



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Research Commons

<http://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/>

Research Commons at the University of Waikato

Copyright Statement:

The digital copy of this thesis is protected by the Copyright Act 1994 (New Zealand).

The thesis may be consulted by you, provided you comply with the provisions of the Act and the following conditions of use:

- Any use you make of these documents or images must be for research or private study purposes only, and you may not make them available to any other person.
- Authors control the copyright of their thesis. You will recognise the author's right to be identified as the author of the thesis, and due acknowledgement will be made to the author where appropriate.
- You will obtain the author's permission before publishing any material from the thesis.

Invigorating the Church for Mission

Action Research with Local Parishes

A thesis

submitted in fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree

of

Doctor of Philosophy

at

The University of Waikato

by

EDWARD PREBBLE



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

2012

i. Abstract

By drawing together the insights of Action Researchers and a personal theological/spiritual conviction of the total and limitless Love of God I present a bridge between the discourse of faith, worship and spirituality on the one hand, and the discourse of management/organisation studies on the other. This bridge is akin to the steering platform on a metaphoric double-hulled canoe. I have brought the collective wisdom of each hull to the setting of the direction of my thesis and my guidance to its destination.

An open, inclusive, and questioning epistemological approach implied by the integration of those diverse ontological assumptions was applied to a research project with members of five Anglican parishes who wanted to explore how they could bring about change among themselves and how they could connect more effectively with their neighbouring communities. I crafted a participatory action process described as ethnographic pastoral inquiry. Key characteristics of this process include a deliberate inclusion of spiritual considerations, a high degree of mutual trust, an unhurried pace, a willingness to change on the part of the facilitator and the target group, and an openness to the unexpected. The working groups in the five parishes were facilitated to identify several new initiatives of community-facing work.

Reflections on the research project led to advocating for Missional Viability as the recommended organising principle for local parishes. If a parish is missionally viable its members can commit to reflect more adequately the Christian principles from which the Church as a whole takes its direction. Three components of missional viability were identified:

- a. An functional relationship with an observable community of people outside of its worshipping members
- b. A well-developed (or rediscovered) sense of the congregation's mission,
- c. A commitment to a deepening of spirituality among its members and others with whom they have contact.

By emphasising spirituality as a dimension of the research process itself rather than simply an insight emerging from but still incidental to the central point of a research project, I make a contribution to the elaboration of the field of intentional action research genres. I argue that an overt acknowledgement of spirituality should be an integral aspect of the holistic approach typically advocated by Action Research theorists. At the same time, the project reported here gives strong support to the view that in the study of churches and other religious organisations the methods associated with Action Research are particularly compatible with theological foundations of religious orientations to 'being in the world'. The project draws on the emancipatory or salvific power of research as organisations are regarded as partners in the inquiry. The findings become material for their members to use in discerning their own sense of vision and direction, thereby assisting them in finding strength to take the necessary risks involved in bringing about change.

ii. Acknowledgements

In August 2003, through the generosity of the **Diocese of Waiapu**, where I was then serving, I had the privilege of attending a Mid-Ministry Refreshment Course at Houchen House, Hamilton, under the leadership of the **Rev'd Paul Dyer**, who invited a number of speakers to address us. The speaker on the subject of Appreciative Inquiry was **Dr Suzanne Grant**, from **Waikato Management School**, who introduced herself as one of the lecturers on a Post-Graduate Diploma in the Management of Nonprofit Organisations, a course taught entirely on line. My interest in this course marks the beginning of a long and interesting journey.

In 1995 I enrolled in the course, which brought me into contact with **Associate Professor Maria Humphries**. Maria has had a profound influence on my life in the last few years, and has become a good friend as well. A few years after completing the diploma, I was looking for a change in my employment situation, and with Maria's encouragement I took up the opportunity to study for a PhD, under her inspired and inspiring supervision.

I am indebted to the **University of Waikato**, which granted me a three-year scholarship, allowing me to pursue my studies on a fulltime basis. The University librarians were of great assistance, especially **Caroline Rodler** and **Alistair Lamb**. I am grateful to the **Rt Rev'd David Rice**, Bishop of Waiapu, and the **Rt Rev'd John Paterson**, then Bishop of Auckland, who jointly sponsored an application to **St John's Theological College**, Auckland, and to the **Rev'd Canon (now Bishop) Jim White**, Dean at the college, for supporting the application. St John's College provided me and my family with rent-free accommodation, a wonderful study to work in, and a generous book allowance.

My wife **Sherrell** and her mother **Esther** supported me by being willing to leave the certainties of secure employment and the comfort of our vicarage in Tauranga to move to Auckland, very much a step into the unknown for all of us. Sherrell's

support has been amazing, as has the encouragement of our children, **Esther**, **Mark** and **Sally** and their families.

I have been greatly assisted by an excellent supervisory team. Maria's exacting tutelage is in keeping with her well justified reputation as a gifted supervisor. The second supervisor, **John Gilbert**, has guided me through the bureaucratic requirements of the University, and has been a consistent encouragement and support. **Stephen Garner**, from the University of Auckland, has served as a Theological Adviser, and in that capacity has repeatedly steered me away from thin ice, and provided me with just the right suggestions to support what I wanted to say. Thank you to **Megan Symes**, who helped so much at the last stage with proof reading and editing. Any remaining errors are my own.

For a project of this type, a very special debt of thanks is owed to the members of five parishes who allowed me to become part of their lives. The working groups from **Hillcrest**, **Kohimarama**, **Mangere East**, **Pohutukawa Coast** and **Pukekohe** truly became co-researchers with me. I hope that I have done justice to their work in my reflections.

iii. Table of Contents

i.	Abstract	iii
ii.	Acknowledgements	v
iii.	Table of Contents	vii
iv.	Table of figures	xi
v.	Glossary of Terms	xiii
1.	Theological Rhetoric V Organisational Reality	1
1.1	Mapping the thesis	5
2.	What is the Church?	7
2.1	Church Buildings	8
2.2	Church as a theological ideal.	10
2.3	The church as ordained leadership	12
2.4	The church as a denomination.	13
2.5	The local church, often referred to as a congregation or a parish.	16
2.6	Church as a ‘verb’	18
2.7	What is the church for?	20
3.	Significance of the Research Project.....	25
3.1	Dramatic Numerical Decline – Real or Perceived	27
3.2	The Church’s Shrinking Sphere of Activity	29
3.3	The New Zealand Anglican Church – a little history	31
4.	Researcher Positioned in the Anglican Church.....	35
4.1	Researcher Positioning or Ideological Surrounds	36
4.2	My own ideological surround – (i) cross disciplinary background.....	38
4.3	My own Ideological surround – (ii) The Anglican Church.....	40
4.4	An Incarnational Theology	43
4.5	An Anglican methodology?	46
5.	Organisational Culture – A helpful construct?.....	51
5.1	Can culture be managed, or changed?.....	52
5.2	Technical versus adaptive change	53
5.3	Metaphors of culture	55
5.4	Is it that an organisation <i>has</i> a culture, or that it <i>is</i> a culture?.....	56
5.5	Perhaps another word?	59
6.	The Spirit of Organisations and the Organisation of the Spirit.....	61

6.1 Management principles applied to churches	61
6.2 Spirituality in Organisations	67
6.3 A tangent: Spirituality versus Religion	69
6.4 Application of Spiritual Principles to Organisation Studies.....	74
6.5 Exploitation of spirituality.....	75
6.6 The spirituality of organisations	77
7. Literature from, and about, the church	81
7.1 The <i>ideal</i> church	82
7.2 Assessing a parish's health or effectiveness.....	86
7.3 The emerging/emergent church.	91
7.3.1 Characteristics of emerging churches.....	95
7.3.2 Critiques of the emerging church	97
7.4 The missional church.....	100
7.4.1 Missional church – a theological principle.....	102
7.4.2 Characteristics of the missional church	103
7.5 Emerging church and Missional church - quite different, but both important.	105
8. The Research in Theory – the Ontology, Epistemology, and Methodology behind the Project.	107
8.1 Social Constructionist theory.....	107
8.2 Epistemology of Love	113
8.3 Transdisciplinarity	117
8.3.1 The 'contributing' disciplines affect each other.	119
8.3.2 In vivo Research	119
8.3.3 Consideration of values, spirituality and the transcendent.....	119
8.4 Action Research.....	122
9. Description of the Research Project	129
9.1 The two-hulled waka	130
9.2 From research orientation to method.....	132
9.3 My work as a facilitator.....	137
9.4 Changes in the research method	139
9.5 Outcomes and forms of analysis proposed.....	140
9.6 Research journal	141

9.7 Modes of analysis.....	142
9.8 Outcomes	143
9.9 Validity.....	143
9.10 Ethical considerations	145
9.10.1 Intentional change in the relationship between Neighbourhood and Parish.....	146
9.10.2 Leaving the project in capable parish hearts and minds	147
9.10.3 Ethics of my own involvement	147
9.11 Confidentiality	147
10. The Research Project – Introducing the Parishes.....	151
10.1 Characteristics of this group of parishes	153
10.2 The parish working groups.....	156
10.3 The parishes - Five different mapping exercises.....	157
10.3.1 Mangere East.....	158
10.3.2 Pohutukawa Coast.....	159
10.3.3 Pukekohe	160
10.3.4 Hillcrest	162
10.3.5 Kohimarama.....	163
11. The Parishes in Detail – (A) The Three Larger Parishes	167
11.1 Pukekohe	167
11.2 Kohimarama.....	173
11.3 Hillcrest.....	177
12. The Parishes in Detail – (B) The Two Smaller Parishes.....	185
12.1 Pohutukawa Coast.....	185
12.2 Mangere East.....	192
13. Reflections on the Research Project.....	199
13.1 Confidence and affirmation.....	200
13.2 Change of attitude in church circles.....	205
13.3 The Importance of theological emphasis	206
14. Missional Viability.....	213
14.1 Criteria for parish ‘wellbeing’	213
14.2 Missional Viability.....	215
14.3 What constitutes missional viability?	218

14.4 A relationship with the community.	219
14.5 A rediscovery of the church’s mission	220
14.6 A commitment to deepening of Spirituality	224
15. Reflections on Process and Methods	229
15.1 Default process	230
15.2 Assessment of Dudley and Ammerman’s process	236
15.3 Ethnographic pastoral inquiry	237
15.3.1 Spirituality	238
15.3.2 A high degree of mutual trust	241
15.3.3 A slow pace	243
15.3.4 Willingness to change.....	244
15.3.5 Openness to the unexpected	246
15.4 Are the findings academically rigorous?.....	248
15.5 Are the findings significant?	250
16. Voyage of Discovery	255
References	261
Appendix	291
Statements from members of the five parish working groups, reflecting on the research process and/or on sections of the draft thesis.....	291

iv. Table of figures

Figure 1 Scales developed by various authors to assess congregational strength or health.....	87
Figure 2 Graph of transdiscipline. From M.A. Max-Neef / Ecological Economics 53 (2005) 5–16.....	120
Figure 3 Representation of Pukekohe map – many more pins in the original. Church shown by black triangle.....	161
Figure 4 “Map” produced by the Kohimarama working group.....	165

v. Glossary of Terms

Two types of words, listed alphabetically, are defined in this list.

1. Terms of a theological nature, or relating to the life and work of churches that may not be immediately understandable to readers from outside of that milieu.
2. Terms that refer specifically to the New Zealand historical or cultural context, and requiring some explanation to readers from other parts of the world.

Admission to Communion The practice in most denominations of determining a policy as to who is permitted to receive the bread and wine of Holy Communion. For many centuries it was Anglican policy to limit communion to those who had been confirmed. In New Zealand, the policy is to give communion to any, including children, who have been baptised.

Anglican Consultative Council The international consultative body representing Anglican Churches. Includes bishops, clergy and lay people. Meets every 3-4 years. One of four “symbols of communion”, the others being the Archbishop of Canterbury, Lambeth Conference, and the Primates’ meeting.

Aotearoa Name for New Zealand in *te reo* Māori, the indigenous language of New Zealand. Does not have legal standing as a title for the country, but is used frequently, either on its own, or in the form Aotearoa/New Zealand. In the official name of my Church, the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand, and Polynesia, refers not to the entire country, but to those people who affiliate themselves with Tikanga Māori. The title of the chief bishop of Tikanga Māori is Te Pihopa o Aotearoa.

Auckland Biggest city in New Zealand, population approx 1,000,000. The diocese of Auckland covers the city, plus rural areas to the north and south. Largest diocese in NZ, with approx 80 parishes.

Back to Church Sunday An initiative begun in the Diocese of Manchester, UK in the first decade of the 21st Century, and now widespread throughout the Anglican church, including in New Zealand, whereby special efforts are made to invite people with past associations to the church to make a return visit.

Bay of Islands Region in the north of New Zealand now largely associated with tourism. Site of the earliest Anglican, Catholic and Methodist

missionary activities. Includes Waitangi, where the Treaty was signed in 1840.

<i>Bicultural</i>	Referring primarily to the two cultural streams in New Zealand guaranteed by the Treaty of Waitangi - the Māori stream, often called <i>tangata whenua</i> (people of the land), and the settler, or Pākehā, or <i>tauiwi</i> (stranger)stream.
<i>Bishop</i>	Senior church leader in Anglican, Catholic and some other Denominations. Normally in charge of a Diocese.
<i>Canons/canonical</i>	Commonly used in catholic churches (including Anglican) to refer to church laws, rules and statutes. <i>Canon</i> can also be used as an honorific for some senior clergy, normally associated with cathedrals.
<i>Catechists</i>	Not a common term in modern church use, but still used in some missionary-oriented dioceses, e..g. in the Pacific and Africa. A non-ordained teacher.
<i>Catholic</i>	Root meaning is 'universal', so connotes one unifying church. Has become the title for the Roman Catholic Church, centred in the Vatican. The Anglican Church claims that its theology did not change at the Reformation, merely its governance structures, and that therefore it is equally an expression of the catholic church. The term is also used, sometimes in the form Anglo-Catholic, to refer to Anglicans who emphasise the universal nature of the church, and are influenced by the doctrinal emphasis of the Roman Catholic Church. Such Anglicans are typically attracted by an emphasis on ritual and traditional liturgical practices.
<i>Chaplaincy</i>	Form of ministry normally outside of parish structures, focused on the needs of particular categories of people, such as students, people in hospitals, the armed forces, prisons, industry etc.
<i>Christendom</i>	A term that traces its origins to the developments under the Roman Emperor Constantine when Christianity became the official religion of the empire. Refers to the mindset that the affairs of whole countries and whole 'societies' are the same as those of the church.
<i>Church Missionary Society</i>	One of several very influential missionary societies founded in 18 th and 19 th centuries, focused on bringing Christianity to the non-European world. Still operating.
<i>Church of England</i>	Name adopted in England after the Reformation. Should not be (but often is) applied to Anglicans in other parts of the world.
<i>City Mission</i>	Organisation in many cities, including Auckland, focused on provision of Christian social services to those in need.
<i>Clergy</i>	The ordained leadership of churches. In Anglican practice, people are ordained as Bishops, Priests or Deacons.

<i>Collect</i>	A Collect is a short prayer composed for a given Sunday or other day, summing up the selected themes for the day.
<i>Communion</i>	Primary meaning is Holy Communion, the central worship service of most Christian bodies, focused on the bread and wine as the Body and Blood of Christ. By extension, refers to the whole Anglican movement internationally – all those who are 'in communion' with the Archbishop of Canterbury.
<i>Congregation</i>	<p>Literally a 'gathering' of people, it is a way of referring specifically to the people, rather than any other aspect of church. It is used in three distinct ways;</p> <p>The people who are present at a specific worship service</p> <p>The people who habitually attend a particular regular service. It is common in Anglican parishes to identify an 8.00am congregation, or an evening congregation, who may have demographic or theological characteristics distinct from the generality of parish members.</p> <p>Particularly in American usage, but also generally, to refer to a local expression of church – in this thesis normally called 'parish'.</p>
<i>Conservative</i>	<p>From the basic meaning of one who endeavours to maintain or preserve that which has been, conservative theology implies an emphasis on holding to the authority of the Bible's teachings.</p> <p>Often equated with evangelical, but that is a much broader term. Often used as an opposite to 'liberal'.</p>
<i>Co-operating Venture</i>	A New Zealand term for a parish belonging to two or more denominations. Most derive from a period in the 1960s when discussions were underway for a formal union among Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregational and Church of Christ denominations.
<i>Cross</i>	The means of Jesus' execution by the Romans. Now in various forms the most recognisable visual symbol of Christianity, and used as a shorthand term to refer to Christ's death.
<i>Denomination</i>	The wider national, and often international, grouping to which a local church belongs. In relation to the parishes involved in this project, and my own professional affiliation, the denomination is the Anglican Church.
<i>Diocese</i>	An area under the administration of a bishop. The basic administrative unit in Anglican practice, comprising a number of parishes. Dioceses can vary greatly in size. The seven New Zealand dioceses range from 14 parishes to over 80. Some Church of England dioceses have several hundred parishes.

<i>Doctrine</i>	The official teaching of the church, either referring generally to the whole of such teaching, or specifically to particular aspects, e.g. the doctrine of the Incarnation.
<i>Episcopal(ian)</i>	From the Latin <i>Episcopus</i> , or <i>Bishop</i> , means ruled by bishops. So in one sense, Anglicans, Catholics, and Eastern Orthodox are all episcopal churches. Normally, and officially, used for churches of the Anglican Communion whose origins are not from the Church of England, especially in the USA and Scotland. The Episcopal Church (capitalised) used to be known as ECUSA – Episcopal Church of the USA) – but the shorter title was adopted in recognition of the fact that this church, though centred on the USA, contains a very considerable membership from a number of other countries, notably in the Caribbean and East Asia. It still needs to be differentiated from other national churches using that title, notably the Episcopal Church of Scotland.
<i>Eucharist</i>	The most common term in Anglican usage for the Holy Communion service. Derives from the Greek word for ‘thanksgiving’.
<i>Evangelical</i>	<p>Name given to an emphasis within Christianity that traces back to the controversies of the Reformation in the 15th Century. Importance is given to the individual’s need for salvation, to the importance of the bible, and to personal spirituality. When capitalised, Evangelical is the name of a number of denominations or to other groupings of Christians who accept that label. When not capitalised, refers more loosely to an emphasis adopted by individuals or groups.</p> <p>The word evangelical is not synonymous with conservative or with fundamentalist, but all three words are used loosely and interchangeably by various writers. Because of that variation, it is not possible to follow a strict definition throughout this thesis.</p>
<i>General synod</i>	The governing body in most Anglican Provinces. In Aotearoa, New Zealand, and Polynesia, meets normally every two years. Decisions must be approved by the three houses of Bishops, Clergy, and Laity, and also by the three Tikanga.
<i>Gospel</i>	Literally Good News. Refers specifically to the four accounts of the life of Jesus, by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. More generally to the message of Christianity.
<i>Hamilton</i>	Main centre of the Waikato region, and one of two cathedral cities in the Diocese of Waikato and Taranaki. Approximately 120 km south of Auckland. Approx 100,000 population.
<i>Incarnation(al)</i>	The Christian doctrine that God became a human being in the person of Jesus Christ. Its implications include that God is made accessible to the entire creation, that our human powers of reason and conscience are themselves God-given, and that, if the church is to see itself as the Body of Christ, its calling is to incarnate – to live out in the flesh – the love of God.

- Justification* The Christian doctrine deriving principally from the book of Romans, stating that because of sin, humans are condemned, but that the death and resurrection of Jesus removes that condemnation
- Laity* A layman, or a lay person is someone who has not been ordained. Its common, broader use for someone who is uneducated in a particular discipline, derives from this fundamental meaning.
- Land Wars* Series of armed conflicts, beginning in the 1840s, but with greater intensity in the 1860s between Māori and the Crown. In earlier times referred to as the New Zealand Wars, or the Māori Wars, the title Land Wars more accurately sums up the essence of the conflicts.
- Lectionary* The lectionary is a schedule of bible readings for daily or weekly use in worship. Most Anglicans in New Zealand use a 3-year lectionary, used internationally by a large number of denominations.
- Lenten* Lent is the period of approximately six weeks leading up to Easter each year. There is a long tradition of special activities, such as bible study groups, during this period.
- Liberal* In its origins, Liberal Christianity originates in the view that uncertainties in religion require a degree of latitude in belief rather than a dogmatic approach. As a method of biblical study, it applies the same modern hermeneutics used to understand any ancient writings. By extension the term has come to mean an emphasis on the ethical teachings of Jesus and a significantly lesser emphasis on the concept of sin. In the literature it is frequently used loosely as a near synonym for broad church, or mainline, or (inaccurately) progressive viewpoints. Also, and equally inaccurately, contrasted with evangelical or conservative Christianity.
- Another of the terms used loosely and interchangeably by many of the writers cited, so difficult to retain a tight definition.
- Local Shared Ministry* A system of leadership in a parish, whereby instead of appointing a vicar, a team of lay members of the parish is called to perform specific responsibilities on an unpaid basis. Most often in smaller areas where financial constraints mean the parish cannot pay a full-time vicar.
- Māori King* In the 1850's, the main chief of the Waikato area of New Zealand was given the title King in the hope that this would protect Māori interests. This act became the trigger for the wars of the 1860's. The King has formal authority only over the Waikato tribes, but is given a place of honour by most Māori tribes.
- Mission district* A local unit in the Anglican system that is too small, or not sufficiently viable financially to have Parish status. Typically under the direct authority of the bishop, with flexible arrangements suited to particular local requirements.

<i>Ordination</i>	In most Christian denominations - Quakers, Brethren, and Salvation Army are notable exceptions - ordination is the process by which individuals are set apart as clergy to perform various religious rites and ceremonies. In Anglican (and Catholic) usage, people are ordained by a bishop at a special worship service.
<i>Pākehā</i>	Normal word in <i>te reo</i> for white person or Caucasian. There is some controversy around its use, based on perceptions that it has pejorative connotations. Most commentators would regard it as having neutral implications.
<i>Parish</i>	The normal name for a local expression of the Anglican Church. In England, a parish is the smallest unit of local government. In New Zealand, parishes have no secular legal standing, but in most cases there is a demarcated geographical area over which the parish clergy are given oversight by the bishop.
<i>Parish Council</i>	The equivalent of a <i>vestry</i> in a <i>Co-operating Venture</i> parish.
<i>Parish priest</i>	In Roman Catholic use, this is the formal title for a priest in charge of a parish. Not a formal title in Anglican use, but used to refer to all clergy whose work is based in parishes, rather than, for example, chaplaincies.
<i>Play Centre</i>	A national voluntary programme in New Zealand, providing pre-school education at centres staffed predominantly by parents.
<i>Polity</i>	A particular form or system of government. Not an exclusively religious term, but often used to distinguish various denominations according to the way they are governed. For example, the polities of Roman Catholic and Anglican systems are distinguished by the degree of authority given to the Pope as compared with the Archbishop of Canterbury.
<i>PostChristendom</i>	A way of referring to perspectives on Christianity that no longer presume a world where the church is a universally recognised and respected institution.
<i>Predestination</i>	The Christian doctrine, associated with the Reformation theologian John Calvin, whereby God has pre-ordained that certain people will be saved. Based on such texts as "In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will" (Ephesians 1:11)
<i>Progressive</i>	A development in theology in the last half of the 20th century characterised by willingness to question tradition, and acceptance of human diversity with a strong emphasis on social justice and environmental stewardship of the Earth. Sometimes implies that our understanding of the gospel progresses as scientific and cultural insights develop.

Strictly not the same as liberal theology, but often used interchangeably

<i>Province</i>	In Anglican usage, a Province is a self-governing group of dioceses, frequently corresponding with national boundaries. The church of England has two provinces, Canterbury and York, and The Episcopal Church has several. NZ is part of a province known as the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand, and Polynesia.
<i>Radical</i>	Like many terms used to describe various theological emphases, 'radical' has been used in a wide range of senses, including connections with existentialism, fundamentalism and liberal thinking. Here used to refer to a number of contextual theological approaches, including feminist, black or queer theology.
<i>Redemption</i>	The Christian doctrine of deliverance from Sin
<i>Rohe</i>	A common term in <i>te reo Māori</i> for a boundary, or an area demarcated by a boundary. In Tikanga Māori, used for the equivalent of a parish.
<i>Sacrament(ally)</i>	The sacraments are the central ritual ceremonies of the church. Sacramental ministry, therefore means ministry comprising those central ceremonies, principally the Eucharist.
<i>Selwyn Centre</i>	The Selwyn Foundation is a large agency based in the Diocese of Auckland dedicated to care of older people. As well as operating a number of resthomes and geriatric hospitals, it co-ordinates a large number of parish initiatives where older people living at home are invited onto the church premises for a day programme.
<i>Synod</i>	Governing body of a diocese. In New Zealand, meets normally annually, and comprises the bishop, all the clergy, and representatives of all parishes and other ministry units, such as chaplaincies.
<i>Team ministry</i>	Umbrella term for a number of arrangements whereby two or more people are given shared responsibility in a parish. Local shared ministry is an example. Also husband and wife teams, or two or more people licensed as Co-Vicars.
<i>Tikanga</i>	When not capitalised, <i>tikanga</i> is a common term in <i>te reo Māori</i> with a range of meanings summed up as 'a way of doing things'. Includes rule, custom, method, authority. When capitalised, means one of three self-governing 'cultural streams' recognised by the constitution of the Anglican church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia. <i>Tikanga Pākehā</i> (<i>Pākehā</i> is the Māori word for white people) refers to the seven dioceses in New Zealand. <i>Tikanga Māori</i> refers to five bishoprics set up for work among Māori people. <i>Tikanga Pasefika</i> refers to the diocese of Polynesia, centred on Fiji and covering a number of small Pacific Island nations, but also including a large number of Pacific Island people living in New Zealand.

- Treaty of Waitangi* The treaty signed on 6 February, 1840 between the British Crown and representatives of various New Zealand tribes. Regarded as the founding document in New Zealand, its significance has been much debated in the 170+years since. The text was translated into *te reo* by Anglican missionaries, giving the church an ongoing sense of responsibility/complicity for the treaty and how it has been applied. The unusual constitutional arrangements discussed under *Tikanga* are an outworking of how the church has interpreted its responsibilities under the Treaty.
- Vestry* Two distinct meanings. Originally the room in a church building where the priest 'vests' or puts on robes. Was typically the only room where meetings could take place, so became applied to the management committee of the parish. The Church of England equivalent is a parochial church Council. In New Zealand, comprises the vicar, the wardens, the synod representative(s) and a number of elected members. Controls all the finances of the parish.
- Vicar* Literally meaning a representative, and in this case a bishop's representative. In New Zealand, the normal term for a priest in charge of a parish. The Church of England and Episcopal Church term 'Rector' is not used in New Zealand.
- Waikato* A geographical region in the central North Island of New Zealand, named after the country's longest river. In Anglican terms is part of the Diocese of Waikato and Taranaki, a diocese with two bishops and two cathedrals.
- Waka* A common word in *te reo* denoting a canoe, and by extension boats and ships of all sizes. All Māori tribes trace their descent from one of a small number of canoes coming to New Zealand from other Pacific Islands, so being able to identify ones *waka* is an important part of one's genealogical identity. Some of the ocean-going *waka* were of two-hulled construction.

1. Theological Rhetoric V Organisational Reality

I have been an Anglican parish priest for 25 years. I have been the vicar of seven different parishes of various sizes in two different parts of the country. It is my experience and, based on many informal conversations, the experience of most of my colleagues, that there is a fundamental mismatch between the theology and rhetoric of the church, and the way most Anglican parishes are organised.

The teaching of the church makes it clear that a local church exists for the social, political and religious benefit of the community around it. As an illustrative example, when instituting a new vicar to a local parish the bishop will ask the following questions of the parish members (Diocese of Auckland, 2009):

Will you take the Good News to the lost and lonely?

Will you teach, baptise and nurture those who come to faith?

Will you respond to the needy with loving service?

Will you work to transform the unjust structures of this world?

Will you care for creation, and for the natural world of which we are part?

The Congregation replies:

We will!

The new Vicar is then enjoined to “equip [the church members] for the ministry of all God’s people in the world”.

Through the promise and mandate expressed in that example, church leaders demonstrate the outward-facing mission of the church and the intended focus on the welfare of others. In practice, however, most parishes display a strong cultural tradition that makes a priority of the worship and pastoral needs of their current members. Hirsch (2007, p. 235) notes that even in a church that is thriving, the vast majority of church activities and groups are aimed at insiders. A far greater energy is devoted to preservation of the existing institution – the building and its associated treasures, the worship patterns which mostly serve well the declining and aging congregation, the complex structure of committees, interest groups and activities that

make up the life of a local parish church. An increasing number of church-based writers (e.g. Thomas, 2003) have explored ways to reverse this pattern. One group of such writers have drawn on the language of the missional church,¹ suggesting that ... “Missional churches, at their best, shift their focus from creating programmes that meet the needs of those within the building to equipping members to address the needs of those outside the building” (Sine, 2008). Bishop Richard Randerson has made a similar point in recent articles (2009; 2010a). As he put it in one of his titles, “Local mission needs a radical overhaul”.

This research project will contribute to that overhaul by investigating ways that change can be facilitated in the local units of the Anglican Church, usually referred to as parishes. In doing so, I draw on a quite different part of my experience, the opportunity in 2005 and 2006 to study concepts of organisational change and renewal in the course of a Post Graduate Diploma in the Management of Not-for-Profit Organisations. As I worked through the requirements of that qualification, I took a particular interest in the construct Organisational Culture. It seemed to me that this way of conceptualising the dynamics of organisations might provide a useful structure for studying how change occurs (or does not occur) in voluntary organisations, especially churches. The academic discourse in Organisation Studies and/or Management Schools is typically a quite different one from that operating in the context of faith, worship and belief normally associated with churches. How the two discourses may be linked will form an important theme of this discussion.

The problem of a perceived mismatch between the internal life of organisations described as churches, and the outward-facing emphasis that is integral to their theological foundations, is widely recognised as an issue in religious literature. It is typically summed up as a tension or dichotomy between maintenance and mission (Minatrea, 2004) or between ministry and mission (Anderson, 2006). However widely it is acknowledged that a problem exists, there is very little consensus as to the appropriate strategy for addressing the problem. Over the past two to three decades a plethora of resources has been produced, in the form of books, journals, ministry consultancies, and web-based programmes, either addressing this dichotomy directly,

¹ Discussed at length in chapter 7

or addressing the associated issue of a serious decline in church attendance in all western countries. A variety of research initiatives have been instituted, mostly following positivist, empirical research principles. Some draw heavily on quantitative approaches, in an attempt either to show statistical trends as a motivation for action (Fields & Lineham, 2008; Simpson & Lee, 2008; Wilson, 1993), or to develop one of a series of indices against which particular churches or congregations can be measured (Callahan, 1983; Schwarz, 1996, 1999; Woolever & Bruce, 2002, 2004, 2008). Others use a variety of qualitative (Swinton & Mowat, 2006) and/or multidisciplinary approaches, (Ammerman, 1997, 2005; Ammerman, Carroll, Dudley, & McKinney, 1998; Cameron, Richter, Davies, & Ward, 2005) often building a broad picture through a large number of case-studies.

All these approaches bring useful insights to church leadership but nearly all can be reduced to some sort of formula that is supposed to ‘work’ in any local situation. They all assume a more or less objective researcher (quantitative approaches rather more, qualitative rather less), and a research process that leaves the congregations, or groups of congregations unaffected, apart from recommendations for change. Research into Organisation Studies literature has tended to confirm a conviction arising from my own experience of parish leadership, during which a number of models for change have been attempted, that all such empirical research approaches are deficient in assisting churches, and similar organisations, to bring about meaningful change.

Developments in the area of Action Research² over the past twenty years or so promise to provide a more helpful theoretical and theological framework. A research process in which the parish or congregation in question is in charge of the process, has

² There is very little consistency among theorists and practitioners of action research as to whether and when this term should be capitalised. I have done so on this first occasion in recognition that the term is sometimes used as the formal title for a specific methodological approach. Subsequently I will follow the practice of Reason and Bradbury and their collaborators (2008), and Coghlan and Brannick (2010), by using the lower case except when quoting other sources or when a formal title is clearly implied. I will follow a similar policy with other terms such as transdisciplinarity and organisation studies.

equal power with the researcher to determine what will be studied and how, and is grounded in the actual experience and needs of that group, rather than the theoretical priorities of the researching institution, has the potential to bring about an emancipatory, liberating effect on the group.

The literature on action research has numerous examples of projects working with businesses, educational institutions, and medical organisations of various kinds, but comparatively far fewer with churches. While there may be similarities among all types of formal organisations, there are also some unique characteristics and intentions associated with Christian churches. This thesis contributes to the literature by describing a research process working with five Anglican parishes in two parts of New Zealand, and shows that an action research process can be very effective in promoting change, especially with groups who see the need for change but feel incapable of bringing it about.

This study contributes further to the action research literature in that it addresses another issue frequently mentioned but not greatly developed, that of spirituality. What makes churches distinctive as organisations is that their whole *raison d'être* is intentionally focused on spiritual and religious considerations. A participatory action research project with and within organisations that see themselves as being led by spiritual influences, both allows and requires a detailed consideration of spirituality. It is very common among action research literature to emphasise the value of holistic perspectives and, in that context, to allude to issues of spirituality on the part of the researcher or the groups under discussion or both. It is much less common to see the spiritual perspective of the organisation, and of the individuals who are its members, as a central consideration in the research design.

The two types of discussion, first, an analysis of a change process using the discourse of organisation studies and action research methodologies and, second, a discussion of the spiritual issues involved in working with groups from local churches whose reason for being is the pursuit of spiritual goals, must be kept in some sort of creative tension. This thesis will conceptualise that tension through the metaphor of a two-hulled *waka*, or ocean-going canoe; each hull must be sound and stable in its own

right, and activities on each co-ordinated for the well-being of the vessel. Stability is provided by the steering platform between them, maintaining the optimum distance between the hulls, and holding the focus on the destination by having the space between the hulls pointed at the horizon. In the discussions to follow, some will focus much more on one hull than the other, while others, especially towards the end of the thesis, will dwell on the relationship between the two, or how a creatively built relationship between the content of the research and the appropriate methodological approach will guide the craft to its destination.

1.1 Mapping the thesis

The structure of this thesis is a three-part one – background and literature, the project itself, and discussion. I begin with the first hull of the canoe or the substantive content of the research, in this case meaning issues and consideration about the life and work of Christian people organised as churches. As a first step to gaining any understanding of the distinctive qualities of this type of organisation, it is necessary to spend some time exploring how the word ‘church’ has been used and trace at least six quite different senses of that word used in the literature. Discerning which of these senses is being employed in particular circumstances, or in a particular item of literature, helps to understand the ontological and epistemological presuppositions that are in play. I then move to a discussion of the significance of the thesis topic in the life of church groups today, before placing myself as a researcher within that context. Two aspects of my background, a commitment to a cross-disciplinary academic approach and a deep foundation in the traditions and theology of the Anglican Church, are fundamental to the research design that follows.

Having laid out my own researcher positioning, or ideological surround, I move to consideration of the other hull of the canoe, issues and considerations of methodology, and begin a series of literature reviews. First there is a review of literature on the organisation culture construct, which I had thought might be particularly helpful in my considerations; that review shows some progression in my thinking, and some doubts raised as to whether that way of conceptualising the organising of groups would be as helpful as I had hoped. I then proceed to an

exploration of how various approaches to management/organisation studies have been related to issues of spirituality. A final literature review chapter discusses literature about churches generated from within church circles; this discussion places my research project into the context of contemporary church debates and developments, notably the emerging church and the theological construct of the missional church.

The second part of the thesis concerns the research project, and begins with an outline of four threads that have influenced the ontological, epistemological and methodological approaches to my research. I discuss in turn the influence of social constructionist theory; a Christian approach to the paradoxes inherent in postmodern thinking developed by P. Watson and entitled *An Epistemology of Love*; the insights of Transdisciplinary theorists; and the methodological approaches of action research. A theme of that theoretical discussion is that issues of process or of methodology take on far greater significance for the thesis than I realised as I began the project. The theory is then converted into a specific research method; after a detailed reflection on the two-hulled canoe metaphor, I describe the specifics of the research method employed with the five parishes. In the following three chapters I introduce the parishes, first all at once in a discussion that emphasises their differences, and then in greater detail relating the progress of the research project in the three larger units followed by the two smaller ones.

In the third part of the thesis, the discussion and reflection chapters, I look again at the two hulls separately. Reflections on issues of church life and work (the first hull) lead to the identification of an original construct 'Missional Viability', which I suggest may be a more fruitful perspective on parish life than other constructs such as success, health or growth. Switching then to questions of process (the second hull) I reflect on my methodological approach, which I describe as ethnographic pastoral inquiry. Foundational to that approach is the explicit acknowledgement of the spiritual understandings, both of the researcher and the individuals and groups under review. The thesis is rounded off with a final reflection on the two-hulled *waka*, including my contention that the deliberate inclusion of spiritual considerations provides strength to the platform connecting the two hulls, thus allowing the whole craft to be steered toward its destination.

2. What is the Church?

A question that arises immediately in a discussion of the way people organise themselves in, or as, churches is the degree to which such groups of people are distinct from any other type of organisation. How is a local church any different from a school or a unit of the armed forces, or a bean factory?

One of the themes to be woven through the whole of this research project is an exploration of the degree to which the church (or churches – this distinction is discussed below) is best seen as a gathering of humans who behave essentially the same as any other formally organised group of people, or as a unique organisation/institution by virtue of the spiritual orientation of its members. Most theological discussions tend towards the second view: one of the central tenets of Christian theology is that the church is in some sense a creation of God. This claim is classically summed up in two biblical texts:

On this rock I will build my Church (Matthew 16:18)³ and

Wherever two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them. (Matthew 18:20).

An influential international Anglican report includes in its theological reflections the statement (Virginia Report, 1997, p. 12)

Every act of God is an act of the undivided Holy Trinity. The very being of the Church is thus dependent upon the outpouring of God's gracious love, the love of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Theologians would acknowledge that the church is made up of humans, who behave in most aspects in the same diverse range of ways as any other humans do. It is, therefore, appropriate to use the insights of organisation studies, or other social

³A strongly contested issue for theology is what Jesus meant by “this rock”. In Catholic thinking, it refers to St Peter, and therefore to the Papacy. Others would argue that it refers to Peter's affirmation of faith. This debate is outside the concern of this project, as is the associated debate as to whether Jesus uttered these words himself or were they put into his mouth by later writers as an expression of their piety. The conviction that God is active in building the church is what is relevant here.

science disciplines, to discuss the life and work of Christian churches as the organisation, or the organising, of people, buildings, finances and activities.

The word ‘church’ is used in at least six quite distinct senses both in regular religious parlance and in literature about gatherings of Christians. As with many typologies, these senses of ‘church’ do overlap and it is frequently difficult to be precise as to which sense is being used. For example, a passage from Archbishop Brian Davis (1995) is quoted below to discuss the word as used in a broad, theological sense but his comments could just as easily apply to the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia or to a particular local parish. These distinct senses of the word do illustrate the complexity of the concept and, while I will concentrate on one or two of those uses, all six do have some bearing on this project.

- i) The church building
- ii) Church as a theological concept
- iii) Church referring to professional office-holders, i.e. the clergy
- iv) The Church as a national or international denominational structure
- v) Local churches, or congregations, or parishes
- vi) Church used in a verbal sense – the collective actions of Christian people working together.

2.1 Church Buildings

The concept of Church as a building, while a very common use of the word, may appear to be somewhat peripheral to a discussion of the gatherings of people who meet in ‘churches’, as my interest is not primarily in buildings. However, each of the groups taking part in the research project has a close association with a church building or several buildings, and four of the five take their names from that of the main building in the parish, for example, St Francis Community Church, Hillcrest. The fifth one, the Pohutukawa Coast Mission District, is made up of three largely independent groups, each associated with a particular building (St Thomas’s Whitford, St Hilda’s Beachlands and St Mark’s Maraetai), normally referred to as ‘a church’.

It is not uncommon for congregations to express some discomfort with this use of the word ‘church’, and to name their buildings slightly differently, for example St Peter’s Church Centre. In this way they attempt to indicate that ‘church’ refers primarily to the people, not the building. An interesting New Zealand example of this comes from the city of Christchurch where, in 2010 and 2011, a series of earthquakes destroyed much of the central city, including both Anglican and Catholic cathedrals, and a large number of other churches. After some months, several churches placed billboards outside their ruined buildings with the slogan: *Our building is munted⁴ – the church is doing fine!*

Despite a reluctance to equate the word ‘church’ with a building, the association between congregation and building is nearly always more than an incidental one. In a discussion of postmodern approaches to Town Planning, Sandercock and Lyssiotis (2003) refer to the importance of ‘sacred places’ and it is not difficult to find in the introductions of books on congregational life, or of religion and social change, comments on the symbolism attached to church buildings. Two examples illustrate the point:

One of the most enduring features of the American landscape is the steeple, a landmark signalling the presence of a congregation’ (Ammerman, 1997, p. 1) .

In the space of 1000 metres, the sheer number of buildings that are or have been devoted to religious purposes attests to both the rich religious heritage of Wales and the effects of social and cultural change on institutional religion (Chambers, 2005, p. 1).

Bennett (2005), an Anglican priest writing in a rural Aotearoa/New Zealand context and also Jenkins (2011), writing in an English newspaper, have noted that when societal changes in recent decades, particularly the user pays doctrine of the 1980s and 1990s, brought about the loss of banks, schools and post offices in rural areas, the church was often the last remaining institutional building still operating. Well after it was no longer economically feasible to pay clergy to fill those positions, the church authorities have worked extraordinarily hard to keep the buildings open, and

⁴ Munted is a slang word in Australia and New Zealand, meaning wrecked, or destroyed, or just not working. The word became very widely used in Christchurch after the 2010/2011 earthquakes.

worship and community work functioning. The theological and ecclesiological justification for these policies is always expressed in terms of worship, pastoral care and community work (Bennett, 2005) but colloquially, it is commonly expressed as the need to ‘keep the church open’.

Keeping the church open, in a very literal sense, is reflected in discussions among church members, and with their insurers, the police and fire departments, about whether church buildings should be locked when not in use. The traditional practice in Catholic and Anglican denominations is to keep the buildings open, at least during daylight hours, if at all possible. This is not just to offer the traditional place of sanctuary to whoever may feel the need of it. An open building much more powerfully symbolises the intention of the congregation’s members to have an open relationship with the community of which they are a part.

2.2 Church as a theological ideal.

When ‘the church’ is being spoken of in theological discourse the term normally refers to the entire body of Christian people of all denominations, in all countries and across all history. It can be assumed that when Jesus said “I will build my church”, it was this wider sense that he had in mind, rather than church buildings or positions in the church hierarchy. This is also the sense that is used in liturgical practice, such as the line from the Anglican Eucharist that introduces the Peace – the moment in the service when worshippers are invited to greet one another: “E te whanau,⁵ we are the Body of Christ” and the response is: “By one Spirit we were baptised into one Body.” Similarly this sense features in hymns, notably:

The church’s one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord,
She is his new creation, by water and the word.
From heaven he came and bought her, to be his holy bride,
To earth he came and sought her, and for her life he died.

Those words of course reflect the rather romanticised attitudes of the Victorian period in which they are written. A much more recent expression of a similar sentiment, less

⁵ *E te whanau* is a greeting meaning literally ‘the family’, but translated ‘Brothers and sisters’.

idealistic but no less reified, comes from the pen of a former Anglican Archbishop of New Zealand:

The church must seek to model in its own life the values of the Kingdom, uphold Christian moral principles, expose injustice and evil, and repent of its own failures. It must seek to live as God's caring, compassionate, servant people, and constantly remind those outside the church that only God can redeem....And it must constantly return to the source of its life and renewal, its vision and power" (Davis, 1995, p. 170 & 172).

The primary focus of this project is on the institutional manifestations of this ideal, or on groupings of people who are trying to 'be church' or 'do church' in particular locations. However, that focus must occur against the background of an ontological assumption behind the great majority of theological discussion about Christianity, which is that the church has a life and identity above and beyond the contributions of its members. Percy (2010, p. 114) drawing on Selznick (1957) makes this point by talking of the church as an institution, rather than an organisation. Later sections of this thesis will explore the difficulties that arise when institutions and organisations are 'reified'. Talking about the church in such terms could obscure the need for human actions to take place if the church were to do what the Archbishop was advocating. The insights of social constructionist thinking help to keep the focus on what actual people do and say, rather than ascribe to organisations the ability to function as if they were intentional creatures. However, that approach must sit in some tension with the perspective of Theology, which consistently uses strongly reified language when discussing the church.

The tension between a focus on the actions of people and the 'actions' of a reified church is related to a further paradox, in that while the institutional manifestations of the church are typically the only forms that can readily be observed, studied or 'joined', the church's influence stretches well beyond those organisational forms. As Archbishop William Temple observed (1942, p. 39), nine-tenths of the work of the Church in the world is done by Christian people fulfilling responsibilities and performing tasks which, in themselves, are not part of the official system of the church at all. Taking that paradox a little further, an important theological principle is

that while it is legitimate to see the church as a manifestation of the work of Christ, and the way that Christ has chosen to work, it is not legitimate to equate that work with the institutional forms of the church. As Pannenberg put it (1969, p. 78):

Many Christians, especially church leaders, like to think they are in possession of the truth, or at least they possess the ultimate criterion of the truth. Because they feel themselves to be so indispensably related to the very kingdom of Christ, they fail to recognize the provisional character of all ecclesiastical organizations. ... Precisely because the Church mistakes herself for the present form of the kingdom, God's rule has often had to manifest itself in the secular world outside, and frequently against, the Church.

Famous examples of the dynamic identified by Pannenberg would include the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa and many liberation movements of the twentieth century.

2.3 The church as ordained leadership

An important, but very restricted sense of the word 'church' refers to professional office-holders – primarily the clergy, but including religious (in ecclesiastical language that word refers to monks, nuns and similar) and, perhaps, to some senior lay employees of the church. The word is mostly used in this sense informally, such as talking about people becoming ordained by saying they are “entering the church”, when, by most other uses of the word, they have been members of the church as lay people for many years. Similarly, until recent decades it was common to refer clergy as churchmen, a use that slipped quickly out of use as women began being ordained.

A distinction is normally made between clergy and laity, or lay people. In Anglican (as with Catholic) churches, the clergy are sacramentally ordained by the bishop to serve as priests or deacons, and most other denominations (the Quakers are a notable exception) have comparable systems of ordination or authorisation of their Ministers. Laity, those who have not been ordained, can be seen as having at least three types of activities in the organisation of the church: firstly, praying, singing, listening, and generally participating in the worship, educational and social activities of the church; secondly, contributing their time and skills, normally as volunteers to make certain aspects of the church's life function – as servers, flower arrangers, cleaners,

secretaries, teachers, community organisers; and thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, working as Christians in their everyday, usually secular, life, both in their professional life and their relationships as family members and neighbours. A very great deal of theological reflection in the past fifty years or so has led to greater emphasis being given to the ‘ministry of the laity’ as the most important aspect of how the church is organised, with the clergy serving as a resource to facilitate that wider ministry. This is another reason why the restricted use of the word church to mean just the clergy is much less common now than it used to be.

The main relevance of this use of the word to the current project is that I have been a member of the church in that restricted sense all my adult life and, in the preferred wider sense my entire life. This will be discussed in much greater detail in sections on Researcher Positioning in chapter 4, but it is important to note that this whole project is based on an ‘insider’ perspective of the church.

2.4 The church as a denomination.

The wider national, and often international, grouping to which a local church belongs is often called a denomination. In my own case, and in the case of four of the parishes taking part in this project, this is the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia. The fifth parish is a ‘Co-operating Venture’, a church that has official links with more than one denomination, in this case Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist.

The nature, purpose and structure of denominations is a significant area of study in itself; even to attempt a definition is a very complex task. Roozen and Nieman (2005, p. 5) offer as a working definition: “A denomination is a group of congregations united under a common and distinct faith, name, and organisation.” That definition, however, immediately betrays a Protestant orientation, as it works from the perspective of the congregation as the basic unit. Churches that originate in a Catholic tradition, and this includes Anglican ones, see the diocese (the area under the care of a bishop) as the fundamental unit. So it is not so much that the denomination is a group of congregations, but that the dioceses are divided into a number of

congregations, with their identification united through a relationship with the bishop. This distinction is more than a play on words. In denominations that work to a congregational polity, as many but by no means all protestant denominations do, the congregation is, to all intents and purposes, autonomous. It is perfectly possible for the members of a local Baptist Church, for example, to decide they wish to secede from the Baptist Union, and operate independently or, potentially, to join another denomination. This is quite impossible in an episcopally organised denomination. In New Zealand, the normal title for an Anglican priest in charge of a local congregation is the vicar, a title which means the representative of the bishop.⁶ The vicar is appointed by the bishop (there are complex processes to allow the congregation a very significant say in the process but, in the end, the bishop makes the appointment), and serves as vicar as long as the bishop extends a licence for that purpose.

In Anglican terms, national churches are self-governing, unlike the Roman Catholic Church with its strong lines of accountability to the Vatican. There is no hierarchical authority above the Primate. In New Zealand that national leadership responsibility is shared by three Archbishops representing, respectively the Maori, Pākehā and Polynesian Tikanga (cultural streams) of the church. There is currently an international debate under way as to whether the national Anglican Churches should subscribe to a covenant, designed to provide new forms of mutual accountability. One of the strongest arguments against the covenant is that the Anglican Communion is not ‘a Church’; it is a network of nearly 40 autonomous national Churches. In Anglican official documents (e.g. Anglican Church in ANZP, 2008), the capitalised word Church is normally used in this sense.

The national structure or denomination is (along with the local congregation discussed below) the primary way in which the theological ideal is expressed institutionally, and it is here that actual and potential tensions between the good news of Jesus Christ and the institutional realities of the organised church are played out. Butler Bass (2006, p. 9) suggests that the term religious institution is oxymoronic. She argues that religious institutions often lack any sense of spirituality, and are the least dynamic of

⁶ In the Church of England, and in the USA, the title Rector is perhaps more common. That title has some other connotations that are not relevant to this discussion.

all institutions. A former Bishop of Edinburgh (Holloway, 1994, p. 151) expressed himself more strongly:

Religion is what we do with God, or to be more precise, it is what the powerful have done with God. What the powerful always do is to control access to anything that people need or simply want. And religion as an expression of power does what power does very well; it divides and separates in order to rule. It controls access to the mystery of God by monopolies, by setting up frontiers and customs posts, and it says who is allowed through”.

Holloway’s comments came in the context of a conference on AIDS, an area where such good news as has been proclaimed has tended to come from sources outside of the church and, frequently, against church opposition. In such a context, some hyperbole on Holloway’s part would seem justified. It may be argued, however, including by those who work for the church in its institutional shape at a national level, that his critique is unfair or too sweeping. My own fieldwork, with its exploration of more sensitive, participatory approaches to facilitation, encourages me to believe that what he describes is not always the case. The critique does express the key tension that exists at every level of church organisation. Churches, in all senses of the word, are made up of humans, who behave individually and corporately in diverse ways. Such people, though explicitly committed to Christian values, are influenced by their varying interpretation of these. Their theological ideas, however exalted, are by no means always observed in institutional reality.

It is reasonable to assume that all Christians who work at a denominational or national level believe that their work is an expression of the Good News of Jesus. Denominations do serve important purposes for individual Christians and for local parishes. Nieman (2005 p.640) suggests that, regardless of its structures or processes, a denomination: first, conserves the memory and hopes of a particular theological identity far beyond the historical and geographic limits of any one congregation; second, it offers a range of connections between congregations themselves; third, it presents a wealth of resources that enable congregations amply to carry out the local work of forming members in this core theological identity and, finally, it retains a diversity of voices due to its national perspective.

The exploration of the use of the word church as denomination is that it draws out some of the ontological foundations for the study or, specifically, for the groups with whom I was working. It is important to note that these are Anglican churches, not Catholic or Baptist ones. Some of the insights gained in the research project may be applicable to congregations from other denominations, but remaining within an organisation of which I am a member, and with which I am very familiar, lowers the risk of my drawing conclusions about groups whose identity and functioning may be based on different ontological or theological assumptions.

2.5 The local church, often referred to as a congregation or a parish.

The sense of the word church as a congregation or parish is the main focus of this project, as the research process investigated five local expressions of the Anglican Church, and sought to work and pray with working groups from each one. It can be argued that the local church is the primary institutional expression of the theological idea of church, as dioceses, denominations and national church structures would not exist without them. As Impey (2010, p. xviii) puts it, “There is no way you can discover a church's shared ministry without the cooperation of a particular local church, for this is the only form in which it exists.”

Given that the root meaning of the word ‘church’, or *ecclesia* in Greek, is a gathering of people, it is natural that teaching about the church from the New Testament onwards is typically interpreted and applied principally at the level of the local gathering of Christians. The shape, organisational characteristics and theological emphases of particular gatherings have varied enormously over the centuries, and continue to do so in the present, but all local gatherings can regard that this is what Jesus was referring to when he said, “wherever two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them.”

In recent decades, and at least since the seminal studies *Congregation: Stories and Structures* (Hopewell, 1987) and *Building Effective Ministry: Theory and Practice in the Local Church* (Dudley, 1983), a great deal of literature has emerged discussing,

analysing and reflecting on local churches. Much of this literature is generated by church leaders and consultants, reflecting on the experience of particular local churches, and offering advice, success formulas and inspiration for other congregations. An academic, cross-disciplinary approach, usually called Congregational Studies has developed in many countries. Davies (2005), a UK congregational studies specialist, offers a number of reasons why the study of local churches is useful to Higher Education: first, to relate theory and practice; second, to bring realism to the “often misplaced ideals of pure theory”; third, to develop the transferable skill of working with people, assessing their views and relating the information to an organisation, to history and to society as a whole; and fourth, to help the churches being studied to gain some distanced evaluation of their own life.

The greatest amount of congregational studies work is carried out in the USA, with writers such as Ammerman (1997, 2005; Dudley & Ammerman, 2002), Carroll (1998; Carroll & Roof, 2002), and Woolever & Bruce (2002, 2004) being prominent, along with the Alban Institute, publishers of many titles in this field, including the scholarly journal *Congregations*. These writers normally use the word ‘congregations’ as the most widely applicable word for local manifestations of church, encompassing Jewish, Muslim and other non-Christian groups in their area of interest. Cameron et al (2005) and Durran (2006) are typical of British writers in preferring the term ‘local church’.

I will mostly use the term ‘parish’. The key reason for doing so is that this is the normal Anglican term for local churches. In England a parish is the smallest unit of local government and although the term does not have the same secular implications in New Zealand, every parish church still relates to a specific geographical area. One difficulty with the word ‘congregation’ is that in Anglican usage, that word commonly has a more restricted use, referring to particular groups within a parish. For example many parishes have an 8.00am congregation, typically an older and more conservative group, and a larger 9.30am congregation often with a wider age range. The geographical dimension does have particular implications for how the congregation relates to the local community. As Bennison et al (1999, p. 63) have noted:

Congregations that understand themselves as parishes ... have a distinct cultural relationship beyond the church, since the very word 'parish' means that a faith community roots itself geographically in a wider culture with all its issues, concerns, inequities, hopes and dreams.

This understanding of parish will be discussed more fully in Chapter 4.

2.6 Church as a 'verb'

In their discussion of the Episcopal Church in the USA, Sachs and Holland (2003, p. 326) argue that Christianity is more than abstractly understood doctrines; it is a set of practices conducted by communities of people in the context of their localities. This observation, and the insights of social constructionist thinking, suggest that rather than (or perhaps as a complement to) any of the uses of the word 'church' outlined above, the word could best be understood in a verbal sense, denoting the collective actions of Christian people, working together to follow the teachings of Christ. Murray (2004, 2008) is one who suggests using 'church' as a verb, in the context of discussing Christianity in a postChristendom context⁷. In a similar way, Moritz (2008, p. 30), in describing a 21st Century development known as the Emergent Church,⁸ argues that:

Emergents desire to reclaim via *praxis* the ancient notion of the church as primarily *ekklesia*—a people called *out* and called *together* according to God's will for the purpose of redeeming God's beloved cosmos. This understanding of church as a verb rather than a noun is opposed to the common misconception of the church as a place to meet once a week.

Used in a verbal sense, the word refers to groups of people who commit to organising themselves *through* or *as* a church and, given that such people have in common an explicit belief in a God who is a part of their reason for gathering, that understanding is likely to affect the ways those gatherings are organised. Percy (2010, p. 17) summarises this thought by suggesting that "... 'church' is an interpretation and

⁷ Christendom, and post Christendom are both defined in the glossary, and will be discussed in the next chapter

⁸ The Emergent Church will be described and discussed in the Literature Review sections below.

performance of theology that takes on a life of its own". That being so, the study of churches can perhaps best be seen, as Ammerman has put it (2003, pp. 223-224), as the study of religious narratives, the products of "...ongoing interaction, both among the diverse human participants in the drama and between them and whatever unpredictable sacred experience they recognise in their midst".

This use of church in a verbal sense should, perhaps, be differentiated from an increasingly common phrase 'doing church'. This term gained considerable currency in literature on successful, large churches, especially in the USA, and tended to refer to techniques and strategies for making churches more effective or efficient, as defined by church leaders or consultants who favoured this approach. *Willow Creek Seeker Services: Evaluating a new way of doing church* (Pritchard, 1996) and *Doing Church as a Team: The miracles of teamwork and how it transforms Churches* (Cordeiro, 2004) are typical of this genre. More recently, the term has been used frequently in the UK and other countries in discussions of various new initiatives, either within existing parishes or outside of the established church structures. These initiatives, officially referred to as Fresh Expressions, have been commonly described as "new ways of doing church" (Gamble, 2008, p. 16; Nelstrop & Percy, 2008, p. xv).

There has been something of a reaction to the widespread use of the phrase 'doing church'. A typical concern is that an exclusive focus on actions, activities and even the honoured theological concept *praxis* can result in a sterile form of Christianity that is divorced from its theological and worship-oriented foundations. A contemporary critique from an Asian perspective is offered by Duraisingh (2010) who argues that it is a distortion of the very essence and the constitutive dynamic of the church to see it as a series of activities which the church defines, shapes, and carries out; rather, the mission of the church is "... a way of being, a style of life, before it is expressed in specific and contextual responses" (p. 11). Winsemann put the tension well in the subtitle of a book: *Growing an Engaged Church. How to stop doing church and start being the church again* (2007). Increasingly Fresh Expressions and similar initiatives are seen as fresh, new ways of *being* the church (Croft, 2008a, p. 6).

The point, then, of thinking of the word ‘church’ in verbal terms is not so much to emphasise the activities of church groups, important though they are, but to focus on the actual life together (both being and doing) of particular groups of Christian people in specific situations. British author Pete Ward, in his discussion of church in a postmodern context, entitled *Liquid Church* (2002, p. 2), encourages a focus on the notion of church as a series of relationships and communications. This, it is hoped, will lessen the risk of reifying the structures of church institutions, at local or national level, or of seeing the teaching of Christianity in purely abstract terms. Sachs and Holland (2003, p. 326) made the point that, “Christianity is more than abstractly understood doctrines; Christianity primarily is a set of practices⁹ conducted by communities of people in the context of their localities”.

When church is seen in these terms, the focus and working title of this project, *Organisational Change in Local Parishes*, comes to denote possible new ways for groups of Christian people to bring about change in how they organise themselves, so that they can more effectively bring about the purposes for which the church exists.

2.7 What is the church for?

The above survey of six different senses of the word ‘church’, and there may be more, leaves unanswered a more fundamental question: what then is the church (in any of its senses) or, alternatively, what is the church *for*? If church groups are in no distinctive way different from any other gatherings of humans for common purposes, then there is no value in studying them except as incidental examples of wider phenomena. Being a life-long insider in the church, I certainly believe that there is something at least distinctive, and possibly unique¹⁰ about churches, and the key to that is the purpose for which they exist.

⁹ The word “practices”, as used by Sachs & Holland and others should not be equated with “activities”. Spiritual Practices, as will be discussed in later sections on deepening of spirituality, refers to various patterns of worship, prayer and ministry activities, practised habitually by individuals or groups of religious people.

¹⁰ I would prefer to leave open the possibility that conclusions I draw about churches may apply to synagogues, mosques and other non-Christian religious bodies. To address that question requires a far more substantial theological excursus than is appropriate here.

In the following section concerning the Anglican Church, I will include some official statements about how Anglicans see themselves and understand the church. My own stance as a researcher is hopefully compatible with those statements but takes a particular focus, as appropriate to this project. I believe the key to understanding what makes churches distinct from other human institutions is to ask the very theological question of why they are there. Whether the question is asked in a purely theological way as, ‘Why did God bring about the Church?’ or in a more organisation studies sense as ‘Why do groups of Christian people organise themselves as churches?’ the answer is likely to be different from the answer to why businesses, schools or government departments exist.

The question of why something is there is quite a different question from the functionalist one: what is its function or how does it work. A former Bishop of Salisbury, David Stancliffe (2010, pp. 144-145), in the course of a discussion about appropriate types of language for different purposes, wrote:

The presumption of the modern, post-renaissance world is that the question most worth asking is how something works, whether it’s the human body, a computer or your motor car, the Church of England or even the world itself..... Patterns that derive from a precise, mechanistic language structure are ideal tools to use for examining how things - even the human body - work. But reflection on what things are for requires a more allusive, speculative mode, where contemplation and wonder may provide the key to unlock the mysteries, and where knowledge might give way to wisdom.

As I attempt to express my own understanding of why the church is there, I am certainly assisted by Stancliffe’s encouragement to use allusive and speculative language. My understanding of God has developed hugely through the course of my life, as I have grown with age, education and experience inside and outside of the church. I have come to see all religious language (possibly all language) as metaphorical, attempting to express in human terms matters that are beyond our understanding (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). The most potent metaphor of God, and one that is central to the biblical witness, is that God is Love. That, therefore, becomes

the foundational message of the church, and all other considerations become secondary.

There are many secondary reasons why the church exists but most of them are not significantly different from why any other human institution exists. Churches are very important community-building organisations; they provide meaning and a sense of belonging to millions of people; and they do immeasurable amounts of good work in a vast range of neighbourhoods. But other groups do many or all of those things; what makes the church distinctive is its commitment to the message of God as Love, a force to be manifest in the world.

Given the centrality in the Christian tradition of the life of Jesus Christ as a manifestation of the love of God, a life I take as my own model for living, I suggest that the church, in all the senses outlined above, exists to perpetuate the traditions surrounding his life, death and resurrection or, in short, to put his teachings into practice. The earliest Christian reflections on the significance of Jesus included the description of the church as “the body of Christ”. This metaphor implies that the work of the church is to do the work of Christ or to ‘be’ Love in the world; in other words, the primary way that humans have of knowing the love of God is through their exposure to the life and work of communities of Christian people - the church.

The body of Christ metaphor implies that the ‘gathering’ of God’s people is not just done by themselves choosing to associate with a group of like-minded people (though that is important), but that the existence of the church is itself an act of God or an enactment of God’s love. I have always felt that I am working for an institution that is both divine and very human. That is why I believe it is important that the worship life of the church is never separated too far from its social service and other community outreach work; neither works with integrity without the other.

How well and how badly Christian people and groups have performed their work of enacting the love that is God at different times and in different places reflects the human dimension. The church has been responsible for founding hospitals, asylums, social welfare systems, schools, universities, orphanages, and agriculture systems, in

addition to generating the majority of the art, music, sculpture and architecture of Western society until the last century or so. At the same time it has generated the inquisitions and the crusades, and has been deeply implicit in the oppression of slaves, women, gay and lesbian people, and various other minority groups for generations. Recent controversies over sexual abuse in church-run welfare institutions show church members failing lamentably to demonstrate the love of God; but those very institutions exist as a direct result of the church's commitment to identifying areas of social need and initiating creative solutions. From biblical times onwards Christians have felt called to express their faith through charitable work and other forms practical action.

This research project is a response to a perception, gained through my involvement with a large number of parishes, that many church members feel the performance of their parishes has been less effective than they consider desirable. The following two chapters discuss the context of this unease. First, an outline of developments in church circles in recent decades and a historical review of Anglicanism in Aotearoa/New Zealand provide a background to why the issue is seen as significant. Second, a discussion of the theological emphases of the Anglican Church will set out foundations for my own position as researcher in my engagement with this apparent deficit.

