



Discipleship & Ministries Learning Network

Church & Community Development

The **Methodist** Church 


Lecture 9

A Community Vocation



IMAGE - GETTY IMAGES

Cliff Summer School 2016
Vocation and Mission: new
forms of chaplaincy



“Give me six hours to chop down
a tree and I will spend the first
four sharpening the axe.”

Abraham Lincoln

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- A **random statement** to begin with! Hopefully this week is providing food for thought and inspiring you.
- The **natural inclination** may be to rush straight to the **action** stage without taking the time to go through the process of preparation.
- **Often we are called to wait; God has plans for us to flourish but in time, His time. We may need to exercise the spiritual fruit of patience.**

“Beginnings are important; they tell us about intentions and vision, values and priorities. So often, the way in which something begins affects the way it develops over time. These early moments can very often determine the direction and speed of travel.”

(Chaplaincy Everywhere Session 1)

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- **Beginnings are important!** When you leave summer school, your next step could be the most crucial
- It is probably a good idea to **sharpen your axe** – to plan and prepare and put careful thought into exactly how you are going to put what you’ve learned into practice.

“Intentional presence’ means that chaplaincy is indeed a ministry of being there – but there with a purpose. Chaplains need to have a clear idea of what they are about, why they are about it and how it fits into an overall pattern of God’s mission in the world.”

(Brown, S Unpublished, Chapter 2)

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- **Session 6 of Chaplaincy Everywhere** briefly covers some of this thinking and planning
- As someone who is keen to help the church learn from **good practice in Community Work and Community Development**, the aim of this session is to explore how those disciplines can help to inform Chaplaincy work
- I hope it will help you as an individual, or your church, **explore** what God is **calling** you to.

Models of Community Work

- Community Action
- Targeted community work
- Community Service
- **Community Development**
- Community Education
- Community Organising
- Radical and socialist work

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For the record, whenever I use the word communities, I refer to those that can be **defined by geography, identity or interest.**

There are several different models of community work:

- Community Action about a particular social or moral issue, a group set up to campaign on something specific.
- Targeted community work – challenging inequalities or working with a groups affected by a specific issue.
- Community Service – activities, networks; providing for particular needs (eg. foodbank).
- **Community Development** – helping individuals and groups to get skills and confidence to improve quality of life. We'll come back to this.
- Community Education – helping people to critically reflect and to see alternatives to the way things are; informing people of their rights or of wider issues that affect them.
- Community Organising – closely linked to Community Development but looking for long-term sustainability. Linking up networks, developing leaders and basically pulling together in a more formal, structured way to influence change and have a 'place at the table'.
- Radical and socialist work – similar to community action and community education but looking for more far-reaching changes in wider society and culture.

Lines between are blurred and all overlap.

Ask wider group: do any of these resonate with your experiences of chaplaincy or what we've heard so far about chaplaincy?

“Community development enables people to work collectively to bring about positive social change.

This long term process starts from people’s own experience and enables communities to work together to:

- Identify their own needs and actions
- Take collective action using their strengths and resources
- Develop their confidence, skills and knowledge
- Challenge unequal power relationships
- Promote social justice, equality and inclusion in order to improve the quality of their own lives, the communities in which they live and societies of which they are a part.”

(Community Development National Occupational Standards, produced by the Federation for Community Development Learning, 2015)

Community development is about meeting **real needs, not perceived needs** or the traditional ‘do-gooder’ approach that churches may have been accused of in the past.

It’s about **capacity building**.

Never do for others what they can do for themselves.

Within community development practice there is a sub-category of thought, known as **Asset-Based Community Development**, or ABCD, which we will look at now. Some argue that **all community development is asset based** – or should be if it is to be effective.

“Asset-based community development (or ABCD) is founded on the idea that change will only happen if we identify and mobilise the gifts and capacities of local people and the social, physical and economic resources of a local place. It is an approach that seeks to build strong, sustainable communities from the ‘inside out,’ through forging and nurturing relationships of care and creativity.”

