

Rev'd Dr Scott Cowdell's Reflection on the proceedings of the Living Stones Conference, Newcastle, NSW, given on the morning of 14th August, 2006.

Dr Cowdell put these points on the white board:

1. Ecclesiology
 - a. Deeply and widely sourced,
 - b. Mission-shaped,
 - c. More than a practical necessity,
 - d. Geographic dependence and theological meaning of "local",
 - e. How Anglican is it?
2. Episcopé and Ministerial Orders
 - a. Episcopé is crucial,
 - b. Theology of "local priesthood".
3. Mission and Evangelism
 - a. What is our mission and how evangelistic is it?
 - b. Ministering Communities and "fresh expressions".

[Short gap from beginning of talk] ... secondly, the issues regarding episcopé and ministerial orders and thirdly the question of mission and evangelism. Now the first thing that I'd like to say is that the Ministering Communities in Mission model strikes me with renewed force as I gather with you — a profound insight into the nature of the church. It seems to me to resonate consistently, deeply and widely with a whole range of theological things.

- 1a. Let me mention what those things are: Firstly, God's relational being as Trinity. When I wrote my doctorate on Modern Christology, in the early 1990s, the Trinitarian wave had not begun to "rise up" in theology. It was the tail-end of our enthusiasm for *Christology*, but the new Trinitarian enthusiasm had yet to emerge. Since the early 1990s, with the recovery of the Trinity at the centre of Christian imagination and increasingly of practical thinking, the implications of living with a Trinitarian God are coming to central theological prominence. So the relationality of God's own being, not the *individuality* but the *relationality* of God's own being, is a major theme in theology. And this model is very compatible with that.

Secondly, and very strongly, Paul's metaphor of the Body of Christ (this is not a new insight) — it's worth saying that the central New Testament metaphor for the Church, the Body of Christ, with its differing charisms, differing but complementary charisms, is particularly powerfully represented in this model of ministry.

Thirdly, I'd mention the Creation and the Incarnation as ways of understanding the nature of God's commitment to the world in which we live. God as the Creator is a God who knows and loves the importance of particularity, history, the limitations of particular situations, and not only bears with them but delights in them. Similarly, the incarnational imperative, which is at the centre of our Christian imagination: God embraces in Jesus Christ the world God creates. In Jesus Christ, God's love for the world, and its people, and its particularity, its history, is nowhere more clearly affirmed than in the fact that, in Jesus Christ, God was with us restoring the world to its proper status with God.

Now this twofold embrace, Creation and Incarnation, seems to me to be present whenever I hear you talking about different versions of this model of ministry. It honours the particular place and the particular context. It honours the local community and its history. It honours the group of people who happen to be there and the skills and charisms that they have. I'm reminded of a phrase from Bp Garry Weatherill, "do what you can, don't worry about what you can't". Don't be afraid of your limitations and your particular context, but delight in it — it's where God calls you and empowers you. I was also very struck by the wisdom of one of the policies in Tasmania, that if a local community is not ready for this model of ministry we

don't proceed. There's a recognition that a local community has to be at a certain point of its life before this type of ministry can emerge. So there's a respect for context, for place.

Now that's three, if you like, patterns or styles of God's working. I'd mention one more which is a little less theological but never-the-less, I think, very significant and that is to reflect on, if you like, the natural order. What clues might we find from the natural order about a pattern of God's creation? One of the things we know about the way the natural order works is that the universe emerges, the world is born and changes, life emerges and evolves and the process is one that involves both structure and flexibility — both order and randomness. You could almost say that order and randomness, structure and flexibility are the two hands of God in creating. A world that would be entirely fixed and static in its structure would not be our world because life has evolved and changed. If it was all randomness, no stable structures would have emerged and would abide. So the pattern of God's working is in both structure and flexibility, order and randomness. It's not planned to death, but nor is it a free-for-all. God has, I think, general principles for the way the world is going to emerge but the process itself throws up a lot of particularity.

Now that seems to be the case in the best expressions of this model that I've heard emerging from the group. And may I say I'm particularly impressed with the Newcastle yellow booklet. It seems to be right on the money in the way that it sets up structures that have to be followed and yet allows quite a lot of flexibility in terms of how the ministering community emerges on the ground, thanks to the agency of the Ministry Development Officer, who's a key agent of flexibility. Now that's not to say that this doesn't strongly emerge in other material that I've seen this weekend. But I'd have to say that if I have to champion the emergence of this model somewhere I'd be looking for that yellow Newcastle document! That would be the one I've found clearest. So that's my first point about ecclesiology emerging strongly from a range of theological indicators.