3. Significance of the Research Project

The five questions asked at the institution of a new vicar, and quoted on the opening page of this thesis, have their origins in work of the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC), the international deliberative committee of the world-wide Anglican Communion. That council, as it considered the church's sense of calling in the lead-up to a new millennium, identified what became known as the 5-fold mission statement, or the Five Marks of Mission (Anglican Communion Office, 2009).

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
- To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To seek to transform unjust structures of society
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

The statement found its way, in a slightly different form, into the preamble of a revised constitution for the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia (Anglican Church in ANZP, 2008). Debates as to the relative significance of the five clauses, with some evangelical commentators¹¹ regarding the first clause as crucial, and the rest commenting on it, and others seeing the five clauses as being of equal significance, are outlined by Ross (2010). Using either interpretation, that statement has been very influential in the two decades spanning this Millennium in assisting Anglican people to summarise their sense of mission.

The theology and intention implied by the ACC mission statement, and widely infused in the life of local parishes, is premised on the principle that the church's key task is to provide a spiritual presence in the midst of a community. As Percy puts it (2006a, p. 15): "To be a parish church, a church must find a community and locate itself within it, incarnating¹² the life of God there in ways that are both local and catholic". Whether it was ever true, or something of a pious ideal, that the entire

¹¹ The term evangelical is defined and discussed in the glossary.

¹²This use of incarnate, and incarnational, will be discussed in the next chapter.

village was the parish and the church was at the centre of the village, as noted by Minatrea (2004), is a matter of some debate and will be discussed in the next chapter. Commentators such as Russell (1980) and Baker (2005) have outlined how models of church life based on a sense of place have changed beyond recognition in the past century or two, in the face of secularism and the professionalisation of the work formerly undertaken by church members, for example teaching and counselling. One application of this phenomenon is noted by Bishop John Pritchard (2007) who argues that as people's identity has progressively become less dependent on the location of their home, and more on the location and requirements of their employment, friendship networks, leisure activities and shopping habits, so the church has lost its core identity at the centre of life.

Crema (2008, p. 167) traces the gradual marginalising of the churches to what he calls the "Pact of the seventeenth century". In that period, he argues, the emergent scientific rationalism reached a tacit accommodation with the dominant religious power of the time. This 'Pact'... "circumscribed the dominance of science upon that which was susceptible to rational investigation, quantification, measurement and control by variables, while the church was left with the soul care, consciousness, interior life, and the spirit."

While arguing from a different perspective, Kirwan (2009, p. 5) makes a similar point. He notes how Christian Theology was known as the 'Queen of the Sciences' during the High Middle Ages (c.f. Jarvis, 2005), because it was the culmination of the various disciplines in the syllabus. But since that time, not only has 'the Queen' been dethroned and has had to struggle with a more humble set of responsibilities, but the other disciplines have been less inclined to contribute to the grand call of seeking wisdom, truth or enlightenment. Theology, therefore, finds itself rather marginalised into areas of spirituality and morality, typically outside of the interest of other disciplines.¹³ In Whitworth's analysis (2008), this process has accelerated during the last two centuries. While the general philosophical system had been given over to reason since the enlightenment, it was broadly accepting of the notions of fact, truth

¹³ In Section 6.8 below, I outline evidence that some reversal of this process may be occurring in recent decades.

and event which, in turn, lie at the basis of the gospel. More recently, as those notions have increasingly been called into question, the church has had to validate itself and declare its message in a world more interested in its effect than its cause; so Christianity, which hitherto occupied public space, becomes "...increasingly a private faith in a competing market of belief" (2008, p. 24).

3.1 Dramatic Numerical Decline – Real or Perceived

The change in the place and significance of the church in personal and community life, as described by Bishop Pritchard (2007), is associated with two other developments, with the causal links being a matter of considerable debate. In the years since the Second World War, there has been a very marked decrease in membership and attendance in most Christian denominations in the western world – Europe, North America, Australasia. The statistical evidence is apparently well-established (Fields & Lineham, 2008; Lineham, 2000; Moynagh, 2004; Prebble, 2000; Simpson & Lee, 2008; Ward, 2006; Wilson, 1993). Much data on the subject can now be reviewed through electronic sources such as British Religion in Numbers (BIRN, 2010). For some time it appeared that evangelical churches were an exception to this trend. As recently as the last couple of years, Gibbs (2009a, p. 29) presented what has been a quite common write-off of the mainline churches from an evangelical perspective:

We have witnessed the demise of traditional religious institutions represented by what were termed the 'mainline' churches. These churches, most of which trace their roots in the historic churches of Europe, are indeed suffering chronic numerical decline.

The perceptions, first, that mainline denominational churches are in severe numerical decline and second, that evangelical churches are an exception to that generalisation are strongly influential in church discussions, and contributed to a widespread lack of confidence in the last decades of the 20th century. A typical comment from the 1990s was from Hadaway & Roozen (1995, p. 75): "It is no secret that many mainstream churches, and all mainstream denominations, have lost confidence in who they are and why they are. Mainstream church leaders readily admit to an institutional identity crisis." Some of that lack of confidence still continues, especially in regions and

parishes where the decline in membership has led to a loss of financial viability. Ward (2010) provides an example from a New Zealand context but the very large number of books and resources on equipping parishes for growth, change, effectiveness or renewal are evidence of a perception that there is a problem.

Recent research suggests that the evidence behind perceptions of general decline, perceptions of an evangelical exception and widespread discouragement is perhaps not as clear as is widely assumed. Some significant caveats have been noted. Evidence outlined, for example, by Duin (2008), Hadaway and Roozen (1995) and, for New Zealand information, Fields and Lineham (2008) suggests that evangelical churches may be experiencing similar developments as other denominations. At the same time, Percy (2006b; Percy & Markham, 2006) provides evidence of growth among some liberal churches,¹⁴ and an increasing number of ‘success stories’ from liberal congregations are being published, with titles such as *The Turnaround Church* (Gifford, 2009). Percy (2006a) also notes that the decreased numbers at worship may be an indication of the same number of people attending less frequently, rather than a smaller number of people attending. This can be connected with widespread ‘associational disconnection’ (people belonging to far fewer clubs and organisations than in former years), and Percy argues that churches are retaining their adherents more successfully than many secular counterparts.

In addition to evidence that the statistical information about apparent numerical decline may reveal a more complex reality than sometimes assumed, some literature is also recording a gradual change of confidence among church members in many countries. In a discussion of empirical research on recent developments in the Episcopal Church (in the USA)¹⁵, Sachs & Holland (2003, p. 8) claim a resurgence of energy (and numbers), associated with a move from “...preoccupation with the intricacies of denominational life, toward a practical focus on local community and mission”. Bayes & Sledge (2006) are among many to argue that the emphasis on Mission-Shaped church (discussed in Chapter 7) is having a similar effect in Britain. Robinson (2003, p. 19) also notes a gradual increase in optimism:

¹⁴ This term is defined in the glossary.

¹⁵ See the glossary.

There are new signs of life among us as the new century emerges...There are, it is clear, possibilities of new life. Moreover, there are opportunities for being the church in authentic and deep ways that may not have been possible in our establishment era.

It may be that using the Victorian era or the period between the two World Wars as benchmarks is misleading, as both periods showed marked increases in church attendance. Perhaps the lower numbers in evidence in recent decades show a return to more normal long-term patterns. Be that as it may, there has unquestionably been a decrease in total numbers attending churches, and this fact does have significant implications on church planning and strategy.

3.2 The Church's Shrinking Sphere of Activity

During the post World War Two period, the Church's (by almost all the senses of that word noted in the previous chapter) accepted sphere of influence in society has steadily been reduced, from once having an acknowledged responsibility to speak from a spiritual perspective on every aspect of life, to a much-reduced one in the areas of spirituality and personal morality. Nichols (2006, p. 19) describes a process in Australian contexts whereby Christianity has been increasingly seen as a private religious option, and church leaders as religious experts whose opinions on political, environmental or economic matters are sought less frequently. In Suderman's words (2005, pp. 39, n.67): "Society has assigned an acceptable role for the church and its functionaries, and they should not step beyond the role assigned to them into areas best left to law, courts, and politicians". Hull (2008a, p. 125 & 128) outlines these developments in different terms, with a discussion of 'possessive individualism'. This he describes as the central characteristic of the Western world view since the seventeenth century, tending to exaggerate the character of human beings as consuming units and causing the place of mutuality to be overtaken by an emphasis upon the interior life, heightened by the continually growing expectation of freedom and multiple choice. This, in turn, has led Christians, consciously or unconsciously, to turn away from the mission of God for justice and peace, towards the propagation of

their own tribalistic religion so that Christian faith has become identified with the interest of Christians and the welfare of the church.

The increasing tendency of church members and their leaders to focus on internal concerns has, according to the observations of Cayley (2010) and Savage (2006), created a sort of 'club' mentality (see also Hadaway, 2001; Robinson, 2006). Cayley argues that the perception of the church as a club, separate and detached from the community, undermines its potential for mission. Savage, similarly, suggests that the church increasingly operates as a club that people chose to join or to leave for a variety of purposes, 'religious' or otherwise, and a large proportion of its energy becomes devoted to encouraging new people to join the club and/or looking after the interests of those in the already in the club. It is very difficult for any organisation to respond to the priorities, attitudes and needs of its surrounding community when so much energy needs to be expended on maintaining the club.

Changes in the dynamics of church life are occurring against the backdrop of major historical developments, not just in the church but in the wider national and international contexts. It has been said that we are in a time of cultural transition (Conder, 2006), or that a sea change is taking place (Simpson & Lee, 2008). To mix in yet another metaphor, Frambach (2008) and Miller (2007, p. 7) talk of social and cultural tectonic plates that are moving underfoot, requiring church people to devise new approaches to a fluid, emerging landscape.

Loren Mead, in his influential book *The Once and Future Church* (1991), and others who have built on his work (e.g. Barger, 2005; Suderman, 2005), put forward the thesis that after some 1500 years of operating under a paradigm of Christendom, where the fields of the sacred and the secular largely overlapped and the church could perpetuate itself through the nurture of its members' children, the church is moving into a different paradigm. For much of the 20th Century, but with its origins going back to the enlightenment, Mead argues that the church has found itself operating in a new and much more ambiguous environment. Similarly, Gibbs (2009a) notes that as Christendom has given way to a secular and religiously pluralistic society so the ministry sphere of the church has shrunk. These developments result in the need for

the church to devise totally new ways of doing its mission. How the new paradigm will operate eventually is still unknown, as the church, like the society around it, is in a process of transition.

Phyllis Tickle (2008, 2009) develops the argument that the church is in transition by suggesting that it is experiencing the latest in a series of 500 year crises, the previous one being the Reformation. Each time there are three results:

- A new more vital, emergent form of Christianity,
- a re-energised shaping of the existing forms ("a more pure and less ossified expression of its former self") and
- a massive growth in the spread of Christianity, geographically and/or demographically.

The prophecy implied in Tickle's third point has yet to be fulfilled, though early evidence from the USA (Butler Bass, 2004), the UK (Barley, 2008), and New Zealand (Miller, 2002; Randerson, 2010b), suggest that she may have some foundation for her optimism. This project will take close note of new forms of Christianity, often referred to as emerging/emergent church, fresh expressions, and the like – her first point. While the three points are clearly inter-related, my project can be seen as an exploration of her second point, through the exploration with my research participants of the organisational changes necessary to bring about a "re-energised shaping" in existing parishes.

3.3 The New Zealand Anglican Church – a little history

Most of the discussion in this chapter can be applied to Christian groups of all denominations in any country in Europe, North America, Australasia and other parts of the world. An adequate understanding of the significance of this project requires that it be grounded in the historical, geographical and social context with which I am most familiar, that of The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia. Some historical interpretation is necessary for understanding the context within which New Zealand Anglicans work out our faith, and the self-understanding that we bring to that work. There are many perspectives on history of course, and some New Zealand histories portray little interest in or sympathy for the contribution of the

Anglican Church. Two of many examples that could be cited are Vaggioli (1896, 2000), from a Catholic perspective, and Macdonald (1989), from a secular one, both very strongly sympathetic to the perspectives of Maori. However, as my interest here is in Anglican self-understanding, all the references in the following several paragraphs about history are drawn from contributors to official national or diocesan Anglican histories, some of which submit aspects of the Anglican legacy to strong critiques.

Anglican work in Aotearoa/New Zealand traces its origins to events surrounding the first recorded service, on Christmas Day 1814, and the establishment of a permanent presence by the Church Missionary Society¹⁶ under the eventual leadership of Henry and William Williams and their wives (Honore, 2011; Morrell, 1973). This mission, starting in the Bay of Islands but extending in the following three decades to most parts of Aotearoa, was totally focused on work with Maori. Much of the spread of Christianity beyond the Bay of Islands was done by Maori catechists (Bluck, 2009, p. 2; Honore, p. 39ff) and most of the worship and instruction were conducted in *te reo Maori*¹⁷, especially after the printing of the first bible extracts in the early 1830s.

Their incarnational approach¹⁸ meant that the missionaries were strongly resistant to colonisation of Aotearoa and worked to protect the interests of Maori (Honore, 2011, p. 45). Both the Declaration of Independence by the Confederation of Chiefs in 1835, and the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 under which British governance and law were established, were translated into *te reo* by CMS missionaries, working hard to gain the maximum protection for Maori interests.

The signing of the Treaty brought about a very rapid influx of Europeans. That, in turn, led to a new emphasis for the Anglican Church (and the other denominations

¹⁶ Many of the terms mentioned in these paragraphs – Church Missionary Society, Maori, Treaty of Waitangi etc - are listed, with brief definitions, in the glossary.

¹⁷The Maori language, often referred to simply as *te reo*.

¹⁸ The significance of an incarnational approach, ie one that is focused on the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, and manifested in an emphasis on the needs of local contexts, is discussed at length in the next chapter. There I argue that this type of approach is characteristic of Anglican theology.

active in the country at that time). With the arrival of the first Bishop, George Augustus Selwyn, the work of supplying ministry to inhabitants of the rapidly growing settlements and towns had to be undertaken alongside the ongoing work among Maori. The two contexts did not always provide an easy combination (Bluck, 2009, p. 6ff; Limbrick, 2011, p. 64). It is common to refer to them, respectively, as the Settler Church and the Mission; *Mihinare* is still the word for ‘Anglican’ in *te reo*. Whatever the relationship between them, it was clear that both mission and settler church were radically different contexts from that of the Church of England, and that many of the legal and canonical bases of the English church could not apply in New Zealand. In adopting in 1857 a new constitution for what became called The Church of the Province of New Zealand,¹⁹ Bishop Selwyn and his colleagues made some radical choices. The new national church was to be totally independent, with no form of control from Canterbury (Limbrick, 2011, p. 57ff).

Perhaps the most obvious, and most tragic, example of the tension between the two spheres of Anglican activity arose in the 1860s with the Land Wars²⁰. These arose from the huge influx of settlers (Maori were outnumbered by settlers by the late 1850s) which led to pressure on land, and increasingly dominant government institutions. The effort to take an incarnational approach to two violently opposed groups of people caused massive harm to the work of the church, and hurts that are only in the process of being healed 150 years later (Donald, 2009).

In 1992, the commitment to incarnational ministry in the rapidly changing New Zealand context, coupled with commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi, for which many Anglicans continued to feel a significant responsibility, led to the signing of a new constitution. This document acknowledged both the bicultural realities of life in New Zealand and the quite different realities applying in the small island nations of the South Pacific, which had always been included in the New Zealand Province. In the

¹⁹ Province in this context refers to the main units of the Anglican Communion, in most cases corresponding to national divisions.

²⁰ Full discussions of these wars, sometimes referred to as the New Zealand Wars, or the Maori Wars, are provided by a number of historians, notably Belich (1988) and Bohan (2005). This note is an exception to the generalisation that I am drawing only on Anglican historical resources.

new Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia governance is divided into three Tikanga, a term usually translated as ‘cultural streams’, each with their own structure of bishops and their own approaches to ministry.

Both the original constitution of 1857 and its 1992 revision were seen in their respective times as very radical and were adopted in the face of some international questioning (Morrell, 1973, p. 64; Puckey, 2011, p. 301). The commitment to ministry that reflects the unique context of this part of the world has led New Zealand Anglicans into radical stands on a number of issues that have emerged over the decades. New Zealand has been among the first to change rules relating to admitting women to vestries and synods, the ordination of women, the remarriage in church of divorcees and the admission of children to communion. In the current and unresolved debates about those in same-sex relationships, New Zealand church leaders have taken prominent roles, some pressing for change and others contributing to creative processes for decision-making in the midst of controversy (e.g. Halapua, 2008).

This research project is designed to have relevance to the issues faced by church members, both in Aotearoa/New Zealand, and in other contexts where the presenting issues are comparable. Chapter 7 of this thesis outlines a considerable range of possible solutions to the dilemma faced by the people involved in churches, given the clearly established decline in numbers and the perceived reduction of the influence of the Christian message. That discussion notes a tendency to search for simple answers, or formulae that can be followed in most situations. The challenge for this project was to discover, in a way that did not expect any mechanistic or formulaic approaches to be appropriate, whether the people in organisations such as local parishes can be facilitated into bringing about change themselves so that they can be better equipped to fulfil their own goals and aspirations in ways that are more consistent with the outward-facing nature of the church’s agreed mission orientation. The first step in describing a research process designed to explore those questions is to outline in some detail my own position as a researcher.

4. Researcher Positioned in the Anglican Church

As I approached my research task, I found myself influenced by the view that humans are co-creators of social reality and, as Gergen and Gergen have argued (2008, p. 164), all research is essentially a contribution to the creation of meaning. This view is in contrast to researcher approaches generated from positivist traditions, which assume a social reality is discoverable and objectively describable. Such approaches, when viewed from social constructivist perspectives, appear to be remote and detached from the people and contexts which they seek to understand and engage with. More significantly, such approaches ignore the research process as an inevitable intrinsic moment in social fabrication. Cameron, Richter et al (2005, p. 20), along with Guba & Lincoln (2000), are typical of researchers who argue that there can be no neutral observer. All researchers come with their own preconceived ideas and these will have an impact upon the situations and the groups they choose to study.

The understanding of a researcher's influence through any engagement in a community is particularly relevant in researching with Christians as they organise in/through local churches, given the self-defining Christian commitment to a profoundly participative ideal. All church members are understood as being members of the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12). Each is therefore encouraged to play their part to the full, both in the co-creation of the community ('building up the body') and in the work of Christian groups in manifesting the love of God, both within the community and beyond it. For this reason, as discussed more fully in the chapter on research method, I was interested in following the principles of participatory action research and qualitative research methodologies as far as is practical in a PhD-driven process. Action researchers are, in principle, open to exploring theoretically and/or in practice with participants any new information that emerges during the process of research which may challenge underlying community assumptions. They are able to allow meaning and interpretation to evolve and change as work proceeds. As Swinton and Mowat (2006, p. 58) have argued:

Good qualitative research requires a certain approach which is dependent on the researcher's self-awareness and ability to function effectively within an

epistemological context which is complex, rich, creative, and sometimes dangerous.

Among this genre of researchers, with Reason & Bradbury (2008) and their contributors providing many examples, there is a conviction that all research is deeply affected by the personality, values and cultural position of the researcher. Lincoln and Denzin (2000) put this proposition the other way around. They note an expectation that researchers will conduct their study from their own acknowledged and expressed perspective and be as explicit as they can about the perspectives they bring to their work. This allows readers to assess the work with a broader understanding of how it was produced and to have the opportunity to enter the meaning making process themselves.

4.1 Researcher Positioning or Ideological Surrounds

There are two interrelated aspects of what some writers call ‘researcher positioning’: one, the position of the researcher in relation to research participants and two, the ontological, ideological or theological position assumed by the researcher. Following Herr and Anderson (2005), Ospina et al (2008, p. 423) outline a continuum of six positions ranging from an insider studying one’s own practice to an outsider working with insiders. As outlined below in the section about research method, I endeavoured to be as open and as clear as I could be in positioning myself as a co-researcher with participants from the parishes included in this investigation – the second of Herr & Anderson’s six positions. I remain, of course, a PhD Researcher with responsibilities to that framing. I am also a Priest in the Anglican Communion and thus, according to my understanding of Anglican theology, a co-creator along with other participants in the Body of Christ in all we do. This positioning of myself, as researcher, in relation to the other participants was strongly influenced by the theological premises upon which the entire project was based. Researcher positioning, in this sense, is similar to an approach by Watson and a number of colleagues working in the area of Psychology of Religion, which they call an ‘ideological surround’(Graham, McDonald, & Klaassen, 2008; Watson, 1993, 2004; Watson & Morris, 2006). Applied in a particular way to that discipline, but relevant to any field of enquiry, an

ideological surround is an approach where the sociological and religious background and understandings of the researcher are explicitly acknowledged. Pattison (Pattison, 2009, p. 56) makes a comparable point in his discussion of Practical Theologians as being “critical, but committed, inhabitants of a particular worldview”.

It would be very difficult to find an academic researcher in recent decades, particularly in the social sciences or humanities, who would argue for a totally scientific, objective or positivist research stance. On the other hand, as Gorsuch (2002, p. 1822) has pointed out, the prevailing positivist stance of the mid-twentieth century was sufficiently influential that the sciences “were seen as *the* model for understanding the search for truth”. That view still retains a strong grip. Swinton & Mowat (2006, p. 39) suggest: “The idea of a ‘scientific fact’ as definitive of rigorous truth is so ‘natural’ to us that we rarely think beyond it”. There is therefore a common perception, including in church circles, that to gain worthwhile insights about any situation requires the enquirer to step back, and take as objective a stance as possible. The reverse of this concern is the view that if we are personally involved in the matter under discussion we may be too close to it to understand the issues.

Concerns about the necessary neutrality of researchers are considered in my choice of method, but the supposed risks are balanced against the positive effects of a more personal and engaged research method. I am persuaded by the argument of Yerby (1995, p. 360 emphasis original) that “...if we want to understand communication, whether as practitioners, teachers or scholars, we need to position ourselves *in* the process rather than *outside* of it”. This is similar to the distinction made by Nicolescu (2008a) between *in vivo* and *in vitro* research. He argues that the effort to create an objective ‘test-tube’ research process creates an artificiality that will inevitably reduce the applicability of any outcomes, while research based ‘in life’ will lead more easily to practical solutions. I posit that the risks of invalidity attributed to perceived subjective or individualistic perspectives are minimised by the rigour of the PhD process, with continued accountability to supervisors, participants and other research colleagues, and in the profession beyond through the rigours of the peer review process. Rather than basing claims to intellectual rigour on an artificially objective or positivist empirical research design, this project relies on what Reason and Bradbury

(2008, p. 8) offer as ingredients for ‘good knowing’: collaborative relationships, a wide variety of ways of knowing, and an understanding of value and purpose. It can further be argued, as do Graham, McDonald et al (2008), that interplay between the ideological surrounds of various researchers or theoreticians can be expected to contribute to a balanced objectivity across the scholarly community. One of the intentions of this research project was, therefore, to explore respectfully where divergent epistemological perspectives have merit and/or where rigid adherence to the desire for empirical data can obstruct human creativity and the flow of the spirit²¹.

4.2 My own ideological surround – (i) cross disciplinary background.

A fundamental aspect of my own researcher positioning, or ideological surround, is my academic background. Cameron, Richter et al (2005) argue that to do congregational studies effectively, a cross-disciplinary approach is required, drawing specifically (at minimum) on the disciplines of anthropology, sociology, organisational studies and theology. I am in the privileged position of having academic qualifications in all four of these disciplines. The desire to broaden my perspective and expertise is one reason why I have moved, over a 40-year period, from Anthropology and Maori Studies, to Sociology, then Theology, back to Sociology and then to Management Studies. A broad, cross-disciplinary understanding has become integral to my approach to learning, research and analysis. Such an approach is particularly appropriate to the study of parishes and other religious congregations. Ammerman et al (1998) make the same point in their discussion of various ‘frames’ that are required if a comprehensive understanding of congregations is to be achieved. They advocate, in particular, ecological, culture, resources and process frames, but emphasise that each frame is partial and others will offer equally important pictures. Similarly, Nicolini’s discussion (2009, p. 1413) of “toolkit” logic, using a range of different approaches, is more likely to provide an adequate analysis of complex practice than any “single totalising discourse”.

²¹From a theological perspective, “the flow of the spirit” implies the work of the Holy Spirit. While not excluding that sense, I am referring to the broader implications of the inner life, covered in the increasingly common use of the word “spirituality” – allowing for flows of energy, creativity, insight and apprehension as ways of knowing that are as significant as analyses deemed ‘rational’ within other genres of meaning making/’knowledge production’.

Chapter 8 of this thesis, on the theoretical base for this research project, discusses in some detail the questions of how various disciplinary approaches might best be related to each other, and how they reflect my own positioning as a researcher. A toolkit approach, where a number of disciplines might be drawn on as needed, certainly has advantages over methods that are narrowly focussed on one particular discipline. But I am drawn to a Transdisciplinary approach, one whose interest is in those things that are above, between, and common to all disciplines (Nicolescu, 2008a, p. 2). Camus and Nicolescu (2001, cited in Welter, 2008, p. 188) suggest that transdisciplinarity tends towards the unity of knowledge, by "... creating bridges between exact sciences and human sciences, between science and tradition, between scientific thinking and symbolic thinking, between knowledge and being". If viewed in this way, the various disciplines that have contributed to my academic grounding are best seen not as discrete approaches but as part of a unified whole.

The metaphor of the two-hulled canoe, introduced in the first chapter of this thesis, and discussed in several other places, implies a particular kind of bridge, the place of steering and navigation, built on the platform between the two hulls. If one hull is perceived as containing the issues and perspectives of faith, theology, and the life and work of the five parishes with whom I was working, and the other contains the discipline of organisation studies and all the questions of methodology and research design that are crucial to any research project, then great importance must be given to the space between the hulls and the platform that connects them together. It is only from this point that efficient steering and navigation can take place. In a single-hulled vessel, the bow of the hull can be pointed to the spot on the horizon that is the craft's intended destination; that strategy used in either hull of a two-hulled craft will pull the *waka* off course.

The platform, which maintains the appropriate distance between the hulls, provides the orientation and direction but, for the whole craft to be viable, the two hulls must be oriented in the same direction. So, before I discuss methodology, it is appropriate to discuss in some detail what I place in the first hull, my researcher positioning based on my personal experience of nearly four decades of ministry both as an Anglican

parish priest and as a layman in Christian organisations before that. The length of this discussion serves an additional purpose: I am not only outlining my own researcher positioning but also setting out some of the theological presuppositions of the five parishes I was working with. When, in a later chapter, I advocate for Anglican parishes to look deeply to their own theological traditions for inspiration in articulating their sense of mission,²² I have in mind a tradition of theological emphasis on the Incarnation. This, in my understanding of it, implies an orientation towards the local community, a respect for diversity, and a search for wisdom and understanding that we pursue together.

4.3 My own Ideological surround – (ii) The Anglican Church

The Anglican tradition - not an 'ism' but a Way
(Two Presbyters of the Anglican Way, 1998 ch. 1).

I am, without doubt, an 'insider' in the Anglican Church. There is no possibility for me to be 'objective' in that sense. My understanding of what it means to live, work or undertake research, from an Anglican perspective was epitomised for me by an incident that occurred in the late 1980s when I was a newly-ordained priest. I was present at a session of the Auckland Diocesan Synod²³ when Bishop Ted Buckle presented a report on his work that year with a partner diocese in Kampala, Uganda. A key part of Anglican work in Kampala had been developing an economical solution to an unusual sanitation problem. Here, the water table is too shallow to allow conventional long-drop toilets to operate so the Church became involved in finding a solution. The proposed new type of toilets, it was hoped, would bring dramatic improvements to the health and general well-being of many people in Kampala. The Bishop's report continued to cover a range of other issues, including a review of the number of other Christian groups living and working in that part of Africa. He mentioned the Catholics, the Baptists, the Mormons, and a number of large

²² That advice is not of course limited to Anglican parishes, but religious organisations of other kinds will need to look to other bodies of tradition and theological understanding.

²³ The annual meeting of representatives from all parishes and other ministries in the Auckland and North Auckland regions of New Zealand.

independent Evangelical or Pentecostal groups, before remarking, “Only the Anglicans seem to be concerned about the toilets”.

Bishop Buckle was, perhaps, unusually down-to-earth in drawing out this particular issue from a discussion about mission in East Africa. He would certainly have agreed that, in different contexts, other Christian groups, such as Presbyterians, Catholics or non-denominational mission agencies, may be equally practical and down-to-earth. On the other hand, he was drawing on a rich vein of self-understanding among Anglican spokespeople. To give just one representative example, in his study series *Anglican – introducing the faith, history and practice of the Anglican Church*, Graeme Brady finishes his section on “Christian Behaviour” with the words:

We may be able to formulate other principles, but the basic principle of Christian behaviour is always the same; we must behave as those who are commanded to love. Christian behaviour is love in action; love with its sleeves rolled up (Brady, undated, section 23).

The Anglican Church’s strong record in action orientation traces back to a central aspect of the Anglican ethos, the traditional parish system. In theory, by the medieval period there was a church building at the centre of every village (often literally, always figuratively). In many places they were the biggest and/or most beautiful buildings in the area. They are described by Edwards in his *History of Christian England* (1981, p. 152) as “...the factories of the industry to which medieval England attached the greatest importance, and the chief public buildings of a period which was in truth the Age of Faith, or at least the Age of Acquiescence”²⁴. Pounds (2000, p. 372) has a more nuanced notion of the church as building. He describes the parish church in his history as an “ambivalent structure”. It was both the place of worship, under the control of the clergy, and also the only meeting and storage place in the village. Meade (1988) similarly points out that village meetings happened there, fire fighting equipment stored, and many social events moved there in case of inclement

²⁴ Edwards’ comment was made in the context of discussing the argument that the existence of so many churches is evidence of a high degree of faith in the medieval period. He suggests that, even if levels of faith were not as high as some others have suggested, the building of so many churches is evidence of a high degree of acquiescence with church influence.

weather. As had been the case with shrines and other religious buildings since biblical times, it was also a sanctuary in cases of physical attack. Connected with the church was the parish priest, who, ideally, resided in the parish and was normally the only paid servant of the parish (Pounds, 2000, p. 155ff). It is important to note, as does Edwards in his discussion of Anglican pastoral tradition (1998, p. 340), that parish clergy in such a system were charged with not only the spiritual but also, to an extent, the physical welfare of all who live within the bounds of their parishes. This type of ministry was immortalised in the writing of George Herbert, in the early seventeenth century, by which time the medieval model was already breaking down. His book *The Country Parson* has remained a classic of Anglican spirituality,

A present-day Church of England commentator Lewis-Anthony has demonstrated that the ideal of the village church and its dedicated priest is, in many ways, at some distance from what actually occurred. In his *If you see George Herbert on the Road, Kill Him* (2009), he points out that many villages would, for centuries, have had a very low level of service at their church (see also Percy, 2006a, p. 7) and that the reality was much more complex than the ideal. However, that the church has at its core a system where the foundations of the institution are based on a presence in every community was and remains a very powerful ideal. Chambers, (2004, p. 58ff) in a discussion of religious life in Wales, contrasts the parish-based ethos of Anglicanism with the congregation-based ethos of the Free Churches, and the resulting “soft boundaries” between Anglican congregations and their surrounding human environments. The current Archbishop of Canterbury,²⁵ in the Foreword to a new book on parish ministry, sums up the power in Anglican self-understanding of this part of the church’s tradition.

The parish system provides a model of the Church's life as essentially, not just occasionally and accidentally, hospitable. The Church exists so that there may be a place where certain human things can find a home, things that will not be accommodated in other places and in other ways. That isn't all the church is for, but it could be said that unless it is at least this, whatever else it says and does will lack credibility; it will risk appearing as a community that requires you to define, for yourself and others, who you are and what you believe

²⁵ This was written before Archbishop Rowan Williams announced his resignation.

before you can properly encounter the welcome of God. And that sits very badly with the mission of Jesus as we read of it in the Gospels (Williams, 2004).

The church's theology and decision-making can never be just a distant abstraction – it must be reflected in what actually happens in real communities filled with the strengths, weaknesses, gifts and needs of real people. Anglican theology has to be grounded in the life around us - hence the interest in toilets in East Africa and in similar immediate practical needs in any community and hence also my interest in studying local parishes.

4.4 An Incarnational Theology

In the beginning was the Word ... and the Word became flesh and lived among us

John 1: 1, 14

Tied in with the parish-based tradition, and perhaps influenced by it, Anglicans have tended to adopt a theological approach that gives central emphasis to the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. That is certainly the view of Mark Harris (1998, p. 91ff), an American Episcopal priest writing about the challenges for the Anglican Communion in a postmodern era. The Incarnation refers to the central tenet of Christian doctrine that in Jesus Christ God became a human being, summed up in the line from the opening words of John's Gospel: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." The implications of this doctrine are diverse and profound but some key principles can be readily identified. Firstly, God is made accessible to the entire creation, and we as humans are at one with the created universe. Secondly, our human powers of reason and conscience are themselves God-given. Thirdly, if the church is to see itself as the Body of Christ, its calling is to incarnate – to live out in the flesh – the love of God. The faith and spirituality of Christians, therefore, is to be lived out in the real world of everyday life, in particular contextual situations, rather than in a somewhat removed spiritual existence.

Several quotations from official and semi-official sources, and cited in the next few paragraphs, illustrate the way in which an incarnational²⁶ emphasis influences Anglican thinking and practice in many areas. The same quotations also illustrate my own theology, as I deliberately position myself within this tradition. Those areas of my life and work where I am critical of the Anglican Church's record (and they certainly exist) are typically areas where I perceive the church, or its leaders, to be acting in ways that are unfaithful to its incarnational theology.

A prominent Archbishop of Canterbury of the last century expressed the emphasis on Incarnation as distinguishing Anglican Christians from other Christian denominations in the following terms:

The indwelling of divine reason in the created world operates especially in the mind and the conscience of men and women....It was that line of thought, I think, that tended to push the Incarnation into first place in Anglican theology. It would be a bit of an oversimplification to say (but perhaps not too much of one) that in Anglican theology through the centuries the Incarnation has been a more central and prominent doctrine than that of the cross and redemption²⁷, and certainly more so than justification or predestination. (Ramsay, 1991, pp. 21-22).

It is not that other key Christian doctrines such as creation, salvation or the work of the Holy Spirit are unimportant in Anglican emphases; it is more that Anglicans favour a theology that "...has as a *guiding principle* the experience, and often the doctrine of the Incarnation" (Harris, 1998, p. 91 emphasis in original).

How an incarnational emphasis works out in practice was expressed in an important report for the Anglican Consultative Council by a commission charged with considering how various Anglican Provinces should best relate to one another.²⁸

²⁶ Following Harris (1998), I have tried to differentiate between the Incarnation (capitalised) as a doctrine within Christian theology, and an incarnational emphasis (lower case), meaning the broader application of that doctrine in the life and experience of Christian people

²⁷ These terms are briefly defined in the Glossary.

²⁸ Province in this context refers to the main units of the Anglican Communion, in most cases corresponding to national divisions.

Anglicans strive to be faithful to the Gospel in their particular cultural contexts, and to face moral, doctrinal, social and economic exigencies which demand discernment and response if identity as the Christian community is to be maintained. For example, issues of justice and human rights including human sexuality, the family and the status of women, racial equality, religious freedom and the use and distribution of resources demand attention. Our response to these issues is conditioned by our particular cultural context, our way of interpreting the Bible, [and] our degree of awareness of being part of a wider human community.(Virginia Report, 1997 Cl 1.5)

An incarnational approach implies an expectation of being influenced, not only by scripture and the traditional teachings of the church, however important those are, but also by the influences of our historical and geographical and social contexts. In their discussion of the Episcopal Church Sachs and Holland (2003, p. 256) suggest that:

Episcopalians presume that belief can no longer be handed down through institutional channels as unchanging forms nor be defined by institutional process. Rather the Episcopal Church's beliefs and their expressions find validity as they are lived in the particularity of local circumstances.

All changes in the orientation and priorities of the church in time and place can be seen as reflections of an incarnational approach to ministry in local circumstances, be they in Europe, in North America, or in Aotearoa/New Zealand. One important reflection of the same approach is the church's record in the "Ministry of Loving Service", in the words of the international five-fold mission statement (Ross, 2010). Anglicans have consistently regarded it as a priority to maintain their commitment to City Missions, aged care work, children and families agencies, and chaplaincies to the armed forces, prisons, schools and industry. The efforts discussed above in section 2.1 to keep small rural NZ churches open (Bennett, 2005) have not just been made in the interests of preserving buildings; those efforts are equally motivated by a commitment to an incarnational ministry in those communities.

4.5 An Anglican methodology?

Anglican theology is not a system or a confession, but a method, a use and a direction.

Archbishop Michael Ramsay (cited in Avis, 1988, p. 414).

The Anglican incarnational approach has significance for this project because such an approach has particular methodological relevance. Harris (1998, pp. 95-96) points out that, according to incarnational thinking, reason, as a gift from God, is an informing source for faith and wisdom but that reason must be filled with the provisionality that pervades all of life. Anglicans, therefore, begin our theological work with the belief that we have a base of information, a contextual environment in which to work with the information and an understanding that conclusions from that work will always be provisional but still aimed at arriving at a continuing approximation of the truth.

Using of the word ‘truth’ as Harris (1998) has done may be seen as problematic in a project that draws on postmodern and social constructionist thinking, conditioned as it is by the conviction that truth is always conditional, relative and paradigm-specific. On the other hand, this illustrates further the creative tension that arises in any analysis of churches from an organisation studies point of view. It is a fundamental ontological assumption in Christian theology that there is indeed Truth, incarnated in Jesus Christ. There is, therefore, a paradox in working both with a theological claim to truth and with a participatory research approach committed to allowing meaning and interpretation to evolve and change as work proceeds. That is precisely why I am committed to an incarnational approach to theology, which I see to be characteristic of Anglican approaches. We never reach the truth (or the Truth) in any complete sense so our conclusions will indeed always be provisional. However an incarnational emphasis encourages the conviction that humans may continue to approximate the wisdom of God, especially as they relate together.

The Anglican tradition is, therefore, defined not by a specific body of teaching or doctrine but by an approach or a method. Anglicans hold to a very wide range of theological beliefs and emphases – we are, after all, the origin of the term ‘broad church’. At different times in history a number of polarised groups have been in evidence in Anglican Christianity, as in other denominations. Past divisions have

been between High Church and Low Church emphases, and between Anglo-Catholic and Evangelical approaches. In recent decades, the divisions have tended to mirror much wider Christian debates, between groups labelled conservative, evangelical or fundamentalist on the one hand and those labelled liberal, radical or progressive on the other. In every case, these labels are problematic; the two sets of three labels are not lists of synonyms but the terms are commonly used both interchangeably and loosely. Other titles adopted for themselves by particular groups of Anglicans (the same applies in other denominations as well) do not assist any desire to be precise. In relation to recent debates around issues of sexuality, a group of liberal Anglicans set up a website called “Thinking Anglicans”, implying that those of a more conservative persuasion are not thinking. At the same time, groups of evangelical Anglicans adopted the title “Mainstream” implying, presumably, that the liberals, at least on these issues, are extremists. If these differing views and emphases can be seen as part of a spectrum, then I place myself toward the liberal/progressive end of the spectrum. I associate myself with views expressed by a Church of England writer Jonathan Clatworthy in a book called *Liberal Faith in a Divided Church* (2008, p. 16):

I defend a particular type of liberalism, historically associated with classical Anglican theology and philosophically characterised by resisting the temptations of certainty and dogmatism. It is a humbler religion, more tolerant, inclusive and open to change. By insisting that nobody has complete or certain truth it establishes principles for a diverse church in which believers agree to differ without threatening each other.

What holds Anglicans together is a tradition of common worship and a commitment to work out our differences together. That commitment can come under considerable strain, and is currently under pressure from issues of sexuality and of the authority and interpretation of scripture. A preference for a more controlled, biblically-centred approach is strongly argued by many parts of the Anglican Communion. It is, perhaps, the preference of a majority of individual Anglicans internationally, given its appeal in the newer, rapidly growing Provinces in Africa, Asia and other areas that refer to themselves as the Global South. Percy (2010, p. 175) has spelled out two

broad approaches that seem to be the dividing line for tensions in the Anglican Communion at the beginning of the 21st Century:

The first sees the shape of Anglicanism in concrete terms. The polity will be governed by law, and scripture will be its ultimate arbiter. Here, Anglicanism will become a tightly-defined denomination in which intra-dependence is carefully policed. Diversity of belief, behaviour and practice will continue, but they will be subject to scrutiny and challenge. The second sees Anglicanism as a more reflexive polity; one that has a shape, but is able to stretch and accommodate considerable diversity. Here the polity will be governed by grace, not law, and the Communion itself will continue to operate as both a sign and instrument of unity. Anglicanism will continue to be a defined form of ecclesial polity, but one that tolerates and respects the differences it finds within itself.

In supporting the second approach, Percy argues that the shape and the shaping of the church remains a fundamentally collective and catholic enterprise and, therefore, often tense and unresolved. This is often what it is to be Anglican: provisional and incomplete. The ontology, epistemology and methodology of this research project are firmly rooted in a preference for that second approach.

The two elements of my researcher positioning, a commitment to cross-disciplinary or transdisciplinary approaches and an Incarnational theology, supply the fundamental reason why I chose to position this research project within the discipline of Organisation Studies and in a School of Management. The project could readily have been undertaken within the discourse of Practical Theology or the Sociology of Religion. However, it has facilitated the ‘fleshing out’ of my learning, and making it relevant to the widest possible range of people, to express it in the vocabulary of a discipline that is not normally associated with the language of faith and theology. If the above discussion of Anglican theology and self-understanding can be seen as providing the equipment and crew for one hull of the canoe, then the insights and disciplines associated with very different discourse can similarly equip the other hull. A defence against any tendency for an overly subjective or entirely church-centred perspective is the opportunity to show familiarity with, and accountability to, the research literature of organisation studies, and insights that that discipline has

developed in the area of organisational change and renewal. In particular as mentioned in the introduction, I developed an interest in the construct organisational culture and, in order to explore how helpful that construct may be to groups of people organised as churches, I now turn to a review of literature on that subject.

5. Organisational Culture – A helpful construct?

Organisational cultures reflect the types of people who make up the organisation, the needs and goals of the organisation, and the ways in which things get done there,... over time, a shared culture with its own norms and values grows within the setting, shaped by individuals, but amplified by the interactions within that setting.

Howard Lune (2010, p. 87)

It is a very common practice, both in the media and in ordinary conversation, when some untoward news occurs in, for example, the police, the armed forces or a school, to suggest that a ‘culture’ of extravagance or drink or arrogance exists in those organisations. This use of the word ‘culture’ reflects, and perhaps influences, a more technical application of the word in management literature as ‘organisational culture’ or sometimes ‘corporate culture’ (e.g. Brinkman, 1999; Schein, 1999-2009). A useful definition of this construct is “...the values, beliefs and basic assumptions that...explain ‘how things are done around here’” (Franklin & Coleman, 2010; MacIntosh & Doherty, 2007, p. 45). Typically, the culture of organisations is described as a force resisting change. The literature on churches has made widespread use of the word culture, often applying the organisational culture construct to congregational situations (Ammerman, 1998; Becker, 1999; Robinson, 2003). It is appropriate, therefore, in a project devoted to change in parishes to review the literature in this area.

During the latter half of the 20th century, the notion of ‘culture’, as derived from anthropological studies, was taken up by management theorists and practitioners with some vigour. During the 1980s and 1990s a plethora of models purporting to depict organisational culture were developed. Many of these models were based on the determinist and positivistic philosophy dominating organisational studies at that time. Three examples, among many, are du Plessis (2006), Cameron and Quinn (2006) and Dwan (2004). Seel’s analysis of such models (2000) argues that most of them are based on two assumptions: first, that organisations are usually in one *state* or another and second, that somehow we can *make* organisations change, particularly by changing their ‘culture’. The implication is that if managers are attentive to the potential of the dynamics assumed to constitute the ‘culture’ in and of their

organisations, analyse and plan accordingly and take appropriate action, then a preconceived outcome can be achieved.

5.1 Can culture be managed, or changed?

Having established ‘organisational cultures’ as existent beings, much energy can be directed at influencing the supposed characteristics of the ‘culture’, typically focused on improving productivity and enhancing employee participation. Simpson (2009), for example, argues that organisational culture should be actively managed to ensure that it supports organizational performance. The insights of critical theorists have exposed much of this rhetoric as being more about intensifying corporate control than a concern with employee engagement. Ogbor (2001, p. 591) charges that, stripped of critical perspective, corporate culture²⁹ lends a dignified complexion to managerial control and a whole-hearted acceptance of the means through which employees in an organization are repressed. Similarly, Harris and Ogbanna’s recent research (2011) supported the argument that organisational efforts at cultural control are negative for employees and even a form of moral imperialism, by indicating that such mechanisms increase stress and erode self-esteem.

In more recent years, followers of postmodern, critical or complexity theories have strongly questioned the assumptions behind such conceptualising of culture as having a seemingly material form – and their applications to practice. In particular, in question are the seemingly overly simplistic managerial notions of organisational change, management and control of culture, with its equally suspect one-way causal directive/directions.

Ogbanna and Harris (2002) review a literature showing an ongoing debate between “optimists”, largely located in business and consultancy fields, who consider that culture may indeed be managed, given the right tools and “pessimists”, predominantly academics, who would argue that this is both impossible and undesirable. They

²⁹ While ‘corporate culture’ is perhaps a narrower construct than ‘organisational culture’, and applies specifically to the business world, Ogbor’s observation still applies to many applications of the wider term.

acknowledge a third category which they call “realists”; given that culture does indeed change, if only through the actions of people, it would be wrong to assume that this process cannot be influenced in any way. Kemp (2004, p. 12) is typical of a persistent “optimistic” viewpoint in arguing that it is important for managers not to view organisational culture as elusive, intangible and insignificant but, rather, as an important component of strategic planning and management. Legge’s title, “Managing Culture, fact or fiction” (1994) is indicative of a “pessimistic” approach. Examples of “realist” perspective are Schein (1999-2009) and perhaps Branson (2008), given his assertion (p. 380) that, “Attending to the creation and maintenance of an appropriate organisational culture is at the heart of leading a successful learning organisation”.

In a recent review of literature on organisational culture, Bellot (2011, p. 30) traces a “loose consensus” among theorists:

1. Organisational culture exists, that is, there is a series of phenomena that can appropriately be referred to by that label. But,
2. Entities known as cultures are inherently fuzzy in that they incorporate contradictions, paradoxes, ambiguities and confusion.
3. Organisational culture is socially constructed, the product of groups not individuals, and based on shared experiences.
4. Each organisation’s culture is relatively unique, malleable, and subject to continual change.

Scott et al (2003, p. 112) advocate treating an organisation’s culture as an emergent property, concomitant with its ontological status as a social institution. In his thinking, culture is not assumed *a priori* to be controllable but its main characteristics can at least be described and assessed in terms of their contribution to broader organisational objectives.

5.2 Technical versus adaptive change

The literature associated with organisational culture suggests that it is comparatively easy to change external manifestations; church examples may include times of services, the choice of language used, communication systems and websites. If the

internal paradigm remains the same, however, then external changes may not last or may not have the intended effect. There is also the risk that changes that are not initiated, not well understood nor supported by the membership may alienate those people who liked things the way they were. Both Robinson (2003) and Barger (2005) address this dynamic using the language of technical and adaptive change. Drawing on the writing of Heifetz (1994; Heifetz & Linsky, 2002) they both argue that it is comparatively easy to lead people through technical change – change that can be quite major, but does not require people to adapt to the change, merely to accept it. Adaptive change calls on people to give up certain ways of thinking, loyalties or assumptions with which they participate in the world.

One specific example, in the context of the church, has been the use of *te reo Maori*³⁰ integrated with the vernacular English in worship, which can be seen as a unique example of church activism redressing the effects of colonisation. When the Anglican Church published a new Prayer Book (ACANZP, 1989) considerable amounts of text were included in Maori and smaller, but still significant excerpts in some Pacific Island languages. Every time the Lord’s Prayer is included, both English and Maori versions are printed. But the publication of these resources did not automatically mean that the material would be used in worship in predominantly Pākehā congregations. On publication, the book was ordered in much higher numbers by Maori parishes than Tikanga Pākehā ones (Davidson, 2011, p. 327) though almost all parishes use it now. But after 20 years the use of *te reo*, though gradually increasing, is still very uneven, and even in those places where Maori or other non-dominant languages, are used, this does not, in itself indicate a shift of influence in the Church. Perhaps the opposite is nearer the truth; as the three-Tikanga constitution, significant sharing of income from Trusts and the realities of demographic changes have contributed to a progressive change in the ‘culture’ of the church, in the sense of “the way things are done around here” (Franklin & Coleman, 2010). This is symbolised by chairs or cathedra for three bishops, Maori, Pākehā and Polynesia, in the Auckland Cathedral (Davidson, p. 337). So congregations appear to be slowly overcoming their earlier discomfort at the use of languages other than English in worship.

³⁰ Maori language – often stated as simply *te reo*.

5.3 Metaphors of culture

A number of writers, in the church and in wider organisation studies literature, have discussed the dynamics depicted as organisational culture through some interesting metaphors. Seel (2000) cites a model of culture, developed by Johnson (1992), referred to as the cultural web³¹. In this view, most change programmes concentrate on the outer circles of the web but may leave intact the paradigm at the centre, the set of core beliefs that result from the multiplicity of conversations and maintain the unity of the ‘culture’.

Thompson (2005, p. 75ff, emphasis in original) talks about the swamp and the different parts played in that ecology by *the shore* – buildings, decorations, mission statements, routines; *the water* – the stated explanations of why things are as they are; and *the mud* – beliefs, deeply held, hardly ever spoken aloud, hardly ever thought about by anyone. Bringing about change to ‘the mud’ needs to be a very slow and careful process, if only because this layer of the culture is so often hidden but if change does not occur here or, at least, in ‘the water’ then possible changes ‘on the shore’ may be very transitory in their effects. The elements of this metaphor correspond to what Schein (1991, p. 252) calls “Levels of Culture” – respectively artefacts, values and underlying assumptions.

Sanguin (2008), following Fox and Sheldrake (1996), discusses morphic fields, a term applied originally in biology but, by extension, to abstract entities and, therefore, organisations. This term assumes that a field exists within and around a morphic unit (a leaf, an animal, an organisation) constituting a sort of database of all its experiences, and this field organises the unit’s characteristic structure and pattern of activity. Wink (1984, 1992, 1998) uses the more religious image of an Angel of a church or other organisation to describe the corporate personality of that gathering of people. Morphic fields and Angels are two different ways of discussing the interaction of memories, behaviours and activities of members of an organisation over long periods, bringing about a corporate personality or organising principle of the organisation. Warren (2004) drew on Wink’s work to develop a process for change

³¹ Becker (1999) uses the same term in a slightly different way.

management in church groups (but applicable to other organisations), whereby members of the group explore ways to change the Angel of their church as a necessary step to lasting change. Warren's technique was used with two of the parishes in this research project.

In yet another metaphor, Branson (2008) applies the idea of organisational culture to the language of the "learning organisation", first coined by Senge (1990, 1992) but now in widespread use. He argues (p. 379) that a successful learning organisation needs to achieve a balance between its interior cultural life and its exterior functional life at both the individual and communal levels. Jamali, Khoury and Sahyoun (2006, p. 347) apply learning organisation language slightly differently, suggesting that the "cultivation" of such characteristics as empowerment, teamwork, trust, communication, commitment and flexibility will facilitate the emergence of learning organisation disciplines, a process rather different in intent from leader-driven change processes.

What all these metaphors have in common is the assumption that effective lasting change requires first a change in the way of being of the people making up an organisation, that is, its 'culture'. Olson's (2008) research with Catholic development agencies in Peru demonstrates that the opposite can also apply; a commitment to development projects and to partnerships with secular agencies led to significant alterations in what he described as the organisational culture of the church.

5.4. Is it that an organisation *has* a culture, or that it *is* a culture?

The wide range of viewpoints discussed here reflects an equally wide range of definitions as to what is being referred to as organisational culture. Following Alvesson (2002) and Rowlinson & Procter (1999), a distinction can be discerned between researchers who treat culture as a variable, or an attribute that an organisation *has*, and those who see it as a root metaphor – the organisation *is* a culture, and both organisation and culture are themselves metaphors. Taking the second view, Seel (2000) argues that the very notion of a definition of culture may be unhelpful since it may lead us to think of culture as a 'thing' or a state which 'belongs' to an organisation – both reifications of ways human beings organise themselves and

others. Seel draws on the work of anthropologist Mary Douglas, whose view is that culture is not a static ‘thing’ but a generative process through which everyone is constantly creating and affirming the context of their corporate living. Seel offers his own rather different working definition of organisation culture:

Organisation culture is the emergent result of the continuing negotiations about values, meanings and proprieties between the members of that organisation and with its environment. (2000, p. 2)

By that definition, organisational culture can be seen as the visible or observable manifestations of the values, ideas and concepts of the people who comprise the organisation.

Bissel, Messersmith and Keyton (2010) further develop the discussion about culture being either an attribute or a metaphor describing a process. Drawing on Fairhurst and Putnam, (2004) they outline three ways of interpreting the interplay between organisational discourse, or the communications that occur in any group of people, and the organisational culture that emerges. These three perspectives can be seen to correspond roughly with Ogbanna and Harris’s (2002) “optimists”, “pessimists” and “realists” discussed above. The “object orientation” (Bisel et al., 2010, p. 349) implies that culture precedes communication, and is measurable and can be managed. In contrast, the “becoming orientation” (p. 353) assumes that discourse both comes first and possesses culturing properties and that, as a result, culture is always in a state of becoming and is never fixed. A third viewpoint, the “grounded in action orientation” (p. 356), resolves the dichotomy by taking the assumption that culture and communications are mutually constitutive. From this perspective, past interactions create a culture that enables and constrains present interactions and interpretations.

Given this complexity, any discussion or analysis of an organisation’s culture, and particularly any attempt to bring about change to that culture, cannot operate from a simplistic framework. Lundberg (1991, p. 360) talks of the need for culture researchers to have “tenacious attention to concrete phenomena, interpretive honesty, and a pluralistic conceptual sensitivity”. Seel (2000) suggests a move away from ‘planning change’ and onto ‘facilitating emergence’ and offers a new metaphor to

help understand the part to be played by those called on to facilitate change, as consultants or as leaders:

One possibility is change agent as ‘midwife’. It seems to work reasonably well: the good midwife develops a personal relationship with the pregnant woman; she recognises the uniqueness of each encounter, treating the woman as a living being not a machine; she knows that birth should not be forced but assisted; she understands the importance of working *with* the body’s natural processes (p. 8).

As well as an increasing interest in the many ways ‘organisational culture’ has become an attractive and usable notion in reflection on church organisation, the word ‘culture’ is also used in a quite different sense in much literature about parishes and congregations. It is used in connection with the relationship that churches have with the ‘culture’ of the society around them. Some will see that culture in reified terms, others as an evolving, developing set of phenomena in which (the members of) organisations such as parishes make an active contribution. In either case, ever since H Richard Niebuhr’s (1951) classic typology of how church and culture can interact (Christ of culture, Christ against culture, Christ transforming culture, etc), the relationship between the church and its wider context has been a fertile issue for theological reflection. Conder (2006, p. 53) argues that the message of the church has always been shaped by the “interests, worldview, prejudices and communicational mediums of the culture in which it is being communicated”. Roxburgh’s discussion (2010, p. 182ff) of the metaphor of ‘cultivation’ of the environment in which we live helps to express the organic quality of any parish’s relationship with those around it. And, reverting to the earlier metaphor of the swamp (Thompson, 2005, p. 93), the concept of ‘confluence’ is relevant; just as the cultures of a particular congregations arise from the confluence of individual members’ streams they are, in turn, deeply affected by the larger-scale streams of culture that flow around and through them. Cladis (1999), revealing an ontological perspective that sees culture in strongly reified terms, argues that parishes, and specifically their leaders, should see themselves as “culture creators”; he suggests (p. 13) that, “Ministry teams endeavour to create the

culture of the perichoritic³² fellowship of God. In so doing they, and thus their churches, offer an alternative to the destructive and dysfunctional cultures around us”.

The interplay between the ‘culture’ of parishes, as defined in the complex and nuanced way above, and the ‘culture’ of their surrounding environment is one way to express the central interest of this project. It may be that use of the specific and now reified construct ‘organisational culture’ and, similarly, the related concept ‘organisational climate’ (Ekvall, 1996) have become too restricted to be completely useful to this approach. On the other hand, an informed and reflective analysis of symbols, rituals, meaning, beliefs and routines as well as values, aspirations and norms will facilitate an understanding of the people and organisations with whom I work. Hopefully, such a nuanced understanding of culture will overcome instrumentalist or determinist approaches and support a more participative approach to methodology, one to which I am drawn.

5.5 Perhaps another word?

That the word ‘culture’ is simply a short-hand way of referring to a complex set of phenomena, rather than a clearly defined attribute of an organisation, is demonstrated by a number of writers who have discussed many of the dynamics raised above without ever using the word. One example is Impey (2009, 2010), whose analyses of church life and development are built around the concept of “practical wisdom”. (Impey’s writing is totally church-based but most of his observations would apply equally to other organisations.) He suggests that every parish has its own practical wisdom (2010, p. xiv), which is the shared wisdom of the congregation, made up of all sorts of factors, especially habits moulded by the successes and failures of the church’s story. He defines wisdom (p. 117) as “...a mixed bundle of what we take for granted, what we usually do, the advice we give ourselves, the reflecting we do in the light of events, our thinking, our responses to people and situations, our convictions and our willingness to learn”.

³² Referring literally to a circle dance, perichoresis is a way of conceptualising the perfect fellowship of the Trinity, a term central to most Christian understandings of God – three Persons of equal power and influence, each taking prominence at appropriate times.

There are a number of reasons why Impey's terminology is particularly compatible with the current project, either replacing or, at least, complementing the language of culture. Wisdom is one of the titles of God in the Judeo-Christian tradition (found in the biblical books of Proverbs, Wisdom, and others) and is receiving increased attention in recent decades (e.g. E. A. Johnson, 1992) as a corrective to some more commonly used titles (Lord, Father, the Almighty) with their gender-specific or hierarchical overtones. On the other hand, wisdom is nonetheless a widely understood concept, which can be discussed meaningfully by those who are not working from a religious perspective (e.g. Bassett, 2005). Wisdom is, by definition, a rather complex and abstract concept, therefore difficult to reify or treat as an attribute. The practical wisdom of a congregation (or any other group) is, however, still a very important concept, and one that must be understood adequately if the organisation is to be understood or to be facilitated toward change. Perhaps most helpfully, wisdom is never assumed to be constant or fixed. As Impey puts it (2010, p. 120), "The great thing about wisdom is that it freely admits the desirability of becoming wiser still. But our present wisdom is necessarily our starting point, even when it may seem clearly inadequate to some".

The theoretical approach taken in this project suggests a move away from the "object" orientation to culture, and organisational culture in particular, in favour of either the "becoming" or the "grounded in action" orientation. In other words, a mechanistic or deterministic interpretation is incompatible with open, inclusive and questioning approaches such as the one I am choosing to follow. It is similarly incompatible with an approach to facilitation that prefers change to be a gradual, emergent and, normally, self-initiated process rather than a formulaic process imposed by a consultant. Discussions below will, therefore, make very little use of organisational culture as a construct and where the word 'culture' is used it will always be in quotation marks, signifying that a complex, evolving and organic series of meanings will be implied.

6. The Spirit of Organisations and the Organisation of the Spirit.

Given my intention to explore change in religious groups through the lens of organisation studies, it was appropriate to review a wide range of literature that addresses management and spirituality for any confluence and any evidence that these genres of scholarship have impact on one another. If issues of faith and theology can be conceived as occupying one hull of the *waka* and issues of organisation studies are in the other, then literature that aims to connect the two discourses will assist in constructing the methodological platform necessary to tie the two hulls to each other and create a location for navigational activities. I found at least five distinct ways in which discourses on management/organisation theory on the one hand and religion/spirituality on the other have been linked in the literature. There is a considerable and growing literature on all five and all have some bearing on the issues under investigation in this project:

- Management principles applied to churches and other religious organisations.
- The influence of spirituality on organisations, either the spirituality of individual members or the encouragement by management of spiritual practices.
- The application of spiritual principles to the study of organisations, organisational change and management.
- An emerging critique of the [ab]use of concepts such as spirituality by business, management or political leadership in ways that exploit people's deepest beliefs to serve prevailing economic agendas.
- Exploring the spirituality of organisations themselves.

6.1 Management principles applied to churches

There is a voluminous body of literature from religious authors, some intended for academic audiences and others for general church readership, applying what are seen as good business/organisational management principles to church organisations, at local, regional or national levels. A particularly clear illustrative example is *Breakout churches; Discover how to make the leap* (Rainer, 2005). The research process, structure and outline described in this book, and the architecture of its ideas, all follow

those of *Good to Great; Why some companies make the leap --- and others don't* (Collins, 2001). Other titles such as *Managing the Church? Order and organisation in a secular age* (Evans & Percy, 2000), illustrate the area of interest of this literature.

There are undoubtedly many useful things that church members can learn from a study of management principles, but there are also dangers in uncritically applying insights drawn from one context into a quite different one. Stewart (2008) notes that the unique spiritual nature of Christian organisations is, in some ways, at odds with the assumptions of traditional leadership models. Cundy and Welby (2000) describe, and deplore, a tendency whereby what is seen as appropriate in business seems to be imitated in churches, usually 20 years later, as it goes out of fashion in the business context.

A large proportion of writing applying business principles to church contexts is designed to address issues of church growth and/or how to make churches more effective. What is meant by 'effective' varies from example to example, and reflects the theoretical and theological assumptions and institutional orientation of the writer. Debate within church circles parallels a similar debate in political and economic arenas about whether growth in terms of numerical expansion is necessarily a good thing. Many contemporary critiques of economic growth (e.g. Alier, 2009; Roberts, 2002) argue that the promotion or endorsement of growth as a positive value is leading to over-exploitation of people and the planet. Similarly, critics of an emphasis on church growth (e.g. Guest, Tusting, & Woodhead, 2004, p. xiii) have argued that this can depend on qualities such as 'success' and 'competitive edge' - the opposite of those exemplified by Jesus Christ whose life demonstrated the grace of God in the face of suffering, humiliation and failure.

Rainer (1993) traces the origins of the Church Growth Movement to the writing of Donald McGavran in 1955. It became a very influential movement in evangelical circles in the last three decades of the 20th century, especially in the USA. The Church Growth approach, exemplified by Spader and Mayes (1991) and Rainer (1993), drew very heavily on the mechanistic management principles typical of that period in the form of good research and well-devised programmes that promised

success measurable in terms of numbers of new members. It was typically associated with either or both of two ontological assumptions about what sort of organisations churches are. The first is to see the church in reified, almost personified, terms as a living being, drawing on the theological theme discussed above of the church being God's creation. By this perspective, as growth is the natural condition for life (e.g. Zunkel, 1983, p. 14) the life of churches should be reflected in numerical growth. The second ontological understanding common to Church Growth literature (and some literature uses both images) indicates an approach similar to what Morgan (1986-2006) describes as Classical Management Theory. Management of a business or of a church, in this form of theorising, can be compared to the workings of a machine, so that if the right organisational principles are put into place then improved 'outputs' are virtually guaranteed. The chapter headings typical of this literature – “Translating purpose into an agenda” and “Our desired product” (Spader & Mayes, 1991), “Specific, concrete, missional objectives” and “Streamlined organisational structure (Callahan, 1983)–illustrate the degree to which business concepts have influenced church growth writing.

Critiques of this kind of management thinking, both as applied in the context of church life and more generally, have emerged in the last decade or so, taking two distinct forms. Recent congregational studies have questioned how appropriate it is to apply business concepts uncritically to the life of churches. Butler Bass (2004), for example, suggests that an emphasis on improving the technical skills of leadership have ironically secularised the understanding of ministry, both the ordained ministry and the one shared by all church members. “By seeing the church as a business to be managed”, she argues (p. 6) pastors and congregations allow themselves to be defined by “...worldviews, programs, and systems not conversant with their own stories.” The other critique comes from the field of management studies itself, questioning whether mechanistic metaphors are the most appropriate ones to use in any organisation. Morgan argues that not only does life not work in such simplistic ways, but that these sorts of management principles often lie at the basis of modern organisational problems (Morgan, 1986-2006, p27). My own experience in a large number of parishes suggests that the life and thriving of parishes is rather more complex and less

amenable to change through carefully devised formulae than much Church Growth literature and the mechanistic theory of management would suggest.

