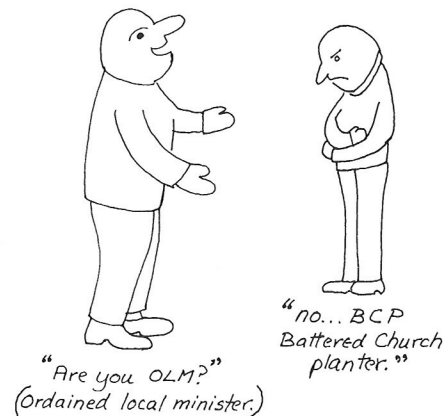


## Part 3 : Leaders and Limitations

Bob Hopkins of *Anglican Church Planting Initiatives* and I could partly be described as church plant pathologists. When analysing death and decline, causes can be internal as illustrated above, but also external. The latter includes:

- 1 Leadership changes at the sending church.** Plants without legal rights to exist can be easy to shut down, to fit in with the incoming vicar's vision for the mother church. This may be rationalised as the concentration of resources at the centre, the need to consolidate identity etc. However, the incoming vicar is not always wrong.
- 2 Not replacing the original plant leader** because of the Sheffield allocation. We have real concern that ever tightening pressures on finance and stipendiary posts means ever higher priority on preserving existing churches and, de facto, starving emerging ones.
- 3** Some dioceses, despite vigorous challenges, hold to a **twin policy that refuses the route to OLM and also insists NSMs must be deployed elsewhere.** This makes it impossible for indigenous leadership to emerge, leadership that could be ordained and offer sacramental ministry to the church plant. It is a form of enforced immaturity and constant frustration that is likely to lead to decline.



These suggest **some Church of England structures provide only weak support and protection to new churches.** In that climate, external consultants find it harder to envision and train people knowing that real sacrifices made by lay teams may well invite much frustration later.

## Is OLM the way forward?

I was struck by the boldness of Bishop David Stancliffe calling for 200 Ordained Local Ministers to be found in Salisbury diocese. A close friend has turned out to be one of them and is currently enjoying the training, a significant part undertaken with a group from his local church in Marlborough.

I was reminded of my sabbatical in New Zealand in 1992. The Anglican Church had taken the Nevada model (from that Diocese in the USA) of ministry from their rural and scattered areas where stipendiary clergy are very sparsely allocated. The aim was to achieve wider mobilisation of lay leadership in the locality, including callings to local ordination. Congregations are invited to make undisclosed nominations to the Bishop suggesting who in the community have potential ministries as priest, teacher and pastor. If the candidates proposed are deemed suitable and are willing to accept the call discerned by the congregation, the Priest candidate goes through an extension learning course, and is ordained, in English terms, as an OLM. **The discovery and liberation of gifts in ministry seems admirable and the model can also be applied in vast urban parishes where stipendiary clergy are comparably overstretched.**

The shadow side is that when the then Archbishop Brian Davis examined the model in its original setting he observed that while all crucial aspects of pastoral and liturgical ministry were provided to the pleasure of the church members, there was no concern for, much less any commitment to, outreach and church growth. **The weakness seems that in providing for maintenance needs, and in effect obtaining low cost ordained ministry, the task of mission is shelved when survival is ensured. Thus the problems of clericalism, which prevented earlier liberation of local ministries, begin to rear their heads in a new form.** This is not so much a criticism of the model as a critique of the self-centred nature of congregations in survival mode, the pastoral orientation to training and the need for accountability over the central task of mission.