- 1b. My second point is much briefer and has to do with this ecclesiology being to some significant extent "mission-shaped". Now one of the things that strikes me as I read the Acts of the Apostles is that the ecclesiology takes different shapes in different situations in response to the mission imperative in those places. And here it seems that, in many of the stories that I've heard, the type of team, for instance, that emerges in whatever context is not a kind of pre-stamped template that's applied. There might be some broad ideas about what kind of ministries might be appropriate, but the needs of the local environment determine the team and the sort of tasks, which again will determine the sort of leadership, and perhaps the sort of ordained local leadership or other ministry that will be involved. So its not that you just approach a town or a district and say that you need this, this, this and this. It really is what the local mission imperatives are that shape the emergence of the particular type of ministering community in that place.

There may be situations where that's not the case or it hasn't worked as clearly, but that's come through to me strongly as a common theme. That's a good thing, it's a biblical model of ministry and it fits so nicely with our traditional forms of ministerial order. So it's a good way of holding together both bible and tradition. This isn't the first model that's done that, by the way. In the nineteenth century the Anglo-Catholics invented the missionary bishop who was sent out with a machete and a Greek New Testament into hot places and built the church there. So that was an attempt to do something like St Paul did. So it isn't the first time we've done it, but it's significant nonetheless.

- 1c. Now the third point that I'd make about the Ministering Communities in Mission model, and this is something that has come through to me with great force this weekend, is that it is not just a matter of practical necessity. I have previously thought chiefly along those lines myself, that practical necessity will drive this, and to some extent practical necessity is the blessing from God that is the grit in the oyster that produces the pearl. I think this is one of the ways that God works. But it's *more* than practical necessity — it's very good to see, and I use the

word advisedly, *viable* parishes going this way, and parishes that could continue in a certain sort of independence choosing not to. That's extremely encouraging.

So in practice this can't be reduced to just reaction to crisis. The image that came to mind is that the crisis, be it financial or depopulation or whatever, is the catalyst that enables the reaction to happen. But you know from your High School chemistry that the catalyst isn't part of the reaction, it's not an essential part of it, it enables the reaction to get going but it isn't transformed itself in the reaction. So the catalyst gets it going but it's not the reaction itself.

However, there is one aspect of practical necessity that I think isn't a problem for us, it's not something that we should be embarrassed about, and that is the practical necessity of working with what you have on the ground in a particular situation. Again, Gary Weatherill's comment, "do what you can, not what you can't". If the practical situation is a congregation of seven in Jamestown, then you're not going to be doing a dozen church plants around the district. You have to work with the people that you've got and to some extent the resources that you've got.

Tasmania is well into this process now and some of our Tasmanian friends have shared that they are not so much thinking roles and ministries up front, as they were when they got into this, as much as now looking for who the holy people are in the local community. And letting the range of people who are there influence it — what kind of team, or what kind of ministry ought to emerge there. So there's a sense that practical necessity is of the essence of this process, looking at what's on the ground. But it's not the *product* of practical necessity, by which I mean a financial crisis, or something like that.

- 1d. Now some issues of geographic dependence, and the theological meaning of local. This is something where I've got questions in my mind still, and maybe you do as well. Are all the gifts necessary for ministry present in every local community? The very fact that Ministering Communities in Mission requires for it to work the constant input of District Priests, Priest Enablers and Ministry Development Officers (MDOs)¹ shows that outside help *is* needed to develop the gifts and ministries of local communities. I'm struck by the fact that in some stories that we've heard Ministering Communities in Mission have decided to employ somebody, perhaps an administrator, to fill the gap in the gifts that are available. That strikes me as intensely sensible.

Another question that I've had raised with me, I haven't picked it up this weekend, is whether an Anglican Ministering Community might seek the input of gifts from other Christian groups in the town. I remember Bill Ray, who used to be in Rockhampton and with GBRE, telling me that the experience of this in the early days in Rockhampton is that in a small town the obvious teacher of the faith might be a member of the Uniting Church congregation, and the obvious pastoral leader might be the Roman Catholic nun who lives there. Parts of the ministry, not all of it, but parts of it could be done ecumenically and shared.