There has been something of a resurgence of Church Growth literature in recent years, particularly in Britain, where it is connected with a renewal of evangelical influence. “In a nutshell, evangelical belief and practice appear to have become synonymous with effective recruitment and church-growth strategies” (Chambers, 2004, p. 57). A number of publications from the Church of England’s official publishing house, Church House Publishing, notably the influential *Mission-shaped Church* (2004) and a series of associated books with similar titles (Bayes & Sledge, 2006; Croft, 2008b; Hope, 2006), and two books by Jackson (2002, 2005), are part of a deliberate strategy to encourage numerical growth, strongly influenced by evangelical thinking³³. Jackson (2005) argues forcibly that numerical growth is the “main solution” to the issues facing the Church of the 21st Century, and that the effective application of good management and leadership principles can be expected to bring that about. A similar tone in a recent USA evangelical source is found in Barger (2005). While distancing himself from the mechanistic (he would say “technical”) approach of Church Growth literature, he lists an upward trend in weekly attendance and an increasing percentage of membership worshipping weekly as two of four indicators of the health of congregations.

The apparent success of Church Growth strategies in at least some sections of the Church of England and in the USA has led to this literature being much quoted in church circles, including in this country (Blakie, 2009; Day, 2009). The enthusiasm for such approaches should, perhaps, be balanced against the predictions of writers such as Conder. Writing in the context of the Emergent Church in the USA, and the rapidly changing cultural milieu of which it is a part, he suggests (Conder, 2006, p. 203) that: “It will become increasingly difficult for churches to reach growth goals, even as the mechanisms to reach those goals become increasingly irrelevant to the questions and concerns of a changed culture.” The reflections on my research project

³³Proponents of the Fresh Expressions approach, (e.g. Croft, 2009), while acknowledging its debt to the earlier Church Growth movement, would argue that it draws from a much wider and deeper theological stream, and would challenge any inherent connection with the Evangelical wing of the Church.

will include further discussion of mechanistic ministry approaches as exemplified by the Church Growth movement, in the hope that I can reach useful conclusions about its value for New Zealand parishes.

Church Growth and other evangelical literature is by no means the only genre to have been strongly influenced by management and organisational theory. Writers from the more liberal end of the theological spectrum have also drawn on business concepts. A great deal of management consulting has occurred in liberal churches, notably in the USA but in many other countries influenced by American theorists. Carroll (1998), for example, outlines a perspective on leadership that gives primary attention to matters of organisational leadership rather than priestly or sacramental aspects. Farnsley (2004) points out that members of liberal churches were the management classes of American life. “Nothing made better sense to them than defining a mission statement, choosing direct cooperative action – missions in the traditional sense – to carry out the mission statement, and research to identify and then to market to target audiences” (p30).

Although many writers from theologically liberal backgrounds would still echo the sentiment expressed by Hadaway and Roozen (1995, p. 11) that “... membership trends are a rough barometer of church and denominational health”, it is typical for them to give less emphasis to questions of numerical growth, or suggest different or wider measures of congregational wellbeing. Loren Mead (1993), for example, drawing on the work of New Zealand Bishop Ted Buckle (1978), (and thereby illustrating the way this type of approach has both influenced, and been influenced by, the New Zealand church) identifies four distinct ways that churches can ‘grow’ – Numerical, Maturation, Organic and Incarnational Growth. It is much more typical for congregational studies from this stable to emphasise whether a particular church is ‘thriving’ or demonstrating ‘vitality’. One example is an assessment of congregational vitality “transcending mere numerical growth” by Butler Bass and Steward-Sicking (2006, p. 297), through a set of three markers: coherence of practice, authenticity of practices and transformation through practice. Some commentators (Farnsley, 2004; Guest et al., 2004) have labelled this type of approach as “Church Health” literature. Warren (2004) with his *Healthy Churches’ Handbook*, again from

Church House Publishing, and Chew and Ireland (2009) with their *Mission Action Planning* provide specifically Church of England versions of this approach. The issue of numerical growth is addressed neatly by the latter book (2009, p. 134): “A healthy church is more attractive to outsiders and therefore more likely to grow, but a healthy church is one which does not make its own growth its primary objective”.

The main figures in Church Health writing have been Loren Mead and other writers associated with the Alban Institute, the USA’s foremost consulting house for congregations, founded by Mead in 1974. Other examples are Carl Dudley (e.g. 2002; 1983) and, more recently, Nancy Ammerman (1997, 2003, 2005). All of these writers have been significantly financed by the Lilly Endowment, a very wealthy trust dedicated to improving religious life in the USA and strengthening organisations and institutions, especially in mainline liberal churches (Farnsley, 2004). This very generous funding explains why congregational studies are much further advanced in the USA than in Britain or Australasia (Cameron et al., 2005). As will become apparent in the discussion of research method, and the account of the research project itself, I have drawn heavily on this stable of authors. My research method is based on Dudley and Ammerman’s workbook *Congregations in Transition* (2002). I have, however, attempted as far as possible to take a critical approach to this literature and use my exposure to it to form a considered opinion as to the usefulness of such a management-based approach to the study of congregations.

Beyond specifically management or business oriented literature, the broader discipline of Organisational Studies has a direct relevance to the study of congregations, parishes and other religious organisations. Cameron (2005) distances this cross-disciplinary approach from the “managerialism” critiqued by Pattison (1997) as the uncritical use of management techniques and practices as a guiding ideology for work. In contrast, she outlines a strand of organisation studies that has concentrated on the particular issues that face voluntary organisations. Cameron, Richter et al (2005) argue that organisation studies is one of four crucial disciplines (along with anthropology, sociology and theology) that must be drawn on for any adequate study of local churches. They acknowledge (p. 12) that other disciplines such as architecture, art or geography can also provide fruitful perspectives. Woodhead,

Guest and Tusting (2004, p. 1) give a longer list including religious studies, linguistics, social theory and gender studies. I have drawn on at least two psychologists (Savage, 2006; Watson, 2004) in my theorising. A cross-disciplinary approach allows critical reflection on the ways people form and work in congregations, which is likely to provide insights beyond what may arise from a purely theological or sociological analysis. The opportunity for this type of reflection is central to my desire to conduct my research project within the discipline of Management Studies, rather than Practical Theology or the Sociology of Religion.

6.2 Spirituality in Organisations

The term ‘spirituality in organisations’ has come to refer to a stream of research and comment exploring how the spirituality of individual members of an organisation, or the corporate expression of spirituality across an organisation, may have beneficial effects. This development in many ways parallels the similar emergence of an ‘Aesthetics in Management’ discourse (see for example Dobson, 1999; Ryman, Porter, & Galbraith, 2009). Both developments can be seen as a corrective to purely mechanistic or positivistic approaches. Benefiel (2003) reviews what she calls a “burgeoning new field” of spirituality in organisations research, while Miller (2007) outlines a similar trend that he refers to as the Faith at Work movement. Kinjerski & Skrypnek (2006) use the term “spirit at work” to describe a widespread increased desire among employees for meaningfulness and fulfilment at work, and a range of organisational responses to that expressed desire.

Some researchers (e.g. Ashmos & Duchon, 2000) have applied quantitative methods in an attempt to demonstrate how spirituality in the workplace contributes to organisational performance. As an example of this orientation, Pandey, Gupta and Arora, (2009) developed a Spiritual Climate Inventory in their attempt to show that the spirituality of employees is reflected in the work climate which, in turn, may affect the employees’ service to customers. Others, such as Mitroff & Denton (1999), have used qualitative approaches to trace how employees perceive their organisations to be better places to work because of the spiritual atmosphere that may be generated with intent. The discussion of methodological approaches to spirituality in organisations

reveals a lack of consensus as to what is meant by the term ‘spirituality’ and serious questions from some (e.g. Neal & Biberman, 2003; Speck, 2005) as to whether a concept so ineffable can or should be measured.

In the search for some kind of definition of spirituality, Karakas (2009 p. 22) argues that organisation development professionals should work to enable “hope, consciousness, meaning, integrity, spiritual wellbeing, wholeness, interconnectedness and faith among managers and employees.” Ashmos and Duchon (2000, pp. p134-135) describe a “spirituality movement” which has its origins in all the main world religions and is, therefore, grounded in the language of religious imagery “accomplishing personal transformation, rediscovering self, beginning a personal journey, having utopian visions, and experiencing renewal”. They, like Cavanagh (1999), note a generalised view that the development and expression of the spirit at work may have beneficial consequences for the organisation. In a similar way, Marques, Dhiman and King (2005) argue that applying a spiritual mindset in a workplace will encourage workers’ creativity and innovativeness, which should enhance their productivity and lead to a better overall performance of the organisation. It should be noted that this view is challenged by some critical workplace spirituality researchers (e.g. Lips-Wiersma, Dean, & Fornaciari, 2009), as discussed below.

Acknowledging that no one, to their knowledge, had defined ‘spirituality at work’, Ashmos and Duchon (2000, p137) offered as a definition “... the recognition that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community.” Their research attempted, with limited success, to arrive at a mechanism for measuring spirituality. More recently, Fisher (2009) has attempted a similar task with comparable results. That they should even attempt such a task reveals an ontological view that, for meaningful academic discussion to take place, there must be some assumed ‘thing’ to observe through some form of scientific method and that these observations may be transformed into a ‘robust’ equation from which reliable predictions/controls can be devised.

The view that spirituality can and should be measured is challenged by Fornaciari and Dean (2001) who argue that traditional social science tools are inadequate for the task of addressing the issue of spirituality in organisations. They also express severe disquiet at the moral and ethical implications of addressing a concept such as spirituality in the context of a discourse whose one overarching goal (they claim) is to increase organisational effectiveness. This argument is related to one propounded by Hull (1996, p. 42), about the ‘inside’ (subjective experience) and ‘outside’ (objective study) ways of looking at spirituality:

To the spiritual, his or her spirituality has no outside. It is a world, a cosmos, seen as entire and viewed from the inside without realising that it is an inside. To the social sciences, on the other hand, the world of spiritual experience has no inside; it is studied comparatively and critically, i.e. from the point of view of the hermeneutics of suspicion”.

Hull’s interest here is in the spirituality of individuals but his argument has all the more force when applied to spirituality in organisations.

6.3 A tangent: Spirituality versus Religion

In one sense, the debate about the appropriate part played by spiritual issues in organisations is somewhat peripheral to my research project. After all, unlike a commercial or business organisation, it is unlikely that anyone would question whether spirituality is a legitimate interest for a local parish. On the other hand, the very fact that this debate is taking place is evidence of a topic of significant interest to the society of which local churches are a part. Of particular relevance is the subsidiary debate about the distinction between spirituality and religion. Some writers will claim that religion is a kind of “optional extra” to spirituality or, as Bellous and Csinos (2009 p. 214) state, “Our primary assumption about the human condition is that people are spiritual, whether or not they are religious.” Others will make a sharp distinction between two very different concepts, seeing spirituality as an inward search for universal values, and religion as an institutionalised system of attitudes, beliefs and practices (Cash & Gray, 2000; Collins & Kakabadse, 2006; Fry, 2003). If that dichotomy is accepted, then spirituality becomes an appropriate

emphasis in the context of organisations and management, whereas the promulgation of religion is inappropriate (Garcia-Zamor, 2003).

Larive (2004, 2007) contends that a distinction between religion and spirituality is due, at least in part, to the failure of the churches and the theological academy to develop a theology of work, resulting in a vacuum among those looking for a spiritual dimension in work.

This vacuum is being supplied *outside theology* mostly by consultants in the area of business management, who have now become gurus of spirituality. They offer a melange of spiritual remedies, Buddhist teachings, science, and new age inspirations. Publishers are producing their books like sausages. As business understands it, ‘spirituality’ means access to a sacred force that impels life.... It can be possessed as an attribute without benefit of ‘organised religion’ so that business people will say “I’m a very spiritual person, but I’m not religious” (2004, pp. 4-5 emphasis in original).

I would argue, with for example Cash and Gray (2000) and Miller (2007), that this *religion bad, spirituality good* characterisation is a false dichotomy. Putting it most simply, as Butler Bass (2009) has pointed out, people who discover meaning through some sort of spirituality usually look for others with the same experience and, if several spiritual practitioners gather to share insights and their craft, it becomes ‘formalised,’ usually in the form of religion. More fundamentally, it has been well argued that any adequate approach to improving people’s “hope, consciousness, meaning, integrity, spiritual wellbeing, wholeness, interconnectedness and faith” (Karakas, 2009 p.22) must be a religious, as well as a spiritual one (Hauerwas, 2001). The reason for this, as Wuthnow (2003, p. 16) has argued, is that people’s existential yearnings and experiences have to take shape. They have to find what he calls *carriers*, vehicles of expression to help people to make sense of their feelings, and providing such carriers is the function of religion. Schneiders (2003 p. 172) makes the same point when she states that “religion is the optimal context for spirituality”. She concedes that institutions, including religious ones, are notoriously prone to corruption, but argues that non-institutionalised spiritualities are prone to extremism, instability and ghettoising. Spirituality that is not linked to a wider religious understanding loses the

advantages of the collective criticism of an historically tested community, the public scrutiny by any society on recognised groups within it, and the leverage that an institution allows for influencing society (and the church) for the good. Tickle (2009, p. 167) similarly argues that to bring into one's body the signs, marks and diurnal rhythms of one's religion is to form and direct one's innate, human potential for spirituality to some definition outside of the self and the self's experience or purposes.

Miller (2007, p. 17) describes the retreat from the word 'religion' as reactionary, and suggests that religion's pursuit of truth and its formation of disciplined faith communities typically lead to "... teachings that accent ethical concerns, social justice and the self-sacrificial act of serving one's neighbour, as opposed to the often inward and narcissistic accent of some forms of modern spirituality". Quatro (2004) turns this discussion around by arguing that the workplace spirituality movement, however much it is associated with personalised, privatised or even secularised new age spiritual faith traditions, would probably not have arisen without the foundational influence of traditional religion.

If the view expressed by Schneiders (2000, 2003) that religion is the optimal context for spirituality is accepted, then this places a particular obligation on the church in general and on parishes in particular. The rapid growth of interest in spirituality, analysed statistically by Hay (2001, 2006, 2009; Hay & Hunt, 2000), has been seen by some writers, such as Collins and Kakabadse (2006) and Bellous & Csinos (2009), as an expression of a wider hunger in society for meaning, higher purpose and sense of identity. This appears to be a partial reversal of a trend identified by Hull (1996). Drawing on Hay (1985), he suggested that the success of thinkers such as Marx and Freud in creating a lack of confidence in religious belief³⁴ had been such that people were suspicious of the spiritual. The cultural bias against religion was so powerful that people were unable to accept their own religious and spiritual experiences.

³⁴ It may be that the 'success' is not so much what Marx or Freud set out to achieve but the effect of how their thinking has been developed and, perhaps, demonised. But the point made by Hay and Hull stands.

It appears that the suspicion against spirituality is breaking down, even if that against religion remains. Marshall, Coleman and Reason (2011) suggest that reductionist and materialist worldviews are beginning to lose their grip in various academic disciplines, resulting in a slowly widening openness to considerations of spirituality. A recent book edited by Hartwig and Morgan (2012) reviews, from the perspective of Critical Realism, a return to considerations of spirituality and religion in philosophical discourse in recent decades. Sandercock (2006, p. 66) applies this openness to the discipline of planning, suggesting that perhaps a different way of talking about planning is called for, "...at the heart of which is the human spirit in its everyday struggle to make meaning and create a better world". In the discipline of development studies³⁵ a number of commentators (Sanderson, 2008; Van der Beek, 2000) have suggested that absence of spiritual discussion, or a taboo status within much academic and theoretical practice, results in a sterile or reductionist analysis. Similarly, in a discussion of the concept of social enterprise, Humphries & Grant (2005, p. 46) challenge the validity and limited insight of "a despiritualised, de-socialised mode of being" in analysing economic affairs. In the area of Management/Organisation Studies, the Management, Spirituality and Religion interest group of the Academy of Management is perhaps the most obvious example of this trend. According to Garcia-Zamor (2003, p. 355), there is a wide-spread and increasing openness in the area of business and management to embrace more spiritual approaches, perhaps as a reaction to the "corporate greed" of earlier generations.

The most prominent recent example of a reaction to corporate greed is the "Occupy" movement that began in Wall Street in late 2011 and spread to many cities of the USA and overseas. It is, perhaps, too soon to know the outcome of these demonstrations, and also too soon for scholarly analysis of them to take shape. However, it was noteworthy, even at an early stage, that the focus of the protests was the greed, corruption and economic inequality of the financial system, and that much of the early analysis through websites, blogs and other social media was on the spiritual

³⁵ I am following the practice of Sanderson (2008, p. 165 n162) in not capitalising development studies. She suggests that 'development' refers to people-centred participatory approaches, and 'Development' to the more international level predominated by neo-liberal economics.

implications of what was happening. As one internet commentator put it, "...Occupy Wall Street, and its local offshoots springing up everywhere from Boston to L.A., has described itself more clearly in the language of 'soul' than in the language of federal financial regulation policy" (Egerstrom, 2011).

The Christian churches have been developing interest and expertise in the area of spirituality for two thousand years but are experiencing a significant drop in influence just at a time that a thirst for spirituality is on the increase. As Dokecki, Newbrough, & O'Gormon (2001) express: "At the core of the contemporary fragmented community is a crisis of spirituality. Therefore, the essence of leadership that enhances community is to attend to the authentic human development needs of persons-in-community, often masked by the overvaluing of material goods". The common view, as noted by Conder (2006) and Thomas (2003), that religion is, at best, something rather different from spirituality and, at worst, is a negative influence on the spiritual search, may be in part a reflection on the perceived behaviour of many churches and congregations. Perhaps the tendency of various congregations to concentrate on their own institutional needs rather than on the wellbeing of the neighbourhoods around them, and the tendency to allow their sphere of operation to be restricted to the internal and personal dimensions rather than a more holistic application, has contributed to the sense that religion has little of value to offer.

As Moynagh (2004) points out (c.f. Jarvis, 2005, p. 56), even very atheistic or materialistic people still have big questions about life and meaning. The difficulty for the church is that "...people don't naturally turn to church for the answers. The church package is too alien – church is seen as being about 'church things' rather than 'life things'" (Moynagh, 2004, p. 75). As another commentator expressed that dilemma (Duin, 2008, p. 81): "It's not news anymore that people are dissatisfied with church as usual. It is news when a pastor can figure out a winning combination in a time when many people are searching for the key." My research project has focused on the ability and willingness of parish members to make themselves aware of the spiritual priorities of their neighbours and to work towards appropriate responses.

6.4 Application of Spiritual Principles to Organisation Studies

As researchers and commentators attempt to discuss a ‘spiritual’ approach to the study of organisations, or of management, they use, as Gull & Doh (2004) have shown, a wide range of definitions as to what precisely they mean by ‘spirituality’. There is however a broad consensus (Bellous & Csinos, 2009; Collins & Kakabadse, 2006; Frohlich, 2001) that what is being discussed is much more complex than, or even qualitatively different from what can sensibly be depicted in numbers, statistics and conventional ways of measuring performance. McKuddy and Pirie (2007, p. p958) argue that spirituality can and should have a significant influence in institutional decision-making. In their view, decision makers are not just agents for shareholders—owners but also act as stewards for other contemporaneous principals and future generations.

One of the reasons for taking a cross-disciplinary approach to research is not only to draw on the particular resources available in each discipline but also to allow the insights of one discipline to inform the discourse of another (Augsburg, 2006). As noted above, it has become commonplace to apply management principles to churches and other religious organisations. What is less common is to apply the insights of spirituality, religious life or theology to the study of management. Karakas (2009), drawing on Appreciative Inquiry and spirituality, advocates a number of new intervention models for management professionals in an age of uncertainty and complexity, including “spiritual visionary” and “holistic thinker” (p. 18). Working from a more specifically Christian perspective, Chater (1997) outlines at least three ways in which theology can offer constructive critiques to management. Firstly, theologians can expose the blind spots (Chater uses the word *lacunae*) in management thinking, especially in the area of human and spiritual factors. Such blindness tends to lead to processes of change and development without reference to a prior set of values. Secondly, a spiritual or theological perspective can uncover assumptions, notably ontological ones, about the supposed nature of work and the assumed right to profit. It is the fact that these assumptions are so often undeclared that (in Chater’s analysis) makes them dangerous. Thirdly, Christian theology can invite the use of the traditions surrounding the life of Jesus, and the symbols of the cross and the empty tomb, to provide ways to analyse and reflect on perceived failure, of organisations or

of leaders, very differently from the utilitarian, outcomes-oriented framework of most organisational thinking.

This research project was designed to make a contribution to the scholarly discussion of concepts that connect theology with organisation studies. An organisation studies project working with religious organisations sits at the intersection between two very different discourses. But, as Gull and Doh (2004, p. 136) put it,

For the human spirit to unfold, management principles and practices must transcend its fixation on the material and enable those in authority to understand the nonmaterial, interior realm of life.

A contribution to the unfolding discourse addressing these issues would also make a contribution to knowledge in the fields of both religious organisations and management studies. I echo the hope expressed by Frohlich (2001) that the discipline of spirituality may be uniquely qualified to move academia toward a “second naive”³⁶, a period when fruits of a critical approach can be linked, as they were in pre-Enlightenment times, to the life of the spirit³⁶.

6.5 Exploitation of spirituality

A number of critical commentators on workplace spirituality have questioned the generalised view that the encouragement of spiritual expression is always beneficial, not only for the individuals concerned but for the corporate life (and often commercial success) of the organisation. Lips-Wiersma, Dean and Fornaciari (2009) identify the problems that arise when leaders are complicit with inherent organisational power structures, and subsume employees’ spiritual selves to the demands of organisational culture, outcomes or infrastructure. Kolodinsky, Giacalone et al (2008) similarly suggest that in an era of rapid and continual change, with decision-making processes increasingly affected by financial metrics, leaders may expect that workers will do whatever it takes, including various forms of spiritual expression, to positively affect the organisational bottom-line. Tourish and Tourish (2010, p. 219) see a particular

³⁶ As in note 21 above, section 4.1, when used in specifically Christian contexts “the spirit” tends to refer to the Holy Spirit, especially in phrases like “the life of the spirit”. I interpret Frohlich as meaning something rather broader, including anything covered by the term ‘spirituality’.

danger in encouraging spirituality in the workplace in an environment where corporate structures privilege the managerial voice above all others, and suggest that Spirituality at Work is inherently likely to be deployed as a means of enhancing leader power at the expense of the agency of followers. McGuire (2010) discusses these issues in terms of “spiritual labour”, whereby organisational members’ private spirituality is commodified, codified and regulated by their organisations.

When spirituality is made a vehicle for what Milacci and Howell (2002) call the “commodification of souls” in order to boost the profits of an organisation, then clearly it is being exploited and abused, a similar point being made by Case & Gosling (2010). Bolton, in her review of workplace spirituality literature (2010, p. 159), argues that much of this work, with its “...disembedded nature, prescriptive tone, and continual references to performativity” actually repeats and embellishes some of the weaknesses of current best practice management models. Bell & Taylor (2003, p. 331) comment on the paradox inherent in much workplace spirituality discourse, in that, “...rather than enabling liberation from the constraints of work and modernity, workplace spirituality ensures that the search for meaning is harnessed to specific organizational purposes”. The potential for misuse and misappropriation of spiritually focused discourses will always be present, according to Lips-Wiersma, Dean and Fornaciari (2009 p. 5), and may only be countered by a more broadly accepted appreciation of spiritual principles properly applied.

The critique of workplace spirituality approaches by critical theorists has itself been challenged, particularly by writers who see the potential of spirituality as an instrument of critical analysis. Such writers (e.g. Exline & Bright, 2011) would challenge the assumption that all forms of religious or spiritual coping are passive and oriented toward personal comfort and suggest that, for some people, religious and spiritual belief and practice might be the vehicle that propels them to seek organisational change. Finch-Lees, Mabey, and Liefoghe (2005) in their discussion of Capability-Based Management Development, note the way that religious discourses in organisations may have bottom-up as well as top-down effects. Using the concept of micro-emancipation, they suggest that spirituality, rather than reflecting a one-sided attempt by management to advance ideological power interests,

can instead become an object and facilitator of resistance. Bell (2008, p. 295) goes further, arguing that spirituality has the potential to enable prevailing managerial orthodoxies to be challenged through the development of a practice-based morality.

Bell's (2008) interest in advocating a more productive link between spirituality and Critical Management Studies is informed by the spirit of liberation theology. This is a form of theological reflection originating in Latin America in the last decades of the 20th century (e.g. Gutiérrez, 1973) and strongly influenced by Marxist theory. The determination of liberation theologians to link spiritual reflection with critical political and economic analysis has been strongly influential in feminist, black, Asian, queer and other strongly contextual forms of theologising. Drawing on that tradition, writers such as Bell (p. 305) are able to make two distinct arguments. The first is that religion, rather than providing a resource that is used to support capitalist interests, can help to enable the mobilisation of resistance towards overcoming organisational oppression. The second is that a critical spirituality of organisation must involve a concern with the exterior, political and social aspects of religion in addition to a preoccupation with the interior search for meaningful existence which tends to dominate managerial approaches.

It appears that, as posited by both Driscoll & Wiebe (2007) and Fry (2003), the dangers of exploitation arise from viewing spirituality in the workplace as a technique to be used for instrumental, financial-centred ends. Most of the authors cited would argue for a much broader application of spirituality; the next section discusses a group of writers who see spirituality as the central organising principle in the workplace.

6.6 The spirituality of organisations

In contrast to those who are reluctant to integrate notions of spirituality with the study of organisation and management, Pattison (2000) describes all organisations as “spiritual”, and means by this that all organisations have a subjective, inner dimension as well as the objective way in which they exist in the world. He argues that the language of spirituality provides an invaluable way to discuss organisations, as a complement to other forms of analytic discourse. The ways in which various

researchers have attempted to conduct such discussions reflect their willingness to reify both 'organisations' and 'spirituality'.

Cunha, Rego and D'Oliveira (2006) take a largely positivist empirical approach and use a number of measures to create a four-way typology describing organisations as 'Soulful', 'Ascetic', 'Holistic' or 'Professional'. In such a typology, both the organisation and spirituality are reified, spirituality becoming an attribute that can be measured and analysed. Pavlovich and Corner (2009) draw on open systems theory to discuss the spirituality of organisations in terms of their degree of 'connectedness'. They suggest that connectedness should not be discussed only in terms of the employees' relationships with each other but that a spiritual organisation will be one where relationship, functions, and eco-systems expressions of connectedness will be interconnected at a deep ecological level. This approach uses a more reified notion of the organisation than the one I have chosen to use, discussing it as a 'real' system, with inputs, throughputs and outputs (p. 215 ff). However, it treats spirituality in a very open and dynamic way, demonstrating that spirituality has relevance to every aspect of individual and corporate life, not simply the personal and private, or even the interpersonal aspects. That broader view of spirituality has considerable relevance to the current project.

Brown (2003) is highly critical of any attempts to define the spirituality of organisations or to suggest that spirituality can be one of an organisation's attributes. She notes that 'organisational spirituality' shares the same grammatical meaning as constructs such as 'organisational culture' which, as discussed in the previous chapter, is also best not seen as an attribute of the organisation. But she sees organisational spirituality as even more an abstract quality; "...at best, [organisational spirituality] is a belief; at the least, it is a feeling about reality and transcendence; in between, it is a quality that can be exhibited by the individuals who make up a workforce. But it is not an attribute of organizational functioning"(p. 395) . Brown makes a very valid and important point but still seems to limit the concept of spirituality to its inward-focused, personal and privatised aspects.

Without retreating into positivistic language of ‘the spiritual organisation’, or the opposite extreme of suggesting that the concept of organisational spirituality is meaningless, Goodier & Eisenberg (2006) provide an example of a healthcare agency which deliberately set itself to change its way of organising along what it saw as more spiritual lines. That the agency in question, like the groups involved in my own research project, was a church-based institution did make this a somewhat easier task than might apply in a totally secular agency. The success of the change was measured by various measures of morale, lower staff turnover, and client satisfaction. Goodier and Eisenberg’s analysis of the project presumes a broad and deep understanding of spirituality, and notes the emancipatory effect on staff, clients and family members. In acknowledging the dangers identified by critical scholars in the concept of organisational spirituality, they note (p. 61):

While spirituality may be inspiring to some it potentially oppresses and exploits others.... We find there are indications that employees are emancipated by these efforts more than they are controlled by them. ... A leader must articulate a vision of the future that people want to embrace. We acknowledge that such visions are simultaneously inspirational and controlling, enabling and constraining, emancipating and oppressive, but it is the role of the leader to work between those dialectics and create a model that does more good than harm.

A quite different way of talking of all organisations as ‘spiritual’ draws on the theology of Walter Wink (1984, 1992, 1998); this is the sense used by Pattison (2000) at the beginning of this section. Using the biblical language of angels, Wink posits that the activities, attitudes and memories of an organisation’s members over long periods bring about a corporate personality or organising principle of the organisation. Subjective and objective aspects of how group members do their organising become profoundly intertwined, and the language of spirituality may be more effective than more analytical forms of discourse for accessing some aspects of organisational life. Pattison argues (pp. 14, 19) that taking seriously the ‘withinness’, the character and the subjectivity of organisational life by using the language and concepts of spirituality may assist organisational professionals to become better carers for those organisations so that they, in turn, can care better for their members and users.

Despite much in theology and Christian teaching to suggest that values of love, truth and justice are intrinsic to Christian (and other religious) organisations there is, according to Groen (2007), no guarantee that the spirituality displayed in a religious organisation is necessarily any more wholesome than in supposedly secular ones. Scandals about sexual and financial misbehaviour in many churches are evidence of that, and McGuire (2010) cites a number of research projects which illustrate how issues of spirituality might engender tensions within organisations having religious ties. There is, nevertheless, a value in locating an investigation in spiritual organisations, and churches in particular, given the increased interest in and openness to spirituality in organisation studies and other disciplines. A research project with a group of local churches allows a ready access to spiritual issues, as those can be assumed to be a part of the life of any church and to have some impact on any inquiry, unless they are deliberately excluded from consideration. The various ways in which spirituality and organisation studies/management discourses may converge all have relevance to the project undertaken with the five parishes. But before exploring the design of the research project, it is necessary to ground it in another large body of literature, writing about churches, most of which is generated from within churches themselves.

7. Literature from, and about, the church

Having reviewed a range of literature dealing with organisational change, and other work where organisation studies literature and church-based writing converge, it will assist in setting the scene for discussion of my research project to review a considerable body of literature from church circles about the life and health of churches. It is possible to identify three distinct, but greatly overlapping, categories of writing by church leaders and spokespeople, or by academics or consultants writing for a church readership.

Firstly I discuss a genre of books that reveal a wide-spread desire in church circles to find an authoritative formula for church life, work and ministry that will bring ‘success’ on some preconceived dimension in any, or at least most local contexts. These books typically have titles in the form ‘The ... Church’. A few examples are: *The Child-Friendly Church* (Bowdon, 1999, p. 5), *Tribal Church* (Merritt, 2007), and *The Purpose-Driven Church* (Warren, 1995). Secondly, I review a number of analyses where the writers have outlined a series of criteria typically in the form of scales against which the ‘health’, ‘vitality’ or ‘effectiveness’ of church groups can be measured. Thirdly, in two sections, I discuss a series of significant developments in Christian circles in recent decades, widely referred to in the literature by such terms as The Emergent/Emerging Church, Fresh Expressions, and Missional Church.³⁷ I set my research with a group of parishes into the context of this third category. All these discussions provide many illustrations of the complexity and ambiguity attached to the word ‘church’, discussed in Chapter 2. Most commonly, in all three discussions, a local congregation is the focus of the literature but, in other cases, the wide theological sense is being used, or whole national denominations or the verbal sense of a gathering of Christians living out their faith and ministry. One purpose of these reviews is to lay out the lack of uniformity of meaning and to question whether more clarity of concept is necessary for an adequate understanding of what the various authors are advocating.

³⁷ There is little consistency in the literature as to whether and when these terms should be capitalised. I have done so here, the first time they have been introduced, but will normally use lower case, except when Fresh Expressions means the officially recognised movement of that title.

7.1 The *ideal church*

Among the many books written by church leaders and consultants about the health and/or development of local congregations, it is common to find titles in the style *TheChurch*, with the gap being filled by an adjective or qualifier that sums up the point being made by the author. In the early 1980s, I was part of a group which produced three books of this kind, with the titles:

The Living Church (Lees, Mills, Prebble, & Welsh, 1980)

The Worshipping Church (Abbott, Lees, Simons, & Lusby Taylor, 1981) and

The Growing Church (Prebble, Abbott, Lees, & Ramsay, 1981).

Our books, and their titles, were not intended to define particular churches but to describe certain aspects of the life of any church. All churches are, almost by definition, ‘Worshipping Churches’; similarly the other two titles tried to address the perspective that any church has a corporate ‘life’ that needs to be nurtured, and any church can encourage the growth of its members.

In most cases, however, when authors use a title such as *The Family-Friendly Church* (Freudenburg & Lawrence, 2009), their intention is to define a particular kind or quality of church, against which other churches may be contrasted. The suggestion is that many or most churches are not family friendly. In every case, the authors believe they have discovered some important insight which they want to share with the wider gathering of Christians.

The titles convey a double meaning, frequently deliberate, based on two different uses of the word ‘church’. Are they referring to the local parish or do they mean the wider church? For example, it is not just that a particular congregation might be described as a *Relevant Church* (Ashley, 2005). The implication is that many or all congregations need to become more relevant (in the sense preferred by the author), or that the whole church needs to think and act more relevantly (in the sense preferred by the author.) Looking at the matter the other way round, when the Mission and Public Affairs Council of the Church of England produced a nation-wide strategy entitled *Mission-Shaped Church* (2004), the hope of the writers was that local churches would re-think their life and ministry in a mission-shaped way.

When the title does not include the definite article the author seems to be using the word ‘church’ in another, almost verbal, sense. Here it means a group of people gathered together to do certain things together, responding in some way to God’s call. The phrase ‘doing church’ has become popular in recent years as a way to convey this dynamic sense of what the church is, and it is picked up in titles like *Accidental Church* (Hathorne, 2003), *Organic Church* (Cole, 2005), or *Tribal Church* (Merritt, 2007). An important example, of relevance to the later discussion chapters, is ‘Deep Church’, a term first coined by C. S. Lewis, and picked up in slightly different ways by Walker & Bretherton (2007) and Belcher (2009).

Nearly all the qualifiers implicitly (and in many cases explicitly) set up a contrast with an opposite qualifier. This is particularly true where the adjective is being used to define, rather than simply describe, the church. *Comeback Churches* (Stetzer & Dodson, 2007), *The Liquid Church* (Ward, 2002) and *The Purpose-Driven Church* (Warren, 1995) define certain churches, and do so by drawing dichotomies against other churches that do not meet the criteria under discussion. In two or three cases the dichotomy itself drives the title: *The Market-Driven Church* (Middelmann, 2004), and *The Incredible Shrinking Church* (Page, 2008) provide trenchant critiques of what the authors see as shortcomings of particular types of church. Interestingly, *The Dangerous Church* (Bishop, 2011) is not in this category; the author believes that the church, both locally and nationally, should live much more dangerously.

Some writers are particularly given to defining the right sort of church. Tom S. Rainer and Ed Stetzer, either alone, with each other or with other collaborators, have written at least five books with this sort of title. Perhaps defining churches as *Breakout* (Rainer, 2005), *Comeback* (Stetzer & Dodson, 2007), *Simple* (Rainer & Geiger, 2006), *Transformational* (Stetzer & Rainer, 2010), or *Viral* (Stetzer & Bird, 2010) are different ways of saying similar or complementary things.

When viewed from the social constructionist perspective on which I am drawing, there are several dangers to the approach of defining an ‘ideal’ church, especially in contrast to others seen as less-than-ideal by a given author. Defining any church involves a reification of the church as akin to an object, a thing with observable

characteristics and dimensions which can be analysed, measured and defined by various epithets. Further, this now objectified community is seen as having a life and the ability to act independently of the individuals who make it up. This tendency should be distinguished from the dynamic identified by Wink (1984, 1992, 1998), discussed earlier, whereby the actions and attitudes of group members over a lengthy period create a kind of corporate personality, described by Wink as the “angel” or “spirit” of the organisation. One of the central themes of Wink’s analysis is that the angel is not an external force, with the ability to direct the group, and that an important key to change is for the individuals who make up the church to change the angel (Wink, 1998, p. 4).

When ‘church’ is being used in its general theological sense then it may be quite meaningful to discuss it in reified terms, for example: “The task of the church is to be a witness to the resurrection”. As discussed above, this type of language is quite typical in theological discourses, reflecting the conviction implicit in Christian doctrine that the church is in some way a creation by God. When local churches or parishes are spoken of in such a way, however, the emphasis shifts onto the reified entity, the organisation. Attention, therefore, shifts away from the members of the church, the only ones who are capable of acting and changing – either themselves or their processes. Making the best use of literature of this type may depend on discernment as to how the language is being used. If the writer is making a primarily theological point then that insight can be taken by Christian individuals and applied to their own situations. If the writer is making reified claims as to how an organisation operates, especially claims based on preconceived notions perhaps not shared by the community, then the arguments need to be weighed with appropriate critical reflection.

Most of the epithets used to describe churches are not mutually exclusive. It is quite possible to be a child-friendly church (Bowdon, 1999), a high-impact church (Morris, 1995) and a changing church (Hinton, 2002) at the same time. Conversely, the fact that many of these books are followed by others taking an opposite tack illustrates the limitations of taking any one of their titles as a defining attribute. *The Purpose Driven Church* (Warren, 1995) is critiqued by *The Market-Driven Church*

(Middelmann, 2004) and *Becoming a Blessed Church* (Standish, 2005). Many of the presuppositions of *Missional Church* (Guder, 1998) are questioned by *AND: The Gathered and Scattered Church* (Halter & Smay, 2010). Defining a congregation according to the latest plan or formula may only be effective until the next good idea comes along, diverting attention and resources accordingly.

Any approach to change in or for ‘The Church’, if framed by positing an assumed characteristic to be aspired after or transformed, implies a formula for success – and the notion of ‘success’ may or may not be given an particularly profound or theological underpinning. While not many titles are as explicit as the subtitle to *Introducing the Missional Church: What It Is, Why It Matters, How to Become One* (Roxburgh & Boren, 2009), these books either tell the ‘success’ story of a particular congregation somewhere or draw out a number of principles that have brought success in various situations. Either way, the implications are firstly that there is a set of criteria against which every other church can be judged; the subtitle *Creating a new scorecard for Congregations* (Stetzer & Rainer, 2010) is a particularly explicit reflection of that viewpoint. Secondly, if certain steps are followed, if a particular formula is emulated, then other churches can and should be the same. That so many books and resources of this type continue to be produced is evidence of a concern among Christian leaders and other church members to find some approach or formula that will make their church more successful, bigger, more attractive to young people, or whatever their local concern happens to be.

While every one of the books referred to above will have some useful insights for church members in many local contexts, the existence of so many discussions of this type suggests that the search for the ‘right’ solution may be a frustrating one. In particular, it may be futile, or a distraction, to be searching for a solution at the level of the organisation – how to change *the church*, especially by using a formula or plan, many of which have been borrowed from different contexts, such as business models. Despite the interest shown in post-modernity by many of the authors under discussion, this formulaic approach betrays a debt to modernist, mechanistic thinking. There is evidence, however, that the influence of this type of thinking is beginning to weaken as more dynamic models are given attention.

7.2 Assessing a parish's health or effectiveness

People come into the church not as guilty souls yearning to be forgiven, but as sensitive souls yearning to feel understood. (Randall, 1992, p. 21)

A genre of literature different from, but related to 'The ... Church' examples, comprises books and resources that attempt to set out a series of measures which church leaders may use to assess particular congregations. From a wide range of theological and ontological perspectives, and with varying degrees of statistical robustness, these authors offer ways to measure different aspects of a congregation's life and work. This allows church members to identify those aspects that require priority attention so as to achieve whatever goal has motivated the measuring exercise in the first place. The examples selected for discussion, and shown in Table 1, are listed in roughly chronological order but also in decreasing order of emphasis on numerical growth as the primary indicator of health or effectiveness. The table lists items in the order provided by the respective authors. No attempt has been made to facilitate comparison between the various lists, for example by placing items on evangelism or worship on the same line. The essential comparison being made here relates to the purposes behind the various lists, and a progression over time away from numerical growth and away from functional considerations.

Table 1 follows

Figure 1 Scales developed by various authors to assess congregational strength or health

Callahan 1983 12 keys to an Effective Church	Schwartz 1996 10 characteristics of Church "Quality"	Woolever & Bruce 1997 10 Strengths	Warren 2004 7 Values of Healthy Churches	Dudley and Ammerman 2002 7 Habits of adapting congregations
Specific, concrete missional objectives	Empowering leadership	Spirituality and faith development	Energised by faith	Drama and symbols
Pastoral and lay visitation	Gift-oriented ministry	Meaningful worship services	Outward-looking focus	Honest self-evaluation
Corporate, dynamic worship	Passionate spirituality	Participation in congregational activities	Seeks to find out what God wants	Playful experimentation
Significant relational groups	Functional structures	A sense of belonging to the congregation	Faces the fact of change and growth	Curiosity
Strong leadership resources	Inspiring worship service	Caring for the congregation's children and youth	Operates as a community	Entrepreneurship
Streamlined structure and solid, participatory decision making	Holistic small groups	Community involvement	Makes room for all	Hospitality
Several competent programs and activities	Need-oriented evangelism	Sharing faith with others	Does a few things, and does them well	Embracing conflict
Open accessibility	Loving relationships	Welcoming new people		
High visibility		Empowering congregational leadership		
Adequate parking, land and landscaping.		A vision for the congregation's future		
Adequate space and facilities				
Solid financial resources				

Perhaps the classic discussion of creating a scale to assess churches, nearly thirty years after its publication, is still Callahan's *Twelve keys to an effective church* (1983). Its approach has strong links to the Church Growth movement and reflects the mechanistic attitudes to management common at that time; that such views still have considerable currency is demonstrated by the publication of a thoroughly revised edition in 2010. Callahan identifies what he argues are the essential characteristics of churches that are effective or successful or growing – those words are used interchangeably. Callahan regards the first six as relational characteristics and the latter six as functional, and argues that the relational ones are the most important. He advocates an approach whereby churches identify their greatest strengths and then develop others that will complement those strengths. Most effective churches, according to this analysis, have significantly developed nine or more of the characteristics, with emphasis on the relational ones.

Callahan's prioritising of relational as contrasted with functional characteristics is taken further by Randall (1992) who offers a critique of the kinds of approach advocated by Callahan and those discussed below. Randall goes as far as to suggest (p. 17) that the building up of supportive relationships within the congregation is the church's primary mission, and not something undertaken as a means of preparing for the 'real' work of the church, whether that be service to others, evangelism, or church growth. Randall advocates an emphasis in parishes on meeting four crucial human needs, each the subject of a chapter in his book: the need to feel understood, the need to understand, the need to belong and the need for hope. While Randall's work provides a valuable corrective to exclusively functional approaches to parish life, it runs into the same sort of difficulty as many of the *The (insert qualifier) Church* discussions outlined above, that of emphasising one aspect of church life in isolation from others. After all, the needs he emphasises might be met equally well by the Ku Klux Klan or, to take a less extreme example, the Four-way test of Rotary International (2012):

- Is it the Truth?
- Is it Fair to all concerned?
- Will it build Goodwill and Better Friendships?
- Will it be Beneficial to all concerned?

The other discussions to follow all attempt a holistic or balanced approach to the perceived tension between functional and relational considerations.

An approach which has proved very influential in a large number of churches internationally is Schwarz's Natural Church Development (1996, 1999). As something of a corrective to Church Growth strategists, using techniques designed to improve recruiting and retention, Schwarz argues that the key to numerical growth is to improve church "quality". Based on research in thousands of churches world-wide he identifies eight quality characteristics and provides questionnaires which allow parishes to measure their strength in each. According to this theory, when all these characteristics are present to a sufficient degree then numerical growth will be practically guaranteed. The key to growth is, therefore, to give emphasis to the characteristic with the lowest score. The Natural Church Development organisation provides resources for churches aiming to improve their performance on each of these measures.

A similar, but contrasting, approach was developed by Woolever & Bruce (2002, 2004, 2008) out of findings from the US Congregational Life Survey, a five-yearly survey of over 2000 congregations and 300,000 individuals, and applied with some variations in other countries as well³⁸. They identify ten "strengths" of particular congregations and, again, offer questionnaires designed to measure a congregation's score in those strengths. They argue for strategies that allow congregations to build on those strengths where they have achieved the highest score, and predict that this will raise the congregation's score in other strengths. While suggesting that an improvement in any of the strengths is likely to make the congregation more attractive to newcomers, they argue (2004, p. 113) based on their statistical analysis of questionnaires from participating churches that only three (caring for children and youth, participating in the congregation and welcoming new people) are positive predictors of numerical growth.

³⁸This should not be confused with the National Congregations Study, a similarly broad survey of US congregations, first carried out in 1998 and repeated in 2006-7 (Chaves & Anderson, 2008).

Rob Warren's work in the UK on developing *Healthy Churches' Handbook* (2004) also sees numerical growth as a key indicator of health but argues for a focus on other factors. After surveying 25 parishes in the Diocese of Durham that had shown at least 15% growth in a period when the average parish had shown a 15% decline, Warren identified seven "values" that he argues were more valid marks of health than can be found by looking at activities. Warren outlines a "lighter" approach than Natural Church Development (p. 5), including a workshop where a parish group can score their parish against the seven marks and reflect on where action may be needed.

As a contrast, or perhaps as a complement, to the statistical approaches of Schwartz or Woolever & Bruce, Ammerman (1997, 2003, 2005) and her associates have based their analyses on a very large number of case studies. To this group of writers the key approach is to pay less attention to growth, or even health, but to focus on whether the congregation has been successful in adapting to their changing communities. Ammerman is careful not to define success in precise or objective terms:

Success here is measured neither in number of members nor in theological or political correctness. If there is a measure of success, it is simply the congregation's survival as the institution it determines it should be. (Ammerman, 1997, p. 5)

In the workbook on which the methodological approach of this research project is based, Dudley and Ammerman (2002, pp. 9-10) outline seven "habits" which distinguish congregations that are capable of adapting. They argue that the key to these seven habits is "spiritual discernment" and drawing on the spiritual resources of the congregation. They do not offer ways of measuring these attributes but their workbook is designed to improve the capacity of parish groups in these seven areas.

The five lists shown in Table 1, and discussed above, do not lend themselves to easy comparison in a 'comparing apples with apples' way. Callahan's "Adequate parking, land and landscaping" is clearly a very different type of issue from Dudley and Ammerman's "Playful experimentation". A comparison of the five lists shows a progression in church thinking over several decades. While there are plentiful examples of local churches of today following the criteria advocated by Callahan and others there has been a gradual move away from functionalist or mechanistic

considerations, and away from tightly crafted formulae that are supposed to apply in all situations, and towards consideration of spiritual emphasis, values and solutions that fit specific local contexts.

This research project aimed to find ways for change to occur in the way that church members viewed their corporate life and ministry. One of my aims was to explore how effective change in church organisations may come about through drawing more deeply on the resources of the Christian tradition, rather than by borrowing from other contexts. The ways that various writers and church leaders have attempted to explore these issues forms the subject of the remaining two sections of this chapter.

7.3 The emerging/emergent church.

The emerging church is not merely another church growth movement but is reflecting key pneumatological principles, emphasizing and exhibiting a more holistic perspective on the broad work of the Holy Spirit in the church and in this world

Patrick Oden (2009)

There is a voluminous, and still increasing, literature in church circles through which authors and readers are generating discussions of a series of phenomena usually called the emergent church, the missional church or Fresh Expressions. These terms are notoriously difficult to define or even describe confidently. They also defy precision as to what sense of the word ‘church’ is being used. In some cases, the term is another reified way of describing particular congregations and, in others, it is a theological term, referring to developments in church life in the decades before and after the turn of the 21st century. Drane (2008, p. 90) likens the effort of defining the emerging church to wrestling with a jelly – an inherently frustrating activity. Nevertheless, the very fact that initiatives that are labelled ‘emerging’ or ‘emergent’ or ‘fresh expressions’ are so numerous, and having a great influence on conversations in church circles, requires some effort to describe what is going on. The jelly metaphor encourages caution in such description, avoiding the kind of classification that traps these initiatives in artificial categories.

Taking appropriate care, therefore, a review of the literature allows the identification of four distinct but overlapping phenomena:³⁹

1. The establishment of a large number of new churches, new congregations within existing parishes and specific outreach initiatives, found in all Western countries and also in Latin America, South East Asia and elsewhere. Many of these initiatives arise from a concern among leaders of traditional denominations to engage in a meaningful way with the changing contexts for their ministry, both within the church and (especially) in the lives of the people around them, and to find new ways of doing things that will honour church traditions, while also making the Gospel accessible to otherwise unchurched people (Drane, 2006).
2. A loose network of new churches, deeply influenced by postmodern and post-Christendom thinking, and motivated by anger and disillusionment with previous experiences of church, predominantly at the conservative evangelical end of the theological spectrum. Carson's critique of the emergent church outlined below (2005) focuses on this element of "protest" against traditional evangelical churches. Drane (2006, p. 4) writing from a more sympathetic perspective, describes emergent churches as typically "fiercely independent, and often highly critical of those who remain within what they regard as the spiritually bankrupt Establishment".
3. Fresh Expressions of Church is the title of an officially sponsored movement by the Church of England and the Methodist Church in Britain to encourage new forms of church, relatively free from the constraints of traditional church structures. By extension, it is applied to any new initiative, either by an independent group or by an existing congregation, to create church with a group or category of people hitherto largely uninvolved with organised Christianity.

³⁹ McKnight (2007) identifies five streams of the Emergent Church, that it is Prophetic (or at least provocative), Postmodern, Praxis-oriented, Post-evangelical, and Political. He is speaking of five distinctive emphases typically found where the terms emerging/emergent are invoked. The categories I have identified are four different types of activity that can be given that title.

4. A large number of individuals, some church members and some not, who align themselves to emerging church thinking as an ethos, rather than as a particular assembly or group of assemblies. Moody (2010) notes how this is manifested in a wide array of magazines, websites, blogs and downloads, whose participants may be part of existing congregations, or may not be members of any church, new or old.

With many exceptions, there is a tendency for 'emerging' to be used either for the first category or in an umbrella way for all these developments. 'Emergent' tends to be applied to the second group of churches, particularly those with links to the official organisation of that title in the USA. With similar hesitation, and allowance for exceptions, 'emergent' is rather more associated with North American sources, and 'emerging' with British ones. A number of writers (e.g. Moody, 2010, p. 496ff) have attempted to outline a difference in meaning of the two terms but I suggest that the differences are too subtle, and too inconsistently applied, to be of value to the present discussion. I will use 'emerging' except when quoting from other writers.

One of the reasons why 'the emerging church' is so difficult to describe is that many of its adherents, influenced as they are by postmodern thinking, are strongly resistant to any classificatory endeavours. This is why it would be misleading to use terms such as 'movement' here, except perhaps the officially sanctioned Fresh Expressions movement. Keuss (2008, p. 451) refers to an anti-movement movement. More appropriate terms seem to be conversation (Moritz, 2008), milieu (Moody, 2010) or network (Croft, 2008b). My own approach, both in reviewing this literature, and as discussed in the methodological section below, has tried to follow something of the same emphasis. I have found it preferable to see the many books and articles as contributions to a very complex conversation, rather than as part of a debate or movement. Any attempt to define various insights into clear categories, or even to place them on either side of fixed dichotomies (even when their authors have tried to do this themselves) both narrows the usefulness of those insights and creates anomalies where other contributions do not fit into the categories so created. Despite this, some widely recognised trends are associated with the term 'emerging church', as outlined in the next few pages.

Whichever sense of the emerging church is under discussion, there is recognition that these developments are an attempt to respond to significant changes in the local, national and international contexts within which church members are active contributors. Tim Conder (2006), writing from a US evangelical perspective but sympathetic to the emerging church, argues that Christians in developed countries are part of an 'emergent culture' by which he refers to a series of progressive changes from what were perceived to be a relatively stable series of institutions and mores into a period of transition. 'Emerging' carries the implication that whatever new institutions and mores that might develop are not yet clear but that this is a period of dramatic, sometimes traumatic, change. Given this context of change, transition and emergence, argues Conder, the church also needs to "transition" into new forms. Gibbs (2009a) is more specific and traces five "megatrends" affecting the whole of western society.

1. from modernity to postmodernity
2. from the industrial age to the information age
3. from the Christendom era to post-Christendom contexts
4. from production initiatives to consumer awareness
5. from religious identity to spiritual exploration.

Every one of Gibbs's terms, and the dichotomies drawn between them, is the subject of debates that are beyond the scope of this project. His analysis, however, illustrates the recognition on the part of many church leaders that they are living and working in a context of widespread change. These changes, he argues (2009b; Gibbs & Coffee, 2000), as do English evangelical writer Rob Warner (1993) and Baptist theologian Stanley Grenz (1997), are so profound and far-reaching that church leaders, like leaders in legal, educational, medical, political and other fields, find themselves contemplating very significant changes in how things are or might be organised. The sociologist David Lyon (2000) makes a similar argument. As Conder (2006, p. 35) puts it:

There are many who'd like to think the existing church's transition into effective ministry in the emerging culture will involve nothing more than the utilisation of some creative, new worship styles and ministry methods....The

church's authentic journey into the emerging culture must involve transitions in both thought and practice.

7.3.1 Characteristics of emerging churches

While allowing for the difficulty and, perhaps limitations, of firm definition, and the potential fruitfulness of avoiding rigid categorisations, it is possible to distil a broad consensus as to the characteristics of groups to whom the terms emerging or emergent church may be applied. Moritz (2008, p. 27) attempts a one-sentence summary of these characteristics:

Emerging Church conversation endeavours to create committed, authentic, day-to-day communities that embrace ecumenical and ancient Christian theology and practices in order to live out the reality of the in-breaking kingdom of God.

A number of commentators have assembled lists of common characteristics (Keuss, 2008; Moody, 2010), or “marks” (Frambach, 2008) of emerging churches.

Firstly, most emerging churches display a minimalist and decentralised organisational structure and a willingness to experiment. Savage (2008, p. 78) notes a tendency for people in emerging churches to prefer networks over traditional hierarchies and relationships over programs. This concern is expressed in resources that encourage churches to learn from the insights of social networking (Brewin, 2004; Friesen, 2009).

Secondly, such churches tend to favour a flexible approach to theology, where re-thinking of theological doctrines and biblical traditions is welcomed and individual differences in belief are accepted as normative. New Zealand emerging church commentator Steve Taylor (2005, p. 48) calls this “koru theology”, evoking the common New Zealand emblem of an unfolding fern frond. It can be compared with the Synthetic Model of Practical Theology, described by Bevans (2002, p. 87) as “...an effort to make theologising an exercise in true conversation and dialogue, so one’s own and one’s culture’s identity can emerge in the process”.

Thirdly, there is typically an emphasis on socially, politically and environmentally just living. Moody (2010, p. 498) relates this to a “kingdom now” theology, to some degree reacting to a perceived ambivalence towards issues of social, political and

environmental justice in established forms of Christianity. Economists Hawtrey and Lunn (2010) critique the tendency of emergent church spokespeople (e.g. Chalke & Mann, 2003; McLaren, 2006) to advocate a revolutionary attitude towards established economic structures.

Fourthly, emerging churches have been associated with a rediscovery of traditional spiritual practices, and the exploration of new ways to apply those practices in specific contexts. Frambach (2008, p. 10) calls this “faithful innovation”, Butler Bass (2009) refers to “re-traditioning” and Webber (2008) writes of “ancient-future worship”. Some disparaging commentators (Atherton, 2004; Schaeffer, 2006) have called this “pick-n-mix spirituality” but, as discussed below, an intentional and reflexive engagement with Christian tradition has been associated with considerable vitality in both emerging and traditional churches (Butler Bass, 2004).

Fifthly, most emerging churches place a high value on creating communities built out of the creativity of those who are a part of each local body. This is likely to include a renewed emphasis on the arts and music. Taylor (2005, p. 68) suggests that “intuitive play” is an essential element of encouraging this creativity.

It is common for emerging church advocates/practitioners to differentiate themselves from the rest of the church, using such terms as ‘inherited church’ (Williams, 2007), ‘traditional church’ (Taylor, 2005) or ‘institutional church’ (Bader-Saye, 2004, p. 25) for contrast. In particular, contrasts are drawn against the mega-churches of the past few decades and the Church Growth movement. Frambach (2008, p. 11) notes that emerging churches are not to be confused with “popular modernist models” such as the mega-church or the church growth approach. Bader-Saye (2004, p. 22) suggests that their post-modern perspectives lead emerging church adherents to resist models and templates – “the franchising of church life”.

A continuing difficulty of definition persists. What does or does not constitute an ‘emerging church’ or a ‘fresh expression’? Is a particular congregation an ‘emerging church’, a ‘missional church’ or both? Despite this difficulty, and despite some reservations, there does appear to be a consensus among religious writers that this series of developments, and the conversation around them, are having positive effects on the church. A 2006 survey in the Church of England (Barley, 2008) showed that in

the previous five years, one half of all parishes had begun a new initiative that could be regarded as a fresh expression of church, with one third of them reporting initiatives among groups of people who never, or only occasionally attend church. Some 216,000 people were engaged in these initiatives, or the equivalent of 1 in 6 of the total church-going population of 1.2 million people. As a cautious interpretation, Barley claims that fresh expressions of church are making a significant contribution towards arresting the continuing decline in church attendance. Bishop Stephen Croft (2009), a team leader of the Fresh Expressions initiative, taking a similarly conservative view of a range of statistical information, credits that movement with the addition of some 75,000 adults and a similar number of children and teenagers to the attendance figures of the Church of England in the past 10 years, which is the equivalent of two average dioceses in terms of adults or seven dioceses in terms of children and youth. In New Zealand, Randerson (2010b) outlines 126 ‘green-shoots initiatives’, innovative approaches to mission that are happening in various parishes and chaplaincies.

A different sort of positive contribution by emerging churches is that outlined by Savage (2008, p. 67), who suggests that fresh expressions provide space for experimentation, discovery and new development to occur in a way that is much more difficult in the more traditional forms of church. The current Archbishop of Canterbury has been much quoted for using the term “mixed economy” (Williams, 2003) to refer to the respective strengths of the traditional parish system on the one hand and the emerging church/Fresh Expressions on the other. He argued that new, experimental forms of church are typically “...where the unexpected growth happens, where the unlikely contacts are often made; where the Church is renewed (as it so often is) from the edges, not the centre”.

7.3.2 Critiques of the emerging church

Despite their positive contribution, the literature reveals at least three critiques, either of emerging/emergent churches themselves or of the rhetoric and theology associated with them. The first is an Evangelical critique. This approach tends to be associated with sources in the USA, which is unsurprising given the tendency in that country for

emergent churches to see themselves as in some way opposed to evangelical or conservative or fundamentalist⁴⁰ theology. This critique, of which Carson (2005), Hawtreay and Lunn (2010) and Mayhue (2006) may be taken as representative examples, perceives that by refusing to be tied to traditional evangelical expressions of theology ‘emergents’ have made unjustified compromises with theological orthodoxy. Carson’s opinion (2005) is premised on the theological perspective that the church should be, to some degree, counter-cultural, a perspective which itself is part of a theological tension throughout Judeo-Christian history between the need for contextualisation and the dangers of syncretism. He perceives a danger that the emergent church is submerging itself in the surrounding culture to the point that it risks hopeless compromise and can no longer offer an authentic Christian message.

A somewhat gentler (and British) version of this Evangelical critique is provided by Tilby (2008) who suggests that in catering to a concern for comfort, gratification and instant comprehension that she sees endorsed by western culture, fresh expressions may produce a version of the gospel that apparently meets the need but fails to transform it. Taylor (2005) attempts to address this with a discussion of ‘spiritual takeaways’ - the idea that the contemporary palette is shaped so much by these aspects that it must start with religion in this format in order to move on to deeper stuff. Chew and Ireland (2009, p. 51) contend, “... it is the extent to which these fresh expressions of church actually enable the participants to engage with issues of truth - to hear the gospel in their own language and respond to it, and to be enabled in turn to 'give a reason for the hope that is within them' - that will determine whether they produce lasting fruit”.

In what could be called an ecclesiological critique, a number of British commentators, including Hull (2008a, 2008b), Milbank (2008) and Percy (2008), have challenged emerging church thinking from another perspective. In the context of the Fresh Expressions movement, they question whether, for example, a prayer and music presentation in a coffee bar, or a new initiative providing shelter, food and counselling for street people, are sufficient to meet any established criteria of what constitutes

⁴⁰ These three words are not synonymous, but are often used interchangeably. All three are listed here to emphasise the range of this critique.

‘church’. Percy charges (2008, p. 39) that the Fresh Expressions movement is a form of collusion with the post-institutionalism that is endemic in contemporary culture:

I am wondering - with all the emerging post-evangelical rhetoric about religion-less Christianity - when it will be realised that church is actually it. That parish ministry is still the cutting edge. And that without the institution of the church, all we'll have left is multi-choice spirituality, individualism and innovation. And that this simply won't be enough to sustain faith in future generations’.

A third type of critique could be called an ontological one. Van Gelder (2007, 2008) argues that proponents of the emerging church have misunderstood a crucial theological point about the nature of the church. He describes this conversation as part of an endless obsession with trying to discover strategies to help congregations become more effective or successful. The problem, he argues, lies in attempting to define a congregation around what it does and, in this way, the ‘emerging’ church is no different from what he calls the ‘corporate church’, an organisation whose intent is to accomplish something on behalf of God in the world. He advocates, instead, a ‘missional church’, existing as a community that is missionary by nature, participating in God’s mission in the world. Hirsh (2008, p. 22) is similarly emphatic in differentiating the terms emerging church and missional church. He sees the first as a renewal movement attempting to contextualise Christianity for a postmodern generation. The second is a way of rethinking the theology of the church in terms of the mission of God. To a significant degree, however, in the work of many writers the two ideas have merged. This is particularly true in the UK, where the language of ‘missional’ or ‘mission-shaped’ church is characteristic of most of the literature about fresh expressions, but Bader-Saye (2004, 2006) and Anderson (2006) are examples of American commentators using the two terms almost interchangeably.

7.4 The missional church

Missional church refers to God's mission in the world, not to management advice for accomplishing our own projects. Indeed, the mission of God doesn't fit the formulas of measurable results and effectual outcomes.

J Todd Billings (2008, p. 56)

In the 1990s and, especially, in the first decade of the new century, the concept of the Missional Church has become very influential, and much discussed. It has been described by Conder (cited by Sine, 2008, p. 43) as the latest buzz-word for church strategists. There are numerous books and articles discussing the concept, both academic and more general, and it is now very common for seminaries and bible colleges to include courses on the subject.

Commentators differ as to the source of the word 'missional', though it is clear that its use was very rare before 1990 even if the ideas behind it can be traced back to the Scholastic theologians of medieval times. Minatrea (2004, p. 48) credits Charles Van Engen with the first use of the word in 1991, but it was certainly used earlier in a rather different way by Callahan (1983) to describe successfully growing churches, and recent research by Van Gelder & Zscheile (2011, p. 42ff) shows occasional uses of the word as early as 1882 and 1907. What is accepted is that the very widespread use dates from the seminal book edited by Guder (1998), entitled *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*. Guder and his collaborators were part of a group of church leaders known as the Gospel and Our Culture Network, which had its origins in the work of former missionary Bishop, Leslie Newbigin (1983, 1986, 1989). After a career of ministry in India, where he was acknowledged as an authority on missionary strategy, Newbigin had significant influence in Britain in the 1980s as he attempted to adapt missionary thinking to the rapidly changing cultural context in Europe. A central theme to his thinking, and one that has been much quoted and developed, is the theological concept of the *Missio Dei*.

As Van Gelder and Zscheile (2011) outline, in its medieval origins *Missio Dei* (God's sending, or God's mission) refers to the sending by God of the Holy Spirit. Through the influence of several international conferences on missionary strategy in the middle of the 20th Century, and later refined by Newbigin, the term came to signify the work

of God calling and sending the church into the world to participate fully in God's mission within the whole of creation.