### Trained for what?

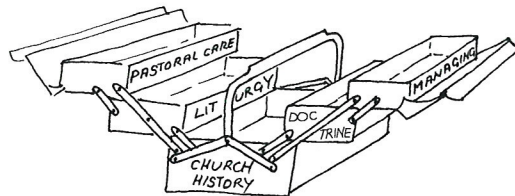
**I believe a key lies in the nature of the training.** Alan Dodds who led Carpenters Arms (Encounters No.7) is now Principal of the Canterbury OLM scheme. He got the job partly because the Diocese wanted a person who combined academic teaching and evangelistic gifts. In a course he has devised and is validated by the University at Canterbury, the first year includes a term on Church Growth and another on Mission. These are supplemented by day schools on evangelism and apologetics. The second year takes communication both through preaching and liturgical skills. Only in the third year is Pastoralia tackled, but with a framework of the five fold ministry from Ephesians 4. This seeks a contemporary outworking of the apostolic as the present pioneer as much as the past guarantor of orthodoxy, and that the eclipsed first two ministries are as valid as those of evangelist, pastor and teacher. Such a course addresses **my concern that a new breed of OLMs need to be trained for leadership in mission for local churches.**

I do not say that all schemes are as mission centred in practice. I do not know. The Salisbury course seems far less so. Since the Decade, the language of mission has at least become a label tied onto much theological education. I hear some stories that not much has changed in practice and the curriculum is already so full that making serious mission additions means facing unwelcome exclusions that are retained.

Wider issues are whether OLMs will be allowed in more dioceses, and whether their training will distance them from the local culture that spawned them. How well they work with a succession of stipendiary clergy is another problem thrown up by the experience of NSM.

### The Choice

As I have struggled with these pressures on new forms of church, I have come down to seeing a basic choice near the heart of the matter.



*"It's the new mission training box"*

1 Should emerging forms of church conform to the pressure from the existing church, for them to become like church as we have known it in our historic denominations? If so, then the wider church has an obligation to help staff these emerging ventures accordingly. OLM, authorised lay ministry, favouring locally paid ministry, Diocesan Growth and Opportunities funds are all variants on that theme. I am intrigued that the fiercely lay, Open Brethren churches have begun to seek pastors. In a faster changing world and harder working culture the inevitability of the paid, skilled and more widely experienced leader, as part of a collaborative team, looks non-negotiable, for any church more complex than cell and that wants to make missionary progress. Not to do so reminds me of the Pharaoh who, when the captive Israelites complained, insisted that they continue to manufacture bricks, but without provision of the straw from which they used to be made. They had to gather that themselves.

2 Or do we let far simpler forms of church appear? King Saul advised David to fight Goliath using the King's armour. This well-meaning tactic turned David into a lumbering liability. He wisely decided to discard the gifts and changed the battle plan. **Part of the failure among voluntary lay led plants is explained by foisting on to these churches a style and level of organisation in church which is natural and possible for full timers but foreign and unsustainable for them.**



*"He'll never get you through that lot"*

### Simpler Church?

What then of the other more radical choice to form and allow simpler church, and insist it stay simple? I think I must make it a resolution to re-read Vincent Donovan and Roland Allen every five years. I have been back to Donovan and am haunted by his intentions in Chapter 8

about the kind of church he was planning to leave behind him. I cannot quote all of pages 162-3, but best for me are

*“To give the people nothing, literally nothing, but the unchanging supracultural, un-interpreted gospel before baptism ... to encourage them to trust in the Spirit given at baptism and to use the powers and gifts and charisms given to the community by the Spirit.... The most important lesson we will ever teach them is to leave them.”*

I think I hear Roland Allen cheering from the stands, but I have also met more recent practice confirming this is possible, not just desirable.

From the world church comes the apparent success of the church in persecuted parts of the world such as China using Cell/household church, in Sudan and South America through Base Communities, or the Honduras, Central America, which has seen continually reproducing small congregational churches, under the enabling genius of George Patterson. **The smaller and simpler church gets, the more we must boil down the task of the church and identify the non negotiable heart of its purpose and so its activities.** Patterson chooses to reject his inherited American models of residential training college and relatively luxurious mission compound accommodation. Passionately committed to only teaching what was biblically essential and could be readily emulated by young disciples who would teach others also, he concluded church could be reduced to living out what he calls the seven commands of Christ, rooted in his words in Matt 28.20 “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you”. For Patterson “everything” includes:

