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The Bishop's Certificate and Diploma in  
Theology for Ministry

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# Situation Analysis

*for Ministry and Mission*

## Handbook Six

*Becoming a Reflective  
Practitioner in Mission*

Name:



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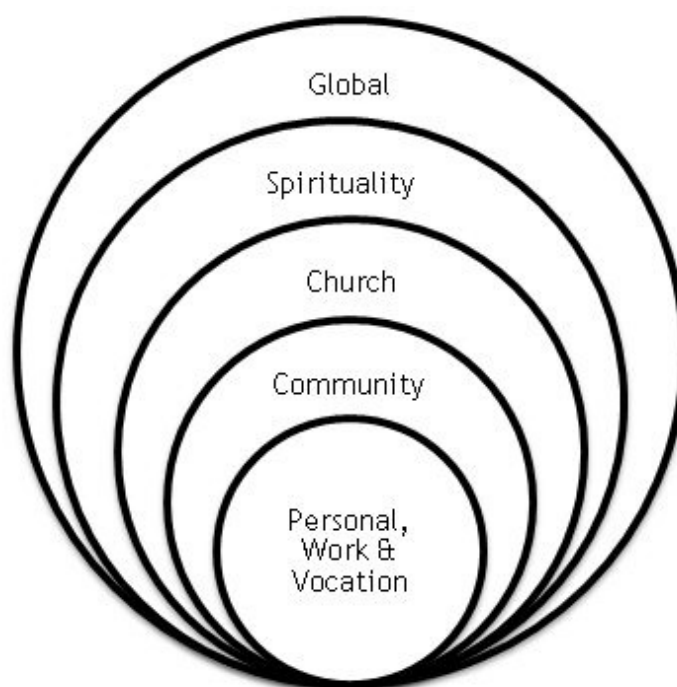
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# Introduction to this Handbook

As you embark on your research in this final handbook of guided situation analysis, we recommend that you carefully re-read the general introduction provided in the fourth handbook. You can also read the general introduction on the NSTM website.



This final part of your situation analysis work differs from the preceding work in the other five handbooks.

In this handbook your analysis and evaluation now begins to focus on your activities in whatever form your Christian mission and ministry takes, with the objective of helping you to become a reflective practitioner: a person who in order to serve to the best of your ability, brings a critical and intentionally reflective eye to bear on all aspects of your activities.

This handbook aims to provide you with a range of tools which are able to help you with that task. All of these tools are aids to reflecting upon practice and it is for you to decide by testing them out, which of them are of most relevance and assistance in your situation.

We are certainly not suggesting that this is an exhaustive list - what we offer here are a few of the aids to reflection which you can test for yourself. There are an enormous number of similar tools in use among a wide range of

professions these days, and you may well encounter some of these and feel that they too, are worth experimenting with to see whether they are helpful to you in your context.

If you are interested in looking for further ideas in this area, we suggest that you consult the four volumes of *Training for Transformation* (Anne Hope and Sally Timmel, Gweru, Mambo Press, revised edition, 1995). These contain “hands-on” exercises for situation analysis, critical reflection and the management of Christian practice first developed for a church-inspired programme in Africa, but subsequently adapted for use in many parts of the world. But you will also find other helpful resources being employed by major secular business enterprises to help employees deliver better services. These can quite often be found on the internet and adapted for a ministry situation. We are not suggesting that you make this kind of search a major enterprise, just that you keep an eye out for ideas which could be of help to you.

*Training for Transformation* is based upon the work of Paulo Freire, the Brazilian Roman Catholic educationalist. Indeed the whole pedagogy of the programmes offered by NSTM draw upon Freire’s educational insights, particularly that students should not be regarded as “empty vessels” to be filled up with knowledge but that we all possess a great deal of knowledge about our community and the world we inhabit, and that all of us are both learners and teachers. You will have encountered these ideas already in your studies.

All of us by becoming both “readers of the word” (drawing on the wisdom of our tradition), and “readers of the world” (using our skills of situation analysis to understand what is going on) can become agents of transformation, in our community, our church, and the world. These tools for reflective practice can help us become those kinds of people.

# Session One

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## WHY BECOME A REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER?

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There was a time, not all that long ago, when Christians engaged in mission and ministry very often without a great deal of preparation and with few practical skills. It was considered sufficient that a person had a calling to serve, and although that calling might be tested in a number of ways, and some basic training was offered, Christian workers were expected to be endowed with a kind of familiarity with what carrying the Gospel into the community and making disciples involved. A person's motivation was regarded as paramount and the expectation was that one would use the tried and tested methods of spreading the Gospel.

So for many clergy preparation for ordained ministry required wrestling with Greek and Latin texts, with Biblical exegesis and the writings of the Early Fathers, studying liturgy, Christian ethics, and Church doctrine, but without any theory or experience of the practice of mission and ministry. As one priest put it, "I spent years learning Hebrew and Greek only to discover that my parishioners spoke neither language!"

Many clergy were not offered anything by way of job descriptions in the past, but were expected to "learn the ropes" from more experienced people who may or may not have been good role models. They were informed by rather romantic views of ministry such as "a priest is a person who is paid to be free to love", and "a minister is a person set aside by the community to remind it of its humanity".

These were bold and imaginative ideas, but the question of how they were to be encapsulated in practice was largely not considered during training, and skilling was therefore not provided.

Similarly, it has been quite normal for the training of missionaries to concentrate upon spiritual discipline and on techniques for communicating the Gospel, with little focus and skilling on the day-to-day practice of mission.

So missionaries have been sent to distant and often hostile environments with little knowledge of the culture and situation of the people to whom they were being sent. In contexts like this mission necessarily has to be conducted on a trial or error basis.

The trouble with ad hoc approaches to mission and ministry conceived of loosely as “working in my little corner of God’s vineyard” is that they frequently lack any built-in means of evaluating our day-to-day practice. Yet if we are committed to lifelong formational learning, as this programme is, and are aiming for continual improvement in our practice, we need to develop some basic skills of reflection upon our activities.

This applies to all ministerial functions whether one is a reader, intercessor, lay liturgical assistant, home-group leader, youth or children’s worker, welcomer, pastoral visitor, administrator, leader within a Parish Ministry Team, deacon, priest or bishop. All of us in ministry need to develop the capacity to reflect critically on our day-to-day activities.

Throughout your studies you have been encouraged to reflect critically upon the readings provided in the range of courses you have been studying. The aim was to encourage you to approach all texts critically, and not simply accept them as if they were the final word on any matter.

Many of us have brought to our studies a great deal of experience - professional experience and life experience. Our aim has been to help you to bring all that experience to bear upon thinking through aspects of mission and ministry, and not, as some programmes do, adopt a deficit model of the

student, assuming that your previous experience is worthless. So, rather than blindly accepting the views of other people, you are being trained to think through issues on the basis of your experience and to form a view of your own.

We can summarise the difference between ‘ordinary thinking’ and ‘critical thinking’ through the characteristics below:

Ordinary Thinking	Critical Thinking
Guessing	Estimating
Preferring	Evaluating
Grouping	Classifying
Believing	Assuming
Inferring	Inferring logically
Associating concepts	Grasping principles
Noting relationships	Noting relationship among other relationships
Supposing	Hypothesising
Offering opinions without reasons	Offering Opinions with reasons
Making judgements without criteria	Making judgements with criteria

The art of critical reflection applies just as much to our day-by-day practice of mission and ministry as it does to our academic study.

We reflect upon what we are doing by way of practice in order to improve and enhance that practice. It would be foolish to assume that our actions, no matter how well intended, will always be free of error, or that we will never, even unwittingly cause offence to anybody, or that we will always deliver actions in the way that we had intended.

Becoming a reflective practitioner and examining critically our day-to-day mission and ministry activities helps us to identify what is good and bad practice, and prevents us from repeating our mistakes. It is a means of ensuring that Christian witness and ministry embody a Gospel experience, and that we are committed to maintaining and continually developing the highest possible standards.

By way of example, here are some reflections from people who have studied on other programmes which have a similar focus on the development of reflective practitioners:

Developing a critical awareness was the first step in a process of change leading to a possible transformation within the Department. Examining current concerns opened our thinking to learning more about ourselves in relation to the work place, releasing a new vision, a new power and a new zeal. It has encouraged me and given me the hope that I can transform my 'world'. *Medical Specialist.*

I paraphrase Paulo Freire who instances a man who spoke out during a discussion. It expresses my experience in this course and my hopes. 'I can't say that I have understood everything but I can say one thing: when I began this course I was naïve, and when I found out how naïve I was, I started to get critical".  
*Parish Priest*

I feel more rounded; my eyes are open wider; I have more confidence. *Nurse*

The use of analytic categories is enabling us to serve the College with greater insight. Understanding why certain changes are taking place and the effect these are having upon the institution and individuals has moved us into a more significant role of ministry. Theology here is a tool in the transfiguration of this place. *School Chaplain.*

Through the programme that these four reflections have been taken from many participants reached important and life-changing insights through critical reflection.

One priest recounted that, in the middle of his Sunday sermon, he suddenly realised that he had been preaching from that pulpit for over twenty years, telling parishioners what he thought the Gospel was about, without ever once having paused to ask what his parishioners thought the Gospel was about. He said that this momentary realisation was to transform his practice.

As he reflected on his previous experiences he was able to make changes to what he would do in the future. As a result, on some occasions during the week he would gather a group of parishioners together to reflect on the Gospel for the following Sunday and include these insights in his sermon. Sometimes he abandoned the pulpit and, walking up and down the aisle, engaged parishioners in a spirited dialogue about the day's readings. Only rarely did he return to preaching "six feet above contradiction". And this came about because he had begun to develop the skills of reflecting upon and critiquing his practice.

So in this final situation analysis handbook we shall be discussing and practising some of the many skills which help us in the task of reflecting on what we are achieving by way of ministry and mission. To aid us in this task we need first to develop a case study which we will be using as the basis of our reflection in many, but not all of the sessions which follow.

In the social sciences this is sometimes referred to as a "critical incident", an example of practice in a professional field which raises some fundamental and sometimes dramatic questions about people's intentions, actions and responses.

- 1. By the end of this first session you must have selected your case study and written it up in your Situation Analysis journal.**

**Your case study should preferably be an event or series of events in which you were personally involved. If that is not practicable you could use an occurrence which you are familiar with in somebody else's practice but that may not prove adaptable for the important exercise in Session 7. If you are a member of a Parish Ministry Team you must use an event in which you were personally involved. It must be an incident related to the practice of mission or ministry.**

**For example, it could be a case study which raises issues about the management of pastoral care, or a dispute that divided a parish and was difficult to resolve. It could relate to a time in which changes were being advocated in the parish, or a misunderstanding that arose between the church and the community at large.**

**It might reflect a breakdown in relationships between key groups or individuals in the parish, or the departure of dissatisfied people to establish or join another congregation. While there need not be any element of conflict in your case study, because we are fallible individuals, and the church is staffed by fallible humans, there is a likelihood of conflict manifesting itself, and this can make for a useful case study.**

**In developing your case study, you might keep the following criteria of a good study in mind. Your case study should:**

- Raise a fundamental problem or problems;**
- Tell a story;**
- Describe the situation as fully as possible without making judgements about it;**
- Describe the steps or actions taken in respect to the event or problem;**
- Describe the key players and the range of opinions held;**

- Describe the resolution of the situation, and its aftermath;
- Be sustainable over the eight sessions of this booklet;
- Be described in no more than a page (or 500 words);
- Be written up in your Situation Analysis journal.

**We have provided a sample case study below by way of example. This depicts real events in a parish which was so caught up in the struggle to survive that it had lost the capacity to address questions of mission and ministry. One of the things that makes this a good case-study is that there were three major players in these events, the congregation, the local youths at a loose end, and the parish priest. Each acted the way they did, but equally each could have behaved differently with the outcomes and aftermath being other than they turned out to be.**

**Note that in this instance the study is divided into three distinct sections: a description of the situation, a description of the event and the responses to it, and a brief description of the aftermath. This template works well with a range of issues including those of local mission and pastoral care, but you should not feel obliged to follow it if you can think of a better way of organising your material.**

**As with some of the previous exercises this could be a joint exercise with members of your Parish Ministry Team or local group, although that would involve agreeing to meet together to complete each session's work.**

## St Agnes's: A Sample Case Study

### The Situation

St Agnes's is an inner-city parish in a very run-down area of a major city. It has a congregation of some thirty elderly members, only four of whom actually live in the parish with the rest returning to worship there because it is the area they grew up in or the Church in which they were married. Financially the parish depends upon weekly Bingo in the Hall. There is a constant harking back to the past and to the ministries of former parish priests in days when the church was full. The atmosphere is that of a private club. Worship is very traditional and catholic, and parishioners want to keep it that way and resist any changes to the liturgy, music, or the church furnishings. The parish priest teaches extensively about the congregation's vocation to engage in both mission and social service in the local community, but the few newcomers who venture to church generally feel unwelcome and do not stay very long.

There were a large number of youths who played and sometimes caused trouble in the streets surrounding the church, there being no recreational facilities in the locality. The Parish Priest found a young man who agreed to become a volunteer youth worker, and soon there was a flourishing youth club in the parish hall, and a football team playing in a local league. Every Thursday night and on Saints Days there was an evening Eucharist in Church at 7 pm which some twenty or so of the congregation would attend. The youth worker encouraged the teenagers, many of whom had never attended church previously, to come to these services. Soon there were as many young people coming to the evening service as there were regular members. Their behaviour could be somewhat unruly and a cause of offence to the regular members. During the communion the priest encouraged the young to come up for a blessing.