Asset-Based Community Development : A Theological Reflection (Al Barret, www.abcdinstitute.org)

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Basically ABCD is about asking **three questions**. What assets does the community have? What are the actual needs of the community? How can those assets be used to meet those needs?

Peter Kenyon, who talks about **Asset-Based, Community Driven**, speaking at the ABCD Festival 2015: “**If you want to bring about change you start with the half-full, not the half-empty.**” (sketch out glass – communities have deficiencies and needs, communities and citizens have capacities and assets)

Sits quite nicely alongside the **appreciative living/inquiry** approach we looked at yesterday because it asks, what is this community good at? What strengths are there? How can we build on that?

Al Barret (Hodge Hill Vicar): Although not explicitly Christian: ABCD’s core values and methods **resonate deeply with Christian** theology and practice.

What are people’s thoughts on that claim?

Jeremiah 29: 7

Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.

Reflecting on Jeremiah 29, Professor Luke Bretheron, in a CUF Report that you will find on Moodle, says:

“We need to become drawn into the fate of our communities, finding common interest and working with others.”

Jesus entered into mutual community, receiving food and shelter from his circle of friends. Even when faced with **5000 hungry people**, he asked his disciples, **‘What do you have?’**, rather than set himself up as the sole provider.

Anna Ruddick and Bethany Eckley, *Building Kingdom Communities* CUF

Every activity must **prioritise building community over meeting a need** [by doing this] we create a much needed shift in thinking, resources and gifts are shared, meaning that **needs are also met along the way. How do you feel about this?**

Needs-based approach	Asset-based approach
• Start with problems	• Start with assets
• People are 'victims', 'recipients', 'clients'	• People are active agents for change
• Looks outward to find solutions, funding according to level of need/deprivation	• Builds community from the inside-out
• Labels people according to need, 'professionalised' solutions extract people from community	• Focuses on relationship building and collaboration, drawing on strengths, building communal resilience
• Focused on targets, end results or outcomes	• The journey is as important as the destination, discovering and learning together

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- 2015 book, *The Nazareth Manifesto*, Samuel Wells uses parable of the Good Samaritan to challenge contemporary Christians in their responses to poverty.
- He asks us to consider again **who Jesus is talking to**, and who we might identify with in the story.
- Rather than see ourselves as the Good Samaritan, able to bring help to those in need, he argues that we should **understand our real situation as the beaten man**, who is reliant on the unexpected, and possibly unwelcome, help of a Samaritan who alone has the resources and compassion to bring him salvation.
- This cuts to the heart of what we're talking about.
- If we are the beaten man, we have nothing to give and are **reliant on the resources and compassion of others** to help us in our need. I think **we can be either**, depending on the situation.
- **Just as we have resources to offer, we are all also fundamentally in need of the rescue that only Jesus can bring.**
- It is also a challenge, inviting us to realise that **Jesus may bring our salvation in the most unlikely of forms**; in the case of this parable, in the compassion of someone who was despised, outcast, on the margins.

Handout: A new perspective on the Good Samaritan

“If people do not wish to be helped, leave them alone.”

E.F Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful: A Study of Economics As If People Mattered*

“The passion a person has for there own growth is the most important thing.”

Ernesto Sirolli, *Want to help someone? Shut up and listen!* TED Talk

Bit of a TED talk geek... (Peter Kenyon already quoted...)

The key to ABCD is the idea that **citizens and communities as the co-producers** of health and wellbeing, rather than the recipients of services. It works through

- **promoting community networks**, relationships and friendships that can provide caring, mutual help and empowerment
- identifying what has the **potential to improve health and wellbeing**
- **supporting individuals' health and wellbeing** through self-esteem, resilience skills, relationships, friendships, knowledge
- **empowering communities** to control their futures and create **tangible resources** such as services, funds and buildings.