So it's not that you have to form the ecumenical community church of Jamestown, but it may be that the Ministering Community of the Anglican Church incorporates in some aspects of its ministry ecumenical partners. This is really a question of "What is the Local Church?" If we take the town so seriously, as we seem to be doing, in fact the local town, its boundaries, its politics, its dislike of the town down the road, so seriously, then perhaps we need to think "Are God's gifts to the town, not just to the Anglican congregation?" So if we're taking towns so seriously, maybe there must then be ecumenical implications. [Voice from the audience (Dorothy Thorpe): "there are!"] That's good to know.

Now, this leads me to the question of just how determinative geography is. I just hinted at it by that comment about 'we honour the town in its distinctive identity and its distinctive

¹ Trevor Burt (Perth) has pointed out that there are four layers in the Ministering Communities ecclesiology: 1, Bishop; 2, Diocesan MDO; 3, District Priests/Enablers; 4, Local Priests & Deacons, Lay Ministers.

hatreds and dislikes!' The other town that it plays footy against (you mentioned it Bp Brian) and the other town that it competes with for government money or services or whatever. So I'm just wondering about these local boundaries and are we in some sense captive to culture by letting the boundaries and the identity of the Body of Christ be shaped by local cultural factors — the fact that Wonthaggi and Inverloch are competitors in Gippsland, for instance.

This is a problem we've found in traditional models where amalgamating two ill-fitting towns into one parish is not always successful. But I'm just wondering, I suppose, if we are developing a much more mature vision of church, whether that mature vision of church can and should somehow overcome some of these local boundaries. They're just questions I'm asking as part of a more general question about the theological meaning of the "local". Which I think is something that might need some more reflection in this forum.

- 1e. Now my last point on ecclesiology has to do with the question that's come up about how Anglican is the Ministering Communities in Mission model. Now Bp Harrower pointed out that the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of the late nineteenth century, which is still the Anglican template for inter-communion with other churches, provides a powerful indicator: if the church contains scriptures of the Old and New Testament; the two sacraments instituted by Christ; the creeds and the historic episcopate locally adapted. I think that's correct, and that certainly tells us the essentials of the Christian faith as we see it as Anglicans. I just wonder if *alone* it's sufficient to adequately decide whether something is Anglican. We can decide using it if it's compatible with Anglicanism but whether it is itself Anglican is I think another question.

I immediately think about the early Anglican ordinals of the Tudor period, and you get mixed signals from them. On the one hand you get the very clear distinction between clergy and laity, which was just carried over from the mediaeval church, but then you get that distinction blurred. You get a sense of a shared form of life that's expected of the clergy and the laity — so the married priest, the model of Christian family life, we hope. And so forth. You also get a strong sense of encompassing vocation, so with priest and laity called together for the building up of the Tudor commonwealth.

Now, this is different to the way we understand lay and ordained vocation today. Our thinking has evolved within Anglicanism into understanding clergy and lay as complementary vocations within the life of the church and the gathered congregation, and this model certainly honours that. Also, one thing this model gives us is something that the early Anglican ordinals wanted, and we've lost a bit, and that is the role of priest and laity and their ministries together — not just within the gathered congregation, but within the community. I've been struck by the way these ministering teams are kind of ministries within the community, building up and encouraging the life of the wider community, not just the gathered congregation. I'm thinking here of Fr David, the biology teacher, who somehow presses the priest button, the shaman button, in the collective psyche of his school and his town. So if that's a little vague, I'm sorry, but I'm just thinking there is an evolution of the early Anglican vision of encompassing vocations, clergy and lay, in community, which has importance in our thinking and which is very strongly represented in this model. So I guess what I'm saying is "yes, I think this is very Anglican" — it reflects an evolved vision of complementary vocations. So that's my reflection on the ecclesiology of the model.

- 2a. I'd like to go on now to a more specific, or focussed, issue that is to do with episcopé and ministerial orders. Something that is crystal clear from everything that has been discussed this weekend is how crucial episcopé is. How crucial leadership is for the success of this model, and this in two senses. First, it's entirely clear that the bishop is central to the success of this being able to work. The bishop has various roles in the process, and I'll identify several. The bishop can be driver of the process; the bishop can be encourager of the process; the bishop certainly has to be vision-bearer in the process; permission-giver is very significant because all the insights don't come from the top, not by any means — they also come from the ground up (God works both ways in my view). The bishop as discerner is a very key role in discerning the ministry of communities and the suitability of individuals for

ministry in those communities, and also the bishop as guardian of the fragile new thing — as a kind of nurturer of that fragile plant, or the image of the animal husbandman who nurtures a weak calf or domestic animal. Now all these roles of the bishop seem to me to be entirely understood and appreciated in the discussions that we've been having. I'd add that this central enabling role of the bishop is named in the English report *Mission-Shaped Church*² as well. In the Cray report, they don't make a theology of episcopacy out of it. I try to say a bit more about that in my paper *responding to Mission-Mhaped Church* that's in the latest *St Mark's Review*.³ But, never-the-less you can't get these things off the ground without the bishops really being on board and active throughout the process.