## **The Event**

Matters came to a head during one Thursday evening Eucharist when one of the lads, kneeling for a blessing, slipped on to the stone floor hurting his knee and uttered an audible expletive. The following week at a meeting of the Parish Council a mood of “enough is enough” prevailed and the Council instructed the Parish Priest to prevent the youngsters from coming to Church next Thursday on the grounds of unacceptable behaviour and the interruption of people’s private devotions. The Parish Priest tried to dissuade people from this action arguing that as the word “Catholic” implied that the Church was open to “all” and not just the domain of the faithful, he could not contemplate such an action. The following Thursday evening two members of the Parish Council stood at the church door and turned every young person away.

## **The Aftermath**

The Parish Priest declared that his priority for ministry would henceforth be focused upon the alienated young of the streets and announced that the Rectory would be an “open house” of hospitality for them. The two members of the Council who had deterred the young from entering the Church expressed neither apologies nor remorse. Three members of the Council signed a letter of complaint about the priest to the Bishop. In time, some of the young began attending services again with several becoming regular members of the sanctuary party. Most never returned.

# Session Two

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## INTUITIVE LEARNING

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The terms '*reflective practice*' and '*reflective practitioner*' are associated with an American academic, Donald Schön, who taught at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Back in 1970 Schön had delivered the prestigious Reith Lectures for the BBC on the theme of "Change and Industrial Society", later reworked as a book under the title *Beyond the Stable State* published in 1973. His argument was that change had become a fundamental feature of modern life and that it was necessary that we develop social systems that can both learn from change and adapt to change. That doesn't sound very radical today, but it was back then!

As his research into learning and adaptation developed, Schön became interested in what professionals *actually do* in their work, rather than what they *think* they are doing or *say* that they are doing. In exploring this area he was focussing upon the difference between our intentional language and what we actually do by way of practice. Such language of course applies as much to institutions as it does to individuals and we can probably all point to examples of the way that the Church often contradicts its intentional language through its institutional behaviour. We declare ourselves to be a loving, open, accepting, caring, just and forgiving community, but throughout our history there have been recipient groups and individuals for whom Christian practice has fallen far short of these intentions. Whilst there are many examples of the Church's ministry at its best, we can frequently fail to practice what we preach.

In his research into a range of professions, Schön discovered that while a basic knowledge of the profession is very important to the professional, people actually know much more than they can put into words and describe. More than this, to meet the challenges of their daily work, most professionals rely less on their formal education and training, than on improvisations that they have discovered in the course of their practice.

Schön argued that professionals need to tap into this creativity and foster it with the aim of identifying what their practice actually is in order to improve it. He called this process “reflection in action”.

He felt that the body of rational, technical and scientific knowledge which is considered the basic platform of a particular profession becomes inadequate in our rapidly changing world. It is no longer sufficient for a person to directly apply the kind of professional knowledge they have absorbed in their training. We need other qualities today, what Schön described as a tacit *knowing-in-action*. Our “feel” for the job is important; that is, the way we can bring intuitive processes to bear on situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and value-conflict which we face.

A good example of this process in popular culture is frequently provided by the range of medical and hospital dramas that abound on television these days. The medical field is a sphere in which the rational scientific approach has been applied par excellence with the practitioner calling upon all the technical skills of his or her training.

In the TV dramas it is frequently the case that the rational-technical approach fails, and it is only through a “hunch” or piece of intuitive thinking that something new is tried, a life is saved and the new solution becomes incorporated into good practice.

What we are talking about here are concepts like “thinking on our feet” or “flying by the seat of our pants” which indicate that we can think creatively and maybe even take a few risks in the context of our practice. Reflective practice is the discipline through which we start to identify and name the

more intuitive and creative elements of our practice, which have become essential to the way that we see and do things, and which we can apply in a systematic way in order to improve our practice. One writer has described the qualities of reflective practice as a tenacious city wild flower which “vibrates with vitality, raising our awareness and calling us from passivity into action”.

So how are we to apply the skills of reflective practice to our work in a variety of forms of Christian mission, care and ministry?

To begin with, to what degree can those who exercise any form of ministry in the Church be described as professionals? This remains a disputed area and there are many who prefer to think of ministry in terms of a “calling” or vocation rather than a profession on a par with that of medicine, teaching, town-planning, law, finance and so on. This issue also arises for the large number of Christians who undertake ministry and witness on an entirely voluntary and unpaid basis. In what sense is their work to be deemed professional? In the previous session we noted some of the more romantic views of the nature of Christian ministry, a sentiment echoed in Christopher Cocksworth and Rosalind Brown’s book, *Being a Priest Today* (Canterbury Press, 2002) in which they write (p 203):

The way we live our... vocation is unique to each one of us as, with God, we shape the dance, the picture, the story, the garden that is our own expression of the fully alive human person who is the glory of God.

There is an obvious tension here between those who regard mission and ministry more as a creative art than as a profession. The very word “profession” will conjure up negative images for some people; images, to take the worst kind of example, drawn perhaps from the competitive and greedy worlds of the market-obsessed professions which betrayed us so badly in the recent global recession.

For a variety of honourable reasons, the Church has worked to position itself as one of society's caring professions, and as such has adopted some of the instruments shared by those professions, instruments like boards or committees for professional standards to keep a watching brief over our standards of professional behaviour and service. Thus we are rightly *treated* as professionals in terms of our relationships with those amongst whom we serve or minister.

But for us the maintenance of professional standards goes a step further than most other professions in that while many professionals can ring-fence their professional and private lives, it is expected of us that we embody Gospel values in both our public and personal lives. So the professional obligations laid upon us are actually greater than those of most other professions.

Given that we are treated as professionals and expected to act professionally, we can certainly benefit greatly from becoming disciplined reflective practitioners. We shall be learning more about this each session as we apply a range of different tools to our case-study. In this session we are focussing upon our intuitions, gut feelings or "hunches" about the situation we have described.

While intuition has long been recognised as a common human experience, it was the psychologist Carl Jung who first introduced it as a formal theory. For Jung, human psychology embraces spiritual aspects which play a very important role both within individual life and in society at large. He regarded intuition as a natural part of us, helping us to understand ourselves and others and putting us in touch with a larger spiritual awareness spanning time and space, which he called the "collective unconscious".

The Hungarian-British academic Michael Polanyi declaring that "we know more than we can tell" worked on a theory of "tacit knowledge" which he regarded as his most important philosophical discovery. This knowledge, he maintained, is arrived at rapidly without deliberate rational thought, difficult to articulate verbally, based on a broad constellation of prior learning and

past experiences, accompanied by a feeling of confidence or certitude, and prompting action.

An American researcher, Gary Klein (*Sources of Power: How People Make Decisions*, MIT Press, 1998) looking primarily at personnel in the military and emergency services, estimated that in 80 and 95 percent of time-pressured cases decision-makers rely on intuitive rather than rational choice. Another survey among American executives found 47 percent claiming to use intuitive decision-making often, 37 percent occasionally, and only 10% rarely.

Another academic, Eugene Sadler-Smith in a paper *Intuition, Neuroscience, Decision-Making and Learning*, describes intuition in the following way:

We acquire our capability to intuit through experiences in particular domains via explicit and implicit learning processes, which result in the acquisition of highly complex and subtle patterns of tacit knowledge that cannot be described or explained easily. These mental models are stored in long-term memory under a variety of sophisticated rules for how to achieve specific goals in particular situations and which are activated by the cues that we perceive from the environment. Intuitions enable us to solve problems, take decisions, achieve insights and generate scientific discoveries and artistic creations.

Arguing for an informed rather than haphazard learning approach to intuition in decision-making, Sadler-Smith has developed the following table which is provided here for information and not an exercise for you to undertake (unless of course, you wish to).

Open up your decision-making 'closet'	Ask yourself to what extent you experience intuition, trust your feelings, count on intuitive judgements, suppress hunches, and covertly rely upon gut feelings.
Elicit good feed-back on your intuitive decisions	Good feedback builds good intuitions, so seek feedback on your intuitive judgements, build confidence on your gut feelings, and create a learning environment where you can develop better intuitive awareness. Communicate your intuitions using analogy, metaphor and stories.
Get a feel for your intuitive decision making 'batting average'	How good are your intuitions, have they served you well or badly in the past - why? Get a better feel for how reliable your hunches are; ask yourself how your intuitive judgement might be improved. How good are the intuitions of your colleagues? What can be learned from reflecting on how well your own intuitions, and those of your colleagues, have worked in the past?
Use imagery and stories in intuitive judgement and decision-making	Intuitions often arise in a nonverbal mode: if you don't already do so make greater use of imagery rather than words; literally visualise not-yet-existing future realities that take your gut feelings into account - how do they 'feel' and can you imagine them becoming a reality? Be open to expressing intuitions using analogy, metaphor, anecdotes and stories. Use intuition to envision non-existing future realities.
Play devil's advocate with your intuitive decisions	Don't be afraid to test out your intuitive judgements and probe those of others. Prototype your intuitions and not-yet-existent futures, play and experiment with intuitions in safe settings, raise objections to them, generate counter-arguments, and probe how robust your not-yet-existent futures are when challenged.
Create a receptive state and capture and validate your intuitions	Create the inner state to give your intuitive mind the freedom to roam, capture your intuitions, envision not-yet-existent futures, and record them before they are censored by rational analysis. Reflect, retreat and contemplate. Slow down the pace to allow creative intuitions to surface and flourish.

It is these kinds of learning theories that Schön is tapping into when he speaks of "learning in action". And our tacit knowledge is the first tool to which we will subject our case study.

- 2. Read carefully through your case study and try to identify any gut feelings, hunches or intuitions that arise in response to it.**
- 3. Do any of your intuitions suggest ways of resolving or ameliorating the situation?**
- 4. In your Situation Analysis journal write up your reflections, together with a note of the ways you found the exercise helpful or unhelpful.**

# Session Three

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## CALLING ON SCRIPTURE

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One of the obvious sources of wisdom in our reflection upon practice is that of Scripture and especially of course the teachings of Jesus.

One of the things we have learnt in our study of the scriptures in this programme is that we need to bring a critical view to bear on scripture just as we do on our other academic pursuits. This means that we pay attention to the context in which Jesus was living and teaching and that we do not indulge in “proof-texting” - taking individual sayings out of their context and using them to justify or to condemn various attitudes and behaviours. Two of the basic questions we always need to pose to scripture are “what did the words mean to the original writer and readers?” and “what do those words mean when located today in the twenty-first century Australian Church?”

For example, some human motivations and predicaments will not have changed at all through the centuries and the words of Jesus will speak directly to them. Other situations dictated by cultural contexts may have changed enormously, and we have to wrestle with scripture to discern its message for us today.

When in Matthew 18:9 Jesus says “If your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away” we do not take this as a divine command to mutilate ourselves, and any who do so are more likely to be treated for mental illness than regarded as models of virtuous behaviour. Instead we recognise that one of the tools of oratory in Jesus’s day was hyperbole - the use of exaggeration

to create dramatic effect - and that Jesus was employing this skill to stress the need for us to be aware of our own sinfulness and to avoid offending other people. He uses the same device in advising us to get rid of the log in our own eye before trying to help a friend get rid of the speck in his eye. He is suggesting that we cultivate the arts of self-awareness and self-examination rather than become preoccupied with the faults of other people.

So as we employ scripture as a tool in our reflective practice we will seek to identify some of the major themes of the Bible like faith, hope and love, dying to self and rising to new life, repentance and forgiveness, making a preferential option for the poor, Kingdom living, redemptive suffering, Jubilee, restoration and healing, the Beatitudes (blessed are the poor, meek, mourners, seekers after righteousness, merciful, pure of heart, peacemakers, persecuted), Magnificat (the proud scattered, mighty cast down, lowly lifted up, hungry filled, rich sent away empty), hope and purpose, and so on. Such themes become benchmarks against which we can evaluate our practice.

Many of the teachings of Jesus were delivered through parables and they are a particularly rich source of insights into our practice. Many of the parables are examples of problem-posing education which is the form of education which Paulo Freire has employed to develop skills of social analysis and which is the basis of our own situation analysis exercises.

The often referred to parable of the good Samaritan, frequently cited as a model of Christian social concern, is a good example of this technique begging the question "Who acted as neighbour to the victim of mugging on the Jericho road?" The parable reveals an unanticipated conclusion: the ideal neighbour, (who is a representation of the Kingdom of God), is located not amongst the violent who attacked the traveller, nor amongst the religious and legal establishments which may pass human suffering by, but in an outsider, a Samaritan, who to Jewish society was a despised person. Thus parables can assist us pursue our analysis and reflection.

We employ biblical insights as an element in reflective practice conscious that we need to know more.

In their book *Learning For Ministry* (Church House Publishing, 2005), Bishop Stephen Croft and Roger Walton point out that each of us needs to constantly work on broadening our knowledge and understanding of scripture and the ways people have treated it, further developing our critical faculties.

They provide a mini-case-study which involves a Church which is struggling financially being offered a large sum of money for some of the Church land to be incorporated into a new shopping complex. In discussions it becomes apparent that the complex is to serve an upmarket clientele, and not those in the community who are disadvantaged and really need access to affordable products.