The book produced by Guder and his colleagues (1998) significantly expanded the idea of the church as the mission of God, and applied it to the situation of churches as they approached the end of the millennium. It proved highly influential. A few years later in the Church of England, a report called *Mission-Shaped Church* (2004), drawing heavily on both Newbigin and Guder et al, was presented to the General Synod. This book made a similarly dramatic impact. As Croft points out (2008b, p. 2), its sales far exceeded any other Church of England official report ever published.

The success on both sides of the Atlantic (and elsewhere) of books on the missional, or mission-shaped, church seem to stem from a widespread acceptance of the idea of seeing the church in terms of the mission of God. This has been seen as a welcome contrast with more typical church thinking, influenced as it had been by the notion that the church was an organisation that had, or needed to have, a mission. This switch of thinking seems to invite the expression of pithy antitheses from a number of authors:

The church is not the *goal* of God's mission, but its *instrument*; that is the church is the *means*, not the *end* of God's purposes (Kitchens, 2003, p. 75 emphasis in original).

Missional churches, at their best, shift their focus from creating programmes that meet the needs of those within the building to equipping members to address the needs of those outside the building. (Sine, 2008, p. 41)

Is the Church (i.e. the *agent* of God's mission) in danger of replacing the *object* of God's mission (i.e. God's kingdom) with its own *objective* (i.e. the proliferation of 'churches')? Is it in danger of embarking upon a *church-shaped* mission rather than a *kingdom-shaped* mission? (Moody, 2010, pp. 496, emphasis in original)

The church is not the fulfilment or flowering of mission. The flowering of mission is the Kingdom; church is merely an agent. Therefore, the mission cannot be attained merely by creating churches (Hull, 2006, p. 2)

7.4.1 Missional church – a theological principle

In terms of the discussion in chapter two of the different uses of the word ‘church’, it is important to realise that the primary way in which the originators of missional church thinking and literature used the word was in its ideal, theological sense. They were making a theological claim that is relevant to all gatherings of Christians at all times and everywhere. Their thinking, of course, has application in particular contexts; contributors to *Missional Church* (Guder, 1998) have supplied resources for local congregations and parishes (Roxburgh & Boren, 2009) and for whole denominations (Van Gelder, 2008). Similarly, the stable that produced *Mission-Shaped Church* (2004) has also produced *Mission-Shaped Parish* (Bayes & Sledge, 2006) which includes a chapter on ‘Mission-Shaped Cathedrals’. However, the focus of their approach, as Van Gelder & Zscheile (2011, p. 7ff) are at pains to point out, is not on discovering a new formula, model or strategy for organising parish life but on giving new emphasis to what they believe is a rather neglected theological principle, the church as an expression of the mission of God. ‘Missional Church’, therefore, means primarily a way of reflecting on the whole church in its ideal terms. Only secondarily should a particular expression of Christianity be thought of as ‘a missional church’.

Despite the theological principle motivating the originators of missional church theorising, it is apparent that, among the avalanche of literature and resources that have been produced reflecting on ‘missional’ themes, many writers are still using ‘church’ in the reified or mechanistic sense that the missional church concept was devised to address. Stetzer, with titles such as *Planting Missional Churches* (2006), is a case in point, as is a book called *How to do Mission Action Planning* (Chew & Ireland, 2009), which describes a programme drawing heavily on business management thinking and relates to parishes as organisations that can be expected to respond well to a ‘tried and true’ formula. An article entitled ‘Missional possible:

steps to transform a consumer church into a missional church' (Hall, 2007) sounds like another attempt to bring about change through a mechanistic formula but, in fact, is saying almost the opposite: "Leaders are (re)discovering that the essential calling of the church has less to do with the way a church is organised, its doctrinal distinctions, or its style of music, and more to do with the *Missio Dei*". The principle at work here is commonly referred to as 'missional DNA', a term discussed formally by Edson (2006). The central idea is that being missional is a fundamentally natural part of being Christian.

7.4.2 Characteristics of the missional church

Given the volume of writing about missional church in recent years (a Google search will give well over half a million sources) it is not surprising that there is a wide range of opinion about how the term may be used and what defines a particular parish as acting in a 'missional' way. It is difficult, therefore, to generalise but it is possible to discern some consensus around a number of themes. With similar reservations to those expressed earlier in this chapter in relation to the 'emerging church', I note the following as particularly relevant to my research project. These are, of course, in addition to the emphasis on the mission of God, already noted:

1. An incarnational emphasis. A missional approach implies a commitment to shape the life of the Christian community according to the cultural context in which it is placed (Archbishops Council, 2004, p. 81).⁴¹ It can be expected that such an incarnational commitment will lead to "concrete acts of solidarity and accompaniment" (Van Gelder & Zscheile, 2011) or, as Hobbs (2004, p. 171) puts it, "an observable impact that contributes to the transformation of life and human relationships".
2. A way of organising that sees the communal life of the congregation as itself a missional activity. Less emphasis is given to the individual's personal spirituality and more to cultivating a welcoming, inclusive community of transformed relationships (Archbishops Council, 2004, p. 82; Guder, 1998 ch.7).

⁴¹ The significance of an incarnational theological emphasis was discussed above in relation to Anglican spirituality.

3. Consequently, less emphasis on membership, with its tendency to create an us/them dynamic with those who do not ‘belong’ to the congregation (Guder, 2000). McNeal (2003, p. 219) notes, and advocates, a move away from what he calls the “church culture” (an emphasis on church membership and church participation) and towards spiritual formation or “life coaching for people”.
4. A focus on spiritual practices, such as daily offices, observance of feast and fast days, rituals and liturgical vestments (Roxburgh, 2010, p. 149). As noted in the discussion of emerging churches, there has been a rediscovery of very old practices, applied in different ways in new contexts. Bass (1998; Volf & Bass, 2001) and Butler Bass (2004; 2006, 2009) have written extensively on the subject. For example, a study of a particular group of mainline churches in the USA, which they call “practicing congregations” is outlined by Butler Bass and Stewart-Sicking (2006). Using qualitative methods, including Appreciative Inquiry, they surveyed 50 churches that had found new vitality, defined as “viability, spiritual depth, renewed identity and mission and often numerical growth”(p. 305), through an intentional and reflexive engagement with Christian tradition.
5. Working from the ‘edge’. Roxburgh (2010, p. 169ff) and others have noted a sharp contrast with the traditional parish model, based in the ‘centre’ of the village. As so much of what generates life, energy and direction for people in most neighbourhoods is generated outside of the church, the emphasis needs to come off managing programmes and getting people into them and go onto creating environments that foster interconnections and conversations among people. Murray (2008, p. 158) suggests that if church members embrace situations where they are relatively powerless, more likely to be partners than patrons, and where most of their initiatives will foster empowerment, not dependency, they may be liberated to engage in holistic, sensitive and unapologetic contextual mission.

7.5 Emerging church and Missional church - quite different, but both important.

‘Emerging church’ and ‘missional church’ appear to be grammatically equivalent terms. Some writers use the terms interchangeably, and the two terms definitely overlap; however, it is still helpful for the purposes of this project to understand them as different concepts. Both of these developments in Christian life and thinking have direct relevance to a project with five Anglican parishes but in quite different ways. If the parishes see their research in terms of the emerging church they will acknowledge a host of examples where local churches have moved away from traditional categories, hierarchical authority and decision-making structures, and tightly defined theology, and moved towards a freer, more flexible way of being, and a greater willingness to be influenced by the communities around them. If they consider the insights of the missional church, then the incarnational emphasis that is already part of their Anglican tradition will take on an even greater importance as they see themselves as fleshing out the mission of God in their communities. This research project attempted to reflect both of these perspectives.

The literature reviewed in this chapter draws a very complex picture of the life, work and mission of Christian people, and an equally complex one of the relationship between those people and the organisation normally called the church. The research project must be seen against the background of that complex picture. In particular, my theoretical and methodological approach, to which I now turn, should be seen in the light of the gradual change in thinking and writing about the church, and a progressive move away from emphasis on the institution as such and towards an interest in the people who make it up, especially in relation to their understanding of being part of the Mission of God.

8. The Research in Theory – the Ontology, Epistemology, and Methodology behind the Project.

The literature reviewed in the previous chapter provides a background to this research project on organisational change in local parishes, firstly dealing with organisational change and constructs such as organisational culture, secondly addressing various ways that work on spirituality/religion and work on organisation studies/management may impact on each other, and thirdly discussing developments in literature generated within Christian churches in recent decades. As a further background, and to set a foundation for my choice of research method, it is necessary for me to outline the theoretical stances that I have chosen to adopt for this research. I have discussed in earlier chapters a number of foundational factors to my thinking: I have identified a researcher position, as a cross-disciplinary scholar and also as an Anglican Priest. I have expressed a desire to ground the research in the actual experiences of particular gatherings of Christian people, including their spiritual experience. I have also discussed my intention for the research process to facilitate change among those groups, rather than impose it on them. Given those factors, I am drawn to four distinct but mutually supporting influences which are set out in this chapter; Social Constructionist theory, the Epistemology of Love, Transdisciplinarity, and Action Research.

8.1 Social Constructionist theory

What is truth? (Pontius Pilate)

The range of theoretical viewpoints represented in the literature on organisational culture, and on organisation studies/management in relation to religious organisations, reflects one of the significant and controversial issues of recent organisation theory. As Broido and Manning (2002) trace, the insights of complexity and post-modern theorists have brought a sharp challenge to a broad consensus in the social scientific, academic and much of the religious world, that held that reality exists in an objective sense and is discoverable through the positivist sciences or through widely accepted forms of evidence. Critics of this view continue to question the positivist/modernist

assumption that if the phenomena of the world are properly investigated and/or viewed through the appropriate lens, then its components can be named, mapped, measured and predicted, and the resultant image can then be posited with confidence as a rendition of reality or as a truth. Researchers critical of this reductionist approach have, increasingly, come to see ‘reality’ as not only multiple, complex and difficult to quantify but, perhaps, not a useful concept at all. Such researchers are also contributing to our understanding that the research process itself contributes to the fabrication of some sets of ideas as truth(s). The ontological presumption of the post-modern paradigm is that truth⁴² and reality are not static unitary ‘things’ which can be studied, described and analysed objectively. Stringer (2007, p. 7) expresses the social constructionist version of this paradigm by suggesting that the social world is dynamic and changing, and is “...redefined continuously by the symbolic systems of thought and language through which human beings fashion their physical and social universe”. Cunliffe, Luhman and Boje (2004) similarly argue that if truth exists at all it is discovered primarily (or only?) through a narrative discourse with others, a point also made by Reason (2001), and Foster & Bochner (2008).

The respective ontological perspectives associated with functionalist and positivist paradigms, on the one hand, and relativist and dynamic outlooks, on the other, have a particular expression when applied in the area of theology or Christian reflection. A central tenet of Christian doctrine is that Truth is embodied or expressed in the person of Jesus Christ, who referred to himself as “the Way, the Truth and the Life” (John 14:6). Theological reflection, in all its many variations, can be interpreted as ways to know that Truth. It would be normative for Christian teachers to include spiritual/experiential dimensions of knowing the Truth through: (a) the everyday experience of Christian life, worship and devotion, expressed in biblical terms as ‘being in Christ’; (b) encountering Christ in a ‘Damascus Road experience’ (i.e. a vision or other direct encounter with the risen Christ), or (c) the direct work of the Spirit through some charismatic or miraculous event. These dimensions of Christian

⁴² The question of whether and when to capitalise ‘Truth’ is problematic. I have used Truth to refer to a theological category and truth to mean a wider concept, broadly synonymous with ‘reality’. In two places I have placed ‘truth’ in single quote marks. In both places I am drawing on other writers and following their practice.

spirituality are important for a full understanding of Christian approaches to truth, but are beyond the scope of this discussion of positivist versus relativist understandings. What is relevant is a debate among Christian thinkers for at least the whole of the 20th century, but with its roots much deeper, as to whether the Truth of Christ is manifested as an objective body of truth to which humans have access through recognised epistemological practices, or whether truth, even about God, is much more dynamic, relative, and ‘still in the making’.

A strong strand in Christian thought holds that there is indeed a body of objective, even absolute, truth, and that the ‘correct’ epistemology derived from this perspective lies in the teaching and tradition of the Church and/or in the revealed Word of God in scripture. Either way, it is assumed that there is an infallible route to understanding of truth through deeper understanding of doctrine and/or of the Bible. In Western countries, this type of understanding is normally associated with churches, or individuals, that use labels such as ‘Evangelical’, ‘Conservative’ or ‘Bible-based’. In quite a different way, it can also be associated with the Roman Catholic Church, but in this case the route to understanding of truth is found less with scripture and more with the tradition and teaching of the Church. Writers such as Jarvis (2005, p. 61), drawing on Barber (2003) trace a tendency for churches of these kinds to attract people who need to believe in something stable and unchanging and who find many of the values of contemporary life unacceptable.

The Lutheran systematic theologian George Lindbeck (1984) described this version of theology as taking a ‘cognitive-propositionalist’ stance. He argued that it was dependent on the foundationalism inherent in post-Enlightenment, modernist thinking, that is the principle that all assertions (in this case, all beliefs) must be justified by tracing them to established ‘facts’ or foundational beliefs that cannot be called into question. This approach assumes that theological statements (doctrines) make first-order truth claims, in other words they assert that something is objectively true or false. It should be noted that Lindbeck equally rejected what he called the ‘experiential-expressive’ stance. This approach, typically associated with churches or individuals described as ‘Liberal’ or ‘Mainstream’, sees doctrines as the outward expressions of inner feelings or attitudes related to personal religious experience. In

Lindbeck's opinion this is an equally foundationalist stance, as it erroneously assumes that there is some identifiable core experience common to all Christian traditions or even to all world religions. Lindbeck advocates a third approach, based on Wittgenstein's theorising on language and with links to social constructionist thinking. By this 'cultural-linguistic' view, the function of church doctrines is "...their use, not as expressive symbols or as truth claims, but as communally authoritative rules of discourse, attitude and action" (p. 18) or, as Grenz & Franke (2001, p. 45) summarise Lindbeck, they act as "...norms that instruct adherents how to think about and live in the world". Catholic theologian Stephen Bevans makes a similar point in quite different terminology in his discussion of the "Translation Model" of contextual theology (2002, p. 30ff), whereby as Christians attempt to translate the meanings of doctrines into various cultural contexts, they always work on the assumption that there is a "something" that must be "put into" other terms – there is always something "given" that must be "received". In his critique of this approach, he states (p. 37):

We might criticise the translation model's implicit notion of revelation as propositional. Revelation is not just a message from God, a list of truths that Christians must believe....The texts of the Bible are the results not of heavenly dictation, but of the struggles of women and men of faith to make sense out of that faith in the midst of lives where God's presence was often less than self-evident.

Grenz & Franke (2001, p. 46) suggest that "a large cadre of theological modernists" continue to be content with foundational epistemologies, but the same writers note the existence of a growing number of theologians who are concerned to explore the implications of postfoundationalist theory for theology. Examples can be found not only in traditionally Liberal denominations (Lindbeck describes himself as 'postliberal') but also among evangelical theologians (Grenz & Franke, 2001; Phillips & Okholm, 1996). An outline of debates about absolute and relative views of truth, or between what he calls "conservative" and "emergent" evangelicals is provided by Hunt (2008).

The theoretical assumptions behind the study proposed here are close to Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic view. I would interpret Jesus' description of himself as the Way,

the Truth and the Life as meaning that there is no objective truth except through interaction with Him. It is in relationship with God, rather than in acceptance of any body of doctrine, that humans have the optimum opportunity to discover their own potential and to participate in God's ongoing creative work. Christian tradition typically uses the words 'salvation' or 'liberation' to refer to this process; my attraction to the emancipatory power of research is closely linked to these concepts. This was what Jesus meant when he said (John 8:31-2), "If you make my word your home ...you will come to know the truth, and the truth will set you free". This view is supported by such progressive theologians as Borg (e.g. Wright & Borg, 1999) and Spong (e.g. 2007), but can be traced back at least to the assertion by William Temple in 1930 (published 1958, p. 102) that "... revelation is given in a Person and not in a set of propositions - not even in a set of propositions about that Person." A far more recent re-statement of Temple's argument is offered by Shanks (2010, p. 6):

The 'truth' that Jesus definitively represents to us Christians isn't just the truth of a correct theory as such - what sense, indeed does it make to speak of anyone *embodying* a correct theory? No, what Jesus embodies is the 'way' of God's love, and hence the 'life' of the most lively encounter with other people, the most open encounter, at the deepest, most thought-provoking level.

The perspective that truth is connected with relationships can be seen as a particular application, in Christian terms, of the point made above by Cunliffe, Luhman et al (2004); if truth is found through a narrative discourse with others then absolute Truth, if it exists at all, is found through a discourse with God, rather than through the pursuit of written or hierarchical authorities. It is, of course, a fundamental ontological assumption of Christian theology that such a discourse is possible. Working from a Christian theological foundation therefore, as Swinton & Mowat (2006, p. 36) have argued, precludes regarding reality (or truth) as *nothing but* a social construction. Nevertheless, our ability to understand and define what reality is will necessarily be filtered through a process of social, cultural, spiritual and interpersonal construction.

Some resolution of the tension between a purely relativist approach and an ontology presuming the presence and activity of a loving God may be found in the theorising of

Critical Realists, both those working from a secular perspective (e.g. Fairclough, 2005) and those with an interest in spirituality, such as Hartwig & Morgan and their contributors (2012). Fairclough, who describes his position as a “moderately social constructivist” one (2005, p. 917) would ascribe some reality to the structures of an organisation (i.e. they are not *purely* the manifestation of discourses), but would give primacy in his analysis to the influence of processes and discourse on those structures.

An additional reason for preferring an understanding of truth in relative, and interpersonal terms rather than in absolute ones, is that it is much less likely lead to exclusive or arrogant attitudes towards those of other viewpoints. Over a long history, exclusive religious claims have led repeatedly to religious conflict and oppression, and are a major factor in the rejection of religion by otherwise spiritual people, as discussed above in the reviewed literature on spirituality. Robinson (2005, p. 38) argues that Christians err in acting as if the whole and absolute truth is somehow their possession. Understanding truth in relation to God, and therefore surely beyond our control, will properly give rise not to arrogance but to humility. Bruce, in a debate with Novinson (1999, p. 167) similarly labels as “faux spirituality” the tendency for people to claim they have the ‘truth’ in terms of religion and spirituality and, therefore, have greater knowledge than any of the rest of us. She correctly notes that the great spiritual traditions share a common awe of mystery and a common search for wisdom.

An appropriately humble understanding of truth and the need to ground truth claims in the dynamic encounters among people – and between people and God – are central to my own spiritual perspective. That perspective permeates my study and is manifested not only in my choice of research method, but also in my developing relationship with my co-researchers.

8.2 Epistemology of Love

*If all history is sealed within the power arrangements of social construction,
what liberating perspectives stand outside those power arrangements
and make it possible for the postmodernist to see
the abuses of socially constructed power?*

P. J. Watson (2004, p. 254)

Having opted to use research methods that are open to the broadest interpretation of ‘reasoning’, it is still necessary to address the fear that straying from the traditional scientific model will generate such a complex or contradictory picture as to render the research useless in practice. It was difficult to find such fears expressed in academic literature, especially in any of the disciplines that are drawn on in this study. However, the positivist paradigm retains a persistent hold on everyday understandings, not least among members of Christian churches, with the residual feeling that if phenomena have not been isolated, defined and measured, then ‘real’ research has not taken place.

Writing from the perspective and discipline of history, Sarkar (1999, p. 298) charges that the uncritical adoption of such post-modernistic assumptions as the rejection of all forms of universalism, is “an absolute valorisation of the fragment”; and the retreat from all transformative agenda, tends to produce “...a truly depressing quantum of banality and dangerous conformism”. Watson (2004) asserts that there is an emerging consensus among non-fundamentalist Christian theorists and theologians that a way must be discovered to move on from the “vertiginous relativism” of postmodernism. Taking his argument further, I hope in this research to demonstrate that an approach drawing on post-modern, social constructionist and transdisciplinary insights not only does not threaten the Truth claims of Christianity but is thoroughly in keeping with the gospel. Such a hope would be supported by Conder (2006), for example, writing from an evangelical background, but in the context of the Emergent Church movement in the USA, who argues that is it not only possible, but necessary, to embrace the insights and assumptions of a postmodern approach without needing to abandon truth (and therefore hope) in theology.

Watson (2004) approaches the modernist/postmodernist distinction from the perspective of a Christian psychologist. While not wanting to reject the insights of

postmodernity, he suggests moving beyond it, into a kind of post-postmodernity, or a kind of transcendence. Drawing on the theorising of French theologian René Girard (e.g.1978, 1986; 1996), he argues that the determinist certainties of the Enlightenment are potentially violent, and it is the task of the Christian theorist to develop a new meta-narrative that is not tied to such certainties, but can integrate the more relative understandings of later theorising. The paradox of attempting to create a ‘meta-narrative’ in a postmodern world that, since Lyotard (1979-1984), has rejected all meta-narratives is implicit in Watson’s approach. Central to this sort of approach is what he calls an “Epistemology of Love”, but implicit in his (and Girard’s) thought is what might be called an “Ontology of Love”.

Girard’s writing addresses a fundamental dilemma in postmodern thought. If life and history are subject to the power arrangements of social construction, what liberating perspectives stand outside those power arrangements and make it possible for the postmodernist to see, or make a contribution to the transformation of, the abuses of socially constructed power? Girard finds the answer to that question in the Judeo-Christian scriptures. Girard's basic thesis is that human culture arose out of the resolution of what he calls mimetic desire. The universal human desire for that which is desired by others leads inevitably to conflict and ultimately murder. Institutions and rituals arise out of this act. Girard sees the Gospel texts of the New Testament as a revolutionary exposing of that basic dynamic (Girard, 1978, p. 178). God entered history to help humanity see with a loving intelligibility what humanity was doing through the murderous intelligibilities of its social constructions. Following Girard and Watson, I would argue that a Christian perspective makes a fundamental ontological assumption, that ultimate Truth and Reality do indeed exist in the shape of a loving God; in Girard’s words:

I hold that truth is not an empty word, or a mere 'effect' as people say nowadays. I hold that everything capable of diverting us from madness and death ... is inextricably linked with this truth. (1978, p. 446).

The implication of Girard’s, and Watson’s, thought is that fulfilment of life for humanity comes through relationship with the God of Love, and/or by emulating God’s love.

The American Jesuit theologian, Bernard Lonergan, makes a similar argument from another angle (Lonergan, 1972). He contends that the core of all religious phenomena in their wide diversity may be placed in the love of God, as described in the biblical line: 'God's love has flooded our hearts through the holy Spirit he has given us.' (Romans 5:5) Although Christian theology reflects a particular interpretation of it, this love is a grace offered to all humanity. Being in love in an unrestricted fashion is the proper fulfilment of the human capacity for self-transcendence. Through processes of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion, humans progressively open themselves to greater approximations of the perfect love of God. Perhaps Lonergan's and Girard's arguments can be expressed in not specifically Christian terms by suggesting that if God is Love (as the bible contends), then Love can be seen as a generative energy in the world; when we experience this Love we tend to call it God, and in enacting/embodying this Love we participate in its expansion. What is distinctive of Christianity is that it sees the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus as a definitive expression of Love.

Helminiak (1998) draws on Lonergan to outline four "viewpoints" – four approaches to study of humanity (and especially of religious phenomena) at progressively higher levels of abstraction. The positivist viewpoint is concerned with determining as precisely as possible what happens to be the case with a given phenomenon - to explain things as they are. The philosophic viewpoint (Helminiak's use of this label draws on the etymological root, the 'love of wisdom') is concerned with authenticity – what is the true and the good. The theistic viewpoint assumes that there is a fullness of truth and goodness, and is concerned with relating phenomena to such notions of perfection, or of divinity. Finally, the theotic viewpoint goes on to ask, is there human participation in that fullness of truth and goodness? "Answering in the affirmative, and with Jesus Christ as the paradigm ... Christianity envisages some possible coincidence of the human and the divine" (Helminiak, 1998, p. 101).

The ontological assumptions that God is the essence of love, and that any degree of love experienced or expressed by humans is a gift of God, lie behind Watson's notion of an Epistemology of Love. Watson outlines at least three important components to such a way of knowing:

- it is non-authoritarian, that is it regards no perspective as the final arbiter of truth. If the ultimate arbiter, or *metaperspective*, is the God of Love, then any perspective is worthy of respect. Treating any other perspective than God as the arbiter of truth opens the way to destructive conflict.
- it is critical, or committed to deconstructing the foundations of whatever truth claims we meet. “The task would be to develop methodologies for shining light on the darkness produced by our own inadequacies in seeing and by our own epistemological scapegoating wherever it may occur” (p.255).⁴³
- it must be integrative, or open to closer approximations of Truth wherever they might occur, with a view to uniting various perspectives “...through their tested and warranted insights into Truth” (p.255) .

I am not aware of any published critiques of Watson’s work and, up to 2009, neither was he (Watson, 2009). In drawing on his work to this extent, I acknowledge that I lay myself open to critique on the grounds of a unresolved paradox: how is it possible to deconstruct all truth claims (Watson’s second point) while at the same time attempt to move towards Truth (his third point)? To my mind, that is an expression of the ultimate and irresolvable paradox of faith. The observation noted above from Swinton & Mowat (2006, p. 36) is relevant here; a Christian theological foundation precludes regarding reality (or truth) as *nothing but* a social construction. While our ability to understand and define what reality is must be filtered through a process of social, cultural, spiritual and interpersonal construction, that construction itself occurs in the context of the God of Love.

Watson describes an epistemology where all insights (including the researcher’s own position) can be welcomed and investigated critically, and weighed against the standard of love. This is, in its origins, a Christian model, and Watson notes (p. 257) that this could constitute a stone over which people from other perspectives may stumble (Romans 9: 30-33). In Watson’s mind, and mine, the “standard of love” presupposes acknowledgement of the Judeo-Christian perspective of God as Love.

⁴³ This principle has been expressed in different terms by Schein when he says: “One should operate with self insight and a healthy scepticism so that one does not misperceive what is out there to make it fit our preconceptions.”(Schein, 2008)

But he also suggests that the model could work in any ideological surround; in another context the standard of love might equate to what a modern, liberal democracy might want, or a traditional notion of classical virtues, or some other criteria. As long as the ideological perspectives are acknowledged, then any perspective can unmask the scapegoating exclusions of its own and other perspectives, and any perspective can explore opportunities for integration. No understanding is rejected *a priori*, but all are measured according to whether they produce acceptance, respect and building up of others. Putting it even more simply, and in the words of Christ, “by their fruits you shall know them” (Matthew 7:6).

8.3 Transdisciplinarity

*An effort becomes more transdisciplinary as established expectations
for the generalizability of knowledge are diminished
in the interest of social problem solving.
J. D. Aram (2004, p. 407)*

An epistemological approach that is open to the broadest range of information and interpretation sits well with a cross-disciplinary academic background. Arriving at an appropriate research method still requires developing an approach to how various disciplines, including theology, organisation studies and anthropology, can be related to each other. One option would be to take a multidisciplinary approach, studying my research topic not in just one discipline but in several at the same time, as it were in parallel. Others have opted for an interdisciplinary approach which either involves the transfer of methods from one discipline to another, or uses two or more disciplines directed by some ‘higher’ organising principle. But what energised me was the possibility of a transdisciplinarity approach, which Nicolescu describes as being concerned with that which is at once between the disciplines, across the different disciplines and beyond all disciplines (Nicolescu, 2008a, pp. 2-3).

A number of writers from different disciplines have explored what a transdisciplinary approach entails. Nicolescu is a physicist, with more than a passing interest in poetry. Crema (2008) writes from the perspective of psychotherapy, Johnson (2001) reflects on the interface between history and cultural studies, and Laurence Ma (2006) argues that only a transdisciplinary approach can provide adequate understanding of the

issues surrounding urban development in China. What these writers argue for is summed up by Chiapello & Fairclough (2002) as a form of research which not only brings together different disciplines and theoretical–analytical frameworks, but also initiates a dialogue among those disciplines and frameworks, hopefully leading to a development of the disciplines through each internally appropriating the logic of the others as a resources for its own development. Ma (2006, p. 371) describes transdisciplinarity as a search for a new type of knowledge by “a fusion of disciplines” rather than just juxtaposing or mixing them as in multidisciplinary and interdisciplinarity. This knowledge, he argues, is broader, more inclusive and more comprehensive in scope, and more insightful in revealing or interpreting the complexities of a subject that may not be apparent under any single disciplinary lens.

Providing a further contribution to the earlier discussion concerning ‘reality’, Nicolescu argues (2008a) that most academic disciplines are premised on a single-level view of reality, and conventional research involves quantifying, analysing and categorising that reality from a largely objective stance, and following an essentially linear logic. Transdisciplinarity, to the extent that a reality is posited at all, is premised on a multi-layered view. Apparent contradictions or dichotomies, such as the now classic dichotomy in physics of wave and particle, can be resolved at a higher, or more abstracted, level. Transdisciplinarity then, can be seen as, “a different manner of seeing the world, more systemic and more holistic” (Max-Neef, 2005, p. 15).

As will be explored at length in the next chapter, my understanding of the theoretical issues involved, including those associated with transdisciplinarity, were not fully developed before I embarked on the research project. To a significant degree, that understanding emerged through reflection on the research process itself, in interaction with the research participants, and ongoing exposure to the relevant literature. My experience with the five parishes did seem to confirm three features that can be noted in the literature on transdisciplinarity: firstly the ‘contributing’ disciplines having an effect on each other, secondly, an emphasis on *in vivo* research and, thirdly, consideration of values, spirituality and the transcendent.

8.3.1 The 'contributing' disciplines affect each other.

Després, Brais and Avellan (2004) have argued that transdisciplinarity activates a mutation process within the disciplines involved as comprehension of the research problem intensifies. In my case, my approach, based on organisation studies and sociology of religion principles, was gradually re-shaped by the five parish working groups, as they wrestled with the very theological question; What is God saying to us here? At the same time, their spiritually inspired reflections were given a whole new form by discussing them in organisation studies language. Part of my reflections on the research project will be attempts to articulate what Stokols (2006, p. 67) calls 'novel conceptual models and empirical investigations that integrate and extend the concepts, theories, and methods of particular fields'.

8.3.2 In vivo Research

Nicolescu has argued (2008a) that for transdisciplinary research approaches to work, researchers must see themselves not as uninvolved bystanders but as active participants, "beings-in-the-world". He draws the distinction between "in vitro" and "in vivo" research. This is a common distinction in sciences such as biology; does a given microbe behave in real life in the way as it does in the test tube? As Nicolescu uses the distinction, he is contrasting the classical, objective, uninvolved spectator stance developed in most disciplines with a stance where the researcher is deeply involved in the matter under research. Transdisciplinary research questions are likely to be less concerned with extending a unified body of knowledge and more to problem and solution-oriented research incorporating participatory approaches to address societal problems (Aram, 2004; Robinson, 2008). These considerations were certainly reflected in the participatory approach taken in my research project.

8.3.3 Consideration of values, spirituality and the transcendent

Max-Neef's discussion of levels of reality (2005, p. 9) uses a diagram of a hierarchy of academic approaches, with strictly disciplinary approaches at the bottom, more integrative approaches at a higher level, and at the top, values, philosophy and ethics. The upper levels, therefore, are dealing with what we should, or must do – considerations that are outside of most disciplines. At that level, or perhaps above it

further, we inevitably find ourselves dealing with the spiritual, the transcendent or the mystical. This can be seen as making a similar point to Helminiak's discussion (1998) of positivist, philosophical, deist, and theistic viewpoints operating at progressively higher levels. It could be argued that the diagram works equally well the other way up, with values and ethics at the 'bottom', representing what is fundamental to the disciplines on the 'surface'. It could then be compared with Senge's image of a tree representing the knowledge structure in a learning organisation, the roots representing deep theory, or deepest timeless insights (Fulmer & Keys, 1998). It is also likely that proponents of particular disciplines might consider that theirs fit at different levels of the diagram. For clarity, I decided to keep the diagram unchanged from how Max-Neef devised it.

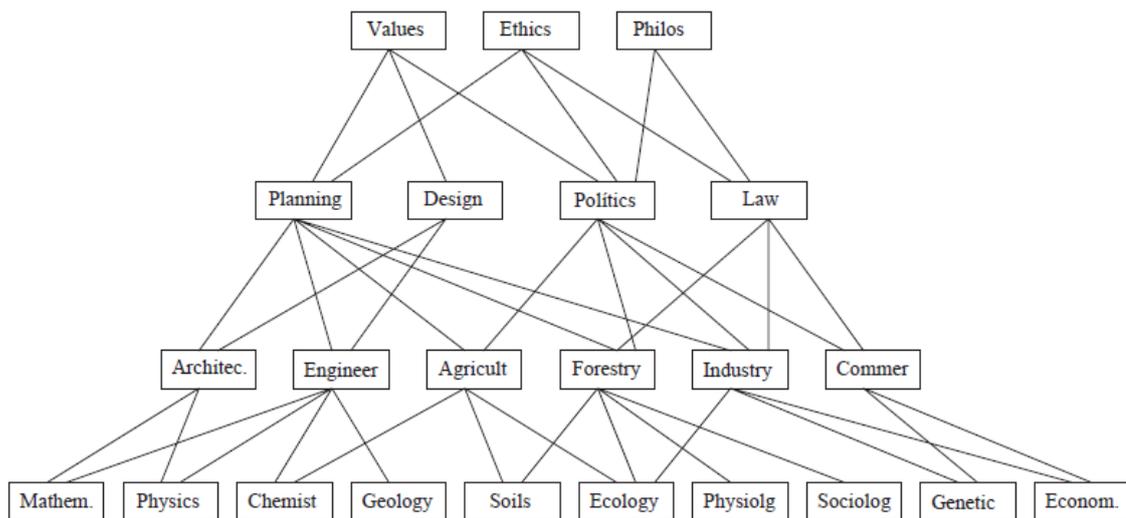


Figure 2 Graph of transdiscipline. From M.A. Max-Neef / *Ecological Economics* 53 (2005) 5–16

Many commentators on transdisciplinary, drawing from a large range of spiritual persuasions and backgrounds, have noted in different ways how this type of approach is very likely to be linked with sacred or spiritual considerations. This was recognised in Article 9 of the 1994 Charter of Transdisciplinarity (cited in Nicolescu, 2008b, p. 264): “Transdisciplinarity leads to an open attitude towards myths and religions, and also towards those who respect them in a transdisciplinary spirit.”

Max-Neef himself notes (2005, p. 12) that in the search for answers about levels of reality, “...a fertile terrain arises for the dialogue between science and mysticism. And this is where transdisciplinarity could and should make its most transcendental

contribution”. Nicolescu, similarly, suggests (2008a, p. 16) that “...the problem of the sacred, understood as the presence of something irreducibly real in the world, is unavoidable in any rational approach to knowledge. One can deny or affirm the presence of the sacred in the world and in ourselves, but if a coherent discourse on Reality is to be elaborated, one is obliged to refer to it.”

These writers are not speaking specifically about Christian considerations, though, arguably, the medieval description of Theology as the ‘queen of the sciences’ has some relevance, with ‘the sacred’ being placed at the apex of the diagram. A powerful expression of the place of the sacred in research (not specifically Christian, but I suggest not un-Christian either) is Camus’ (2008, p. 55) contention that:

Perhaps [in transdisciplinarity] the Great Nature is making use of human beings to actualise potentialities she contains but cannot express by herself without the human instrument that she has taken twelve to fifteen billion years to forge.

The argument that transdisciplinary approaches and the discussion of spirituality are readily linked is one that works both ways. An approach between, across and above all disciplines leads to considerations that are beyond any empirical analysis and, thence, to the sacred or the mystical. It can also be argued persuasively that an adequate discussion of spiritual themes requires grounding in two or more disciplines. I suggest that the study of churches, such as this project with five Anglican parishes is a useful area for exploring transdisciplinary approaches, as consideration of the transcendent is already part of their self-understanding. It may be that only a transdisciplinary approach can allow academics to explore these areas, as conventional disciplines are not equipped to do so.

What an approach that transcends disciplines can achieve is summed up in Article 14 of the Charter of Transdisciplinarity, developed by Nicolescu and others in 1994. The issues it raises bear a remarkable similarity to those covered by Watson’s discussion of the Epistemology of Love:

Rigour, openness and tolerance are the fundamental characteristics of the transdisciplinary attitude and vision. *Rigour* in argument, taking into account

all existing data is the best defence against possible distortions. *Openness* involves an acceptance of the unknown, the unexpected and the unforeseeable. *Tolerance* implies acknowledging the right to ideas and truths opposed to our own. (Nicolescu, 2008b emphases in original)

8.4 Action Research

You don't do action research in order to simply maintain the status quo.
B. Moore (2007, p. 30)

Over roughly the same period that some theorists have been exploring ideas of transdisciplinarity, other groups of researchers, motivated by similar considerations, have developed a range of methodological approaches that, together, have come to be referred to as Action Research. A review by Stringer (2007, p. 15ff) outlines the proliferation of literature on Action Research (AR), and the range of approaches and techniques that are covered by that title and variants, such as Action Inquiry (Torbert, 2004), Clinical inquiry/research (Schein, 2008) and Community-based Participatory Research (Hergenrather, Geishecker, McGuire-Kuletz, Gitlin, & Rhodes, 2010).

As AR is an approach, or a process, rather than a particular method or set of methods, an agreed definition over all authors is elusive. However, in their *Sage Handbook of Action Research* (Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p. 4) the authors offer what they call a “working definition”, itself a re-working of an earlier version:

Action research is a participatory process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities.

Kemmis (2008, p. 122) provides a rather different, but complementary, definition:

... a form of collective self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own ... practices, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out.

Among the wide range of literature on the subject of AR, it is possible to distinguish three ways in which the term tends to be used. The strict interpretation of the term, what might be called ‘pure action research’ is used by writers such as Coghlan (2009; Coghlan & Brannick, 2010), Reason & Bradbury and their contributors (2008), and Zuber-Skerritt (1996, 2012). To these writers, the meaning of the word ‘action’ is crucial. Action(s) taken by a group or organisation to bring about intentional change must be the core of the research, and active participation by the group in formulating the goals and interpreting the significance of findings must take precedence over any agenda brought by a researcher. A sharp distinction can be drawn, and has been by Schein (1987), between the philosophy of AR (by this interpretation) and that of ethnography, where the action and viewpoint of the researcher are more fundamental. A second group of writers take a rather broader interpretation of AR. While drawing heavily on the strict interpretation, they are more ready to integrate these understandings with ethnographic approaches, leading to such constructs as Ethnographic Action Research (Tacchi et al., 2007; Tacchi, Slater, & Hearn, 2003) and Theological Action Research (Cameron, Bhatti, Duce, Sweeney, & Watkins, 2010). By this interpretation as Tacchi et al have outlined (2003, pp. 12-13), in addition to the senses of active participation and knowledge-producing activities, the ‘action’ may mean that the research is aimed at generating action – plans, new initiatives and problem solving. Given the very wide use of the AR term, it is possible to note a third group of writers, mostly outside of the academic sphere, using the term so broadly as to be almost synonymous with applied research. The ‘action’ here means very little more than the action of the researcher in instigating the research. My use of the word may place me in the second group of writers, but I am strongly influenced by the philosophy of pure AR.

In my search for an appropriate methodological approach for a research project with a number of Anglican parishes, and one that would reflect the ontological and epistemological concerns outlined above, I considered that methods based on AR principles had the strongest potential to meet these requirements. AR can be compared with the “Praxis model” of contextual theology (Bevans, 2002, p. 63ff), that originated in Liberation theology and the work of Paulo Friere. This typically follows the cycle: A question or issue → local stories → wider context → theological

dialogue with context and questions → theological response → practical planning and action → evaluation and return to step 1. One of the attractions for me in such an approach was the realisation, as Torbert (2004, p. 2) outlines, that AR is not a set of prescriptions for behaviour that, when followed, invariably manipulate situations as we initially wish and yield the success we dreamed of. Rather, it is “... a way of learning anew, in the vividness of each moment, how best to act now.... [and] requires making ourselves, not just others, vulnerable to inquiry and to transformation.”

Coghlan & Brannick (2010, p. x) suggest that AR is particularly appropriate for research about unfolding series of actions over time in given groups or organisations, where the members wish to study their own action so as to change or improve the working of aspects of the system, and study the process in order to learn from it. This is a very close description of the context for my research project. In such a context, AR techniques allowed me as an academic researcher to work in partnership with parish representatives to explore and identify community needs, priorities, strengths and assets. It became, as Hergenrather et al (2010) point out, an empowering process, emphasising multidirectional co-learning, and organisational capacity building, in this case, the capacity to increase and improve the parishes’ community-facing work.

The empowering, emancipatory or liberatory potential of research is a theme discussed by a high proportion of writers on AR. Stringer (2007, p. 11) is typical in describing AR as *democratic*, enabling the participation of all people, *equitable*, acknowledging people's equality of worth, *liberating*, providing freedom from oppressive, debilitating conditions, and *life enhancing*, enabling the expression of people’s full human potential. In describing it as emancipatory Reason argues (2004) that AR leads not just to new practical knowledge, but also to new abilities to create knowledge, and that in AR “...knowledge is a living, evolving process of coming to know rooted in everyday experience; it is a verb rather than a noun”. An even stronger claim is made by Pyrch (2007, p. 203): “I consider [AR] to be a form of resistance to all forms of control limiting our freedom to pursue a reasoned, compassionate, committed and democratic knowledge base”. All these writers are drawing attention to the potential for well-devised research projects, especially those

using AR-type approaches, to facilitate research subjects/participants into new discoveries, new insights and opportunities for further action, all of which can enhance the control they have over their own lives. This is thoroughly compatible with the deeply emancipatory tone of the Christian message, so makes methodological approaches like AR particularly appropriate for a project working with congregations or parishes.

A number of writers (Pyrch, 2007; Smith, Bratini, Chambers, Jensen, & Romero, 2010) prefer the term PAR or Participatory Action Research. This presumably is to differentiate it from other forms of action research that do not emphasise the active participation of co-researchers. Certainly, as Bentz and Shapiro outline (1998), the early pioneers of AR, such as Lewin (1946), did not have a participatory element in their approaches. However, more recent AR researchers and theorists, notably Reason and Bradbury and their collaborators (2008), have seen the participatory element as foundational. As Bradbury Huang recently argued (2010, p. 95 emphasis in original), “Action research *with* practitioners *always includes* practitioners as partners in the work of knowledge creation”. For simplicity I will follow the increasingly widespread practice of using the shorter term. The implication is that the word ‘participatory’ is something of a tautology. This is in keeping with the contention of Coleman & Gearty (2007, p. 205) that AR is, by definition, participative; it is something done *with* people not *on* people. Whether all researchers who claim to be doing AR are faithful to that contention is another question; the ideal that AR is conducted *with* people is assumed in my use of the term.

In a manner rather similar to writers on both social constructionism and transdisciplinarity, advocates of AR methodology tend to make their case in terms of a contrast with more traditional approaches. Smith, Bratini et al (2010, p. 407) argue that AR “stands conventional research methodology on its head” in that AR researchers do not enter communities to conduct studies on community members. Instead, they form partnerships with community members to identify issues of local importance, develop ways of studying them, collect and interpret data and take action on the resulting knowledge. Similarly, Torbert (2004, p. 91) characterises the

learning process involved in AR as, "...not a mechanistic, automated feedback process producing continuous change, but [rather] a bumpy, discontinuous, sometimes upending, and transformational kind of learning".

The discussion in the next chapter about my specific research method indicates that 'discontinuous' and 'bumpy' learning was indeed what was experienced. Not only did the discussions with the various parish groups lead to unexpected insights and significant changes in the research techniques used; also the repeated interaction and ongoing reflection on the relevant literature led to a progressive deepening of my understanding both of the matters under discussion and of the processes that were being followed. Indeed, the realisation that our research process was becoming an AR one was something that only became clear as the project unfolded; this was not an explicit aspect of the research design in the early stages. Coghlan & Brannick (2010, p. 148) suggest that this experience is to be expected: "In action research projects, specific relevant content areas emerge as the project progresses, so you often don't quite know what the focus of your synthesis is until the project is well in progress." This is not simply a complicating factor that needs to be accommodated and controlled for. A process of change and progressive development of understanding is inherent in AR methodological approaches. As Moore (2007, p. 37) suggests, "Action research needs to be a process of conscious and mindful choices being made throughout the performance of an enquiry rather than being pre-ordained".

One important aspect of my developing understanding emerged as I reflected on the connections between the issues involved in AR methodology and the questions of spirituality that are one of the themes of this whole study. As will be discussed more fully in Chapters 15 and 16, I observed at least three stages in my changing attitude to this relationship. At first, I saw AR in relatively pragmatic terms, as an appropriate methodology to address the concerns at the heart of the project. As a second stage, I saw that an AR project with church groups allowed a two-way contribution to the literature. On the one hand, the project might encourage Christian commentators to make far more use of AR approaches than I have observed. On the other, a successful project might allow me to contribute to a wide, but undeveloped, discussion among AR commentators about spirituality in the context of holistic approaches to life and to

research. Torbert (2004, p. 226) notes that scholar/practitioners of approaches like AR are strongly associated with a range of spiritual traditions, and suggests that this is no co-incidence. However, very few of those practitioners have discussed this connection in any depth, and, as Torbert further notes, very few of the spiritual traditions have discussed how the personal search for spirituality can be developed into second- and third-person analyses. I address these discussions more fully in later chapters.

At a third, and more profound level, I came to see AR as itself a spiritual practice. Torbert suggests (2004, p. 226) that taking the spirit of inquiry seriously is as profound a spiritual commitment as one can make. Moore (2007, p. 38) similarly characterised his own insider research project as “an exhilarating and a strangely spiritual ... experience”. This is not simply because an innovative research project can be deeply satisfying at a personal level. It is more that in adopting a strongly subjective and reflective stance, we open ourselves to a much wider range of understanding and wisdom, including at a transcendent or metaphysical level. Docecki, Newborough & O’Gorman (2001, pp. 515-516), having argued that a subjective-objective distinction is methodologically and epistemologically impossible to maintain, argue that “a foray into the personal and subjective” is necessary to understand the spiritual realm. In the reflection chapters to follow, I will tentatively offer a bolder claim; perhaps the potential for exposure to the spiritual is an inevitable implication of this kind of inquiry.

A quotation from (Stringer, 2007, p. 20) provides a summary of the discussion of AR, and of this whole chapter, before I move to an outline of my specific research method.

Formally, action research in its most effective forms is phenomenological (focussing on people's actual lived experience/reality), interpretive (focussing on their interpretation of acts and activities), and hermeneutic (incorporating the meaning people make of events in their lives). It provides the means by which stakeholders - those centrally affected by the issue investigated - explore their experience, gain greater clarity and understanding of events and

activities, and use those extended understandings to construct effective solutions to the problem(s) on which the study was focused.

9. Description of the Research Project

Having outlined in the previous chapter my debt to a number of theoretical stances, specifically social constructionism, the epistemology of Love, transdisciplinarity and action research, I now turn to discuss how these concerns translated into a specific methodological approach for a six-month research project. Borrowing some terms used by Bentz and Shapiro to describe “successful action research” (1998, p. 129), how could I devise a way to build into a system (in this case, five parishes) the ability to identify and solve problems, to select goals and evaluate movement toward them and increase its learning capacity?

My aims through this project were firstly to facilitate, observe and where feasible contribute to a process of change in a small number of parishes, including reflection on my own part in the process. Secondly, and using that experience, I aimed to reflect critically on the applicability of the construct of organisational culture and a variety of concepts brought to the project from the various literatures of organisational change/management. Thirdly I hoped to provide a similarly informed critique of literature in the subjects of church growth and parish effectiveness. Fourthly, my intention was to develop the ability to recommend strategies that will increase the capacity of parish leaders and parishioners generally to operate in the contexts of rapidly changing neighbourhoods and to bring greater integrity between the expressed mission and mandate of the church and the practice of the parish.

My intention then, was to design a research process that was in keeping with my spiritual convictions and ontological positioning. The process needed to be robust enough to meet the important criteria of meaningfulness and validation in the academic research community, but more importantly, meaningful to those I was inviting to become involved. In keeping with the ideas of emergence and fluidity of insight, this process had to be both well designed and open to responsiveness and change. This chapter discusses the initial design, the emerging process and a number of changes made to the process as our activities were formed, enacted, discussed and evaluated. Those changes exemplified a process that occurred throughout the project, seeming at times like a voyage of discovery. I came to envisage an appropriate vessel

for undertaking such a metaphorical voyage – the Polynesian image of a two-hulled canoe.

9.1 The two-hulled waka

From an early stage in my journey with this project, I began to reflect on the interplay between two different discourses. On the one hand, my perspectives are shaped by a life in the Church, a life where issues of faith and of spirituality are central to the worldview. On the other hand, I have chosen to base this inquiry within an academic discipline called variously management or organisation studies, where quite different epistemologies are normally in play. An early image that evoked the difficulties of this task was that of trying to ride two horses. This is, of course, an activity that is only possible for highly skilled acrobats, using specially trained horses. For most people, the different temperaments of the two horses and their instinctive tendency to go their own ways means that any attempt to travel in such a way will be at best highly unstable and probably an exercise in frustration.

Given my conviction that an approach combining these discourses was not only possible, but desirable, another image seemed preferable. A journey along two parallel tracks like a railway line seemed to have some possibilities. The tracks must be connected to each other, and each track is equally essential for the stability of the train and equally responsible for getting the train to its destination. But a journey along a railway line is largely pre-determined; the driver has very little control over the steering. My commitment to an evolving process and the ability for me and the people I planned to work with to change direction meant this image would not do either.

An image that is particularly appropriate for a setting in the Pacific, with a long tradition of voyages of discovery (Halapua, 2008) is a two-hulled *waka*, or canoe.⁴⁴ This metaphor has been used by a number of New Zealand writers (Humphries & Grant, 2005; Martin, Humphries, & Rangiita, 2004) to evoke living and working in a culturally diverse environment. Each hull must be stable and sound in its own right,

⁴⁴ This word is spelled 'waka' in *te reo Māori*. Other Polynesian languages render it as 'vaka'.

but stability for the craft is provided by what ties the two hulls together. When Polynesians embarked on ocean voyages, they typically did not know what they would discover until they found it. One element of this image is that the *waka* is often a craft for a voyage into the unknown; the destination is not pre-determined.

I apply the metaphor to the interplay between two quite different perspectives which are not normally discussed together. Each hull must be sound and stable in its own right; my spiritual considerations need to be sound theologically and have integrity in relation to my religious experience, and at the same time, my reflections need to communicate meaningfully in a discourse that draws primarily on social science backgrounds which with notable exceptions do not normally allow space for spiritual or religious considerations. What ties the hulls together is the continued attention to the space between; my reflections will have been meaningful only to the degree that I have created a platform that allows the two hulls to hold each other in balance.

There is another and possibly more significant way in which the image of two hulls can apply to this study, and this represented the major point of discovery for me as the project took its course. One track, or one hull, can be seen as the issues of content, the work with and among the five parish working groups that formed the business of the six-month research project and the reflections that emerge from that work. The other hull comprises the issues of process and method that formed an increasingly significant part of my reflections. The content is vital; the church groups were wrestling with a set of problems seen as important to a high proportion of church members and with relevance to a wide range of other groups. But equally the issues of method are vital; the issues of methodology raised in the previous chapter and work in devising a specific method to be discussed in this chapter increasingly took on a significance that was almost independent of the content of the inquiry. The single hull of the life and work of parishes was all I had in mind at the beginning of the project. The discipline of organisation studies and AR methods expanded the image by providing the other hull, which renders the original one not only much more stable, but probably much faster. But what makes the image work is the insights of transdisciplinary theory and the Epistemology of Love, providing the steering platform between the hulls maintaining them in the right relationship with each other.

For a two-hulled *waka* to sail well there needs to be a basic compatibility between the two hulls. They need to be set in the same direction and their respective crews must be committed to find their destination together. So not just any theological approach can be loaded into the first hull and not just any organisation studies insights in the other. My theological perspective and my understanding of the most appropriate understandings from organisation studies have been outlined above. How this worked out in practice - how the two hulls were loaded - is the subject of the rest of this chapter.

9.2 From research orientation to method

The image of a journey illustrates the evolving nature of my research method. As I began, I envisaged a combination of participant observation and ethnography. Over the course of a six-month project, I was increasingly using the participatory methods of action research. This sub-chapter primarily concerns the earlier understandings as I designed the research project.

Coleman (2005, p. 44) describes churches as “the perfect places of study for anthropologists”, as the discipline specialises in small-scale study of bounded groups, through in-depth, participant observation techniques, aimed at understanding the ‘culture’ of the group. Moschella’s definition of ethnography (2008, p. 4) also informed my approach: “Ethnography is a way of immersing yourself in the life of a people in order to learn something about and from them”. Given the intentionally flexible evolving and responsive dynamics desired for this project, it is necessary to relate some of the findings that emerged, as these findings informed the developing methodological approach. Although I could be described as an anthropologist with a spiritual orientation, it was not my intention to study the spiritual habits of my community of interest, except as those matters arose incidentally. Rather, I wished to enact our common Anglican spirituality as a conscious aspect of this work –and to reflect on that dimension along with the various other considerations discussed in earlier chapters. The challenge was how to design this into the research method.

I decided to research the issues of organisational change and of relationships with local communities by working in and with a small number of Auckland parishes. The main aim of an anthropological approach has been described by Coleman (2005) as an attempt as far as possible to see the ‘cultures’ we study from the inside, as well as in their social, economic and political contexts. There is therefore an advantage to studying groups to which one already belongs, even when, as Guest suggests (2005), it opens up the risk of difficulty in maintaining sufficient ‘distance’ from the group to make useful analytical comments. This is one reason why I chose to study only Anglican parishes and mostly in Auckland. Based on my interaction over the years with Christian communities and with church concerns beyond my immediate communion, I am of the view that most of the insights gained by this research process will be applicable, to a greater or lesser extent, to denominations similar to the Anglican Church, such as Presbyterian, Methodist or Baptist congregations, and to Anglican parishes in other parts of the country or the world. However, I recognise that if I were to conduct research of this kind in those situations I would have to establish my credentials in a way that was not needed in my current situation. I would also have to learn a great deal about those other organisations that are outside of my experience, whereas I am now able to use my privileged position as a senior priest in the Diocese of Auckland to short-circuit much of that learning. The whole basis of action research, as Stringer (2004, p. 112) has argued, is that the researcher “...gets in there with everybody else, gets their hands well and truly dirty, and takes the credit and the blame alongside all those involved.” That is an easier process in organisations where I am already accepted as an ‘insider’ or as a known colleague.

As the research project evolved, and in my deliberations on both the project and associated literature, I came to conceptualise my approach as ethnographic pastoral inquiry.⁴⁵ Drawing on such models as Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice (Moschella, 2008), Clinical Inquiry Research (Schein, 2008), Critical Action Learning (Rigg & Trehan, 2004) and the Praxis model of Contextual Theology (Bevans, 2002), I saw this approach as a way to integrate spiritual and theological considerations with widely accepted techniques associated with organisation studies. As most of these

⁴⁵ My decision not to capitalise these three words is explained in Chapter 15.

deliberations took shape after the research project itself, detailed discussion of this approach is reserved for the reflection chapters.

I hoped –but could not be sure at the outset - that the parish leadership would see themselves as co-researchers with me, choosing the issues to explore and undertaking to explore these issues themselves to discover insights that could inform their on-going life together well after I had ceased to be actively involved. From the perspective of these participants, the approach could be described as Insider Action Research (Coghlan & Shani, 2008) whereby members of an organisation seek to inquire into the working of their organisational system in order to change something in it.

To provide structure for that shared activity, I offered to the parishes the workbook *Congregations in Transition: A guide for Analysing, Assessing, and Adapting in Changing Communities* by Carl S. Dudley and Nancy T. Ammerman (2002). This book offers to a parish a process whereby congregational leaders explore who and where the congregation is, analyse its relationship to the surrounding community in which they are placed, assess preferred direction, and identify at least one new initiative that can be put in place in the following months. The central thesis of the book is that congregations thrive in proportion to the extent that they can adapt to changes in their local community, an argument expressed in similar terms by Edgell (2006). That view is consistent with open systems models, including contingency theory and resource dependence, which, as Boyd has outlined (1991), argue that a firm's survival is dependent on its ability to adapt successfully to a changing environment.

The suggested workbook includes a number of exercises for the church leadership, or some for the wider membership. None of them is particularly original. Participants are encouraged, for example to devise maps of the area and construct timelines to portray the story of the congregation. The book had been well trialled and used in the USA, including a pilot with 20 congregations in the San Francisco area. The attractiveness of this process for my research project was that it is a process for the

congregation to work through itself, rather than one imposed on it by a consultant. As the authors put it:

This book does not outline a program. It simply offers opportunities to experiment with new ways of being together as a congregation, ways that make change more possible. (Dudley & Ammerman, 2002 p.8).

A number of British commentators, notably Cameron, Richter et al (2005) and Guest, Tusting and Woodhead (2004) have described the kind of approach taken by Ammerman and her colleagues as an extrinsic one, meaning that it is interested in studying congregations because of their extrinsic contribution to some broader good. They suggest that researchers of this kind identify broad theological assumptions about the local church being a force for moral and social good and therefore focus their attention on congregations' outward contribution. In contrast, they suggest that most British congregational studies work has an intrinsic orientation, aiming to study local churches for their own sake and for the sake of understanding them.

Woodhead, Guest and Tusting themselves acknowledge (2004, p. 9) that many studies are both extrinsic and intrinsic and the dichotomy they draw did not appear particularly relevant to this research project. While it is fair to say that Dudley and Ammerman's approach is premised on a USA cultural context, I had no difficulty with the theological assumptions in their writing detected by Guest (2005, p. 7) that congregations are a force for moral and social good. They are very close to the assumptions that I have taken in this project. There appeared to be value in applying Dudley and Ammerman's approach in a New Zealand context, where the level of church attendance is so much lower and a different set of cultural assumptions applies than in either the USA or the UK. On the other hand, these differences in context suggested the less than rigid approach in the use of Dudley and Ammerman's material – as they themselves invite (2002, p. 14). It seemed appropriate to begin the research in a tentative and exploratory tone, with Dudley and Ammerman as a conversation starter and as a structure for the ongoing conversation for as long as this was helpful.

I was able to use the email communication system of the Bishop of Auckland to advertise my interest in working with parishes to discover ways to change that would

enable them to be more effective in community-facing work. I was well-enough known in the Auckland diocese for a number of invitations to come for me to work as a trusted 'insider' rather than an external consultant. I certainly count as an 'insider' in the small parish in Mangere East where I serve as Priest-in-Charge and where this project provided a useful structure for some planning work that the parish leadership wished to engage in anyway. In the other four parishes my personal links with the parish and/or the vicar meant that invitations were extended to me. This relationship allowed me to operate at times in each of the first-, second- and third-person modes outlined by Coghlan and Shani (2008, p. 644) in their discussion of insider action research. First-person practice allows us to reflect on our own values and assumptions and how we behave and so develop self-reflective skills. In second-person practice, we engage in inquiry with others and work to create a community of inquiry. The third-person mode allows a researcher to move to the more impersonal wider community and make a contribution to the body of knowledge of what it is really like in these systems and how we can learn to manage change while in the middle of it.

Dudley and Ammerman found that, when their process was piloted with 20 congregations in San Francisco, most were able to complete the process in the March to September period, a time that includes significant summer 'down-time'. Given their experience, I arranged to start immediately after Easter (4th April in 2010) and work with these parishes for six months.

In each case, negotiation with the parish began with the vicar (or the parish administrator in one parish that had no vicar). I required approval by the vestry, following a presentation about the project either by me, or by the vicar. In each case, the vicar and vestry appeared to accept my premise that there is typically a mismatch between the theological understandings of most parish leaders and the actual performance. Despite frequently stated commitments to the people of their neighbourhood communities, most parishes prioritise for the worship and pastoral needs of their existing worshippers. So although the issue to be researched was one that I presented, my experience of parish life had allowed me to identify an issue that the parish leadership accepted as 'their own'. They seemed therefore able to enter

into the process without feeling that the issue had been imposed on them from outside. They were interested in exploring ways to bring about change in an area that they already identified as a problem for them.

Each parish was asked to organise a committee or task group with the responsibility of gathering information, sharing it with the congregation and organising the results into an action plan. The committee would need to meet at least monthly and sometimes more frequently. The committees were encouraged to report often and by every available means to the wider membership. As Dudley and Ammerman advise (2002, p. 15):

The most powerful congregational and community studies are not the work of an exclusive (and exhausted) committee, but the shared activity of wide segments of the congregation, and interested people from the larger community as well.

It should be noted that Dudley and Ammerman's process does not claim to be an action research approach. It would have been quite possible to complete their process as a sociological participant observation exercise, without recourse to AR insights. What made this project action research, or at least the beginnings of an AR process, was the interaction with the research participants, their reflections on the process, and the implementation of new actions in response to those reflections.

9.3 My work as a facilitator

My personal part in the process was a dual one, partly participating directly in the process and partly reflecting in an ongoing way about what is happening. As Coghlan and Shani (2008, p. 646) describe this form of research, "...insider action researchers need to build on the closeness they have with the setting, while, at the same time, create distance from it in order to see things critically and enable change to happen". In theory, Dudley and Ammerman's process does not need a facilitator at all; their intention is that a congregation's leaders will simply buy the book and run all the activities themselves, perhaps inviting expert help on occasions when they feel the need for support. In practice I undertook to meet with the committee at most of their

monthly meetings and attend as many of the congregational gatherings as possible, perhaps 6-8 meetings in total in each parish.

My work as a facilitator was the primary area in which the first-person research mode was operating. In addition to the learning that was taking place about the parishes and the life and work of their members, I was exploring my own contribution to the process. Action Researchers, such as Mackewn (2008) and Gayã Wicks & Reason (2009), drawing on the theorising of Habermas, have described the central task of the facilitator as the creation of a communicative space. Kemmis (2001, p. 100) suggests that a:

... communicative space is constituted as issues or problems are opened up for discussion, and when participants experience their interaction as fostering the democratic expression of diverse views . . . [and as permitting] people to achieve mutual understanding and consensus about what to do.

I could not claim to have that understanding at the beginning of the process, but it was certainly my desire to allow the maximum degree of freedom and power to the parish working groups and at the same time provide structure and direction for the communications. As far as possible I wished to maintain a relationship whereby I was facilitating a project *by* and *within* each parish, rather than one where I imposed a process on them.

As the project unfolded, I became increasingly aware of the paradoxical demands on the facilitator, if such a significantly emancipatory process is to take place. In the course of the six-month research project, I observed every one of the seven areas of paradox identified by GayãWicks and Reason (2009, pp. 258-259) as being inherent in AR facilitation:

- Contracting: providing a sense of clear purpose early on, in the knowledge that this clarity will need renegotiating as the inquiry proceeds, relationships develop and understanding deepens
- Boundaries: an inquiry group needs boundaries in order to open a safe communicative space; but if these boundaries are too firm the group will become isolated from its context.

- Participation: a facilitator must have a vision of participation if they are to engage with others, but that vision must be held lightly and flexibly.
- Leadership: a facilitator needs to provide appropriate leadership in order to create the conditions in which participation can flourish; and also be able to relinquish power and step away from leadership so that participants can fully own their work.
- Anxiety: since all practices of inquiry stimulate anxiety, communicative spaces need to be able to contain anxiety so that it may be expressed.
- Chaos and order: since all inquiry in some sense disturbs established ways of seeing and doing, sufficient order is needed to contain necessary chaos and confusion.
- Liberatory and practical orientations: a tension between an intent to address and solve practical issues and the desire to liberate people from oppression and self delusion.

Details of how those areas of paradox were experienced and managed are discussed in the reflection chapters.

It was important to clarify, both at the initial meeting with the vestry and throughout the series of encounters with members of the parishes, that I had two distinct responsibilities, one as consultant/facilitator and one as researcher. I endeavoured to take an inclusive approach to both activities; parish members were related to as co-researchers and the workshops would be run by the organising committee in each parish rather than by me. At the same time, it was clear that as we worked together through the series of workshops, I was also gathering information for the thesis.