“Community-building, the ABCD way, is founded on the belief that a neighbourhood already contains the most important assets its residents need to grow and learn, raise children, feel safe and secure, be healthy, age well and act to change the world.”

Asset-Based Community Development : A Theological Reflection (Al Barret, www.abcdinstitute.org)”

Anita Ruddick and Bethany Eckley: Building Kingdom Communities (CUF): **Each person is an expert in their own experience**, they know what it is like to be them. **Respecting this** experience, and what each person feels is right for them, is an **important step in honouring their personhood**. It will involve **listening** and asking good questions, all the time seeking to **spot the image of God in their character and in their story**.

There are two problems with a **needs meeting agenda** – firstly it is **patronising** and secondly it is **professionalising**, it becomes about power and process.

There are many ways in which networks established by good community development work can help to connect people’s gifts to each other, and everyone has something to offer, **no one is too old, too young or to frail**. Examples:

- Community project – older men taught gardening to children, older women taught cookery, everyone ate the food.
- Young man in Newtown, looking to educate residents in Tigrinya language so they could communicate with Eritrean influx.
- Young girl, aware peers were struggling to keep up with pressure to constantly update wardrobe, and also concerned about waste, used her skills as a seamstress to lead ‘upcycling’ lessons (Jenny sewing uniforms).
- Hairdressing video on YouTube.

- How much do you need a steady stream of 'clients' for your own survival as an organisation or project or church?
- Where are you creating dependencies on your service and disconnecting people from the interdependence and mutual support of their local community?
- What are you doing that the community's networks could do for themselves (with or without support)?
- What are you doing 'to' or 'for' people that you might be able to do 'with' them?
- How can you start from people's gifts and strengths, rather than their needs and problems?

Al Barret:


ABCD recognises that the motivations for providing services, such as food banks, are usually compassionate. However, the structures of **service provision have often done as much harm as good** to local communities. ABCD asks these challenging questions of those involved.

Any initial reactions to these questions, based on your church or work experience?

To what extent has our church work in the community been influenced by a service delivery framework that focuses on 'fixing'?

What underlying beliefs about ourselves and others shape the church's relationships with those around us?

Are we the fixers or the ones that need to be fixed?



Go to the people
Live among them
Learn from them
Love them
Start with what they know
Build on what they have
But of the best leaders, when their task is done,
The people will remark:
“We have done it ourselves”.

Lao Tze, Chinese Philosopher

The best community development worker will **do themselves out of a job** by empowering the people they work with to make the changes they want to see.

So... what is an asset?

“ABCD invites us to practise [a] liturgy of abundance in our own neighbourhoods: to open our eyes to the ways God has blessed this place and this people with goodness, vitality and fruitfulness. It may be in the place itself, in the stories that it contains or in the webs of relationships that knit it together. It certainly begins by recognising the wealth of gifts of the people who inhabit it and the marks of the ‘image of God’ that define each and every one of them.”

Asset-Based Community Development : A Theological Reflection (Al Barret, www.abcdinstitute.org)

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ABCD begins with a **shift in vision: from seeing the world around us, our neighbours and our neighbourhoods, for what they are lacking, to seeing them for what they have**. It invites us to look first for the gifts of its people – their passions, knowledge and skills – as well as for other resources that may sometimes be hidden, but have often simply been overlooked or dismissed as insignificant.

You can't know what you need until you know what you already have!

In the SOAR, referring to Martin of Tours, we asked you **“What is your cloak?”** You can ask this question of any one individual and also of a community. What can they share?

Brainstorm! What types of asset are there?

- Networks and connectors
- The stories of people's lives and the evolving community
- The skills, knowledge and passion of local residents (could include you if you are part of that community – Jenny using sewing skills to meet a need)
- The power of local associations
- The physical and economic resources of local places
- The resources of public, private and non-profit institutions
- 'Faith as social capital'

- **What assets does your church have?**

People!