A parish meeting is held with somebody asked to give a short talk on the stewardship and use of land in the Bible. People learn that the Old Testament says a great deal about adequate provision for the poor in the use of land, and as a consequence, the church begins negotiations with the developer to ensure that the needs of the poor in the community will be catered for.

Let's now turn to the sample case-study we developed in the first session of this handbook to see what light scripture might throw upon that situation.

In the example that was provided the elderly congregation at St Agnes's are apparently wanting to maintain a stable and settled life, resist change and are constantly harking back to the "good old days".

By way of contrast the Old Testament depicts the Hebrews as a community on the move, following a God who goes before them. As Welsh Anglican priest and poet R S Thomas puts it: "He is such a fast God, always before us, and leaving as we arrive". The image of a community wandering in the wilderness and encountering God there is very powerful.

Rarely were the Hebrews able to live a settled existence: enslaved in Egypt, wandering in the wilderness, surviving foreign attacks, driven into exile, drifting back from exile, their Temple destroyed, dispersed among the Diaspora, life was perilous and uncertain, not comfortable and assured.

Again in Jesus, we find a man on the move, with “nowhere to lay his head” and none of the comforts of a settled existence, and above all a person conscious of the needs of others and making himself available to them.

In contrast to the settled stability of St Agnes’s, the Old Testament depictions of the chosen people of God and the New Testament images of the peripatetic ministry of Jesus, suggest that Christians too must be people on the move.

And what of the alienated young people who play in the streets surrounding St Agnes’s in the case study? What can scripture tell us about them?

One image that springs immediately to mind is that of the disciples chasing children away so that Jesus won’t be bothered by them. But Jesus will have none of it. “Let the children come to me”, he says, adding, “because the Kingdom of heaven is made up by such as these”.

Commentators do not agree about what Jesus is saying here. But he is insisting that the young are to be especially valued, because some of the characteristics associated with childhood, like innocence, openness, a sense of wonder, their unconditional love, are manifestations of the Kingdom, and we adults can learn from them.

In their rejection of the young, and excluding them from the community of the church and its worship, the congregation was ignoring the advocacy of Jesus and apparently unaware that here lay a treasure from which they could learn.

Moreover, in that wonderful block of teaching which comes towards the end of his life in Mathew’s Gospel, Jesus declares that on judgement day the King will say (25.42ff) that hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick and in prison, nobody came to his help. And the people are dismayed and protest “When did we see you hungry or thirsty, a stranger or naked, sick and in prison, and did not come to your help?” to which the King replies, “Insofar as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do it to me”.

What the congregation of St Agnes' lacked was the capacity to discern Jesus in these young people, and in welcoming and ministering to them, welcoming Jesus himself. And according to this parable, in their failure to do that, they placed their mortal souls in peril.

Some of the parables cast light upon our ministry and mission in the world. Take the parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin for example, in which we find a shepherd and a woman going to extraordinary lengths to find that which is lost. For the shepherd ninety-nine sheep may be safe, but all his energy is directed at finding and bringing home the one that is lost.

So there is an urgency about mission, accompanied a willingness to go to great lengths to bring people home to God, an understanding and urgency which for this congregation had become submerged in other concerns considered more pressing. They could not see the young people as lost souls who needed to be brought home.

Finally, does scripture have anything to say about the role of the priest in this situation? In his preaching and teaching he had tried to convince the congregation of its need to become more outward looking and missionary in its orientation but had received virtually nothing by way of a positive response.

Scripture makes it clear that Jesus confronted people with a challenge, but if they were not able to meet it, he didn't put pressure on them or pursue them.

Take the story that appears in three of the Gospels, of the rich young man who asks Jesus what he needs to do to be saved. In Mark's Gospel we are told that Jesus looked upon the young man and loved him and tells him that ultimately he needs to sell all that he has and give the proceeds to the poor. The young man goes away sorrowfully unable to do this. Jesus allows him the freedom to do that: he doesn't put pressure upon him, he doesn't chase after him. Jesus is saying that we must take responsibility for our actions. The congregation, turning its back on the youths, is walking away from Jesus.

This act of rejection prompts the priest to rethink his mission priorities, and presumably after a great deal of thought he reaches a decision. Following the example of Jesus in Scripture, he makes a preferential option for the poor, carrying a ministry to these young people beyond the walls of the Church.

These are just a few of the scriptural connections we can make with the sample case-study. From, your knowledge of the Bible you may be able to make many other links. But it is important to note that what we are applying here are broad themes rather than individual texts.

- 5. Revisit your case study. As you review it, note any biblical themes, parables or acts and teachings of Jesus that illuminate it.**
- 6. Write up the results in your situation analysis learning journal. Then also note the degree to which you found this tool useful.**

# Session Four

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## USING THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

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The social sciences are a group of disciplines which serve as tools for exploring aspects of human society. They include anthropology, archaeology, political science, economics, sociology, psychology, history and geography. Some people add education and linguistics to this list. You have been making use of some aspects of the social sciences in your situation analysis work as you have sought to analyse the structures and dynamics of your work, your church, your community and the global impact upon these aspects of your life.

In terms of reflective practice, pioneers like Carl Jung, Michael Polanyi and Donald Schön made use of some of the tools of social science in their research and the construction of their theories of intuition, human learning processes, the structures of the working environment, the way professions function, and so on. And we can employ some of these tools as we reflect in a systematic way upon our practice of mission and ministry.

Paulo Freire, in trying to equip disadvantaged and impoverished communities with skills that could transform their situation, developed a range of accessible tools of critical social analysis. Simple questions which can be posed to any action or process, “Who decides? Who benefits? Who is disadvantaged?” are in fact applications of insights derived from social sciences like economics, politics and economics. We mentioned earlier that Freire was committed to a form of problem-posing education which

encourages curiosity. As he puts it (*Pedagogy of Indignation*, London, Paradigm Publishers, 2004, p87):

Disquieted by the world outside of the self, startled by the unknown, by mystery, driven by a desire to know, to unveil what is hidden, to seek an explanation for the facts, to verify, to apprehend - curiosity is the engine for the discovery process.

One of the Institutes that Freire established, the Ecumenical Institute for the Development of Peoples (INODEP) which is based in Paris, developed a series of exercises which link our curiosity to the process of social analysis. We used one such exercise in the first piece of Situation Analysis we undertook at the beginning of this course, in our Personal Audit. Questions about our family origins, our education, our profession, the activities we pursue outside our profession, our sources of information and the kind of society we would prefer to be living in create our psycho-social history and help us to understand why and how through events and experiences, we have come to a particular understanding of the world we inhabit, and the adoption of a particular set of values and views.

In this session we will be employing another Freirean exercise to help us reflect upon our practice. This one invites us to identify and classify under three categories, elements which we are able to identify in our case-study.

The first category is that of decision-making which takes us into the realm of power and politics. Power is the influence that individuals, groups or institutions have exercised in your situation. The “politics” may be those of the local community, or your church community, or reflect the decision-making of local, State or Federal government.

The second category is broadly that of survival, and the way that resources are created, distributed and available within the community. In terms of the social sciences this is what economics is concerned with. Given the attention the media pays to this area we may be tempted to think of economics as a

complex system of financial transactions in which only “experts” can really understand and explain. This field is sometimes described as “high finance” and while we have learnt from our global situation analysis that financial decisions taken in distant countries and behind closed doors can impact upon our local communities, in this exercise we are reflecting on a less mysterious form of economics, that of how people manage to “get by” or cope in their circumstances.

The third category of analysis combines insights from a range of the social sciences. It encompasses matters like human values, behaviours, cultures, ideologies, religions, and social life, often lumped together under a heading like “socio-cultural”. This is something of a “catch-all” category for factors that influence social and community life.

To illustrate how we apply this tool as an aid to clarifying our practice, we now turn again to the sample case study of the parish priest whose practice of welcoming outsiders into the worshipping community of the Church precipitated a crisis in both personal and institutional ministry.

In what follows we attempt to isolate and categorise some of the factors which can be discerned in the case study. In doing this exercise it is important to be aware that some “facts” may sit uneasily within a category, or even span all of the categories.

For the purposes of the exercise we will not try to verify whether the “facts” are true or not, but just identify what we believe to be the case.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>POLITICAL</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Power &amp; Decision-making</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>ECONOMIC</b> Survival etc</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SOCIO-CULTURAL</b> Values, Behaviours, etc</p>
<p>Parish Council is congregation's decision-making body</p> <p>Priest refuses to accept democratically reached decision to exclude young from worship</p> <p>Priest and congregation in power struggle</p> <p>Two members of Council decide to turn young away from worship</p> <p>Adults have all the power and young are powerless in this situation</p> <p>Priest decides to make young people the priority for ministry</p> <p>Priest and youth worker declare Rectory an open house providing hospitality for young</p> <p>Three members of Council write letter of complaint to Bishop</p> <p>Majority of young decide not to attend Church again</p>	<p>Parish is located in a low socio-economic area with multiple deprivation</p> <p>Church and congregation struggling to survive financially: main source of income is Bingo</p> <p>People have limited incomes for personal contributions to Church</p> <p>Young people have no access to recreational facilities and play in the street</p> <p>Parish priest is paid to minister to all in the area</p> <p>Priest makes "open house" a budget priority</p> <p>Young perceived as a financial liability to the parish: not an asset.</p> <p>Priest regarded as financially better off and of a different class from parishioners</p> <p>Congregation closes ranks to protect its interests</p>	<p>Ageing congregation resists change and innovation.</p> <p>People wish things were as they were in the past</p> <p>Private club ethos: no effort to welcome strangers</p> <p>Teaching and preaching on mission has no discernable effect</p> <p>Youth worker establishes youth club and football teams</p> <p>Young have no experience of Church and unaware of the behaviour expected of them</p> <p>Antisocial behaviour offends congregation</p> <p>Huge generation gap between elderly and young: piety confronts exuberance</p> <p>Majority of excluded young don't return to worship: a few come back</p>

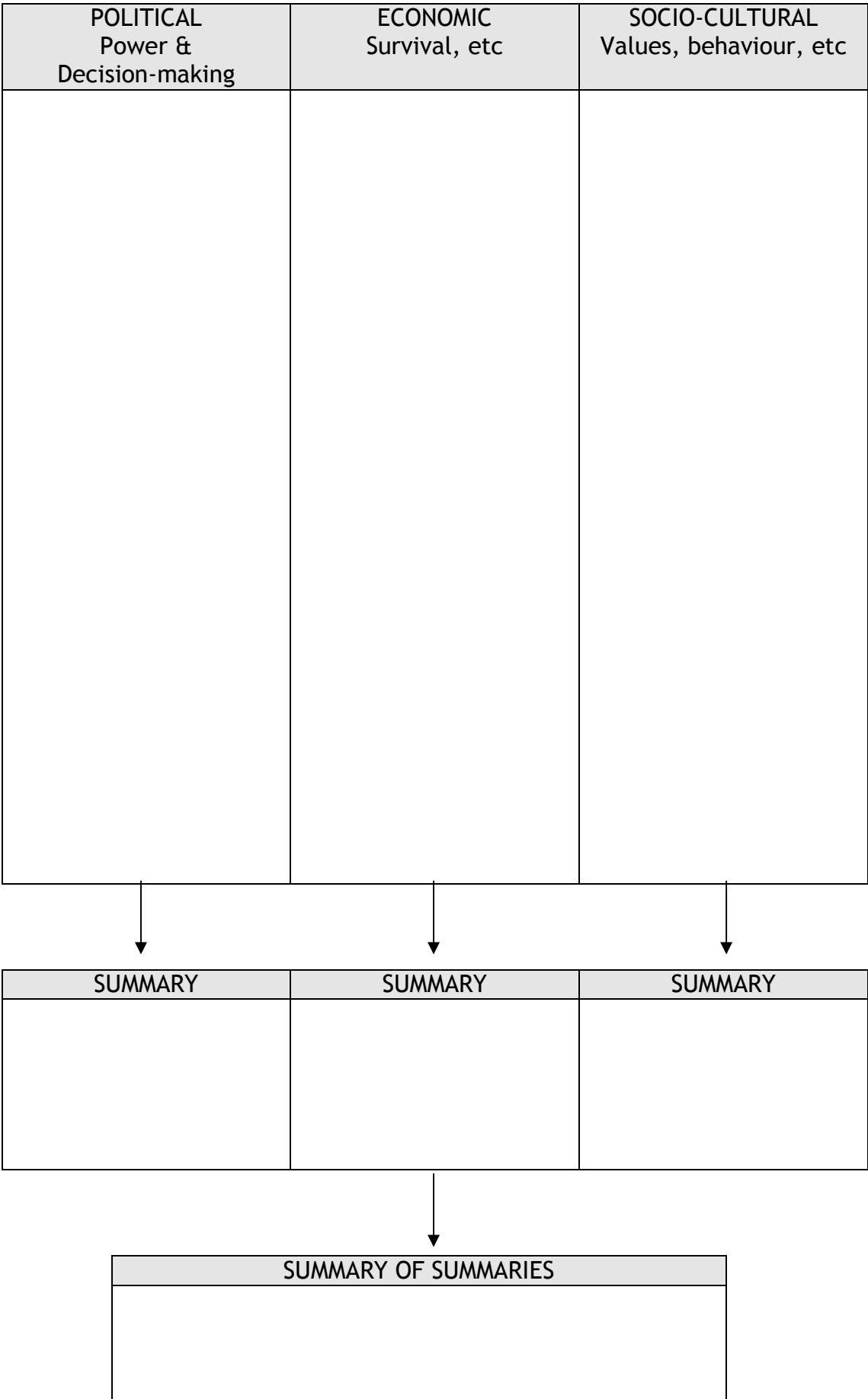
The next stage is to compose a short statement summarising each of the columns. For example, these could be:

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>POLITICAL</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Power &amp; Decision-making</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>SUMMARY</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>ECONOMIC</b> Survival etc</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>SUMMARY</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SOCIO-CULTURAL</b> Values, Behaviours, etc</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>SUMMARY</b></p>
<p>Adults hold power and young are powerless: priest and congregation at loggerheads; work needed on inter-personal relationships</p>	<p>Congregation's financial crisis needs to be sorted; the dynamics of the poverty-stricken neighbourhood addressed as an issue of social justice.</p>	<p>Both the ageing congregation and the young newcomers need to be embraced in ministry and ways of resolving clash of values sought</p>

Finally, see if you can construct a brief summary of the summaries, perhaps along these lines.