9.4 Changes in the research method

As the later discussion of the actual process shows, the clearest expression of the tension between providing direction and allowing an emergent process to take place was the flexibility I and we used in the application of Dudley and Ammerman's technique. I made it quite clear that I was willing to follow the workbook to the letter if the groups found that helpful, but that I was also willing to depart from it should they provide a clear rationale for doing so. As will be seen, all five of the groups did

depart from the workbook, at different stages and for different reasons. Goghlan and Shani (2008) have noted how Action Research is a dynamic process where the situation changes, and changes as a consequence of deliberate action. It is therefore important to deal with emergent processes, not as distractions, but as central to the research process.

A specific example of emergent process was the need to exercise particular flexibility in applying Dudley and Ammerman's technique to the two smaller parishes. In both cases, the leadership found it impossible to collect a large enough working group to do all the exercises envisaged in the workbook. Had I insisted on following the programme strictly, the project in these two parishes would have been perceived as a 'failure'. If the central task had been to evaluate Dudley and Ammerman, then this would have been helpful information; I could simply have recorded that their process requires a minimum size to be effective. That would not have assisted the two small parishes in their efforts to be co-researchers. Instead, as will be seen, one or two alternative techniques were located, allowing us to continue on a more informal basis, and both parishes were able to identify some interesting new initiatives, despite completing fewer than half of the exercises in the workbook.

Monk and Howard (1998), in their work on human-computer interaction, identify a similar dynamic when working with very small organisations. They recommend (p. 26) "lightweight" techniques, which encourage user-centred-design and to avoid the natural tendency for developers to take a system-oriented view. Such techniques are usually more informal than those necessary for larger, more complex organisations and may not be able to achieve quite as much. However, they may achieve 90% of what much more elaborate techniques do, for much less than 90% of the financial and personal cost.

9.5 Outcomes and forms of analysis proposed

Once the six-month research stage was completed I invited collaborators who had been involved in the research to come together and discuss/debate the research findings. This allowed a collective conversation and group thinking to further enrich

the research process, test the efficacy of themes and identify any recommendations for action. This intervention was to take the form of a combined meeting of the five parish working groups.

I also made a commitment to return to all five parishes for three follow-up visits, at 6-monthly intervals. I was conscious of critiques by Smith, Bratini et al (2010, p. 412) and Stokols (2006, p. 64) of the effect on communities by the continued attention of university researchers who appear to arrive and depart, taking up valuable time and attention, for no discernable or lasting benefit to those who participated. It is not sufficient, for example, simply to make various recommendations that the groups being studied may take up, or that other similar groups might take up on learning about the research. As Stringer points out (2004), there needs to be some study of the implementation of the recommendations, to see if they will actually work. I hoped that danger would be minimised by continued contact over an extended period, one that might extend beyond the submission of my thesis.

9.6 Research journal

Reflecting on the process took the form of a research journal, a diary documenting the research process, developing ideas, telling my own story of this work – my specific locations as insider/outsider with specific responsibilities to each group, to all the groups together, to my church community and to the PhD process. In particular the journal recorded in-depth conversations with key participants, some from each parish, talking about the research, the issues that are being addressed and the insights gained. This personal narrative also systematically documented my participant observations, change processes, resistance to change and insights about the dynamics operating in the five participating parishes. These notes were self-reflective accounts of incidents and included information about how I feel/felt about them. Many of the entries, particularly the longer ones, loosely followed the format recommended by Labanow (2006 p. 139), with its four headings:

- Date
- Description
- Self-reflection

- Interpretation and investigation.

Given the long journey of this research process these notes allowed me to recall observations more easily and provided potentially value context to other information collection activities. Points of interest were discussed with working group members and my academic supervisors and were then used to inform the ongoing analysis.

9.7 Modes of analysis

As could be expected the research stage generated, and the journal endeavoured to record, a complicated series of interviews, text, notes of meetings and other incidental insights. Swinton and Mowat (2006 pp. 57ff) point out that in qualitative research projects of this type, the key dynamic for analysis of the information gathered is the reflexivity of the researcher. They define this (p. 59) as, “..the process of critical self-reflection carried out by the researcher throughout the research process that enables *her* to monitor and respond to *her* contribution to the proceedings”. They argue that, rather than seeking after tools and methods that provide objective distance from the process, the reflexive researcher becomes the primary tool used to access the meanings of the information gathered. The task for the researcher becomes, as Denzin and Lincoln suggest (2000), one of deploying a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices, or as Nicolini (2009) puts it, a range of interpretive “lenses”, working in various ways to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand.

What this meant in practice for me was that the methods of analysis used depended substantially on the types of information that was gathered. As I did not have large amounts of transcriptions from interviews and conversations, it did not seem necessary to use a formal Thematic Analysis approach. Instead I developed the practice of reflecting on meetings, conversations and other relevant events as they occurred and connected them where possible to insights gleaned from relevant literature and experience. Whatever the nature of the information gathered, I maintained a continual interplay with my academic supervisors and my co-researchers in the parish working groups. This form of continual sharing assisted greatly in assuring that my analysis would not be a purely personal and subjective one.

As a further reflection of the co-researcher status extended to members of the participating parishes, I undertook to include in my final report an appendix where members of the working groups would be invited to respond to the interpretations generated by the research. Labanow (2006 p. 151) found that giving participants an unmediated voice to express their perspective on the research and its conclusions grants the reader an inside voice to achieve greater understanding of the congregations under study.

9.8 Outcomes

It was my hope that this six-month research process would lead to two distinct types of outcomes, both of strong relevance to my research questions. At a surface level, the process might allow me to provide an assessment of the value of Dudley and Ammerman's process and of others like it, and their applicability to New Zealand contexts.

At a deeper level, I hoped that my observations of the process taking place, and the insights gained through in-depth interviews and many other conversations with individual parish members would lead to new understandings of the issues under discussion. Would the five parishes come up with useful (by any definition) new initiatives in their neighbourhoods? Would their relationships with their respective communities change significantly? Would we have reason to hope that such changes would be for the good and that they would be lasting? Would this process constitute a useful model to offer to other congregations in the years to come? In particular, would the dynamic and emerging methodological approach yield insights that might become useful contributions to the academic discussion of research methods, especially in the area of Action Research?

9.9 Validity

When the discussion on validity that is necessary to any research project is applied to one drawing primarily on AR for its method, the fundamental paradox inherent in AR approaches comes to the surface. How can I be confident of the validity of my findings when, as noted above, the key dynamic for analysis of the information gathered is my own reflexivity? As Bradbury Huang (2010, p. 105) restates the difficulty, most AR "looks rather pale" when questions of generalisability are posed.

There are two linked questions here. How do I know that for example positive comments from a parish working group as recorded in my journal accurately reflect change in the parish? And how do I know if that (reported or real) change in a small number of parishes has any relevance to different parishes or to other types of organisation?

A review by Reid (2007) of an ethnographic study on a Scottish parish (Dowie, 2002) illustrates the challenges inherent in any projects based on a small number of case studies. Whatever interesting insights can be gained about that particular example, can useful generalisations be drawn that will apply to other examples? In Reid's view his inability to do so did not denigrate from the value of that particular study.

Bradbury Huang (2010) suggests that some answers to questions of generalisability lie in the accumulation of local knowledge that is occurring through the increasing numbers of AR-type research projects. In addition to the continual reflections with my research participants and my academic supervisors already mentioned, perceived compatibility with the insights from many AR projects reported in academic journals can give confidence that the insights gained here will not only validly reflect what is happening in the communities under review, but also have value to researchers and practitioners in other contexts. Outside of the thesis itself, the ongoing process of peer review through academic conferences (already experienced) and submission to journals (in prospect) will provide additional assurance of the validity of what is learned through this or any similar project.

A different approach to AR project rigour is provided by Stringer (2007, p. 57). He suggests that in place of 'validity', a concept from conventional experimental research, rigour in AR projects comes from checks to ensure that the outcomes are *trustworthy*. I follow his suggestion and attempt to establish the trustworthiness of my findings through giving attention to four attributes, as outlined originally by Lincoln and Guba (1985)⁴⁶: *Credibility* – the plausibility and integrity of the study; *Transferability* – the possibility of applying the outcomes to other contexts;

⁴⁶ Lincoln and Guba's work was not discussing Action Research, but qualitative methods generally. I am following Stringer in applying their insights specifically to AR.

Dependability – procedures that are clearly defined and open to scrutiny and *Confirmability* – evidence that the procedures described actually took place. In the discussion chapters, part of my reflexive evaluation will include a weighing of the project against seven criteria, or “choicepoints” used by the editors of *Action Research* to evaluate reports submitted to that journal (Bradbury Huang, 2010, pp. 102-103). Observance of protocols and emphases used by recognised AR specialists will increase the likelihood that this project will be much more than a personal, subjective perspective.

9.10 Ethical considerations

As this was a research project for a PhD, I was of course subject to the requirements of the University’s Ethics Committee. These primarily lay in the areas of confidentiality, protecting the right of individuals and groups to opt out of the process and requirements regarding the security and length of related document storage. In addition to those basic requirements, the ethical considerations involved in a project of this type were broad and complex. At one level, it can be argued as do Coghlan & Brannick (2010, p. 132) that given its attempts to integrate inquiry with everyday organisational action, the ethical issues of AR are not different from the ethical issues of a good life. There were however a number of specific issues that needed to be addressed.

The primary ethical consideration related to the fact that this project overtly sought to bring about change in the parishes under study. This applied in both general and specific ways. In a general sense, my choice of ethnography/participant observation as a research method saw the Heisengerg Ucertainty Principle (that the research process always has an impact on the findings) as not just an unfortunate inconvenience, but a positive and sought-for outcome. As Moschella (2008) points out, the ethnographic encounter can profoundly affect the members of groups being studied; it was hoped that the desire for spiritual growth on the part of these parish members would be assisted by the life-changing potential of the ethnographic study itself.

In a more specific sense, it was my explicit wish to generate a process intended to bring about change in at least two ways:

- generating new policy regarding the parish's relationship with the surrounding neighbourhood and identifying new developmental initiatives by the participating work-groups and
- encouraging and inspiring refreshed energy and enhanced capacities in the activities of parishes that would continue beyond the duration of this research.

9.10.1 Intentional change in the relationship between Neighbourhood and Parish

The focus, both of Dudley and Ammerman's specific approach and of my research questions that lay behind that approach, was an intention to contemplate a long-lasting change in the relationship between the parish and the community. The ethical considerations here include the implications for those (among the parish leadership, in the wider parish, or in the neighbourhood) who might disagree with this strategic decision. It was important for the parish leadership, and me, to work sensitively with anyone who might disagree with, or feel aggrieved by the decision.

The process was designed to identify at least one new initiative, a response to some pastoral or social need perceived by the parish members to exist in their neighbourhood (Dudley & Ammerman, 2002, p171ff). The specific ethical considerations around these initiatives were unknown in advance, but working through them was an important aspect of my work with the planning committees in each parish. The likely implications we discussed included

- confidentiality about needs of individuals
- competence of church members in responding to perceived needs
- raising unrealistic expectations either among the church members, or among potential "clients" about what can be achieved
- responsibility for identified needs that fall outside of the chosen initiative.

When I met with the vestries of the inviting parishes, I made clear to them the nature of the process and the intention that they would make an important strategic decision during this period, leading to at least one new initiative. This is why the vestry in each parish was asked to express its intention to take part in the research process, to

be open to making important strategic decisions and to make the necessary provisions for any new initiative. In the Anglican system, only the vestry has the authority to make decisions of this kind and it would have been unethical to facilitate decision-making that avoided this official structure.

9.10.2 Leaving the project in capable parish hearts and minds

As mentioned above in relation to the six-monthly review visits, I took seriously the need to continue monitoring the ongoing effects of the research process. This dimension of the study was mostly outside of the scope of a 3-year PhD research process, but remains an ethical obligation on the researcher. Therefore, as well as the actual outcomes to be achieved through the discrete projects, I intended also to leave, where welcomed, a commitment to ongoing work, including reviewing what had gone well and not so well, discussion of how the parish might take on any new work and assistance with identifying other resources that parish groups could draw on if needed.

9.10.3 Ethics of my own involvement

A final set of considerations relate to the ethics of my contribution to the process. The paradoxes inherent in AR facilitation outlined above had a particular application in my own parish of Mangere East, where I already have a set of responsibilities. The potential difficulties of working in my own parish in this way provided an argument for avoiding confusion and rejecting use of that parish as a subject of study. Mobsby (2007) acknowledges the potential weakness of using a researcher's own church project as a sample group, in that it may distort the source narrative data and results. I was however persuaded by his counter argument, and that of Cole (1991), that this form of participatory research may actually be strength rather than a weakness, as my close relationship with the parish may enable detailed and relevant questions to elicit more accurate data.

9.11 Confidentiality

An issue identified at the outset, but only resolved during discussions with the various parish working groups, was the question of how openly the parishes should be identified in my discussions including the thesis. There are good arguments for and

against identifying the parishes involved in the research process. Vanderbeck, Valentine et al (2009) provide a good example of keeping their sample parishes confidential but, in their case, the subject matter was more controversial and they were drawing from a much greater pool, so were able more easily to use general descriptors like “A parish from the North East of England”. Ammerman (1997 and 2005) consistently identifies congregations clearly. Cameron (2006) acknowledges the value of confidentiality to encourage people to talk freely but notes the difficulty of disguising the identity of a church. It would not be possible for me to follow her practice (p.39) of disguising the name of the town in which congregations are located. The same considerations apply more acutely with the identity of individuals. Once the identity of the parish is revealed then that of its vicar is also public knowledge. Cameron points out (ibid): “If the purpose of the research is to help a church reflect upon itself, it may be important that responses are from named people so that it is clear who would support new developments.”

Over the six-month process this question was debated at length but in time a consensus emerged for totally open disclosure. That might appear to constrain me from making comments that could appear to be critical of the parish concerned, or of individuals. On reflection I came to the view that a thesis was not the appropriate context for such comments even if the identity was successfully disguised. If I did have any pastoral or other concerns, my knowledge of church structures meant that I had access to appropriate avenues, at parish and diocesan level, for discussing them. But we also reflected in our discussions that disguising identities would never be successful in a country the size of New Zealand. Furthermore, even if disguising were successful, the members of the working groups, my co-researchers, would recognise themselves in the comments. And even if they did not, *I* would know what I had said, and I was not willing to place on record comments that could be interpreted as criticisms of the parishes or of individuals within them. I hasten to add that this concern was primarily an academic or hypothetical one, as in fact virtually all my observations about these parishes were positive ones.

Given the decision to speak openly about the parishes we did agree on several specific understandings:

- No individual would be quoted openly without prior knowledge and the opportunity to correct the quotation or deny permission for it to be used.
- If a comment was sufficiently valuable to the research discussion that I wished to use it anyway, it would be disguised to make it impossible to identify either the individual or their parish.
- No individual would be required to take place in the research at all and could opt out at any stage. This undertaking was, of course, qualified by the fact that I was researching a corporate entity, a parish, with the approval of its vestry. All individual parish members were, therefore, constrained to some degree by that decision; no one member could veto the vestry's decision to participate. Still, any individual, or even a particular vestry member, could elect to take no part in the process.

As I applied those undertakings to the task of recording the six-month research project, the pattern emerged of referring openly to the parishes and the four vicars but not mentioning any other working group members by name. As with any group exercise, some group members had more to say than others and it seemed to undervalue the contribution of all the co-researchers to single out the handful of members whose comments were recorded. An exception to this pattern is in the appendix, where personal comments are offered by named participants.

This research design was submitted to the University Postgraduate structures in late 2009. Having obtained their approval, including that of the appropriate Ethics Committee, I was ready to embark on the project in early 2010. I now turn to an account of what took place over a six-month period that year.

10. The Research Project – Introducing the Parishes

The field work for this research project took place between March and September 2010.

I intended to work with a number of parishes in the Auckland area, and planned to spend considerable amounts of time with those groups during 2010. Over the summer of 2009/2010 I advertised through the email networks of the Diocese of Auckland my interest in receiving invitations from parishes who would like to participate in my research process. My advertisement advised that this would involve a group from each parish working together on a partly self-directed project for about six months. I explained that the focus of my enquiry was the difficulty of most parishes in prioritising for outward facing work, rather than the worship and pastoral needs of their worshipping members.

As I would be working without any research assistants, I estimated that I could work with a maximum of six parishes at once. About fifteen Auckland parishes made contact with me and I initiated an approach to several more. Following discussions with the vicar of each parish and, in some cases, others in parish leadership, the number of parishes that could commit was reduced to four. Reasons given for not proceeding included pressure of time, “not really what we had in mind”, the pregnancy of the vicar, commitment to another research process and the fact that I was using an American resource. Whatever reasons were given for choosing not to participate, all these decisions were made by the parishes concerned. In no case did I need to make a selection myself as I had not received more than the six positive responses that I regarded as a maximum. Therefore, this group of four parishes may be regarded as self-selected.

I had hoped that among the parishes who agreed to participate there might be one or two Local Shared Ministry (LSM) parishes. These are parishes where, either because of financial pressure or because of conviction that this is a theologically appropriate model, no vicar is appointed. Instead a leadership team is selected from among parishioners and members of that group are given designated responsibility and

training. One or more of the team may be ordained to provide sacramental ministry. None of the team members is paid but an Enabler, an experienced priest from outside of the parish, is contracted to provide leadership and support and, in the Auckland version of this model, to co-ordinate an intensive diocesan training process. There are approximately 20 such parishes among the total of nearly 80 in the Diocese of Auckland. Two LSM parishes did make contact and in one case I was invited by the Parish Administrator (the lay team member with that responsibility) to discuss the project with their vestry and leadership team. Considerable interest was shown but the parish decided not to proceed, partly because the Enabler considered that the team had too much work fulfilling the training work expected by the diocese, and partly because every one of the leadership team had plans to be away at different parts of the 6-month intensive research period. The other LSM parish that had expressed interest was over two hours' drive from Auckland and it was realised that it would be impractical for them to participate.

As I was about to begin working with this group of parishes I was advised that I might be eligible for funding from a charitable trust based in the Waikato area, the neighbouring region to the south of Auckland and the location of the University where I am enrolled. It was suggested that my chances of receiving this funding would be enhanced if some Waikato parishes were included. I approached the Bishop of Waikato for introductions to parishes in Hamilton and, through a similar but much shorter process, discussions with five parishes led to an agreement with two to proceed. At the last moment one withdrew and I was left with a total sample of five parishes, four in Auckland and one in Hamilton. Unfortunately the Waikato funding did not eventuate but it was very helpful to the project to have even one parish from outside of Auckland as it allowed for insights from a different diocese that might alert me to any 'Auckland specifics' that I, as an Aucklander, might not have noticed.

The process I intended to follow did not depend on a particular mix of 'types' of parish but the group represented a reasonable cross-section of parish types in this region as categorised by size, socio-economic status of the surrounding community and theological emphasis. The five parishes were:

- St Andrew's Kohimarama: This parish has a very stable congregation in one of the most affluent parts of Auckland. There is one church building, a full-time vicar, and about 80 people at worship each week, with perhaps 120 different people attending at least once per month.
- St Andrew's Pukekohe: Pukekohe is a market town just outside of Auckland and a centre for the Franklin region. There is a very well-established parish, with one vicar and two church buildings. About 150 people attend services in any week, and around 200 different people attend monthly at least.
- St Francis, Hillcrest: This is a Co-operating Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian parish in the south-eastern suburbs of Hamilton. The parish has had two paid clergy until recently, and the current Minister is Anglican. There is one big church complex in Hillcrest and two little ones in country areas. About 120 people worship in any week, and around 200 different people attending at least once per month.
- Pohutukawa Coast: This is a 'Mission District' (term for a group that is not big enough, or not strong enough, to be constituted a parish) on the Eastern outskirts of Auckland. There are three little congregations at Whitford, Beachlands and Maraetai with combined weekly attendance of 30. These churches were historically part of other parishes, and have been considered a unit in this form for two years.
- Selwyn Church, Mangere East: This is a very small Mission District in a low socio-economic part of South Auckland. Approx 20 can be expected in church on Sundays and about 40 different people attend monthly or more. This is a very multi-racial group and can pay only small part-time salary. The parish has tended to follow a theologically liberal emphasis. I am the Priest-in-Charge of this Church.

10.1 Characteristics of this group of parishes

The range of parish sizes outlined above illustrates a significant difference between the church scene in New Zealand and that in the USA. Pukekohe, with 150+ worshippers weekly is a large church by New Zealand standards. Only eight parishes out of a total of 80 in the Auckland Diocese have higher numbers (Anglican Diocese

of Auckland, 2010). By comparison, Butler Bass (2006) discusses a research project in the USA with 50 congregations, ranging in size from 35 to 2,500 members, with the average congregation numbering just below 300. Becker (1999, p. 4), drawing on Rothauge (1990), describes “small” congregations as roughly 150 members or fewer.

The proportion of a parish’s regular attenders who are present at worship in any particular week may also be a significant figure. I am not aware of international statistics for comparison, and they may be very difficult to obtain as most parishes would not keep that figure as a routine statistic. The figures given above for these parishes are rough estimates by the parish working groups in answer to a question from me such as: “How many people are there who you would not be surprised to see on any particular Sunday?” The figures thus obtained are indicative of the differences among this group of parishes. Pukekohe, as the church at the centre of a small town has the most ‘stable’ congregation, with 75% of its regular attenders likely to be present on any given Sunday. It is the impression of the Pukekohe working group that this figure is a declining one, especially at their 9.30 service, as more young families become involved, but may attend less than every week. Hillcrest (60%) and Kohimarama (66%) are suburban parishes in cities. Their figures may reflect the observation by Percy (2006a, p. 6) noted in an earlier chapter, that figures purporting to show a decline in the number of people attending church may instead show, at least in part, that committed church members are attending less frequently. Mangere East (50%) may be an extreme example, reflecting the complex and multi-cultural demographics of that part of Auckland. The complex makeup of the Pohutukawa Coast parish made it impossible to calculate this figure meaningfully.

The ‘stability’ of a parish’s worship attendance should not, I suggest, be taken as an indicator of its strength or health, nor the reverse. This discussion is included here simply to illustrate the different ‘style’ or ‘feel’ of the five parishes under review. This factor was first drawn to my attention by the Rev’d Stephen Baxter, Vicar of Kohimarama, who had previously been Vicar of Pukekohe. As he changed parishes, this difference in the frequency with which deeply committed members attended church was one of the distinctions he noticed between the two parishes (Pukekohe more frequently, Kohimarama rather less), with a resultant difference in how pastoral,

social and other programmes work in practice. The current Pukekohe parish leadership perceive that this pattern has changed in the six years since the change of vicars, with a lowering of the average age and a tendency for people with family commitments to attend somewhat less frequently.

It happens that I have a personal relationship with all five of the parishes who decided to take part. I am a former Vicar of Pukekohe; my family are members of Kohimarama parish and we attend there when I do not have commitments elsewhere; the Vicar of Pohutukawa Coast worked as my Assistant in a parish some years ago; the Vicar of Hillcrest and I, with our respective families, lived together for six months 20 years ago; and I am part-time Priest in Charge at Mangere East. It is possible that this group of five parishes is non-representative, representing only a minority of parishes whose vicars are personal friends of mine, and whose members want to address questions of change and community-facing mission. Certainly, no attempt was made to create a statistically robust ‘sample’. A number of factors give me confidence that this group can be taken as more representative than its small number suggests and that insights drawn from them are likely to be applicable much more widely. The wide differences in parish characteristics have just been discussed. Even without the inclusion of any LSM examples, this group of five is a reasonable cross-section of New Zealand Tikanga Pākehā⁴⁷ Anglican Parishes. In addition, the much larger number of parishes expressing preliminary interest in the project is significant. With a few exceptions, most of the reasons why those parishes did not participate were practical ones, and did not reflect any disapproval of the project. Several of the vicars consulted asked to be included if the project was ever repeated. A helpful perspective on this matter, recorded in my research journal, was offered by the Rev’d Canon Jim White, then Dean of St John’s College Auckland⁴⁸ when offering me a Residential Scholarship at the College to allow me to undertake the research: “Well, every parish is interested in that subject, and if they are not, then they should be.”

⁴⁷ See explanation of this term in the glossary and the earlier discussion on Researcher Positioning.

⁴⁸ Now the Right Reverend Jim White, Assistant Bishop of Auckland.

10.2 The parish working groups

I advised the parishes that I was planning to follow the workbook *Congregations in Transition* by Carl P Dudley and Nancy T Ammerman (2002)⁴⁹. I mentioned at the beginning that I was willing to depart from this text, should any parish wish me to do so, but that this would provide my ‘default’ approach. In summary, Dudley and Ammerman offer a four-stage consultation process:

- an exploration of the local neighbourhood through a series of maps,
- a review of the congregation using a series of timelines’
- discerning the most appropriate strategic direction, exploring in turn six options which, they say, apply to the vast majority of congregations, and
- identifying at least one new community-facing initiative and working through some exercises to assist the parish to become more ‘outsider-friendly’.

My key research question was made clear:

In what ways can local parishes bring about change in themselves to enable them to be more effective in working with their local communities?

The phrasing of the question meant that we would not need to be bound to Dudley and Ammerman’s process if parishes had a better way to research the question in their own situations.

I asked each vestry to authorise a working group of 6-8 people. My only requirements were that each group must include the vicar, and that the vestry must authorise the group to act for the parish. The groups were all different in their make-up.

Mangere East	The Vestry themselves acted as the working group.
Pohutukawa Coast	Three-person group, in response to request from the Vicar.
Pukekohe	An already-existing ‘Ministry Team’.
Kohimarama	Self-selected interest group, including both Wardens.
Hillcrest	Self-selected group, all being members of the Parish Council.

⁴⁹ This workbook will be mentioned repeatedly in the next three chapters. I will not reference it formally on every occasion, just the first time it is mentioned in each chapter.

I initially estimated that to be as faithful as need be to Dudley and Ammerman's process, we would need fortnightly meetings of 90 minutes. Hillcrest met monthly for 3 hours and the others every three or four weeks for a couple of hours at a time. The two smaller parishes (Mangere East and Pohutukawa Coast) were not able to sustain that rate of meetings and moved to a more informal style of meeting and working. All five parishes managed to complete their work by September or October of 2010. We also decided to hold one combined meeting in late November. This meeting allowed all the groups to discuss or debate the research findings. It was hoped that this collective conversation and group thinking would enrich the research process, test the efficacy of themes and identify any recommendations for action. The meeting was held at Pukekohe, mid-way between central Auckland and Hamilton, and therefore requiring the least travel on average.

Unfortunately only four of the five were able to be represented as none of the Kohimarama parish working group was able to attend. The feedback gained at the combined meeting was uniformly positive. Group members found it encouraging and stimulating to see how a similar approach had worked out in a very different situation from their own. For example, the two smaller parishes were encouraged to hear how groups from parishes they perceived to be much stronger than their own struggled with very similar issues. There was an emphatic request from the combined meeting for at least one of the six-monthly review visits to take a similar combined form.

10.3 The parishes - Five different mapping exercises

Reviewing how the research project worked out in the five parishes will be done in two parts. First I discuss the task to compile a map of the parish's community. This was the first of Dudley and Ammerman's exercises and the only one that all of the groups undertook in one form or another. Although the task was undertaken by all, the discussion of it and its outworking provides another illustration of how different the parishes are from each other. It also demonstrates the widely differing working styles that operated in the respective working groups, and therefore the value of a flexible approach. For this discussion, the parishes are taken in chronological order

of their first working group meeting. In the second and third parts of the discussion, outlining how the project unfolded in each parish in turn, I will take the three larger parishes first followed by the two smaller ones.

The first series of exercises contemplated in the workbook was designed to give the parish working groups a renewed understanding of their local context. The groups allowed approximately six weeks for the tasks, which included compiling several maps, designated the Place map, the People Map and the Institution Map, and also a series of interviews with appropriate people in their respective communities. Dudley and Ammerman's chapter heading is "Getting the lay of the land" and one of their subtitles is "Define your boundaries". They advise that mapmaking requires choices or discernment as to which information is most important and they therefore discourage use of printed maps, which might impose the publisher's choices as to what is important.

10.3.1 Mangere East

The five working groups embraced these tasks in five very different ways. It happened that I started the process in my own parish, Mangere East. There the small vestry was the only body which could function as the working group as it already comprised virtually all the available leadership in the congregation. At the first meeting, one of the members remarked:

Look, I am an engineer – I need to work with concrete, precise information.

*Let's get some printed maps.*⁵⁰ 24.3.10

This view prevailed and the group accessed some internet maps of the area. They realised quickly that they would need a map that covered almost a quarter of the Auckland area, much greater than the legal parish boundaries, as a high proportion of their members travelled some distance to the church. This suggested an unusual relationship between the worshipping congregation and the geographical area the church is attempting to serve. Over the following several weeks the group invited

⁵⁰ This is the first of a considerable number of quotations from the research journal. They will be shown in italics, together with the date in 2010 when the comment was made. This format allows their inclusion without having to state in the text that the comment comes from my journal.

church members to place pins into the map showing where they lived; this allowed the whole congregation to feel involved in the process.

Working group members did some interviewing of local people to get some interesting feedback. In some ways the most interesting map for this group was the Institution Map, where they marked significant organisations, businesses, educational establishments and similar. The Mangere East map of community institutions revealed 23 churches, and just one bank, an agency of the government-owned Kiwibank located in the precincts of the local supermarket. A month before our project began the supermarket decided to close this bank agency to facilitate a redevelopment, a decision which was reversed after strong community objection, including from members of Selwyn Church. This paucity of financial institutions, especially as contrasted with the commitment of the various Churches to the neighbourhood, seemed to epitomise the character of an economically disadvantaged part of Auckland.

10.3.2 Pohutukawa Coast

At Pohutukawa Coast the vestry agreed to participate following my presentation but only two vestry members, plus the vicar, were willing to serve on the committee. The issue was taken to the parish AGM a week later in the hope that more volunteers could be recruited, but without success. The two who did agree to take part were one each from Whitford and Maraetai. No one was available from Beachlands, often the largest of the three congregations, and probably the future centre of the parish as it develops. So the Vicar attempted to represent Beachlands.

It quickly became clear that as the parish is made up of three distinct small communities (roughly represented by the three persons present) it would be necessary to run three processes concurrently. The ways that the Maraetai, Beachlands and Whitford congregations relate to their respective communities are sufficiently different that trying to produce just one map would have become an exercise in frustration. In contrast to Mangere East, there was a quite different response to the question of hand-drawn versus printed maps. One member of the working group was

a Geography lecturer at the local Institute of Technology and could immediately see the argument for a map generated by the group rather than by the printer of the map. He undertook to prepare a map for the Maraetai by the following Sunday. The three members of the group each produced a map and, as expected, the three were quite different from each other, but all found it a very helpful exercise. As one member commented:

It has been a most interesting, and thought-provoking experience to view these districts in this way. 7.5.10

What the three maps had in common was a visual demonstration that in each community the parish has a serviceable building situated very close to major areas of new or planned housing. In terms of its physical plant, at least, the parish is well positioned for future development.

10.3.3 Pukekohe

In the three larger parishes, all with working groups of 6-8 people, the dynamics were energetic and creative. Pukekohe was the parish which kept closest to Dudley and Ammerman's process. The group produced a map and invited people attending the church to mark their homes, with different coloured pins for which service/event they normally attended. The working group mapped where their attenders live, with coloured pins for the different services. This exercise revealed some striking patterns.

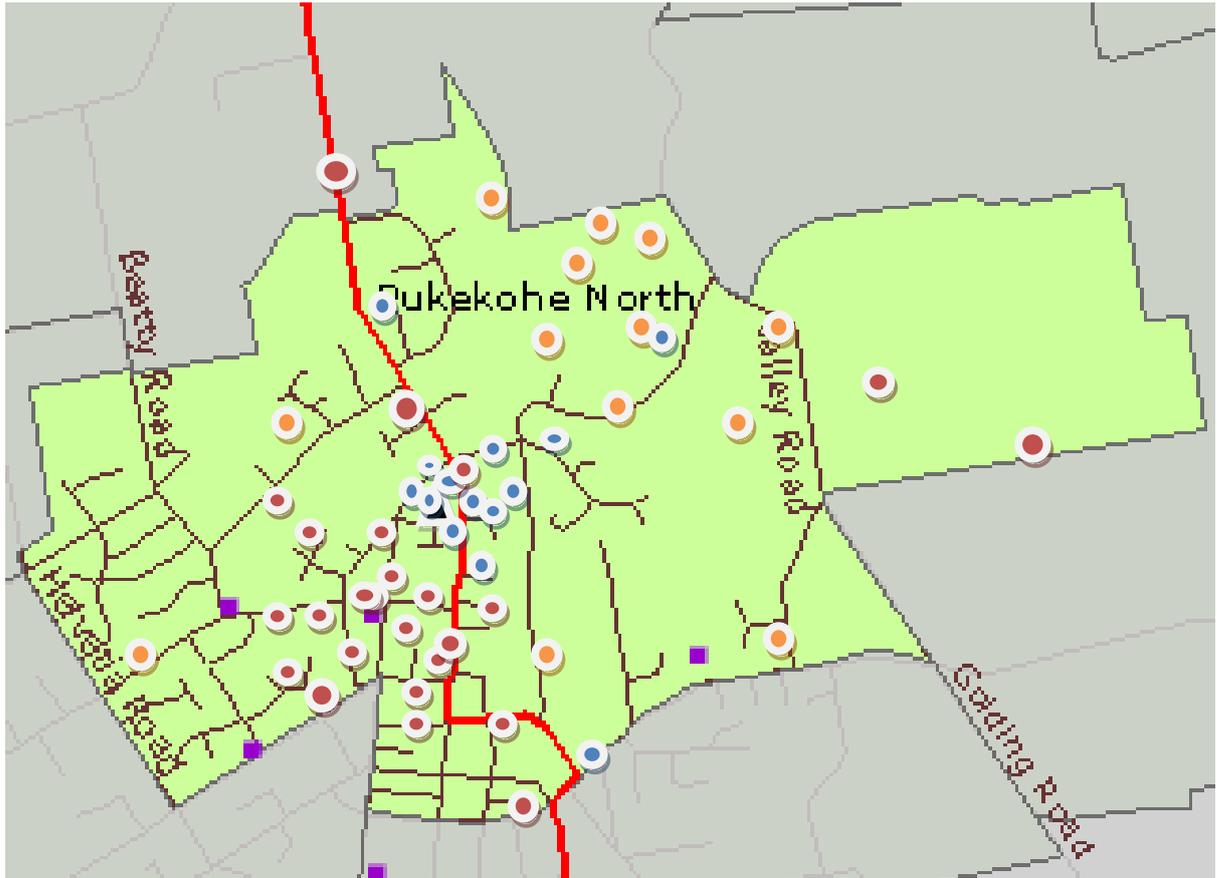


Figure 3 Representation of Pukekohe map – many more pins in the original. Church shown by black triangle

- 8.00am people (blue dots) Heavily concentrated in the immediate walking distance of the church. These are typically older people with long associations in the district.
- 9.30am people (red dots) More widely scattered but there was a clear concentration on the older, well-established districts of the town to the south of the church. Typically associated with the traditional, agriculturally oriented business of the district or working in the town, e.g. as teachers.
- Music and play group people (orange dots) Predominantly from the new housing areas to the north east of the town. Typically from families who are new to the town, and mostly commuters to Auckland rather than agriculturally oriented.

This map demonstrated that the programmes of the parish are ‘servicing’ at least three different constituencies of people. The Institutions Map showed the very heavy concentration of businesses, social service agencies and professional services in the middle of the town. The working group was able to reflect on the strategic advantage of having the church buildings located in that central area. This was significant given much debate in past decades about whether it might be preferable to move to a less central location.

At one meeting I asked group members for their reactions to what the map showed and they reported a high sense of encouragement:

I didn't know we had so many pins!

It's good to see so much activity.

The map has created a lot of interest among the parish. Lots of conversations have come from it, and a real sense of ownership of the process. 13.5.10

Group members saw the map as showing not only how well they are catering to different groups of people but also areas in which to concentrate their energies in the future, i.e. where the young families are and where they have already created inroads through the music and play group.

10.3.4 Hillcrest

The negotiations with the Hillcrest parish in Hamilton were conducted at a much faster pace than with the Auckland parishes. Within a week of my first contact, the vicar had referred the question to the Parish Council and a positive commitment made. Because of the distance from Auckland, and because all the members of the self-selected working group had professional responsibilities during the day, we settled into a pattern of monthly evening meetings for three hours, including a meal. At the first meeting, the vicar, who had been a professional sign-writer, drew a map on a whiteboard. This map showed quickly that there is a particular set of neighbourhoods firmly associated with that church.

As with all other examples, I was careful not to pre-empt the discussion or the map-making process by stipulating what sort of information should be included. On this

occasion, the Vicar chose to mark six or seven schools or educational institutions onto the map,— including the University of Waikato which lies about a 15 minute walk to the north of the main church building. I remarked that no other parishes had considered that this was vital information, and asked why it seemed to be in this parish. The group observed that one of the reasons many people move into the Hillcrest area is their perception that the schools are better. Further discussion on this point revealed that this area has an unusually high proportion, over 20% of the population, for whom English is their second language. Related to this is a comparatively high turnover in the local population. A significant number of people come from Asian countries for three years or so for University of Waikato courses, and book their children into the local schools as they know they will learn English well there.

Over the following weeks, the group developed a series of maps, again soliciting contributions from the wider membership, and also produced a questionnaire to gain input from groups renting the facilities and from other local people.

This work is really stimulating! It is showing us just how much we don't know about the community. 19.5.10

One very unusual geographical aspect of this church is that their property includes a walkway that has become the main pedestrian route from the Hillcrest shops to one of the main residential areas. This walkway provides an unusual point of contact with locals, and parish members had gone to some effort to make the buildings appear welcoming from that perspective.

Why don't we set up a table there to get people to fill in questionnaires? 19.5

10.3.5 Kohimarama

In comparison with the other groups, Kohimarama made the least use of Dudley and Ammerman's material, except as the basis for very interesting and stimulating discussions. They supplied the most intellectually challenging working group, convened by a retired judge, and including a professor of statistics, a farming advisor, a regional manager for Citizens Advice Bureau and other very skilled professionals.

My first meeting with the group was over breakfast; there were eight people there who all expressed a high degree of commitment to the project. We settled into a pattern of short breakfast meetings, alternating with longer meetings on a Friday afternoon.

As with the other groups, I presented them with a blank sheet of paper to open the question of how to do a map of their community, and therefore how to define that community. Despite lengthy discussion, and despite several members of the group buying and reading Dudley and Ammerman's book, the group could not see value in producing maps of their area. This was partly because they felt it would re-do some earlier work that had taken place during official consultation at the time the current vicar was appointed. But more importantly, they did not wish to define themselves principally in terms of geography. In particular, they were very resistant to the idea of asking Sunday worshippers to mark their homes on a map (printed or otherwise) as that would pre-judge a definition of their community as being about where their worshippers live.

Wouldn't it make more sense to do the exercise in reverse, and mark where our members work, or otherwise spend their time? 7.5.10

That struck me as a very creative suggestion and I encouraged them to do just that. But the group maintained its resistance to a geographical expression of their identity. They became quite energised by the rather postmodern comment from the vicar which became a sort of mantra for this and following conversations:

We are the map! 7.5.10

One of the group used the blank sheet to draw a three-dimensional conceptualisation of ever-larger circles laid above each other, depicting the parish's 'community'.

Fig 4 follows

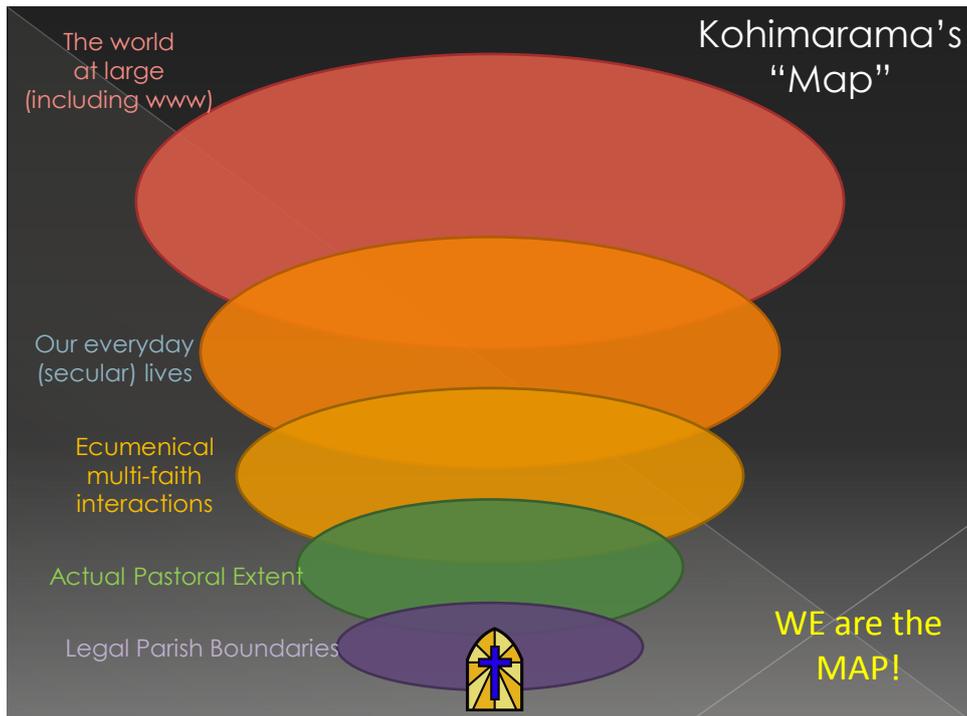


Figure 4 "Map" produced by the Kohimarama working group

- at the bottom the legal/canonical geographical parish,
- above that a pastoral parish – the group of people they have contact with now, through worship or other pastoral contact,
- then an ecumenical community – all the various groups, organisations, other churches etc that they are, or might be linked with
- then an 'ordinary life' one depicting everyone touched by all their members in the course of their family, neighbourhood or work lives
- then an "electronic" one, reflecting the fact that the Vicar's sermons are on the web, and that many of their members touch the lives of a large number of contacts through various electronic media.

This interesting discussion reflected two unusual aspects of this parish, compared with all the others I was working with. The first was that their area should now be considered as in the inner suburbs of Auckland. They therefore felt a freedom to think in other than geographical terms and to offer a particular variety of ministry to anyone from any part of Auckland who is interested. The second relates to the full name of their building: St Andrew's Melanesian Martyrs Memorial Church. The parish has a very strong historical link with the Melanesian Mission, and the church in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. The church land was donated by the family of one

of the martyrs, murdered in 1867. The long-standing association with that Mission provides a strong non-geographical factor to the life and ministry of the parish.

Describing how the respective working groups approached their first task in such totally different ways serves to demonstrate how what started as a uniform approach based on a common resource book can develop in quite varied ways. To look at the whole process in each parish in turn, it will be helpful to take them in a different order, with the three larger parishes first, followed by the two smaller ones.

11. The Parishes in Detail – (A) The Three Larger Parishes

In the previous chapter, I reviewed the methodological approach used in this project, introduced the five parishes, and discussed the first task envisaged by Dudley and Ammerman (2002) as a way of illustrating the very great differences among the parishes and the varied ways in which the parish working groups went about the task. To discuss the project as a whole in detail it will be much easier to follow the course of the project in each parish in turn, starting with Pukekohe, the parish where Dudley and Ammerman's process was followed most closely. I then proceed to Kohimarama, where, in contrast, the workbook was hardly used at all and, finally, Hillcrest, the third of the larger parishes. In the next chapter I will discuss the two smaller parishes, where some different issues had to be addressed.

11.1 Pukekohe

Pukekohe is an unusual style of parish when compared with others the Diocese of Auckland. The diocese is dominated by the large city of Auckland and about two-thirds of its parishes are part of the Auckland urban area. The remaining parishes are mostly centred on comparatively small towns, with large rural areas, and the majority of them operate as Local Shared Ministry units. There is no other parish in the diocese based on a large town (estimated population of Pukekohe is 19,000), with very little rural hinterland, though this pattern is reasonably common in other parts of New Zealand.

The unusual situation of the Pukekohe parish is significant in relation to the discussion in earlier chapters about the traditional parish structure. Of all the parishes participating in this research project, Pukekohe is the closest to the archetypal 'church-in-the-centre-of-the-village' model. St Andrew's Church is indeed near the centre of the town and the parish has always had an active role in town events, such as civic functions and socially significant funerals.

In social terms (and in local government terms until recently when the entire area was brought under the Auckland Council) Pukekohe is the centre of a region known as

Franklin. That area is covered by three other parishes all working on the LSM model. In recent decades a number of approaches have been tried in order to facilitate a closer working relationship among the Franklin parishes.

I was the Vicar of Pukekohe myself from 1990 to 1993 and it was an interesting experience to return as a researcher. In 2006 the parish appointed a local woman, the Rev'd Jan Wallace, as Vicar. Jan had been a Churchwarden in my time as vicar, and in the period since she had trained for ordination while continuing her professional life as a school teacher. A few years after her ordination as an unpaid assistant to the parish, the vicar left for another appointment, and Jan successfully applied for the vacancy. It appears to have been a very happy appointment for her and for the parish.

I had an interesting exchange with Jan at an early meeting of the Pukekohe working group. I wished to compliment the parish and its people on some excellent work I saw happening, and described them as an outstanding example of the traditional parish model working well. Jan perhaps took my use of the word 'traditional' to mean conservative or hidebound. Her response was:

I don't experience this parish as traditional at all. They certainly do not expect the vicar to do everything. There is a wonderful level of participation by lay people. My job is just to facilitate and coordinate what they are doing.

22.4.10

She was absolutely correct. One of the reasons why the parish struck me as being a very vibrant one was the very active involvement by a number of deeply committed lay people, some of whom were serving on the working group. In this case the parish had decided to give the working group task to an already functioning group in the parish, known as the Ministry Team. The team's normal work was to co-ordinate several programmes for the parish of a pastoral and/or outreach type, and provide a venue for the vicar and other staff to discuss a range of ministry-related issues in a way that the more formal structures of the vestry did not allow.

The Ministry Team was clearly a well-functioning group of people, capable of good lateral thinking. In response to my original proposal of three fortnightly meetings for each of the four stages in Dudley and Ammerman's process, one of the group

suggested that they might approach the work differently. For each of the four sections they could have a short preliminary meeting, and then all the members of the group would take some aspect of the task home to work on it individually, she would collate it, and they could come back for a two hour meeting to complete the task. With some variation as the project proceeded, this is the pattern we followed. They elected to meet with me monthly.

In addition to the mapping exercises advocated in the first phase of Dudley and Ammerman's process, working group members were encouraged to interview members of the community about local needs, attitudes and contact with the church. The Pukekohe group entered into this task with enthusiasm and collected forty questionnaires. The information was collated onto a chart summarising comments according to five age-groups of respondents. This provided the working group with a quite comprehensive understanding of issues of the town as reported by those with whom they have contact. While this work was continuing, the group proceeded to the second phase, i.e. drawing up a timeline of the parish history. Again this was done in the most inclusive way possible, by posting up sheets of card in the church headed up by decades, from the building of St Andrew's Church in 1931 until the present. Members of the parish were invited to write in, from memory or from research, any significant dates, events and developments.

In practice, the group reported that compiling a timeline had proved a harder exercise than the mapping to get people involved, perhaps because of trying to do that exercise in a somewhat disjointed way after the Sunday service, rather than in a dedicated gathering over an hour or more. Despite the less-than-hoped-for buy-in, a good number of events, developments and initiatives had been entered onto the timeline. I suggested that we devote some of our meeting time to filling in some gaps, and group members were able to add perhaps another dozen significant events to the chart. I asked them to share any reflections about the history of the parish that the exercise had brought up:

This history shows a whole lot of changes and new developments over the decades, but there is continuity throughout. Some things have not changed.

A core of people has faithfully maintained an Anglican tradition, with all sorts of changes in expression.

It's amazing how the parish has changed over the years as the town has changed.

People have shown a consistent commitment to our buildings, and a willingness to be involved in maintaining, repairing and improving them. 1.7.10

These exercises led to a new understanding on the part of working group members of the relationship between the church and the town. In recent decades, the town has become less a service town to a rural, farming community and more a commuter area. Young families are moving in for affordable housing and people who grew up in Pukekohe are returning to have their children there. The nature of the parish's ministry has seen a corresponding change but its commitment to the town remained constant. Seeing their programmes in those terms gave parish members a whole new appreciation of the excellent facilities of the St Andrew's complex, and an acceptance that the buildings, and the parish, are about much more than Sunday worship.

Discussions within the working group about the third stage of Dudley and Ammerman's process led to an interesting interpretation. In the workbook, congregations are asked to explore six options for future directions:

- no change
- relocation
- starting a new congregation
- becoming a niche congregation
- merging with another congregation or
- re-rooting in the community.

Rather than seeing these courses of action as mutually exclusive options, the group perceived their parish members as working on at least three of the options at once. Firstly, they are developing at least two new congregations, both of which could be described as 'fresh expressions', as discussed in Chapter 7; one is based on the music and playgroup families, and one on aged folk attending a weekly day programme at the church. Secondly, their energetically community-facing emphasis is creating a theological 'niche' in the town, by contrast with the various non-Anglican churches,

most of which have a more theologically conservative emphasis. Thirdly, the emphasis of the parish leadership can be described as re-rooting in their community.

Reinterpreting Dudley and Ammerman's material in these terms contributed further energy to the working group's discussions but this led to their most significant departure from the workbook's process. There was a concern that explaining each of the six 'options' to parishioners would take far too much time and cause a loss of momentum. In our discussions Jan Wallace kept returning to a different issue, which she considered vital, but was not addressed explicitly in the proposed exercises:

We need to find stronger ways to feed the people spiritually. 24.7.10

Jan then had a novel suggestion for how to take the discussion to the wider parish membership. The month of August contained five Sundays that year. It was decided to use those services, either the services themselves, or discussion times afterwards, to address five related themes:

- 1 August: The Mission Statement; let's look at the existing one and ask: How well are we doing, and is it still useful?
- 8 August: Being rooted in the community – what does that mean?
- 15 August: How to define ourselves – who are we and where are we up to?
- 22 August: What are some new ways we can be church? - looking at fresh expressions and new initiatives based on existing work.
- 29 August: Bring this together with one combined service with me present as facilitator, to explore where we go from there.

This idea proved very successful and, after the combined meeting, the working group produced a new Mission Statement, which includes the motto:

Pukekohe Anglican Parish: where life and faith meet.

Pukekohe was the only parish among the five to use Dudley and Ammerman's fourth stage, a series of reflections on 'tables' designed to encourage congregations to become more open and welcoming to their neighbourhoods:

- Sharing kitchen tables – hospitality and meals
- Sharing tables, chairs and schedules
- Sharing boardroom tables – committees and governance

- Sharing sacred tables – styles of worship.

The group added a fifth type of table:

- Sharing table of service – inviting individuals from the community to offer time and expertise to assist in running programmes at various levels including, where appropriate, at board level.

The group found this a very helpful set of exercises.

By the end of the six-month research process, and certainly by the first follow-up meeting held in mid-2011, the parish had begun a number of new initiatives.

1. Two new ‘fresh expressions’ of worship had been established, as noted on the previous page, one for families attracted by the Music and Playgroup initiative, and one for clients of the Selwyn Centre operating in the parish.
2. In addition, the parish had begun weekly production of a series of comments on the readings selected for each week, plus a prayer and a process for reflecting on how those have been used in homes.
3. Discussions were continuing about use of the parish kitchen and of a workshop with some engineering tools donated from the nearby steelworks to develop a training centre for unemployed young people from the town.
4. Pukekohe Community Action (PCA) had been launched as an umbrella group for the parish’s community-facing work, and as a vehicle for accessing community funding independently of parish budget. This was partly in response to an approach by the Tindall Foundation, a large philanthropic trust. The Foundation had been seeking strategic partnerships for their community work, and the Pukekohe parish was one of five groups selected in the Auckland area.

The six-month follow up visit to Pukekohe showed them to be working very hard to develop their community-facing work. The official launch of PCA was scheduled for a few weeks after my visit, and epitomised their commitment to this aspect of their ministry.

An additional follow-up visit occurred in April 2012. The launch of PCA had significantly lifted the profile of the parish in the town, and had also increased the pastoral work undertaken by the Ministry Team. Fundraising had brought about a

fund of \$70,000, nearly all from sources outside of parish members, and an Advisory Committee had been convened from significant donors. PCA was about to initiate a programme entitled SPACE, or Supporting Parents Alongside Children's Education. This programme, originating in the Play Centre movement, is aimed at first-time parents with pre-school children. The strategic partnerships being worked out with both the Tindall Foundation, and Play Centre, provided evidence of the deepening relationships between the Pukekohe parish and the community of which it is a part.

11.2 Kohimarama

In contrast with Pukekohe, the Kohimarama working group made the least use of Dudley and Ammerman's material, except that they adopted the title of the workbook, *Congregations in Transition*, as a name for the group, and intended to remain as an ongoing ginger group in the parish well after my research project had finished, meeting several times a year to reflect on the relationship between the parish and its community.

Kohimarama was established as an independent parish in the late 1950s at a time of very high church attendance; the church building dates from this period. Kohimarama is one of the most affluent suburbs of Auckland and an area where census returns show among the highest number of Anglicans as a proportion of the population. In terms of the geographical area covered by the officially designated boundaries, this is one of the smallest parishes in the diocese; three other parish churches are less than two kilometres from St Andrew's Church.

Despite the group's discomfort with Dudley and Ammerman's approach (one of the group once referred to it as "the American text") they were very keen to discuss the whole dimension of their church's mission to and with their surrounding community, however defined. There was a very intellectually stimulating quality to their deliberations as they engaged with the workbook and related issues. After one early meeting, I remarked in the journal:

A very stimulating conversation. The talk kept ranging far and wide, with different members of the group trying to call things to order with comments

like “let’s cut to the chase”, or “Who is taking notes?”, or “Do we need something concrete here?”. Then the talk would go for another 10 minutes of fascinating abstractions. 7.5.10

In a similar way as occurred with the mapping exercise, drawing up timelines did not seem to this group to be a useful exercise. They felt that it would be simply a re-statement of information gleaned from earlier vacancy reviews and similar exercises. They were not persuaded by the argument that a review of their journey over the decades might provide inspiration or guidance for reflecting on the next steps for the future.

Their concerns seemed to be motivated by two key questions that kept emerging as themes for our discussions:

How can we as a congregation perform our responsibility of mission/outreach/contact with our neighbouring community?

How can we do any of it unless we are equipped/spiritually fit/ filled with the grace of God? 26.6.10

The second question was linked to a separate piece of work that had already been operating in the parish. A well attended ‘spirituality group’ had been meeting to discuss a wide range of issues relating to spirituality, and how the spirituality of individuals, and of the parish corporately, might be deepened.

Our conversations were also coloured by an ongoing discussion among members of the group as to whether the Kohimarama congregation could accurately be described as declining and aging. At least two members of the group were of the view that numbers were continuing to decline (as they unquestionably had in recent decades) and that the average age of parish members was increasing. In contrast the vicar insisted that over the past decade there had, in fact, been a small but steady increase in numbers at worship, and a perceptible lowering of the average age, to a greater degree than is occurring in the surrounding community. The congregation could also claim to be more ethnically diverse than the neighbourhood. Kohimarama, like the other two larger parishes in the group, seems to illustrate the claim of Butler Bass (2004; 2006) that the dramatic decline in numbers in mainline denominations over recent decades has ceased in many areas.

A turning point for the Kohimarama group came when Stephen Baxter and the convener of the working group asked for a private meeting with me. They said that they were getting increasingly uncomfortable with Dudley and Ammerman's approach and, while they are happy to use it as a structure, they wanted my permission to move away from sections of it to pursue other lines of inquiry. They were concerned about jeopardising the integrity of my research process, which is why they wished to discuss these matters outside of the regular working group meetings.

It happened that this conversation took place the very day that I had read Edgar Schein's discussion of Clinical Inquiry Research (CIR), where he argues (2008, p. 273 & 277):

The clearest form of CIR occurs when the client and helper work together to decipher what is going on in the context of some problem that the client is trying to solve....It is driven by the client's agenda, not the researcher's.

Good participant observers and ethnographers discover that the quality of their data improves as they become helpful to the organization in which they are working. In other words, good participant observation and ethnography inevitably become CIR though that aspect is often not written about or even admitted.

Given those insights, I readily agreed to the request to change the process as long as group members had a good rationale for doing so, and as long as I could understand and reflect on that rationale. If we were seeing ourselves as co-researchers (or if we were moving into the area of clinician inquiry/research) then of course they should be encouraged to follow their agenda on what we looked at and how we did it. The fortuitous coincidence of reading the article and having a discussion with the two men on the same day had a two-way benefit. On the one hand Schein's article provided me with a strong theoretical justification for accommodating the request to modify the method we were using; on the other hand, the issue raised by the Kohimarama working group provided an excellent example of the point Schein was arguing.

The real sticking point for this working group (and, in fact, this applied to all five parishes) was the third stage of Dudley and Ammerman's process, where congregations are asked to explore the six 'options' for future directions:

- no change
- relocation
- starting a new congregation
- becoming a niche congregation
- merging with another congregation or
- re-rooting in the community.

The group argued that only the last of these options had any application to their situation, so why spend up to six weeks looking at five other options that they knew they would not take up? Given my own emerging opinion that this argument applied to all five parishes, I had considerable sympathy for their point-of-view. I have been in previous parishes where any (and in one case all) of the six options have been under serious discussion, so I could appreciate the value of Dudley and Ammerman's discussion but I agreed with this working group's opinion that most of them were not relevant to the five participating parishes. This matter will be picked up in a later chapter.

As an alternative to Dudley and Ammerman's process, the group got rather excited by recently retired New Zealand Bishop Richard Randerson's *Engagement 21* (2010b). This book, published mid-way through the research project, outlines over 100 initiatives being tried by various parishes in New Zealand. Being keen to maintain momentum, and to identify appropriate initiatives for their own situation, the group became quite decisive. The convener assigned to each of the group members one or two community groups to visit and ask about the needs of the neighbourhood (neighbouring Anglican churches, the police, schools etc). Assisted by those conversations the working group devoted subsequent meetings to distilling from the information gained a series of initiatives that could be achieved. I attended a special service in September, taking advantage of the larger than normal congregation on 'Back to Church Sunday', to present the suggested new initiatives and gauge congregational support.

As a result of the group's deliberations, four initiatives were identified:

1. A Selwyn Centre for older folk, which started in June 2011
2. A closer relationship with the (Roman Catholic) Mary McKillop Centre, along the road from the Kohimarama church, and its outreach to needy families. This has included shared Lenten study groups, a number of combined services, and an invitation, as honoured guests, to the celebration in the Catholic Cathedral honouring the canonisation of Mary McKillop as St Mary of the Cross.
3. The continued existence of the Congregations in Transition group, meeting 3-4 times per year and continuing to look for new outreach ideas.
4. A plan to develop some unused rooms as a professional counselling centre.

At the follow-up meeting six months after the intensive research period, the working group emphasised that all these initiatives arose from the research project; they were not ideas that were already in circulation and might have come about anyway. At a final follow-up meeting in May 2012 it was reported that the Selwyn Centre was now well established, with up to fifteen older people attending a weekly session for companionship and gentle exercise. The relationship with the Mary McKillop Centre was also growing and deepening. Both initiatives were seen as entirely originating from the research process.

11.3 Hillcrest

As well as the fact that it is in a different city and a different diocese, one factor that immediately sets the Hillcrest parish off from the others is that it is a Co-operating Venture. This means that it is a parish with affiliations to more than one denomination, in this case to Anglican, Presbyterian, and Methodist structures. This arrangement was put in place during the 1960s when there was a strong move toward an amalgamation of those denominations and two others. While that amalgamation did not eventuate, there were a number of initiatives put in place in, for example, new housing areas to establish strong shared parishes rather than a proliferation of smaller congregations. St Francis Hillcrest has been one of the more successful of such arrangements. In its earlier days there were three full-time clergy, one for each of the

participating denominations and, for thirty years, there were normally two, alternating among the denominations. Financial restrictions meant that from soon after the turn of the century only one Minister (the exclusively Anglican title of Vicar is not used in Co-operating Ventures) could be appointed. With the resignation of the previous (Presbyterian) minister, an Anglican priest, the Rev'd Tony Wescott, was appointed.

My research project was very well-timed, coming as the culmination of a period of study in the parish of much church development literature, especially by Tony Wescott and members of the Parish Council (the Anglican title vestry is not used in Co-operating Ventures). In particular, they were much influenced by Robinson's *Leadership for Vital Congregations* (2006), with its distinction between congregations that operate as a club or clan and those aspiring to be incarnational communities. They had already committed themselves to aim for the latter and saw my project as assisting them to achieve that aim. This is why, within a week of my initial email contact, Tony had taken my proposal to the Parish Council and gained their wholehearted approval for the project.

The working group was a self-selected group. It happens that nearly all of the members were Anglican by background. Group members were not able to express a view as to whether this is significant. It may be that a research project offered by a Presbyterian researcher might have resulted in a different membership but that is impossible to know.

Some of the group had been members of the parish for decades and others for much shorter periods but all showed a high level of commitment to the parish and to the task of finding new ways of interacting with their community. Because of the distance from Auckland, my contact with the parish was restricted to meetings of this group. That is, unlike with the other four parishes, I was unable to attend any worship services or congregational meetings, and thus to gain first-hand impressions of the feel of the parish or of the progress of the project. The strong impression I gained through the meetings was a consistently positive one. This appeared to be a parish with a strong sense of identity, mostly highly satisfied with the leadership offered by

the Minister and lay leadership and keen to find ways to put their faith into practice in their local situation.

The complex of buildings associated with St Francis Church are well-used by community groups. This made it simple for the group to achieve a high degree of participation in their map-making exercises, and to collect questionnaires from people who are not parish members but are part of other groups who use the buildings or simply use the church property as a thoroughfare. There was certainly no difficulty in helping this group to see the value in establishing close ties with their neighbourhood. This was already part of their emphasis; the only question was how to do it better and more consistently.

An analysis of their maps, questionnaires, and parish roll showed that 30% of their membership lives outside of their formal parish boundaries. This realisation initiated a lengthy discussion when I asked them why they think this is so. Given the options available, what makes that number of people travel across Hamilton to involve themselves with St Francis church? Though acknowledging that this is a good question, they were not really able to identify easy answers. They also posed an opposite question which seemed, perhaps, more compelling but equally difficult to answer:

Why do so many of the local people NOT identify with the church? 19.5.10

In complete contrast with the Kohimarama group, the Hillcrest people found the timeline exercise was very helpful here. As at Pukekohe, it allowed people to understand how changes in the area had impacted on the church's life. The simple writing out of a very long chart of the last 60 years or so, divided into decades with the names of all the ministers marked in showed that they had an unusually complex tradition. They believed that they had benefitted from a broader and deeper history, as a Co-operating Venture incorporating three denominations:

St Francis has always been the 'main' Christian Church of Hillcrest, and that has really helped our impact on the community. 23.7.10

However, the exercise also brought to the surface two or three periods of significant discord in the parish linked with tensions between the denominations. Always having

two, and sometimes three, clergy has meant far more frequent changes of leadership over the years.

There has been frequent tension between clergy, typically with one bringing a burst of new energy, and the other keeping a lid on things.

Sometimes the tension has been between one Minister with a more liberal theology and another more conservative or evangelical. That has brought splits in the congregation with people not necessarily supporting the minister from their own denomination.

We've had lots of highs and lows – some periods of strong families and youth work, worship and drama and great holiday programmes.

We are a much more ethnically diverse congregation than we used to be, and that is because our community has changed. 23.7.10

The timeline exercise also brought out a strong emphasis on hospitality throughout their history. A particular and unusual example is that St Francis is the nearest church to the Hamilton crematorium. For many years their good facilities have allowed them to offer a high standard of funeral catering.

It was the perception of group members that having only one minister in recent years had been greatly to their advantage. It had allowed them to develop a much more coherent theological emphasis. Group members used the term 'orthodox' to label their theological hue but were also comfortable with the terms 'evangelical' and 'conservative'. One or two other Anglican parishes in Hamilton are more strongly and distinctively evangelical than Hillcrest, and other non-Anglican local churches very definitely so. Still, group members felt that their gentle but distinct moves in that direction, certainly in contrast to the more complex pattern of the past, have been a great strength.

Members of the working group perceived that a decline in total numbers over recent decades can be linked with increased levels of commitment. There has been some decline in the number of people attending worship though, as in Kohimarama, a modest increase in recent years. The much more dramatic decline has occurred in numbers on the parish roll, the list of people who claim some official affiliation with the parish, irrespective of how often they attend worship. The Hillcrest roll has less

than half the number of names as it did in 1990. This is supported in the literature by e.g. Lineham (2003, p. 211) who notes:

There is a real change taking place, so that today what were once mainstream churches with low levels of participation are becoming gathered churches, characterised by high levels of commitment and involvement.

