dramatically since then with the advent of a service contract culture. Then, however, denominationally and ecumenically, training and advice services related to church and community work were generally funded centrally and provided free or at highly subsidised rates. Thus costs were hidden. Paying for these services went against the cultural and theological grain.



GRAPH 2: Fees and Grants as Percentages of Expenditure and Income Respectively

Generally speaking churches did not budget for training and consultancy services. A church development scheme, for example, might cost £500,000. The building scheme was well thought out. Professional charges for architects and lawyers might easily have come to £50,000. My experience is that rarely had adequate thought been given to underlying purposes and beliefs and how they were going to achieve them through the work they planned to do with people. Consequently they often worked on flawed designs for work with people. Consultancy help to think through this might cost as little as £1,000 – or less if the priest came on a ten-day course. That is 2% not 10% of the cost to put the *whole* scheme on a better footing. It is ironic that Christians, committed as they were to human and spiritual development, jibbed at such costs. They put schemes at risk because they did not buy in such help. Those who oversee church building projects and control central funds have major opportunities to educate people to budget for training and work consultancy services of the kind described in this book. For very modest sums the quality of church and community work would be greatly improved.

Charging realistic fees simply would have put Avec out of business; generally speaking the market would not stand it. (Later we will come to exceptions.) Fees were subsidised on average to the extent of 43%, cf Graph 2. Display 8 gives the range of fees charged in 1991. The consultancy fees had not been increased for four years because we felt we had reached the ceiling figure.

Had the fees been lower the culture shock would not have been so great and that would have meant that the issues would not have been faced. The fees were high because this kind of training was expensive. The services were labour intensive. Significant amounts of this time were given freely by associates, office staff and volunteers. Still, the general initial, and in some cases abiding,

AVEC: A SERVICE AGENCY FOR CHURCH AND COMMUNITY WORK

Course Fees
 10-day Courses £315
 3-day Courses £97
 Diploma £650 pa

Consultancy and Project Work Fees

Consultancy and project work are costly because they are labour intensive. They generally involve a consultant working with one person or a small group and undertaking much unique preparatory work. The fees reflect this, the research which has to be undertaken, the preparation and the back-up facilities which have to be provided whether one or more consultants are directly involved. Avec is able to keep its fees well below actual costs and commercial rates because it receives grants, it is non-profit making and its staff receive stipends not salaries. A limited number of small bursaries are available to those unable to meet the costs. The costs are set out below.

Ad hoc and exploratory face to face consultations with one consultant	£50-£100 per session (1½ hours) dependent upon preparation time
(Individuals or small groups) with two consultants	£100-£150
A series of consultations or ongoing consultations with one consultant	£75-£100 per session
(Individuals or small groups) with two consultants	£150-£200
Avec staff acting as workers and consultants to projects:	
one staff member	£300 per day
two staff members	£450 per day

Travel expenses and accommodation costs have to be added.

Gordon Franklin
 Hon Treasurer
 1991

DISPLAY 8: Course and Consultancy Fees, 1991

response in the churches was that the Avec services were expensive. This was disabling. Trustees, on the other hand, who were used to charges for similar services in industry, thought Avec's fees were far too low. According to the MARC Europe Survey satisfied customers felt the charges were reasonable: "the vast majority of those who attended the ten-day courses were happy with the cost of the courses".

Avec was, in fact, pioneering a fee-paying culture as well as a new way of working with people. At times these were unhelpfully confused. There was a personal side to this. As a Methodist minister in a local church I had been paid a stipend so that I could minister freely to people in church and community. Negotiating fees for "Avec and my services" went against all my psycho-spiritual conditioning. I too was undergoing professional cultural changes. Arguments about people taking seriously what they pay for helped me slightly. But I was driven, really, by the sheer necessity of getting the money to do the work. It was that which helped me to cope with the embarrassment I sometimes experienced. I never felt entirely comfortable with the arrangement – psychologists will make much of that confession!

One of the things which greatly helped to increase the fee income and make the fees more acceptable was the approach taken by the Overseas Division of the Methodist Church in response to the financial crises faced by Avec in the early 80's. They said they were unable by their constitution to give grants to Avec but they could and would pay "realistic fees". Others followed this lead notably the Division of Ministries and religious orders. This gave us a psychological boost and enabled us to raise the fee level considerably.

Other ideas for raising the fee level were suggested. One was that we should surcharge people from those denominations which did not offer grants to Avec. This was not done mainly because individuals who had to pay their own fees would have been penalised. Many would simply not have been able to raise the funds for fees. Another idea was that we should offer services to industry and commerce at the fees normally paid which were far in excess of those Avec charged. But our commitment was to working with the church for development – and there was more work in that task than we could complete.

(b) *Search for Permanent Funding Failed*

Avec was launched in 1976 with pump priming grants from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, an anonymous trust, the Methodist Division of Ministries, the Roman Catholic Fund, the Voluntary Services Unit (VSU). When it was agreed in 1979 that Avec should become established on a permanent basis, the search began for long-term funding. One of the charitable trusts suggested that Avec become a unit in an institution of higher education. The other funding bodies agreed. Roehampton Institute of Higher Education

(R.I.H.E.) seemed an obvious choice. It was a recently founded ecumenical federation of Anglican, Methodist, secular and Roman Catholic colleges based in South West London. After much careful discussion and planning between the Department of Education and Science (DES), the Voluntary Services Unit (VSU) of the Home Office, R.I.H.E. and Avec, arrangements were made for Avec to become an affiliated and funded unit of R.I.H.E. in 1982. Just as these plans were to be implemented the Government announced cut-backs and changed the way in which it was to fund higher education from a per capita arrangement to block grants. Under these new arrangements R.I.H.E. simply could not fund Avec. The Rector, Professor Kevin Keohane, tried hard to find a way of doing so because he was highly committed to the plan but without success.

The future seemed bleak. The trustees felt that there was a real possibility of having to close down Avec. Several developments prevented this happening.

At the end of November 1981 the associates met. It was a moving occasion. They felt very deeply that Avec must go on and committed themselves to raising the money to enable this to happen. An appeal was launched which the Revd Howard Mellor headed up. It raised something like £16,500 and attracted several long-term covenants. This sum, inadequate of itself to fund Avec, boosted the morale of the staff and trustees and strengthened their resolve to find a way forward. It also showed the high value that some people attached to Avec.

For some time Mr Richard Mills of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation had been wanting the principal denominations to take substantial financial responsibility for this work. The 1982 Methodist Conference passed a resolution which acknowledged the "help to the whole ministry of our church through the work of Avec" and supported "the Divisions in their endeavour to secure Avec's future".

I was stationed in the Victoria and Chelsea Circuit and seconded to Avec. My stipend and allowances were met by the Circuit and the Advance Fund of the Methodist Church. Avec was now financially viable. A long, happy and profitable association with the Victoria and Chelsea Circuit was established. From 1986 onwards a similar arrangement was made between the Division of Ministries and the Victoria and Chelsea Circuit. The Revd Edward Rogers and the late Dr John Pater who negotiated these grants wanted them to be paid to Avec but the President's Council insisted that the grants be tied to me. Four years later the President's Council of the Methodist Church agreed that the grants from the Division of Ministries could be used towards the costs of employing a director of any denomination and that they would be available until 1996 when they would be reviewed. This paved the way for the appointment of a new director in 1991.

The Grail made major financial contributions through seconding Catherine

Widdicombe to work full-time with Avec up to 1992 at a Methodist minister's stipend and through annual grants.

These grants saved Avec. They were supplemented by occasional grants from the Roman Catholic Church and private individuals.

Important advances were made through this crisis. Two denominations became much more committed to financing Avec. The training and educational potential inherent in the affiliation of Avec to R.I.H.E. was mapped out. Avec became an Associated Institution of R.I.H.E. and a founder member of a committee for a group of associated institutions. This provided academic support for Avec. Avec courses were validated and in 1986 R.I.H.E. and Avec inaugurated a Diploma in Church and Community Development.

In 1984 the trustees renewed their attempts to get the Church of England more actively involved in helping to administer, staff and finance Avec. They approached the Archbishop of Canterbury who asked Lady Margaret Brown to report to him about the work of Avec. She presented a very positive report urging the Archbishop to appoint someone to represent him on the Avec Trust, to find substantial grants and to second a full-time staff member.

The Archbishop acted immediately on the first of these recommendations. Some time later we met with the Archbishop to discuss the other matters. He said he was ashamed at the lack of financial support for Avec from the Church of England and said he was determined to do something about it. After making soundings he advised us to apply to the Church Urban Fund (C.U.F.). Our application was turned down on the grounds that C.U.F. supported only local work and not national training and consultancy agencies even though they might be involved in helping people with their urban work. However, later C.U.F. gave grants towards the course and consultancy fees for people working in urban areas.

Avec looked into the possibility of raising a capital sum in order to be self-sufficient. Experts in fund raising advised against this because our work would not attract sufficient interest. So we were left relying on grants!

Avec survived until 1994 but an enormous amount of time and nervous energy was spent by the directors and trustees in searching and negotiating for grants and worrying about the situation.

(c) *Inadequate Reserves*

Reserves were built up slowly by the appeal fund, by budgeting each year for a modest surplus and through careful management of resources. These reserves were sufficient to facilitate an irregular cash flow and to make short term part-time appointments. But they were never sufficient to appoint a new full-time staff member.

(d) *Failure to Get New Money*

Shortage of money stunted Avec's growth. It reduced the amount of work that could be done. It placed staff under unnecessary stress. It prevented Avec from implementing a scheme for preparatory and follow-through field work. It forced the staff to accept some commissions for the income they generated rather than for their potential to further Avec's purposes. It prevented staff members from promoting work in Scotland and Wales and getting properly involved in rural work. It made them cut back experimental courses with other agencies. It reduced their freedom to be innovative. Lack of finance and personnel prevented them researching the work as thoroughly as they would have liked. To have written a report along the lines of this book in the mid 80's could have been a very creative thing to do. I make this point hesitantly because the objectivity that disengagement brings is probably more essential to such an exercise than money and time. The MARC Europe Survey, useful as it was, did not reveal the issues emerging from this reflective research.

(e) *Root Problem: Churches' Failure to Fund Training and Consultancy Services Adequately and Fairly*

From the outset the trustees realised that, whilst there were advantages in practitioners contributing to the cost of their own training, the fees were too high for practitioners to pay out of their own pocket. So, they urged church leaders to ensure that grants were readily available to those who needed and wanted to attend Avec courses. Some churches and organizations made such arrangements through central, regional and local funds. My impression is that it was easier for practitioners to get grants for courses than for consultancy services. Even when they got grants, some course members had to find a considerable sum towards fees, travel, accommodation and books. Some people found it very difficult to get grants – and they were often people in most need of training. It was not uncommon to find people paying out of their savings. In the case of the diploma this involved one person known to me in no less than £3,000 over two years. Others got grants from charitable trusts. For several years Avec had an understanding with an Anglican trust, Sons of The Clergy Corporation, that they would help a number of people.

Avec did all it could to help those experiencing difficulties in raising money for fees: it provided information about possible sources of funding; organized a small bursary fund; allowed people to defer payments until they had received grants; organized loans.

Whilst Avec was trying to establish itself on a sound self-financing basis the churches and allied organizations were awakening to the need for funds for in-service training and consultancy services but allocating inadequate sums. Some were developing their own in-service training programmes. The costs of

this training were generally met centrally. Thus the question of fees did not arise and the costs were not widely known. Alongside this, training and consultancy services on a fee paying basis were burgeoning. Traditionally such courses were heavily subsidised through block grants to the agencies which provided them. But, as in the case of Avec, pressures were being exerted to make some of these organizations and their services self-financing. Real costs were now becoming apparent. Many thought they were high and even exorbitant, not least because the per capita costs of denominational courses had been hidden. And, wherever one stood in relation to all this, there simply was not sufficient money available to meet the needs.

Avec was a microcosm of this mixed and muddled economy: it was meant to be self-financing but received block grants; its fees were not high enough to make it self-financing but they were generally thought to be too expensive. It was in the maelstrom of the transition. It was being used to promote this transformational change and it was the victim of it. This was disabling. It meant, as we have noted, the staff promoting radical change in the work culture and in the way of financing training and consultancy services.

Until churches and allied organizations make realistic sums of money available the financial and human costs of these confused policies will be borne by the most vulnerable practitioners (those who need and want training and consultancy help desperately and do not have access to grants), by those who see the needs and give of themselves to meet them and by service agencies. I have felt the pain of the practitioners because I too had to struggle to find money for my own training and research. All too easily and readily, churches and their leaders at all levels trespass upon the vocational commitments of practitioners, trainers and consultants and, by design or default, make them pay doubly to equip themselves to do the work of the churches better. Churches have got to face up to their moral responsibilities to finance these services. It is not right to promote policies for which others have to meet so many of the human and financial costs.

Throughout our time at Avec we found ourselves saying over and over again, "We do not want money to come between you and the training and consultancy services you need". I suggest that is a dictum for the churches.

9. Limited Inter-Organizational and Ecumenical Co-operation

As we have seen, concentrating upon working with people on their work and with other agencies rather than on general networking was one of the important enabling factors. Just what could have been achieved had there been the resources to put more effort into networking and co-operating, became apparent during the time that the Revd Dr Michael Bayley was a part-time

staff member. A considerable amount of his time was spent networking and promoting inter-agency co-operation especially with community workers, Anglican organizations and black churches. This took an extraordinary amount of time and energy. One important result was a course organized in partnership with black churches. Sadly this partnership was not maintained. When Michael's contract concluded we could not find anyone to replace him and we had not the capacity to continue this demanding but rewarding work. I deeply regret this. There is little doubt that Avec missed out because it simply did not have the staff and the time for getting to know people and organizations, establishing friendships for their own sake, letting them mature and, should possibilities for co-operation emerge, pursuing them.

One result of all this was that, although Avec was a unique ecumenical project, it never became an accepted and integral part of the official ecumenical movement as represented by the British Council of Churches and then by the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland (CCBI). This was to our mutual disadvantage.

Repeated attempts to get the Baptist and the Reformed Churches involved met with only limited responses whilst we failed completely to get into working relationships with the Salvation Army.

STAFF MEMBERS' PROBLEMS

Three main factors are considered in this section.

10. The Director's Intensive Engagement in Training, Consultancy and Project Work

Another difficulty crept upon us so gradually that I became fully aware of it only towards the end of my time as director. In the mid 80's we decided to inaugurate the post-graduate diploma described earlier. I took primary responsibility for this. It occupied much of my time from 1985 to 1991. Acting as organizing tutor for these courses was far more demanding than I had anticipated. It involved me in an extensive reading programme, writing lecture notes and supervising action-research projects. This was a heavy work load even though I had a colleague for the second course and two colleagues for the third. During this time I was heading up a major project between the Methodist Church in Britain, Sierra Leone, Ghana and Nigeria. This involved preparing for and leading consultations in West Africa for each of three successive years. Also, I was responsible for annual ten-day consultations exclusively for people working regionally, nationally and internationally.

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. This caused me considerable stress and reduced my sense of job satisfaction.

As I have already indicated I would not have wanted to become a "managing director" with a modicum of training and consultancy work. Engagement in such work was very important to me. I wanted and needed to be a "working director". What was required was a more creative balance between the effort I put into training and consultancy work and performing the functions of a director. A third member of staff would have enabled a more realistic distribution of responsibilities for the work of Avec and for its overall direction.

11. Failure to Publish Adequately

As we have already said, we treated our work in Avec as an action-research project. Extensive records were kept. The work was evaluated. Endless internal memos and reports were written. Handouts were prepared. Articles and books on much of this would have greatly helped to achieve the purposes of Avec. But they were not written. A glance at the Bibliography will show that we did not publish anything of significance on the *avec* approach between 1982 and 1989 and then between 1989 and 1992 and on Avec between 1985 and 1992. From the mid-eighties I worked on two books, one on the analysis and design of church and community work and another on work consultancy but it was only after my retirement from Avec that I was able to complete them. Consequently we did not fully capitalise on our work and research.

Many reasons can be given for this. Some are obvious from what I have written in this book. Writing articles and books did not come easy to us. There was no tailor made outlet for the kind of articles we would have written as the subject matter of church and community development did not fit easily into the interests of established journals. We were busy and stressed. Whatever the explanation, the lack of published material was a major disabling factor and I deeply regret this omission.

12. Dysfunctional Stress and Strain

Doing the work of Avec was stressful. Most of it was inherent in the work and unavoidable but some of it was spurious and avoidable. The work load was enormous. It was simply not possible to sustain all the areas of work all the time. Training courses, for example, absorbed all the available energy, sometimes

for two weeks at a time. Then the staff had to catch up on other things clamouring for attention. Consequently there were spurts of energy in relation to first this and then that.

Throughout, the staff was continually exposed to several different sources of vulnerability: working with people non-directively; working outside of any authority and power structures; permanent financial insecurity; recurring difficulties of recruiting for courses with the financial penalties of failing to do so; the temptation to put aside non-directive scruples and attempt to put pressure upon people to attend courses to make them viable; working with people on increasingly complicated problems which they and their organizations had failed to overcome and which they expected Avec to solve in a very short time. Risks had to be taken. When they paid off the rewards were great and the satisfaction deep, when they did not there was much *angst*.

Thinking through complicated things with practitioners could be daunting and worrying as well as exciting and satisfying. The intellectual stress could be considerable. This was accentuated by the fear of misinforming or misleading people or of failing to help them. Church and community development work involved drawing upon the theory and practice of several disciplines: Christian theology and particularly pastoral theology, community development, the social and behavioural sciences and adult education. It involved foraging in these disciplines for explanations and theories of human behaviour and ways of working with people which would help Avec staff and those with whom they were working to overcome the problems that were preventing them from achieving their purposes. This kind of activity was going on concurrently in relation to church and community development generally and to the work of each individual and group engaged in Avec's training, consultancy and project programme. To be effective this inter-disciplinary process had to result in coherent models of practice theory with which those concerned felt comfortable – and they came from very different theoretical and ecclesiastical backgrounds. It involved continuous analysis, research and reflection in disciplines other than one's own.

All this got the adrenalin flowing. For most part the tension between all these factors was resolved creatively. When this happened there was what Professor Gillian Stamp refers to as a state of "well-being" when we felt we were "in flow". However, this often induced stress because we over-reached ourselves. One aspect of the work going wrong was manageable but stressful. Several going wrong at the same time, as they seemed to do, was difficult to manage and very stressful. Failure to make progress over a period of years with substantive issues such as finance and staffing were debilitating and destructive, they undermined morale and our confidence in a benevolent future. Only now that I have retired do I realise just how stressful the work was.

One of the important antidotes to stress was the help received from

Dr TR Batten our consultant and the Revd Edward Rogers the Chairman of Trustees. They helped us to see things more objectively, less emotionally, and to control our work load.

A Tentative Comment

Somehow or another, Avec remained a small organization, a "family business" although its work and the people involved in organizing it and providing the services increased considerably. Whether this was a disabling or enabling factor depends upon whether or not it would have been more effective had it become a larger and more formal organization. That is a matter of judgement and speculation. Possibly Avec was teetering on the verge of organizational development. For better or for worse various things, including some of the disabling factors, kept it as a carefully structured and purposeful small organization. Amongst these were: the failure to get a third full-time staff member; the shortage of voluntary and part-time staff; the struggle with persistent financial problems and living "hand to mouth"; the predilection of the full-time staff to training and consultancy work and their preoccupation with it; the effort required to design, inaugurate and develop the technical side of the agency left little energy for other things; dysfunctional stress and strain. On the positive side there was a commitment to providing personal services tailored to people's needs and circumstances, and to work at things with people from basic principles rather than proffering ready-made "solutions".

This analysis does not attempt to describe the kind of organization best suited to the task of providing services. It provides information about the enabling and disabling factors emerging from the experience of providing services through a particular agency, Avec, at a particular time. In as much as these are universals, they enable people to establish some of the criteria for designing small or large agencies for servicing church and community workers.

Towards Using the Avec Experience

This final chapter takes us from an analysis of the past experience of Avec to its implications for the future. First I attempt a reflective summary. Then, drawing upon all the research indicated in Chapter II, I discuss what it seems will be involved in the next phase of servicing practitioners, churches and organizations. This is followed by a note of the resources available. In the concluding section I cogitate about why the need for consultancy services has become a significant feature of this generation.