<p><b>SUMMARY OF SUMMARIES</b></p>
<p>Priest and congregation need to agree mission priorities which focus on immediate neighbourhood issues and wider questions of social justice.</p>

- 7. Revisit your case-study and subject it to this form of critical analysis. Remember that you are reflecting on practice. This could be your own practice or the practice of others according to the way you have constructed your case-study. A grid is provided on the next page if you need it for your journal.**
- 8. In your learning journal also note how useful you found this exercise.**



## Session Five

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### THE PASTORAL CYCLE

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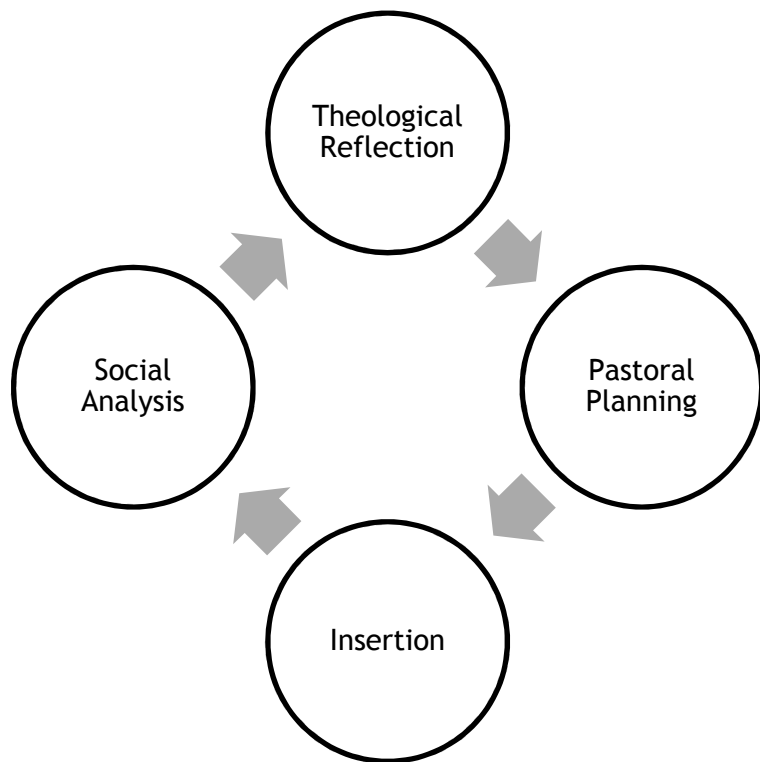
The Pastoral Cycle has become the most popular tool employed as an aid to theological reflection upon action and forms the basis of the majority of courses in practical theology delivered at universities and programmes of ministerial training and development worldwide. Originally pioneered in a Roman Catholic context it has been adapted and used in a variety of forms by practically all major Christian denominations.

The origins of this approach are generally held to reside in work pioneered by Joseph Cardijn, a Belgian Roman Catholic priest who, early in his ministry in the 1920's established organisations for poor working boys and girls in his community. The organisation for boys was originally called the Young Trade Unionists, but in 1924 it changed its name to Young Christian Workers. YCW as it is commonly known, became so popular that it was recognised by the Vatican, spread through the Roman Catholic world and saw its founder Joseph Cardijn become Bishop then Cardinal. If you are interested to learn of the form that YCW currently takes in Australia and the work it promotes, visit their website [www.ycw.org.au](http://www.ycw.org.au)

Cardijn introduced a simple model of reflection for use in YCW groups, which is known as "See, Judge, Act". The Australian YCW movement's current description of the process is:

- See:** What exactly is happening?  
 What is this doing to people? (the consequences)  
 Why is this happening? (the causes)
- Judge:** What do you think about all this?  
 What do you think should be happening?  
 What does your faith say?
- Act:** What exactly is it that you want to change? (long term goal)  
 What action are you going to take now? (short term goal)  
 Who can you involve in your action?

In 1980 Joe Holland and Peter Henriot of the Roman Catholic Center of Concern in Washington DC, published *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice* (Orbis Books, Maryknoll NY) which drawing on the insights of Liberation Theology and the ongoing relationship between reflection and



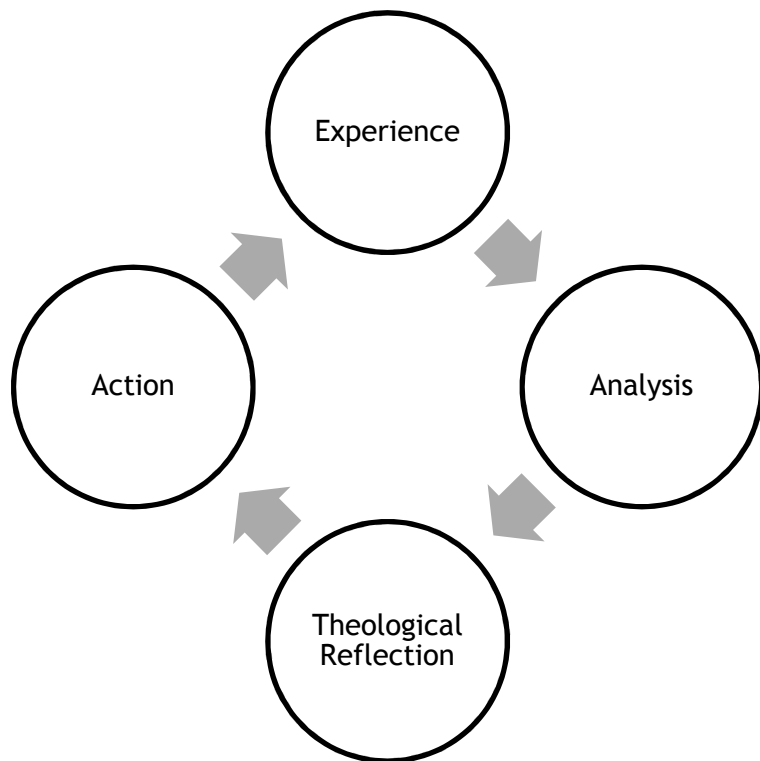
action popularised by Paulo Freire, introduced the concept of the Pastoral Cycle. Emerging as it did out of the Latin American experience of poverty and oppression, the Pastoral Cycle was envisaged as a helpful tool for Christians committed to social action in these and similar circumstances. The original diagram looked like this.

The diagram indicates that employing the pastoral circle is not a theoretical exercise but one based upon experience. First comes insertion which means sharing the life of the poor; then social analysis which looks at causes and connections; followed by theological reflection embracing living faith, scripture, church teaching, and tradition, and finally pastoral planning of action which creates new experience. The authors note that the “circle” is more like a “spiral”, not simply retracing previous steps but always breaking new ground.

In time the Pastoral Cycle as it came to be known, the name “cycle” perhaps more suggestive of a spiral than a circle, was developed for a range of different purposes. So

for example Stephen Croft and Roger Walton in their book on ministry skills (*Learning for Ministry*, London, Church House publishing, 2005) shift the focus of the cycle from establishing justice for the poor to its use as a tool for reflecting upon the practice of ministry.

Their diagram looks like this.



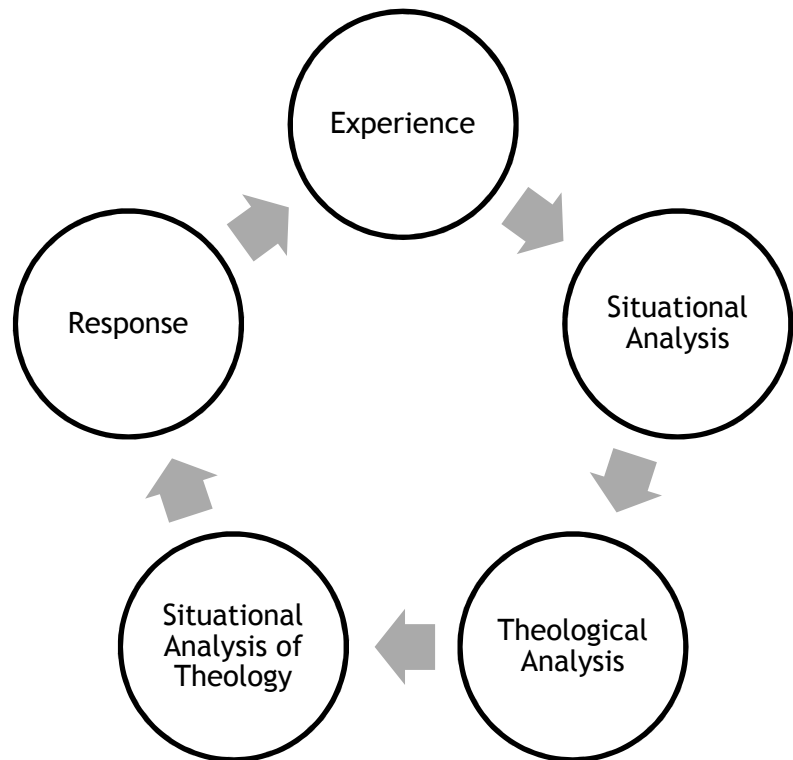
Croft and Walton say (p 157):

Beginning with an experience or issue, the person or group builds up a picture of what is going on by gathering information and looking through different lenses, with the help for example of sociology, psychology or economics. Then through identifying

particular faith questions raised and seeking what the Bible and Christians have said in the past and present, theological reflection takes place, Then action is planned and taken which leads to a new experience and the cycle begins again.

For the purpose of this session however, we are going to use a variation of the cycle developed by Emmanuel Lartey, a Ghanaian theologian who is now a professor in the USA.

Writing in James Woodward and Stephen Pattison (Eds) *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology* (Oxford, Blackwell, 2000) Lartey uses different terminology including that of Situational Analysis, a term we are very familiar with in this programme. In addition he adds a new category to the process, that of Situational Analysis of Theology.



This is a significant addition which Lartey explains as subjecting our theology to questioning by the experience or encounter, and by one's situational analysis. This is a twofold recognition; first that our theology is not something independent and neutral but is a located theology influenced by such things as our social status, our economic position, our political beliefs, our cultural norms, and so on. So we need to identify the degree to which the manner the theology embedded within us informs the judgements we are making, and pose some questions to it.

Then secondly, as Lartey puts it "The God of all creation may in reality be `standing at the door and knocking' through what has been encountered". It could be that in some situations our theology is being challenged and we are being led to reconstruct our theology in the light of our experience. As reflective practitioners we need to be always open to that possibility.

We think that this model establishes some important connections for us, not least the contribution that all our work in situation analysis makes to the way we reflect upon our practice.

In the series of analytical categories we have been exploring in a cumulative way throughout this programme: looking at ourselves, our personal histories and our viewpoints, our sphere of work, area of expertise or family roles, examining the structure and dynamics of the community in which we live, together with its wider cultural and religious foundations; creating a picture of our church at local, national and international levels, and identifying the way that the many facets of globalisation impact upon national, local, church and individual life, we have created a treasury of information which, combined with a tool like the Pastoral Cycle, sheds light on our practice of mission and ministry

**9. Follow Emmanuel Lartey's variant of the Pastoral Cycle in the following steps:**

**Step 1: Experience**

**Read through your Case-Study again carefully. This serves as your experience or encounter.**

**Step 2: Situational Analysis**

**You have already used some of the lenses important to situational analysis - political, economic, social, cultural - in last session's work in social sciences. Refresh your memory about the conclusions you reached in that exercise. Are there other lenses: e.g. psychological, historical, medical, anthropological or insights drawn from any other discipline which you think have a bearing on your encounter?**

**Step 3: Theological Analysis**

**Again you have partially covered this in a previous session where**

**you identified biblical themes or teachings which throw light on your case-study. Refresh your memory on what these were and to them add any information arising from:**

- **Any Church doctrines which may relate to the encounter**
- **Any responses derived from the field of Christian ethics**
- **Any public or pastoral statements your diocese or the Anglican Church in Australia have issued on matters relating to the encounter**
- **What your personal faith and theological views reveal about the encounter**

#### **Step 4: Situational Analysis of Theology**

**You may have already reached some understanding of why you hold the views you do from your initial work in the personal audit in the first part of situation analysis. Lartey says we should allow our theology to be interrogated by the encounter and our situational analysis. Ask yourself questions like:**

- **What aspects of your theology have you inherited?**
- **What aspects have been derived from your studies?**
- **What aspects have been prompted by your life experience?**
- **To what degree has the way you read the Bible influenced your theology?**
- **Can you detect any ways in which your role in society, your politics, or your economic position may have impacted upon the formation of your theology?**

- **Are there any ways in which the encounter (case-study) makes you question any aspect of your presently held theology?**
- **Are there any aspects of the encounter that suggest that you need to reconstruct any element in your theology?**

#### **Step 5: Response**

**In the light of all the above, what conclusions are you able to reach about your case-study?**

**Can you discern any ways of resolving any of the issues that the case-study has raised?**

**Are there any clues as to how you might improve your own practice if you had any direct involvement in this situation, or if you were to encounter such a situation in the future?**

**What insights or lessons if any does the case-study offer about the practice of mission and ministry in general?**

#### **Step 6: Evaluation**

**You should write brief notes in your situation analysis journal on any relevant issues that working through the Pastoral Cycle has raised, together with a brief evaluation of this tool's usefulness.**

## Session Six

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### INSIGHTS FROM ACTION THEORY

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In the second session we looked into Donald Schön's theories about the way that professionals perform their tasks very often making use of their intuition rather than their technically and rationally based professional training. We also discussed how Schön's insights were related to particular understandings of learning theory.