So that's one sense in which an episcopate's crucial — the central role of the bishop. But there's a second, more devolved aspect of episcopé that's crucial at all other levels. The district priest, for instance, shares in episcopé in the same way that traditionally an archdeacon would — well, not in the same way, but in a highly-related way — to the way the archdeacon shares in episcopé. The priest enabler shares in episcopé as an agent of the bishop's encouraging and enabling role. The ministry development officer, whether lay or ordained, certainly shares in episcopé, this ministry of enabling leadership. Now, if the ministry team is collectively the incumbent, the ministry team collectively shares in episcopé as well. Not just the priest. Traditionally, the bishop says at the induction "accept the charge that is both mine and yours", so the priest shares in the episcopé of the bishop in that place, and is an agent of it and a conduit for it. The whole ministry team shares in that episcopé. I was very struck in some of the material about the way lay people in ministering communities feel the weight of the obligation and the pressure that comes with that office, of episcopé.

Now I've had a gripe for a while about our present structures in the church. My gripe is that many of us priests, in the way we're expected to work in parishes, are too diaconal and insufficiently episcopal in our ministries. We can be just reactive ambulance chasers, if we're not careful [laughter] in busy parishes. That's what I call pastoral nurture. Pastoral nurture and the ambulance chasing is a very significant part of pastoral ministry. But it's not the beginning. Pastoral ministry begins with what I call pastoral structure. With others we establish a nurturing environment that's well administered, that's caring so that people feel valued. So that names aren't wrong on rosters all the time, and things like that. But when that background level of care breaks down we get pastoral nurture for individuals who need particular help. But it's very easy for the parish priest to just be running morning, noon and night, being reactive. And complaining that they don't get time to read, pray, reflect and be agents of spiritual teaching, spiritual formation, strategic planning to advance the ministry.

In the traditional model I think our priests can be *too* diaconal and insufficiently episcopal. We don't always emerge, or we don't let ourselves emerge or we're not allowed to emerge as the kind of enabling, nurturing, vision-bearing leaders of the new thing. Not controlling and shaping it, but just giving it permission and helping it to emerge. Now, I would think paradoxically, perhaps, in the Ministering Communities in Mission model the priest can emerge more with his or her episcopal face.

- 2b. Now there's an issue arising at this point. For me it's an issue arising with the theology of local priesthood. I think there's a bit of a theological lacunae for you on this issue that needs some more work. Now, if you look at the district priest, if you look at the priest enabler, if you look at the MDO (if they happen to be an ordained person), then you're clearly seeing both diaconal and episcopal elements in the priestly ministry that they exhibit. They're serving and helping, but they're also leading and shaping and guiding. So I can recognise the priest as I understand it in the district priest, the priest enabler and the ordained MDO, but I think we need to give some thought to actually what priesthood means for the local priest, with whom

² *Mission-Shaped Church* is a report from a working group of the Church of England's Mission and Public Affairs Council, often abbreviated to the "Cray Report" after its chairman, Bp Graham Cray. (London: Church House, 2004)

³ Also available at http://www.stpaulsmanuka.org.au/essays_and_addresses.htm

there are concerns as to whether they are the same sort of priest as the other ones and the conventional stipended priesthood. Is the local priest participating in a “priesthood lite”, if you like? Now Perth and Willochra and others are thinking that in order to make sure this doesn’t happen there needs to be one sort of gate and one sort of selection process into the priesthood, so you don’t get two castes of ordained priest within the church. And this has been a problem since the beginning of discussion of this issue in the Ministry and Training Commission (of General Synod) back in the mid ’90s.

The concern about local priests from North Queensland in an earlier era, is that some of them weren’t preachers, so sermons were sent out that could be read. So Sydney got offended by the idea of a pre-reformation-style ‘mass priest’ who ran the local chantry and said mass for the souls of the dead and wasn’t a preacher. So part of Sydney’s impetus to lay presidency is a reaction against local priests who can’t be learned ministers of the word and spiritual leaders of their congregations on the right path.