A REFLECTIVE SUMMARY

Researching and writing about the Avec experience from 1976-1991 has helped me to see more clearly what was and what was not achieved. Avec discovered and provided training courses and consultancy services from which all kinds of practitioners got invaluable help of a kind not otherwise available. It gained a high and wide reputation for quality service in church and community work. Associates and staff did a phenomenal amount of work by careful stewardship of their limited resources and giving themselves totally to the tasks. Much potential in all this was simply not realised because Avec failed to attract new money in the 80's, to get the Church of England to second or fund a third full-time worker in the way in which the Methodist Church and the Grail had done and because it failed to make its work more widely known through articles and books. New money and an Anglican worker would not only have increased effectiveness, it would also have reduced the dysfunctional stress and strain on the full and part-time staff. In short, trustees, staff and associates were not as successful in developing and financing Avec as an organization as they were in providing services.

By common consent, during the last two or three years of this period, Avec staff gained a new and more comprehensive and coherent understanding of their approach and the nature of their essential contribution to church, community and community development work. There was also greater coherence in and between Avec's purpose and policy, the work programme,

staff members' working relationships with others in the field and the internal working relationships between trustees and associates.

Factorizing is the method I have used to determine things which contributed to, and those which detracted from Avec's effectiveness. Factors such as the non-directive approach and the way of relating to people were permanent and necessary parts of the *avec* process. These factors Batten referred to as the "soul of Avec". For us they were the soul because they embodied significant aspects of the way in which God relates to and works with other people through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. In fact the soul of Avec was what we have referred to as the *avec* approach. Other factors such as the user friendly services describe bodies through which the soul lived and worked. The bodies were temporal, the soul immortal. There were human factors such as qualified missionary staff and collaborative working relationships. Theological factors undergirded the whole venture; it was of God. Then there were organizational factors relating to Avec as an independent service agency and to finance. Finally there were contextual factors. These are charted in Display 9 and illustrated in Figure 9.

Factorizing has revealed the nature of the component parts that made Avec work and the things which militated against its effectiveness. As they were laid, side by side, as it were, some of the necessary connections between the enabling and disabling factors were apparent, others were not. All these factors interacted in many different and often unexpected and unpredictable ways within the complex system of which they were a part. Effectiveness depended upon being alert to them, cultivating the enabling ones and containing the disabling ones. A tricky process. Often we failed to manage it in the way in which we wanted to do.

The enabling factors were put together in different combinations to serve different people in various circumstances and settings. Doing this was a creative art. It involved designing and making action systems from the enabling components which practitioners and staff could use to achieve their purposes in the reality in which they were set, with its constraining and disabling factors. Forming such action systems was anything but a mechanical exercise because they were more and other than a simple summation of the parts. They were holistic tools which meshed into the environment in which they had to operate. The ability to design such systems was a key enabling factor.

Each of these systems – ten-day courses, work consultancy sessions, projects, etc. – were designed to facilitate a particular form of dynamic interaction between practitioners and the work with people for development in which they were engaged. Interaction of this kind causes the fusion of the energies and abilities of the participants. They act in unison. They collaborate. They combine their intellectual abilities and reinforce each other. They share their knowledge and insights. They explore each other's ideas and experience. All this happens as they engage directly upon the work in a disciplined manner

Factors related to	Enabling Factors	Disabling Factors
The <i>avec</i> concept, philosophy, approach and process viz. the 'soul' of Avec.	The non-directive approach Stance on church and community development • 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 Mode of interpersonal engagement and behaviour The body of knowledge	Failure to • 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.	Ditto
The approach, methods and tools	Basic methods that worked • The non-directive approach • Work study tools • Ten-day in-service training courses • Work consultancy • Action-research	Sheer difficulty of making these work Degrees of incompetence
The programme	Wide range of user-friendly services • 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	Unreasonable expectations and judgements and lack of trust Mismatch of work cultures and the mistrust it generated Failure to organize personal field-work services before and after courses Work flow and recruitment difficulties
The staff, the human factor	Mode of technical and interpersonal behaviour Qualified ecumenical staff with a sense of mission • 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 Collaborative and supportive working relationships	Shortage of people to staff 10-day courses and consultancy work Failure to get a third full-time staff member Director's intensive engagement in training, consultancy and project work Dysfunctional stress and strain Failure to publish adequately
The organization	Professional, administrative, financial and moral support • An ecumenical trust • Consultancy support • Financial and moral support with conditions but without 'strings' Avec was • An independent agency • A service agency Avec's vocation the vocation of others	Financial difficulties and crises Limited inter-organizational and ecumenical co-operation
Context	Avec's good name and promotional networking Favourable to church and community development Felt need for the approach	Indifference, antagonism Ignorance and suspicion of the non-directive approach

The media through which the *avec* process operated viz the "bodies" through which the "soul lived and worked"

Various degrees of failure to realise the conditions necessary for the enabling factors to be fully effective

DISPLAY 9: The Pattern of Enabling and Disabling Factors

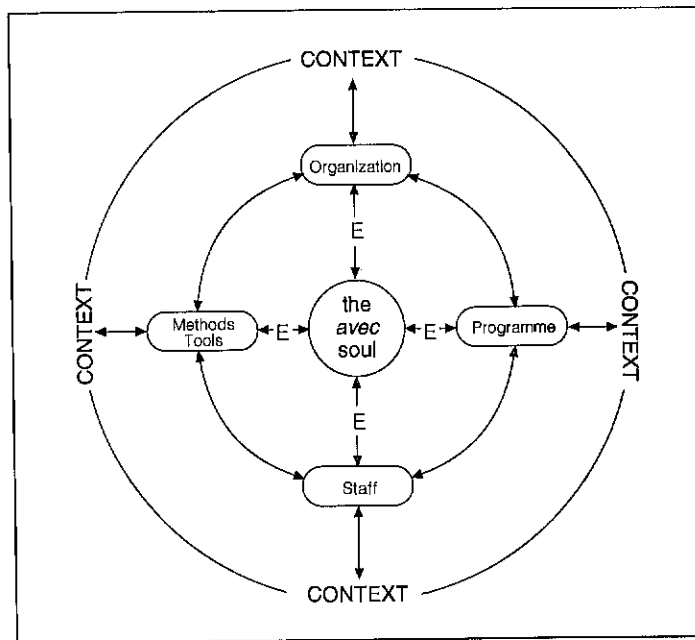


FIGURE 9: Avec, Soul and Bodies

through processes of analysis and design. Fusion of energies and work engagement combined release creative power and engender an ethos and spirituality which are greatly valued. At the very heart of this is the facilitating power of the non-directive approach. This is how the *avec* process works. I have tried to model these essentials of the design in Figure 10.

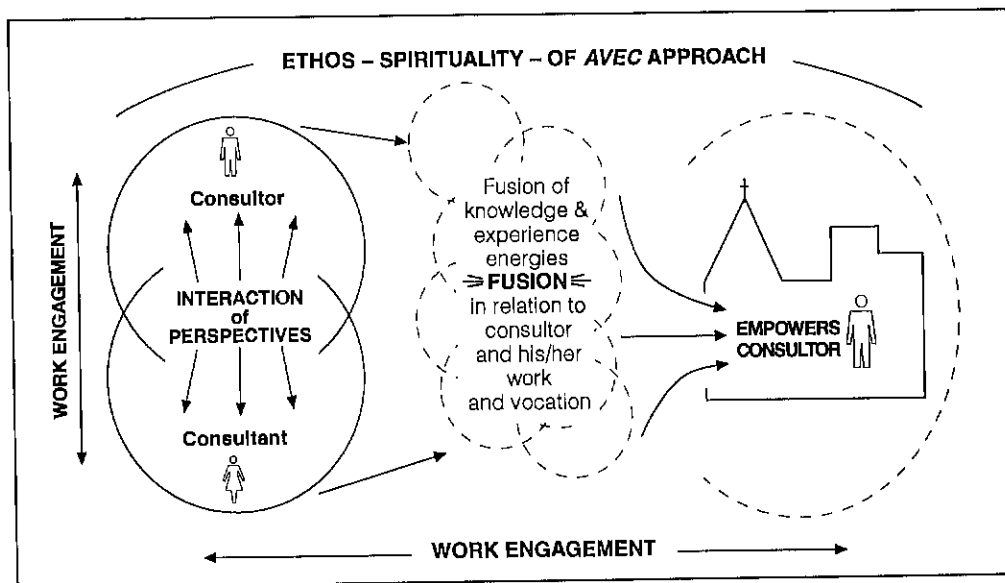


FIGURE 10: Avec: Fusion of Energies in Work Engagement

From this analysis a picture emerges of an agency providing services of proven value but for ever struggling to survive in the market place and to expand. Undoubtedly, much could be learnt from a similar analysis of the next three years and the factors related to Avec ceasing to trade. Leapfrogging over this period to a brief review of the contemporary situation is tantalizing and frustrating but unavoidable. Be that as it may, this analysis of the period 1976-91 is not compromised by the closure of Avec as an agency. On the contrary, the advent of the Avec Association in the same tradition confirms the validity of the enabling factors. Bald facts of the period 1991-94 are: the economics of Avec became much more problematic, not least because of unanticipated difficulties in funding me as a research worker; in 1993 I took voluntary retirement to ease the financial situation; there was a slight upturn in the finances as the director attracted new work and recruited new associate staff members; Canon Malcolm Grundy was an energetic director until he became the Archdeacon of Craven in May 1994; in July economic and logistical difficulties led the trustees to abandon their search for a new director and to decide that Avec should cease to trade in August 1994; having supported the formation of the Avec Association the trustees closed down the Trust at the beginning of 1996.

SERVICING THE *AVEC* MOVEMENT BEYOND *AVEC*

Making assessments about the continuing need for Avec type training and consultancy services and how they could/should be met involves three things. First, it involves reconsidering the contributions these services and the adopting of the *avec* approach make to the Christian work-force and through them to the Christian enterprise in church and society. Second, it involves assessing the state of the *avec* movement. Third, it involves identifying contemporary needs and resources. Clearly, these things are matters of moment when people consider, as I do, that Avec-type training and service contributions are invaluable and essential to human and spiritual well-being in church and society in the contemporary situation and the foreseeable future. My aim is to provide information which could help people in the churches -and especially those with power, authority and influence - to consider ways and means of providing what is needed.

1. Effects and Contributions

Avec enabled practitioners, churches and organizations to work *with* rather than for people and to design programmes through which they could

promote self-directed participation, self-determination and self-induced change. Staff and associates formulated coherent expressions of the theory, theology and practice of church and community development. They developed analytical tools, modes of studying work and in-service training courses based on work consultancy processes. A unique mode of interpersonal engagement and behaviour between trainer consultants and practitioner consultants evolved. Avec pioneered work and vocational consultancy provision and researched codes of good practice through providing a wide range of user friendly services. A cadre of qualified staff was built up. Avec was a centre and a community for work reflection which helped people to become better reflective practitioners. In fact through processes of trial and error Avec:

- demonstrated conclusively that the non-directive approach to church and community development is appropriate to the extraordinarily wide range of work in which those who used its services were engaged;
- found ways of helping practitioners, teams, church, organizations and religious orders to determine precisely the kind of practical, theoretical and theological help they needed from Avec staff in order to develop their abilities to adopt, adapt and practise this approach;
- discovered the conditions under which practitioners and their churches and organizations could avail themselves of the help they needed;
- devised effective modes of analysis, research and design which practitioners themselves could engage in and use in relation to their problems, cases, work situations and projects;
- developed ways of providing work and vocational consultancy services to individuals, groups, churches and organizations and ways in which practitioners could act as consultants to each other;
- provided reflection/action workshops in which belief and practice were examined on the test bed of applied theology, the mission of the church and critical features of contemporary society;
- became a tangible focus and a promoting presence for the non-directive approach to church and community development;
- found that all participants placed great value on the *avec* approach, the services provided and the existence of such an agency;
- accumulated invaluable data about the life and work of clergy, religious and laity in all kinds of churches and communities which, if researched, will provide a unique picture of beliefs, aspirations, purposes, conditions, achievements, problems and failures during an important period of change and development in this century;

- showed that, given personnel and some finance, the service agency model for providing training and work consultancy has much to contribute to the church and allied organizations;
- provided important information about the actualities of creating and maintaining agencies to service the work-force of the Christian community.

The following bald statements indicate some of the effects that Avec had upon church and community work and those engaged in it.

- It helped, encouraged, inspired and challenged people.
- It contributed to the creation of a more highly skilled and job satisfied work force.
- It helped practitioners to get a subjective purchase on work and life through using their intellectual abilities and their intuitive sensitivities to better effect.
- It engendered egalitarian working relationships.
- It promoted dialogue, co-operation and collaboration in a competitive and pluralistic church and society.
- It began the development of a work consultancy infra-structure which services and supports workers.
- It generated a particular form of "work culture" with an inimitable spirituality.

Avec continued to make these kinds of contributions and to be this kind of presence until 1994 and, as we shall see, the Avec Association intends to do so.

2. The Current Situation

From the outset the aim was to use Avec to promote and develop non-directive action for human and spiritual development of Christians and non-Christians and their communities through the church. A major objective was to get as many practitioners and institutions to adopt and to internalise the *avec* approach, to embody it, so that it had a life of its own ultimately independent of Avec, but making common cause with it in an ever changing interdependent relationship. Over and again this objective was achieved. There is *avec* life beyond Avec in countless human cells. That is *the* legacy of hope and promise of Avec 1976-94.

A reliable audit of the extent, health and weakness of the *avec* movement would be helpful. Carrying out such an audit would be difficult and demanding and is beyond our resources so we have to rely on the observations and impressions of people active in the field. There are several key aspects emerging from my own observations and those of others:

- there is growing interest in and acceptance of *avec* type approaches;
- a significant and increasing minority of practitioners and a smaller minority of churches and organizations have internalized the *avec* approach;
- an increasing number of practitioners, churches and allied organizations make use of non-directive work and vocational consultancy services and seek to make them available to others without necessarily adopting the approaches themselves in their work with people;
- there is a shortage of people who can act as work and vocational consultants.

The *avec* movement is, in fact, part of a much wider movement towards egalitarian working relationships in church and community work stemming from many different secular and religious sources. Central to this movement there is an inexorable thrust towards the liberation and empowerment of people in every aspect of religious and secular life. It is about getting people to think and act creatively for themselves and with others. It mobilises people to use all their resources and determination to create the kind of churches and communities which enable people to satisfy their deepest human and spiritual needs. It is not freedom for freedom's sake. It is freedom to be engaged in all that makes for human well-being, happiness and development and the common good. Such high purposes prevent liberation and empowerment and the approaches which facilitate them from becoming open-ended or a recipe for anarchy.

Gradually this movement has induced radical changes that have been transforming working relationships in all areas of contemporary life in the western world throughout the second part of this century. Working with and alongside people is seen to be a much more effective way of getting people to give of their best and to engender their own development. Increasingly, emphasis is placed upon participation, collaboration, equal opportunities and associated concepts. Christians have "discovered" shared ministry, team-work and the ministry of the whole people of God. Morally and theologically such approaches have the edge because they respect human and spiritual rights and enhance human dignity. This movement, sadly all too slowly, is overcoming authoritarian, autocratic, patronising, discriminatory and do-gooding forms of behaviour and outlawing them from acceptable practice. It is making significant

contributions towards the transformation of the church and the work it does with people, although there remains a very long way to go. I believe this movement to be irreversible but it would be unwise to underestimate the resistance to it from people on the left and the right in the church and the world.

My observations and research show that the *avec* movement is healthy; I see new evidence of its vitality in many people and places. Nonetheless, I am firmly convinced that for the foreseeable future it needs a focus, a central body which epitomises, promotes, develops and researches it vigorously – not least to see that the needs described in the next section are met. The *Avec* Association is therefore important.

3. Needs

The following persistent needs are emerging from harvesting the work of *Avec* in the ways described in Chapter II and observing the church at work.

The Need for Increasing Numbers of Workers to Develop Their Abilities to Analyse and Design Their Work and to Use the Avec Approach

Much effort has gone into inducting clergy, religious and laity into the *avec* approach. Equal attention now needs to be given to helping them to develop their abilities to design, as well as to analyse, programmes of church and community work by which they themselves and those with whom they work can, and will, promote overall human and spiritual development. Designing, a very different activity from analysing and a much more difficult skill to acquire, is a neglected art and science. The non-directive and *avec* approaches facilitate these processes of analysis and design and aid the implementation of action plans that emerge. Current emphases upon appraisal, review and evaluation bring this need to the fore.

The Need for Consultancy Services and Therefore for Consultants

No matter how proficient practitioners become in the analysis and design of their own work programmes – and it is important that they become as self-reliant as possible – they will not become entirely self-sufficient. They will need work consultancy help when, for instance, they simply cannot get their minds around things either because of their complexity or because they are too emotionally involved. Practitioners also need such help when they are experiencing work related reactive depression and stress, ie, depression and stress induced by work problems and worries and a sense of failure rather than

by innate psychological disorders. It is important that those in such circumstances should *not* be directed to counsellors when they need consultants.

Some twelve years ago an Irish Methodist minister came to Avec for consultancy sessions. He felt he was a failure and near a breakdown. He had his resignation from the ministry in his pocket. He was facing extremely difficult problems in a shared church. The consultancy group helped him to work his way through those problems to a course of action that worked. It is highly unlikely that he would have got from a counsellor the technical help he needed with his work which was the source of his psychological distress. He is now a Chairman and Superintendent of the Belfast Mission, and gave me permission to tell this story. He said, "Those sessions saved me for the ministry". In work we did with the Methodist Church Overseas Division for eighteen years we took great pains to discern whether a person needed consultancy help in relation to her/his work or vocation or whether she/he needed counselling – and when in doubt we always went first for consultancy and only rarely had we to suggest counselling.

Meeting this need more adequately involves making more readily available two forms of consultancy help: that provided by specialist consultants and that provided by practitioners acting as co-consultants to each other in their work situation. It also involves training people in the art of consulting with other people about their work and vocation.

The Need to Orientate Church and Community Workers at an Early Stage in their Professional Training to the Avec Approach and its Applications

Enormous advantage could be gained through introducing all church workers at an early stage in their professional training for diaconal, lay, presbyteral and religious ministry to the rudiments of several things: the *avec* approach and the body of knowledge and experience associated with it; work analysis and design; work and vocational consultancy. With reference to the last point, it is particularly important to prepare and train them to be consultants. This would enhance their ability to engage in various forms of work analysis, appraisal, audit and evaluation. They need to develop their ability to process creatively through their own being both negative and positive feedback. Without this capacity they are at a grave disadvantage no matter how sophisticated the analytical and evaluative procedures they and others deploy.

The Need for Creative Reflective Communities and Centres

Reflective practitioners need reflective communities to stimulate and sustain them – and vice versa. Practising the *avec* approach creates both reflective practitioners and communities. Nevertheless reflective practitioners

need opportunities to reflect with people other than those with whom they work. There are many reasons for this. One is that they need places where they can think openly and safely about any and all issues without the inhibiting fear that thinking aloud freely will damage local working relationships. Another is that reflective practitioners need reflective communities when they are working to awaken unreflective groups. Avec courses and co-consultancy services actually provided temporary and ad hoc reflective "communities". They are still needed and in some cases desperately needed. My hunch is that those who fail to become habitual reflective practitioners are those who are unable to find or generate reflective groups, churches or communities.

The Need for Avec Type Courses and Services

Avec type courses and services adapted to changing circumstances continue to be needed. That, I believe, to be self-evident. They make essential contributions to the infra-structures of continuing training and consultancy support and the back-up services required by reflective practitioners and communities.

The Need for Research

Ongoing programmes of research are urgently needed into the practice, theory and theology of:

- church and community development work;
- the analysis and especially the design of work programmes aimed at promoting human and spiritual development in churches and communities;
- work and vocational consultancy services and their operational relationship to appraisal and evaluation schemes, counselling and spiritual direction.

4. Resources

In this section I note briefly the resources currently available to meet the needs listed in the previous section. I have limited myself entirely to those things which are based directly upon the approaches, methods and services referred to in this book. Approaches and services significantly similar abound which could also help to meet these needs. But it is beyond the scope of this book to describe and compare them. That is a task for the reader to do in relation to resources available to them and for others who can take a more objective and independent view of the different resources than I am able to do.

This information could help three possible groups of readers: practitioners who wish to learn more about the approaches and methods and to acquire the skills; church leaders and those engaged in pastoral management who wish to ensure that practitioners (lay, ordained and religious, paid and voluntary) are adequately equipped for their work and have the support they need; those responsible for pre- and in-service training of the church's work-force.

Literature

An examination of the annotated bibliography shows that the amount of literature available for those who wish to study the approach is expanding quite quickly.