Schön collaborated with another academic, Chris Argyris, and their joint researches led them to explore the area which we today call Action Theory. Their three most influential jointly authored works are *Theory in Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness* (1974); *Organisational Learning: A Theory of Action Perspective* (1978); and *Organisational Learning II: Theory, Method and Practice* (1996). Their argument is that we all carry within us internalised mental maps that we refer to when we plan our actions, implement our actions and subsequently reflect upon them. These intuitive interior maps may differ quite dramatically from the formal theories which we claim as the basis of our practice. In other words, we all function on the basis of two kinds of theory, "espoused theory" and "theory in use".

Espoused theory is the explanation that we offer when anybody asks us to explain the basis of our practice. Theory in use is the frequently unidentified intuitive process that actually guides our day-to-day practice or behaviour.

So how does this apply to our mission or ministry actions? Let's return for a moment to our sample case-study of the events at St Agnes's Church. We may

surmise that there were those in the congregation who believed that the action of turning the young people away from the Eucharist was perfectly good practice because the Eucharist should be conducted in an atmosphere of dignity and devotion which the young people were abusing. If so, this was the members' *espoused theory* and they concluded that on the basis of this theory their action was completely justified.

But we might also surmise that in their resistance to innovation or to engage in mission there lay a determination to resist any change to their existing mode of congregational life, and this, for some at least, was their unarticulated *theory in use*. And were we to examine the actions of the priest it may have been that his espoused theory in reaching the conclusion that mission dictated that the young be given priority was an issue of justice, whereas his theory in use may have been that the congregation had become so intransigent that nothing further could be achieved by making it his priority.

It is therefore important for us as Christians to be able to distinguish between the theory we claim informs our practice and behaviour, and that which actually guides what we do.

In examining our theory-in-use and in developing a model of the processes involved Schön and Argyris identified three elements. First there are what they called *governing variables*. These are primarily the values which we are trying to adhere to, or at least keep within acceptable limits. In terms of our mission and ministry our values are drawn from our understandings of the demands of the Gospel and our Christian ethics.

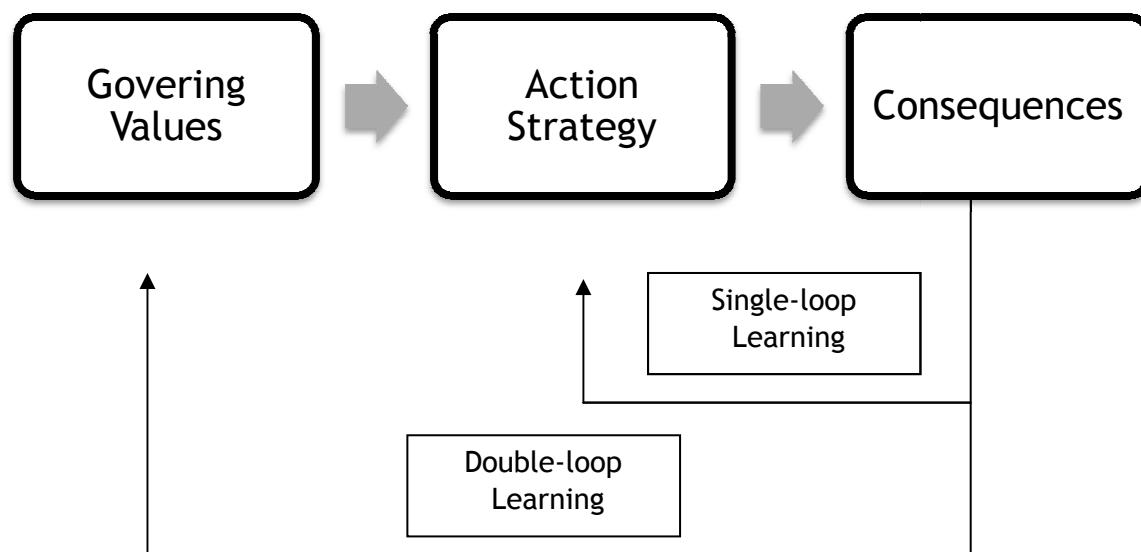
Argyris uses the terms governing variables and governing values interchangeably, so we are going to employ the term governing values because this best relates to ministerial and mission activities. Any action we engage in will most likely relate to a number of our values, and one of the things that may happen is a trade-off occurring among our governing values. For example a particular situation which we encounter may prompt us to pay

less attention to our professional code of conduct, and greater attention to the value we associate with human suffering or degradation.

Secondly, there are our action strategies which are the behaviours in which we engage to manage our responses, or surroundings or our social context. Associated with these strategies are the techniques we employ to keep our governing values within the acceptable range or to maintain a key Christian belief. It is at this point that values which are derived from our faith commitment become crucial.

And thirdly, there are the consequences or results of our action. These consequences can be both those which we intended and those which are unintended, what we feel obliged to do or what we feel prevented from doing. There are consequences for ourselves to be considered, as well as consequences for others and these latter include the responses our action engenders in people and what *they* feel obliged to do or prevented from doing. 'Others' includes not just persons, but groups (like congregations), organisations (such as the diocese or archdeaconry) or systems (like pastoral care).

So in terms of our ministerial and mission practice, the learning process involves the detection and the correction of error. If something goes wrong in our activities or practice, Schön and Argyris suggest that the first response for most of us is to look around for a different strategy that is consistent with our governing values. They refer to this as ***single-loop learning***. But they go on to advocate ***double-loop learning*** which subjects our governing values themselves to critical scrutiny, which may result in the alteration of the governing values, either in terms of their hierarchy, by the introduction of a new value, or by the recognition that we have intuitively been working to an alternative value all along. This critical scrutiny may prompt a consequent shift in the way that strategies and consequences are framed. This may be represented diagrammatically as follows:



So in practice we should engage in both activities that the diagram suggests. If the consequences of any action we have taken are not what we intended we certainly need to re-examine our strategy. But this can be a superficial exercise because the underlying assumptions are not addressed. But when we subject our governing values and assumptions to critical scrutiny, we may identify values of increased importance, or even entirely new values which would dictate a different strategy. Put simply: single-loop learning is generally superficial learning because the underlying assumptions are treated as fixed. Double loop learning promotes change by testing the values and assumptions on which we work.

Let's imagine that one of the two members of St Agnes's Parish Council who turned the young people away from the door that Thursday night felt unhappy with some of the consequences of that action. The congregation was divided on the appropriateness of the action and the person was subject to criticism from friends and hurtful personal remarks from young people in the streets. The Parish priest seemed to have abandoned the congregation in favour of working with the young people. Some parishioners had opted to worship elsewhere. Morale in the congregation was low. The person begins to wonder whether things might have been handled differently.

Upon reflection, the person begins to question some of the values upon which the action was based. While still feeling that some of the implicit values were in themselves honourable: trying to maintain solemnity and dignity in worship, believing that the young should show respect to the elderly, protecting the tradition that been fostered by successive parish priests, making a personal stand when the priest's response was considered inadequate and rather dismissive, being loyal to one's friends; there were other values in one's hierarchy of values which had been given insufficient consideration and weight.

These values included the vocation of the church as a welcoming community, the call to seek out the lost and lonely, the offering of forgiveness, the inclusive character of the Kingdom, the avoidance of offending "God's little ones", the Eucharist as the banquet from which nobody is turned away.

As the person reflects upon these two sets of values, the realisation dawns that some to which little priority was afforded deserved a much higher position in the hierarchy of values which had dictated the course of action, and those to which high priority were given now seemed less compelling.

With the hierarchy of values clarified a spectrum of new strategies present themselves ranging from those seeking to establish a working relationship between the congregation, the young people and the priest, to the enthusiastic embracing of the young as valued members of the St Agnes's community.

What is certain is that critiquing the values suggests that both the action and the outcome could have been different. And maybe it's not too late to select a different strategy and to try again.

**10. With your case-study in mind follow these steps:**

**Step 1: Conclusions**

**What are the key results or conclusions you can identify in your case-study?**

**Which results/conclusions do you regard as unsatisfactory or unhelpful? Make a note of them.**

**Step 2: Strategy/Actions**

**Can you identify the strategies or actions which have created these conclusions?**

**Is there a major strategy or action that you consider responsible for the result(s) or conclusion(s)? If so, make a note of it.**

**Step 3: Values**

**As you saw with the St Agnes's case-study, what are the major values upon which the strategy or action seems to have been based? Note them down.**

**What alternative values can you identify which could have formed a better basis for the strategy or action? Make a note of these.**

**Step 4: Reconstruction**

**Drawing upon what you consider to be more appropriate values in this situation, what do you think might have been a better strategy or action in the circumstances?**

**Step 5: Reflection**

**Write up your conclusions in your situation analysis journal together with an evaluation of how helpful you consider this tool to have been.**

## Session Seven

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### ESPOUSED THEOLOGY & THEOLOGY IN USE

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In our last session we found Schön and Argyris suggesting that incongruities can develop between our *espoused theory* and our *theory-in-use* so that we don't always practise what we preach. This distinction has some further important insights for Christian mission and ministry.

There can be a significant difference between the theology we espouse and proclaim in formal situations - from the sermons and talks we deliver to our pastoral advice and personal conversations - and the theology which informs our day-to-day practice of ministry. To take a rather extreme example, our espoused theology may embrace notions of love, repentance, forgiveness and restoration to community, where our theology-in-use leads us to react to people in terms of judgement, rejection and exclusion from fellowship. One of the objectives of reflection on practice is to help us identify and analyse these embedded theologies in order to improve the quality of our practice.

When people in ministry and mission begin to apply the conclusions of action theory that practitioners are guided not only by espoused theory but also by theory-in-use, they very quickly identify that they possess two theologies, an espoused theology and a theology-in-use. This has frequently been experienced as a moment of enlightenment or liberation.

Our espoused theology is relatively easy to identify. It is the theology which has been delivered to us in a variety of ways: through our socialisation into the church, through our schooling and our theological studies, through

listening to lectures and sermons, particularly by those considered to be eminent in their fields. As intimated above, it is the theology which we publicly proclaim, the theology we roll out when people ask us to justify what we are saying or doing, or the theological label - traditional, modern, radical, biblical, evangelical, catholic, charismatic - which we are proud to wear. Our espoused theology is the theology we publicly own and proclaim in our relationship with the world.

Our theology-in-use is much more difficult for us to identify, and it generally takes other people to reveal it to us. That was certainly the experience of Canon Michael Elliott, one of the writers of this programme, when the Archbishop George Appleton invited him to work amongst the Palestinian populations of the West Bank and the Galilee in the Diocese of Jerusalem.

Archbishop Appleton had been encouraged by the Archbishop of Canterbury to exchange the relative comfort and security of the Archdiocese of Perth for the privations and dangers of the volatile Middle East.

In Jerusalem the Archbishop urged his clergy not to take sides in the bitter disputes that were raging and to regard their ministries as being signs of love and reconciliation. As the Christian virtues of love and reconciliation were high in Brother Michael's hierarchy of values he had no problem accepting this style of ministry and sought out situations in which it could be embodied in a range of projects focussing on education, sanitation, social development, small economic enterprises and so on amongst disadvantaged communities.

He was very surprised when in October 1973 the Yom Kippur War broke out, and some young men from one of the projects he had been working with visited him and said, "Father, you've stood alongside us in all the troubles we've experienced in making our community a better place, so we know that you stand with us in this armed struggle".

These Palestinians had a very different perception of the writer's theological commitments that they had identified as the pursuit of justice and the expression of solidarity. In little things and small gestures in his day-to-day

involvement with disadvantaged and oppressed people, his theology in use had been revealed to the community in an unmistakable way. Yet he had never articulated it in these terms and was surprised by its revelation.

In subsequent conversations he learnt how a variety of day-to-day decisions he had made were identified by those who suffered, and when he revisited his hierarchy of values he found that justice and solidarity had indeed moved to the very top. More importantly he learnt that the value of reconciliation on its own is not enough and that both in theology and practice there can be no reconciliation without justice.