- 1 Repent, believe, receive the Holy Spirit cf Mk 1: 15 John 20:22
- 2 Baptise - and live out the baptismal life cf Mt 28.20 and Rom 6 3-4
- 3 Love Christ, others, neighbours, self cf Lk 10.27 & 37
- 4 Celebrate Lord’s Supper cf Lk 22:19
- 5 Pray - cf Lk 11 2 & 9
- 6 Give and Forgive cf Lk 6:37 & 38
- 7 Make Disciples - Matt 28.20

Patterson’s experience is that if these characteristics are taught, learnt and reproduced in the minds and lives of communities of new disciples, it leads to reproducing further simple, reproducible churches, without leaders who go away to college, require salaries and become professional ministers.

Similarly, he asserts that worship in the New Testament did not require great resources, highly trained leaders, professional musicians, OHPs, sound systems etc. Once more he cites 7 characteristics; the praise of Jesus/ confession and absolution/ hearing the Word/ giving/ intercessory prayer/ the Lord’s Supper/ and a sense of unity.

Both sets of seven are to be taught to new converts from day one in such a way as to enable the expectation that they will, from the beginning, participate in all of these spiritual disciplines within the life of a small church. This ties in exactly with an article by Carol Davis of DAWN Ministries looking at why certain churches continue to reproduce, as opposed to those which may grow for a time but long-term are sterile. The commonality is that all ministry functions are taught in such a style that the indigenous people can emulate them from day one and all future leaders will emerge from the indigenous church with that same value of enabling yet others on similar lines.

One man’s simple is another man’s simplistic, but I applaud the transcultural potential of such broad brush strokes for the clues they give for the life of an indigenous, voluntary lay led, simpler church. If we are willing to recognise Church as existing in a much looser affiliation of small groups with such values, then leadership requirements become very different. **The supervision task changes to initiating what is sustainable within the culture, not pursuing the current search for the very few, onto whom we can transpose the standards of existing organised church, burdening them with sophistication that they cannot sustain.** Past experience substantiates the further risk of alienating them from their indigenous roots, to which they then cannot return.



The choice at present is ours.  
This time an Anglican *Via Media* is not helpful.  
**Resources and models must match  
or decline will set in.**  
I think it matters.

**George Lings**  
Jan 2001

## Where could you go from here?

### Strategically...

- If you are thinking of starting a **church plant**, use this or other issues with your ministry team to think through the proposed church style and the leadership resource implications.
- If you are **at a lay led plant**, these stories will help that leadership team compare where they fit. What might you want to communicate to your sending church, or your diocese as a result?
- If you have **connections within diocesan groups**, please think who else needs exposure to these kinds of questions and suggestions. How can these issues help us all get closer to good practice?

### Practically...

- For whatever reason if you want **further copies**, those can be ordered from Claire Dalpra by note, phone or email - see *next page*.
- Is the **first issue you've read**? You may want to collect the previous issues listed on the back cover. All individual copies are £3.

### About us...

In the early part of the 1990's **Church Army** reviewed its strategy, the outcome of which was the seminal 'People to People' strategy document first published in 1993. The decision to establish the **Sheffield Centre** was spelt out in this document.

## Our aim is

- **To inspire and mobilise the Church in its task of evangelism.**

## The Sheffield Centre has the following functions:

- **Research into church planting and evangelism**
- **Extensive study and library facilities through the Training College**
- **Specialist training in church planting and evangelism for those in full time Christian ministry**

## The Sheffield Centre - developing Church Planting & Evangelism



## The Sheffield Centre can offer the wider Church

- **Specialist research, consultancy and publishing on Church Planting, the fruits of which are made available through Encounters on the Edge**

*The Director: Revd George Lings.*

*Research Assistant and PA : Claire Dalpra*

- **Practical hands on experience in Evangelism for young people through its Xchange, First Contact and Word on the Web initiatives**

*National Youth Projects Co-ordinator: Captain David Booker*

*Evangelist with the Sheffield Centre : Alison Booker*

*Administrator: Ruth Mills*

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*We are a team supporting the evolving mission of the Church of England.*