Catherine Widdicombe and I, in association with the Grail and with the backing of a charitable trust, have set up "Avec Resources: Working With People in Church and Community".* The aim is to make books and papers more readily available to theological colleges, training institutions and practitioners.

The Avec specialist church and community development library and a selection of occasional papers and journals have been re-housed at Westminster College, Oxford for reference. Extensive archives are also to be housed at Westminster.

Training and Consultancy Services

In this section I note briefly the *avec* type training and consultancy services available in the British Isles.

*The Avec Association***

The Avec Association is a successor to, but not a direct continuation of, Avec. It was formed by a group of Avec associates who met when they knew that Avec was to cease to trade to see what could be done to provide the Avec-type services which they were utterly convinced were still needed. They met several times and considered the logistical, recruitment, staffing and financial problems that Avec had experienced in the past and those which had led the trustees to the decision they deeply regretted having to make. (An early draft of this book was made available to them during this period.) Eventually they came up with ideas for continuing the Avec tradition but through a different kind of voluntary organization, the Avec Association. Display 10 reproduces

* Avec Resources, 125 Waxwell Lane, Pinner, Middx. HA5 3ER

** For further information contact The Revd Dr Keith Davies, Hartley Victoria College, c/o Luther King House, Brighton Grove, Manchester, M14 5JP from September 1996 onwards.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Avec Association aims to facilitate a process by which individuals, organisations and communities can become reflective practitioners. Our aim is to work with people on the analysis, design and re-design of the work in which they are engaged. We aim to help others to explore the creative tension between:

- *their past story, traditions and experience;*
- *their present needs and opportunities;*
- *and the possibilities of the future.*

Avec has developed a distinctive training and consultancy provision which is based on a tried, tested and coherent process, which involves working together towards:

- (a) a description of a person's beliefs, work and context;
- (b) analysis of the tensions and opportunities present in that situation; and
- (c) designing of possible strategies and potential solutions for the future.

Avec has been especially successful in helping people to relate faith to context, working with problems, resolving conflict, shaping shared visions, promoting human and spiritual development, and facilitating evaluation. One of Avec's important strengths has been that this has been an ecumenical process from start to finish, and it is intended that this ecumenical dimension should continue.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ASSOCIATION

The Association aims to:

- franchise the Avec approach and courses;
- provide affordable services for training and consultancy, especially having in mind those in moments of transition, crisis or change e.g.
 - Ordinands;
 - Missionaries preparing for overseas service or returning to work in this country;
 - Organizations and individuals seeking help with evaluation;
- process the induction of new Avec trainers;
- offer a support network for workers, members of the Association and those who have been on courses, as reflective practitioners of church and community development
- be a tangible focus and a promoting presence;
- be developmental at every level of management, in respect of both professional and institutional development;
- liaise with other service agencies and community networks, and facilitate with them the creation of forums to reflect on current issues;
- promote research;
- be ecumenical in approach.

DISPLAY 10: The Avec Association Mission Statement and Aims and Objectives

the Associates' mission statement and its aims and objectives. To facilitate the working of the Association a Development Group has been formed. Teams have been formed to provide work study courses and courses and services for mission partners (missionaries); to co-operate with the Conference of Religious in providing courses and services for religious; to promote the *avec* approach in theological education and ministry practice. Several members of the Association are involved in research in a number of fields using their Avec experience. Regional networking is being encouraged by the Association.

Methodist Further Training Courses

Versions of the work paper study groups are used on some Methodist further training courses.

Cliff College

Cliff College, Calver, in association with Sheffield University now offers an MA in Evangelism. One of the modules is on the non-directive approach to evangelical ministry. The course will also make use of the action-research methods developed by Avec and especially those used in the Avec/Roehampton Institute Diploma in Church and Community Development.

Consultancy Services in the Methodist Church and Westminster College

Initiatives are being taken towards providing more adequate work consultancy services. The British Methodist Church is considering the kind of work and vocational consultancy resources and services needed by its ordained and lay workers and means of providing them, so that they complement counselling services, appraisal schemes and other support systems.

Westminster College, Oxford is considering the idea of forming a Westminster College consultancy service in applied theology. This will draw upon the Avec experience of providing work and vocational consultancy services. Also under consideration is a proposal to provide a training course in work and vocational consultancy.

People Who Have Been on Avec Courses

Another resource is people who have been on Avec courses. "Avec Resources" and the Avec Association may be able to help you to find people who have attended Avec courses and are open to people contacting them about their experience. Some of them may be in touch with groups of people who support each other and act as work paper groups. A few of them offer consultancy help.

BUT WHY THE NEED FOR THESE SERVICES?

Why the need for in-service training and consultancy services? Generations of people have given outstanding service in and through churches and allied organizations without recourse to such help. Now, however, this help is needed and increasingly wanted by those engaged in the work and ministry of the church in contemporary society. Several things help to explain this development:

- Egalitarian, participative and non-authoritarian working relationships are becoming more widely accepted and claiming the high moral ground in church and community activities. This means practitioners have to learn new approaches and methods.
- The growing practice of people designing their own local church and community work programmes rather than following blueprints means, *inter alia*, that different skills have to be learnt and that work programmes are more varied.
- The use of approaches and methods from the social and behavioural sciences and from business and industry is widespread in the churches.
- There is an emphasis upon clergy, religious and laity becoming reflective practitioners and building reflective communities. Alongside this, they are required to be accountable. Consequently there is a rapid development in the major denominations of work assessment and appraisal schemes for workers and programmes of evaluation for church and community work programmes.

These multifaceted changes constitute a paradigm shift in the work culture of churches and allied organizations. Amongst other things, for instance, this means that those who were trained to conduct worship and to address audiences now work with groups openly to facilitate participatory worship and those trained to give pastoral advice now have to act as counsellors. Those who were trained to lead have now to collaborate. Those schooled to service, maintain and develop established programmes of church or educational work have now to design and to manage diversified programmes. Those who were trained to follow traditional ways of doing things now have to think out for themselves how to do things and their motivation for doing them and to get others to do the same. Those who once pursued their ministry with segregated, like-minded people now have to relate to people of other denominations and faiths, religious cultures and ethnic backgrounds. These changes make great practical, theoretical and theological demands upon workers. Accepting the practical aspects of these changes without examining the underlying theory and theology makes workers vulnerable because they cannot give adequate reasons for what they are doing. Yet examining the underlying theory and

theology is a complicated business. It involves foraging in many disciplines other than their own such as sociology, management and business studies, the study of organizational theory and behaviour, social work and community development studies etc. An extraordinarily difficult thing to do. Rival claims and contradictory theories confuse laymen and specialists alike. Also, no sooner have workers and people got hold of one idea than it is upstaged by another. Very few people can master even one discipline. Workers often find themselves on the practical, theoretical, theological edges of all this- and they are workers and not academics, they have to decide and act now, not juggle with and speculate about ideas and theories indefinitely.

In-service training courses and consultancy services are ways of helping practitioners enter into this new work culture and they are also essential aspects of it. This is so because the rate of change of working practices is so great that pre-service training can no longer equip people for the whole of their working life, apart, that is, from equipping them to approach and negotiate change creatively. In-service training and consultancy services make their best contributions when they are used to perform complementary functions in helping practitioners, churches and organizations to pursue their purposes in their own way in an ever changing work culture.

Bibliography

Books and Papers About the *Avec* Approach
to Church and Community Development

This bibliography is about books, papers, articles and theses which describe and examine the *avec* approach to church and community development and the concepts, theory and theology on which they are based. I have deliberately limited myself to the *avec* approach even though there are many other books which are about similar approaches. Most are available from "Avec Resources", The Grail, 125 Waxwell Lane, Pinner, Middlesex, HA5 3ER; some are in the Avec reference library (rehoused in Westminster College Oxford, information from Avec Resources), others are in college and university libraries; some are in the process of being written and published. They are listed under the following headings:

- Personal testimonies.
- 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.
- Books about basic concepts related to working with people in church and community.
- Action-research into the non-directive approach to church and community development.

Personal Testimonies

Widdicombe, Catherine & Lovell, George (1987) *Our Church and Community Development Stories* (Avec Publications) 16pp.

This booklet describes the separate paths which led two people into church and community development: Catherine Widdicombe, through the Second Vatican Council, and George Lovell, through local church ministry in this field of work. It describes the work they did together from 1971 to 1976 through Project 70-75 and from 1976-1991 through Avec.

Lovell, George (Editor) (Forthcoming) *Telling Experiences: Stories About a Transforming Way of Working with People*.

In this book a number of very different people tell their own stories about how the *avec* approach and the Avec courses profoundly changed the way in which they work with people in churches and communities. They represent four denominations in three countries. Some of them work on council estates, others in urban and suburban communities. One person worked with the profoundly deaf, another with travellers, and yet another with mentally ill destitutes in Nigeria. Two of the stories are about couples with joint and separate vocations. They tell how work consultancy sessions helped them to sort out some tricky issues and make far-reaching changes in their approaches to each other's vocation.

Examples of this Approach to Church and Community Development Work in Practice

Lovell, George & Widdicombe, Catherine (1978) *Churches and Communities: An Approach to Development in the Local Church* (Search Press) 218pp.

This book describes how clergy and laity of sixteen churches of seven denominations in Ronsey (a pseudonym) helped by an ecumenical team learnt about the non-directive approach to working with people and tried it out on a wide range of church and community work and how they found the experience of working in this way deeply satisfying and highly productive. It contains a collection of case studies of development work with individuals, groups, ecumenical organizations and churches. It describes the evaluation of what had happened by the people and how they felt that what they had learnt, should be widely known for the sake of the church as well as the community. It also describes how key people in all major denominations were involved in discussions about the project from beginning to end, and what they thought about it.

Grundy, Malcolm (Editor) (1995) *The Parchmore Partnership: George Lovell, Garth Rogers and Peter Sharrocks* (Chester House Publications) 189pp.

This is probably a unique story. The Parchmore Road Methodist Church in Croydon, South London, has had four consecutive ministers who have, since 1966, attempted to develop the life of this local congregation by using church and community development methods and policies. This book – the stories of

the first three covering twenty five years with a contribution from the fourth who is the present minister of Parchmore – encourages us to see how much more can be achieved when consistent working practices are employed. A measure of the effectiveness of the Parchmore ministry through these three men is one way in which relationships with the police and the local community were maintained through more than 20 years of tension and change.

Practical Aids to Working with Practitioners, Groups and Communities and to Non-directive Work Consultancy

Widdicombe, Catherine (1994) *Group Meetings That Work: A practical guide for working with different kinds of groups* (St Pauls) 205pp.

This is a practical "how to" book, a helpmate, about working together in groups. It is arranged so that you can easily find what you need for a particular group or situation. It could be used as a manual by study groups. It is written for anyone who wants to help others to think and discuss together and to tackle common tasks collaboratively. This means, amongst other things, pooling ideas, insights and expertise in the conviction that individuals, groups and communities flourish best when people have a say in decisions that affect them.

Lovell, George (1991) *Diagrammatic Modelling: An aid to theological reflection in church and community development work* (An Avec Publication originally published as Occasional Paper No 4, 1980 by the William Temple Foundation) 64pp.

This report has a preface by Bishop David Jenkins. The title is an accurate description of the contents of this booklet. Drawing heavily upon the work of Bishop Ian Ramsey, models are described and diagrammatic modelling is illustrated. Three creative experiences of disclosure models are described and the reflective process which led to them is outlined in some detail.

Lovell, George (1994) *Analysis and Design: A Handbook for Practitioners and Consultants in Church and Community Work* (Burns & Oates) 303pp.

This book gives examples of ways in which clergy and laity can analyse and design their work with people. It covers every aspect of it, from having the initial ideas to evaluating the outcome. It describes sequences by which clergy and laity can think through the work they do with people more systematically and systemically. These sequences help people to articulate, conceptualise,

analyse, and evaluate their work experiences and ideas and to design, plan and carry out programmes most likely to achieve their purposes. Embedded into the habitual working practices of clergy, laity and organizations these sequences give depth to the work and enhance its quality and value. In turn, this makes for better workers and more proficient working organizations and churches.

The book examines these thoroughly researched and tested sequences and methods, the underlying theory and theology and their relevance to the contemporary situation.

Grundy, Malcolm (1995) *Community Work A Handbook for Volunteer Groups and Local Churches* (Mowbray) 165pp.

This book puts a case for churches being involved in community work and community care. Then, drawing upon various approaches and methods, it goes on to look in practical ways at fund-raising, managing a project, employing staff, using volunteers and organizing meetings and groups. Detailed ways are suggested for the all-important work of staff and project evaluation. All this is done with an examination and an affirmation of the Christian values implicit in this kind of community involvement.

There are two forthcoming handbooks for practitioners: one by Catherine Widdicombe giving practical aids to the formation and development of small communities in religious orders; the other by George Lovell is for those engaged in work consultancy, appraisal, evaluation and supervision related to church and community work.

Books About Basic Concepts Related to Working with People in Church and Community

Lovell, George (1992 originally published in 1972 as a Grail & Chester House Publication) *The Church and Community Development: An Introduction* (An Avec Publication) 80pp.

A concise introduction, in non-technical language to church and community development work. It describes how local churches can work *with* rather than *for* people. It gives illustrations of projects and schemes. It discusses the biblical theology underlying this approach.

Batten, TR & M (1989) *The Non-Directive Approach* (An Avec Publication) 53pp.

This book, written in a plain, direct and lucid style, is a critical study of the nature, scope and limitations of the non-directive approach. The directive and non-directive approaches are defined and contrasted and their relative uses discussed. This publication is an abridged version of *The Non-directive Approach in Group and Community Work* by the same authors published by Oxford University Press 1967, fourth edition 1978, now out of print.

Involvement in Community: A Christian Contribution: A report by the Community Development Group, William Temple Foundation in collaboration with the Community Work Advisory Group, British Council of Churches (1980) (The William Temple Foundation) 107pp (out of print).

This is a theological critique of church and community development work by a group of people which met over a period of some three years under the aegis of the William Temple Foundation. They were Tony Addy, John Atherton, Alan Gawith, David Jenkins, George Lovell, Harry Salmon, Austin Smith, Richard Tetlow, Gerry Wheale and Clifford Wright. From a Christian perspective it critically explores the nature and necessity of involvement in community and its limitations. It argues the necessity for a theory of involvement in community and discusses what is involved in formulating one. It concludes that this way of working is in fact a way of life.

Action-Research into the Non-directive Approach to Church and Community Development

Lovell, George (1973) *An Action Research Project to Test the Applicability of the Non-directive Concept in a Church, Youth and Community Centre Setting* (A thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Institute of Education, Faculty of Arts, University of London).

This thesis is a factual study of a community development action-research project. It tests the applicability of the non-directive approach to working with people (as defined by TR Batten) in a church, youth and community centre setting in Thornton Heath, Surrey. It describes the origins of the project; the training in community development of the Methodist minister who acted as "worker"; the help he received from a consultant; and the theoretical background to the non-directive approach. It reports in detail the developments which occurred between September 1966 and August 1969 (with some reference to events up to August 1972) in youth, community and church work and in programmes of Christian education and worship and the ways in which

the worker initiated programmes of work and prepared, assisted and trained those who undertook them.

It considers the relevance of action-research and the worker's role as an "active participant observer" in the sequential analysis of community development processes. It describes the use of "indicators" for evaluating "change for the better" in people. It analyses various critical responses to the worker's use of the non-directive approach.

It concludes that the use of the non-directive approach helps people to "change for the better" and is applicable to work undertaken in church, youth and community centre settings. It recommends that church and community workers be trained in the non-directive approach and states the need for more consultancy help.

Widdicombe, Catherine MJ (1984) *The Roman Catholic Church and Vatican II: Action research into means of implementation* (Thesis submitted for the Degree of Master of Philosophy in the Institute of Education, Faculty of Education, University of London).

This thesis studies work done between 1970 and 1981 with Roman Catholics in positions of authority, particularly at local level, through two ecumenical community development action-research programmes: Project 70-75 and Avec, a Service Agency for Church and Community Work. It is about the introduction of new ideas and practices required by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) into the Roman Catholic Church through initiating clergy, religious and full-time church workers into the appropriate and skilled use of directive and non-directive approaches. It describes the approaches and methods as used in training, projects and work consultancy.

It discusses the nature of the changes at the heart of Vatican II and outlines the way the Roman Catholic Church has attempted to implement it and with what result. It describes work done with a large number of clergy, religious and church workers; the problems they were currently facing in introducing Vatican II; and the ways found of overcoming or ameliorating them. It shows that through this work many Roman Catholics in positions of authority have undergone a change of attitude and approach to their work with people.

It concludes that Roman Catholics in positions of authority at every level in the church would be helped to implement the innovatory ideas and practices of Vatican II if they were able to use the non-directive approach, and to do that they need training and support.

New, Charles (1987) *Development in Church and community: Promoting personal growth through community development and curriculum development methods* (A thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Philosophy in the University of Liverpool).

This thesis is about a Methodist Circuit minister (the Revd Charles New) and a church of which he was minister for ten years (Moreton Methodist Church, Wirral). It describes in detail a three-year period during which important changes occurred in the church and in his role and function as the minister. His assessment of the significance of these changes and of the part he played in promoting them is tested by researching the opinions and attitudes of some of the church members, community groups who used the church premises and neighbourhood agencies whose work brought them into contact with the church.

It also describes and evaluates principles and concepts from community development to which he worked in his ministry. It shows how curriculum development models used in formal education and the principles and concepts from which they are constructed can assist ministers and other local church workers to promote human and spiritual growth amongst the people.

Insights from both community and curriculum development practices are incorporated into a tentative model by which a local church worker could put these ideas into practice in his or her own situation.

Mellor, G Howard (1990) *A Theological Examination of the Non-directive Approach to Church and Community Development with a Special Reference to the Nature of Evangelism* (A thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in Theology in the Theology Department, Faculty of Arts, University of Durham).

This thesis is an examination by Howard Mellor, now Principal of Cliff College, of the nature and value of the non-directive approach to church and community work in the context of evangelical ministry. It originates out of his seven-year ministry in Addiscombe, Croydon and describes the process of adopting a non-directive approach to that ministry, first of all intuitively and then systematically.

The thesis considers the origins, nature and application of church and community development and the directive and non-directive approaches.

Evangelistic ministry is analysed by noting the characteristics common to all evangelicals and then constructing in some detail a typology of evangelicals against which to test the applicability of the non-directive approach. It then critically reviews the theology of church and community development. It tests

out the non-directive approach against the biblical narrative by considering Jesus' use of parable, the exercise of authority, and use of charismatic gifts within the church. It examines three areas which seem predisposed to show dissonance between evangelistic ministry and the non-directive approach: decision-making, theology of evangelical conversion; proclamation of the evangel. The conclusion is that the biblical teaching supports the non-directive approach, whilst also recognizing certain aspects as non-negotiable.

Only one type of evangelical, the fundamentalist evangelical, is incompatible with the non-directive approach. It further concludes that the non-directive approach is not only consonant with evangelistic ministry but could be a vital partner to such a ministry and increase its effectiveness.

Dissertations, Essays and Seminar Papers Produced by Members of Diploma Courses (An Avec Resource Publication) 32pp.

This report is a note of the dissertations, essays and seminar papers produced by thirty four members of the Avec/Roehampton Institute Diploma in Church and Community Development courses from 1986-1993. The dissertations are about action-research programmes on church and community work by clergy, religious and lay workers of six denominations. Notes of each dissertation are given. Copies of this report can be obtained from Avec Resources.