Our theology in use then, is most often what other people see in us and identify for us. It can be nigh on impossible for us to identify it on our own. Hence the importance for mission and ministry of establishing a group of people with whom we can undertake some form of regular reflection. Such a reflective group can tell us how its members perceive our worldview for example, what is revealed by our behaviour towards other people, and what our hierarchy of values appears to be in practice. These are very important perceptions which are hard for us to identify on our own.

The following diagram indicates how a model of reflective practice embracing both our espoused theology and our theology in use looks.

Note that at the top there are the three boxes borrowed from action theory which indicate that what we do by way of action or practice in mission or ministry is based upon the values inherent in our theology, and in the case of ministry, the professional values associated with ministry. The third box indicates that there will be consequences flowing from the action we have taken.

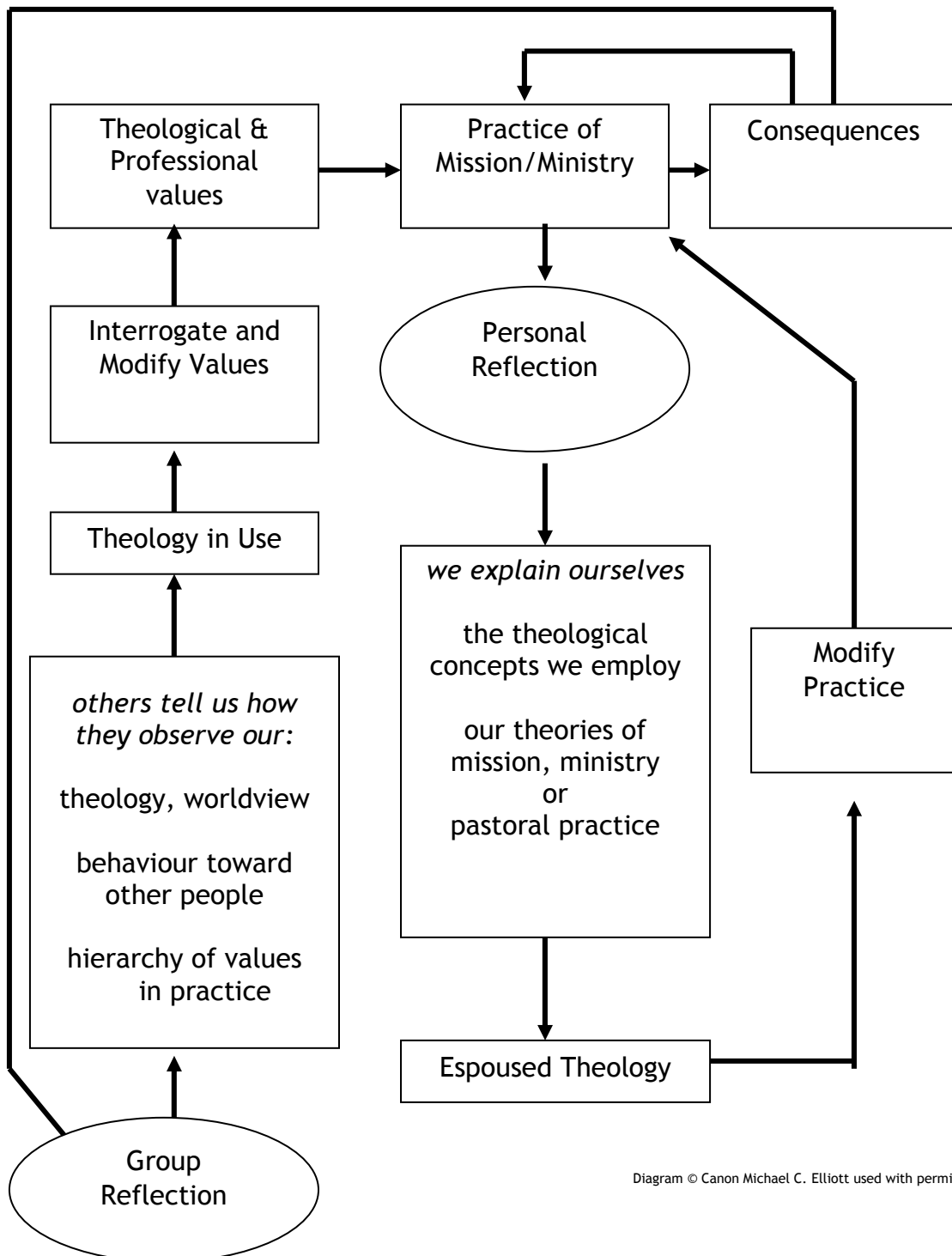


Diagram © Canon Michael C. Elliott used with permission

If on reflection we consider that some of the consequences of our action have been unacceptably negative, or if we suspect that a different action or strategy might have produced better consequences we can embark upon the process of double loop analysis and learning.

In the first loop we move from the consequences of our action to examine our action. This generally takes the form of some personal reflecting within a group context in which we explain both the particular action we took and the consequences which flowed from it along with our key theological beliefs and values which we believe have informed the action. We also try to provide an explanation of the principles of mission or ministry or pastoral work which inform our Christian activity or practice.

This uncovers our espoused theology upon which we justify our actions. The process of identifying our values, the lines along which we work and our espoused theology may clarify that we would need to make some modifications to our action or practice were we to find ourselves in a similar situation again.

We then turn to the second loop. This has the same starting point as the first loop: the consequences resulting from our action, and again we embark upon some reflection on those consequences. This time around members of the group comment on how they perceive our values, our theology, the worldview we have adopted, the way we behave towards other people, and their discernment of our hierarchy of values, and which of them appear to be more or less important in our actions. This helps us clarify our theology-in-use and it may well surprise us to discover that there are differences between the theology that we *think* informs our actions, and the theology which *in practice* does so.

This disparity will usually prompt us to take a hard look at our theological and professional values and to rearrange the priority we have mentally placed them in. We may also discover that we exhibit some values in our actions that we have been unaware of, but which ought to be added to our list. Then, given that our theology is constantly being challenged by our experience we might also conclude that we need to add one or two new values to those that inform our practice, perhaps dispensing with some others.

**Please Note:** This is the group exercise we asked you to be prepared for in our Introduction to this handbook.

- 11. It works best if undertaken with a group of your peers such as your local group or Parish Ministry Team. If the case-study you have been using up until now portrays events in which you had no direct personal involvement, it will not serve as a useful instrument in this session's exercise which aims to help you explore your theologies. If this is the case, for this exercise you will need to prepare some kind of "critical incident" in which you were involved.**

**Step 1: Case Study**

**Share your case-study with members of the group.**

**Step 2: Analysis**

**Follow the process depicted by the diagram and explanatory text.**

**Ask somebody in the group to take reminder notes of key items in your presentation and in the discussion.**

**Step 3: Record**

**Make notes in your situation analysis journal of the conclusions you reached and on how useful you considered this exercise to be.**

# Session Eight

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## EVALUATING WORK LIFE BALANCE

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### A Cautionary Tale

Once upon a time there was a young priest who was very dedicated to his work. In theological college he had been imbued with the idea that Christian ministry was essentially a sacrificial profession, and the advice that the task of ministering to others can be very costly. These sacrifices and costs were just something that went with the job.

The priest being of an extroverted and dedicated disposition worked indefatigably to make his parish a flourishing and lively centre. He joined a range of community groups because he wanted to raise the Church's public profile. Through membership of some of these, particularly Rotary, he attracted a large number of men into the congregation, something which was rare at that time.

He visited parishioners assiduously, and made it his aim to visit thirty families each week. He worked from morning prayer at 7.30 am till he completed his final visit or meeting late at night. He chaired every Church committee. He built up a dynamic ministry team which looked after youth work, confirmation training, bible study and prayer groups.

Considered the most successful priest in the diocese, he soon saw the added responsibilities of serving as Archdeacon on top of all his other work. His wife

and children saw little of him but accepted his absence as part and parcel of ministry. His wife, running the household on her own, fell victim to depression. His children began having problems at school and the school counsellor warned that these stemmed from their lack of experience of a father figure. Because of his conviction that ministry demanded total commitment, he did not deal adequately with these and other problems, including taking care of his health.

Driving himself to achieve even more spectacular successes, in his early forties he suffered a massive stroke, had to retire from ministry, was confined to a wheelchair, and was never able to work again.

### **Taking Stock of Our Lives**

Fortunately in the years since these events occurred, Christian ministry, ordained and lay, has fostered a much more pragmatic approach, encouraging Christians to lead a more balanced life, ensuring that we are paying attention to the issues of family, health, recreation, social life and so on. Even so it is possible for us occasionally to forget that in order to be whole people we need to cultivate all aspects of our God-given life and to ensure that our lives are organised in such a manner that we can take time out to do so. One of the concepts which addresses these issues and is a useful tool in our reflective practice is that of Work-Life Balance.

As its name suggests this a broad concept which includes helping people prioritise between “work” (one’s career and ambition) on the one hand, and “life” (pleasure, leisure, family and spiritual development) on the other. The term was first used in the 1970’s but became much more prominent through the 1980’s and 90’s as the working environment began to undergo rapid change.

These changes were prompted by technological innovation such as those of computerisation and information technology which contributed to the erosion of the old “job for life” culture. This gave way to a highly competitive and

performance based culture in which there was often very little employment security. This in turn often led to overwork, stress and burnout evidenced in nearly all occupations. A rise in workplace violence, in absenteeism and workers' compensation claims began to evidence an unhealthy work-life balance.

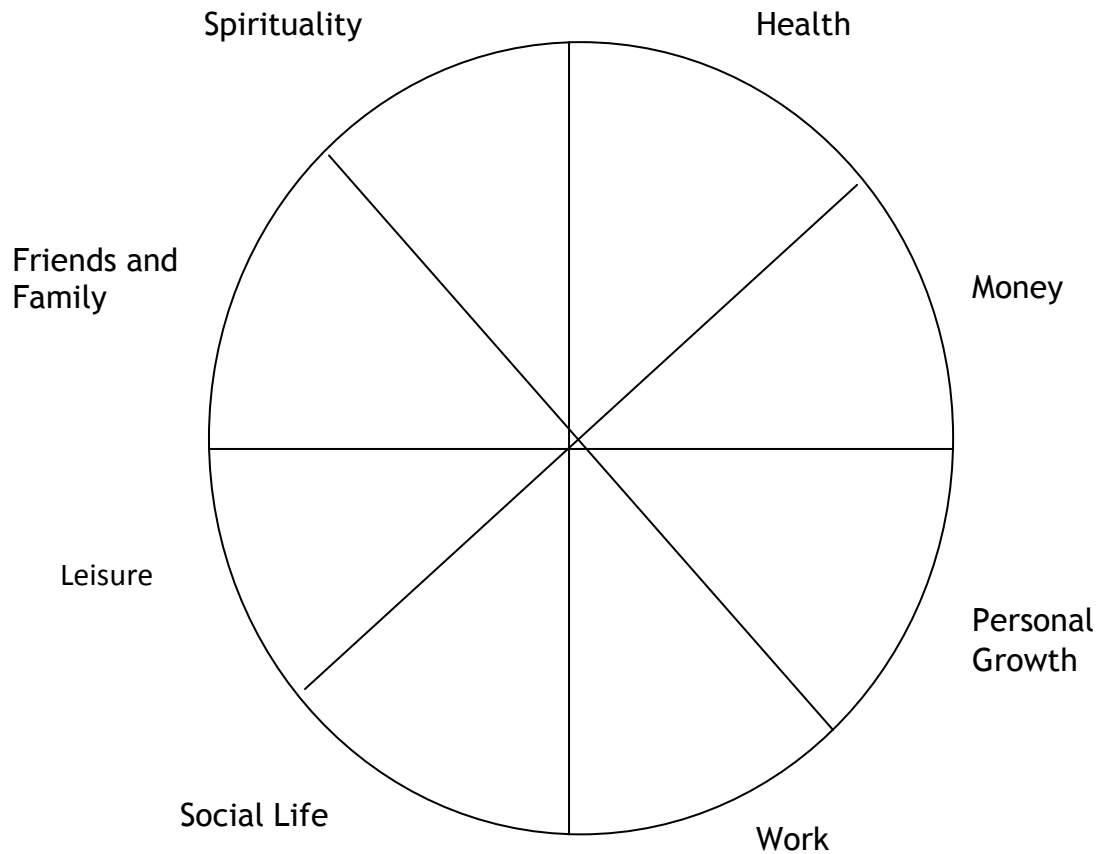
Situation analysis would suggest that the stress of modern living is being manifested in a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms. These include heart disease, weakened immune systems, sexual dysfunction, headaches, stiff muscles, poor coping skills, irritability, jumpiness, anxiety, exhaustion, lack of concentration, smoking, and binge eating and drinking. These in turn affect the quality of one's work, and ultimately of course our economy in terms of less production, and rising costs in many spheres including that of health care.

These issues have become concerns of governments around the world and the introduction of measures such as child care, maternity and paternity leave, humane working hours, improved health care, leisure facilities and so on. If you have an interest in further situation analysis in this field and a spare moment, you will find a huge number of articles about the Australian situation on the Internet, together with annual reports compiled by the Australian Work and Life Index (AWALI) which is associated with the Hawke Research Institute at the University of South Australia.