Now, I don’t hear that problem in anything anyone is saying here. No one is saying that they want mass priests in their towns. I get the feeling from all of you that you’re talking about local priests who will not only be ministers of the sacrament, but also ministers of the word. So preaching is of the essence. I, for one, would argue that preaching is of the essence of the priestly vocation, where it’s not of the essence of the diaconal vocation — you can have non-preaching deacons.

Also, in the local priest model, we see some differences from what we normally recognise priests to have been doing in other models. We see local priests who don’t have the pastoral care role as their chief focus, for instance, in the gathered congregation. We see local priests — say for instance a pastoral care team with lay members who might do it and the priest not do it, like Fr David the biology teacher — who’re not responsible for the pastoral care of the gathered congregation. We see local priests who aren’t “in charge”. So there’s Springsure, (I read the story about Springsure in *Market-Place* last month ⁴), and the local priest, Bp Godfrey⁵ you ordained there, is a member of a team of three and isn’t the leader of the team. [Bp Godfrey: “there’s no leader”] So here we have a local priest who has some sort of ministerial leadership, but doesn’t have oversight of the ministry in the town.

Is this the same as what we’ve got already? Can we find sufficient parallels, or is it a new thing? John Stead suggested “What about the hospital chaplain, who doesn’t have oversight of the gathered congregation?” I thought subsequently, John, that the hospital chaplain may actually be the leader of a team of lay volunteers in the hospital. But it’s still a good point, and then I thought of my curate who has some ministry leadership, but isn’t responsible for the leadership of the parish — that’s my responsibility. So, is the local priest a bit like the hospital chaplain, or the curate, who doesn’t have to be in charge of anything? Or retired clergy, or non-stipendiary clergy of various sorts who are honorary assistants. Is it just another version of what we have already, or is this an evolution of the doctrine of the priesthood? Our doctrine of the priesthood *has* developed. We now understand that the priesthood is incomplete without women. Is the practical evolution of local priests an invitation for us to see a doctrine of the priesthood develop yet further? Now, I don’t know, but I think we need to know, which is why I think this ought to be an issue for further theological reflection.

- 3a. My third section has to do with Mission and Evangelism. What is our mission and how evangelistic ought it to be? Now it’s very clear from what you’ve all said that the mission of furthering God’s reign of peace and justice in local communities, by just action and by loving service, is well understood. This is what all of these ministering communities are built on. The mission of worshipping God as a gathered community is absolutely central, and that gathered

⁴ *Market-Place*, an independent newspaper for Australian Anglicans, July 2006, pp. 10 – 11.
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⁵ Bishop Godfrey Fryar, Rockhampton Diocese.

community of faith becomes a presence and a witness in the local town or district nourishing word and sacrament in fellowship.

Now this is entirely understood by this model and by you all. What's not as clear to me, and forgive me if I've missed something, is that these ministering communities are all committed to growth in numbers and to winning souls for Christ. Now if that's in doubt, it's also indoubt for many churches in the traditional model. John Dunnill, from Perth, said in the latest *St Mark's Review*⁶ that a lot of congregations in the traditional model really don't want new members. New members subtly upset things and shift the dynamics of relationships and networks so the power brokers aren't as sure of their ground. So new members can be a real problem for the church, as we know!

So if it's true that ministering communities are a bit like this, then it's not their particular burden. There is potentially a much more mature way of being church. It ought not to be the case that ministering communities are enclosed and don't want growth in numbers. You'd think that a more mature expression of Christianity would just start attracting people and they would be welcome. So growth in numbers, as well as growth in faith, seems to me to be imperative in this sort of thing and if it's not the case then maybe there are some helpful questions to be asked. Some of those helpful questions might be: "Is the ministering communities model really something that suits a broad church type of Anglican, whose real interest is in community and being together, rather than the more spiritually intense business of winning converts?"; "Does the ministering communities model appeal to theological liberals, who like prayer and silence and who like fellowship and who like doing social work type things, but who don't really have any burning sense of the gospel as God's great claim on our imagination and our history, and who don't have a sense that it's good for people that they become Christians?".

I do know that there can be sensitivities in small towns where particular Christian groups start to operate evangelistically, and will probably be taking members from other churches as well as from the wider community. So I know there are issues here, and I just think it might be helpful to think about them.