Appendices

KEYS TO CHARTS

GENERAL KEY

A	= Anglican	OFM	= Order of Friars Minor
B	= Baptist	P	= Presbyterian
C	= Congregational	Q	= Quaker
Ch	= Church	Reg	= Regional
C of I	= Church of Ireland	Rel	= Religious (Ordained Religious are listed under clergy)
Ch Wkrs	= Church Works	RC	= Roman Catholic
Cses	= Courses	URC	= United Reformed Church
Dss	= Deaconess	YMCA	= Young Men's Christian Association
DRC	= Dutch Reformed Church	?	= Someone whose denomination is unknown to us or who is a non-Christian
M	= Methodist		
NTC	= New Testament Church		
Nat	= National		
Nos	= Numbers		

RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS

CP	= Passionists	RSC	= Religious Sisters of Charity
CSSR	= Redemptorists	RGS	= Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd (known as Good Shepherd Sisters)
Cm	= Vincentians	SJ	= Jesuits
DHS	= Daughters of the Holy Spirit	SM	= Marists
OP	= Dominicans	SSMN	= Sisters of St Mary of Namur
OSM	= Servites		
RSM	= Sisters of Mercy		
RA	= Religious of the Assumption		

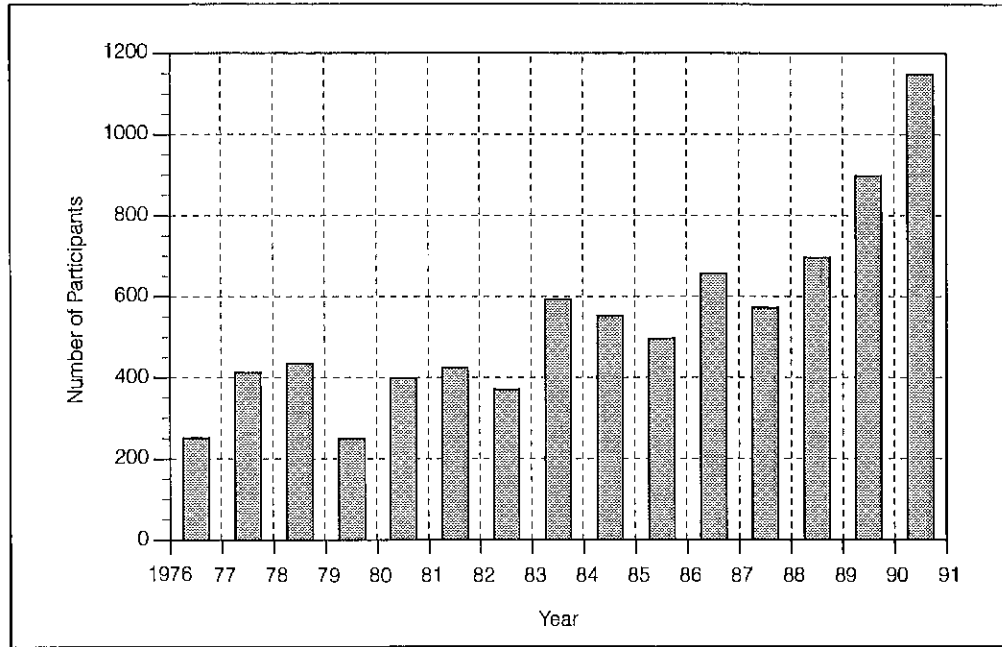
The participants in Avec's Training Consultancy and Project Work Programme,

September 1976 – August 1991 : Fifteen-year Statistical Summary Chart (continued)

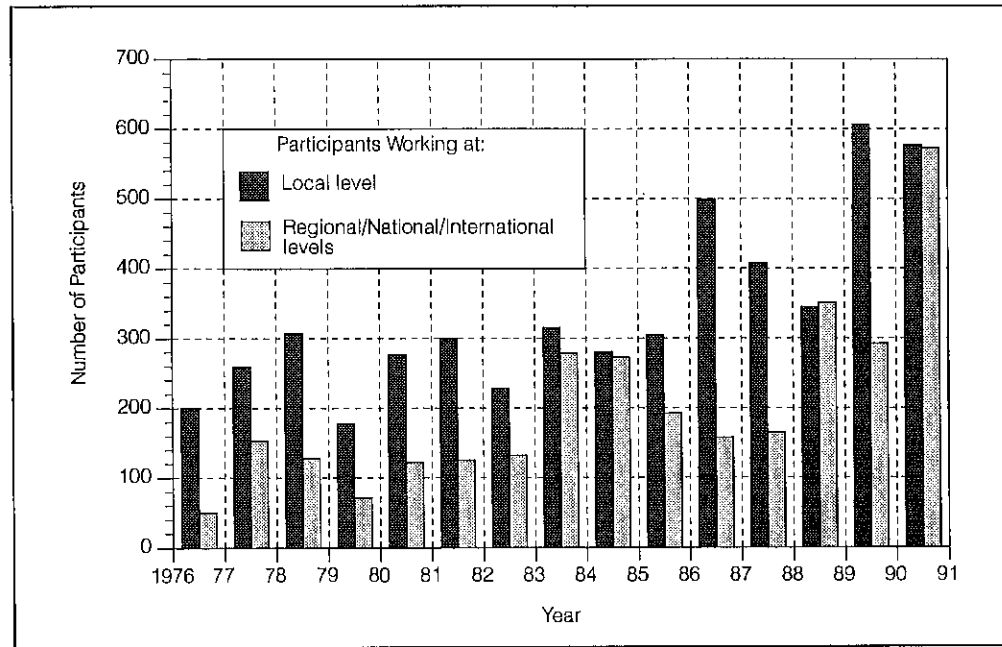
Description	No. of Courses	Location	Total No.	Denominations				P/C	Q	Denominations			Working		Clergy	Rel / Dss / Ch Wkrs	Lay People
				A	B	M	NTC			RC	URC	?	Locally	Reg/Nat			
2 – 2½ day Courses:																	
Training seminars for associate staff	10	London	55	16	–	24	–	–	9	6	–	31	24	48	7	–	
Seminars for superiors of Daughters of the Cross	1	Carshalton	15	–	–	–	–	–	15	–	–	11	4	–	15	–	
Mercy Institute	1	Liverpool	7	–	–	–	–	–	7	–	–	4	3	–	7	–	
Franciscan Missions of Mary	1	Coldash	32	–	–	–	–	–	32	–	–	24	8	–	32	–	
Consultation for Provincials	2	London	32	–	–	–	–	–	32	–	–	–	32	6	26	–	
Total	15		141	16	–	24	–	–	95	6	–	70	71	54	87	–	
Conferences & Seminars:																	
1 – 2 days																	
Seminars for specific groups	2	London	16	10	–	6	–	–	–	–	–	9	7	15	1	–	
Work Consultancy seminars	1	London	11	9	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	6	5	7	1	3	
	1	Sheffield	9	9	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	8	9	–	–	
	1	Dublin	14	2	–	–	–	–	12	–	–	6	8	8	5	1	
Conferences for specific groups	5	Provinces	707	4	–	380	–	–	1	304	3	15	665	42	108	328	271
Introductory, follow-up to courses & specific topics	11	London	147	39	4	13	–	–	–	80	7	4	61	86	97	49	1
	21	Provinces	400	144	1	158	–	7	–	78	–	12	323	77	255	98	47
	2	Dublin	27	–	–	–	–	–	–	27	–	–	9	18	10	17	–
Orientation & promotion		Various	1197	261	22	509	4	17	–	296	50	38	730	467	535	333	329
Training trainers	1	London	10	4	–	–	–	–	–	4	2	–	9	1	7	3	–
Lichfield diocese	1	Stone	16	13	1	–	–	–	–	1	1	–	16	–	13	3	–
Edmundsbury & Ipswich	1	Diocese	15	15	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	15	–	10	5	–
Southwark bishops & deans	1	London	6	–	–	–	–	–	–	6	–	–	–	6	6	–	–
Theology of church and community development	1	London	15	4	1	6	–	–	–	3	1	–	8	7	10	4	1
Training for associate staff	1	London	10	2	–	5	–	–	–	2	1	–	6	4	8	2	–
Seminar for Y.M.C.A.	1	S. London	30	30	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	26	4	–	30	–
Harrow Circuit: community skills	1	Harrow	24	–	–	24	–	–	–	–	–	–	24	–	1	–	23
Total	52		2654	546	29	1103	4	24	1	813	65	69	1914	740	1099	879	676
Missionary Courses:																	
Missionaries & spouses																	
10 days – Stages I & II	14	Various	90	7	–	77	–	–	–	6	–	–	88	2	34	8	48
2-6 days – Stage I only	7		80	3	–	71	–	1	–	5	–	–	77	3	31	4	45
5-7 days – Stage II only	7		27	2	1	16	–	2	–	4	–	–	25	2	9	6	12
Lay workers: 2-5 days	3	Provinces	26	–	–	25	–	–	–	1	–	–	25	1	–	1	25
Furlough courses – 6 days	9		56	–	–	49	–	–	–	7	–	–	46	10	10	34	12
Total	40		279	12	1	238	–	3	2	23	–	–	261	18	84	53	142
Project work	37	Various	2407	398	1	133	–	–	–	1870	–	5	1458	949	619	1707	81
Work consultancy*	52	Various	727	183	6	233	13	14	–	218	17	43	413	314	296	387	44
GRAND TOTAL	307		7544	1484	52	1936	21	65	5	3732	121	128	5072	2472	2795	3772	977

* From 1981 to 1991 Avec staff also acted as consultants to 412 individuals of six denominations (records were not kept from 1976 – 1981).

Graphs 1, 2, 3 and 4 : Features of the Programme as a Whole

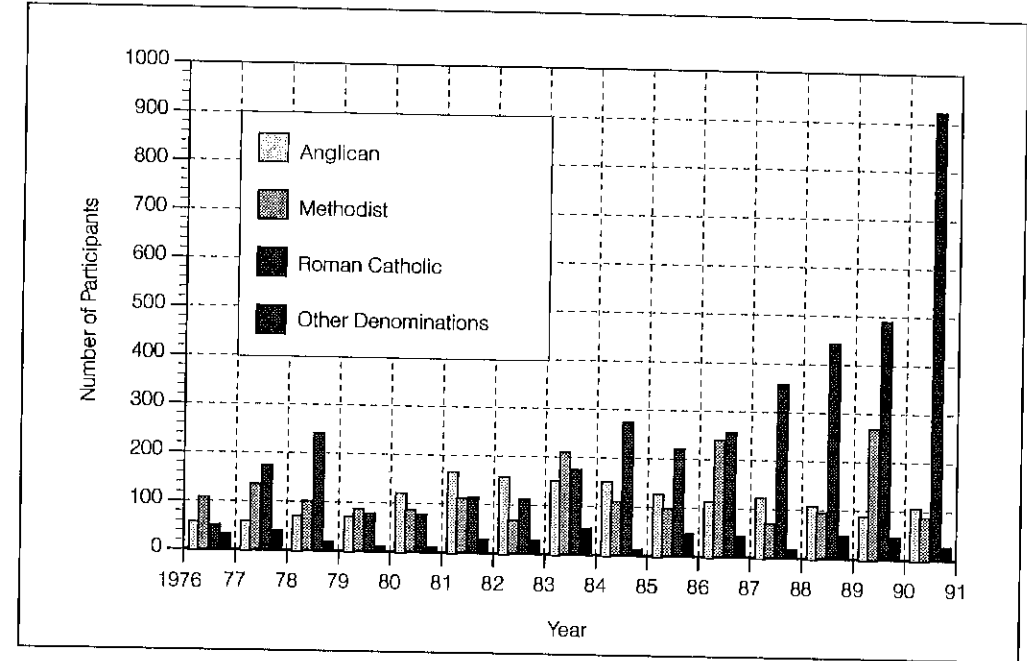


GRAPH 1: Total Number of Participants Each Year

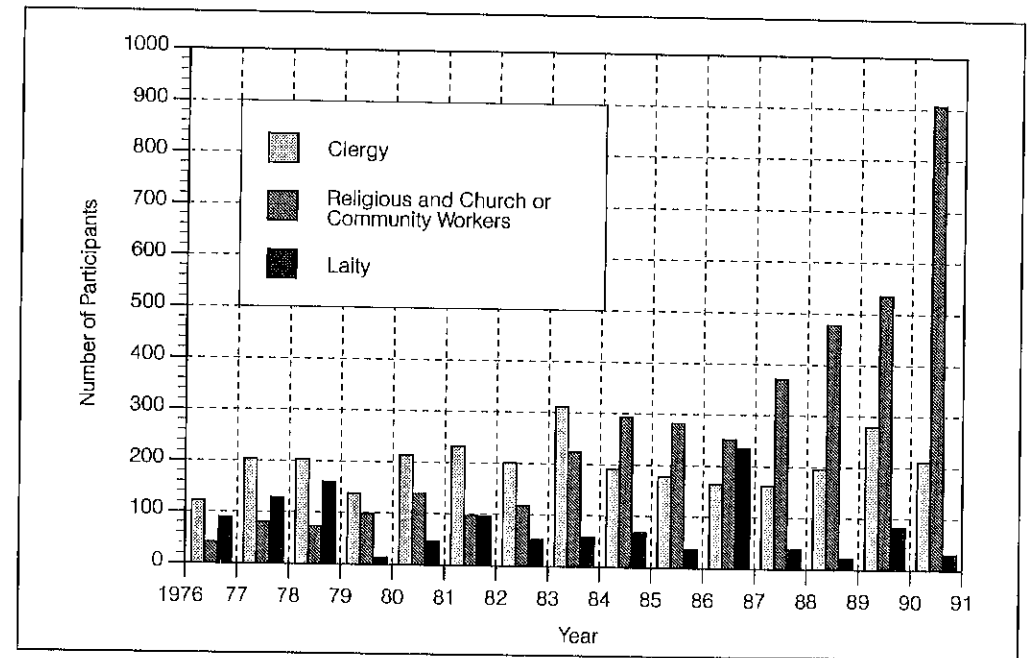


GRAPH 2: Levels at Which Participants Were Working

Graphs 1, 2, 3 and 4: Features of the Programme as a Whole

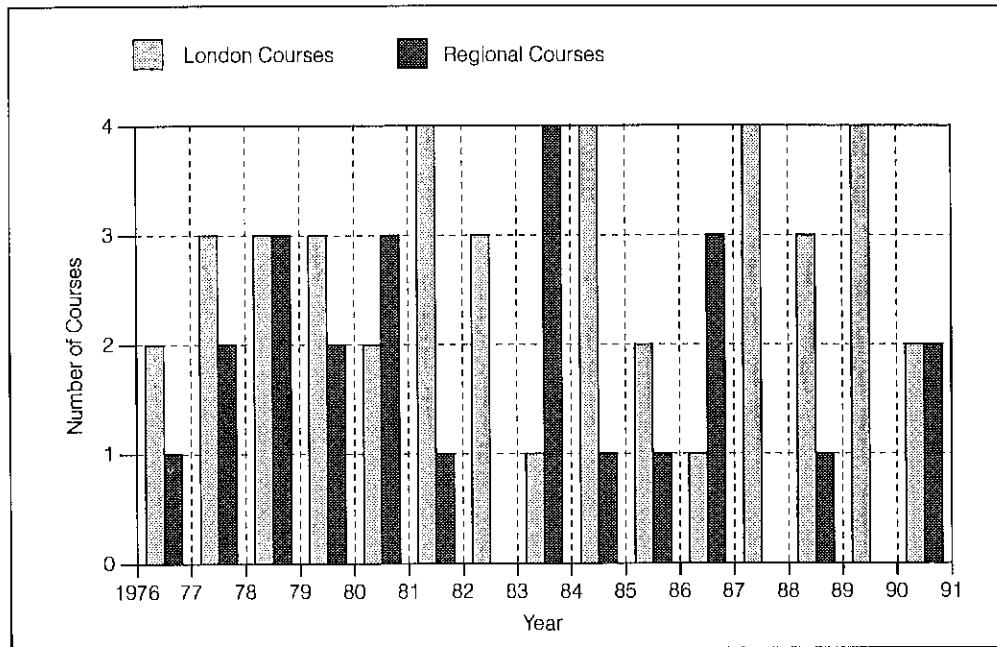


GRAPH 3: Participants by Denomination

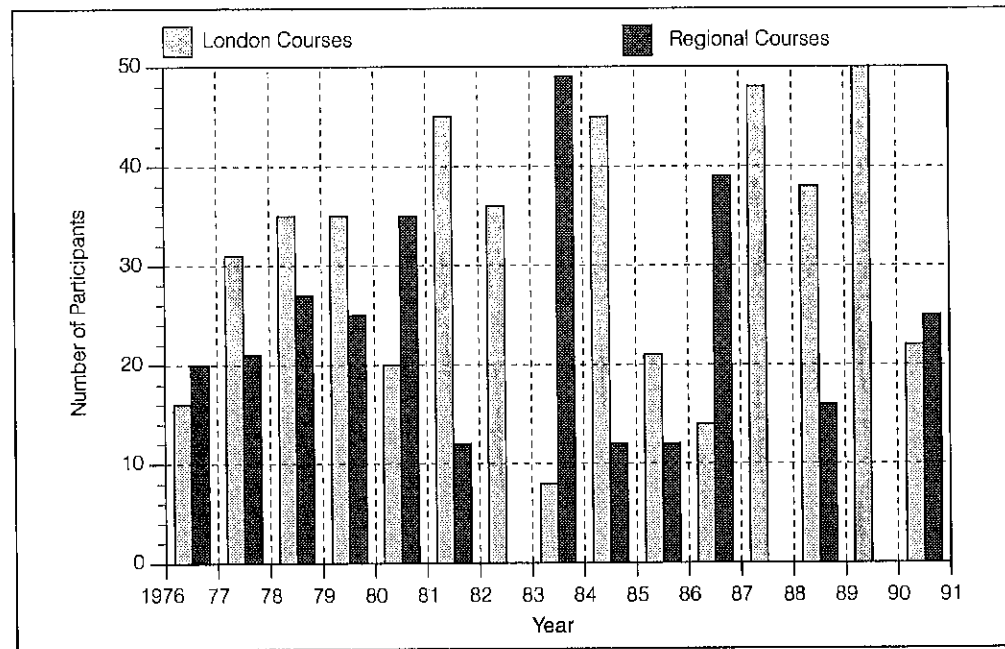


GRAPH 4: Participants by Church and Community Workers, Clergy, Laity and Religious

Graphs 5, 6 and 7: Features of the Ten-day Courses

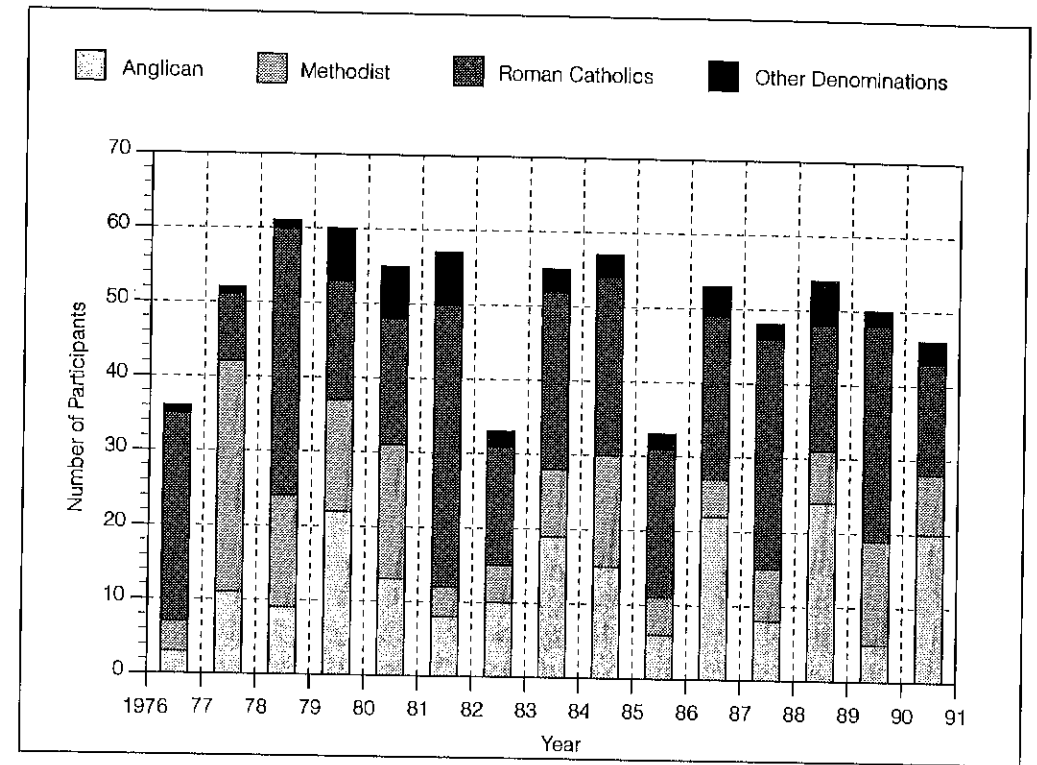


GRAPH 5: Number of London and Regional Courses



GRAPH 6: Number of Participants in London and Regional Courses

Graphs 5, 6 and 7: Features of the Ten-day Courses



GRAPH 7: Participation by Denomination

NOTES to Graphs 1 – 7:

- The years run from September to August.
- Regarding Graphs 3 and 4: Large number of Roman Catholics in 1990-91 due to working with Chapters of Religious Orders.

**APPENDIX II –
Avec Consultancy Work and Projects from 1976 to 1991**

This appendix is extracted from a memo prepared as an aid to organizing the postal survey by MARC Europe. It gives information about consultancy services and project work.