Like the other parishes, the Hillcrest group abandoned Dudley and Ammerman's process after the first two stages. Their reasoning was less to do with the applicability of the six options and more to do with finding the best mechanism to discern the next steps on their way forward. The process suggested in the workbook seemed too cumbersome and time-consuming. I offered an alternative approach to engaging in the discernment process; this is called the Angel of the Church and is outlined below in the discussions of the Pohutukawa Coast and Mangere East processes. The group had a good grasp of what this exercise would try to achieve but were no more interested in using it than they were with the workbook. Again, the group shared some concern about possibly jeopardising the integrity of my research process and, in an email exchange, the minister stated a willingness to work through one or other of the processes on offer if my comparative results with other parishes required them to do so. While I appreciated their concern on my behalf, which I saw as evidence that they took their status as co-researchers seriously, I was able to reassure this group, like the others, that they were perfectly at liberty to use any process they found in the literature or one that they devised themselves. All I needed was a rationale for whatever process they chose, and a mandate to discuss it in my writing.

At one meeting to discuss the right way forward (Research Journal 18.8) considerable time was devoted to Hillcrest's Mission Statement. One exercise included in Dudley and Ammerman's stage three is to write a Mission Statement or to revisit it if the group already has such a statement. There was a consensus that their existing 15-year-old one, about four paragraphs long, is not much use now. However, members of the working group did not consider that they had been authorised by the parish council to embark on re-writing it and felt that they might provoke dissent if they initiated such a task. As discussion proceeded, several courses of action were considered. Should the group recommend to their parish council that they:

- declare that the old Statement no longer operates, with nothing in its place?
- declare it no longer operates, and start a process to write a new one?
- do nothing? After all, few parish members are even aware that the old one exists.
- reaffirm the old one, but take new measures to show the parish is living up to it?
- start putting some specific initiatives in place, and allow a new mission statement to emerge from that new reality?

After much discussion, they came to a combination of the first and last of that list. They could see the potential value of a mission statement but felt that the process of consultation required to produce one would be a distraction at this stage. They were influenced by the arguments in for example Rainer (Collins, 2001; 2005) and Collins (2001) that a church (or business) should let their actions/practices determine their mission statements rather than the other way around.

The discussion of mission statements helped the group to realise that they were much further along in the process of discernment than they had thought. Insights that they had gleaned from their earlier research, especially from the writing of Robinson (2003, 2005, 2006), provided the key to discerning the appropriate initiatives to put in place. The group's conversation kept returning to the vocabulary of an 'incarnational community', as opposed to a 'club' church or a charismatic one (Robinson, 2006, pp. 60-62). The key question for them became: What are the steps by which the incarnational church comes about? Tony Wescott asked the same question differently:

What practices do we need to develop to lead us in the direction of being an incarnational church? 18.8.10

A focus of this was a very significant Annual General Meeting two weeks later, at which the following initiatives were approved:

1. Change of the church's name to St Francis Community Church
2. A decision to employ a Families and Youth Minister

3. Additional design and building work to improve the meeting spaces at the church, to make them even more useful as community facilities.
4. Making an asset of the church property's use as a thoroughfare between a large area of houses and the sizeable shopping centre across the road from the church. The plan is to develop the grounds with easy walkways, shade trees, sitting areas for people from the shops and, making a feature of the church's name, St Francis, an area where the ashes of pets can be interred.

At the follow-up visit, the working group reviewed a large number of activities that are happening in the parish, some with a long history, and others that have emerged more recently in conjunction with my research project or the other deliberations by members of the parish council. In our meeting, working group members confirmed my impression that although all their new initiatives might have come about without my intervention, the project allowed them to look at their situation more systematically, and to work out why various ideas were indeed good ones and, possibly, weed out one or two other ideas. That was likely to lead to a much quicker supportive response by the wider parish, so the initiatives had a higher likelihood of success.

At our final follow-up contact, in May 2012, it became clear that some of the initiatives identified during the research period had not been able to proceed, primarily because of disappointments with funding. An interesting local difficulty arose from the Christchurch earthquakes; because of the government's prioritising of that city's needs, the availability of public funding for children's activities had almost completely dried up, so the parish's employment of a Families and Children's Worker, and all programmes associated with that position, had needed to be curtailed. Similarly, the work on developing the grounds was on hold until economic circumstances improve. In the meantime, parish leaders had continued to reflect on the issues raised by the project. Members had been greatly encouraged by an evangelism course entitled "How to change the DNA of your parish". A five-yearly review of the parish, as required in all Co-operating Ventures, had resulted in a renewal of the Rev'd Tony Wescott's position.

The three parishes discussed so far are well established and well-functioning ministry units, with adequate resources of finance and people to provide the necessary worship, pastoral and community ministries expected of Anglican parishes. The remaining two are in a different category, so it is appropriate to discuss them separately.

12. The Parishes in Detail – (B) The Two Smaller Parishes.

For rather different reasons, the two parishes still to be discussed both have the status of Mission Districts. This is a term in Anglican usage for a unit that is too small or too new to exist on its own. Such groups are therefore subject to a greater level of accountability to the bishop, and governed by somewhat flexible rules that are modified to suit particular situations. Strictly speaking, the word parish is not appropriate but I will continue to use it here for simplicity and because it is still applied in everyday use.

12.1 Pohutukawa Coast

The Pohutukawa Coast Mission District is the title of a grouping of three small churches, St Thomas's Whitford, St Hilda's Beachlands, and St Mark's Maraetai, on the eastern outskirts of the Auckland urban area. Anglican ministry in each of these locations goes back many decades, to when groups of locally-based Anglicans in what were small rural settlements acquired suitable plots of land and erected church buildings to serve those communities. The buildings were seen either as daughter churches of large suburban parishes whose legal boundaries encompassed stretches of rural hinterland or as some of a large number of small churches in totally rural parishes. There have been a number of changes over the decades as to which combination of parishes had responsibility for these three churches.

In the early 1990s a mission initiative of the suburban parish of Howick, which at that time included Whitford, was to develop a centre for what was expected to become a new parish, as it was clear that significant population growth was projected in the area. A new clergy house and meeting room were erected. In the two decades since, several combinations of churches and communities (including neighbouring ones) have been trialled, together with a number of different names for the combined district. The current arrangement of three communities arises from the suggestion by the neighbouring parish of Clevedon that, in order to rationalise ministry in that very large parish, it might be appropriate to close one of their weaker centres, St Mark's

Maraetai. From the perspective of the St Mark's parishioners, joining the Whitford/Beachlands district seemed a much better prospect.

The combination of these three churches is a quite new one. Although there are many similarities among the three there are also marked differences, reflecting the natures of the three communities where they are based – Whitford being a farming centre, and the other two characterised by holiday and retirement housing. There is also very little tradition of working together as a combined unit. Despite considerable growth in population in the three areas, and much more projected, the congregations are still quite small. The parish is able to pay a half stipend and the Vicar is the Rev'd Shiu Goundar.

The topography of this part of Auckland, with a sharp drop-off from a ridge where the suburbs of Howick and Botany are now located, results in an unusually clear demarcation between suburban and rural landscape. The area is sufficiently close to Auckland that the three communities are in strong demand for new housing, a little distance outside the urban area. There is now a ferry service from Beachlands to downtown Auckland. A series of consultations by diocesan authorities have demonstrated the great potential of the area; there is, however, some frustration at all levels of the church (people, clergy, and diocese) that so far much of the potential has not been realised. This frustration was expressed by a member of Vestry when I made my introductory presentation:

We are the smallest and weakest parish unit in the Auckland area. 14.3.10

I responded that I would not comment on 'weakest', as various people might define that term very differently, but that as the Vicar of Mangere East I could assure him that Pohutukawa Coast was definitely not the smallest.

Only two vestry members, plus the vicar, were in a position to serve on the working group. To limit my transport costs, the group agreed to meet at the vicar's own house, in the suburb of Botany, at a time of day when one of them could come on his way home from work in South Auckland. With the exception of my own parish at Mangere East, this parish is the one where I spent the most time speaking to the wider membership. I discussed with Shiu Goundar my concern at the low numbers in his

group, offering what assistance I could to help things along. He immediately invited me to speak to Sunday church services and attend a coffee morning at Beachlands on a Friday, the day he normally spends in that part of the parish. Making this kind of contribution, by his invitation, seemed an appropriate application of an action research approach. I could have sat back and observed how well, or how poorly, this parish managed a complex task on their own and with such a small group of people, but it was almost certain that better results would emerge if they were given greater encouragement and assistance, and given my commitment to engage with them, this did not feel like a viable option.

I spent some energy trying to recruit additional members for the working group, by attending worship twice at Whitford and once at the other two centres. I was able to encourage significant interest in the project among the wider membership, and lead some of the exercises myself. Unfortunately, the interest generated did not translate into additional working group participation. When one of the three group members became seriously ill mid-way through the project, the group's ability to complete Dudley and Ammerman's (2002) exercises was further constrained.

I offered to assist the group by collating the 20 questionnaires they received that commented about the area, all but three from members of the worshipping congregations. Almost all spoke of how friendly, supportive and inclusive the congregation is, and many spoke in very supportive ways about Shiu's ministry as Vicar. Most, however, also spoke of how they were feeling old and that there were not enough people to do the work they felt needed to be done.

The three maps generated by this working group demonstrated that in each case the parish has a serviceable building situated very close to major areas of new or planned housing. This is particularly so in Beachlands, which is projected to double in size over the coming decade and will almost certainly become the centre of the whole area. Facing similar complex planning issues, the Presbyterian Church decided to rationalise their various buildings into a new large complex at Beachlands. So far that option has not seemed to be an attractive one to the Anglican parish, though at one of our meetings the group discussed the possibility of combining Beachlands and

Maraetai Sunday services at St Hilda's Beachlands (only two kilometres away), and developing St Mark's Maraetai as a community facility with more intensive mid-week use. At a meeting after church in Whitford, I invited those present to reflect on the maps, and to describe the type of people who live in the area. Their two responses were:

Welcoming, friendly people, and

Reasonably affluent people with busy lives, who have bought lifestyle blocks as 'alternative stress', and are therefore too busy for church things. 13.6.10

The group members were able to make good use of the timeline exercises. Again, this had to be done three times, as there was no practical way to have a well-attended combined meeting. I led a discussion at Whitford after church one Sunday, when a timeline was drawn up, and held similar but shorter discussions at the other two churches. One participant strongly questioned the value of the exercise as he could not see any reason to look back beyond about 2000. The conversation, however, managed to get the group quite animated and the same man agreed to become part of the working group, but pressure of his work meant this could not take place. The value of looking at such a timeline was that church members were able to see that the issues being addressed now are part of a long story. One person, who has been a member of the parish since 1964, was able to remember much lower numbers and far less frequent services than the present, and was able to contribute an encouraging note by saying she knew from experience that growth could happen there.

It became clear after one or two meetings that some changes would be required to the schedule offered by Dudley and Ammerman. The reason for departing from that programme, both here and at Mangere East, had very little to do with the issues of principle considered in the three larger parishes and much more with entirely practical considerations; there simply were not enough people to conduct the exercises. This realisation presented me, and the co-researchers, with something of a dilemma. As has been noted in chapter 9, I could have insisted on following the programme strictly, in which case the project in these two parishes would have been perceived as a 'failure', and I could have recorded that Dudley and Ammerman's process requires a minimum size to be effective. That, however, would not have helped the two small

parishes towards any answers to the research question, nor would it have contributed to the emancipatory function aimed for in this project.

Encouraged by the previously discussed work by Monk and Howard on human-computer interaction (1998, p. 26), and their recommendation of “lightweight” techniques when working with very small organisations I looked for a simpler, more flexible and more informal process. At both places I decided to pilot a different approach to discerning a way forward. In fact, I offered this alternative to all five parishes but the three larger ones felt it would be no more helpful to them than the other processes they identified. Drawing on Robert Warren’s *Healthy Churches Handbook* (2004), I did an exercise entitled the Angel of the Church.

Warren’s approach is based on the famous passages from Revelation 2 and 3: the messages from God to the respective ‘angels’ of seven churches. Drawing on the influential work of Walter Wink (1984, 1992, 1998), Warren argues that the angel is a way of addressing the church personally. The church is being seen as having a corporate personality and the risen Christ is addressing the corporate identity of the church. Taking this further, Warren (2004, p. 95) describes the angel of a church as the interweaving of:

- Where the church has come from – its *history*
- Where it is – its *context*
- What it is – its *personality* and, crucially
- What it is called to become – its *vocation*.

The angel, then, is not an outside being who has come guiding hand on the congregation; instead the angel is a personification of the congregation itself, so changing the congregation changes the angel. One attraction for me of this approach was that those four points make a neat parallel with the four sections of Dudley and Ammerman’s workbook. Warren writes (2004, p. 97 emphasis in original):

The primary purpose in considering the angel of a church is to discover how that angel can grow to greater health – measured by likeness to Jesus Christ. Working with the angel of a church involves *affirming the positives and addressing the negatives*, as happens in the seven letters to the churches in Revelation. It is about helping to mature the ‘personality’ of the church so it

becomes a richer reflection of Christ. Working like this enables us to be in touch with something more profound and important than results from treating the church simply as an organisation.

I trialled this approach at an after-church gathering at Whitford. With a small group of seven people, I showed the gathering pictures of angels, asking each person to choose one that expressed what their church was like at present. After discussion, the exercise was repeated and they had to choose a picture of what they felt the church was called to become. I was very encouraged by how the exercise worked. Although the group was too small to be considered representative of the whole Whitford congregation, let alone the whole parish, the people seemed to get a lot out of the session.

The exercise allowed the group to reflect in a non-threatening way on some of the fundamental difficulties that congregation and the whole parish face. The seven people chose images that spoke of being old but protective (of the church building, of their own members and of the area), of being persistent, but small, and being a type of mother figure in the area, an example to the local community.

When it came to looking forward using Warren's 'Angel of Vocation' one person spoke about how images of angels with wings symbolise human aspiration and the desire to come closer to God. Others spoke about Jacob fighting with the Angel, and said that the group are fighting with God – what could God be calling them to do when they really don't have the energy to do what they are doing at the present?

On the same day as this exercise with the Whitford congregation (Journal 15.8.10), a member of the working group talked to me before the service and said that in his opinion, given the other member's worsening health, perhaps the parish should pull out of my project. His concern was, then, for the integrity of my research. I reassured him, as I had with all the other groups, that there need be no concern from that point of view. I had already gathered plenty of material for valuable reflections on the parish and even their potential withdrawal, and the reasons for it, would constitute

invaluable information for me. We agreed upon another meeting of the working group to come to a considered decision.

When the three of us gathered (Journal 10.9.10), I agreed with them that there was little point in having more meetings with their working group but insisted that this didn't mean they were 'dropping out'. As we were so close to finishing with all the groups, and as I had already gathered more than enough information for the purposes of my research, I would continue to regard them as part of the project.

In the course of discussion, it emerged that during the six months I had been involved with the parish, they had in fact put two new community-facing initiatives into place. They were about to employ someone to run a children's programme called *Mainly Music* at Maraetai, having successfully applied for a grant for the purpose. At the same time at Beachlands they had been running a fortnightly group called *Bag Ladies*, a time for people on their own to gather over lunch for discussions and to hear guest speakers. Some men had started to come along, so they had changed the name to *Bag Ladies and Lads*. I remarked that in no sense should the group see their participation in my research as unsuccessful, as they had indeed come up with one or more new initiatives. When I contacted one member of the group for the six-month follow up conversation, it transpired that a similar group, this time called *Chinwag*, was also operating at Maraetai.

At a follow-up meeting in May 2012 it was reported that *Bag Ladies and Lads* was still operating well, though *Chinwag* was less successful. *Mainly Music* was also struggling, and was about to be restructured into a more flexible programme for little children. It was also noted that for more than a year Pohutukawa Coast had been hosting a Selwyn Centre, the programme for older people seen as such a success at Kohimarama and Pukekohe.

12.2 Mangere East

Selwyn Church, Mangere East, is one of the oldest buildings in South Auckland. It was originally built in 1867 as Holy Trinity Church, Otahuhu, but when that church was rebuilt in brick in 1928, the older wooden building was moved by traction engine to become a daughter church in what was then a rural part of the parish. It is one of a number of historic, mostly wooden, buildings of that period known as Selwyn churches, but this is the only one that is actually named after Bishop Selwyn.

Huge population growth occurred in the Mangere area from the 1960s onwards, partly associated with building the Auckland International Airport a few kilometres from Selwyn Church. As recorded in a booklet to commemorate the 50th anniversary of moving the building (Alford, 1978), Mangere East became a parish in its own right in 1962. It enjoyed a brief period of busy and lively success but then experienced a long slow decline, as the area became increasingly identified with lower socio-economic status and with a high proportion of Maori, Pacific Island and, more recently, Indian ethnic groups. Given that Pacific Islanders are typically associated with churches other than Anglican, and Indian people with non-Christian faiths, in census terms the Mangere area has the lowest number of Anglicans in the country as a proportion of the total population.

Over the decades, the parish and the diocese have tried a number of arrangements to meet the particular needs of ministry in this part of Auckland. Mangere East was the first place where a team ministry was trialled (in conjunction with two other Mangere parishes), almost the first parish in the country with a female vicar, and the location for an experimental and short-lived three-Tikanga sharing of the building. Throughout these various arrangements, the parish has developed a theological emphasis that could be labelled 'liberal' or 'radical', coloured by the feminist insights brought by two former vicars. Much of the current leadership was attracted to Selwyn Church by that theology, and by its associated commitment to the socio-political struggles of this type of neighbourhood. When it became clear that the parish could not sustain a full-time vicar the area became a Mission District, and further rounds of discussion took place with diocesan authorities on the best way forward. The option of Local Shared Ministry was explored, but rejected by the parish leadership, who felt

that they were already exercising a higher degree of responsibility than they wished. The option of closure was also discussed but, again, strongly resisted. In a personal conversation with me, a former Archdeacon of the area once described the parish as “a little group who refuse to lie down and die”.

The current finances of the Mangere East Mission District allow them to pay 15% of a stipend. That has allowed them to attract the part-time ministry of priests who are in other employment; while I have been engaged in my PhD studies I have been able to offer that assistance myself. I take services there on a fortnightly basis, the other services being taken on a voluntary basis by other clergy. The building is shared with a Samoan Anglican congregation who use Selwyn Church on Sunday afternoons. On a typical Sunday morning, there are 20-25 people in church, from a very wide range of ethnic backgrounds, including families from at least four different Pacific countries – Tonga, Samoa, the Cook Islands, and Niue. Some are from families with long Anglican associations but others have come simply because the church is nearby and welcoming. It is typical for Selwyn Church’s welcoming, low-demand approach to be described as a welcome change from the much stronger social and cultural demands of large Pacific Island churches. A corollary of that approach is that there is an unusually high turnover of attendants from one week to another, and it can be difficult to attract people into leadership responsibilities, including vestry membership.

As I was already in place as Priest in Charge when I began my research, it was an obvious step to include this parish into my group, and it was not difficult to persuade the small vestry that this would be positive move for the parish. It was also clear that there were no other parish members available to constitute a working group, so the vestry decided to declare itself that group. This meant that we met as a vestry every single month of the six-month research period, although normally it is common to cancel meetings from time to time if there is a light agenda.

It was the Mangere East vestry/working group which first suggested the technique of displaying a map on a board and inviting parish members to mark on it where they lived (Journal 14.4.10). This showed that a high proportion of the members lived

outside of the Mangere East area. Most of them had lived much closer in the past and had retained their church links after moving to other parts of Auckland.

Members of the working group each identified two or three local people whom they were willing to interview to gain outsiders' perspectives on the project. A high proportion of respondents said that they had come to Mangere East for economic reasons:

It was a place they could afford to buy a house. 28.4.10

I was well aware that the area's population included a high proportion of Pacific Islanders. What the questionnaires revealed to me (however well known it was to other group members) was that there was a high concentration of people of Indian ethnicity, most of whom had come to New Zealand from Fiji after political unrest in that country. They were attracted to the area partly because of affordability of housing, and partly to live near others of a similar background. All those interviewed, of whatever ethnicity, spoke of really liking the area.

When we moved to the task of drawing up timelines, the group's work was assisted by two books of reminiscences about the parish history (Alford, 1978; Mutch & Turton, 2003). One of the group members undertook to distil from these books a timeline that others could read and add to. As in other churches, group members found it both interesting and encouraging to see how the nature of the church's life and work had changed as the neighbourhood had changed. It also enabled them to reflect on a consistent thread of commitment to that neighbourhood over more than 50 years.

As at Pohutukawa Coast, it became clear after a few meetings that this small group of people would not be able to fulfil most of the exercises suggested in Dudley and Ammerman's workbook. This was another situation where trialling the Angel of the Church exercise (Warren, 2004) seemed appropriate. In this situation I used a variation on the approach described earlier. Having studied Warren's approach, and Wink's writing on which it draws (Wink, 1984, 1992, 1998), I discussed the method with a clergy colleague who I knew had used Wink's thinking to good effect in his own facilitation work with parishes. He expressed strong misgivings about using pictures of angels to generate people's thoughts as that would, in his view, cut across

Wink's interpretation of what angels are. I certainly took my colleague's point. Wink goes to some lengths to argue that the popular conception of angels as winged beings, somehow influencing the behaviour of individuals or groups from outside (normally for the good, but sometimes the reverse), is quite at variance with the biblical understanding. Wink summarises his interpretation of the letters to the churches in Revelation thus (1998, pp. 3-4):

The angel seemed to be the corporate personality of the church, its ethos or spirit or essence....The angel of a church was apparently the spirituality of a particular church....The Powers that Be are not simply people and their institutions.... they also include the spirituality at the core of those institutions and structures.

It is clearly a valid argument that if we are accepting this interpretation as the theological basis for facilitating a discussion in a particular parish, then it may be counterproductive and confusing to use pictures of pretty figures with wings.

I was still keen to use the approach as developed by Robert Warren, if only to form my own opinion about the exercise. Warren provides an alternative technique, which he describes (2004, p. 139) as "an exploratory approach", and "the approach outlined by Walter Wink himself"; the suggestion is that signs of the angel of a church are best found in such features as the architecture and ambience, the economic class and income of its members, the church's power structures and how the church handles conflict. The fortuitous timing of a vestry meeting a few days before a pre-arranged congregational forum allowed me to trial both approaches. I used Wink's exploratory approach with a meeting of the vestry/working group on Wednesday evening, and the angel pictures exercise with the whole congregation after church the following Sunday.

At the vestry meeting (Journal 28.7.10), members were invited to complete nine sentences:

- The colour of our church (church life, not building) is.....because.....:
- Our church building says.....
- The local context/culture can best be described as
- The history of this church is a story of.....

- What we are trying to do here is.....
- The clergy/lay relationship can best be described as.....
- What is missing in this church is.....
- The best thing about this church is.....
- The angel or personality of this church can best be described in terms of.....

As there were eight of us in the room, I gave everyone (including myself) a sheet of paper with one of these sentences on it, except the last one, and a couple of minutes to write something. Then we passed the paper to the left and wrote about the next sentence; I encouraged them not to respond/react to what the previous people had written. Then each person took one of the sheets, read out all the comments and, together, we summed up the comments on the last sheet.

It seemed to go very well. A number of phrases/thoughts came up repeatedly: a very accepting, inclusive group, committed to “keep the place going”, feeling tired, wishing there were more people to help them. They seemed to be looking forward to doing the exercise again in a different manner the following Sunday.

At the after-church meeting (Journal 1 8.10) we again had eight adults (four from the vestry meeting and four others) plus two pre-teenage boys. My first observation on comparing the two approaches is that it was much easier to draw the boys into choosing and commenting on pictures than it would have been with the much wordier vestry exercise. The whole group seemed to interact well with the pictures of angels, and a quite energised discussion provided an interesting reflection on Selwyn Church’s commitment to the Mangere East Community. Several people chose pictures that implied significant change was necessary and that such change might be painful. One person chose a picture of a rather weather-beaten statue of an angel, with a city scene in the background, and talked about how long they had been part of Mangere East. In the second exercise, another person chose the same picture, to say that God’s calling is for the church to maintain that commitment. In other words, change does not necessarily imply that the past was bad.

The part of the meeting that went least smoothly (and it is least well outlined by Warren) is the last stage when we identified some suggestions about what the parish

might want to do to move from the Angel of Personality to the Angel of Vocation, or from what they⁵¹ are now to what they think they should become. They got a bit bogged down on the details, but even here, there was some real energy, and they began thinking creatively about things they could do rather than talking about how difficult everything is.

At the August vestry meeting, five months into the research project, we reviewed progress on the parish's part in the process, noting that very few of Dudley and Ammerman's exercises had been completed. It was clear that they would not be able to do work on any more of the activities in the workbook but attention was given to three possible new working relationships, any one of which would constitute a significant initiative in Dudley and Ammerman's terms.

1. A renewed and closer relationship with the Samoan-speaking congregation who use the building on Sunday afternoons,
2. A possible re-joining with the neighbouring parish of Otahuhu, after the resignation of the Vicar there. This is the parish of which Mangere East formed a part until 1962. Financial realities in that parish meant that it was also not able to pay a full stipend. Some suggestions had been made at diocesan level that the two parishes together might be able to finance a full stipend.
3. Negotiating a relationship with the Mangere East Family Support Centre (MEFSC), an independent community and social work agency, under the leadership of the Rev'd Peter Sykes, a former Co-vicar of Selwyn Church. The hope would be that this centre would take over the management of the Selwyn complex, and run it as a much more active community facility, paying income to the parish.

At the follow-up meeting six months later, it was agreed that the third suggestion was the most promising way forward. If satisfactory terms could be negotiated, this closer working relationship with MEFSC would allow Selwyn Church members to maintain

⁵¹ I found myself in some difficulty writing this paragraph, as I was present both as a facilitator/observer and as a member of the parish. However, writing it in the first person – “from what we are now to what we think we should become” – became very confusing, so I have re-written the paragraph in the same way as I wrote the other four accounts.

and improve their relationship with and commitment to the local area, but be relieved of much of the administrative burden of maintaining the historic building. At the parish AGM in April 2012, in response to a formal proposal from Peter Sykes, the parish agreed in principle to negotiate an agreement with MEFSC.

In the following chapters, the outcomes from the research project, with both these two smaller parishes, and the three larger ones, will be discussed under two broad headings. First, over two chapters, I will reflect on the findings in relation to the parishes themselves, and their implications for church life and ministry in the years to come. Second, I will outline a discussion of method, both the facilitation techniques used here and a more general reflection on Action Research approaches, particularly in relation to issues of spirituality. Such issues are reasonably obvious in discussions of churches but may be of relevance to any management/organisation studies research.

13. Reflections on the Research Project.

It is fundamental to any research method, but to action research methods in particular, that a process of reflection takes place, to consider the implications of what emerged from the field work itself. That reflection takes on a particular significance as action research theorists (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010; Craig, 2009; Lewin, 1948; Marshall et al., 2011) advocate a continuing spiral of action research - planning action, taking action, evaluating and then diagnosing or constructing new issues that call for renewed action. If the strict interpretation of AR is taken, then the six-month project in the parishes was only in the process of becoming action research; it was perhaps only the first cycle of an AR spiral. Had time or resources or many people's schedules allowed, reflections by the working group members on what emerged from the discussions could have led to the identification of new research/inquiry questions, and from there to new interventions or actions. In an informal way, such continued learning is taking place. This is seen most clearly in Kohimarama's commitment for their *Congregations in Transition* group to continue its work on an ongoing basis, and Pukekohe's action, some months after our research project, in establishing the Pukekohe Community Action organisation. What follows is therefore primarily my own reflection and sense-making (Marshall, Coleman, & Reason, 2011, p. 11) – my own analysis in the spirit of AR and strongly informed by the input of working group members.

At least two distinct categories of analysis are discussed in the next three chapters. First, this chapter and the next outline issues and discussion related to the parishes themselves, and what these findings may contribute to literature on the life and health of church groups. This reflection arises from the most literal application of my research question:

In what ways can local parishes bring about change in themselves to enable them to be more effective in working with their local communities?

In the following chapter, the reflection and sense-making will focus on the process used, and how this project may contribute to literature on action research methodology. This arises out of a particular angle on the research question, which arose as the project developed:

In what ways can local parishes *be facilitated* to bring about change in themselves to enable them to be more effective in working with their local communities?

13.1 Confidence and affirmation

*The project has brought interest among the people
and a feeling that there is a future and that change is possible.*

The Rev'd Shiu Goundar

Whatever else was discovered through the research, it was clear from all five parish groups that the research project had the effect of significantly raising the morale and confidence of at least the working group and by, their testimony, the wider parish. No attempt was made to survey the wider parish membership or to measure 'before and after' levels of confidence. However, at Pukekohe, the one parish where I attended a meeting of parishioners, a number of people made comments about how the whole research project had given the parish a new energy (*Journal 29/8/10*). In the other parishes, conversations within the working groups revealed a clear increase in enthusiasm among those members, and it was typical for their comments to reflect what they perceived to be a raising of morale among other church members. The sentiment was exemplified by a number of comments made by working group members. At Kohimarama, two different members of the group thanked me for being there, and being willing to be flexible about the process. One said:

After all, if you had not come and asked these questions, we would not be having this conversation at all. 2.7.10

Were it not for your initiative, the parish would not be thinking in this energetic, outward-facing way. 24.7.10

The Hillcrest Vicar used the combined meeting of parish working groups in November 2010 to sum up his assessment of the project:

This project helped our church to see how what they were doing in the church was going to impact on the local community. They want change rather than staying in spot A all the time. (Combined meeting, November 10)

As previously noted, the Pukekohe group reported a high sense of encouragement at the early exercise where pins were put into a map to see where attenders live. Their comment was:

I didn't know we had so many pins! It's good to see so much activity. 13.5.10

Shiu Goundar, the Pohutukawa Coast Vicar, also offered a summary statement at the November combined meeting:

We have done well since Edward came – it has brought interest among the people and a feeling that there is a future and that change is possible.

(Combined meeting, November 10)

One aspect of the increased confidence was the realisation in each parish that their particular set of issues, challenges and problems were a local manifestation of issues that are common to most of the church, and also that there are manifold examples of local churches successfully working with those challenges and problems, and finding answers themselves. The reading and study carried out by members of many of the groups, and noted specifically in the discussions of Hillcrest and Kohimarama parishes, clearly contributed to this realisation. In the same way, the whole project, anchored as it was in the internationally recognised work of Dudley and Ammerman, helped the various working groups to perceive that their efforts are part of something much bigger, but also that their situation is unique. The answers in each situation are different, and there is no recipe or formula for success, but it is possible for local groups to discover effective ways forward. This realisation could easily be interpreted negatively: there are no good answers from 'head office' – you are on your own. Instead the project had an opposite and much more positive message: answers are there to discover and they will usually be found among the local gathering of God's people.

The theme of answers to the questions affecting the life of churches being normally (or best?) found within those local gatherings of people can be linked to the early discussion in Chapter 2): What is the Church? There is a common tendency, even among church members, to see the church in very impersonal, institutional terms. This applies to some extent at the parish level but even more so at diocesan or national levels. When looked at in this way, the church seems to be an impersonal

‘thing’ that people attach themselves to. This leads to remarks such as: “The church could solve its problems if it only.....”, or “Why doesn’t the church do ...?”, ignoring the fact that the church is essentially a gathering of people. Perhaps the increased energy evidenced among the five working groups comes about as people realise that “We are the church”, and therefore, we are the ones who will define its character. Putting that in other terms, and drawing on the literature on church growth and church health, perhaps the aim for church leaders should not be how to grow the church, or even how to make the church more healthy, successful or effective; a better aim may be find ways to invigorate the people who make up the church. As Rendle & Mann put it in their discussion of *Strategic Planning as a Spiritual Practice* (2003, p. xvii emphasis in original):

It is not the plan that will change people and give direction to the congregation. It is *the conversation* of the people with one another and with God - that is part of the planning process - that changes people.

The tendency to see the organisation in impersonal terms seems to be a dynamic that affects a range of organisations of all types, and is certainly not limited to religious organisations. It is very common for a group to become focused on its own agenda, be that a commercial or a non-profit one, especially when challenges of various types make it difficult to see ‘success’. It is all too easy for members of a small organisation to see the difficulties and issues that they face entirely in terms of the organisation itself. Knowing that the challenges are common to many other similar organisations, because of economic, demographic or technological changes, does not necessarily help, as group members can easily feel that their little group is powerless to solve the problems it faces.

Churches are at something of an advantage here for two reasons, one specific to Christian gatherings and the other applying to any religious or spiritually oriented groups. There is a strong thread in biblical teaching that promises the grace and strengthening of the Holy Spirit to individuals and groups who are attempting to carry out the work of God. One example is from Ephesians 1: 18ff:

May he enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you can see what hope his call holds for you, how rich is the glory of the heritage he offers among his holy

people, and how extraordinarily great is the power that he has exercised for us believers.

Similarly, Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 are among a large number of biblical passages discussing that theme, as are all passages developing the metaphor of the Body of Christ. If the focus of attention moves away from how to keep the organisation going, or how to get more people to join it, and towards how may we, the people who make up the church, be of better service to the people around us, then church members are likely to access that theme of their tradition promising divine power for the task.

In more general terms, a Christian gathering (and presumably any group organised around a Muslim, Buddhist, Gaian or other religious/spiritual tradition) has a depth of spiritual resource to draw on as they attempt to get beyond purely mechanistic views of their organisation. As they pursue their perceived mandate from their conception of god or the cosmos, they have a deeper perspective from which to view the challenges or problems that present themselves. Taking that point further, and with some reservation, the experience of this project suggests that something similar may be possible in any organisation in which the members have the freedom to manifest more than a financial bottom line, or more than a mechanistic contribution to the organisation's 'outputs'. An example of similar thinking from the secular literature is Senge's image of a tree (Fulmer & Keys, 1998) as a metaphor for the knowledge essential to a learning institution:

The roots are like the deep theory - the deepest timeless insights. They are below the surface and take a long time to develop. But ultimately the health of the tree is dependent on the health of its root system.

Clearly the task of accessing 'deep theory' is more straightforward in a group whose members have a more or less common spirituality but, as the literature on spirituality in organisations shows, and with all the reservations noted when that literature was discussed earlier, the freedom to pursue spiritual dimensions of life is likely to lead to better group and organisation outcomes.

Processes such as those developed in the five working groups help group members to see their situation more broadly. They can see that they have a great deal in common

with a large number of similar organisations, working with similar sets of issues, challenges and problems. They can also see that a good proportion of those organisations have found some unique responses to those problems, and are able to move onward. Processes like this also help members to see the situation more ‘deeply’, as they are encouraged to pursue answers to questions like the one posed by Shiu Goundar, the Vicar of Pohutukawa coast: “What is it that God wants for this parish?” Even if questions are not expressed in such explicitly religious terms, this point is similar to that made in the discussion about transdisciplinarity in the theory section; a very broad approach is likely to lead to deeper, or higher, considerations of values and ethics (e.g. Max-Neef, 2005), and from there to the transcendent and mystical. It can also be linked to the previously noted argument by Stancliffe (2010), that understanding, or wisdom, is more likely to be achieved by asking not how something works but what it is for.

By ensuring that the group members are in charge of the process, including what issues to investigate, what questions to ask about those issues, what other organisations to investigate for comparison, what solutions to explore and perhaps to try, and even what constitutes ‘success’, this research process has enabled the groups to discover solutions that might not have appeared open to them, and given them the courage to put some ideas into force. The project was able to tap into the emancipatory power of research, to be discussed more fully in the next chapter. If organisations are not seen simply as objects of study, but as partners in the enquiry and, to a great extent, in control of it, then the findings become material for the group to use to further its own sense of vision and direction. The organisation can, therefore, discover new strength and encouragement to take the necessary risks involved in bringing about change.

13.2 Change of attitude in church circles

*This book does not argue that mainline churches should change. Rather it argues that mainline churches **are** changing and have **already** changed.*

Dianna Butler Bass (2004, p. 4)

The change in confidence evidenced among the five working groups, especially those from the three larger parishes, may be an example of a wider phenomenon. In the course of our discussions, group members, and especially the vicars involved, evidenced a confidence in their identity and in the part that the church should play in its community that, in my own experience, was not so evident ten years ago. Hadaway & Roozen's comment (1995, p. 75) about an "institutional identity crisis" may have been true in the 1990s, but seems to be becoming less so. Robinson (2003, p. 19) relates this change to the developments discussed above in relation to the emerging church and the missional church:

There are new signs of life among us as the new century emerges...There are, it is clear, possibilities of new life. Moreover, there are opportunities for being the church in authentic and deep ways that may not have been possible in our establishment era.

The apparent success of our research project may provide additional evidence of this gradual change of perception among church leaders.

Possibly the clearest example from the research project of this gradually increasing level of confidence, especially among the leadership of the church, comes from the Kohimarama parish working group. Section 11.2 above refers to a meeting of that group where members discussed a perception that their parish was too small in numbers, and too high in average age to be able to do much effective outreach ministry. This was despite statistics showing that their numbers were very slowly increasing, and their congregation was getting younger and more ethnically diverse than the neighbourhood. In the context of that discussion, when the group was asked about what changes needed to happen for them to be able to be more responsive to our community, the vicar said:

Well, I have been here six years, and I have a very clear idea of the things that need to change, and they are:

- *Improvement in individual and corporate sense of spirituality*

- *More interaction with the bible*
- *More interaction with each other and*
- *A realisation that the area might be monetarily rich, but is spiritually poor.*

4/5/10

This statement struck me at the time as an eloquent expression of the thesis of, for example, Barger (2005), and Standish (2005) that the essential work of the church is to be a witness to the Resurrection/to express its faith in Jesus, and that any pieces of ministry or outreach need to stem from that. More generally, it is an example of the re-emerging confidence among church leaders that there are, indeed, appropriate ways forward for parishes, and that it is possible for them to put in place new initiatives that can be expected to bring new life, not only to their existing members but also the community of which they are a part.

13.3 The Importance of theological emphasis

Liberal church growth is not an oxymoron. Churches with liberal theological orientations are able to grow, despite the protestations of evangelical church growth practitioners. (Percy & Markham, 2006)

The fact that five quite different parishes responded to this research project with new enthusiasm for outward-facing work is significant, particularly as these parishes identify themselves with a wide range of theological emphases. All five parishes have identified potentially exciting new initiatives in community facing ministry and all five parishes are trying in different ways to see those initiatives in spiritual or missional terms. The experience of working with such a theologically diverse group prompted me to explore a body of literature dealing with the influence on the growth and health of churches reflecting different emphases. This issue had not emerged as a significant matter in my review of literature before undertaking the research; its emergence during the course of the project, and of my reflections on it, is an example of the continual learning that is an integral part of action research approaches.

Not one of the parishes I worked with is a ‘niche congregation’ taking a strong stand on a particular emphasis – evangelical, anglo-catholic, liberal or other – and gathering an eclectic congregation around that type of theology. One strongly

evangelical/charismatic parish, and one 'inclusive' parish (whose advertising makes a feature of a commitment to welcoming gay, lesbian and bi-sexual people) were among the wider group expressing some interest in taking part in the research but, for various reasons, dropped out of the project. It would have been very interesting to see how such a parish responded to the process and, should the opportunity arise to repeat it, efforts would be made to include one or more parishes of this type, as well as parishes that are different in their organisational structures, such as Local Shared Ministry parishes.

Although there are no theological extremes represented among the five participating parishes, they still represent a wide range of emphases. One parish, Hillcrest, sees itself as following an evangelical/conservative theological line⁵² but this description is only by comparison with a much more diverse range of views in earlier times. The leadership of Mangere East have been noted for a strongly radical/feminist theological emphasis, though this is weakening as demographic shifts lead to increasing leadership responsibilities being taken up by Pacific Island parishioners. In Pukekohe, as the working group discussed Dudley and Ammerman's option of becoming a niche congregation, they reflected that this could be another way of saying to be more overt and explicit in describing the particular emphasis the parish has been developing over the last decade or so – a very outward-facing and community-orientated approach, perhaps in contrast to other (non-Anglican) churches in Pukekohe, many of whom are following a conservative/evangelical theology. Neither Kohimarama nor Pohutukawa Coast can readily be defined by a theological emphasis 'label'.

What makes this range of emphases significant is that it contradicts a commonly held perception in some church circles that only evangelical or conservative parishes are growing, or healthy. Since the now classic *Why Conservative Churches are Growing* (Kelley, 1977), it has not been difficult to find literature arguing that a conservative or

⁵² I made no attempt to measure or assess this self-view (or those of the other parish working groups) by any form of external observation. The perceptions of parish leadership, represented by working group members, seemed to be the important factor here and attempts to test these opinions 'objectively' would have been well beyond the focus of the research.

evangelical theology is one of the key factors behind the growth and/or health of 'successful' churches. Many commentators (e.g. Reeves, 1998) would agree with Kelley's secondary thesis that the strict demands of faith and practice made by conservative churches on their members are the reason for their success. Two issues interweave here. Is numerical growth the best (or any) indicant of vitality in a congregation? As discussed at length in the literature review section on Church Growth, there now seems to be a reasonable consensus that while numerical growth is a very poor motivation for congregational strategy, if a congregation has successfully become a healthy, life-giving, mission-focused, community-facing group, then it is likely to show evidence of some numerical growth. It will have become a much more attractive group for people to join.

The second issue is whether theological emphasis is, in fact, a causal factor in the health/growth of the congregation. My experience with the parish groups supports a view increasingly found in the literature, suggesting the reality is much more complex or, as Markham has expressed it (2006, p. 165): "Although it is true that many of the growing churches are conservative ones, there is ample evidence that this is a contingent connection, not a logically necessary one". Even if it can be shown that more conservative congregations have grown than liberal or mainstream congregations, it may not be the case that their theology or the strictness of their pastoral practices provide the reasons.

One reason why the issue of theological emphasis is important is that most congregations in New Zealand (and North America, the UK and Australia) are not self-defined as conservative or evangelical. To argue that congregations need to adopt a more conservative theology if they aim for congregational health means that these groups face a depressing dilemma; either they need to change views, beliefs, and emphases that are central to their sense of spirituality, their understanding of God and their image of themselves, or they must reconcile themselves to an existence marked by chronic decline and eventual demise. This research suggests that neither course is necessary.

Hout, Greeley and Wilde (2005) drawing on earlier research (Roof & McKinney, 1987; Wuthnow, 1993), conducted demographic studies of conservative and liberal congregations in the USA, and claim to have demonstrated conclusively that the higher birth rate among members of conservative churches during the years of the baby boom was responsible for at least 70% of the difference in congregation size, and that the much smaller difference in recent years is due to the birthrates becoming more similar. It would be unwise to extrapolate these findings to the New Zealand situation, where both the religious landscape and demographics are quite different, and I am unaware of any researcher who has attempted to do comparable research in New Zealand. Nevertheless, the ‘demographic argument’ has been shown to have sufficient validity that conclusions based purely on theological emphasis need to be questioned.

This project can offer a contribution to the theological debate by providing support to the contention that a dichotomy between conservative or evangelical Christians on the one hand and progressive or liberal ones on the other is no longer useful or meaningful. Murphy (1996) places this distinction in modernist philosophy, where a commitment to foundationalist theories of knowledge required theologians to choose between scripture or experience as the foundation for their beliefs. Murphy argues that the more holistic philosophical approaches associated with postmodern thinking make such sharp distinctions less useful and predicts the development of a continuum or spectrum of theological options, rather than a bifurcation or dichotomy. Drawing on Murphy’s work, Butler Bass (2004, p. 85ff) outlines significant work among both evangelical and liberal theologians working towards new perspectives that are more useful in a postmodern context. She notes commentators from both ends of that spectrum advocating a ‘generous orthodoxy’, an open-yet-committed stance allowing for doubts, questions and ambiguities as a legitimate part of theological reflection, while retaining a commitment to Christian particularity. Mobsby (2008, p. 61) describes the use of the key word “and” as a distinctive feature of the emerging church, resisting polarities between Protestants and Catholics, high church and low, clergy and laity, sacred and secular. These writers seem to bear out the contention of transdisciplinarity theorists (e.g. Nicolescu, 2008a), that virtually all dichotomies can

be resolved at higher levels of meaning; the experience of this research project provides further support for such a view.

A move away from a liberal/conservative demarcation, while retaining an emphasis on the importance of churches' spiritual traditions as an essential aspect of their sense of mission, is supported by commentators in the USA (Hadaway & Roozen, 1995), the UK (Percy & Markham, 2006), and New Zealand (Ward, 2003, 2006, 2009, 2010). Hadaway & Roozen (1995, p. 81) describe four categories of churches from American mainstream or liberal traditions that are growing. The first three are of only peripheral relevance to the present discussion: a small but significant number of market-driven mega-churches, parishes where demographics make growth easy, and niche parishes, gathering a congregation attracted by a particular (in this case, liberal) emphasis. Their fourth category is one that they suggest provides a source of hope for denominations that are struggling with decline in members and the resultant debates about identity. These are the spiritually orientated and liberal churches.

Such churches are unapologetically liberal and heavily involved in community ministry, with a clear focus on social justice. Yet the social and moral agenda of these churches is anchored in a deep and powerful worship experience.

Writing from a UK perspective, Markham (2006) notes that many of the strategies pursued by successful evangelical churches and identified by Woolever & Bruce (2004) as likely to bring about growth (emphasis on welcoming new people, good programmes for children and encouraging people to get involved) are all things that can be done by mainstream or liberal congregations. But he also emphasises that for such a congregation to prosper, it must not only witness to the social and political demands of the gospel, and maintain an interest in the conversation with philosophy, and the social sciences; it must also retain a spiritual emphasis that is recognisably in the Christian tradition, and encourage a genuine pluralism in the congregation, including with those of a more conservative outlook. In another contribution to the same book, Percy and Percy (2006, p. 170) argue that "...churches which hold a liberal position can do so with passion and commitment, and can still believe that the message of the gospel is life-enhancing and well worth sharing."

Ward's analysis of New Zealand church life (2003) maintains a similar commitment to two essential components: a progressive social and cultural adaptation to the surrounding community, and a strong commitment to an orthodox theological position – in Ward's work, a much broader category than conservative evangelical emphases. Churches that manage to thrive are likely to have combined a strong adherence to the basic tenets of Christian belief with an ability to adapt their life and message to the rapidly changing social and cultural contexts.

This research project provides evidence in support of a widening consensus in the literature. Five Anglican parishes, representing diverse points on the theological spectrum, have made similar discoveries as they research possible ways forward. In pursuing the two emphases of looking outwards to their communities to provide a context for their faith, and looking inward to their spiritual traditions for inspiration and guidance, but without adopting a tightly devised formula, all five parishes have come closer to what Butler Bass (2006) describes as “new village churches”. These are congregations that are finding new ways, in a totally different historical and cultural setting, to re-create something of the ethos of the idealised medieval village parish. As she describes them (p. 53):

New village churches are not built through niche marketing, sophisticated programming, capital campaigns, and architectural plans Although they have buildings, new village churches are primarily the communal journeys of a people finding a home in tradition, practice, and wisdom.

In the next chapter, the discussion is extended by attempting to identify what it is that makes a parish thrive, and what can allow such a parish to find answers to the research question.

14. Missional Viability

The church's mission... is related to the universal human design to be the divine image. The church is to be a people who reflect in relation to each other and to all creation the character of the Creator and thereby bear witness to the divine purpose for humankind.

Stanley Grenz (2003, p. 267)

If it is reasonable to argue, as I did in the previous chapter, that there is a gradually increasing level of confidence and sense of mission in church circles, and if this applies across a wide range of the theological spectrum, then it is appropriate to explore what is the basis for this confidence. It appears that church members and their leaders are becoming more optimistic about their ability to be successful in their endeavours. But this immediately raises the question of what constitutes 'success' or 'health' or 'thriving' in organisations of this type.

14.1 Criteria for parish 'wellbeing'

Earlier discussions have alluded to the problems arising from using a number of different concepts as the measure of a parish 'doing well'. Those discussions can be summarised as follows:

Growth. Numerical growth is the most common concept used to measure success, probably because it is the easiest to objectify and measure. It begs the question of whether growth is always a good thing, mirroring similar debates in the economic realm. Many commentators would accept that a church that is doing well (by any of the standards and concepts outlined here) is likely to be a more attractive group of people and is likely to be showing some growth. But a growing number would argue that a focus on growth *per se* is a poor strategy for mission.

Success. Like effectiveness below, success is a very subjective concept and commentators or church members who use it have some obligation to define what they mean. Success at what? The term tends to be used by those who find business and management concepts helpful in discussing church life, so can be used in the sense of success at marketing the church's 'product' or successfully growing the congregation. A further difficulty with the concept discussed earlier is a theological one: to what extent is it appropriate to aspire to success, in a group organised around

the example of Jesus Christ, who “...died helpless, a failure and in pain”? (ACANZP, 1989, p. 535). I agree with the observation by Mobsby (2008, p. 141) that churches taking on capitalist and business models cannot easily undertake mission activities that are counter to business values. They are likely to target the powerful, rich and successful, avoiding the poor and the disadvantaged, or at least to prioritise for programmes that may contribute to the value of equities of various kinds, or accept potentially lucrative government contracts rather than attend to the pressing needs of their communities.

Health. Asking whether a congregation or parish is healthy may be one of the more helpful approaches for church members or leaders to take, as it invites a much more holistic perspective. However, the term ‘Church Health’ has taken on a technical sense, associated with diagnostic approaches to consultancy with congregations, especially in the USA.

Viability. In practice this tends to be reduced to questions of financial or economic viability. The question “is this parish viable?” usually means, “Can it pay its way?” Can it pay the staff costs, maintain its buildings and run an acceptable minimum of worship, pastoral and social programmes? These are indeed important questions and church leaders at a diocesan or national level are required to give much creative considerations to those places where the answer is no. However, it is often difficult, when the focus is on financial viability, to explore how well or otherwise a parish is attending to its reason for existence – its participation in the *Missio Dei*.

A number of other concepts that have not been discussed earlier can be added to such a list, illustrating further the range of perspectives that are used to discuss the life of local churches and the need for clarity about what people are looking for as they try to bring about what they perceive to be improvements.

Level of engagement. Winseman (2007) argues that the key factor in leading a local congregation to thrive is the degree to which its members are “engaged”, meaning dedicated, energised and growing spiritually. He considers that all these qualities are measurable (the book is published by the Gallup Press) and that proven strategies are available to improve a parish’s degree of engagement.

Effectiveness. As with ‘success’, it is common for church leaders to look for ways to make their churches and/or their own ministries more ‘effective’, without a common

understanding of what might constitute effectiveness. Certainly in Callahan's case (1983), effective means growing. For Schultz & Schultz (2003), drawing on Gallup & Lindsay (2002), effectiveness is a matter of enabling church members in deepening their relationships with God and with the people in their communities. There is a tendency for effectiveness to be related particularly to the ministry of church leaders, rather than the life or mission of the congregation. A book edited by Dudley (1983), entitled *Building Effective Ministry* is a case in point. Literature drawing on business models sometimes equates effectiveness with efficiency. Bloede (1996) presents the case that a clear definition of duties and responsibilities, such as caring, communicating, administration and worship will lead to greater efficiency and, therefore, effectiveness.

Vitality. Another concept used by some commentators, notably Robinson (2006), to define a congregation that is 'doing well' is vitality. This is a variation on the metaphor of health and thriving and is as difficult to define. In Robinson's treatment of the metaphor, vitality is the result of inspired leadership, in particular leadership that encourages a parish to see itself as an incarnational community.

14.2 Missional Viability

All of the concepts outlined above can have value when analysing and discussing the life and work of parishes. The experience of my work with the five parish groups and my reflections on the relevant literature lead me to suggest that another construct might be more helpful to church members and to parish and diocesan leadership; it may be more fruitful to ask whether a parish is *missionally viable*. Is it capable of exercising its mission or, in the language of missional church commentators, is it capable of participating constructively in the Mission of God?

In the next section I will outline what I see to be dimensions of Missional Viability; to take the concept as a whole, it is at the same time a much broader idea and a more focused one than most of the terms outlined above. If a parish is missionally viable, or is moving in that direction, then that can provide a context for investigating other concepts such as growth, financial viability or health. On the other hand, if it is not

missionally viable and there is no realistic prospect of it becoming so, then there is little point in exploring the other questions.

Most local churches are already missionally viable or it is comparatively straightforward for them to become so. In contrast, most churches, especially in a country like New Zealand, where average church size is quite small, are not able to become 'successful', given the specific definitions of success commonly in use. Many churches are unlikely, for a variety of reasons, to grow significantly in numbers or financial contributions, and a considerable number of parishes are demonstrably not viable in the economic sense of self-sufficiency. Up to half of parishes in some New Zealand dioceses are not able to afford a full time vicar; the various arrangements known as Total Ministry or Local Shared Ministry stem from a recognition that these units still are, or can be, missionally viable. Conversely, it is not difficult to identify parishes that are clearly viable in a financial or economic sense but are not missionally viable. They may, for example, have so much energy focused on their own survival or their own internal tensions as to make them incapable of much life-giving ministry.

I suggest that in any discussion or analysis of local parishes, by their own members as they work on their own strategic planning, by newly appointed clergy as they discern the most appropriate priorities for their energies or by diocesan leaders setting priorities for financial or other assistance, the question of a parish's missional viability should come first. If the discernment is that the parish is indeed missionally viable, then energy and resources should be channelled into whatever facilitation will encourage the parish members to get on with the work of mission and find their own direction. If it is discerned that a parish is not missionally viable but could become so, (possibly a very large number of parishes) then rectifying that situation should be the priority. If a parish or congregation is found to be not only not missionally viable but, realistically, very unlikely ever to become so (hopefully a small but definitely existing category) then those are the parish units where some kind of drastic action is required, either leading to closure in the most gracious way possible or bringing about a major reconstructing of the congregation – effectively starting again.

An example from my own experience may illustrate this point. My first parish placement as a curate was to a small church building and congregation that was part of a much bigger parish. This congregation of a dozen or so people with an average age in excess of 70 was drawn from quite a wide area, mostly out of dissatisfaction with the ministry direction of the larger parish. This group had almost no contact with the community of people living near the church and no energy for creating those contacts. There was no problem with the finances, as the little group was able to make a reasonable contribution to parish funds and to attend to routine maintenance on the building but as a congregation it was manifestly not missionally viable and could never become so on its own. With the guidance and assistance of my vicar and the bishop, I was encouraged to start a new congregation in that church at another time on Sunday morning. Over a period of years the new congregation grew strongly. The new parishioners and I put in place a number of ministry initiatives, including useful contacts with the local community. Eventually the new community was able to absorb the original group, and the combined congregation was able to make a much more positive contribution to the life and mission of the whole parish.

The three categories mentioned above – missionally viable now, not missionally viable but able to become so, and not missionally viable and unlikely ever to become so – can be related to Mann's discussion (1999) of the life cycles of congregations. She posits that congregations, like any other social organisation, go through a life cycle of birth, formation, stability, decline and death, unless creative interventions take place to interrupt the cycle and give the social organisation a new 'lease on life'. If that intervention occurs early enough in the decline stage (while the congregation is still missionally viable), it can be seen as an ongoing process of renewal. If the decline is more established, it needs to take the form of a revitalisation – leading to a new missional viability. And if the decline is at a more advanced stage, then a redevelopment needs to take place. While not necessarily accepting the inevitability associated with Mann's model, I concur with the principle that the lesser the remaining missional viability of a parish or congregation, the greater will be the necessary change required to restore viability.

If I apply the concept of missional viability to the five parishes that participated in the research project, then I would assess the three larger parishes as missionally viable. There are some areas in each where some work would strengthen their performance against this construct but, in each case, the church members are aware of what is needed and are working in that direction. The two smaller parishes are not missionally viable but could become so. In both cases I suggest it will be more important to work on their ability to take part in mission than on how to pay the bills, as the second will almost certainly follow the first but it is by no means sure that the reverse would be so.

14.3 What constitutes missional viability?

Given the discomfort expressed at many points of this thesis with mechanistic or formulaic approaches to the way groups of people organise themselves, especially when they organise themselves as churches, it is important to emphasise that I do not see missional viability as a concept where a given parish will pass or fail, or even a quality that lends itself to a scale with a score. Perhaps a more appropriate metaphor is the image of a journey, a very common motif in Christian spirituality. The first title for the adherents of Jesus was Followers of the Way; all Christian individuals and all churches (by every use of that word) can be seen as on a journey. The concept of missional viability suggests that the journey for members of churches should be in the direction of participation in mission and that is likely to be achieved by emphasis on three distinct elements. All three have been alluded to at various points in this thesis but not brought together in one discussion. These three components all strongly overlap each other and are not listed in order of priority.

1. A clearly definable relationship with a group of people outside of its worshipping members – normally the surrounding geographical community but possibly a group defined by other factors.
2. A rediscovery of the church's mission and a coherent understanding and expression of the congregation's contribution to mission.
3. A commitment to deepening of spirituality among its members and others with whom they have contact

14.4 A relationship with the community.

Who is my neighbour? Luke 10:29

A relationship with the community is, perhaps, the most concrete of the three elements that make up missional viability. It is essential that any parish has a functional relationship with a group of people for whom and with whom it is involved in mission. It has been noted earlier that the tradition and ethos of Anglican spirituality is rooted in the sense of the parish church; a vicar is traditionally entrusted with the ‘cure of souls’, meaning the care of everyone, church members or not, who live in a defined area. In a great many cases, this theological ideal is a long way from the experiential reality. It is not simply, as noted in the introductory sections, that most parishes find themselves prioritising time, finances and other resources for the worship and pastoral needs of their own worshipping members. In addition, it is frequently difficult for church members to identify who, outside of their current worshippers, is their community.

Missionally viable churches have made, and are making, serious progress in answering the question, “Who is my neighbour?” In the great majority of cases this will be a geographically-oriented set of people though, as many commentators have noted, the group may bear very little relationship to the formally drawn parish boundaries. It could be the people who live around the church (or some of them) but it might equally be people who work near the church or people who drive past it.

The mapping exercises provided by Dudley and Ammerman and similar approaches by others (Chew & Ireland, 2009; Roxburgh, 2010) can be very useful to parishes, as they were to those in this study. Exercises of this type assist church members to move their thinking away from ideals, which can be too ephemeral to be of much value, or from the daunting concept of ‘everyone in the community’. Their thinking can, therefore, be focused on particular categories of people with whom the church members can forge and deepen a relationship, either out of some form of mutual interest or out of some sense of need that resonates with church members who feel they might have something to offer.

In a minority of parishes, concentrated in larger cities where there is a wider range of choice and where geographical distances are smaller, a focus for mission may not be geographical at all. Mention has been made already of ‘niche congregations’ – parishes that are organised around a particular form of worship or theological emphasis. Most cathedrals operate in this way. The majority of cathedral congregations are gathered from a wide area of the city and are formed by people who are attracted to the formality, scale and strong music traditions of cathedral worship. All large cities in New Zealand have a number of large churches characterised by evangelical and/or charismatic theology and there are a number of others known for their Anglo-Catholic or liberal theology or their work among students. Depending on geography, a local parish connection and a niche identity are not mutually exclusive but, in either case, the parish develops a pastoral, social and often political relationship with particular groups of people.

In a missionally viable parish these relationships are real and functioning. It should be possible for the parish leadership and, even better, for outsiders to describe easily which schools, clubs, organisations or categories of people that church members are mixing with, working alongside, advocating for or simply getting to know. If a parish is indeed growing numerically then it is to be hoped that the number of relationships with others outside its membership will also be growing. If not, then it is quite possible for a parish to be growing but not be missionally viable.

14.5 A rediscovery of the church’s mission

*Mission should move people from belonging to the faith to owning the faith,
from knowing their neighbour to caring for their neighbour,
and from subduing the environment to caring for the environment.*

This age in history has all the potential to be one of the most excitingly creative in Christian mission. (Randerson, 2010b)

The earlier review of literature around the words ‘mission’ and ‘missional’ noted an emerging consensus around the contention that churches exist for the purpose of participating in the *Missio Dei* or the Mission of God. In other words, it is misleading to suggest that the church (or a particular church) *has* a mission; a better understanding is that the church *is* a mission or is part of the mission of God. If this

perspective is accepted, then it suggests that churches are by that reason different from secular organisations. Even if a strongly secular/rationalist perspective is taken, arguing either that there is no God or that spirituality is either delusionary or irrelevant, churches must still be seen as distinct from other organisations, because their members *believe*, or say they believe, that God is, that God is love and that God is involved in the whole of life.

The second component of missionally viable churches is that not only are they coming to see themselves as part of the mission of God but also that they are increasingly able to articulate what it is they have to offer. Again, this is not a yes or no issue. All parishes or congregations are able to deepen their understanding and appreciation of mission. But to return to the language of journeying, a parish will increase its missional viability as it progressively moves toward a coherent understanding of its part in God's mission. To put it simply, having identified who the people are that they feel called to work with and among, it is important to understand what to say to those people.

The ubiquitous practice of developing mission and vision statements, even in secular organisations with a specific or implied focus on profit-making aspirations, has its origin in Christian reflection; producing such statements may be a useful way to articulate a parish's sense of mission. Many resources on assisting congregational change processes or strategic planning encourage production of a mission statement (Chew & Ireland, 2009; Dudley & Ammerman, 2002; Rendle & Mann, 2003). If a statement of this kind does assist in articulating a sense of mission then it serves its purpose but there is no guarantee that such an exercise will bring about a commitment to work with and for the people who have been identified as the church's 'neighbours'. Conversely, as Carroll points out (1998, p. 180), having a vision for a congregation's ministry does not require having it in writing. They may just get on with it rather than summarise it in a written statement.

Despite my considerable discomfort with the language of marketing in talking about churches, given the overly reified and mechanistic ways in which such language refers to the church and to its 'customers' or 'target groups', those who adopt this

perspective (e.g. Angheluta, Strambu-Dima, & Zaharia, 2009) encourage church members to reflect on what is their ‘product’. What is it that this group of people, known as a church or a parish, has to offer to and in the community they feel called to be part of? Is there something distinctive about this group of people and their contribution, as compared with the Rotary Club, the school or even the local bike shop?

Among the five parishes I was working with, the two which made the strongest impression on me in this regard were Hillcrest and Pukekohe. In quite different ways, these two groups had done a lot of work, well before my involvement, on developing their sense of what they had to offer in their respective communities. In both cases, they had moved away from offering *to* the neighbourhood and were increasingly seeing themselves as part of the community, so their offering was *in* or *with* or *among* other groups of people. In Hillcrest, this was exemplified by their enthusiasm for the concept of being an incarnational community. In their case, the decision to change their name to St Francis Community Church was not simply a marketing ploy; it was an expression of their sense of calling to be a Christian presence in and among the community as a whole. Their emphasis appeared to be moving away from growing the worshipping congregation, however welcome that would be, and towards building and enabling the wider community of which they are a part.

In a very different way, I experienced members of Pukekohe parish doing something similar. Their reflections on their history, throughout the research process, continued to note how the shape of the parish’s ministry had altered many times, reflecting changes in the life of the town.

It’s amazing how the parish has changed over the years as the town has changed.

A core of people have faithfully maintained an Anglican tradition, with all sorts of changes in expression. 1.7.10

This reflection led the working group members to the view that continual development not only was occurring but had to occur given their continued participation in the town’s development. “Maintaining an Anglican tradition” might mean a range of different things in different parish contexts but, in this case, parish members found it helpful and motivating to summarise their sense of calling in the

phrase from their revised Mission Statement: *where life and faith meet*. The progress that this parish was making, and in some ways this was true of all five parishes, seemed to support the contention by Hobbs in his list of indicators of a Missional Church (2004, p. 160); in such a church mission is a priority and, in overt and communal ways, the members are seeking to be and do “what God is calling us to know, be and do.”

In the introductory chapters, it was noted that the Anglican Church internationally has done a considerable amount of work in reflecting on how Anglican tradition impacts on the work of mission. This work has produced the 5-fold Mission Statement. (Anglican Communion Office, 2009; Ross, 2010), which was used in all the participating parishes as a framework for discussion. It is not essential for the members of any parish to conceptualise their mission in terms of all or any of that statement’s five points but the statement does provide a much-used framework for the range of emphases and activities that might be included. What is essential, I suggest, for missional viability is that a parish develops some sense of its mission or some sense of what it has to offer to those around it.