Our concern here however, is how we might undertake an audit of our own practice to ensure that we are establishing a healthy work-life balance for ourselves and not encountering the kind of risks the Rector in our cautionary tale ran. On the following page you will find a simple exercise which is commonly used as an aid to reflection in this area.

**12. Complete the following exercise relating to work life balance.**

## WORK-LIFE BALANCE



1. This exercise works better if you do it with a friend.
2. If you want to alter the categories to substitute those which better match your circumstances, do so.
3. Rank your level of satisfaction in each area. The centre of the circle is "0" (complete dissatisfaction), the outer edge "10" (complete satisfaction).
4. Using different colours, colour in the area between the centre and your new outer edge
5. The diagram represents your life right now

**The next step in this process is to ask yourself the following questions:**

- 1 Which area is your first priority to work on?**
- 2 What outcome are you looking for?**
- 3 What help do you need to succeed?**
- 4 What is the initial step you need to take?**

**As you begin to restore balance in the selected area, you should check your progress periodically.**

**When you feel you have achieved your first goal, do the exercise again. You may find that other areas have also altered. Repeat the exercise to determine which priority to address next.**

**Step 1:**

**Test the work-life balance circle exercise. Select the categories you want to use and colour in the segments according to your levels of satisfaction/dissatisfaction.**

**Step 2:**

**Select one or two areas you would like to work on.**

**Step 3:**

**Identify the steps you need to take to restore balance to these areas.**

**Step 4:**

**Write up your notes in your Situation Analysis journal together with a brief evaluation of how useful you think this exercise is.**

## Session Nine

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### TALKING THINGS THROUGH

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The textbooks on reflective practice stress the importance of the reflective practitioner availing him or herself of opportunities for structured reflection.

One way of engaging in this is through what has been referred to as mentored practice in which a person establishes a formal relationship with another person who helps monitor and improve one's practice through structured reflective sessions.

Sometimes the mentor is referred to as a professional supervisor and all clergy in the Diocese are encouraged to avail themselves of this disciplined one-on-one approach to assessment of professional practice. In most cases the mentor or supervisor will expect to be paid for these services.

For us as Christian practitioners, one area that calls for special attention in the process of reflection is that of the maintenance and development of our spiritual life because from this springs both our desire to be of service to others and the quality of any help we may be able to offer. This is not to say that secular professionals ignore the spiritual dimension to their practice, but to emphasise that for us it plays a very major role. Some have likened our spiritual life to a garden that calls for constant attention and activity if it is to blossom and bear fruit.

Some do their "gardening" by reading about the experience of Christians in the past, enshrined in classic devotional literature such as Brother Lawrence's ever popular *Practice of the Presence of God*, or St Francis's

*Little Flowers*, or St John of the Cross's *Dark Night of the Soul*. Others may draw encouragement from modern works like those of Thomas Merton (*The Seven Storey Mountain*), Henri Nouwen (*The Inner Voice of Love*) or Simone Weil (*Waiting For God*). And of course, there is an avalanche of contemporary writings of various quality on a spirituality for our times.

Others attend to their spiritual development through regular consultations with a spiritual director. This is a person who accompanies another on their spiritual quest, posing challenging questions to and teasing out issues in one's spiritual practice and development. In his book *Soul Friend* (London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1994 [revised edition]), Kenneth Leech laments the fact that spiritual direction has come to be seen as a specialist ring-fenced professional activity and "the preserve of a small group of experts based on religious orders and therapy groups" whereas guidance of individuals in the spiritual life lies at the heart of the Christian religion and should be "part of the ordinary pastoral ministry of every parish and every Christian community".

Leech regards the role of spiritual direction as lying at the heart of the activity of all who have joined the Church's ordained ministry, as well as being an aspect of the witness and ministry of many lay Christians. And he strongly resists the move to regard it as a professionally remunerated activity, tied to particular psychological theories and ideologically based notions of training. It is a ministry all can engage in, growing as it does out of a life of prayer and growth in holiness.

The origins of the practice of spiritual direction or accompaniment are generally traced back to the Desert Fathers and Mothers in Egypt, Syria and Palestine in the fourth and fifth centuries. Christians would seek out the guidance of these holy men and women who helped shape the inner lives of people through their prayer and pastoral care.

The pilgrims would attach themselves to a holy person who would frequently communicate more by example than through words, ideas which helped the pilgrim solve practical problems and difficulties. When pilgrims insisted upon

advice, it was generally given by way of example rather than the detailed direction the pilgrim was seeking. Thus in response to the question “What good work should I be doing?” Abba Nistheros the Great replied to a seeker, “Are not all actions equal? Scripture says that Abraham was hospitable, and God was with him. David was humble, and God was with him. Elias loved interior peace, and God was with him. So, do whatever you see that your soul desires according to God, and guard your heart.”

The “Soul Friend” of the title of Leech’s book refers to the tradition that arose out of the eighth century reform of the Celtic Churches, that of the *anamchara* (friend of the soul). It describes a relationship of great affection, intimacy and depth with Soul Friends having a deep respect for one another’s wisdom and to their commonly shared values. They are able to challenge one another when it is necessary to do so. Such a soul friendship was considered able to survive geographical separation, the passage of time, and ultimately even death. One commentator has written:

This robust spiritual tradition flourished in the soil of Celtic Christianity where nature was revered as a sign of God’s creativity, learning was honoured, solitude was regarded as a vital resource, simplicity and small communities were cherished, and human fragility acknowledged.

Something of its character is summed up in the writings of the Northumberland born monk and abbot, Aelred of Rievaulx, who said:

But what happiness, what security, what joy to have someone to whom you dare to speak on terms of equality as to another self: one to whom you need have no fear to confess your failings; one to whom you can unblushingly make known what progress you have made in the spiritual life; one to whom you can entrust all the secrets of your heart and before whom you can place all your plans.

Finding a soul friend who can accompany us on our spiritual pilgrimage and development, can be a very useful tool in our quest to become reflective practitioners. So if you don't already have someone who can act in that capacity, you could consider establishing such a relationship.

There are of course, a variety of other ways of talking things through and fostering our spirituality. Instead of seeking out a spiritual director we could join a reflection group which meets on a regular basis. We have often found that participants who have been active members of a local group during their studies have found a group work approach to situation analysis, review of learning and evaluation of practice so helpful, and established such a sense of solidarity, that they continue to meet as a reflection group for years after their academic programme has ended. The value of the group experience is that our practice can be reviewed from a variety of perspectives and diverse interests, rather than interpreted through the "spectacles" of one person.

However one of the problems associated with a group approach is that it can provide an excellent "hiding place" for people who want to avoid engagement with learning and reflection, so experienced facilitators in the disciplines of reflection often urge that practitioners use a combination of reflective strategies.

The making of a retreat on a regular basis is also a way of attending to our spiritual lives. These are often regarded as a way of "restoring our spiritual batteries" by generally in silence reflecting upon our inner lives through the medium of devotional addresses, bible studies, and opportunities for sustained prayer.

Dag Hammarskjöld, the second general secretary of the United Nations wrote in his spiritual journal (published as *Markings*) that "the longest journey is the journey inwards" and it is the opportunity to make this inward journey that the retreat offers us. (Incidentally, we shall be discussing the value of keeping a journal in a later session, for as Hammarskjöld demonstrated from the midst of his professional life with its exacting responsibilities for world peace and order, the journal is a useful tool for interior reflection).

As you are probably aware, retreats can vary from the concept of the Quiet Day, to the popular Ignatian retreats which can last up to thirty days. Some retreats offer the opportunity for a thorough self-examination and for repentance, confession and the absolution of our wrong actions and intentions. This provides an opportunity for us to “wipe the slate clean” and renew our witness with our spiritual lives reordered.

Talking things through to address our spiritual development can thus take many forms. It is for us to choose an approach which suits our circumstances.

**13. Reflect on the following questions:**

**Step 1:**

**Which of the various suggestions for talking things through in order to nourish your spiritual life – finding a mentor or supervisor, joining a reflection group, making a regular retreat, working with a spiritual director, or establishing a Soul Friend relationship, do you think would best suit you?**

**Step 2:**

**What steps would you need to take to make this happen?**

**Step 3:**

**If none of these suggestions appeal to you, how do you propose monitoring your spiritual growth?**

**Step 4:**

**Write up your reflections in your learning journal, together with a brief evaluation of the value of the exercise.**

# Session Ten

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## DISCERNING THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

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Future gazing, once the preserve of mystics, prophets and sages, is big business these days as global enterprises discern and plot changes in climate, capital, security, production, markets and other indicators. Predicting where global trends will carry us, they plan to position themselves ten, twenty, thirty years down the line so that they are best placed to cope with and exploit trends in society and maintain markets for their products or services. An array of specialists, analysts, scientists and planners earn their livings by trying to predict where current trends will lead us.

Some predict a positive future in which applied technology successfully solves the predicaments facing humanity. Others, emulating the exploits of Nostradamus paint a disconcerting doomsday picture in which little if any of life as we know it will survive.

One of the early books in this field was John Naisbitt's *Megatrends* (New York, Warner Books, 1982). Such was the success of this book in identifying major trends in the 1980's that it was followed by a succession of publications by Naisbitt and others. You can judge for yourself the accuracy of what Naisbitt was predicting back then:

- a move from industrial society to the information economy;
- rapid technological advance tempered by human scale;
- emergence of a global economy;

- longer time frames for dealing with problems;
- the growth of empowerment manifested in bottom-up politics and organisational management;
- self-reliance replacing institutional help;
- framework of representative democracy rendered obsolete by shared information;
- hierarchy giving way to informal networks;
- speed becoming a competitive weapon e.g. in manufacturing and delivery;
- more choices available as we move from an either/or society to multiple options for all;
- small business power reigns; big organisations will need to rebuild as a collection of small companies.

As the millennium approached, a spate of books looking at trends for the new millennium emerged. There were the usual millennial doomsday scenarios of course - our computers would crash, airliners fall out of the sky. But there were many serious works. Paul Kennedy's *Preparing for the Twenty-first Century* (London, Fontana, 1994) identifies general trends relating to population explosion, the communication and financial revolutions and the growth of multinational companies, agriculture and the biotechnology revolution, robotics and automation, environmental dangers, and the changing nature of the nation state. He writes (p 333):

Communities and even whole countries appear to have less and less control over the own destinies. Traditional power structures are baffled by below-replacement fertility rates, illegal immigration, and massive currency flows; they have unsatisfactory answers - or no answers at all - to the threat of large scale redundancy in farming and manufacturing; they find it hard to prevent companies from relocating in other regions, or to muffle information from transnational television and radio; they pause, and worry, at the implications of global warming.

In another work, *The Future Now: Predicting the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, (London, Phoenix, 1998) a series of distinguished writers examine futures in a range of areas based on current trends. Two writers deal with trends in religion. One sees signs of scientific progress stimulating religion, religion provoking more wars, and fundamentalism threatening world peace.

The other examines some identifiable trends which lead people to posit that there may be no future for religion, but concludes more positively that there are signs that religions are of inexhaustible appeal, that they have more to fear from each other than from science, that they are threatened less by secularisation than by their own lack of fidelity to their objectives, and that society is changing in their favour.

Religion frequently takes a bit of a knocking when current trends are used as the basis for future predictions. There are dire warnings that declining numbers of attendees at worship, if they continue, will spell the demise of the Church. We need to be cautious about such predictions. Some years ago one province of the Anglican Communion produced a video which detailed statistics intended to shock and employed the image of a guttering candle to symbolise the parlous state the church was in. The effect of this intervention was totally negative, and may have even provoked further decline.

While current trends in Church membership may be a worry to many, we need to temper pessimism by remembering, in the words of Father Gerard Hughes that our God is a “God of surprises”. Or better still, read Australian theologian Scott Cowdrell’s book, *God’s Next Big Thing: Discovering the Future Church* (Mulgrave, John Garratt Publishing, 2004) which explores the likely shape of a “mature, mystical and militant” twenty-first century Church.