Consultancy Services

Consultancy work involved examining with workers the work in which they were engaged or intended to undertake. It involved analysing, designing, planning and reviewing. But it did *not* involve Avec staff members in any of the action required to implement in a worker's situation any of the ideas that evolved from the consultancy sessions. Such action remained the responsibility of the worker.

Consultancy work with groups or organizations is differentiated from consultancy work with individuals. The consultancy work which involved a sequence of sessions over a period of weeks, months or years is classified as "long-term". Consultancy which involved up to three sessions or which was completed in two or three days is classified as "short-term".

Consultancy help was offered through a wide range of services to individuals, groups and organizations. (It was also part of ten-day courses.) Some consultancy sessions were held in Chelsea, others where the people worked or in any other convenient place.

In some cases, individuals sought further consultancy help after a ten-day course. In other cases, and especially in the past few years, a part of the consultancy contract was that workers and/or their colleagues would attend a ten-day course.

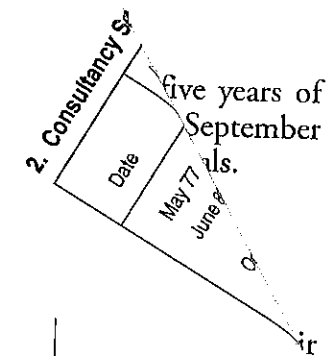
The subject matter of the consultancy work varied enormously.

Key to Charts

A – Anglican	PR – Presbyterian
C – Consultancy Services	P – Projects
E – Ecumenical	R – People working regionally
I – International	RC – Roman Catholic
L – People working locally	T – 10-Day Courses
M – Methodist	URC – United Reformed Church
N – People working nationally	

1. Consultancy Services for Groups and Organizations: Long-ter

Date	Venue	Consultors		
June 76-Oct 78	Chelsea Penarth	Penarth Methodist Cr Centre		
Nov 77-Apr 79	Bradford	Bradford Inner City Mission		
Feb 1978	Upholland	Deans in Liverpool Archdiocese		
Nov 78-Oct 79	Southport	Skelmersdale Roman Catholic Team Ministry		
Mar 79-Jan 80	Chelsea	Methodist Church Youth & Community Centres in London: Full-time Staff Members	M	
July 79-81	London	YWCA Evaluation Programme	E	N
July-Oct 79	Redhill	Redhill Clergy Group	A	L
Mar 80-Aug 80	Gwelo, Zimbabwe	The Methodist Church in Zimbabwe: Consultation on the post-war period	M	N
June-Oct 80	Milton Keynes	Towards Ecumenical Co-operation in Milton Keynes	E	L
Sept 81-Oct 89	South London & Petersfield	Elephant and Castle Group of Churches	E	L
Feb-Nov 82	Westminster	Methodist Further Training Team	M	N
Jan-May 83	Chelsea	Marist Fathers	RC	N
July 83-Apr 87	Pontyrid	Mid-Glamorgan Mission	M	L
Sept 83-June 84	Various	Methodist Church Overseas Division Review	M	N
Sept 83-Aug 85	Various	Marist Sisters	RC	L
Sept 83-Jan 84	Forest Hill	Methodist Circuit	M	L
Dec 83-Mar 84	London	Consultation on a possible Centre for Christian Studies at a South London College	E	N
Apr 85-Nov 88	Thamesmead & Godalming	Thamesmead Team Ministry	E	L
Oct 85-Oct 86	London	West London Day Centre	M	L
Oct 87-Jan 88	North Finchley	Catholic Missionary Society	RC	N
June-Nov 88	Chelsea	Division of Social Responsibility	M	N
June 88-June 89	Chelsea Royal Oak	St Mungo's House Association	-	R
Jan-June 89	Chelsea Worth	Benedictine Abbey of Worth	RC	R,I
Oct 89-Jan 90	Chelsea	Carmelite Friars	RC	N
88-90	London	Elephant & Castle Group of Churches	A,B,URC	L



2. Consultancy Services for Groups and Organizations: Short-term Consultancy Services

Date	Length in days	Venue	Consultors	Denomina- tion(s)	Spheres of action
May 77	1	Manchester	Manchester Mission Team	M	L
June 80	1	Hertling- fordbury	Hertford & District Council of Churches	E	L
Oct 80	1	North London	Work for Handicapped in Westminster Diocese	RC	R
Oct 80	1/2	Chelsea	Allen Hall: Westminster Seminary	RC	R
Oct 80	1/2	Pinner	St Luke's Catechetical Team, Pinner	RC	L
July 81	1	Basingstoke	Basingstoke Team	A	L
July 82	1	Chelsea	Church Officers' Consultation	M	N
Sept 82	2	Dublin	Church of Ireland Adult Education Committee	A	N
Oct 82	1 1/4	Southwark	Lay Training Team: Southwark Diocese	A	R
April 83	1	Chelsea	Co-operation between local Churches and Social Work Team Earls Court	E	L
May 83	1	Welwyn Garden City	Liaison Team Meeting	A	L
May 83 1984	3 1/4	Manchester Roehampton	Manchester Mission Team Youth and Community Development Project: Roehampton Institute of Higher Education	M E	L L
June 84	1/2	London	Methodist Commission on Greater London	M	R
Dec 84	2	Calver	National Team of Evangelists: Cliff College	M	N
Sept 85	2 3/4	London	London Diocesan Board for Social Responsibility	A	R
Feb/May 85	1/2	Fulham	Association of Parish Sisters	RC	R
Feb 86	1/2	Croydon	Further Training Team of Southwark Diocese	A	R
April 86	1/4	Dublin	Catholic Social Service Conference	RC	R
Feb 89	1	Liverpool	Mercy Institute Northern Provincial Chapter	RC	N
May 89	1	Brentwood	Mercy Institute and Mercy Union Collaboration	RC	N
Sept 89	1	Chelsea	Baptism and Participation Archdiocese of Southwark	RC	R
Dec 89	1/2	Chelsea	Little Sisters of the Assumption	RC	N
May 89	2	Chelsea	Managers' Course	A,P,RC, New Assembly of Christians	R,N,L
Oct/Nov 91	1	Birmingham	Kingsmead College	M	L,N
Sept 90- May 91	1	Hammersmith	Shaftesbury Society	Shaftesbury Society	L
April 91	1	Cork	Cork Diocesan Renewal Staff	RC	R

Consultancy Work with Individuals: Short- and Long-term

Details of consultancy work with individuals for the first five years of Avec, ie, September 1976 – September 1981 were not charted. From September 1981 to August 1991 Avec staff acted as consultants to 412 individuals.

Project Work

Project work involved Avec staff members working with people in their organization on agreed tasks and programmes. These varied enormously. Examples are: helping organizations to review their work and to determine future policy; helping churches in Britain and those in West Africa to become more interdependent; helping an organization/church to work *with* rather than *for* people with handicaps.

Project work invariably involved consultancy sessions but was more than a consultancy service. In project work Avec staff were actively involved in carrying out what had to be done: they had responsibility, sometimes primary responsibility, for the action as well as for the planning. This was not so in consultancy work. Consequently a project was jointly "owned" by Avec and the organization which had commissioned it.

Projects which involved Avec staff working intermittently at them over a period of weeks, months or years are classified as "long-term" those completed in one to three days are classified as "short-term".

3. Long-term Project Work

Date	Venue	Project Title/ Description	Key People with whom worked (No.)	Denomina- tion(s)	Spheres of Action
Oct 76-May 80	Various	Association of RC Deaf of Gt Britain and Ireland	Council (20)	RC	R,N
Sept 78-89	Various	Promotion of Training in NI	Churches' Central Committee for Community Work (9)	E	R,N
Apr 78-May 84	Various	Picpus Sisters Great Britain	Provincial Council (5)	RC	L,N
Dec 80-Jan 82	Various	Irish Chaplaincy Scheme	Director (1)	RC	L,R,N
Feb 80-Aug 83	Various	Sheffield: Parishes and the Diocese	Board of Social Responsibility (8)	A	L,R
Sept 79-Jun 82	Salisbury	Salisbury & Wells Theological College	Vice Principal and Pastoral Staff (3)	A	L,N

continued over

3. Long-term Project Work – continued

Date	Venue	Project Title/Description	Key People with whom worked (No.)	Denomination(s)	Spheres of Action
Jan 81-Jul 82	Morley	Post-ordination Training: Derby Diocese	Bishop and Community Development Office (2)	A	L
Feb 83-May 88	Various	Little Company of Mary UK	Provincial and Council (5)	RC	L,R,N
Sept 83-Jan 85	Various	Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, Great Britain	Provincial and Council (6) Working Party (2)	RC	L,R,N
Sept 84-Nov 86	W. Africa	Relationships in Mission, Methodist Church	Methodist Church Overseas Division (8)	M	N,I
Apr 83-Feb 84	Oxford Saergreen	Partnership Teams: Oxford Diocese	Bishops and Archdeacons (4)	A	R
Mar 86-Jan 89	Chelsea Brentwood	Ursuline Sisters of Brentwood Diocese	Provincial and Council (8)	RC	R
Mar 85-Sept 86	Various	Daughters of the Holy Spirit, UK	Provincial (1)	RC	N,L
Nov 86-1990	Various	Mercy Institute, UK	General and Council, 3 Provincials and Councils (15)	RC	N,R,L
Dec 86-1990	Various	Sisters of Charity	General and Council, Provincial and Council (12)	RC	N,R,L
Feb 86-1990	Chelsea and Kensington	Assumption Sisters UK	Provincial and Council (6)	RC	N
Oct 85-1990	Stone	Shared Ministry: Lichfield Diocese	Board of Mission (1)	A	L,R
Sept 87-1990	Various	CD Partnership: Church in Wales/ Children's Society	Division for Social Responsibility (5)	A	R,N
Oct 87-Oct 88	Chelsea Carshalton	Daughters of the Cross	Provincial and Council (5)	RC	L,N
Sept 87-1990	Clapham and Wimbledon	Conference of Major Religious Superiors	Executive Officers (3)	RC	N
Jun 88-1990	Various	Team Ministries: St Edmundsbury & Ipswich Diocese	Bishops and Advisors for Clergy Training (3)	A	L,R
Jun 78-Oct 79	Chelsea Liverpool	Sisters of Our Lady of Evron	Provincial and Council (5)	RC	L,N
Mar 84-85	Various Swanwick	Board of Social Responsibility of Church of England	Secretary Planning Group (5)	A	R,N
Mar 82-Mar 84	Various	Friars Minor	Provincial and Council (5)	RC	N
Oct 86-Apr 90	Various	Mercy Institute: Emmaus Province	Provincial Council and Chapter Delegates	RC	L,R,N
1987-1991	Wimbledon	CMRS Executive	Executive Officers	RC	L,R,N
Oct 88-Jun 91	Ipswich London	St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocese	Bishop's Staff Meeting	A	R
Sept 90-Jul 92	Various	Mercy Union	General Council and Chapter Delegates	RC	L,R,N

4. Short-term Project Work

Date	Length in Days	Venue	Project Title/Description	Key People with whom worked	Denomination(s)	Spheres of action
Nov 76	1½	St Albans	Harpenden PCC Conference	Vicar and PCC Officers (4)	A	L
Apr 77	2½	Mill Hill	Amersham Six Churches Conference	Six Churches Committee (6)	E	L
Nov 78	2	Mill Hill	Amersham Church Weekend	Vicar and PCC Officers (6)	A	L
Jan 79	2	Bath	Probationers Conference: Promoting Theological Reflection	Division of Ministries (3)	M	L
Nov 81	1	Epsom	Review of Goals and Policy with a School Staff	Headmistress	RC	L
Mar 86	1	Selly Oak	Support Network for Missionaries	Personnel Secretary, Methodist Church Overseas Division	M	N
May-Jul 90	1½	Dublin & London	Baggat St. Project, Mercy Sisters Worldwide	Representatives of National Groups	RC	N
Feb 90	2½	Birmingham	Pastoral Studies Conference	Organizers	E	N
Jul 91	1¾	London	Assumption Sisters' Chapter	Delegates	RC	L,N

NOTE:

These project work charts give the numbers of key people with whom the staff worked. Project work invariably meant working with and through the key workers with individuals and large and small groups. In total this was almost two and a half thousand people.

Avec Personnel, 1976-1991: Tutorial & Consultancy Staff and the Work They Did (continued)

NAME	Denomination	Period	Number of courses helped to staff			Days on other courses	Face to face days on consultancy & project work	Total number of courses	Total face to face days	Part-time staff (PTS) Associates (AS) Course tutors (CT) Course project staff (PS)
			3-day	10-day	Courses for Missionaries					
The Revd Barrie Headford	M	77-81	-	3	-	-	3	30	AS	
Sr Ann Patricia Hewitt RSM	RC	86-91	-	-	-	5	-	5	PS	
The Revd Elizabeth Hewitt	M	83-	1	4	-	22	5	65	AS	
Sr Mary Edward House OP	RC	1991	-	-	-	-	2	5	CT	
Revd Sandra Howes	M	86-	10	1	-	1	11	41	AS	
The Revd Dr Kevin Kelly	RC	1989	-	-	-	3	-	3	PS	
The Revd David Kerr	M	1986	-	1	-	-	2	14	CT	
The Revd Dr Ermanuel Lantry	M	1985	-	-	-	-	10	-	PS	
The Revd Colm McCarthy	RC	1990	1	-	-	-	4	12	CT	
Miss Katie McDonald	RC	88-91	4	-	-	30	-	30	PS	
Mrs Ivy McGhee	M	83-87	-	-	-	2	-	2	PS	
Sr Mary McGrath RSM	RC	1991	-	4	-	8	-	68	PTS/AS	
The Revd Howard Mellor	M	80-	-	-	3	-	-	2	CT	
The Revd John Montague	A	1980	-	-	-	21	1	2	CT	
Sr Bernadette Morgan RSC	RC	90-91	2	-	-	-	2	16	CT	
Miss Ann Morrissey	A	81-82	-	-	1	-	1	3	CT	
Sr Maureen Murphy RSM	RC	1991	1	-	-	-	1	196	PTS/AS	
The Revd Charles New	M	78-	4	12	10	28	26	3	CT	
Mr Cyril Newton	M	1991	1	-	-	-	1	3	PS	
Sr Catherine O'Carroll RSM	RC	90-91	-	-	-	9	-	9	AS	
Sr Margaret O'Connor DHS	RC	88-	-	-	1	-	4	46	AS	
The Revd John Oldershaw	URC	88-89	2	-	-	-	2	6	AS	
The Revd John O'Mahoney	RC	1990	-	-	-	1	-	1	PS	
The Revd David Osborne	A	88-	-	2	-	6	2	26	AS	
The Revd Brian Pettifer	A	79-82	1	-	-	-	1	3	CT	
Sr Madeleine Prendergast LSU	RC	87-	-	2	-	3	2	23	AS	
The Very Revd Timothy Raddiffe CP	RC	1990	-	-	-	-	1	2 1/2	CT	

continued

Avec Personnel, 1976-1991: Tutorial & Consultancy Staff and the Work They Did (continued)

NAME	Denomination	Period	Number of courses helped to staff			Days on other courses	Face to face days on consultancy & project work	Total number of courses	Total face to face days	Part-time staff (PTS) Associates (AS) Course tutors (CT) Course project staff (PS)
			3-day	10-day	Courses for Missionaries					
Sr Gabriel Robin CSA	RC	90-91	-	-	-	-	2	5	CT	
The Revd Edward Roos	M	1986	-	1	-	-	1	10	CT	
The Revd Peter Russell	M	83-	-	-	15	3	16	74	AS	
Sr Catherine Ryan OSM	RC	91-	-	-	-	-	1	6	CT	
The Revd Mark Sanders	A	91-	-	-	-	-	1	6	CT	
The Revd Patrick Scott CSSR	RC	79-89	-	2	-	60	2	80	AS	
The Revd Peter Sharrocks	M	82-	-	-	-	1	2	21	AS	
Sr Majella Sheridan RSM	RC	90-91	-	-	-	11	-	11	PS	
The Rt Revd Robin Smith	A	1988	-	-	-	-	1	10	CT	
The Very Revd David Somoye	M	1986	-	-	-	10	-	10	PS	
Miss Michelle Spenceley	RC	1980	-	-	-	-	1	10	CT	
The Revd John Joe Spring	RC	1988	-	-	-	2	-	2	PS	
The Revd John Stevinson	A	79-90	-	14	-	10	14	150	AS	
Mr George Stokes	M	84-86	-	-	1	-	1	3	CT	
The Revd Dr Norman Todd	A	1990	-	-	1	-	1	10	CT	
The Revd Tor Trotter	RC	1988	2	-	-	-	2	6	CT	
The Rt Revd Stephen Verney	A	81-82	-	-	3	-	3	14	CT	
The Revd Stephen White	C of I	91-	1	-	-	-	1	3	CT	
The Revd Dennis Williams	M	87-	-	-	3	-	3	18	AS	
Mr Kevin Williams	A	88-	-	1	-	-	1	10	AS	
The Revd Stephen Winter	A	86-	-	-	5	-	5	13	CT	
The Revd Brian Woodcock	URC	81-	3	8	-	5	11	94	AS	
Sr Ann Wright DHS	RC	1991	1	-	-	-	1	3	CT	
The Revd Keith Yates	A	1982	1	-	-	-	1	3	CT	
Sr Margaret Young SSMN	RC	90-91	-	-	-	5	-	5	PS	
TOTAL: 80	6		50	84	51	379	198	1,701 1/2		
	Denom's									

APPENDIX IV

MARC Europe's Survey of Avec Training and Consultancy Services, 1990

Trustees and staff commissioned MARC Europe to carry out a major survey of Avec's Training and Consultancy Services. A report of this survey was published under the title, *Viva l'Avec: An Evaluation of Avec's Training Ministry* (MARC Europe December 1990, 188 pages plus 52 pages of questionnaires).

This appendix contains: an analysis and interpretation of the survey report presented to a one-day conference in January 1991 by Mr Peter Brierley and the overall recommendations.

By common consent it was a masterly analysis and interpretation of the Report; it was, therefore, much more than a summary or an introduction although it serves as both. The presentation consisted of a series of key questions. Diagrams and charts and comments were used to answer the questions. The diagrams and charts are reproduced here with notes of Mr Brierley's commentary.

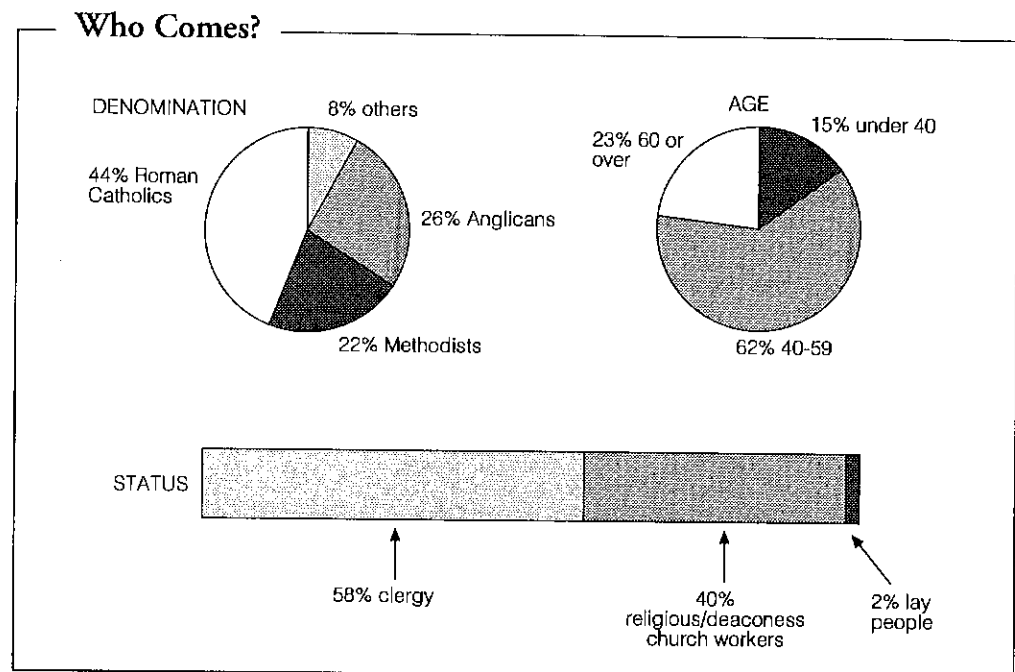
THE RESPONSE TO THE SURVEY

- *Ten-day Courses:* over 300 replies came from 679 people who attended one of the 60 courses conducted over nearly fourteen years. This was a disappointing response rate but in no way does this invalidate the findings.
- *Consultancy and Project Work:* the response was not so good because many people who had attended a Consultancy session several years ago had moved on and been replaced by others not in touch with Avec.
- *Missionary Courses:* of the 143 questionnaires sent out to people who had attended one of the 30 courses for missionaries, 120 were returned.