Until perhaps the 1980s it was relatively unusual for Anglican parishes to make a lot of use of language of mission; mission tended to be equated with personal evangelising and/or overseas missions. The gradual change that has taken place, discussed earlier with reference to the work of Mead (1991), Tickle (2008) and others and also through the emerging church and missional church discourses, means that churches across the theological spectrum are much more ready to conceptualise their life and work in these terms. Bayes and Sledge (2006, p. 16) are typical of this trend with their assertion that “Commitment to the parish system is commitment to mission; there is no theological room in it for the idea that the Church is just there to chaplain its own”. As Butler Bass has noted (2009, p. 7) , there was a tendency in the last half of the 20th Century for mainline congregations to disengage from or mute tradition, in favour of contemporary issues, problems and theologies. More recently, she argues, church members are asking new questions of the old traditions. My experience with the parish groups in this project appears to confirm what she describes in relation to American mainline Protestantism: a “detraditioning” in the 1960s and a gradual

“retraditioning” now, and it seems that it is in these retraditioning churches that new patterns of missional viability are being discovered.

The link between tradition and mission is important and it is one that can be traced in much of the missional church literature. To say simply that churches need to develop a sense of mission is to return to a mechanistic, formula-oriented perspective and requires that they look outside of themselves, probably to various business models, for their inspiration and direction. Instead, by looking to over 2000 years of their own tradition and countless examples of other Christian groups working out what mission means in their particular contexts, parish groups may be able to see an outward facing perspective as a natural manifestation of being Christian. That is why I suggest that an important component of missional viability is a *rediscovery* of the church’s mission.

14.6 A commitment to deepening of Spirituality

The Sole purpose of the Church is to negotiate the Word of God, not to run activities or buildings. The word must engage with the world, the text with the context.

Jim Hart (2004, p. 19)

All four vicars I worked with (I being the icar of the fifth parish myself) had different ways of expressing a third dimension of missional viability and their own desire to deepen the spirituality of their respective parish’s members:

- Stephen Baxter at Kohimarama argued consistently that “We cannot do any effective neighbourhood ministry unless we are equipped/spiritually fit/filled with the grace of God.
- Tony Wescott at Hillcrest asked “What practices do we need to develop to lead us in the direction of being an Incarnational church?”
- Jan Wallace at Pukekohe remarked that she had an overriding issue that she kept coming back to in her reflections: We need to find stronger ways to feed the people spiritually.
- Shiu Goundar at Pohutukawa coast repeatedly asked in our reflections, what is it that God wants for the parish?

When Hadaway & Roozen spoke of “spiritually orientated and liberal churches” (1995) they were drawing on a thread found in much of the emerging church/missional church literature. This literature describes a wide-spread emphasis on encouraging and enabling individuals and groups to deepen their own spiritual understanding and experience. Some examples use the biblical language of discipleship - training and equipping individuals to become more Christ-like. Rouse & Van Gelder (2008, p. 56) suggest that congregations which focus on becoming discipling communities as they deeply engage their context are more likely to develop a healthy life moving beyond institutional survival or just serving the needs of their members. An alternative form of vocabulary describing essentially the same emphasis is that of spiritual formation. This term, traditionally associated with monastic forms of Christianity and with the training of clergy, reflects the conviction that the essential dimension of spirituality is *who we are* as Christians, rather than *what we do*. Seminaries traditionally refer to their work as the ‘formation’ rather than the ‘training’ of clergy. Taking up the point previously noted from McNeal (2003), I suggest that missional viability may increase as churches move away from a concentration on maintaining congregational structures (church membership, participation and support) and towards the spiritual formation of their members and of all those with whom they come in contact.

The spirituality group run by Kohimarama parish was the most clear-cut example of an emphasis on spiritual formation among the five parishes. This group, which started a few months before my project took place, provides an opportunity for interested parish members to discuss various forms of spirituality and investigate how they might apply either to those individuals or to the parish as a whole. The discussions of that group had an early influence on the project working group, as the two groups have some members in common. A comment from the vicar of that parish exemplifies this point:

Whatever new initiative we decide on must emerge out of our spirituality. There is not much point in us just coming up with some social service initiative that may not be as good as what a whole lot of other people might offer. But what we can offer is a commitment to the spiritual life of the parish and if

some initiative arises from that it promises to be much more useful and long-lasting. 22.4.10

In Pukekohe, Jan Wallace's concern to "find stronger ways to lead the people spiritually" led, as an indirect outcome of our discussions, to some new ways to use the weekly Collects and Lectionary readings⁵³ for at-home reflections and learning. This is an example of an increasingly wide-spread development among churches influenced by emerging church or missional church thinking. In a wide variety of ways, church members are finding great value in developing or rediscovering a range of activities, rituals and customs that together are referred to as Christian or spiritual practices. Van Gelder (2007, p. 102) drawing on Bass (1998) notes that such practices are rooted in the Christian tradition and that communities cultivate an active awareness of the presence of God by practicing their faith within these shared activities. Examples are the rediscovery of traditional vestments (including by churches that have traditionally not been attracted by Catholic influences), use of the calendar of seasons, regular readings from early Christian writers, labyrinths, various forms of meditation, morning and evening prayer, use of candles, incense and bells, fasting, and Sabbath observance. As noted earlier, writers on the emerging church (e.g. Belcher, 2009, p. 125ff) have expressed concern at a "pick-and-mix" approach to worship that encourages faddishness and consumerist entertainment, and have stressed that spiritual practices must be grounded in a full understanding of the traditions from which they are drawn. Guder (1998, p. 154) argues that what he calls ecclesial practices are "... self-conscious, disciplined processes that regulate and shape both personal and communal life". He suggests that such practices should be:

- historical (derived from a received tradition)
- communal (defined, developed and communicated corporately)
- experiential (the benefits can only be appreciated by participation) and
- dynamic (they grow and change as people participate).

The exploration of spirituality observed at Kohimarama, spiritual practices at Pukekohe and similar attempts in all five parishes provides evidence that many local

⁵³ Both terms defined in the glossary.

churches have been influenced by the rediscovery of traditional patterns through spiritual practices. As they continue to journey in the direction of deepening their spirituality, these parishes may increasingly fit a description applied by Butler Bass to her “vital congregations”(2006, p. 305):

These congregations emphasise contemplation in action, faith in daily life, finding God in all things, the reign of God in the here and now, and creating better communities: by joining spirituality to social concerns, they are constructing a theological alternative to both conservative evangelicalism and classic Protestant liberalism.

To put that more simply, they will have become more missionally viable.

Although the three dimensions of missional viability outlined above are distinct, they also overlap and influence each other. A focus on developing and deepening relationships with specific categories of people in the community is likely to lead to an exploration of how the mission of the church relates to those people. A coherent and explicit expression of mission is likely to involve a desire to deepen spirituality if the mission is to be carried out. I do not suggest that these three components are all that contribute to missional viability. What I do suggest is that a combination of emphases such as this is likely to lead to health, to a life-giving contribution to the surrounding community and to growth in all the senses noted earlier in Mead (1993) and Buckle (1978): Numerical, Maturational, Organic and Incarnational Growth. Woolever & Bruce’s statistical analysis of the strengths of congregations (2004, 2008) emphasises that a *mix* of congregational strengths is essential for a parish to thrive. It is this broad approach, I suggest, that is most likely to fulfil of Tickle’s prediction of a “re-energised shaping of existing forms of parish” (2008, 2009).

The three components that I have identified through reflection on the research project with five parishes and on the associated literature seem to match comparable lists offered from two theologically diverse backgrounds. Rev Jim Kitchens, Pastor of a San Francisco Presbyterian Church noted for its inclusive emphasis on matters of sexuality, included in his *The Postmodern Parish* (2003, p. 75) a summary of missional church thinking, originating in the Gospel and our Culture Network. Kitchens suggests that there are three aspects of the calling on the church as it

contributes to the *missio Dei*. The church is called and sent to be the apostle to the world, to represent the reign of God and to cultivate communities of the Holy Spirit. The second list was offered by Richard Elena, Bishop of Nelson, the New Zealand diocese most associated with evangelical theology, in an address to his diocesan synod:

There are three essential marks of a missional church:

Firstly a missional church will always be a serving church. It will be constantly looking for new ways of reaching out into the local community and responding to the needs of that community because relationship is the seed-bed of mission.

Secondly a missional church will always be a witnessing church. When and how did we lose the confidence and courage to share our own stories, simply and transparently?

Thirdly, a missional church will always be a confessing church. The heart of our faith is the confession that Jesus Christ is Lord (Elena, 2011).

In summary, I return to the research question: In what ways can local parishes bring about change in themselves to enable them to be more effective in working with their local communities? My research offers at least a partial answer: by developing closer relationships with particular people and categories of people outside of the worshipping membership, by rediscovering a sense of the church's mission and by reemphasising the need for spiritual growth among the membership and all with whom they come in contact.

15. Reflections on Process and Methods

Having discussed in some detail in the last two chapters the substantive issues addressed by my research question, I now turn to a different series of issues that arise from my choice of research method. This discussion can be seen as addressing a particular angle on the research question

In what ways can local parishes *be facilitated to* bring about change in themselves to enable them to be more effective in working with their local communities?

Putting that another way, how did my involvement with these parishes assist them in participating in an action research process so as to bring about change, and how might such an approach assist similar groups in future? These reflections could perhaps be seen as a type of first-person action research: how did my actions of instigating the project, working flexibly with the participants, reflecting with them on what was working well or less well, and therefore instigating more actions, assist the broader project being undertaken by the parish groups?

The discussion will progress from reflecting on specific techniques to a wider review of the whole methodological approach. My use of a default technique (Dudley & Ammerman, 2002, p. 267), and my willingness to use that technique flexibly, is discussed with reference to the list of seven “areas of paradox” identified by Gayã Wicks and Reason (2009), as being inherent in AR facilitation. A discussion of each paradox in turn provides a framework for reflecting on the whole six-month project and the insights that arose from it. I then discuss the approach taken, which I describe as ethnographic pastoral inquiry, and review some aspects of what makes this approach distinct. In making claims for the academic rigour of this approach, I draw on Stringer’s suggestion that, in place of validity, projects based on AR and similar approaches should aim to demonstrate trustworthiness. I do this through his four criteria of Credibility, Transferability, Dependability and Confirmability. Finally, in this chapter the contribution that this project may make to literature on methodology is analysed using a different seven-point list, that offered by Bradbury Huang (2010) to assess whether research articles are worthy of publishing in the journal *Action Research*.

15.1 Default process

In my own experience and supported by other anecdotal information I have found it very common for a facilitator or consultant to introduce their work with words to the effect of: “This is your process, not mine – I am not here to impose anything on you”. But it is also my experience that many such consultants then offer one of two extremes. They either offer no clear direction so the group in question has to work out the process themselves, raising the question that if they have to do the work themselves, why did they need a consultant in the first place. Alternatively, the consultant offers a very firm process and is unwilling to change it. This means that their apparently inclusive introduction can be interpreted as: This is what I am offering you – if you don’t want it, then I will go away. Both approaches can be seen as examples of what a recent edition of *Information Today* (Anonymous, 2010) called “facipulation”. The six-month research project has provided a process for avoiding the two extremes, both offering a clear consultative process and managing to be inclusive and flexible in its application.

A well tried and proven process was on offer. Dudley and Ammerman (2002) had shown that their process can work well. Many dozens of North American congregations had used the process and found it helpful in their situations. I was confident that, had we followed their process completely, we were likely to find some useful answers to my research question. I made it clear that in the absence of alternative direction from the planning groups, this was the process I would follow. On the other hand, in my desire to regard the working groups as co-researchers, I never considered that Dudley and Ammerman’s process was the only way of reaching those answers. If any of the groups had a different way they wished to work and could provide me with a coherent rationale for such an alternative, then I was willing to amend the way we worked.

I suggest that my flexible application of a default process provided a way of resolving or, at least, managing the paradoxes described by Gayã Wicks and Reason (2009). In their view, it is characteristic of AR processes to work against a tension between the need for the facilitator to provide clear leadership and direction and the need to allow the group in question to have the maximum degree of control over research into what

is, after all, their business. How this project managed that tension is discussed by looking at the seven areas of paradox in turn; the seven headings in italics are drawn from Gayã Wicks and Reason's article.

1. *Contracting: providing a sense of clear purpose early on, in the knowledge that this clarity will need renegotiating as the inquiry proceeds, relationships develop and understanding deepens*

The account of the research project has outlined the processes of contacting parishes, negotiating with vicars and/or vestries and ensuring that the working groups were duly authorised to do this work on behalf of their respective parishes. The groups were provided with copies of Dudley and Ammerman's workbook and information on how to purchase more copies if desired. My willingness to depart from that process was explained at the start, but each working group began with the assumption that this workbook would provide the structure for our work, unless and until we found reasons to follow some other course.

In fact, all five groups departed from Dudley and Ammerman's process to one degree or another. It was, therefore, also important to have at my disposal some other techniques to draw on in response to a group's desire to work differently. Schein and others have referred to this as a "toolkit" approach. In particular the "Angel of the Church" exercise (Warren, 2004) proved very useful at a particular point with two of the working groups.

As has already been noted, neither Dudley and Ammerman's workbook, nor Warren's angel of the church exercise are themselves AR processes, particularly not 'pure AR' as described in Section 8.4 above. It was the renegotiation of our contract as the inquiry proceeded, relationships developed and understanding deepened, that constituted the beginnings of an AR process.

2. *Boundaries: an inquiry group needs boundaries in order to open a safe communicative space; but if these boundaries are too firm the group will become isolated from its context.*

This area of paradox can equally relate to boundaries of membership in the working groups or to boundaries as to the subject matter they were welcome to discuss. It has

been noted that the composition of the respective working groups varied from parish to parish, some being self-selected by those interested, one being an already existing committee and one being the vestry itself. In each case, once the group started work, other individuals were not invited to join the group. (In the case of the Pohutukawa Coast parish, attempts were made to recruit additional membership but, as these attempts were unsuccessful, the generalisation applies to all five parishes.) Consistency of membership did, indeed, contribute to safe communicative space. On the other hand, in all cases the working group members were encouraged to use every opportunity to share what was happening with the wider parish membership and to solicit input from other people. This allowed working group members to feel that they were contributing on behalf of the wider membership.

Dudley and Ammerman's workbook itself encourages a very wide participation and that contributed to a broad interpretation of what we were researching. The groups did have the research question presented to them but as they took advantage of the safe communicative space they began to look widely at how to answer it. It was this that led, in various ways, to all the groups moving away from the original process.

3. Participation: a facilitator must have a vision of participation if they are to engage with others, but that vision must be held lightly and flexibly.

The ways in which I participated in discussions varied from group to group. At Mangere East, I actively facilitated all discussions, as was appropriate in a parish where I am the vicar. At Hillcrest, my only contact was active participation in the monthly meetings, plus occasional email contact with the Vicar. At Pukekohe, Kohimarama and Pohutukawa Coast, I also took part in a variety of congregational gatherings, to assist the working group in communicating with the wider membership. In every case, I took my lead from the members of the working group.

The varying nature of my participation reflects the insights of Hergenrather et al (2010, p. 228) as they described an approach called Community-Based Participatory Research; the authors do not describe this as an AR approach but a number of similarities can be identified. In such an approach, the academic researcher must not only make time to interact with organisational representatives and build rapport, but also articulate the overlapping interests and perspectives of the University process.

Openness about these overlapping interests and willingness to participate on a level appropriate to that particular organisation are likely to encourage development of trust and becoming a community partner, not an outsider.

4. *Leadership: a facilitator needs to provide appropriate leadership in order to create the conditions in which participation can flourish; and also be able to relinquish power and step away from leadership so that participants can fully own their work.*

I reached a particular point at a meeting of one of the working groups where every suggestion made by me appeared to make very little progress. Ideas were received openly but discussion moved on without any of the suggestions being acted on. It became clear that the difficulty lay not with the processes I was advocating, but with individuals in the group having concerns that were different from those of other members, with the result that these people were continually talking past each other. I decided that I should initiate no further suggestions but would simply sit with the group to listen and learn. If they wanted me to advise on any matter or facilitate a piece of work, I would be available to them but they would need to work out their own process. As it happened, by the next meeting the group seemed to have either resolved the difficulties or moved past them and initiated a series of steps that enabled a great deal of progress on their research. Where they then needed my assistance was in reporting back to the wider parish membership. That incident seemed to exemplify the two-way trust that this process requires; group members showed trust in allowing me to be part of a group that had some tensions running through it, without fearing that I would exacerbate those tensions or force a solution on the group. I had to trust that if I 'did nothing' a satisfactory way forward would emerge. It was group members themselves, as they analysed the outcomes of earlier actions, and made sense of their situation in the light of what they had learned, who devised a new round of actions, in keeping with the cyclical pattern inherent in AR approaches.

5. *Anxiety: since all practices of inquiry stimulate anxiety communicative spaces need to be able to contain anxiety so that it may be expressed.*

At the first meeting of the Pohutukawa Coast working group, I was greeted with the question:

You haven't come to offer us a blueprint, have you? (16-4-10)

The question seemed to encapsulate the anxiety felt by many groups at what might be entailed in a research project. I was able to reassure the individual quite readily, but it was also important that he was free to ask the question. Perhaps more significant was the level of anxiety experienced in several groups, as to whether they really were free to depart from Dudley and Ammerman. Two members of the Kohimarama group asked for a private meeting with me to ask whether a departure from the workbook would 'jeopardise the integrity of my research'. Similarly, members of the Hillcrest group, as they drew increasingly on insights from previous reading they had found, were concerned that the structure of my research would suffer. The following month, a member of the small Pohutukawa Coast working group approached me in private suggesting that, as they were struggling to complete the work, perhaps they should withdraw from the project all together. His main concern was for the effect of such a decision on the integrity of my research process; an interesting echo of the Kohimarama group's concern. In each case, I was able to reassure the group representatives that as long as they could explain why they saw the need for a new process or even for a withdrawal from the project, then my research would not suffer at all; the decision would itself become a matter of discussion and reflection.

It was this series of discussions about desired changes in direction that marked the transition from a participant observation/ethnographic process to an action research one. Sufficient communicative space had been created that the groups felt able to take ownership of the research, so increasingly it was their actions and their reflections that were providing direction. This is in keeping with Schein's assertion (2008, p. 277) that good participant observation and ethnography inevitably become Clinical Inquiry/Research, a form of AR.

6. *Chaos and order: since all inquiry in some sense disturbs established ways of seeing and doing, sufficient order is needed to contain necessary chaos and confusion.*

My insistence that every one of the parish projects was authorised by a resolution of vestry, and that the vicar must be a member of the working group, was a key element to maintaining order and avoiding confusion. That resolution authorised the working groups to collect information, communicate with the wider parish and organise the

results into an action plan. My own experience of nearly three decades as a vicar had convinced me that this was crucial. Had this step been omitted, a number of chaotic or confusing outcomes would have been more likely. The project might have been seen as a personal interest of the Vicar, with less buy-in from parish members, or the group might have been perceived as unrepresentative of the wider membership. Had the vicar not been a part of each group, then a group recommendation that did not have the vicar's support would always have been a possibility.

The vestry resolution acknowledged that the work to be undertaken would be guided by Dudley and Ammerman's workbook. This appeared to give parish members confidence that any changes advocated, however disturbing they might prove, would be grounded in well-proven principles. This applied even when the groups chose to depart from the workbook. They still needed to provide a rationale for a different course of action and the conversations that ensued as each group contemplated such a change provided further order to what otherwise might have become a very confusing process.

7. *Liberatory and practical orientations: a tension between an intent to address and solve practical issues and the desire to liberate people from oppression and self-delusion.* (Gayā Wicks & Reason, 2009)

“Oppression and self-delusion” are stronger words than I would have chosen here, but it was clear in every parish that the groups were working from a perception that they had some difficulties to address. My own suggestion that most parishes find themselves prioritising for the worship and pastoral needs of their own members, rather than the work in and with their communities, seemed to be echoed by group members. They were to some extent looking to this project to liberate them to do the work they felt called to do.

The benefit of the flexible approach was illustrated in comments by the working groups, especially during their combined meeting at the end of the six-month period. They clearly perceived that they had discovered some answers for themselves and the initiatives identified in each case were ones that they saw as their own. It has already been noted that almost all the new initiatives identified by the respective working

groups were already under consideration in those parishes or might well have arisen independently of the research project. I did not bring a series of preconceived initiatives for them to choose, nor did I tell them what decisions to make. The process allowed the groups to work more quickly and more decisively with various ideas that emerged among them. This meant that when a particular idea was identified as suitable to present to the wider membership for approval, they knew it was their idea, not mine, and they could be more confident that parish members would get behind the idea. The process was, therefore, addressing both parts of the ‘paradox’; practical issues were indeed being addressed and solved and at the same time the parish leadership was being set free to address other potential issues as they arose.

15.2 Assessment of Dudley and Ammerman’s process

Almost all aspects of the *Congregations in Transition* workbook, except for the list of options inherent in the ‘discernment’ phase, were used to good effect by at least one of the working groups. However, the book was used more as a resource to draw from than a formula to follow. Given the very flexible approach taken and given the fact that none of the working groups adhered closely to the original process, it would be inappropriate to use this project as a critique of Dudley and Ammerman’s work. For that purpose it would be essential for at least some congregations to have used their techniques completely. I am not aware of any parish in New Zealand which has used their workbook in the way Dudley and Ammerman intended. This would be an appropriate area for further research should it be considered desirable to make an assessment of their process in a New Zealand context.

It is, perhaps, significant that none of the five participating groups felt that the six options outlined in the workbook applied in their particular situations – except the Pukekohe group, which interpreted some of the options in a rather different way. As I considered the different reasons why each of the parishes wished to take some other approach, I did reflect on one parish where I had been vicar in the 1990s and where all of the options (no change and, therefore, eventual death; moving; starting a new congregation; finding a niche; rerooting in the old neighbourhood, and also the sixth option, merging the congregation with another, described as a combination of the

other five) were investigated as serious suggestions. I also reflected that this had been a very unusual parish and that members of most parishes would agree with the Kohimarama group, that re-rooting in the neighbourhood was the only realistic option. It may be possible to infer that those options would need modification before being applicable to most New Zealand Anglican contexts.

15.3 Ethnographic pastoral inquiry

The exercises and structured discussions provided by Dudley and Ammerman, Warren and others were techniques that I drew on as part of a broad approach. It could even be said that those techniques were almost incidental to the research method. There are a number of similar processes (e.g. Chew & Ireland, 2009; Durran, 2006) which might have worked equally well. While it was extremely helpful to have a proven technique available, at least in the early stages of the project, the ongoing interplay between me and the working groups formed the essence of the research dynamic.

As I reflected on what was happening, it became helpful to conceptualise my approach as ethnographic pastoral inquiry. In using the word ‘approach’ rather than ‘method’ I am focussing on my own contribution to what occurred. In this case, it was my approach to what became an AR process, but the same approach could have been equally appropriate in, for example, a purely participant observation method. I have noted above that this approach draws on such other work as Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice (Moschella, 2008), Clinical Inquiry Research (Schein, 2008), Critical Action Learning (Rigg & Trehan, 2004), Theological Action Research (Cameron, Bhatti, Duce, Sweeney, & Watkins, 2010) and praxis models of Contextual Theology (Bevans, 2002 ch 6). All of those approaches emphasise cycles of learning as a result of action and reflection and imply a search for deeper, or higher, meaning behind what is observed. Each of the three words was helpful to me in reflecting on what is distinctive about this approach. It is, fundamentally, a pastoral activity; that is, its central motivation is the material, emotional and spiritual well-being of the people involved. It is ethnographic in that it draws on the traditions of anthropological practice, including participant observation, usually over an extended period, and

understanding the groups being studied as much as possible in their own terms. Inquiry, rather than research, seems to carry connotations of open-ended exploration, rather than a focus on specific issues. It seems appropriate to spell the word inquiry, rather than the normal New Zealand use, enquiry, as this spelling tends to be used when naming particular methodological approaches, for example Appreciative Inquiry.

I have chosen not to capitalise the words as I am using them purely as descriptors of my approach rather than as the title of a new methodological formula. There are two distinct reasons for this choice. Firstly, it may be premature to claim a distinctly new approach, based on one six-month research project. Further research, by me or by others, using ethnographic pastoral inquiry principles may refine the terms and determine whether the approach justifies a title of this kind. Secondly, my entire approach throughout this thesis has been to look with some caution on all fixed formulae, recipes or programmes. A flexible, intuitive and interactive dynamic has seemed to be more effective in assisting groups to find their own direction and identify their own insights. It may cut across that very openness to give the process a title.

A research project employing the principles of ethnographic pastoral inquiry will have at least five distinct features:

- including the spirituality of the target group and of the researcher/ facilitator as conscious elements of the work
- a high degree of mutual trust
- an unhurried pace,
- a willingness to change on the part of the facilitator and the target group and
- an openness to the unexpected.

15.3.1 Spirituality

The word 'pastoral', in its normal sense of caring for someone's welfare, has its etymological roots in the care of sheep. It is an example of a word in quite wide usage, including in totally secular contexts, but with its origins in Judeo-Christian practice. Here it draws on a common biblical metaphor of sheep to refer to the people

of God.⁵⁴ Psalm 23 and Jesus describing himself as the Good Shepherd in John chapter 10 are the best known examples. In a Christian context, therefore, to describe a research approach as pastoral carries connotations of spirituality.

Including the spirituality of a target group would appear to be quite straightforward when working with an Anglican parish or another group that is, in part, defined by a particular spiritual perspective, such as a church school. But as the earlier review of literature on spirituality in organisations revealed, it does not follow that a parish or a hospital with a religious foundation or a church-based social service organisation, will necessarily operate from the spirituality implied by its mission statements. The literature also reveals a strong tendency for members of churches and other religious groups to look to secular models of marketing or business for guidance in areas like change management. My experience with the five working groups persuaded me of the value of being very explicit at invoking (in this case) Anglican spirituality as one of the drivers of the research process.

At the most obvious level, all our meetings started and ended with prayer. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore what effects prayer is believed to bring about or what difference it makes and, especially, what difference it may make to God. However, when members of a group have asked the Holy Spirit to be present in a meeting and to guide their thoughts, words and decisions, at the very least it is likely to influence the people themselves. Whatever the nature of the discussion and whatever tools or techniques are used, the people are likely to work through the exercises with at least some attention to spiritual considerations. Similarly, when key group members have asked “What does God want us to do here?” or “How can we feed the people spiritually?” then it is unlikely that an insight or an exercise drawn from a secular management background will *on its own* lead to acceptable answers.

Being explicit and deliberate in including the spiritual dimension in our deliberations did influence the outcomes for these five groups. It is impossible to conjecture whether the groups might have arrived at the same decisions or identified the same

⁵⁴ The common use of this metaphor throughout the biblical tradition does *not* carry the implication of sheep as ‘dumb followers’, as typically occurs when the expression is used in the vernacular.

initiatives, had they not been as prayerful in their approach. What can be said is that invoking their common spirituality allowed group members to see their decisions as in part the result of divine guidance, therefore assisting in group support for the decisions.

While the deliberate inclusion of spiritual considerations is more obvious and straightforward in churches and other religious organisations, I suggest that the same element may be of value in research with other groups, both those with a common sense of spirituality and those where spirituality has no obvious part in how the group is defined. An ethnographic pastoral inquiry project with a Muslim school, a Maori development organisation or a women's empowerment group influenced by Gaian spirituality would work in essentially the same way as my project with Anglican parishes. In those sorts of situations a facilitator would invite participants to be conscious of that source of meaning or that spiritual understanding that is common to them all.

In a secular group or one that is not defined by any spiritual understanding, the processes will be rather more complicated but I suggest that a pastoral approach as I have defined it can still be appropriate. Despite the fuzziness in definition and the very wide range of ways in which the concept is applied, it is possible to suggest, as does Sheldrake (2007), that the word 'spirituality' refers to the deepest values and meanings by which people seek to live. In other words, "spirituality implies some kind of vision of the human spirit and of what will assist it to achieve full potential" (Sheldrake, 2007, pp. 1-2). In a secular context, it may be necessary to operate on an individual basis, inviting participants/co-researchers to focus on whatever is their own source of meaning, their way of knowing what is 'right' or, in the parlance of 12-step recovery programmes, "God as you understand God". As noted earlier in the discussion on transdisciplinary theory, a broad approach, one that transcends tightly defined boundaries of particular disciplines, is likely to lead to higher or more abstracted levels of meaning or the levels of values, ethics and philosophy (Max-Neef, 2005). My own sense of spirituality, confirmed by my experience with the five groups participating in this study, leads me to argue that any satisfactory solution to social issues must draw, to some extent, on these sorts of considerations. The

alternative, maintaining an absence of or even a taboo status for spiritual discussion (Sanderson, 2008; Van der Beek, 2000) is likely to result in a sterile or reductionist analysis.

An adequate ethnographic pastoral inquiry will always conduct discussions of spirituality from a critical stance, including questioning the researcher's own spirituality. Given that spirituality is a problematic and contested concept, I would echo the argument of Marshall, Coleman and Reason (2011, p. 37) that any attempt to appeal to spiritual concepts or to ground knowing in religious commitments must be well articulated and terms must be carefully defined or, at least, their intended meanings be outlined. This is part of what Watson (2004) advocates in his *Epistemology of Love* – an epistemology where all insights (including the researcher's own position) can be welcomed, investigated critically and measured according to whether they produce acceptance, respect and building up of others.

It has already been noted that many writers on Action Research consider that a holistic approach to understanding individuals and social groupings is crucial to AR approaches. It is not uncommon for such writers to make at least passing reference to spiritual matters, either in the context of an holistic analysis (Stringer, 2007, p. 86) or in the context of the personal or philosophical groundings for researchers. A few theorists have drawn connections between AR and specific spiritual or religious traditions, such as Ignatian Exercises (Coghlan, 2005; Nolan, 2005) or Gaian theory and Buddhism (Reason, 2004). The apparent success of this research project suggests a field for further research, to explore how an explicit inclusion of spirituality may assist the effectiveness of AR techniques.

15.3.2 A high degree of mutual trust

I was fortunate in being able to work on a project with groups at least some of whom knew me, either as personal friends or by reputation. This meant that a high degree of trust could be established quite quickly. Other factors that appeared to encourage trust were the nature of the process, as discussed above, and my willingness to be flexible and open to their suggestions. This meant that they could be confident that I would not impose either a process or (worse) a set of conclusions on them. I could be

seen not merely as a facilitator/ consultant/researcher, but also as an insider who could be included in their use of “we” and “us”.

When this degree of mutual understanding does not already exist, as must be the case with the great majority of research projects, then care and time must be devoted to establishing it. Hergenrather et al (2010) have outlined the requirement for academic researchers to make time to interact with community members and organisational representatives and build rapport if they are to become trusted partners within the community. The reputations of researchers’ academic institutions may facilitate or impede trust-building. This means that researchers have not only an ethical obligation, but also a practical need to articulate overlapping interests and perspectives with community members so as to initiate trust development and assist in becoming community partners, not outsiders.

Conversely, the process would not have worked without a considerable degree of trust in the working groups on my part. I had to trust their sincerity when they expressed a commitment to the research and an interest in the questions we were pursuing, especially when they wished to depart from the planned process. When various group members expressed concern that their decisions might jeopardise the integrity of my research, they were articulating a real issue. As I was working with only five groups, the withdrawal of only a few would have made it very difficult for me to draw meaningful conclusions. I had to trust, and fortunately this trust was well placed, that the groups would be willing and able to articulate coherent explanations for a desire to change direction.

What Hergenrather et al (2010) call “becoming community members” is similar to what Schein (2008) calls “being a help to the organisation”. Is the research motivated primarily by the academic agenda of the researcher or the university or is it grounded in the perceived needs of the group participating in the research? Schein suggests (p. 267) that ethnographers also have to become ‘helpers’ in some way or another before they begin to get more intimate data about the groups they are studying and (p. 277) that for good participant observers and ethnographers, the quality of that data improves as they become helpful to the community. I suggest that establishing trust

in this sort of way is crucial to subjective methods of research and action research in particular; it is certainly central to ethnographic pastoral inquiry.

15.3.3 A slow pace

The degree of familiarity existing between me and the parish groups not only allowed trust to be established very quickly, but meant also that the whole process could be conducted in the relatively short time allowed. In a discussion of congregational studies undertaken by their pastors, Boers (2011) suggests that pastors should observe their congregational settings carefully and for a long, long time. I have noted above that this project should be seen as only one cycle of an action research cycle and that the insights gained by the project could well form the basis for further research cycles. The six months expected as a sufficient period of time by Dudley and Ammerman may be long enough to complete the exercises, but may not be enough to gain an in-depth understanding of the congregation. The risk is that the process becomes more important than discovering the information necessary for good decisions. In other words, a congregation (or some other group participating in research) may commit itself to a particular process and set of exercises, workshops or other activities, and allow the pace set by the process to dictate how fast they work. But the real information about the parish, its 'culture', ethos or history, may only emerge as people tell their stories over however long it takes to tell them.

The presumption of classic anthropological methods was that the researcher would spend extended periods of time, months or even years, with the communities being researched. Over that time and using techniques such as participant observation an in-depth understanding of the group's culture would emerge. Something of the same quality is required for gaining an adequate understanding of a group or organisation and, in my experience, this is particularly true of a parish or congregation. This applies whether the research is being undertaken by a leader from the congregation, as described by Boers (2011) and Moschella (2008), or by an outside facilitator/researcher. In most cases, there are time constraints on a researcher, be they academic or publishing deadlines or the need to provide information at a higher level, such as a diocesan mission programme. The less such external constraints are imposed on the research and the more the group can discover its own timetable for

study, the more likely it is that a full understanding is achieved, on which good decisions can be based.

It is primarily to emphasise the need to allow plenty of time that the word ‘ethnographic’ is included in the description of my research approach; good ethnography cannot be done quickly. But there is a deeper reason for a slow pace, which relates to the trust and spirituality issues discussed above. In a discussion of the Pacific Islands concept of *talanoa*⁵⁵ (a process of discussion and storytelling as a way to address problems by reaching across differences), Sitiveni Halapua (2007) asserts: “If you give people the opportunity, and they know you respect their voice, they will tell you their stories; that is a universal human phenomenon”. This work has been developed by his brother, Archbishop Winston Halapua, into a Pacific theology of the *Moana* (the sea). He posits (Halapua, 2008, p. 64) that:

To engage in *talanoa* is to celebrate that which is in common and it also means the gaining of understanding of the contexts of differences. *Talanoa* honours the numinous and that which cannot as yet be understood, and it gives room for interaction.

The approach to research that I describe as ethnographic pastoral inquiry is not the same as *talanoa*, but it has some common threads. Allowing people to find and express their own thoughts and to connect them with others and with the numinous or spiritual dimensions of life is at the core of this approach to research. It is only these factors that allow me to make any claim to have articulated ‘novel conceptual models’ (Stokols, 2006, p. 67) that may have the potential to extend the concepts, theories and methods of particular fields, such as organisation studies or practical theology. Allowing people the space to do that sort of work takes a great deal of time.

15.3.4 Willingness to change

Central to the increasing acceptability of various kinds of subjective research methodologies is the realisation that a totally objective stance is impossible, especially when the object of enquiry is groups of human beings. The many concerns that are

⁵⁵ The concept of *talanoa* is discussed at length in a Master of Theology thesis by the Rev’d Shiu Goundar, Vicar of Pohutukawa Coast Mission District (Goundar, 2005).

legitimately the business of Ethics Boards reflect the reality that our research has at least the potential to change and affect the people we are studying. What is, perhaps, less obvious is that the research process is likely to change the researcher. Following Moschella (2008) and drawing on the experience of my research project, I now feel that this change is not merely a complicating factor in research that needs to be acknowledged and controlled for, but something that should be welcomed and embraced.

A presupposition of an approach such as ethnographic pastoral inquiry is that it is either impossible or undesirable to have a purely descriptive account of the phenomena under study. A snapshot of a group at a particular moment in time, even if it is possible, tells us very little about what is going on. Greatly preferable is an approach where an observation is carried out of how a group is changing and developing, including change as a result of the researcher's intervention. Further, an approach where the researcher is either already a member of the group, or can be regarded as such to some degree, both allows and requires the researcher to take note of changes in her/himself.

How was I changed by the process? At a superficial level, my willingness to adapt the process as we worked through it, and to move increasingly to AR methods was significant. The changes that each of the five working groups asked for required me to analyse the rationale for the changes and find ways to accommodate them into my theoretical approach to the research. At a more fundamental level, the process of making friends with five groups of very interesting people, learning from their experience, seeing life and faith from their perspective and allowing their understandings to influence my own, increased my sensitivity as a consultant and facilitator. Furthermore, I myself found the experience encouraging. I observed and participated in a series of processes where groups of faithful people wrestled with the interplay between the tenets of their faith and the ever-changing realities of their local contexts. For all five groups to identify a number of new initiatives that they would be able to work on in the ensuing months was a deeply encouraging outcome. It gave me much greater confidence that this sort of process could be applied in other contexts and that similar outcomes are likely.

15.3.5 Openness to the unexpected

The research process demonstrated the importance of asking genuinely open questions, rather than ones that expect a particular outcome. As the working group members came to appreciate that I really did not know what the outcomes of the project would be, they were able to take on the work of co-researchers, so that we could ask the questions together.

It may be that being open to the unexpected is something that should come more naturally to an organisation that sees itself as Spirit-led. The famous line from John's Gospel, rendered traditionally as "the spirit bloweth where it listeth", but in more modern language as either "the wind blows where it wills" or "the Spirit breathes where s/he chooses", epitomises a spiritual principle that is at the heart of Christian understanding. God cannot be controlled, so any interaction with God must make allowance for the unexpected. Discussion in the literature reviews shows that this principle is not necessarily applied seriously in church groups, which can have the same attraction as any groups of humans to more business/strategic or functionalist discourses. The experience of this project may contribute to the literature in this area, by illustrating the effectiveness of a more flexible approach and one that is more explicitly open to divine influence and, therefore, to the unexpected. I would, therefore, support the contention of Bayes in his discussion of strategic planning in churches:

There doesn't have to be anything mechanistic or driven about this process ...What prevents 'strategy' from becoming hard-edged and unlovely is ensuring that it is built on a Christian foundation – and that means a foundation of values based on faith. Values are the hinge. They swing what we know of God into action and bring the theology of a church to bear on its practice (Bayes, 2006).

While making allowance for the unexpected may be more compatible with worldviews that are based on faith, I suggest again, however, that ethnographic pastoral inquiry is not dependent for its effectiveness on a common Christian or other spiritual understanding. Looking to any source of deeper truth or sense-making, or

any system of values and morality, is likely to sit uncomfortably with a formulaic or mechanistic approach. Action research in a secular organisation, particularly one whose individual members come from a range of different spiritual understandings, would indeed be a more complex exercise than the one I undertook. But the wide range of AR literature, applied to all sorts of organisations suggests that there is no reason why such a project would not work. As long as trust was established and as long as sufficient time was allowed, an explicit inclusion of whatever system gave group members an understanding of the roots to their values should lead them to a more inclusive and open process of inquiry.

The very different nature of the ideas that emerged from the respective groups is an illustration of the unexpected. The ideas ranged from a possible radical reorganisation of the entire parish structure at Mangere East in conjunction with a neighbouring social services agency and/or an ethnic congregation that already shares the building, to a much less radical, but potentially profound, set of initiatives at Kohimarama including a permanent group dedicated to deepening the parish's identification with the local community. I was most surprised by the developments at Pohutukawa Coast and at Pukekohe. I, like the members of the small Pohutukawa Coast working group, had come to expect that they would probably have to withdraw from the process. When it emerged that two new pieces of community-facing ministry had been put in place during the course of our work together (and a third six months later) and that the process was 'working' for them significantly better than any of us had realised did illustrate for me the danger of making hasty conclusions.

The surprise at Pukekohe arose from the fact that I was quite familiar with the parish, having been the vicar there in the early 1990s. I had experienced it then as a strongly conservative parish, very slow to change and committed to preserving its traditional role in the life of the town. It was a very pleasant surprise, three changes of vicar later, to see a group that welcomed change and renewal, had many new points of contact with the people living around them and was successfully working through a series of programmes that were bringing new life into the various neighbourhoods of the town.

This project seems to support literature on ‘organisational culture’ (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002; Robinson, 2003; Scott et al., 2003) suggesting that most attempts to change culture in any mechanistic, predictable way are likely to bring about temporary change at best. Processes that allow the group ‘culture’ to evolve in its own organic and largely unpredictable ways are much more likely to be successful. The construct of ‘organisational culture’ seemed to be of limited value to these parishes, especially if it is taken to refer to a relatively unchanging attribute of their life together. That is why, where it has seemed helpful to use the term at all, I have placed ‘culture’ in quotation marks.

15.4 Are the findings academically rigorous?

In the discussion of research method, it was noted that the traditional measures of academic rigour, reliability and validity, are somewhat problematic in AR approaches. Those measures work when the principle of researcher objectivity has been maintained and when tightly defined quantitative or qualitative measures have been used. In such circumstances, it is quite appropriate to question (or to establish) whether those techniques are reliable, that is, will they work if used again, or in other situations, and are they valid, that is do they in fact measure what they say they measure. When a research project does not attempt to establish objectivity (and actually rejects it as either undesirable or impossible) and where the measures are based on stories, conversations, discussions of evolving actions and reflections on the researcher’s own evolving understanding, some different approaches are required to establish that the project has uncovered worthy insights. Put in its most basic terms, how do I know that what I have learned from this project is of value to me, to the participating individuals and their parishes and to the academy?

In place of validity, and drawing on earlier work by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Stringer (2007, p. 57ff) argues that a much more helpful test for AR projects, as with other subjective research, is trustworthiness. If the results of an AR project can be demonstrated to be trustworthy, then they are worthy of contributing to the literature. I believe that this project meets the criteria Stringer offers.

Credibility – the plausibility and integrity of the study. While only a small number of AR studies have been conducted with Anglican parishes, the existence of very large numbers of congregations in many parts of the world suggests that the issues raised by this particular group of five parishes may be taken as credible. The support of three bishops from two dioceses and the interest of perhaps two dozen other parish leaders provide evidence of the plausibility of the project. The consistently favourable feedback from the participating parishes is evidence of the study's integrity.

Transferability – the possibility of applying the outcomes to other contexts. Like any case study, this project claims direct applicability only for the five parishes concerned. But the fact that the parishes are so different from each other suggests that the insights gained may be transferable to other situations, most obviously to other Anglican parishes in Aotearoa/New Zealand. It may be that the *outcomes* would not transfer to congregations from other Christian denominations or to situations in other countries (after all, it is basic to this approach that the outcomes are unpredictable) but the research *method* is certainly transferable.

Dependability – procedures that are clearly defined and open to scrutiny. The procedures of this project were clearly defined in the research methods chapter. As the consultation process depends on open conversations, working to different formats in the various parishes, it is not possible to define the procedures into a tidy series of discrete steps, but the account of what happened, as recorded in the Research Journal was open to the scrutiny of my academic supervisors and any statements relating to particular parishes were offered for correction to the people concerned.

Confirmability – evidence that the procedures described actually took place. One feature of living and working in a comparatively small country like Aotearoa/New Zealand is that it would be quite impossible to record a project of this kind if it had not actually occurred. This may be contrasted with the example of Dowie's account (2002) of a Presbyterian parish in Scotland. His kirk of "Riverstane" is sufficiently disguised that other means were needed to prove the veracity of his accounts. One reason for the decision to identify the five parishes and the four other Vicars openly

was to increase the confirmability of what occurred. The invitation to participants to include comments in an appendix is additional evidence of the trustworthiness of the reports.

15.5 Are the findings significant?

A series of criteria for academic robustness, different from those used by Stringer (2007) and only slightly overlapping them, is a list of seven items offered by Bradbury Huang (2010), as “choicepoints” used to determine which AR research accounts are worthy of publishing in the journal *Action Research*. She notes (p. 101) that it is rare that any one account successfully responds to all seven choicepoints equally; the list provides a very helpful standard against which to measure the quality and significance of this or any other AR project. It is worth reiterating here that my research project was not seen as an AR process in its early stages, and only become one as the project developed. The realisation that AR principles were so applicable to this project was an important part of the journey of discovery. Had these choicepoints been available at the beginning of the project they might well have influenced the design of the research. As it is, they form part of my reflections, and those of my co-researchers, after the research project.

1. *Articulation of objectives: The extent to which authors explicitly address the objectives they believe relevant to their work and the choices they have made in meeting those.*

The objectives of this research project were clearly articulated at the beginning of the Research Methods chapter. In summary, these were: firstly, to facilitate and contribute to a process of change in a number of parishes; secondly, to reflect critically on a number of constructs drawn from both church and organisation studies literature, including organisational culture, church growth and parish effectiveness and, thirdly, to develop the ability to recommend strategies to parishes and similar groups in the area of fulfilling their sense of mission.

An additional objective emerged as the project increasingly became an AR process: to allow the agenda of each parish to provide direction to the research. The key choice made was to ground the inquiry in the deliberations of a working group in each parish, and allow their deliberations to shape the direction of the investigations. This choice

opened the project to the areas of paradox discussed above, in particular the sharing of control and power with the participants the resulting loss of ability to describe the processes in a tightly defined format. The reflections in Chapter 14 about Missional Viability stem from this choice, as the concept emerges out of the interactions with these five working groups.

2. *Partnership and participation: The extent to and means by which the project reflects or enacts participative values and concern for the relational component of research.*

Participative values were at the heart of this research project. As with some other aspects, this was not apparent at the beginning of the process and, if participative values were evident, this was an intuitive matter or a reflection of my normal approach to pastoral work over many years of parish ministry, rather than a carefully considered research strategy. But as the project unfolded and as I reflected on literature from both AR and transdisciplinarity studies, the importance of a fully participatory approach became increasingly clear.

If AR projects can be seen along a continuum from consultation with stakeholders to including stakeholders as full participants, I have attempted to place this project as near to the latter end of the continuum as possible. The paradox involved in trying to do this when I alone have the academic responsibility for the research has already been discussed. An interaction with my Primary Supervisor illustrates the paradox. In an early description of the project, I commented that I was allowing the working groups to “control” the direction of the project. My supervisor considered that this word was too strong as I could never abdicate control; she suggested “influence” as a better descriptor. After due consideration, I settled on “shape” as the best verb here. Perhaps I retained ultimate control, but the group members and my relationship with them, definitely shaped the direction and outcomes of the project.

3. *Contribution to action research theory/practice: The extent to which the project builds on (creates explicit links with) or contributes to a wider body of practice knowledge and or theory.*

There are two ways in which this project may claim to make original contributions to AR theory and practice. A very small number of AR projects have been conducted in and with Christian congregations. Given the distinctive characteristics of this type of organisation and given the large number of churches and the influences that they have

in their respective communities, this project may be seen as making a useful contribution. Perhaps more important are the tentative beginnings made here to discuss the effects of an explicit inclusion of spirituality in AR projects. Links can be drawn with a number of AR theorists (Heron & Lahood, 2008; Reason, 2004; Torbert, 2004), but the way that I have applied their insights may be seen as original.

4. *Methods and process: The extent to which the action research methods and process are articulated and clarified.*

As this whole chapter has discussed, questions of process and methodology comprise almost a greater component of this thesis than the substantive issues addressed by the parish groups. In the concluding chapter to follow, I discuss these matters through the metaphor of a personal journey of discovery. An important aspect of that journey was identifying and articulating AR methods and theory.

5. *Actionability: The extent to which the project provides new ideas that guide action in response to need.*

This was discussed above under the heading Transferability. The approach to facilitation that I have described as ethnographic pastoral inquiry has the potential to guide action in and with a range of social groupings, other churches certainly, but possibly various other organisations that are able to make use of the spiritual issues involved.

6. *Reflexivity. The extent to which the authors explicitly locate themselves as change agents.*

A key aspect of the personal journey involved in this project was a move in my own mind away from a researcher stance of objectivity and non-involvement. I have often described my work as a parish priest as being a change agent. It has been part of my job description to identify areas where change is required (be that in relation to buildings, programmes, decision-making structures or worship patterns) and to facilitate the necessary change. It has always been important in that context not to impose change, but to work through whatever processes are necessary to allow the change to be accepted as far as possible, by the parish as a whole. It is this approach that I brought to the research process and the discovery, during the course of the project, of such concepts as the Epistemology of Love, Transdisciplinarity and Action

Research allowed me to see how it can apply in a research context. All research brings about change; through the insights of AR theorists and others I have come to see the value of making that change explicit and deliberate.

7. *Significance: The extent to which the insights in the manuscript are significant in content and process. By significant we mean having meaning and relevance beyond their immediate context in support of the flourishing of persons, communities, and the wider ecology.*

It is, perhaps, for others to judge the significance of the *content* of this research project in other contexts. As mentioned above, I have made no attempt to construct a formula or closely defined set of steps that can be readily applied in many different situations. The experiences and learning that emerged from the five parish working groups have direct applicability only in those parishes. If people in other Anglican parishes, other congregations, or other organisations of various kinds, are able to detect a resonance with their situations then the project will be shown to have a broader significance. But that claim cannot be made from the perspective of five case studies.

Regarding the *process* involved in this project, it is possible to stake a somewhat stronger claim. As the methodological approach used here builds on the insights of several AR and Transdisciplinary theorists and as the project did prove to be successful within the groups under discussion, then the approach I have described as ethnographic pastoral inquiry may have relevance and meaning in a wider sphere.

What I certainly claim is that the flourishing of persons, communities and the wider ecology was the driving force behind the entire project, both in my own mind and in the minds of my co-researchers. That flourishing is, after all, why parishes exist, and the reason my proposal seemed to strike a responsive chord with these and other parishes was a perception that insufficient flourishing of persons, communities and the wider ecology was taking place. To the extent that members of these five parishes have been set free by the process to identify solutions to this difficulty and have found new confidence to address this and similar issues in the future, then the insights of this project may be seen as significant.

Having reflected on issues of content in the previous chapters and issues of process and method here, I conclude this thesis in the next and final chapter by returning to the themes raised at the beginning and tracing the journey of discovery that has taken place. What has it meant for me, an Anglican Priest, to work through a presenting problem with a group of colleagues and friends and explore the best ways to address similar problems?

16. Voyage of Discovery

This research project, and the reflections on it and associated literature, represent a personal journey of discovery. In a sense, this must be true of any significant research process – if we know the information already there is nothing to learn and, therefore, no point in doing the research. In this case, however, the progressive learning and discovery of new insights have shaped the course of the inquiry, leading to outcomes of a quite different nature than I expected. When the project began I hoped to produce the key elements of a “How to ...” book that local parishes could take to guide them to a new vitality. Instead, I discovered some principles and ways of approaching issues that can assist parishes or similar groups to look more deeply into their own resources and traditions so as to discover answers for themselves.

The image of a two-hulled canoe, or *waka*, has supplied a connecting metaphor to assist in conceptualising this voyage of discovery. In such a craft, each hull must be stable and sound in its own right, and oriented in the same direction, but stability for the craft is provided by what ties the two hulls together. How I have applied this metaphor has, itself, developed over the course of the project. In the early stages I saw the two hulls as representing the interplay between two quite different perspectives which are not normally discussed together. On the one hand, my perspectives are shaped by a life in the Church, a life where issues of faith and spirituality are central to the worldview. On the other hand, I have chosen to base this inquiry within an academic discipline called, variously, management or organisation studies, where quite different epistemologies are normally in play. For such a craft to sail effectively, my spiritual considerations need to be sound theologically and, at the same time, my reflections need to communicate meaningfully in a discourse that does not normally allow space for spiritual or religious considerations. Continued attention to the space between will allow me to create a platform that holds the two hulls in balance and from that platform, the only effective vantage point for accurate navigation, to draw conclusions that are meaningful in both discourses.

During the course of the project the application of this image developed further, in a way quite compatible with the first but with greater relevance to other research

projects. This shift in thinking represented a major point of discovery for me as the project took its course. One hull, the only one that I was aware of as the project began, can be seen as the issues of *content*, the work with and among the five parish working groups that formed the business of the six-month research project. Reflections that emerge from that work are outlined in Chapters 13 and 14. The other hull comprises the issues of *process and method* that formed an increasingly significant part of my reflections, as summarised in Chapter 15. However important the issues of content are, and they certainly are of vital importance to the parishes members who took part in the project, the issues of method and process that emerged in the course of the project took on a semi-independent significance. This means that the project has led to two different sets of findings. In the area of substantive content (the first hull), a new construct of Missional Viability provides a template for other parishes and similar groups to study and discuss a complex series of issues in their own contexts. In the area of process and method (the second hull) the kind of approach that I have described as ethnographic pastoral inquiry is intended to make solutions to the organisational issues of churches and similar groups more accessible.

The two sets of findings work only because they are held in tension with each other. Much work on the dynamics of church life generated within churches shows some of the characteristics of sailing a single-hull canoe; a great deal of progress can be made but the inherent instability of the craft, especially when adverse circumstances slow its speed, mean that a great deal of effort is required to keep it going. Similarly, however insightful good discussions about process may be, they cannot be convincing without connecting them to real situations and real people. It is the creative tension between those two dynamics that creates the steering platform between the two hulls.

The project started with a problem that had arisen in my mind over nearly three decades of parish ministry; how can local parishes be more faithful to the theology and rhetoric of church life and find ways to prioritise for outward-facing work, without ignoring the worship and pastoral needs of their own members? As I searched for appropriate ways to address that issue, a combination of participant observation and action research (AR) methodologies seemed to be appropriate. In the early stages, I saw AR in largely pragmatic terms, as I tried to address the concerns at

the heart of the project. The promise of AR to develop research skills so as to empower people in communities and organisations, and “to help them organise to act on these needs through enhanced and shared information” (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 131) seemed to blend well with my pastoral approach in parish work. I, therefore, undertook a six-month project with a working group from each of five Anglican parishes, four in Auckland, and one in Hamilton. Structure for our deliberations was provided by the workbook *Congregations in Transition* (Dudley & Ammerman, 2002) but the working groups were invited to diverge from that programme if they had a clear rationale for doing so. In the course of the six-month project, all five groups did move away from the workbook but all five did arrive at a number of new initiatives in the area of community-facing work, to be put into place in the ensuing months.

Reflections on that project and associated literature led me to identify the concept of Missional Viability, and offer that as a potentially more fruitful organising principle for local churches than growth, success or even health. If a parish is missionally viable, and most are or have the potential to become so, then the best insights from both theological and organisation studies theory suggest that they should be given the maximum freedom to find their own solutions and ways forward.

As the work progressed, I progressively came to the view that an AR did not simply provide some useful techniques for facilitating groups in attaining their goals. Questions of methodology took on an importance in their own right. I came to see the principles behind AR and similar approaches, with their emphasis on relationality among people, on the emancipatory effects of research and on learning emerging from experience, as providing a far better complement to my understanding of Christian theology than approaches based on positivist or mechanistic epistemologies. My account of this project with five church groups provides, therefore, a two-way contribution to the literature.

From one perspective, the project may encourage Christian commentators to make far more use of AR approaches than I have observed happening. Until recently, most analysis of the life and work of congregations by church-based writers has drawn

heavily on mechanistic or business-based models and has depended on tightly drawn quantitative or qualitative research measures. In more recent years, especially since the turn of the 21st century, there has been a gradual openness to more flexible or dynamic models. The findings of this project provide support to those developments and allow me to advocate for further projects using AR techniques in churches and religion-based organisations. From the other perspective, the success of this project allows me to contribute to a wide, but undeveloped, discussion among AR commentators (Heron & Lahood, 2008; Reason, 2004; Torbert, 2004) about spirituality in the context of holistic approaches to life and to research. This contribution would support the contention that issues of spirituality should be taken much more seriously and addressed more openly if AR approaches are to claim a truly holistic perspective.

In a famous incident from the gospels, one that has been used over the centuries as an example of faith, Jesus invited Peter to “Get out of the boat” and come towards him. By linking my research method to the (normally) secular discipline of organisation studies, and especially to action research approaches, I am, perhaps, inviting church members to venture out of the single-hulled boat with which they are familiar and to navigate from the platform built between the hulls. The same invitation can be offered to advocates of AR approaches; by linking their methodological hulls to others that are committed to a spiritual quest, they may discover new navigational platforms that, however unfamiliar, are firmer and more effective.

Insights drawn from the experience of working with and among the five working groups led me to describe my particular approach to AR as ethnographic pastoral inquiry. The essential elements of this approach are the inclusion of the spirituality of the target group and of the researcher/facilitator as conscious elements of the work, along with the development of a high degree of mutual trust, an unhurried pace, a willingness to change on the part of the facilitator and the target group and an openness to the unexpected. The project has demonstrated that this approach can be successful in working with five different Anglican parishes. A fruitful area for ongoing research would be to attempt further projects using ethnographic pastoral inquiry. It would be instructive to assess its effectiveness over a longer period than

could be attempted in a six-month project, and particularly use it in a project utilising several cycles of an AR learning spiral. It would also be important to use the approach with groups other than Anglican parishes, both religious organisations and groups that are not organised around a common spiritual understanding.

There was an important final stage in this journey of discovery. (The word ‘final’ only applies in relation to this thesis; the learning and discovery should be seen as forming part of an ongoing commitment to learning, both on my part and the part of my co-researchers.) To return to the metaphor, I came to see this as the platform for the two-hulled waka. Open-ended inquiry, grounded in the experience of real people and groups and focused on their perceived needs, is itself a spiritual activity. As well as AR thinkers, this contention draws on Watson’s Epistemology of Love (2004), with its emphasis on non-authoritarian, questioning and integrating perspectives. It also builds on the work of Transdisciplinary theorists with their rejection of most sharp dichotomies, and their realisation that a broad inquiry, based on a number of disciplines and focused on what is between, above and common to all disciplines, is likely to lead to consideration of the numinous and the mystical dimensions of life. If all human beings are participants one with another, as Reason claims (2004), and as most spiritual traditions and particularly Christianity affirm, then a research approach that emphasises the links between people, that integrates the insights of the range of people who are participating and that emancipates participants to find solutions to problems that had seemed intractable is likely to both create and draw on deeply spiritual energy. If “a foray into the personal and subjective” is necessary to understand the spiritual realm (Dokecki et al., 2001, p. 516), this project has let me to the conviction that the reverse is also true. When we engage in inquiry about other humans, by adopting a strongly subjective and reflective stance we open ourselves to a much wider range of understanding and wisdom, including at a transcendent or metaphysical level. When a firm platform of “sacred science” (Reason, 1993) is in place, then there need be no dichotomy between the world of faith and the world of organisation studies (or any other discipline) and, equally, no tension between the content and the methodology of a research project.

T S Elliot's famous line from *Little Gidding; The Four Quartets* reads:

We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring
will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.

If I take my journey of discovery back to the starting point and re-look at the 'problem' that had arisen from my experience as a parish priest, one that I knew exercised the minds of many other church leaders, I see that this project was able to tap into the emancipatory power of research. That power is related to the saving, or liberating power that is at the core of the Christian message. If organisations, in this case local parishes, are not seen simply as objects of study but as partners in the inquiry and to a great extent in control of it, then the findings become material for the group to use to further its own sense of vision and direction and discern their own answers to difficult problems. This will allow members of the organisation to discover new strength and encouragement to take the necessary risks involved in bringing about change.

References

- Abbott, S., Lees, T., Simons, A., & Lusby Taylor, P. (Eds.). (1981). *The Worshipping Church. A praising people*. Lytchett Minster, Dorset: Post Green Press.
- ACANZP. (1989). *A New Zealand Prayer Book. He Karakia Mihanare o Aotearoa*. Auckland: Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia / Collins.
- Alford, H. M. (1978). *Fifty Years Forward. Selwyn Church Mangere East 1928-1978*. Unpublished Commemorative booklet. Selwyn Anglican Church.
- Alier, J. M. (2009). Socially Sustainable Economic De-growth. *Development & Change*, 40(6), 1099-1119.
- Alvesson, M. (2002). *Understanding Organizational Culture*. London: : Sage.
- Ammerman, N. T. (1997). *Congregation and Community*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Ammerman, N. T. (1998). Culture and Identity in the Congregation. In N. T. Ammerman, J. W. Carroll, C. S. Dudley & W. McKinney (Eds.), *Studying Congregations. A New Handbook*. Nashville: Abingdon.
- Ammerman, N. T. (2003). Religious identities and religious institutions. In M. Dillon (Ed.), *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ammerman, N. T. (2005). *Pillars of faith. American congregations and their partners*. Berkley, CA: University of California Press.
- Ammerman, N. T., Carroll, J. W., Dudley, C. S., & McKinney, W. (Eds.). (1998). *Studying congregations. A new handbook*. Nashville: Abingdon.
- Anderson, R. S. (2006). *An Emergent Theology for Emergent Churches*. Downers Grove IL: Inter Varsity Press.
- Angheluta, A. V., Strambu-Dima, A., & Zaharia, R. (2009). Church Marketing - concept and Utility. *Journal for the Study of Religions & Ideologies*, 8(22), 171-197.
- Anglican Church in ANZP. (2008). *Constitution*. Auckland.
- Anglican Communion Office. (2009). *Five Marks of Mission*. from <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/fivemarks.cfm>
- Anglican Diocese of Auckland. (2010). *Yearbook*. Auckland: Anglican Diocese of Auckland.
- Anonymous. (2010). Words at Work. *Information Today*, 27(9), 36.

- Aram, J. D. (2004). Concepts of Interdisciplinarity: Configurations of Knowledge and Action. *Human Relations*, 57(4), 379-412.
- Archbishops Council. (2004). *Mission-shaped Church*. London: Church House Publishing.
- Ashley, J. (Ed.). (2005). *The Relevant Church: A New Vision for Communities of Faith*. Orlando, FL: Relevant Books.
- Ashmos, D. P., & Duchon, D. (2000). Spirituality at work: A conceptualization and measure. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 9(2), 134.
- Atherton, J. (2004). Trust-Building Today. Tasks for public faith and church. *The Bible in Transmission*(Autumn).
- Augsburg, T. (2006). *Becoming Interdisciplinary*. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall Hunt.
- Avis, P. (1988). What is 'Anglicanism'? In S. Sykes & J. Booty (Eds.), *The Study of Anglicanism*. London: SPCK.
- Bader-Saye, S. (2004). The Emergent matrix. (cover story). *Christian Century*, 121(24), 20-27.
- Bader-Saye, S. (2006). Improvising Church: an Introduction to the emerging church Conversation. *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church*, 6(1), 12-23.
- Baker, C. (2005). Religious faith in the exurban community -- A case study of Christian faith-communities in Milton Keynes. *City: analysis of urban trends, culture, theory, policy, action*, 9(1), 109 - 123.
- Barber, B. (2003). *Jihad v McWorld*. London: Corgi.
- Barger, R. (2005). *A New and Right Spirit*. Herndon, VA: Alban institute.
- Barley, L. (2008). Can fresh expressions of church make a difference? In S. Croft (Ed.), *Mission-shaped Questions* (pp. 161-172). London: Church House Publishing.
- Bass, D. C. (Ed.). (1998). *Practicing our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Bassett, C. (2005). Emergent wisdom: living a life in widening circles. *ReVision*, 27(4).
- Bayes, P. (2006). The value of values. In P. Bayes & T. Sledge (Eds.), *Mission-Shaped Parish*. London: Church House Publishing.
- Bayes, P., & Sledge, T. (Eds.). (2006). *Mission-shaped parish: traditional church in a changing context*. London: Church House Publishing.