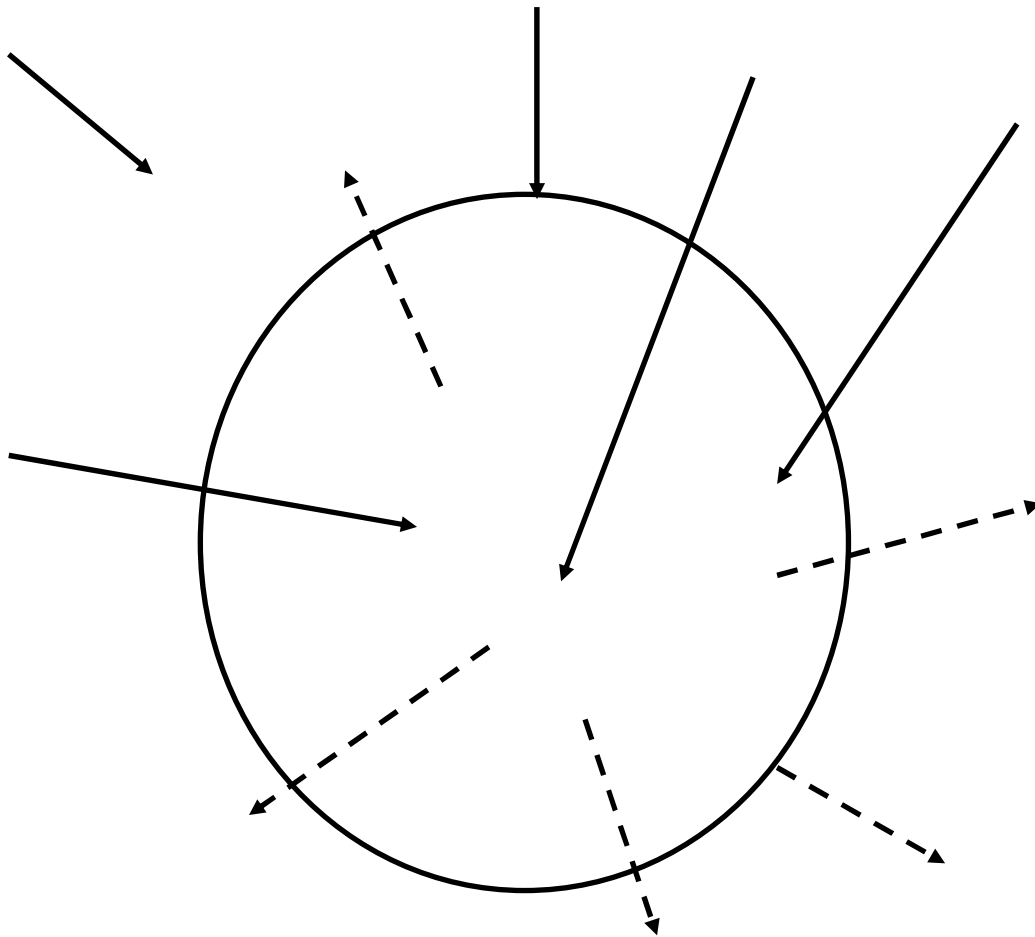
Reflecting upon trends in society far from being a contemporary fascination, has biblical antecedents. It’s what the Old Testament prophets engaged in. Their depictions of the future were not magically conjured out of thin air. Rather they noted the signs of the times, the trends in Israel’s religious, social, political and economic life and concluded that should those trends continue the nation was facing a troubled future. Thus for example, the

eighth century prophets discerning that Israel's worship had become debauched, that society was becoming more violent, that political corruption abounded and that the economic system was unjust, predicted that if these trends continued, the nation's very future was in doubt. Yahweh either by direct intervention, or through the agency of foreign armies, would act decisively to restore his justice and rule in the hearts of the people.

So discerning the signs of the times is not for Christians a secular preoccupation but an aspect of Christian witness and ministry. Like the prophets of old, we need to be keeping an eye upon trends in our society and thinking about where they are leading us. Some trends we will welcome because they are manifestations of the nature and the values implicit in the Kingdom of God. Others we may want to resist because they are antithetical to Kingdom living. Reflecting upon these things is not a matter simply expressing our hopes and our fears for the future. Rather we need to embody in our day-to-day lives and Christian practice actions on the one hand supportive of signs of the Kingdom, and on the other actions which resist trends that would undermine it.

That is what this session's exercise is basically about. It invites you to discern some of the signs/trends of our times. This is not so much an exercise in social research as calling upon our existing experience and knowledge. Some of that knowledge we will have gained by reading newspapers, watching television programmes, engaging in conversations, or undertaking our situation analysis. But some of it may well be "tacit learning", the hunches and intuitions we have about what is happening within our local community and in Australian society at large. You should call on all these sources in doing the exercise.

#### **14. Complete the following exercise.**



### MAPPING TRENDS: STAGE 1

- 1 Draw a circle
- 2 Using unbroken arrows indicate future trends you foresee impacting upon Australian society
- 3 Use the length of the arrow to indicate how influential you think the trend will be - from on the periphery to the heart of society
- 4 Identify the trend alongside each arrow
- 5 If you identify trends that are five, ten or twenty years away, indicate their distant approach.
- 6 Using dotted or wavy arrows indicate current trends which you think are leaving our society
- 7 Alongside each arrow name the trend
- 8 Indicate by the length of the arrow whether you think it was a deep-seated trend or a more superficial one

## MAPPING TRENDS: STAGE 2

- 1 Which of the trends that you see approaching do you think should be encouraged? How might they be encouraged?
- 2 Are there trends which you think ought to be resisted? Can you articulate any ways of doing that?
- 3 Are there any trends leaving Australian society that you think should be encouraged to leave? What can be done to assist their departure?
- 4 Are there any exiting trends that you feel are valuable and should remain? How might they be assisted to do so?
- 5 Are there aspects of any of the suggestions that you have made above which could be incorporated in some way into your daily life or your mission practice? If so, to which two or three would you give priority?

To help you with this task, here are a few examples of the possible impact of trends upon life and practice.

### **Example One**

A popular trend today, particularly amongst the young is reliance upon mobile phones and texting rather than face-to-face relationships. If your view is that modern communications encourage living at a distance, in what ways could this trend be resisted and relationships be made more personal? What steps might you take both in your personal life and in your practice?

### **Example Two**

In our sample case-study of St Agnes's congregation we saw a massive gulf developing between generations. If you think this remains a trend and closing this generation gap became a particular concern of yours, what modifications or innovations in your practice could you make?

### **Example Three**

Marriage patterns are changing with fewer people opting to live in a monogamous marriage and more opting for alternative relationships and partnerships. If you feel this trend is for the better, what implications would this have for your practice? If you feel it to be a trend for the worse, what might you incorporate into to your practice to combat it?

### **Example Four**

A friend claims to have discerned a trend in the church that considers worship should make people happy, citing the example of a celebrant who distributed jelly beans to the congregation. He felt that worship should make people holy not necessarily happy, and that becoming holy can be a very uncomfortable and even unhappy process. If you approve of the happiness approach, what steps would you take to incorporate it into your practice? If you resist it, what are the implications for your practice?

### **Example Five**

A trend on the horizon, perhaps twenty years away, based on the recent laboratory creation of a living cell controlled by synthetic DNA, is being hailed as giving humans the power to revolutionise everything from health to climate change. Opponents claim this as an example of scientists “playing God”. If you think this to be a good trend, what could you do in your practice to encourage it? If you want to resist it, what steps would you take in your practice?

#### **Step 1:**

**Follow the instructions on page 67 and identify on the basis of your social and intuitive knowledge, the trends you see entering and leaving Australian society.**

#### **Step 2:**

**Following the set of questions on page 68 decide what the encouragement or discouragement of your identified trends would mean for your daily life and Christian practice.**

**Step 3:**

**Write up your conclusions in your situation analysis journal together with a brief evaluation of the exercise.**

**Step 4:**

**(optional): you may like to compare notes with a colleague, friend, or reflection group to determine whether your impression of trends mirrors or differs from those of others.**

# Session Eleven

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## KEEPING A LEARNING JOURNAL

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You will be well aware that the Bishop's Certificate and Diploma programmes differ in the way that they assess your work from other educational programmes that are available. In keeping with the pedagogy of the programme we do not assess your progress by inviting you to submit 5,000 word essays, or sitting three hour unseen examination papers. Rather your progress is assessed through your responses to reflective questions, integrative exercises and situation analysis research which you have noted in various journals.

This process of logging events, problems and responses in a journal is basic to exercising the skills of reflective practice and a good habit to establish in our mission and ministry. It is an approach now adapted for use in a wide range of professions, notably the sphere of medicine (particularly nursing practice) and teaching. Our hope is that you have found making journal responses a stimulating and rewarding exercise and that you will consider it as a tool for evaluating your church related work.

Your journal can take a number of forms. Many people these days prefer to keep a computer journal as this simplifies any changes, additions, cutting or pasting that you may wish to do. Others will choose a ring-binder or loose-leaf folder as that allows for a limited degree of editing and change. Or one could choose an ordinary exercise book, although that is the least adaptable option.

Your journal is similar to the field notebook that social scientists use in their research, or the laboratory notes that scientists make as they conduct experiments. In this latter field it is often the patient documentation of failed experiments that can deter later practitioners from taking that road, and which often provide the generation of a new idea or approach that makes a significant breakthrough. In journal writing we can record not only, as action theory suggests, the values and theories lying behind a particular action we decided to take, and the consequences which we observed flowing from it, we can identify new learnings, make sense of new situations which confront us, and clarify our position in terms of both theology and theory, on a range of issues of both personal and mission-related significance.

Reflective writing of this kind provides us with the opportunity to think critically about what we are doing and why we are doing it. Again, this is an attitude that you have been encouraged to develop from day one of this programme - not to take the views of any distinguished scholar simply for granted, but always to subject theories to critical review. This is one of the things that makes this programme such a challenge. So our journal writing can provide:

- a record of events and actions and our responses to them;
- an opportunity to challenge what we do, and how we might do it differently or better;
- the impetus ensure that our actions are informed and carefully planned;
- the means of further developing our theology and Christian values;
- the opportunity to look at our actions more objectively and not regard all problems as springing from our own inadequacy;
- the enrichment of our mission and ministry because we are willing to be innovative;
- increased confidence in our abilities and our work;
- basic documentation which enables us to respond to those who ask us “What do you do?”

The books on maintaining a reflective practice journal suggest a variety of ways of structuring the journal. One of these is the “agenda approach” in which one works through a set of questions along the following lines:

- What is the current problem or issue and its context?
- What additional information would be of help?
- How is it related to other issues in your experience?
- Who or what could help?
- What are my assumptions, and how can I test them?
- What can I do to create a change?
- What are the possible outcomes?
- What action will I take and how will I justify it?
- List the particular outcomes you hope to achieve.
- Reflect on the actual outcomes. What worked well?
- What could I do differently next time?

Another approach is “critical incident analysis” which is similar to the case-study you constructed as a focus for the various tools you have been testing out in this situation analysis booklet. In this approach you would:

- Describe the incident as objectively as possible.
- What were the assumptions that you were operating with?
- Is there another way to see the event?
- How would your parishioners explain this event?
- How do the two explanations compare?
- What could you do differently?

Then from time to time you might pose some general questions to your practice along the lines of:

- What has using this journal confirmed that I already know about the people I serve?
- What do I need to do to improve the quality of what I do?
- What innovation could I introduce?
- What professional development opportunities should I be seeking?

This is not to suggest that you should slavishly follow any of these methods of approach. More than likely when reflecting on your practice you will turn to one or two of the tools you have been testing in the session by session exercises; calling upon intuitive learning, the social sciences approach, biblical reflection, the pastoral cycle, or the variety of tools based on action theory. These all will help you develop your skills as a reflective practitioner.

## **15. Complete this session's exercise.**

### **Step 1: Practice exercise**

**Taking either the case-study you prepared for this series of exercises, or some recent event in your life, mission or ministry, in your situation analysis journal write a sample entry reflecting on the event, as if writing for your new reflective practice journal. The journal entry can take any form you wish and should be the equivalent of 250 to 500 words.**

### **Step 2: Planning ahead**

**Set up your Reflective Practitioner Journal on your computer, or in a folder or exercise book, and think about how you will establish a regular routine for maintaining it.**

# Session Twelve

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## DEVELOPING YOUR OWN MODEL

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We can probably all think of examples of when we have been talking enthusiastically about a theme relating to mission and ministry, and someone has asked us, or we have had cause to stop and ask of ourselves, “what do you actually do?”

Such a question can be a pointed reminder that in terms of Christian mission and ministry we are more likely to be judged by our actions rather than our intentions no matter how passionately or convincingly they are expressed.

That’s why this final work in situation analysis has tried to stress the practicalities of reflective practice: what do we need to *do* to become reflective practitioners? We have introduced you to a few of the many tools which can be employed to turn one into a person who takes seriously the task of reviewing their mission or ministry activities in a sustained and systematic way.

There are of course a great many more tools in circulation, some developed by other professions to help their members to pursue a critical view of their activity, some the product of large international companies trying to encourage a more creative workforce, others designed by people engaged in community education.

One of the things you might do is to keep an eye out for any approaches or exercises you encounter which you think could be adapted to and employed in your own particular circumstances.

The exercises that we have suggested are simply for testing. Some may work well for you while others prove to be of less value. Still others may call for considerable adaptation in order to function successfully for you.

So this final session contains a kind of health warning: don't lose any sleep over things that didn't work for you: make use of those that served their purposes well and helped you to cast a critical eye over your activities.

The really important thing is to construct a model of reflective practice which is your own, which suits your understanding of ministry and which works well for you. And that - beginning to construct a model of your own - is the object of this exercise.

**16. Complete the following exercise.**

**Step 1: Review**

**Review your evaluations of each of the sessions in this booklet which you noted in your situation analysis journal.**

**Write a brief overall review noting:**

- **which approaches you found most helpful, and which were less helpful. Give your reasons for reaching these judgements.**
- **which exercises you will use to begin creating your own model of reflective practice.**

## **Step 2: Planning ahead**

### **Make notes in your situation analysis journal outlining**

- **How you intend keeping your situation analysis work up to date**
- **Any proposals you have for maintaining progress in your personal or professional development (e.g. embarking on further courses of study, seeking appropriate training in skills you think you need; finding a mentor, supervisor, Soul Friend or joining a regular reflection group, establishing a programme of reading in areas you are interested in; setting aside time for personal reflection; creating a better balance between work, family and leisure commitments, etc)**
- **Your plan for keeping the Reflective Practitioner journal you set up in the previous session.**