TEN-DAY COURSES

During this part of the presentation Peter Brierley considered the following questions:

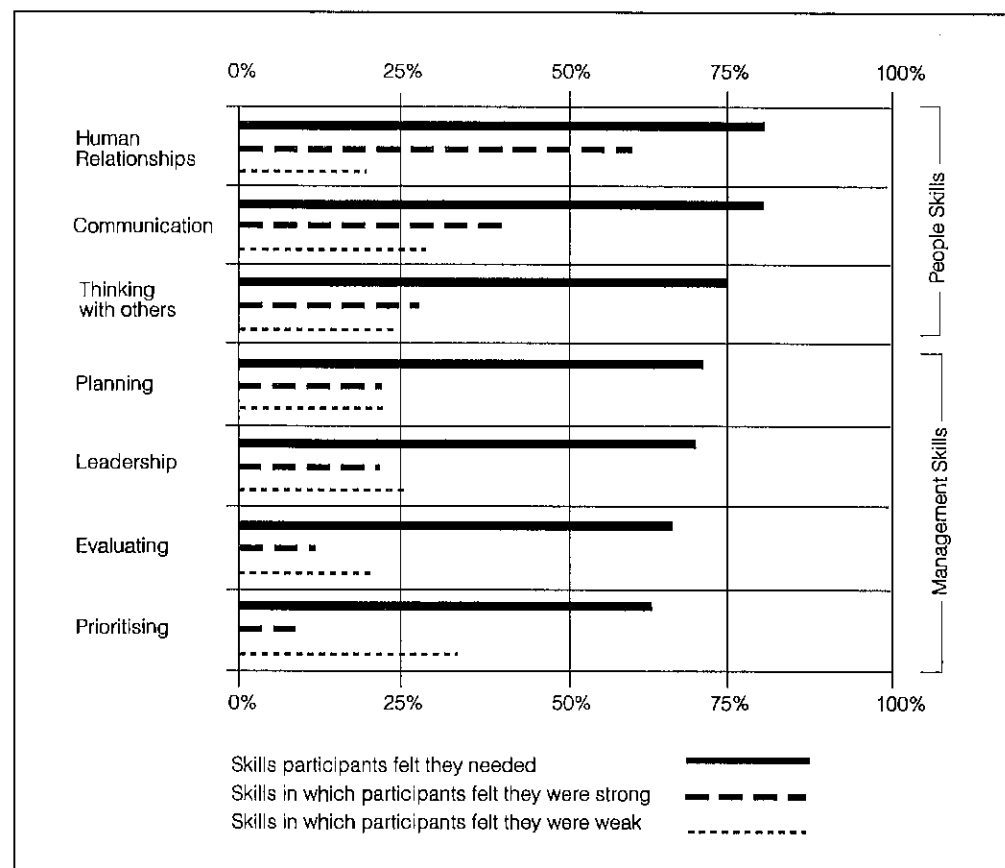
- Who comes?
- Why do they come?
- What do they get?
- What emerges?
- What happens afterwards?
- Why was there so limited an organisational impact?
- What happened after the course?



- Level:* 64% working locally; 36% working regionally/nationally
- Gender:* 61% male; 39% female
- Education:* 76% degree/ministerial training
- Marital Status:* 52% married; 47% single; 1% widowed/divorced
- Employment Movement:* 5 out of 6 still with same organisation as when they attended a course
- Course attendance:* 32% came in groups

Why do they come?

Most people come because of a felt need to extend their skills in human relationships, in communication, in thinking with others, in church and community development work. The chart below shows what respondents felt they needed for their jobs and those things in which they felt strong, and where they felt weak.



What do they get?

The answers to these questions is summarised in the chart below. Respondents finished off the sentence, "The course helped me with..."

Skills	Average Score	Men	Specially helped			
			Women	<40	40-60	60+
Skills of working with groups	1.38		✓			✓
Team Work	1.26		✓			✓
Training	0.34		✓	x		
Work evaluation	1.13		✓		✓	
Leadership skills	0.94			x		
Decision making	0.89	x				
Working with systems	0.26					x
Time management	0.21	x	✓	x		
Development work and conflict	0.77				x	
Theory/theology of community development	0.50			x		✓
Working with secular communities	0.39		✓			
The Bible and community development	-0.11	x		x	x	✓
Working with deprived people	-0.35	x		x		

Legend:
 ✓ = helped +2 = very helpful -1 = of limited help
 x = not helped +1 = helpful -2 = not found helpful

What emerges?

Peter Brierley said the following things emerged:

- Women are more positive than men.
- Younger people were not helped as much as they hoped to be in some areas.
- The ecumenical aspect was very helpful: a 95% positive response, "Avec in practice".
- People said it enriched debate, encouraged empathy and broadened horizons.

What happened afterwards?

- Most were thankful and enthusiastic.
- A few were fed up and disappointed.
- Most participants were able to share results with their peers (1.94) but not so well with their superiors (1.50).
- 42% were non-directive, that is, they were 'enablers' who were more prepared to work *with* people.
- 28% were better managers.
- 25% were more confident of themselves.
- 48% had changed their attitudes to other people.
- The course helped them
 - to think about their work (1.40)
 - to make changes in their organisation (0.25)
 - to influence culture of their organisation (0.06).

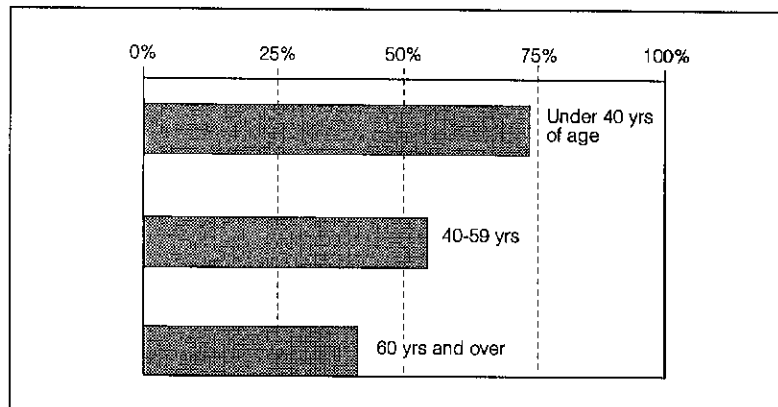
Why was there so limited an organisational impact?

The reasons given for the limited organisational impact were insufficient:

- opportunity (0.55)
- people (0.40)
- materials (0.40)
- finance (0.31)
- time (0.19)

What happened after the course?

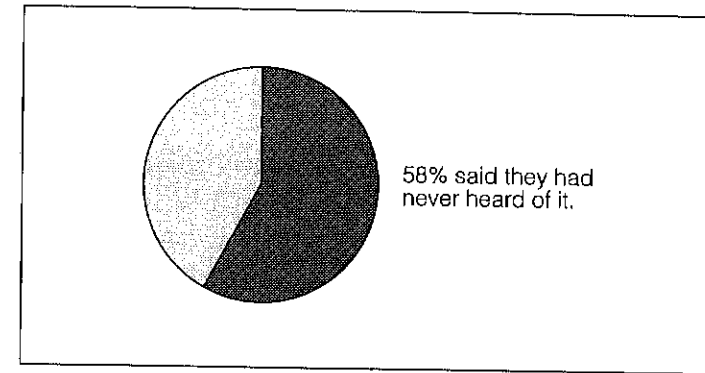
Roughly a third of all respondents have had some contact with Avec since the termination of the course. The breakdown of the ages of those who have had no further contact is shown in the following graph.



Respondents were asked:

“As you have spoken of your course to others, what have been their reactions to Avec?”

The result was:



Respondents were asked to finish the sentence: “If I were Director of Avec I would...”

One replied: “... die of disappointment that Avec has never been more widely recognised by the Churches.”

CONSULTANCY AND PROJECT WORK

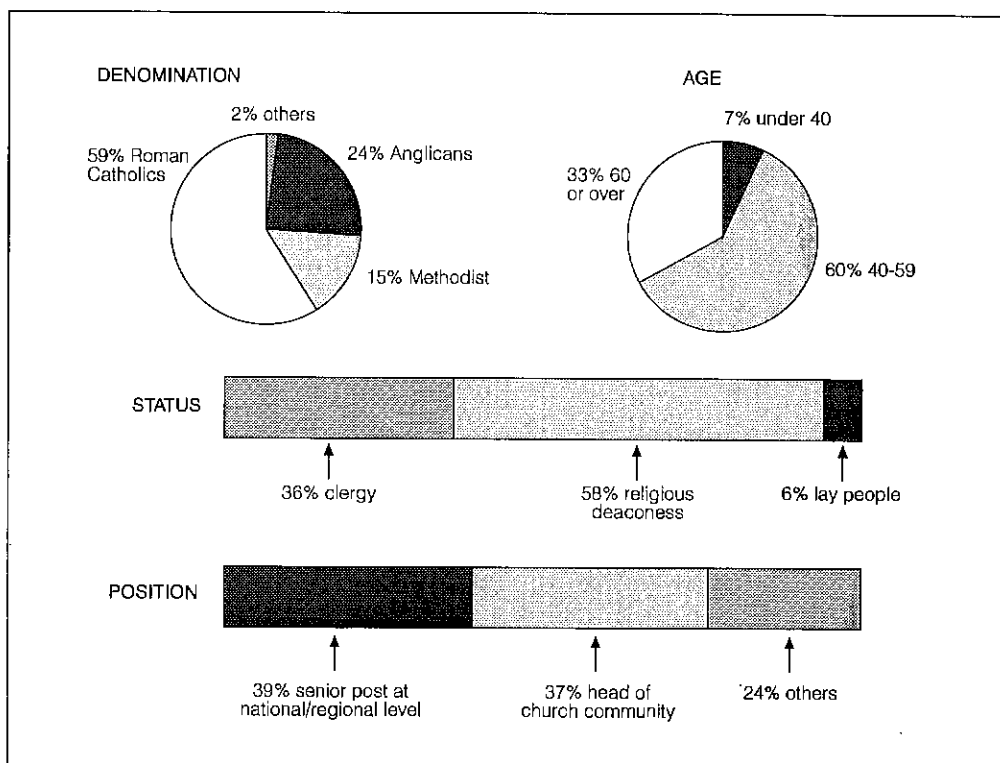
The questions and a statement considered in this section were:

- Who uses Avec's services for consultancy and project work?
- Expectations?
- Was the experience successful?
- Encouraging responses.

Who uses Avec's Services for Consultancy and Project Work?

Over nearly fourteen years some 2,060 people have made use of Avec's services in Consultancy and Project work.

The following charts give the denominational breakdown and an analysis of various attributes of the participants. Amongst other things they show that this area of Avec's work reaches people in positions of authority and influence at local and other levels.

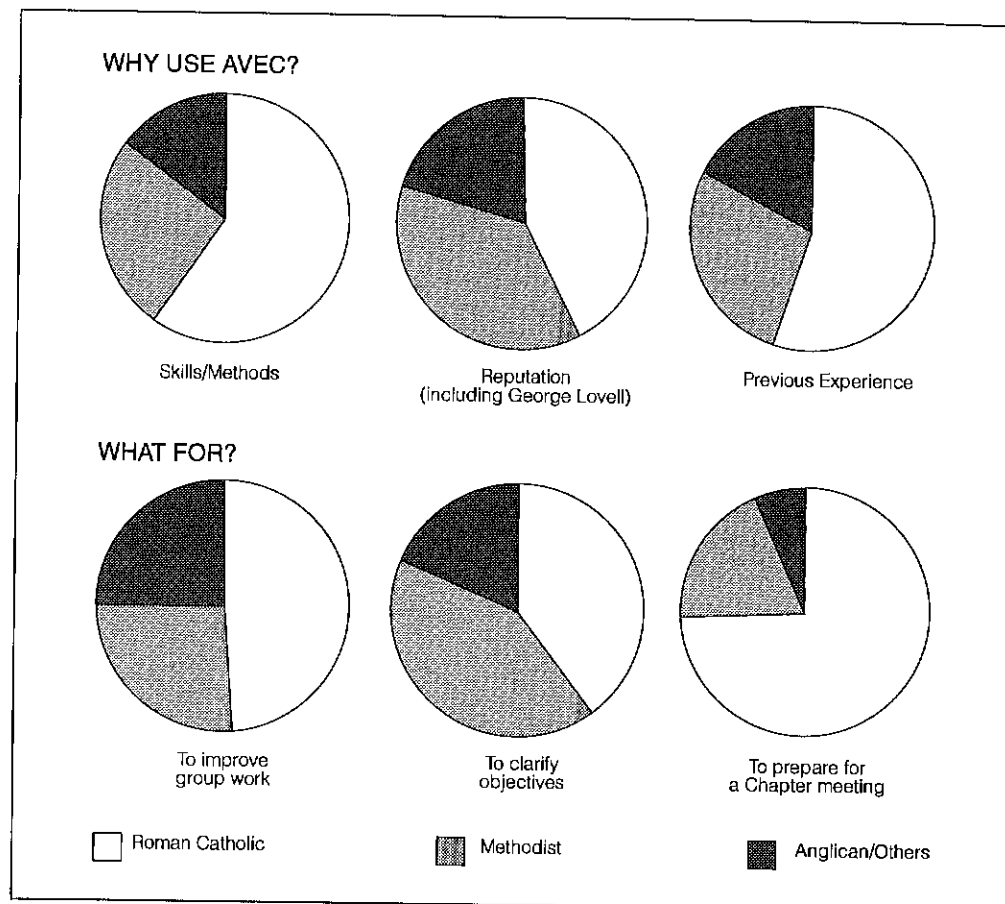


Level: 66% working locally; 34% regionally/nationally
Gender: 55% male; 45% female.

Expectations?

The following charts summarise the main reasons that led participants to use Avec staff, and their expectations. Typical comments were:

- "I felt Avec would understand our situation"
- "I felt Avec would enable us to find our own solutions".



Was the experience successful?

When asked "was the exercise successful?" 80% said YES! The response breakdown is given in the following chart.

Lay	1.2	Under 40	1.2	Catholic	1.1
Ordained	0.9	40-59	1.1	Methodist	1.0
		60 or over	0.9	Anglican	1.0

Respondents were asked to rate their experience of Avec in relation to specific skills. The results are charted below.

Skills	Average Score	Specially helped			
		Men	Women	Under 40	40 and Over
Enabling people to talk creatively about sensitive issues	1.5				✓
Analysing	1.4			✓	
Working systematically	1.4			✓	
Using diagrams and charts	1.3	✓			
Opening up the range of discussions	1.3		✓		
Preparing records of discussions	1.0				✓

Within six months of the consultations/project work respondents said they had:

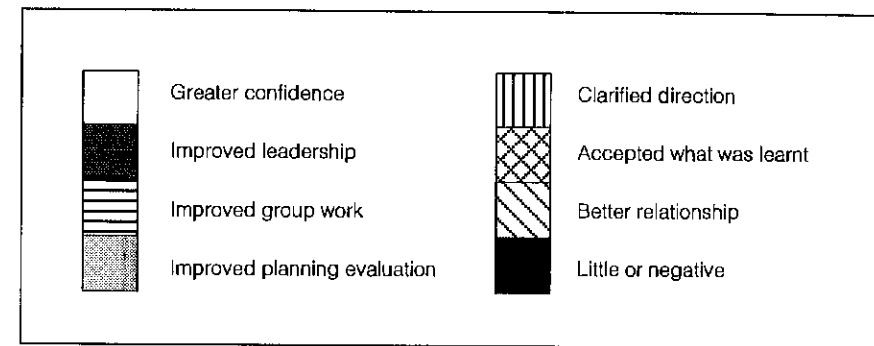
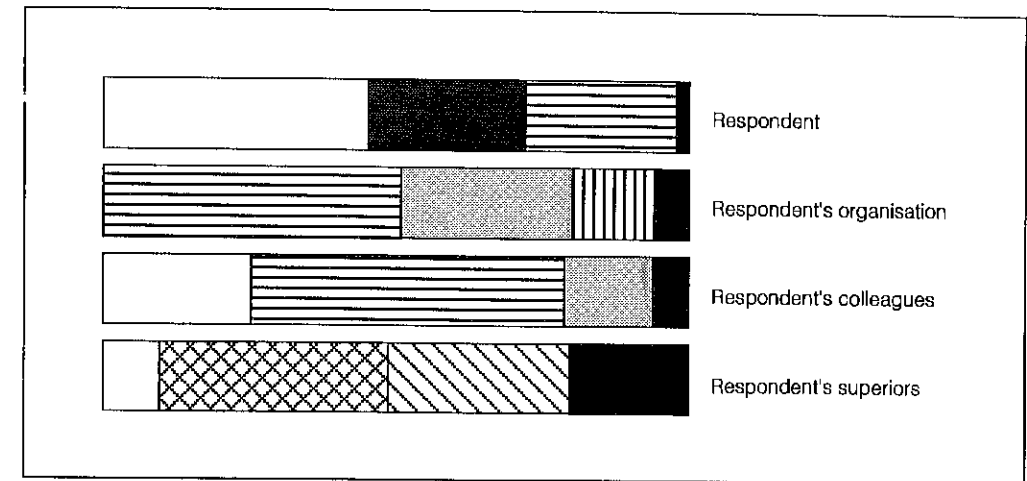
- used the new skills (44%)
- implemented their plans (27%)
- attended a follow-up meeting (17%)
- done 'nothing really' (12%)

Results that the participants said that they had not expected were:

- better understanding of group work (39%)
- personal growth (38%)
- greater confidence (13%)

Overall people felt a growth in self confidence and said their group work was much improved. One person said: "Management is about team work and learning from each other".

The charts (overleaf) give a breakdown of what had been achieved through the consultancy/project work.



Encouraging responses

The overall responses were encouraging:

- 94% would employ Avec again
- 62% were very impressed with Avec
- 52% had further contact with Avec

But 29% of those to whom respondents had spoken had not heard of Avec.

Respondents were asked to finish off the sentence: "If I were the Director of Avec I would..." Among notable responses were the following:

- 32% said "Publicise more widely"
- 27% said "Maintain standards".

Respondents were asked what they would like to see Avec taking the initiative in...

- 63% said "Working with a wider range of people."

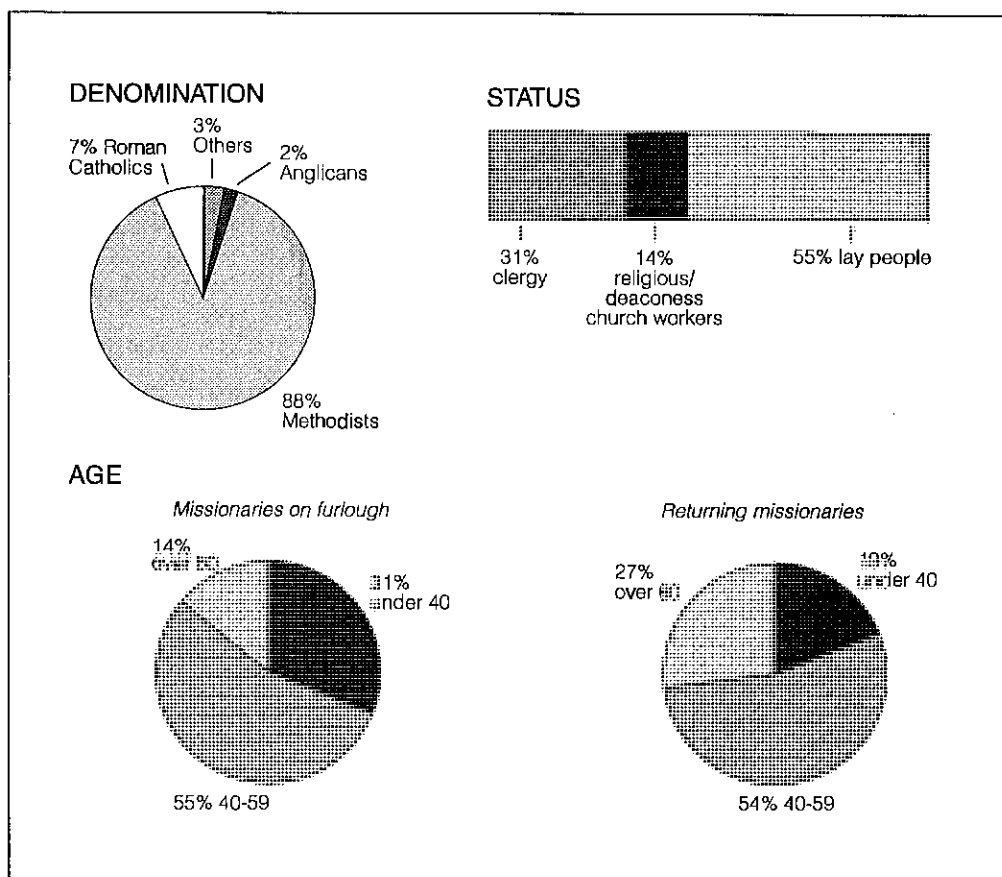
COURSES FOR MISSIONARIES

The questions considered in this section were:

- Who comes?
- Why do they come?
- How did the courses help them?
- The future?