- Becker, P. (1999). *Congregations in Conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Belcher, J. (2009). *Deep Church: A third way beyond emerging and traditional*. Downers Grove: IVP.
- Belich, J. (1988). *The New Zealand Wars and the Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict*. Auckland NZ: Penguin Books.
- Bell, E. (2008). Towards a critical spirituality of organization. *Culture and Organization*, 14(3), 293-307.
- Bell, E., & Taylor, S. (2003). The Elevation of Work: Pastoral Power and the New Age Work Ethic. *Organization*, 10(2), 329-349.
- Bellot, J. (2011). Defining and Assessing Organizational Culture. *Nursing Forum*, 46(1), 29-37.
- Bellous, J. E., & Csinos, D. M. (2009). Spiritual styles: creating an environment to nurture spiritual wholeness. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 14(3), 213 - 224.
- Benefiel, M. (2003). Mapping the terrain of spirituality in organizations research. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 16(4), 367 - 377.
- Bennett, B. (2005). *God of the whenua : rural ministry in Aotearoa New Zealand*. Wellington, N.Z.: Philip Garside Pub.
- Bennison, C., Davis, K., Lummis, A., & Nesbitt, P. (1999). *In Praise of Congregations*. Cambridge: Cowley Productions.
- Bentz, V. M., & Shapiro, J. J. (1998). *Mindful Inquiry in Social Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Bevans, S. B. (2002). *Models of contextual theology*. New York: Orbis.
- Billings, J. T. (2008). What Makes a Church Missional? *Christianity Today*, 52(3), 56-59.
- BIRN. (2010). British Religion in Numbers. 2010, from <http://www.brin.ac.uk/>
- Bisel, R. S., Messersmith, A. S., & Keyton, J. (2010). Understanding organizational culture and communication through a gyroscope metaphor. *Journal of Management Education*, 34(3), 342-366.
- Bishop, J. (2011). *Dangerous Church: Risking Everything to Reach Everyone*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Blakie, M. (2009). Yes, we can do this! *Anglican Taonga, Advent 2009*.
- Bloede, L. W. (1996). *The effective pastor: A guide to successful ministry*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

- Bluck, J. (Ed.). (2009). *The Gift Endures: A new history of the Waiapu Diocese*. Napier: Diocese of Waiapu.
- Boers, A. P. (2011). What must a Pastor Know? Reflections on congregational Studies. *Resources for American Christianity* Retrieved 15th Feb 2011, 2011, from <http://www.resourcingchristianity.org>
- Bohan, E. (2005). *Climates of War New Zealand in Conflict 1859-69*. Christchurch NZ: Hazard Press.
- Bolton, S. C. (2010). Being human: dignity of labor as the foundation for the spirit-work connection. *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion*, 7(2), 157-172.
- Bowdon, B. A. (1999). *The Child Friendly Church: 150 Models of Ministry With Children*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- Boyd, B. K. (1991). Strategic Planning and Financial Performance: A meta-analytic Review. *Journal of Management Studies*, 28(4), 353-374.
- Bradbury Huang, H. (2010). What is good action research? Why the resurgent interest? *Action Research*, 8(1), 93-109.
- Brady, G. E. (undated). Anglican: Introducing the faith, history and practice of the Anglican Church. Christchurch, NZ: Genesis.
- Branson, C. M. (2008). Achieving organisational change through values alignment. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 46(3), 376-395.
- Brewin, K. (2004). *The Complex Christ: Signs of Emergence in the Urban Church*. London: SPCK.
- Brinkman, R. L. (1999). The dynamics of corporate culture: conception and theory. *International Journal of Social Economics*, 26(5), 674.
- Broido, E. M., & Manning, K. (2002). Philosophical foundations and current theoretical perspectives in qualitative research. *Journal of College Student Development*, 43(4).
- Brown, R. B. (2003). Organizational Spirituality: The Sceptic's Version. *Organization*, 10(2), 393-400.
- Bruce, W., & Novinson, J. (1999). Spirituality in Public Service: A Dialogue. *Public Administration Review*, 59(2), 163-169.
- Buckle, E. G. (1978). *Paroikia. The house alongside*. Auckland: Diocese of Auckland.
- Butler Bass, D. (2004). *The Practicing Congregation*. Herndon: Alban Institute.
- Butler Bass, D. (2006). *Christianity for the Rest of Us: How the Neighbourhood Church is Transforming the Faith*. New York: Harper Collins.

- Butler Bass, D. (2009). On the Vitality of “re-traditioned” mainline Protestant Churches. Retrieved 16th July 2010, from <http://www.Resourcingchristianity.org/interview.aspx?INTID=92de0c24-03e6-410e-9b96-8691b1be2a7>
- Butler Bass, D., & Stewart-Sicking, J. (2006). Appendix: Research Methodology and Findings. In D. Butler Bass (Ed.), *Christianity for the Rest of Us. How the Neighbourhood Church is Transforming the Faith*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Callahan, K. L. (1983). *Twelve keys to an effective church*. San Fransisco: Harper and Row.
- Cameron, H. (2005). The Research Process. In H. Cameron, P. Richter, D. Davies & F. Ward (Eds.), *Studying Local Churches. A Handbook*. London: SCM.
- Cameron, H., Bhatti, D., Duce, C., Sweeney, J., & Watkins, C. (2010). *Talking about God in Practice. Theological Action Research and Practical Theology*. London: SCM.
- Cameron, H., Richter, P., Davies, D., & Ward, F. (Eds.). (2005). *Studying local churches. a handbook*. London: SCM.
- Cameron, K. S., & Quinn, R. E. (2006). *Diagnosing and changing Organizational Culture*. San Fransisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Camus, M. (2008). The hidden hand between poetry and science. In B. Nicolescu (Ed.), *Transdisciplinary, theory and practice* (pp. 53-65). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton.
- Carroll, J. W. (1998). Leadership and the Study of the Congregation. In N. T. Ammerman, J. W. Carroll, C. S. Dudley & W. McKinney (Eds.), *Studying Congregations. a New Handbook*. Nashville: Abingdon.
- Carroll, J. W., & Roof, W. C. (2002). *Bridging Divided Worlds: Generational cultures in congregations*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Carson, D. A. (2005). The emerging church. *Modern Reformation Magazine*, "Faith a La Carte?", 14(4).
- Case, P., & Gosling, J. (2010). The spiritual organization: critical reflections on the instrumentality of workplace spirituality. *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion*, 7(4), 257 - 282.
- Cash, K. C., & Gray, G. R. (2000). A framework for accommodating religion and spirituality in the workplace. *Academy of Management Executive*, 14(3), 124-133.
- Cavanagh, G. F. (1999). Spirituality for managers: context and critique. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 12(3), 186 - 199.

- Cayley, S. (2010). Are we brave enough to really tackle mission? Review of Engagement 21 by Richard Randerson. *Anglican Taonga*, 45.
- Chalke, S., & Mann, A. (2003). *The Lost Message of Jesus*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Chambers, P. (2004). The effects of Evangelical Renewal on mainstream congregational identities: A Welsh case study. In M. Guest, K. Tusting & L. Woodhead (Eds.), *Congregational Studies in the UK. Christianity in a Post-Christian context* (pp. 57-69). Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Chambers, P. (2005). *Religion, secularization and social change in Wales*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.
- Chater, M. (1997). Theology and management. *Modern Believing*, 40(4), 64-69.
- Chaves, M., & Anderson, S. (2008). Continuity and change in American congregations: Introducing the second wave of the National Congregations Study. [Journal Article]. *Sociology of Religion*, 69(4), 415-440.
- Chew, M., & Ireland, M. (2009). *How to do Mission Action Planning: A vision-centred approach*. London: SPCK.
- Chiapello, E., & Fairclough, N. (2002). Understanding the new management ideology: a transdisciplinary contribution from critical discourse analysis and new sociology of capitalism. *Discourse & Society*, 13(2), 185-208.
- Cladis, G. (1999). *Leading the Team Based Church*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Clatworthy, J. (2008). *Liberal faith in a divided church*. Winchester, UK: O Books.
- Coghlan, D. (2005). Ignatian spirituality as transformational social science. *Action Research*, 3(1), 89-107.
- Coghlan, D., & Brannick, T. (2010). *Doing Action Research in your own Organization*. London: Sage.
- Coghlan, D., & Shani, A. B. S. (2008). Insider Action Research: The Dynamics of Developing New Capabilities. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Sage Handbook of Action Research* (pp. 643-655). Los Angeles: Sage.
- Cole, N. (2005). *Organic church: growing faith where life happens*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Cole, R. E. (1991). Participant Observer Research. In W. Foote Whyte (Ed.), *Participatory Action Research* (pp. 159-166). London: Sage.
- Coleman, G., & Gearty, M. (2007). Making Space for Difference: The CARPP Approach to Action Research. *International Journal of Action Research*, 3(1/2), 190.

- Coleman, S. (2005). Anthropological Strand - Context. In H. Cameron, P. Richter, D. Davies & F. Ward (Eds.), *Studying Local Churches. A handbook*. London: SCM.
- Collins, J. (2001). *Good to Great: Why some companies make the leap...and others don't*. New York: Harper Business.
- Collins, P., & Kakabadse, N. K. (2006). Perils of religion: need for spirituality in the public sphere. *Public Administration and Development*, 26(2), 109-121.
- Conder, T. (2006). *The Church in Transition. The Journey of Existing Churches into the Emerging Culture*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Cordeiro, W. (2004). *Doing Church as a Team: The miracles of teamwork and how It transforms churches*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books.
- Craig, D. V. (2009). *Action Research Essentials*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Crema, R. (2008). Transdisciplinary Approach in therapy. In B. Nicolescu (Ed.), *Transdisciplinarity, theory and practice*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton.
- Croft, S. (2008a). What counts as a fresh expression of church and who decides? In L. Nelstrop & M. Percy (Eds.), *Evaluating Fresh Expressions*. Norwich: Canterbury Press.
- Croft, S. (2009). Persuading Gamaliel: Helping the Anglo-Catholic tradition engage with Fresh Expressions of Church. In S. Croft & I. J. Mobsby (Eds.), *Ancient Faith, Future Mission. Fresh Expressions in the Sacramental Tradition*. Norwich: Canterbury Press.
- Croft, S. (Ed.). (2008b). *Mission-shaped questions: Defining issues for today's church*. London: Church House Publishing.
- Cundy, I., & Welby, J. (2000). Taking the Cat for a Walk: Can a Bishop order a Diocese? In G. R. Evans & M. Percy (Eds.), *Managing the Church?* sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Cunha, M. P. e., Rego, A., & D'Oliveira, T. (2006). Organizational Spiritualities : An Ideology-Based Typology. *Business and Society*, 45.
- Cunliffe, A. L., Luhman, J. T., & Boje, D. M. (2004). Narrative Temporality: Implications for Organizational Research *Organizational Studies*, 25(2).
- Davidson, A. K. (Ed.). (2011). *Living Legacy: A history of the Anglican Diocese of Auckland*. Auckland: Anglican Diocese of Auckland.
- Davies, D. (2005). Why study local churches? In H. Cameron, P. Richter, D. Davies & F. Ward (Eds.), *Studying Local churches. A handbook*. London: SCM.
- Davis, B. (1995). *The Way Ahead. Anglican change & Prospect in New Zealand*. Christchurch: The Caxton Press.

- Day, J. (2009). Reflections on Parish Growth. Unpublished Study leave report.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2000). *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. . New York: Sage.
- Després, C., Brais, N., & Avellan, S. (2004). Collaborative planning for retrofitting suburbs: transdisciplinarity and intersubjectivity in action. *Futures*, 36(4), 471-486.
- Diocese of Auckland. (2009). Worship Resources for Occasional Services.
- Dobson, J. (1999). *The art of management and the aesthetic manager: The coming way of business* Westport, Connecticut: Quorum Books.
- Dokecki, P. R., Newbrough, J. R., & O'Gormon, R. T. (2001). Toward a community-oriented action research framework for spirituality: Community psychological and theological perspectives. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 29(5), 497-518.
- Donald, S. (2009). The Legacy of Conflict. 1865-76. War in Waiapu and its Aftermath. In J. Bluck (Ed.), *The Gift Endures. A new history of the Waiapu Diocese*. Napier: Diocese of Waiapu.
- Dowie, A. (2002). *Interpreting Culture in a Scottish Congregation* New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Drane, J. (2006). The emerging church. *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church*, 6(1), 3-11.
- Drane, J. (2008). What does maturity in the emerging Church look like? In S. Croft (Ed.), *Mission-shaped questions. Defining issues for today's church*. London: Church House Publishing.
- Driscoll, C., & Wiebe, E. (2007). Technical Spirituality at Work: Jacques Ellul on Workplace Spirituality. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 16(4), 333-348.
- du Plessis, A. J. (2006). Managing diversity: New Zealand businesses, along with those of other countries, are increasingly under pressure to remain globally competitive. . *Monash Business Review*, 2(1), 42.
- Dudley, C. S. (2002). *Community Ministry: New challenges, proven steps to faith-based initiatives*. Herndon, VA: Alban institute.
- Dudley, C. S. (Ed.). (1983). *Building Effective Ministry: Theory and Practice in the Local Church*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Dudley, C. S., & Ammerman, N. T. (2002). *Congregations in Transition. A guide for analysing, assessing, and adapting in changing communities*. San Fransisco: Josey-Bass.

- Duin, J. (2008). *Quitting church: why the faithful are fleeing and what to do about it*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books.
- Duraisingh, C. (2010). From Church-Shaped Mission to Mission-Shaped Church. *Anglican Theological Review*, 92(1), 7.
- Durran, M. (2006). *Regenerating Local Churches: Mission-based strategies for transformation and growth*. Norwich: Canterbury Press.
- Dwan, S. (2004). Changing organisational culture. *NZ Business*, 18(5).
- Edgell, P. (2006). *Religion and family in a changing society*. Princeton: PUP.
- Edson, B. (2006). An exploration into the missiology of the emerging church in the UK through the narrative of Sanctus1. *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church*, 6(1), 24-37.
- Edwards, D. L. (1981). *Christian England Vol 1*. London: Collins Fount.
- Edwards, O. C. J. (1998). Anglican Pastoral Tradition. In S. Sykes & J. Booty (Eds.), *The Study of Anglicanism* (pp. 338-351). London: SPCK.
- Egerstrom, M. (2011). My take: Occupy Wall St looks like church to me. Retrieved 10 October 2011, from <http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2011/10/07/my-take-occupy-wall-street-looks-like-church-to-me/>
- Ekvall, G. (1996). Organizational Climate for Creativity and Innovation. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 5(1), 105-123.
- Elena, R. (2011). *Bishop's Charge*. Paper presented at the Nelson diocesan synod.
- Evans, G. R., & Percy, M. (Eds.). (2000). *Managing the church? Order and organization in the secular age*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Exline, J. J., & Bright, D. S. (2011). Spiritual and religious struggles in the workplace. *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion*, 8(2), 123-142.
- Fairclough, N. (2005). Peripheral Vision. *Organization Studies*, 26(6), 915-939.
- Fairhurst, G. T., & Putnam, L. (2004). Organizations as Discursive Constructions. *Communication Theory*, 14(1), 5-26.
- Farnsley, A. (2004). The rise of congregational studies in the USA. In M. Guest, K. Tusting & L. Woodhead (Eds.), *Congregational Studies in the UK. Christianity in a Post-Christian context*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Fields, A., & Lineham, P. (2008). The current Status of the Church. In B. Patrick (Ed.), *New Vision Vol III* (pp. 163-173). Auckland: Tabernacle Books.
- Finch-Lees, T., Mabey, C., & Liefoghe, A. (2005). In the name of capability: A critical discursive evaluation of competency-based management development. *Human Relations*, 58(9), 1185-1222.

- Fisher, J. W. (2009). Getting the balance: assessing spirituality and well-being among children and youth. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 14(3), 273 - 288.
- Fornaciari, C. J., & Dean, K. L. (2001). Making the quantum leap: Lessons from physics on studying spirituality and religion in organizations. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 14(4), 335 - 351.
- Foster, E., & Bochner, A. P. (2008). Social Constructivist Perspectives in Communication Research. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *Handbook of Constructionist Research* London and New York: Guildford Press.
- Fox, M., & Sheldrake, R. (1996). *The Physics of Angels: Exploring the Realm where Science and Spirit Meet*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.
- Frambach, N. (2008). Emerging Church Communities. *The Clergy Journal*, 84(4), 9.
- Franklin, T., & Coleman, J. (2010). The way things are done around here (organizational culture). *Training Journal*(1465-6523), 37-39.
- Freudenburg, B. F., & Lawrence, R. (2009). *The Family-Friendly Church*. Loveland, Colorado: Group.
- Friesen, D. J. (2009). *Thy Kingdom Connected: What the Church Can Learn from Facebook, the Internet, and Other Networks*. Grand Rapids: Baker.
- Frohlich, M. (2001). Spiritual discipline, discipline of spirituality: revisiting questions of definition and method. *Spiritus*, 1(1), 65-78.
- Fry, L. W. (2003). Toward a theory of spiritual leadership. *Leadership Quarterly*, 14(6), 693.
- Fulmer, R. M., & Keys, J. B. (1998). A conversation with Peter Senge: New developments in organizational learning. *Organizational Dynamics*, 27(2), 33-42.
- Gallup, G. J., & Lindsay, D. M. (2002). *The Gallup Guide: Reality check for 21st century churches*. Loveland, Co: Group.
- Gamble, R. (2008). Mixed Economy: nice slogan or working reality? In L. Nelstrop & M. Percy (Eds.), *Evaluating Fresh Expressions*. Norwich: Canterbury Press.
- Garcia-Zamor, J.-C. (2003). Workplace Spirituality and Organizational Performance. *Public Administration Review*, 63(3), 355-363.
- Gayã Wicks, P., & Reason, P. (2009). Initiating action research. *Action Research*, 7(3), 243-262.

- Gergen, K. J., & Gergen, M. M. (2008). Social Construction and Research as Action. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Sage handbook of Action Research* (pp. 159-171). London: Sage.
- Gibbs, E. (2009). *Churchmorph: How megatrends are reshaping Christian communities*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- Gibbs, E., & Coffee, I. (2000). *Church next: Quantum changes in Christian ministry*. Leicester: IVP.
- Gifford, M. L. (2009). *The Turnaround Church: Inspiration and Tools for Life-Sustaining Change*. Herndon, VA: Alban Institute.
- Girard, R. (1978). *Things hidden since the foundation of the world*. London: Continuum.
- Girard, R. (1986). *The Scapegoat*. Washington DC: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Girard, R. (1996). Nietzsche versus the Crucified. In J. G. Williams (Ed.), *A Girard Reader* (pp. 243-261). New York: Crossroad Publishing.
- Goodier, B. C., & Eisenberg, E. M. (2006). Seeking the spirit: communication and the (re)development of a "spiritual" organization.(Higher Ground Leadership)(Essay). *Communication Studies*, 57(1), 47(19).
- Gorsuch, R. L. (2002). The pyramids of sciences and of humanities. *The American Behavioral Scientist*, 45(12), 1822-1838.
- Goundar, S. N. (2005). *Talanoa: The way forward for peace, unity and reconciliation in Fiji*. University of Auckland, Auckland.
- Graham, M. D., McDonald, M. J., & Klaassen, D. W. (2008). A Phenomenological Analysis of Spiritual Seeking: Listening to Quester Voices. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 18(2), 146-163.
- Grenz, S. J. (1997). *A Primer on Postmodernism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Grenz, S. J. (2003). Ecclesiology. In K. Vanhoozer (Ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Grenz, S. J., & Franke, J. R. (2001). *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox.
- Guba, E., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2000). Pragmatic controversies, contradictions and emerging confluences. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. New York: Sage.
- Guder, D. L. (2000). *The Continuing Conversion of the Church*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

- Guder, D. L. (Ed.). (1998). *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Guest, M. (2005). Sociological strand - worship and action. In H. Cameron, P. Richter, D. Davies & F. Ward (Eds.), *Studying local churches. A handbook*. London: SCM.
- Guest, M., Tusting, K., & Woodhead, L. (Eds.). (2004). *Congregational studies in the UK: Christianity in a post-Christian context*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Gull, G. A., & Doh, J. (2004). The "Transmutation" of the Organization: Toward a More Spiritual Workplace. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 13(2), 128-139.
- Gutiérrez, G. (1973). *A Theology of Liberation : History, Politics and Salvation*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Hadaway, C. K. (2001). *Behold I do a New Thing: Transforming Communities of Faith*. Cleveland: Pilgrim.
- Hadaway, C. K., & Roozen, D. A. (1995). *Rerouting the Protestant Mainstream: Sources of Growth and Opportunities for Change*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- Halapua, S. (2007). Talanoa. Talking from the Heart (Publication. Retrieved 14th September 2011: <http://www.sgiquarterly.org/feature2007Jan-4.html>)
- Halapua, W. (2008). *Waves of God's Embrace: Sacred Perspectives from the Ocean*. Norwich: Canterbury Press.
- Hall, C. W. (2007). Missional possible: steps to transform a consumer church into a missional church. *Leadership Journal*, 28(1), 34-37.
- Halter, H., & Smay, M. (2010). *And: The gathered and scattered Church*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Harris, L. C., & Ogbonna, E. (2011). Antecedents and consequences of management-espoused organizational cultural control. *Journal of Business Research*, 64(5), 437-445.
- Harris, M. (1998). *The challenge of change: The Anglican Communion in the post-modern era*. New York: Church Publishing Inc.
- Hart, J. (2004). Local Church Leadership in Urban Communities. In *Urban Church. A practitioner's Resource Book*. London: SPCK.
- Hartwig, M., & Morgan, J. (2012). *New Studies in Critical Realism and Spirituality: Theism, Atheism, and Meta-Reality*. Florence, KY, USA: Routledge.
- Hathorne, C. (2003). *The Accidental Church: How Mothers against Drugs changed the heart of a Church*. London: Kingsway.

- Hauerwas, S. (2001). Christianity. It's not a religion, it's an adventure (1991). In J. Berkman & M. Cartwright (Eds.), *The Hauerwas Reader*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Hawtrey, K., & Lunn, J. (2010). The Emergent Church, Socio-Economics and Christian Mission. *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies*, 27(2), 65-74.
- Hay, D. (1985). Suspicion of the Spiritual: Teaching Religion in a World of Secular Experience. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 7(3), 140-147.
- Hay, D. (2001). The Spirituality of Adults in Britain - Recent Research. *Scottish Journal of Healthcare Chaplaincy*, 5(1).
- Hay, D. (2006). Why spirituality is difficult for Westerners. In D. Hay (Ed.), *Something There: The Biology of the Human Spirit*. London: Darton, Longman & Todd.
- Hay, D. (2009). Are we naturally religious? Retrieved 9th October 2009, from http://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/Are_we_naturally_religious.aspx?ArticleID=1744&PageID=47&RefPageID=11
- Hay, D., & Hunt, K. (2000). Understanding the spirituality of people who don't go to church, A report on the findings of the Adults' Spirituality Project Available from http://74.125.155.132/scholar?q=cache:xIRZCe_kWaoJ:scholar.google.com/+Something+there%3F+Understanding+the+spirituality+of+people+who+do+n%27t+go+to+church&hl=en
- Heifetz, R. (1994). *Leadership without easy answers*. Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press.
- Heifetz, R., & Linsky, M. (2002). *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Business School Press.
- Helminiak, D. A. (1998). *Religion and the Human Sciences. an approach via spirituality*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Hergenrath, K. C., Geishecker, S., McGuire-Kuletz, M., Gitlin, D. J., & Rhodes, S. D. (2010). An Introduction to Community-Based Participatory Research. *Rehabilitation Education* 24(3 & 4), 225-238.
- Heron, J., & Lahood, G. (2008). Charismatic Inquiry in Concert: Action Research in the realm of 'the between'. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Sage handbook of Action Research* (pp. 439-449). London: Sage.
- Herr, K., & Anderson, G. (2005). *The Action Research Dissertation: A guide for students and faculty*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hinton, J. (2002). *Changing churches: Building bridges in local mission*. London: Churches Together in Britain and Ireland.

- Hirsch, A. (2007). *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press.
- Hirsch, A. (2008). Defining missional: the word is everywhere, but where did it come from and what does it really mean? *Leadership (Carol Stream, IL)*, 29(4), 20(23).
- Hobbs, W. C. (2004). Indicators of a Missional church. In L. Y. Barrett (Ed.), *Treasures in Clay Jars. Patterns in Missional Faithfulness*. Grand Rapids MI: Edrdmans.
- Holloway, R. (1994). AIDS: The Church's Response. *The Furrow*, 45(3).
- Honore, C. (2011). Foundations: From Mission to Te Hahi Mihinare 1814-45. In A. K. Davidson (Ed.), *Living Legacy: A History of the Anglican Diocese of Auckland* (pp. 23-49). Auckland: Anglican Diocese of Auckland.
- Hope, S. (2006). *Mission-shaped spirituality: The transforming power of mission*. London: Church House Publishing.
- Hopewell, J. F. (1987). *Congregation: Stories and Structures*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
- Hout, M., Greeley, A., & Wilde, M. (2005). Birth dearth. *Christian Century*, 122(20), 24-27.
- Hull, J. M. (1996). The Ambiguity of Spiritual Values. In J. M. Halstead & M. J. Taylor (Eds.), *Values in Education and Education in Values* (pp. 33-45). London: Falmer Press.
- Hull, J. M. (2006). *Mission-shaped Church: A Theological Response*. London: SCM.
- Hull, J. M. (2008a). Mission-shaped and kingdom focussed? In S. Croft (Ed.), *Mission-Shaped Questions?* London: Church House Publishing.
- Hull, J. M. (2008b). Only one way to walk with God: Christian discipleship for new expressions of church. In L. Nelstrop & M. Percy (Eds.), *Evaluating Fresh Expressions: explorations in emerging church*. Norwich: Canterbury Press.
- Humphries, M., & Grant, S. (2005). Social Enterprise and Re-Civilization of Human Endeavors: Re-Socializing the Market Metaphor or Encroaching Colonization of the Lifeworld? *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, 8(1), 41-50.
- Hunt, S. (2008). The Emerging Church and its discontents. *Journal of Beliefs & Values: Studies in Religion & Education*, 29(3), 287-296.
- Impey, R. (2009). Towards Professional Wisdom in Parish Ministry *Ethics and Social Welfare*, 3(2), 181-194.

- Impey, R. (2010). *How to develop your local church: Working with the wisdom of the congregation*. London: SPCK.
- Jackson, B. (2002). *Hope for the Church: Contemporary strategies for growth*. London: Church House Publishing.
- Jackson, B. (2005). *The road to growth. Towards a thriving Church*. London: church House publishing.
- Jamali, D., Khoury, G., & Sahyoun, H. (2006). From bureaucratic organizations to learning organizations. *The Learning Organization*, 13(4), 337.
- Jarvis, P. (2005). The Churches' Outreach Mission: Educational and Evangelical Dilemmas. *Journal of Adult Theological Education*, 2(1), 51-62.
- Jenkins, S. (2011, 21 April 2011). There's no such thing as 'big society' – just many small ones, under steeples. *The Guardian*,
- Johnson, E. A. (1992). *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*. New York: Crossroad Herder.
- Johnson, G. (1992). Managing Strategic Change: Strategy, Culture and Action. . *Long Range Planning*, 25(1), 28-36.
- Johnson, R. (2001). Historical returns. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 4(3), 261-288.
- Karakas, F. (2009). New Paradigms in Organization Development: Positivity, Spirituality, and Complexity. *Organization Development Journal*, 27(1), 11.
- Kelley, D. M. (1977). *Why Conservative Churches are Growing*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Kemmis, S. (2001). Exploring the relevance of critical theory for action research: Emancipatory action research in the footsteps of Jürgen Habermas. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice* (pp. 91-102). London.: SAGE.
- Kemmis, S. (2008). Critical theory and Participatory action research. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice* (pp. 121-138). London: SAGE.
- Kemp, S. (2004). Planning Behaviour: A Re-examination of the Organisational Culture present in the Regent International Hotels' Group. *International Journal of Applied Strategic Management*, 2(1).
- Keuss, J. (2008). The emergent church and neo-correlational theology after Tillich, Schleiermacher and Browning. *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 61(4), 450.

- Kinjerski, V., & Skrypnek, B. J. (2006). Creating organizational conditions that foster employee spirit at work. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 27(4), 280.
- Kirwan, M. (2009). *Girard and Theology*. London: T and T Clark.
- Kitchens, J. (2003). *The Postmodern Parish: New Ministry for a New Era*. Bethesda, ML: Alban Institute.
- Kolodinsky, R., Giacalone, R., & Jurkiewicz, C. (2008). Workplace Values and Outcomes: Exploring Personal, Organizational, and Interactive Workplace Spirituality. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 81(2), 465-480.
- Labanow, C. (2006). Researching a local church: Exploring an 'emergent church'. In J. Swinton & H. Mowat (Eds.), *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*. London: SCM.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1999). *Philosophy in the Flesh: The embodied mind and its challenge to Western thought*. New York: Basic Books.
- Larive, A. (2004). *After Sunday: A theology of work*. New York: Continuum.
- Larive, A. (2007). Responsive Labor: A Theology of Work. *Sewanee Theological Review*, 50(2), 33.
- Lees, F., Mills, D., Prebble, E., & Welsh, C. (Eds.). (1980). *The Living Church: A pastoral Community*. Lytchett Minster, Dorset: Post Green Press.
- Legge, K. (1994). Managing culture: fact or fiction In K. Sisson (Ed.), *Personnel Management: A Comprehensive Guide to Theory and Practice in Britain*. Oxford . Blackwell.
- Lewin, K. (1946). Action Research and minority problems. *Journal of Social Issues*, 34-36.
- Lewin, K. (1948). *Resolving social conflicts: selected papers on group dynamics*. . New York: Harper & Row.
- Lewis-Anthony, J. (2009). *If you meet George Herbert on the road, kill him: Radically re-thinking priestly ministry*. London: Mowbray.
- Limbrick, W. (2011). Diocesan Genesis: Bishop and Settler Church 1842-70. In A. K. Davidson (Ed.), *Living Legacy: A History of the Anglican Diocese of Auckland*. Auckland: Anglican Diocese of Auckland.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Denzin, N. K. (2000). The Seventh Moment: Out of the Past. In N. K. Denzin & L. Y. S (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. New York: Sage Publication.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Beverly Hills: Sage.

- Lindbeck, G. A. (1984). *The nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*. London: SPCK.
- Lineham, P. (2000). It's a New World out There. In C. R. Association (Ed.), *The Religion Question: Findings from the 1996 Census* (pp. 61-73). Auckland: Christian Research Association.
- Lineham, P. (2003). Three Types of Church. In R. Bodde & H. Kempster (Eds.), *Thinking Outside the Square*. Auckland: St Columba's Press.
- Lips-Wiersma, M., Dean, K. L., & Fornaciari, C. J. (2009). Theorizing the Dark Side of the Workplace Spirituality Movement. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 20(10), 1-13.
- Lonergan, B. J. F. (1972). *Method in Theology*. New York: Herder and Herder.
- Lundberg, C. C. (1991). Musings on Self, Culture, and Inquiry. In P. J. Frost, Moore, L. F., Louis, M. R., Lundberg, C. C., & Martin, J. (Ed.), *Reframing Organizational Culture*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Lune, H. (2010). *Understanding Organizations*. Cambridge UK and Malden, MA: Polity.
- Lyon, D. (2000). *Jesus in Disneyland :Religion in postmodern times*. Cambridge, UK ;: Polity Press in association with Blackwell Publishers,.
- Lytard, J.-F. (1979-1984). *The Postmodern Condition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Ma, L. J. C. (2006). The State of the Field of Urban China. *China Information*, 20(3), 363-389.
- Macdonald, R. (1989). *The Fifth Wind: New Zeland and the legacy of a turbulent past*. Auckland: Hodder and Stoughton.
- MacIntosh, E., & Doherty, A. (2007). Extending the Scope of Organisational Culture: The External Perception of an Internal Phenomenon. *Sport management review*, 10, 45-64.
- Mackewn, J. (2008). Faclitation as Action Research in the Moment. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of Action Research*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Mann, A. (1999). *Can our Church Live?* Herndon, PA: Alban Institute.
- Markham, I. (2006). Two Conditions for a Growing Liberal church: Right Theology and Right Clergy. In M. Percy & I. Markham (Eds.), *Why Liberal Churches are Growing*. London: T & T Clark.

- Marques, J., Dhiman, S., & King, R. (2005). Spirituality in the Workplace: Developing an Integral Model and a Comprehensive Definition. *Journal of American Academy of Business, Cambridge*, 7(1), 81.
- Marshall, J., Coleman, G., & Reason, P. (Eds.). (2011). *Leadership for Sustainability: An Action Research Approach*. Sheffield: Greenleaf.
- Martin, B., Humphries, M. T., & Rangiita, R. T. (2004). A two hulled waka: Managing diversity in a Pacific mode. *International Journal of Diversity in Organisations, Communities and Nations*, 3(B).
- Max-Neef, M. A. (2005). Foundations of transdisciplinarity. *Ecological Economics*, 53(1), 5-16.
- Mayhue, R. L. (2006). The Emerging Church: Generous Orthodoxy or General Obfuscation? *The Master's Seminary Journal (TMSJ)*, 17(2), 191-205.
- McCuddy, M. K., & Pirie, W. L. (2007). Spirituality, stewardship, and financial decision-making: Toward a theory of intertemporal stewardship. *Managerial Finance*, 33(12), 957 - 969.
- McGuire, T. (2010). From Emotions to Spirituality: "Spiritual Labor" as the Commodification, Codification, and Regulation of Organizational Members' Spirituality. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 24, 74.
- McKnight, S. (2007). Five Streams of the Emerging Church. *Christianity Today*, February 2007.
- McLaren, B. (2006). *The Secret Message of Jesus: Uncovering the Truth that Could Change Everything*. Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group.
- McNeal, R. (2003). *The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mead, L. (1993). *More than Numbers: The ways churches grow*. New York: Alban Institute.
- Mead, L. B. (1991). *The Once and Future Church: Reinventing the congregation for a new mission frontier*. Washington, DC: Alban Institute.
- Meade, D. M. (1988). *The Medieval Church in England*. Worthing: Churchman.
- Merritt, C. H. (2007). *Tribal Church: Ministering to the Missing Generation*. Herndon VA: Alban Institute.
- Middelmann, U. W. (2004). *Market-Driven Church: The Worldly Influence of Modern Culture on the Church in America*. Wheaton, Illinois 60187.
- Milacci, F., & Howell, S. L. (2002). *Marketing God: a critical inquiry into spirituality in the workplace*. Paper presented at the Proceedings of The Adult Education Research Conference, Raleigh, North Carolina.

- Milbank, J. (2008). Stale Expressions: the Management-shaped Church. *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 21(1), 117-128.
- Miller, D. W. (2007). *God at Work: The History and Promise of the Faith at Work Movement*. New York: Oxford.
- Miller, G. (2002). *Growing Great Kiwi Churches*. Tauranga, NZ: Affirm.
- Minatrea, M. (2004). *Shaped by God's heart: The Passion and Practice of Missional Churches*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Mission and Public Affairs Council, C. o. E. (2004). *Mission-shaped Church*. London.
- Mitroff, I. I., & Denton, E. A. (1999). *A spiritual audit of corporate America: A hard look at spirituality, religion and values in the workplace*. San Fransisco: Josey-Bass.
- Mobsby, I. J. (2007). *Emerging and fresh expressions of church: How are they authentically church and Anglican?* London: Moot Community Publishing.
- Mobsby, I. J. (2008). *The Becoming of G-d: What the Trinitarian nature of God has to do with Church and a Deep Spirituality for the Twenty-first Century*. London: YTC Press.
- Monk, A., & Howard, S. (1998). The Rich Picture: A Tool for Reasoning About Work Context. *Interactions*(March/April).
- Moody, K. S. (2010). 'I Hate Your Church; What I Want is My Kingdom': Emerging Spiritualities in the UK Emerging Church Milieu. *Expository Times*, 121(10), 495-503.
- Moore, B. (2007). Original sin and insider research. *Action Research*, 5(1), 27-39.
- Morgan, G. (1986-2006). *Images of Organisation*. Newbury Park, California: Sage.
- Moritz, J. (2008). Beyond Strategy, Towards the Kingdom of God: The Post-Critical Reconstructionist Mission of the Emerging Church. *Dialog*, 47(1), 27.
- Morrell, W. P. (1973). *The Anglican Church in New Zealand: A History*. Dunedin: Anglican Church of the Province of New Zealand.
- Morris, L. J. (1995). *The High Impact Church: A Fresh Approach To Reaching The Unchurched*. Houston TX: Touch Publications.
- Moschella, M. C. (2008). *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press.
- Moynagh, M. (2004). *emergingchurch.intro*. Oxford: Monarch Books.

- Murphy, N. (1996). *Beyond Liberalism & Fundamentalism: How modern and postmodern philosophy set the theological agenda*. Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press.
- Murray, S. (2004). *Church after Christendom*. Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press.
- Murray, S. (2008). Post-Christendom, Post-Constantinian, Post-Christian...does the label matter? Retrieved 31-3-2011, from <http://www.anabaptistnetwork.com/node/506>
- Mutch, C., & Turton, P. (2003). Selwyn Church: 75 years of worship and service 1928-2003, as recalled by its people. Unpublished Commemorative Booklet. Selwyn Anglican Church.
- Neal, J., & Biberman, J. (2003). Introduction: the leading edge in research on spirituality and organizations. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 16(4), 363 - 366.
- Nelstrop, L., & Percy, M. (Eds.). (2008). *Evaluating Fresh Expressions: Explorations in emerging church*. Norwich: Canterbury Press.
- Newbigin, L. (1983). *The Other Side of 1984: Questions to the Churches*. Geneva: Consul Oecumenique.
- Newbigin, L. (1986). *Foolishness to the Greeks*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Newbigin, L. (1989). *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Nichols, A. (Ed.). (2006). *Building a Mission-Shaped Church in Australia*. Sydney: General Synod.
- Nicolescu, B. (2008a). In vitro and in vivo knowledge. In B. Nicolescu (Ed.), *Transdisciplinarity: Theory and Practice*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Nicolescu, B. (Ed.). (2008b). *Transdisciplinarity: Theory and Practice*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Nicolini, D. (2009). Zooming In and Out: Studying Practices by Switching Theoretical Lenses and Trailing Connections. *Organization Studies*, 30(12), 1391-1418.
- Niebuhr, H. R. (1951). *Christ and culture*. London: Harper.
- Nolan, P. (2005). From first-person inquiry to radical social action. *Action Research*, 3(3), 297-312.
- Oden, P. (2009). An Emerging Pneumatology: Jergen Moltmann and the Emerging Church in Conversation. *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, 18(2), 263-284.
- Ogbanna, E., & Harris, L. C. (2002). Managing organisational culture: Insights from the hospitality industry. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 12(1).

- Ogbor, J. O. (2001). Critical theory and the hegemony of corporate culture. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 14(6), 590.
- Olson, E. (2008). Common Belief, Contested meanings, development and faith-based organisational culture. *Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie*, 99(4), 393-405.
- Ospina, S., Dodge, J., Foldy, E. G., & Hofmann-Pinilla, A. (2008). Taking the Action Turn: Lessons from Bringing Participation to Qualitative Research. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Sage Handbook of Action Research*. London: Sage.
- Page, F. (2008). *Who can save The Incredible Shrinking Church?* Nashville: B&H Publishing.
- Pandey, A., Gupta, R., & Arora, A. (2009). Spiritual Climate of Business Organizations and Its Impact on Customers' Experience. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 88(2), 313-332.
- Pannenberg, W. (1969). *Theology and the Kingdom of God*. London: The Westminster Press.
- Pattison, S. (1997). *The faith of the managers: When management becomes religion*. London: Cassell.
- Pattison, S. (2000). Organisational spirituality: an exploration. *Modern Believing*, 41(2), 12-20.
- Pattison, S. (2009). Deepening Relationships with Material Artefacts. In C. Deacy & E. Arweck (Eds.), *Exploring Religion and the Sacred in a Media Age*. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate.
- Pavlovich, K., & Corner, P. D. (2009). Spiritual organizations and connectedness: the Living Nature experience. *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion* 6(3), 209-229.
- Percy, M. (2006a). Many rooms in my Father's house: The changing identity of the English parish church. In S. Croft (Ed.), *The Future of the Parish System. Shaping the Church of England for the 21st Century*. London: Church House Publishing.
- Percy, M. (2006b). Paradox and Persuasion: Alternative perspectives on Liberal and Conservative Church Growth. In M. Percy & I. Markham (Eds.), *Why Liberal Churches are Growing*. London: T & T Clark.
- Percy, M. (2008). Old tricks for new dogs? A critique of Fresh Expressions. In L. Nelstrop & M. Percy (Eds.), *Evaluation Fresh Expressions*. Norwich: Canterbury Press.
- Percy, M. (2010). *Shaping the Church: The Promise of Implicit Theology*. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate.

- Percy, M., & Markham, I. (Eds.). (2006). *Why Liberal Churches are Growing*. London: T & T Clark.
- Percy, M., & Percy, E. (2006). A view from the pew. Ministry and organic church growth. In M. Percy & I. Markham (Eds.), *Why Liberal Churches are Growing*. London: T & T Clark.
- Phillips, T. R., & Okholm, D. L. (Eds.). (1996). *The Nature of Confession: Evangelicals and Postliberals in Conversation*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.
- Pounds, N. J. G. (2000). *A History of the English Parish*. Cambridge: Cambridge university Press.
- Prebble, E. (2000). Theory and the church: A different theology or a theology of difference? *Journeyings, Council for Christian Nurture of the Diocese of Auckland*, 12(1), 20-35.
- Prebble, E., Abbott, S., Lees, T., & Ramsay, K. (Eds.). (1981). *The Growing Church: Personal renewal*. Lytchett Minster, Dorset: Post Green Press.
- Pritchard, G. A. (1996). *Willow Creek seeker services: Evaluating a new way of doing church*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books.
- Pritchard, J. (2007). *The Life and Work of a Priest*. London: SPCK.
- Puckey, A. (2011). Mana Motuhake o te Whakapono: Religious Self-determination, Maori and the Diocese 1928-92. In A. K. Davidson (Ed.), *Loving Legacy. A History of the Anglican Diocese of Auckland*. Auckland: Anglican Diocese of Auckland.
- Pyrch, T. (2007). Participatory action research and the culture of fear. *Action Research*, 5(2), 199-216.
- Quatro, S. A. (2004). New Age or Age Old: Classical Management Theory and Traditional Organized Religion as Underpinnings of the Contemporary Organizational Spirituality Movement. *Human Resource Development Review*, 3, 228.
- Rainer, T. S. (1993). *The book of Church Growth: History, theology and principles*. Nashville, Tennessee.
- Rainer, T. S. (2005). *Breakout Churches: Discover How to make the Leap*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Rainer, T. S., & Geiger, E. (2006). *Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples*. Nashville: B&H.
- Ramsay, A. M. (1991). *The Anglican Spirit*. Cambridge, Mass: Cowley Publications.

- Randall, R. L. (1992). *What People Expect from Church: Why meeting the needs of people is more important than church meetings*. Nashville: Abingdon.
- Randerson, R. (2009). Local mission needs radical overhaul. *Anglican Taonga, Advent, 2009*.
- Randerson, R. (2010a). Engagement 21. In J. Fairbrother (Ed.), *To the Church, To the World: Essays in honour of the Rt Revd John C Paterson*. Auckland: Vaughan Park.
- Randerson, R. (2010b). *Engagement 21: A wake-up call to the 21st Century Church in Mission*. Wellington: Matai House.
- Reason, P. (1993). Reflections on Sacred Experience and Sacred Science. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 2(3), 273-283.
- Reason, P. (2001). Learning and change through action research. In J. Henry (Ed.), *Creative Management*. London.: Sage.
- Reason, P. (2004, March 2004). *Action Research: Forming communicative space for many ways of knowing. Response to Md. Anisur Rahman*. Paper presented at the International Workshop on Participatory Action Research, Dhaka.
- Reason, P. & Bradbury, H. (Eds.). (2008). *Sage Handbook of Action Research*. London: Sage.
- Reeves, T. (1998). *The Empty Church: Does Organized Religion Matter Any More?* New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Reid, H. W. (2007). Al Dowie, Interpreting Culture in a Scottish Congregation *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 60(1), 104-105.
- Rendle, G., & Mann, A. (2003). *Holy Conversations: Strategic Planning as a Spiritual Practice for Congregations*: Alban Institute.
- Rigg, G., & Trehan, K. (2004). Reflections on working with critical action learning. *Action Learning: Research & Practice*, 1(2), 149-165.
- Roberts, R. (2002). *Religion, Theology and the Human Sciences*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Robinson, A. B. (2003). *Transforming Congregational culture*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Robinson, A. B. (2005). *What's theology Got to do With It?* Herndon VA: Alban Institute.
- Robinson, A. B. (2006). *Leadership for Vital Congregations*. Cleveland: Pilgrim.
- Robinson, J. (2008). Being undisciplined: Transgressions and intersections in academia and beyond. *Futures*, 40(1), 70-86.

- Roof, W. C., & McKinney, W. (1987). *American Mainline Religion: Its changing shape and future*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Roozen, D. A., & Nieman, J. R. (Eds.). (2005). *Church, Identity and Change. theology and Demoninational Structures in Unsettled Times*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Ross, C. (2010). The Five Marks of Mission. Their Role and Significance for the Anglican Communion. In J. Fairbrother (Ed.), *To the Church, To the World: Essays in honour of the Right Reverend John C. Paterson*. Auckland: Vaughan Park.
- Rotary. (2012). Retrieved 15 May 2012, from <http://www.rotary.org/en/aboutus/rotaryinternational/guidingprinciples/Pages/rifdefault.aspx>
- Rothauge, A. J. (1990). *Sizing Up a Congregation for new member ministry*. New York: Episcopal Church Centre.
- Rouse, R., & Van Gelder, C. (2008). *A Field Guide for the Missional Congregation*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress.
- Rowlinson, M., & Procter, S. (1999). Organizational Culture and Business History. *Organization Studies*, 20(3), 369-396.
- Roxburgh, A. J. (2010). *Missional Map-making: Skills for leading in times of transition*. San Fransisco: Josey Bass.
- Roxburgh, A. J., & Boren, M. S. (2009). *Introducing the Missional Church: What It Is, Why It Matters, How to Become One*. Grand Rapids: Baker.
- Ryman, J. A., Porter, T. W., & Galbraith, C. S. (2009). Disciplined Imagination: Art and Metaphor in the business school classroom. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 10(8-10), 1-26.
- Sachs, W., & Holland, T. (2003). *Restoring the Ties that Bind: The GrassRoots Transformation of the Episcopal Church*. New York: Church Publishing Inc.
- Sandercock, L. (2006). Spirituality and the Urban Professions: The Paradox at the Heart of Planning. *Planning Theory & Practice*, 7(1), 65-97.
- Sandercock, L., & Lyssiotis, P. (2003). *Cosmopolis Two. Mongrel Cities of the 21st Century*. London: Continuum.
- Sanderson, E. (2008). A Future Shaped by Love: Towards a Feminist Geography of Development and Spirituality. In L. Irigaray & M. Green (Eds.), *Teaching* (pp. 156-165). London: Continuum.
- Sanguin, B. (2008). *The Emerging Church: A model for change and a map for renewal*. Kelowna, BC: CooperHouse.

- Sarkar, S. (1999). Post-modernism and the Writing of History. *Studies in History*, 15(2), 293-322.
- Savage, S. (2006). On the analyst's couch: Psychological perspectives on congregations and clergy. In S. Croft (Ed.), *The Future of the Parish System: Shaping the Church of England for the 21st Century*. London: Church House Publishing.
- Savage, S. (2008). Fresh expressions: The psychological gains and risks. In L. Nelstrop & M. Percy (Eds.), *Evaluating Fresh Expressions*. Norwich: Canterbury.
- Schaeffer, N. A. (2006). Making a joyful noise: The multiple forms and functions of music in modern revivalism. In E. Arweck & P. Collins (Eds.), *Reading Religion in Text and Context: Reflections of Faith and Practice in Religious Materials*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Schein, E. H. (1991). What is Culture? In P. J. Frost, L. F. Moore, M. R. Louis, C. C. Lundberg & J. Martin (Eds.), *Reframing Organizational Culture*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Schein, E. H. (1999-2009). *The corporate culture survival guide : sense and nonsense about culture change*. San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass.
- Schein, E. H. (2008). Clinical Inquiry/Research. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Sage Handbook of Action Research* (pp. 266-279). London: Sage.
- Schneiders, S. M. (2000). *Religion and Spirituality: Strangers, Rivals, or Partners?* Santa Clara, CA: Santa Clara University.
- Schneiders, S. M. (2003). Religion vs. spirituality: A contemporary conundrum. *Spiritus*, 3(2), 163.
- Schultz, T., & Schultz, J. (2003). How effective is your church? *Group*, 29(2), 81.
- Schwarz, C. A. (1996). *Natural church development: A guide to eight essential qualities of healthy churches*. Carol Stream: ChurchSmart Resources.
- Schwarz, C. A. (1999). *Paradigm Shift in the Church: How natural church development can transform theological thinking*. Carol Stream: ChurchSmart Resources.
- Scott, T., Mannion, R., Davies, H. T. O., & Marshall, M. N. (2003). Implementing culture change in health care: theory and practice *International Journal for Quality in Health Care*, 15, 111-118
- Seel, R. (2000). Culture and Complexity: New Insights on Organisational Change. *Organisations & People* 7(2), 2-9.
- Selznick, P. (1957). *Leadership in Administration: A Sociological Interpretation*. New York: Harper.

- Senge, P. M. (1990). *The fifth discipline: the art and practice of the learning organization*. New York: Doubleday/Currency.
- Senge, P. M. (1992). Building Learning Organizations. *The Journal for Quality and Participation*, 15(2), 30.
- Shanks, A. (2010). *Anglicanism Reimagined: An honest Church?* London: SPCK.
- Sheldrake, P. (2007). *A Brief history of Spirituality*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Simpson, R., & Lee, B. L. (2008). *Emerging Downunder: creating new monastic cities of God*. South Australia: ATF Publishing.
- Simpson, S. (2009). The invisible rules (organizational culture). *People Management*(1358-6297), 28-29.
- Sine, T. (2008). *The New Conspirators: Creating the Future one Mustard Seed at a Time*. Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press.
- Smith, L., Bratini, L., Chambers, D.-A., Jensen, R. V., & Romero, L. (2010). Between idealism and reality: Meeting the challenges of participatory action research. *Action Research*, 8(4), 407-425.
- Spader, D., & Mayes, G. (1991). *Growing a Healthy Church*. Chicago: Moody Press.
- Speck, B. W. (2005). What is spirituality? *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 2005(104), 3-13.
- Spong, J. S. (2007). *Jesus for the Non-Religious: Recovering the Divine at the Heart of the Human*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Stancliffe, D. (2010). The Grammar of our Intercourse. In M. Chapman (Ed.), *The hope of Things to Come: Anglicanism and the Future*. London: Mowbray.
- Standish, N. G. (2005). *Becoming a Blessed Church: Forming a Church of Spiritual Purpose, Presence and Power*. Herndon, VA: Alban institute.
- Stetzer, E. (2006). *Planting Missional Churches*. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group.
- Stetzer, E., & Bird, W. (2010). *Viral Churches: Helping Church Planters Become Movement Makers*. San Fransisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Stetzer, E., & Dodson, M. (2007). *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can, Too*. Nashville: B&H Publishing.
- Stetzer, E., & Rainer, T. S. (2010). *Transformational Church: Creating a new scorecard for Congregations*. Nashville: B&H Publishing.
- Stewart, A. C. (2008). The workplace of the organised church: Theories of leadership and the Christian leader. *Culture and Religion: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 9(3), 301 - 318.

- Stokols, D. (2006). Toward a Science of Transdisciplinary Action Research. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 38(1), 63-77.
- Stringer, E. T. (2007). *Action Research (3rd Edition)*. London: Sage.
- Stringer, M. (2004). Putting congregational studies to work: Ethnography, consultancy and change. In M. Guest, K. Tusting & L. Woodhead (Eds.), *Congregational Studies in the UK. Christianity in a post-Christian context*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Suderman, R. J. (2005). *Missional Ecclesiology and Leadership: Toward an Understanding of the Emerging Church*. Winnipeg: Mennonite Church Canada.
- Swinton, J., & Mowat, H. (2006). *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*. London: SCM Press.
- Taylor, S. (2005). *The Out of Bounds church? Learning to create a community of faith in a culture of change*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Temple, W. (1942). *Christianity and Social Order*. London: Penguin Special.
- Temple, W. (1958). *Religious Experience and other Essays and Addresses*. London: James Clarke & Co.
- Thomas, R. (2003). *Counting People In. changing the way we think about membership and the Church*. London: SPCK.
- Thompson, G. B. (2005). Maps and Compass: Swamp Culture and Power. In G. B. Thompson (Ed.), *Alligators in the Swamp: Power, Ministry, and Leadership*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press.
- Tickle, P. (2008). *The great emergence: How Christianity is changing and why*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker books.
- Tickle, P. (2009). Liturgy and Cultural Engagement. In S. Croft & I. J. Mobsby (Eds.), *Ancient Faith, Future Mission: Fresh Expressions in the Sacramental Tradition* (pp. 162-171). Norwich: Canterbury Press.
- Tilby, A. (2008). What questions does Catholic ecclesiology pose for contemporary mission and fresh expressions? In S. Croft (Ed.), *Mission-Shaped Questions: defining issues for today's Church*. London: Church House Publishing.
- Torbert, W. R. (2004). *Action Inquiry: the secret of timely and transforming leadership*. San Fransisco: Berrett-Koehler.
- Tourish, D., & Tourish, N. (2010). Spirituality at Work, and its Implications for Leadership and Followership: A Post-structuralist Perspective. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 6.

- Two Presbyters of the Anglican Way. (1998). *The Way, the Truth and the Life*. Charlottetown, Canada: St Peter Publications.
- Vaggioli, D. F. (1896, 2000). *History of New Zealand and its inhabitants* (J. Crocket, Trans.). Dunedin: University of Otago Press.
- Van der Beek, K. A. (2000). Spirituality: A Development Taboo *Development in Practice*, 10(1), 31-43.
- Van Gelder, C. (2007). *The Ministry of the Missional Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.
- Van Gelder, C. (Ed.). (2008). *The Missional Church and Denominations: Helping Congregations Develop a Missional Identity* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,.
- Van Gelder, C., & Zscheile, D. (2011). *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping trends and shaping the conversation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.
- Vanderbeck, R. M., Valentine, G., Ward, K., Sadgrove, J., & Andersson, J. (2009). The Meanings of Communion: Anglican Identities, the Sexuality Debates, and Christian Relationality. *Sociological Research Online*, 15(2), 3.
- Virginia Report. (1997). London: Inter Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission of Anglican Consultative Council.
- Volf, M., & Bass, D. C. (Eds.). (2001). *Practicing Theology. Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Walker, A., & Bretherton, L. (Eds.). (2007). *Remembering Our Future: Explorations in Deep Church*. Milton Keynes: Paternoster.
- Ward, K. (2003). *Losing My Religion? An examination of church decline, growth and change in New Zealand, 1960 to 1999*. Otago, Dunedin.
- Ward, K. (2006). Towards 2015: the future of mainline Protestantism in New Zealand. *Journal of Beliefs & Values: Studies in Religion & Education*, 27(1), 13-23.
- Ward, K. (2009). It Might be Emerging, but is it Church? *Stimulus*, 17(4), 2-13.
- Ward, K. (2010). Candour. Would the last person turn out the lights? Unpublished Paper.
- Ward, P. (2002). *Liquid church*. Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers.
- Warner, R. (1993). *21st Century Church. Why radical change cannot wait*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Warren, R. (1995). *The Purpose-Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message & Mission*. Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan.

- Warren, R. (2004). *The Healthy Churches' Handbook*. London: Church House Publishing.
- Watson, P. J. (1993). Apologetics and Ethnocentrism: Psychology and Religion Within an Ideological Surround. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 3, 1.
- Watson, P. J. (2004). After Posmodernism: Perspectivism, a Christian Epistemology of Love, and the Ideological Surround. *Journal of Psychology & Theology*, 32(3), 248-261.
- Watson, P. J. (2009). Personal Email correspondence with Edward Prebble.
- Watson, P. J., & Morris, R. J. (2006). Intolerance of Ambiguity within a Religious Ideological Surround: Christian Translations and Relationships with Religious Orientation, Need for Cognition, and Uncertainty Response *Archive for the Psychology of Religion / Archiv für Religionspsychologie*, 28(1), 21.
- Webber, R. (2008). *Ancient-Future Worship: Proclaiming and Enacting God's Narrative*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.
- Welter, R. (2008). Scientific Research, Fragmentation, and Self-awareness. In B. Nicolescu (Ed.), *Transdisciplinarity, theory and practice* (pp. 183-189). Cresskill: Hampton.
- Whitworth, P. (2008). *Prepare for exile. A new spirituality and mission for the church*. London: SPCK.
- Williams, E. (2007). *Fresh Expressions in the Urban Context*. Cambridge: Lulu Enterprises.
- Williams, R. (2003). Traditional and Emerging Church: extract from Presidential Address *General Synod, York, July 2003*.
- Williams, R. (2004). Foreword. In M. Torry (Ed.), *The Parish*. Norwich: Canterbury Press.
- Wilson, J. (1993). Religious affiliation change over time: An analysis of intercensal change in religious affiliation of 5 yearly age-cohorts in recent NZ censuses. *New Zealand Sociology*, 8(1), 60-94.
- Wink, W. (1984). *Naming the Powers*. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- Wink, W. (1992). *Engaging the Powers*. Minneapolis: Fortress.
- Wink, W. (1998). *The Powers that Be*. New York: Doubleday.
- Winseman, A. L. (2007). *Growing an Engaged Church. How to Stop "Doing Church" and Start Being the Church Again*. New York: Gallup.

- Woodhead, L., Guest, M., & Tusting, K. (2004). Congregational Studies: Taking Stock. In M. Guest, K. Tusting & L. Woodhead (Eds.), *Congregational Studies in the UK* (pp. 1-19). Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Woolever, C., & Bruce, D. (2002). *A Field Guide to U.S. Congregations: Who's going Where and Why?* Louisville: Westminster John Knox.
- Woolever, C., & Bruce, D. (2004). *Beyond the ordinary. Ten strengths of U. S. congregations.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox.
- Woolever, C., & Bruce, D. (2008). *Places of promise: Finding strength in your congregation's location.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox.
- Wright, N. T., & Borg, M. (1999). *The meaning of Jesus.* London: SPCK.
- Wuthnow, R. (1993). *Christianity in the 21st Century.* New York: Oxford.
- Wuthnow, R. (2003). *All in Synch: How Music and Art are Revitalizing American Religion.* Berkley: University of California Press.
- Yerby, J. (1995). Family Systems Theory Reconsidered. *Communications Theory*, 5(4), 339ff.
- Zunkel, C. W. (1983). *Growing the Small Church: a Guide for Church Members.* Elgin, Ill: David C Cook.

Appendix

Statements from members of the five parish working groups, reflecting on the research process and/or on sections of the draft thesis.

As with the mapping exercise (Chapter 10) the various working groups interpreted the request for a statement quite differently. Some are in the form of email messages addressed to me, others written in the third person. Some are from one person representing the group, some are from two or three named group members, and one is written anonymously on behalf of the whole group.

1. Statement from Maureen Martyn

Member of the Mangere East working group

Edward,

I enjoyed reading your thesis. The process was accurately described and the ability to adapt your research to the needs of each parish showed a flexibility that was refreshing. I think that it gave our people the opportunity to talk in groups which is something we don't get the chance to do very often. People have a reluctance to talk in church for a variety of reasons but in the more informal discussions it is less threatening for them to "open up".

Your comments have given me a renewed energy to think about different ways of communicating with our very multi-cultural congregation especially about future changes and to discover what needs they may have. I was pleased to read your suggestions on the changes that might have to be taken at Diocesan level to assist parishes to become missionally viable. Will they take any notice?

I enjoyed the comment about "a little group who refuse to lay down and die". This is because we have always been clear that there should be an Anglican presence in this community because we offered a different theology from other denominations around us and stood very firmly for a just society for all people. We also felt that keeping our buildings in good repair for the use of the community was important as well as Mangere East does not have a lot of community buildings in good repair.

I sincerely hope more people will read your research and summations as they were insightful and thought provoking. We need to keep asking questions and trust in God for the answers.

Maureen Martyn

2. *Statements from three members of the Kohimarama working group*

It proved to be a very successful process for the parish. We set out to achieve one new outreach activity and achieved two. It also established an ongoing group within the parish to consider and develop outreach projects.

The Rev'd Stephen Baxter

Edward Prebble did not try to push us to accept his initial suggestion. Instead in a quiet, patient way he let us find our own Outreach project---one we feel we own . After a little less than year it is possible to say it is a success. Without Edward's stimulation I doubt that we would have reached this point.

The Hon Robert Smellie, QC

Our first meeting with Edward was the catalyst to our researching outreach options and our forming a lively and dedicated group which finally chose to implement a community service to the elderly. Edward's presence at our several breakfast meetings provided us with reinforcement of the "rightness" of what we set out to achieve. He provided helpful mentoring, when asked.

We are very happy with our Selwyn Foundation community service.

Leith Hamilton

3. *Statement from the Hillcrest Group*

The Parish has tried to progress the plans that were underway prior to the *Congregations in Transition* work - most have not progressed or have failed, largely because of funding. There is a general recognition that we need to re-think and maybe change our plans - is God closing the door or are we just slow to respond / suffering from institutional inertia? Still general recognition at parish leadership and other levels that we need to reach out into our communities and develop links, etc, do mission. We definitely qualify as a *congregation in transition*.

The process was interesting to work through – it generally seemed to confirm what we had been thinking already but now it is clear that we need to rethink. It was extremely interesting to read the later chapters of thesis in the light of the potential Evangelism/DNA plans etc.

4. *Statements from two members of the Pohutukawa Coast working group.*

I was interested to take part in the research project because it opens your eyes to other views of what a parish/mission district should/could be doing and to how the Spirit moves in other people's lives. It contributed to the ongoing conversations in the Pohutukawa Coast Mission District by allowing us to look at ourselves as if we were flies on the wall without any prejudices or misconceptions. The "angel" exercise was worthwhile and memorable. The meetings with Edward also demonstrated that it is difficult to obtain involvement from parishioners in a project which does not specifically appeal to them.

Dr. Tony Booth

Edward,

I have read through your paper. I think you have covered quite well what transpired at the Mission District. As I mentioned to you, my parishioners in the MD are mostly elderly with a number of them touching 100. There are some middle aged parishioners but they were very busy with their work commitments. I agreed to take part as there was some enthusiasm from the vestry to find ways for growth to remain viable as a Mission District. This enthusiasm unfortunately did not translate in numbers for the working committee.

And this was not the only problem. When doing the mapping we realised that the research method suggested was not suitable for the MD because of its geographical location. We were very much rural and did not have many schools or industries etc to support a large population. Our parishioners were scattered all over the place. However, the research did initiate some ideas that led to the starting of three programmes. The Bag Ladies and Lads has been very successful. Mainly Music started very well with numbers reaching 30 within weeks. However, a year later the numbers dropped because of lack of volunteers to support the programme. It is now left to the Vicar and his wife to run the programme.

Yes you did generate interest amongst us but lacked the support of the vestry.

The Rev'd Shiu Goundar

5. *Statement from Vicky Mee,*
Member of the Pukekohe working group

In many ways the six month's work we did following Dudley and Ammerman's process happened at a very opportune time for our parish. Our Ministry team were already beginning to extend our outreach programmes into the community (Selwyn Centre, Seasons for children suffering loss and grief and the music/playgroup for young families). We needed funding to pursue this work and the support of both the parish and the community.

The first task was to map our parish and this created a lot of interest and discussion about the various worshipping and outreach groups that make up our parish family. It helped parishioners to understand the scope of the outreach that had begun and to be more aware of the young families living mainly in the northeast of the town who came to our play and music group but not to our services.

The Sunday reflections through the month of August 2010 were key to widening discussions from the working group into the whole parish. It enabled us all to think about who we were and how welcoming we were to new people. The parish breakfast at the end of the month was a lively affair with a lot of input on "where to from here." It accomplished a great deal in terms of parish "buy-in" to widening and extending our outreach into the community.

Looking back I can see the six month's work focused the Ministry team in what we were trying to achieve and provided us with wide support throughout the parish. We were fortunate that the Tindall Foundation then funded a consultant to work with us preparing for the launch of Pukekohe Community Action. The sequence of projects could not have worked out better.

Our parish now has its outreach funded quite separately from the parish under the Pukekohe Community Action umbrella and has increasing financial and volunteer support from the community. Our programmes are going well and we're now ready to begin a new programme (SPACE) with first-time mothers. We have also built on the process to provide worship opportunities with our play and music group and with the elderly in the Selwyn group. Jan Wallace, our Vicar, has ensured there is a continuing emphasis on spiritual nourishment.

Pukekohe is not a "congregation in transition" but several congregations continuing to work out how to act together and interact with our changing community. There is a buzz in the air and there have been some changes that would have astonished us two years ago. Who would have believed we would now have four members of vestry who are parents of pre-schoolers?

So, thank you Edward for giving our parish the opportunity of working with you. It helped us assess our position and clarify our goals. We appreciate all the time you put in and the structured nature of the process.

Vicky Mee