- 3b. Now let me just say something finally on Ministering Communities and the so-called fresh expressions of Church. You know what I mean by "fresh expressions"? The stuff that's talked about in *Mission-Shaped Church* for instance? So church plants, café church, pub church, particular types of youth initiative, the new monasticism — there are some theological students in Canberra who are living together in a house, three of them, under vows. They pray together daily, they're in their early twenties. Apparently this is a movement that is growing up around the world. The *Mission-Shaped Church* report says that, at best, thirty per cent of people in our society will be able to be reached by traditional parish-type worshipping communities. So even if we really rev up our parish and get it zinging, the suggestion is that it won't reach more than about a third of the population. And the suggestion is that the only way the other two thirds of the population can be reached is through these fresh expressions of church, which brings Christ's gospel, word and sacrament, in a non-churchy way to a post-Christian culture.

I've heard a criticism from one evangelical bishop that the Ministering Communities model is just about preserving existing forms of parish life. It's just maintenance, really, with a new face. This evangelical bishop feels that this is not really the way we ought to go. Now, I'm just interested to reflect on this question in the light of my experience listening to you over the weekend. I reckon that the Ministering Communities in Mission really represent the Church becoming more mature, mystical and militant, and hence is more likely to be evangelistically successful than a traditional parish of passive lay people gathered around an over-active minister! [Laughter.]

⁶ Information about *St Mark's Review* is obtainable at <http://www.stmarksntc.org.au/thl/review/default.htm>

My instincts are that this criticism may not be entirely on the right track, and further there seems to be no reason why some Ministering Communities in Mission, if they are big enough, couldn't spawn fresh expressions of church. There's been some examples given of just that very thing happening, over the weekend. I'm reminded of the young mum's group, which started off as something for the kids, and then something for the young mums and then they quickly realised it was an outreach they were doing for God. Now that young mum's group could very easily be seen as a fresh expression of Church, where the play group is the weekly worship for that group of people, and it could be that a ministering team is discerned and equipped for ministering to those young mums, and it could be that one of those young mums is eventually ordained as a local deacon to minister in that context. I don't know whether a local priest would be needed, but maybe.

Another example was the ice creamery in Forbes. Now that's an exciting development, so if there are numbers in the ministering community, and resources, it may be that fresh expressions will naturally emerge more readily than they would from traditional parishes.

Summary

Now let me sum up with two practical suggestions: the first has to do with these three block points here ... [section of whiteboard previously obscured]

Theological Issues

(proposed topics to be included in future conferences)

1. Theological Reflection on, and meaning of value of, 'the local'.
2. The theology of 'local priesthood'.
3. Evangelism in the Ministering Communities in Mission model and 'fresh expressions' of church.

... which I think are the three things that have emerged for me as needing further reflection. The first is to do with the theological meaning, and value of, 'the local'. There's been some debate about the theological significance of 'the local' in a global era, and something about God's commitment to the local as a sort of counter-cultural challenge to the culture of globalisation, where nobody belongs anywhere, except the poor, who are stuck somewhere. So a theological reflection on 'the local', I think, might be a very helpful and timely injection into your reflections in future.

Secondly, I think the theology of local priesthood is an issue that needs some really good theological input on, and some reflection. Is it just 'priesthood lite'? Is it essentially the same as the old expression of priesthood, and compatible? Or is it a new evolution of priesthood and a doctrine development? I don't have a problem with the district priest, the priest enabler or the ordained MDO, but I think there are real issues for reflection on what sort of priest is the local priest?

And the third thing, just some reflection on evangelism. Now that's something the whole Church needs to do, regardless of the model. But just some reflection on evangelism in the Ministering Communities model. So that's my first practical suggestion, and it's to do with theology.

My second practical suggestion isn't really to do with theology, it's really to do with process. Just having been part of the group and having heard comments from people, I wonder if in future you might take on board this idea: that in future conferences, everyone's together but there are sessions where the main group divides according to special needs and interests. And I'm thinking there are at least three groups of people here who bring particular needs and interests, who might all appreciate to be catered for in a more specific way than they have been over the last weekend. The first group are practitioners who are eager to hear stories and gather good ideas; the second group are practitioners who are needing to network and have serious discussions about strategy and review; and the third group are interested newcomers who need to be guided through their

reflection on this and have the opportunity to ask questions and gather resources. It could be that one or two afternoons could be devoted to different streams and interests and needs ... so that'll do, I think. [Applause.]