Who comes?

These courses are for missionaries on furlough and for those who return to the UK or Eire to work or retire and who need help to adapt. They are set up under the auspices of the Methodist Church Overseas Division, though non-Methodists are welcome, consequently the majority are Methodists.



	Missionaries on Furlough	Returning Missionaries
Gender	41% male	59% female
Marital Status	43% Married 57% Single/Widowed	76% Married 24% Single/Widowed
Length of Service	6.6 years	6.8 years

Level: 93% working locally; 7% working regionally/nationally

Education: 71% degree or equivalent

Occupation: Teacher (secular or Christian) 32%; Church Minister 21%.

Why do they come?

Missionaries on Furlough said that they came to evaluate missionary work (30%) and to get guidance on an issue (30%). Missionaries returning said that they came to get help to adapt to UK culture (53%). The key problems they experienced were: materialism, pace of life and indifference to Third World.

How did the course help them?

Overall the respondents said that the course helped them with their work evaluation (0.8) and to acquire more skills of working with groups (0.8). The chart shows other changes that the participants said resulted from the course. They said Avec is "teaching about change".

	Missionaries on Furlough	Returning Missionaries
<i>Positive feelings experienced:</i>		
– before the course	4.5%	33%
– after the course	96%	78%
<i>It improved relationship with:</i>		
– family	18%	11%
– missionary organisation	22%	16%
<i>It changed attitudes to:</i>		
– UK life	22%	58%
– people/church	48%	44%
– work/retirement	35%	27%

The future?

How integral are the courses for missionaries to Avec's long-term vision? The vast majority have had no subsequent contact with Avec but were very positive about the courses although 38% men, 52% women said they were very impressed with Avec. The break-down is as follows.

	Missionaries on Furlough	Returning Missionaries
No subsequent contact with Avec	90%	90%
Would repeat the course	90%	80%

Respondents were asked to finish off the sentence: "If I were the Director of Avec I would..."

- 38% said they would *advertise more*
- 19% said they would *seek changes in the course organisation and structure*
- 18% said they would *extend the course*

THE WAY AHEAD: OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr Brierley said that MARC Europe's overall recommendations could be summarised as follows:

1. Keep Going!
2. Strengthen the content
3. Market better
4. Keep in touch with ex-course members
5. Show members how to present results of the course to others
6. Be more specific in your literature
7. Train a successor to George Lovell
8. Release your resources and make them more widely available.

Peter Brierley thought that 3 and 7 were most important for Avec.

For an exposition of each point see the display opposite.

OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Avec courses and consultancy services are generally very well received. They are still appreciated years after clients attended them, and are found to be helpful, practical and life-changing. There seems little doubt that customers would wish to see Avec's work continue, as its key skill techniques are valuable for the ongoing work of church leaders.
2. Broadly speaking, people do not wish to see the content of Avec courses or consultancy sessions diminished, but do desire for some facets of the content to be strengthened. This is particularly true of management subjects in the Ten Day courses and in consultancy work and human involvement skills in the missionary courses. The topics most requested on management relate to time, change and prioritising.
3. Avec courses are not widely enough, and perhaps not well enough, marketed. Too few know of them, and relying on personal recommendation or denominational pressure, may no longer be sufficient. It is suggested that the marketing mechanisms employed by Avec be reviewed with the intention of making Avec's image, standing, and success widely known so that its services will be used to their full potential.
4. Avec appears to lose out on repeat business partly because respondents do not always realise it is there and partly because they would like to see a wider range of services on offer. Some regular means of keeping in contact with those who have attended courses or consultancy sessions could lead both to more business and a reminder for more implementation of skills learnt.
5. Avec staff should conclude courses and consultancy meetings by giving guidelines to clients on how to present the results of the exercise to others in their work situation. In most cases, the co-operation of colleagues and superiors determined whether or not the plans made at such meetings were implemented. The results of the exercise must be presented in a sensitive, non-threatening manner by clients if they are to gain co-operation from their colleagues and superiors.
6. A small proportion of Avec's customers dislike their experience with Avec. To avoid creating false expectations it is suggested that Avec review its literature outlining the aims and content of its various courses and services on offer. By being more specific as to what customers will receive, dissatisfaction among this minority of clients should be reduced.
7. George Lovell has unique gifts and commands wide respect. Many have found his methods helpful to follow. It is recommended that he should seek to train a successor in order to ensure that these skills are not lost to the church.
8. Avec's philosophy has clearly been well understood. There is a "powerful internal consistency between what is taught, the way it is taught and how it is received". It is therefore vital that Avec's knowledge, experience and resources be made widely available to aid those engaged in church and community development to stimulate theological and practical understanding, and take advantage of their current intellectual assets.

APPENDIX V:
Some Theological, Educational and Sociological Developments
Favourable to Avec

For a decade or so before Avec was inaugurated several strong movements of thought and action had been challenging and changing the climate of opinion about what religious, statutory and voluntary organizations should be doing in contemporary society and the ways in which they should work for the welfare and development of people. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this book to survey these movements in any detail it is possible to indicate the nature and sources of those which helped to create an environment of thought and modes of ministry which variously influenced Catherine Widdicombe and me and which were sympathetic to Avec and its development.

At the centre of these movements were radical changes within the Christian church about its internal and external working relationships: how, for example, should Christians work with each other and with non-Christians? What contributions should they seek to make to welfare and development in contemporary society and how should they make it?

The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) was a watershed for a radical transformation in the Roman Catholic Church. Internally there was a shift of emphasis from a static, hierarchical bureaucratic church to a more "organic" one in which fundamental equality of membership with differentiation of function exercised in partnership predominated. Emphasis was placed upon the co-responsibility of all members, the practice of collegiality and subsidiarity, the development of inter-church relations at all levels, Catholics actively co-operating with people in the secular world for the betterment of the human condition and community participation. This movement brought Catherine Widdicombe, my colleague for over twenty-five years, into community development.

Movements of two kinds were very active in Protestant and ecumenical circles. One was a theological dialogue and argument about the place of the laity in the church and what the church should be and do in the world. Recalling some of the books that made important contributions to the debate brings it to mind:

On Being the Church in the World by John A.T. Robinson, 1960.

Where in the World? and *What in the World?* by Colin W Williams, both published in 1963.

God's Frozen People: A book for almost ordinary Christians by Mark Gibbs and T Ralph Morton, 1964.

The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Perspective by Harvey Cox, 1965.

Religion and Change by David L Edwards, 1969.

The Committee on Society, Development and Peace (Sodepax) established by the Holy See and the World Council of Churches in 1968, made very important contributions to the development debate through conferences on world co-operation for development. Sodepax's mandate was "to awaken the Christian churches and their members to a realization of their obligation to make the problems of international social injustice a matter of conscience". The areas of its concern were, "justice, development and peace" and the theological questions raised by all of these. An international consultation was held by Sodepax in Cartigny, Switzerland in November 1969. A report containing the working papers and a resume of the discussion was published under the title, *In Search of a Theology of Development* (1969) with contributions from leading theologians such as Charles Elliott, David Jenkins, Philip Land, Jurgen Moltmann. Their thinking about the nature of development and the theology of change, development and liberation is still relevant, challenging and stimulating. They then produced a 200 page annotated bibliography on the concept and theology of development entitled: *Towards a Theology of Development* (1970).

The second kind of movement was of a practical nature. Ministers, churches and ecumenical organizations were pioneering new ways of working in and with communities. Bruce Kenrick's account in *Come Out The Wilderness* of his experience of working in a parish in East Harlem was a trail-blazer. In the introduction Trevor Huddleston says "...this account of a magnificent Christian experiment ... makes it plain in every line of what he writes that it is the world as it is, men and women where they are that the church must reach ... this ... gives expression to ... the truth that God ... cares enough for man to come to where he is". At the time East Harlem was a community "cast off by affluent society". Then there was the highly influential work John Pellow and his Congregational Church did in the East End. He lived in a condemned house with his family and worked through endless discussions with his congregation and the community about ways of promoting local development (see *The Concrete Village*, 1967). The Notting Hill Team ministry was another pioneering project (see *News From Notting Hill: The Formation of a Group Ministry*, 1967 by David Mason, Geoffrey Ainger and Norwyn Denny). Then there was the Methodist Scheme inaugurated in the early 60's to build ten church, youth and community work centres in Greater London. I wrote my doctoral thesis on one of these projects, Parchmore, which is still thriving twenty-seven years later (see *The Parchmore Partnership: George Lovell, Garth Rogers and Peter Sharrocks* edited by Malcolm Grundy, 1995).

Highly selective as these brief references are they illustrate twin movements of theology and practice each backing and influencing the other.

The vision of churches organized and run on a thoroughgoing egalitarian and participative basis working alongside others in society for development

and well-being preceded the means of effecting it. Many, including myself, made the mistake of assuming that the vision was the means, of thinking that seeing what needed to be done meant that they could do it. Others, who, like myself, had discovered the hard way that they had not the skills needed to realise their vision, started to look for things that would help them to translate theological convictions about ministry and mission into effective action.

Attention turned to the social and behavioural sciences and the very great progress they were making. Increasing numbers of churches, clergy and laity were eager to learn from these sciences ways and means of making their own work more effective. An indication of the serious way in which these sciences were being treated by some Christians is to be found in two series of articles published in the *Expository Times* (a journal founded in 1889 and dedicated to biblical exegesis) by the editor, the Revd Dr CL Mitton. The first was a series of nineteen articles under the general title of "First Aid in Counselling" which ran from the November 1965 to the September 1967 issue. So article XVI, "The Church and The Immigrant" appeared side by side with notes of recent expositions, sermons, and various other biblical and theological articles. Of itself this indicated the value of putting them together. The second series is even more pertinent to our subject. It comprised twenty-two articles under the general title, "Learning from the Social Sciences".

The first article was published in the October 1969 and the last in the January 1972 issue. Part I was on "Understanding Group Behaviour" and Part II on "Learning from Sociology". The series generated such interest that the articles were published in book form by T & T Clark in 1972. (*The Social Sciences And The Churches* edited by CL Mitton). Clergy and laity were variously looking for help on how to understand and work with groups, churches, organizations, communities; on the different forms of leadership; on how to train clergy and laity for the new kinds of church and community work that was emerging; on "management by objectives". I contributed an article to this second series, "The Mission of the Church and Community Development". It is reproduced in Appendix VI because it set out the framework of a substantive programme of theological exploration, action research and training which informed the work of Avec. I did not realise at the time that this set out a tripartite agenda upon which I would spend the remainder of my working life!

From within churches and Christian organizations, therefore, a climate of opinion favourable to Avec was being formed by theological movements, by pioneering community work and by clergy and churches seeking methodological help from the behavioural and social sciences. All this inclined people to look favourably at community development, the discipline from which Catherine Widdicombe and I got most theoretical and practical help.

Monsignor Geno Baroni traces the origins of the use of community development approaches in the Roman Catholic Church to the 1950's. The

Division of Ministries of the Methodist Church set up a Community Development Committee in 1970 and the Methodist Conference of 1973 adopted a report setting out the need for the church to be engaged in community development and ways and means of training clergy and laity in its approaches and methods. The Revd Dr Fred Milson, Principal of Westhill College, wrote prolifically about church, youth and community development in the late 60's and early 70's and affected Government policy in this direction through commissions he chaired and reports he produced. (One such commission is referred to below.) In 1976 The British Council of Churches set up a Community Work Resource Unit, C.W.R.U. (See *Community Work and The Churches*, 1976). And this is but to mention a few of the initiatives within or associated with the churches committed to getting clergy and laity to adopt these approaches and methods in their work.

Along with many others, Catherine Widdicombe and I committed ourselves to the integration of community development into the work and mission of the church. Our field was "church and community development". These movements in the church, the climate of thought they induced, were reinforced by action from charitable, statutory and voluntary bodies. Three examples substantiate this point. In 1968 the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation which had funded much work produced a report which had far reaching effects, *Community Work and Social Change: The Report of a Study Group on Training*. The following statement indicated the importance of churches in community development:

The churches are significant among voluntary organizations for two reasons. First, they command a network of many men and a number of women working full time and of premises suitable for communal activities unrivalled by any other voluntary body. Second, they have in the past carried out a number of social welfare and educational activities which have since become the responsibility of the community as a whole. In the past, too, the church and the parish were the focus of much community help and people in trouble still often turn up at the door of the clergy.

In common with other voluntary bodies, many of whose activities have been taken over by statutory authorities, there has been a tendency for the churches to try to cling to these particular activities rather than to explore those new areas, such as community work, where there is as yet little statutory provision. Yet churches have extended beyond their traditional boundaries in two directions. There has been, within individual denominations, a coming together of several parishes or congregations in the same urban or rural area with a view to providing a more comprehensive service to that area. (p. 25)

The now largely forgotten *Birmingham Social Responsibility Project*, a report published by the Birmingham Council of Christian Churches in 1961 made significant contributions to the involvement of churches in social welfare. It was a three year study of relationships between the social services and the churches in a city suburb between 1957 and 1960. The project proved that a wide opportunity was open to the churches if they were prepared to face the extent of human need in their communities – providing that volunteers offered services with “no ‘strings’ attached, and with no secondary motives, however good”. There was “no room for professional ‘do gooders’; people with a patronising ‘Lady Bountiful’ attitude”. Without using the term, the Report pointed the way to church and community development projects.

What has become known as the Fairbairn-Milson report to the Government published in 1969. *Youth and Community Work in the 70's*, expressed most vigorously that the churches can make important contributions to church and community development.

The Churches should consider their role (in the youth service) in relation to the task and opportunities of community development. How far is it consistent with their faith indeed in the twentieth century how far is it an inevitable consequence of their faith – that they should put a large part of their effort into the encouragement of people to identify their own needs, develop their own resources to meet them and thus (almost in the language of faith) to attain their true stature and dignity in the universe by learning to govern themselves more and more?

Strong movements of thought and action therefore were challenging and changing the current climate of opinion about the ways in which religious and secular organizations should work with people. Broadly speaking these movements were directing people away from their traditional ways of working, heavily influenced by authoritarian and patronising attitudes, to new ways of working and to new areas of work. Like all new movements they were dynamic, generating excitement and momentum. As far as the church was concerned essential elements of this newly emerging climate of thought were several-fold: working *with* people in church and society on equal terms rather than *for* them; using the insights and methods of the social and behavioural sciences perspicaciously to promote Christian ministry and mission; engaging openly with non-Christians in genuine attempts to promote the well-being and development of individuals and communities without intent to proselytize. For most churches and Christians this meant – as it meant for me – making far-reaching changes in attitude, approach and method and in the scope of the work in which they were engaged. This emerging climate of thought was sufficiently established and influential to provide a favourable context for Avec and for the non-directive approach to church and community development.

APPENDIX VI The Mission of the Church and Community Development*

The Church, like any other organization, has her own aims and purposes. Fundamental to these is the desire and intention to communicate both the personal and communal experience of Jesus Christ to all men. [sic] Christians seek a world community centred on the person, values, attitudes, ideas, teaching or worship of Jesus Christ. The activity of the Church must derive from this purpose and be seen, both in theory and practice, as a way of achieving it. It follows that anything that is learnt from the social sciences must be seen in relation to the purposes Christians discern in the life and work of Jesus Christ. In view of this, the general title of this series is an arresting one. It implies this kind of a relationship between theology and the social sciences, between theologians and social scientists and between Christian workers (lay and ministerial) and social or community workers. Basically such a relationship involves theologians learning from and with social scientists in order that they may be better able to pursue their own discipline in the light of the findings and methods of that other discipline. Similarly it involves Christian workers learning from and with social and community workers in order that they too may be better able to achieve their purposes through using the relevant insights, methods and skills developed by other professions. This learning and sharing may occur through Christian workers studying a social science or by working in multi-discipline teams or by employing consultants from other professions. People from other professions may be able to help Christians clarify their purposes and objectives and to discover the most appropriate methods of achieving them. But in the final analysis the Christians themselves must ensure that what they are learning and using from the social sciences is not only consonant with their purposes but does in fact help to achieve them.

This provides a general background to the church and community development work we are advocating. Some ministers have been led to study and practise community development processes and methods through failing to achieve their purposes in church-based community work using traditional methods. Dr. TR Batten, Reader in Community Development Studies, London University, has assisted them to define their Christian purposes and objectives in regard to Church and Community Development work. The non-directive group work methods he uses and teaches enables them to achieve these purposes and objectives.

* An article by George Lovell first published in the *Expository Times*, Volume LXXXIII/2 November 1971. Subsequently re-published in *The Social Sciences and The Churches*, CL Mitton, Editor (1972) (T & T Clark).

Community Development and Environmental Improvement

Community development is often thought of in terms of economic or environmental improvement, especially in the underdeveloped countries or in deprived urban areas. It has, of course, to do with both environmental and social improvement but it is more than either or both of these things. Environmental improvement does not of necessity nor of itself create a better community or better people. Ex-slum dwellers, for instance, re-housed in a utopia of modern dwellings have, in many cases, yearned for the lost community spirit of the old familiar streets. Housing improvement had cost them the sense of community, of belonging, of tradition, of closeness, of oneness, of mutual care and support. Many of them would have willingly exchanged the new environment for the old. If the 'essence of community is a common bond, the sharing of our identity, membership in a group holding some things, physical or spiritual, in common esteem, coupled with reference to all others so identified',¹ then the former slum community was not 'developed' by being better housed, even though its members' physical amenities were improved. This is not to argue that the slum dwellers should not have been re-housed. Certainly this should have been done, but in such ways that they did not lose what was valuable in their sense of community. Somehow they should have been helped to use the change not only to retain but to improve, refine and develop their sense of community. A change of housing would have then become a programme of community development.

This example could mislead the reader into thinking of community development exclusively in terms of deprived areas, urban or rural. The essential problems of development posed by the slum clearance example take many different forms. For instance the transplant of church people into new premises does not automatically result in a better Christian community. If they have not shared in the planning and decision-making processes they may, like the re-housed slum dwellers, actually lose something of their sense of community. On the other hand if they have been actively involved in planning for the new church, the community could be enriched. Another example of community disruption is to be found in the building of, say, a new six-lane ring road which ploughs its way through a variety of residential areas scattering some of the householders. It requires more than planners and house agents to create or re-create community within the areas newly defined by the ring-road boundaries.

These examples clearly illustrate that environmental change does not of itself, any more than social change, develop people and communities for the better. Indeed some of the forces which militate against achieving a sense of community come from the environmental and social changes which have accompanied the evolution of modern urban living. In contemporary urban society the relationships which people had with one another in small towns

and rural areas are drastically altered.² And it is in these urban societies that the full effects of physical and social mobility are most acutely felt.

Community Growth and Community Development Workers

Community grows out of the constant interaction of the lives of people and groups as they live, work, worship and play together, as they meet in the street, in clubs, pubs, churches and in each other's houses. Social intercourse, however, left to its own devices has also produced faction, ghettos, self-centred groups and innumerable personal and social problems. A healthy community offers to all of its members a sense of belonging, accords them status and significance, stimulates them to care for one another and gives each the opportunity to make his contribution to the welfare of the whole group. This must be worked for consciously and with understanding. Community development workers who employ non-directive group work methods help people to achieve a community like this by the following methods advocated by Batten:

- (a) 'Trying to strengthen incentives for people to act – where these are weak – by stimulating them to discuss their needs in the hope that they will come to see them as wants.' Dr. Batten illustrates this reformulation of 'need' in terms of 'want' by comparing the statements: 'If only our children had somewhere to play' (i.e., a need stated in vague terms) and 'We want and intend somehow to get a suitable play space for our children' (i.e., a restatement of 'need' in terms of a specific 'want').
- (b) 'Helping by providing information – if people need it – about how similar groups have organized for action.'
- (c) 'Helping people systematically to think through and analyse the nature and cause of any problem they may encounter in the course of their project, and to explore the pros and cons of each and every suggestion for solving it.'
- (d) 'Helping by suggesting sources for which the group may be able to obtain any material help or technical advice in addition to what they can provide for themselves.'³

It is through these processes that people and groups mature, come to accept responsibility, and so a community may be developed. It is this personal and group development and maturation which we value even more than specific improvements in the physical or social environments. This way of

working we can describe as working 'with' people in contradistinction to those ways of working which are based upon doing and providing things 'for' people. This illustrates that, as Brokensha and Hodge point out, 'the distinguishing characteristic of community development is the educational process by which people change themselves and their behaviour and acquire new skills and confidence through working in co-operation'.⁴ Community development strategy and group work methods are used to stimulate this process.

The Evolution of Community Development

This contemporary emphasis on community development and the terminology used to describe the principles, methods and approaches is comparatively recent but community development itself has a long and distinguished history. Dr. Batten acknowledging this, says that 'its principles were in fact applied by a multitude of government officers and missionaries long before anyone had thought of such a term as community development'.⁵ Brokensha and Hodge,⁶ in an interesting and masterly summary of the evolution of community development in the United Kingdom, the U.S.A. and India, focus attention upon two roots: education and social work. They demonstrate that in the British experience this evolution occurred mainly through the Mission Schools and the Colonial policies for education and especially for 'mass education'. The term 'mass education' was replaced in 1948 by 'community development'. By way of conclusion Brokensha and Hodge point out that the British experience was not in essence moulded by practice at home. Indeed, it was acquired and practised mainly in Africa. Furthermore, community development was a 'pragmatic response to colonial needs in the face of the inadequacies of colonial services in the fields of education, health and welfare'.⁷

Education, Social Work and Community Development

The Christian Church has been deeply involved in these historical processes. Many of the roots of social and educational work grew in the soil of the Christian Church and civilization. In the contemporary British scene education and social work are both involved in promoting community development. This can be illustrated from a series of official reports. In regard to education the Plowden Report strongly recommends the development of 'community schools'.⁸ The Newsom Report says that in some areas the 'school may have an important socially educative role in the community'.⁹ The Fairbairn-Milson Report says: 'We believe that there are no long term answers to the perplexities of youth work apart from the growth and encouragement of community

development'.¹⁰ Regarding social work, the Seebohm Report says, 'We realise that a general responsibility for community development is difficult to define and the means to its achievement are only now coming to be understood but, looking ahead, we are convinced that this must become an essential part of the social service department (of the local authority)'.¹¹ Seebohm also endorses the Plowden Committee's recommendations on this subject. The Gulbenkian Report, an enquiry 'into the meaning and extent of community work in the United Kingdom' with the purpose of making recommendations on training, was seen to be directly relevant to the work of the Seebohm committee and the Royal Commission on Local Government in England and Scotland. José de Azeredo Perdigao in his foreword to the Gulbenkian Report said that the moment was opportune for a review of training because the 'growing interest and participation in community work among professional social workers, adult educationalists, social planners and others were beginning to be reflected in an increasing awareness of the need for appropriate training'.¹²

The Church and Community Development

The Church is involved in educational, youth and social work. Gulbenkian says that community work should be a recognized part of the work of the clergy and that 'in the Churches, their congregations, their premises and their sometimes still powerful voices in social affairs, is a significant potential source for community work'.¹³ Fairbairn and Milson say that 'the churches should consider their role (in the youth service) in relation to the task and opportunities of community development. How far is it consistent with their faith – indeed in the twentieth century how far is it an inevitable consequence of their faith – that they should put a large part of their effort into the encouragement of people to identify their own needs, develop their own resources to meet them and thus (almost in the language of faith) to attain their true stature and dignity in the universe by learning to govern themselves more and more'.¹⁴ Seebohm sees the voluntary organizations as having a pioneer role.¹⁵ There is a specific role for the local church in this field in offering help in the development of communities, particularly in educational priority areas.

A particularly vivid description of the task is contained in *Christian Commitment in Education* (Report of the Methodist Conference Commission on Education, Epworth, 1970):

'What is needed is an injection of energy into the community not only from official agencies but through the voluntary groups in the area, including the churches. Some churches already offer help in the form of play-group facilities, contact groups for immigrant parents, club activities for children, and so on, but there is room for continuous experiment and service – adventure

playgrounds, amenity projects for old and young, involvement in after-school activities. Each community has its special needs and opportunities.

'We have made contribution by the Church our final point since we believe it to be one of the most important issues in education to-day and one in which the ordinary church member and the local congregation can play an active and significant part. This help must be offered not in any patronizing or paternalistic role, assuming a moral and social superiority which has sometimes characterized Christian social action in the past, what has been described as a "middle-class take-over bid for the soul of the area". Rather, we see this as part of the mission of the Servant Church, called to minister to all men and to be honestly identified with the community.'

Simultaneous and Interdependent Development of Church and World

Some writing about the church and the world could lead people to think that they are entirely separate entities working against each other. The actual relationships between the church and the world are much more complex than this.¹⁶ People in the church live and work in the world; they are members of various communities. The world is not by any means in total opposition to the aims and purposes of the church. In the world and in the church there are reformers, social workers, social scientists, planners and good neighbours all striving in different ways, using different approaches, to improve the social systems and circumstances within which people have to live and die. They contribute toward the alleviation of poverty, bad housing and bad working conditions; they attempt to eliminate racial, class and educational discrimination and to overcome loneliness; they help to create community. There are in fact real areas for co-operation between people in the world and the church in achieving common purposes. Both church and world belong to God and both are the proper province of his work, love and care. It is not a case of a perfect church community developing an imperfect world community. Utopian society evades both the church and the world. Nor do we want to see the church working in the world solely for the purpose of numerically increasing the size of her own community, regardless of the welfare of the communities she uses as her religious hunting ground. 'We want to see – and all our work in this field is oriented to this concept – people from the church and the world working together on community development projects in such ways that both communities develop interdependently. 'We wish to stimulate simultaneously in the church and in the world those processes of education, personal, social and community education by which people mature. These things are achieved by church and non-church people working together on projects to improve their community.

A Framework for Church and Community Development Work

As a result of our experiences in the field of church and community development work during the past five years we suggest that if the church is going to take seriously the challenge of community development a tripartite framework for action is necessary.

1. *It is necessary to formulate a theological critique of community development.* The work done in the field of church community development work is based upon the following tenets¹⁷ which substantiate our conviction that to work for the simultaneous development of the church and the world is fundamental to the church's ministry and mission.

- (i) God's relationship with the world as defined in the New Testament and embodied in the life and work of Jesus Christ is the key to the church's relationship with the world. The New Testament states God's primary relationship is to the world he loves and desires to reconcile to himself.¹⁸ His concern is not exclusively for the church nor for the world through the church. Consequently God is already at work in areas unoccupied by the church. His kingdom embraces every aspect of his relationships with men and the cosmos. Christ is described as 'God with us'. God sends Christians into the world as he sent Jesus into the world.¹⁹
- (ii) Man's creative relationship to his social and physical environment is purposed by God. God has delegated to man the responsibility to create the best possible social and physical environmental conditions for the full realization of human potential and welfare.
- (iii) Community development methods and processes enable Christians to emulate the servant ministry which Christ established during his earthly life and which he maintains in his risen state.
- (iv) The Biblical narrative describes an ongoing search for community and indicates the way in which Christians can make a unique contribution to its realisation.

A group of Christians engaged in community development work met in conference in December 1969 to consider the theological implications of their work. Their conclusions, which have been published, make a useful contribution in this area of thought.²⁰ Sodepax (The Committee on Society, Development and Peace) has also published two interesting books on the theology of development.²¹ The Methodist Board of Lay Training's Group on Community Development has also asked an ecumenical group of theologians and some ministers to work on this theme. There is need for people at every level of community development action, research and practice to think theologically about what they are doing.

2. *It is necessary to formulate adequate programmes of lay and ministerial training in church and community development work.* Training is required first in community development ideas, concepts and theories and the relationship of community development to other social sciences; and second in the practising of non-directive group work skills. These two areas of training are to the community development worker what medical school and walking the wards are to doctors. There is a dearth of this kind of training both for the professional and the part-time community development worker. The Gulbenkian Report contains a useful summary of the training available for professional workers²² but there is no comparable list for voluntary or part-time workers.²³ Indeed the Gulbenkian Report said that it is the responsibility of employing authorities (in this case the church) to promote in-service training.²⁴ A course of training for voluntary workers recently mounted in High Wycombe has yielded a fund of information about what is involved in this kind of training.²⁵ If the churches are to enter effectively into the community development field an immense amount of energy has to be devoted to training programmes.

3. *It is necessary to mount a select number of church and community development action research programmes in order to determine the practical and theoretical implications for local churches, church administrators, ecclesiastical decision-makers and for the trainers of clergy and laity involved in community development projects.* In this the social sciences teach us something of great importance – the necessity for action research programmes. To explore this subject would require another article. The 1970 Social Science Research Council's Conference was on the theme 'The role of the social scientist in action research'. In the introductory lecture Professor Daniel P. Moynihan claimed a causal link between the investment of large sums of money and energy on action research and the rapid expansion of inventiveness in the U.S.A.²⁶ This ought to make any one wishing to learn from the social sciences stop and think what programmes of action-research could do for their enterprise and organization. It could lead the church to a radical reappraisal of the use of her plant, machinery and men in relation to her purposes. It could lead to the discovery of new ways of fulfilling God's will for mankind; a new inventiveness could be found for church work and mission.

The working definition of its area of concern, accepted by the S.S.R.C. 1970 Conference, was: 'Research commissioned to monitor and evaluate the operations of specifically implemented policy schemes so as to enable policy makers and administrators to assess the effectiveness of such schemes'.²⁷ We however know of only two church and community development action research programmes.²⁸

Such a framework for church community development work should enable church members to expend themselves and their material resources to the greatest possible effect, to realize to the full the development potential of

the situations in which they work, and to make their own proper contribution towards a world community centred on the person, values, attitudes, ideas, teaching and worship of Jesus Christ.

NOTES:

1. *Community Work and Social Change. The Report of a Study Group on Training* set up by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, which is commonly referred to as 'The Gulbenkian Report' (Longmans, 1968; p. 2).
2. Ronald Frankenberg, *Communities in Britain, Social Life in Town and Country* (Pelican, 1966; Chapter 11). He contrasts and compares twenty-five themes of community life as they appear in rural and urban societies.
3. T. R. Batten and M. Batten, *The Non-Directive Approach in Group and Community Work* (O.U.P., 1967; pp. 13-14)
4. David Brokensha and Peter Hodge, *Community Development: An Interpretation* (Chandler, 1969; p.48).
5. T. R. Batten, *Communities and Their Development* (O.U.P., 1957; p. 3).
6. *Ib.*, chapter 2.
7. *Ib.*, 35 f.
8. *Children and Their Primary Schools: Report of the Central Advisory Council (England)* (H.M.S.O., 1967).
9. *Half Our Future* (1963, para. 134 and generally chapter 6).
10. *Youth and Community Work in the 70's* (1969; H.M.S.O., para. 202).
11. *Report of the Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Services* (H.M.S.O., 1968), commonly known as the 'Seebohm Report', paras. 480-507.
12. The Gulbenkian Report, p. v.
13. *Ib.*, 25.
14. *Ib.*, paras. 139-141, but compare paras. 176 and 183.
15. *Ib.*, para. 495
16. Cf. George Lovell and Alfred Gilliver, *People in Community*, A Group Study Course (Published by The Methodist Board of Lay Training, 2 Chester House Pages Lane, London, N.10). Also Colin H. Williams *Where in the World* (Epworth, 1963) and *What in the World* (Epworth, 1963); Harvey Cox, *The Secular City* (S.C.M., 1965).
17. George Lovell, *Church and Community Development – An Introduction* (a forthcoming Grail and Chester House Publication in the summer of 1971). In chapter 5 these ideas are worked out at length.
18. Cf Jn 3.16 and 2 Cor 5.19
19. Jn 17.18-19
20. *The Grail Conference Report, The Church and Community Development*. Copies available from The Grail Centre, 125 Waxwell Lane, Pinner, HA5 3ER. Price 17p.
21. *Towards a Theology of Development: An Annotated Bibliography prepared for Sodepax by Fr. Gerhard Bauer* (1970). In *search of a Theology of Development: Papers from a Consultation on Theology and Development held by Sodepax in Cartigny, Switzerland November 1969*. Obtainable from the W.C.C. or B.C.C.
22. *Ib.* chapter 5.

23. See George Lovell, *Church and Community Development: An Introduction*, for a short list of London Training Courses.
24. *Ib.*, IOI.
25. An explanatory pamphlet is available from The Grail Centre, 125 Waxwell Lane, Pinner, HA5 3ER. Price 5p (incl. postage).
26. See S.S.R.C. Newsletter IO, November 1970, pp. 2-5.
27. S.S.R.C. Newsletter IO, p. 5.
28. *The Church and Community Development Project 70-75*, an Ecumenical Action Research Project designed 'to explore the practical, technical and theoretical implications of the Churches becoming involved in the field of community development'. Information from Miss C. Widdicombe, The Grail, 125 Waxwell Lane, Pinner, HA5 3ER. The second is *An Action Research Project to Test the Applicability of The Non-directive Concept in a Church Youth and Community Centre Setting* by the author.

APPENDIX VII
Avec Briefing Paper
for Staff Engaged in Ten-Day Courses*

1. These notes are intended to introduce the range of tasks in which the staff are involved before, during, and after each ten-day course. Please read them through in conjunction with the handouts which accompany this paper. If you have any queries, please contact the senior staff member as soon as possible. We intend to revise these notes in the light of comments by those using them. Please let us have any suggestions for their improvement and any papers that should be added.

Overall Time Commitment

2. In addition to the 2 x 5 day periods of the course, staff normally meet for one day prior to each period (often on the Saturday immediately preceding), on the Friday evening of the first week, and on the Thursday evening of the second week.
3. Prior to the commencement of the course it is necessary for each staff member to be thoroughly conversant with each of the course members' work papers (usually 12-14) and to have prepared a preliminary analysis of a selection of them.
4. During the course staff members need to keep evenings free for consultations in preparation for plenary sessions and to prepare work paper sessions to which they are the worker.

Thus the minimum time commitment to a ten-day course is:

2 x 5 Course days (including each evening Monday-Friday)

2 x 1 staff planning says

2-3 days to prepare work papers and plenaries.

TOTAL: 14/15 days.

Personal Preparation Prior to the Course

5. The staff will decide who is to be responsible for which part of the course. Usually there will be a senior staff member who will have overall responsibility but the content of the sessions and the leading of them will be shared. These arrangements are most likely to be made via telephone

* A pack of background papers was supplied with this.

conversations which should begin when the initial letter is sent out to participants. Those leading plenary sessions (see "Foundation Subjects" para 28) will need to know in sufficient time to be able to prepare them so as to share their intentions with the rest of the staff beforehand.

6. The initial letter is sent out about 6-8 weeks before the course starts together with a guide to writing the work papers.
7. When each staff member receives copies of the work papers written by members of the course they also receive a paper which enables them to build a tentative "profile" of each member. The senior staff member draws up a draft composite list of objectives for the course which are discussed during the first session and, if necessary) amended before adoption by the course. The senior staff member is usually responsible, in consultation with the other staff, for drawing up a draft programme.
8. It is important that all staff are conversant with each work paper in order to facilitate the division of the members into two work paper groups and the allocation of each work paper to a member of staff who will be primarily responsible for assisting its progress through the work paper sessions in each week and the intervening period.
9. Some two to three weeks before the course, copies of the work papers, a draft programme and a briefing paper, are sent out to each course member by way of acknowledging receipt of the work papers and to aid their preparation for the course. This is usually the responsibility of the senior staff member in consultation with the other staff.
10. If there are three members of staff, one of whom is not experienced in leading work paper sessions, a decision will have to be made as to how that member is to develop his/her expertise. It may be as a co-worker to another member of staff, or vice-versa, or it may be as the leader of the session but with staff briefing sessions before and after the work paper by way of support for both the 'new' worker and the group.

Joint Preparation for Week One

11. During a staff planning day the staff will consider each member of the course and their situation, noting what each person hopes to get from the course. This task can still take two to three hours to complete.
12. When completed, this task will have enabled the allocation of each member to one of two (occasionally three) work paper groups. These contain, as far as is possible, a balance of denomination, work experience etc. A staff member is allocated to each work paper and the sequence in

which the papers are taken in the work paper group is arranged to enable the staff members to alternate in each group.

13. A second outcome of the careful consideration of each paper is a tentative list of objectives for the course compiled from each members' personal objectives. This serves as a check list for the staff as well as the course members after it has been adapted or adopted by the course members during the first session.
14. The preparation for plenary sessions is discussed and any additions or amendments made.
15. Finally the various practical tasks are allocated i.e. responsibility for photocopying, note taking, sub-group compositions etc.

During Week One

16. Each morning the staff meets before the day's sessions to review the programme and make any necessary preparations. Plenary sessions may again be checked through and work papers for the day discussed. There may also be other occasions, for example before and after work paper sessions in which there are particular problems or difficulties, or during the lunch break, when the staff need to have a word together. At the end of each day the staff may wish to reflect upon each other's work so as to assist their continuing training and development.
17. As the week progresses reference is made to the objectives for the course and a note taken of any topic emerging from the course or not completed in a plenary.
18. Overnight work involves final preparation for plenaries and work papers for the next day. Consideration may also be given to any pastoral issues which may have emerged in relation to a particular course member and how best to deal with it. Telephone discussions between staff members can often be helpful in preparing the following days' work.
19. Friday afternoon provides an opportunity for course members and staff to check the week's work against the objectives for the course and to identify subjects for the second week's programme.
20. The staff may work on the subjects requested by course members immediately following the Friday afternoon sessions in order to shape them for the programme and to agree which staff member will be responsible for each plenary subject. This can take an hour or two. Alternatively, or in addition, they may need to meet during the following week or two.

Between Weeks One and Two

21. Staff members will prepare the plenary sessions for which they are responsible and give further consideration to the work papers allocated to them. It may be necessary to have telephone consultations with other staff.
22. A paper setting out the suggested shape for the week, and a draft programme are distributed to the course members prior to the commencement of week two.

Joint Preparation for Week Two

23. During a staff planning day the staff discuss what each course member wishes to work on during his or her work paper sessions by way of orientation to each one's specific needs in week two.
24. The sequence of papers in the work paper sessions is often re-arranged so as to give those who were last in week one, a chance to be taken earlier and vice-versa. (This may have been done earlier.)
25. Preparations for the known plenary sessions are finalised and any adjustments made to the draft programme. Another check is made of the objectives for the course and any practical tasks allocated amongst the staff.

During Week Two

26. This is generally the same as week one, with the important exception of Thursday evening. Course members are asked to complete an assessment form on Thursday afternoon. During Thursday evening the staff work on the implications of these for Friday's agenda. This invariably occupies all of the evening, including discussion over an evening meal. Sessions are allocated to staff and preparations are made to lead Friday's plenaries.
27. Following the end of the course, it is often helpful for the staff to share in a short de-briefing which would not be expected to last more than an hour or so.

'Foundation Subjects'

28. Over the years a number of subjects were seen to re-occur in ten-day courses and have become what might be termed "foundation subjects" which we consider to be essential and additional to those subjects identified as objectives for the course. Most of these will occur in the programme for the first week and include:-
 - (a) *Working for Human and Spiritual Development* Setting the course in the context of inter-related development between church and neighbourhood, people and their environment; communities as entities; working systematically, theologically and empirically; work which is focussed upon people leading to human development. (cf *Human and Religious Factors* pp.11ff)
 - (b) *Introduction to Work Paper Sessions* Describes the process of working with the papers.
 - (c) *Towards Working Purposefully* Looking at beliefs and purposes and their function as touchstones by which to make critical decisions.
 - (d) *Approaches and Methods* Examining the Directive and Non-Directive approaches to working with people and the various methods available to the worker.
 - (e) *Leadership and the Non-Directive Approach* and a skills practice session led by group members as non-directive workers with observer to provide feedback.
 - (f) *Promoting participation.*
 - (g) *Integrating work, faith and theology.*
29. An important element of the course is the opportunity to observe and experience various methods in tackling these subjects. Most courses will include at least one case study and a session led by course members as non-directive workers with observers to provide feedback. The problem-solving sequence is also used.
30. An annotated book list is also sent to members beforehand. These books about church and community development theory and practice are recommended to participants.

Charles New
May 1989, Revised May 1990