“The future of every community lies in capturing the passion, energy and imagination of its own people.” (Ernesto Sirolli TED Talk)

“We are familiar with Paul’s theology of the Church as the body of Christ, made up of interdependent, differently gifted parts. ABCD invites us to consider our wider neighbourhoods, beyond the obvious boundaries of ‘church’, as part of that interconnected, interdependent, richly-gifted ‘body’. As we spend time with people, discover more about their passions and gifts, we can help them connect with others and build up the ‘body’ of the neighbourhood.”

Asset-Based Community Development : A Theological Reflection (Al Barret, www.abcdinstitute.org)

Al Barret argues that we should see the people in the neighbourhoods and communities around us as much a part of the body of Christ as those people who turn up to Sunday worship.

How do you feel about this?

Meeting real needs...

“The people who have been defined as the problem may themselves redefine the problem.”

(Cormac Russell, MD of Nurture Development & Director of ABCD Europe)

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ABCD has a heavy emphasis on **consultation** and **participation**. We should be asking people to define their own needs, rather than (as church may have been guilty of doing in the past), assuming we know what's good for them.

This can be made difficult because we each carry with us our own **underlying beliefs** about ourselves and others and the causes of societal problems.

Can you think of any examples of assumptions that have been made about communities and what is 'good' for them?

I'm going to talk in a minute about getting to know your community – including community profiling techniques – but really it begins with just **paying attention** and **staying alert**. Martin of Tours noticed a man in need. Who do we notice? What needs do we see?

I keep coming back to the title of that Ernesto Sirolli TED talk: **“Want to help someone? Shut up and Listen!”** Deep listening is crucial to ABCD and it can take time.

- What places do you travel through and where are the wells where people gather?
- What are some of the needs that you see there?
- What are some of the deeper questions that you've heard in your conversations with others?
- How might you respond to them?

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Jesus' conversation with the **woman at the well** began with a simple request for water and then **Jesus listened and listened good!** He actively listened so he didn't just hear the words she was saying but also got to the underlying, perhaps even unsaid things.

A colleague used to tell a story of a community she worked in that was a poor area and had very poor school attainment levels. Many would think that this simply meant the schools needed better teachers and perhaps a homework club could be set up by a well-meaning church. However, in this community a lack of car ownership and supermarkets (there was only a convenience store and fish and chip shop) had a negative impact on diet. For the average person (there will always be a few exceptions) poor diet has an impact on school attainment, school attainment has an impact on education and employment prospects, your education and employment options have an impact of how much money you can make, how much money you make affects where you can live and whether you own a car, where you can live affects what schools your children can go to and what amenities are accessible, car ownership and amenities affect diet. It very easily comes around full circle. Downward spiral of deprivation.

What kind of community initiative might help in this situation?

A church was getting ready to launch a new community project to work with the homeless, and called a meeting with members who might be interested in volunteering, praying or making a donation. There was a strong sense of purpose; there was energy to get involved and readiness to make a start. Towards the end of the evening someone asked, "Do we know if there are any homeless people in our community?" The gathering went very quiet.

Ready, Steady, Go (Matt Bird, Cinnamon Network)

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This might feel like taking an example to its absurd extreme. But quite often I see local **churches leaping into delivering youth programmes in particular before they even do any work** on finding out whether young people want the kind of service they're offering, whether there's anything else that young people would be taking part in at the same time and, perhaps quite crucially, whether there are any young people in the area at all!

To avoid this, before starting any project, to 'sharpen your axe', you should attempt community profiling.

Good community work practice suggests that those seeking to engage with their communities should **spend time just getting to know the community** and people they're looking to work with, walking the streets, listening to people and profiling the community before they start actually working with people. **This can take between 3 months and a year.**

“Very often, we fail to see the opportunities that are right before us. This is often due to our overfamiliarity with the places we live. Often, we need to look again at the things that are familiar to us and try to see things from a fresh perspective. [...] Your local supermarket that employs one thousand staff members, the row of shops down your road, the local council offices that employs hundreds of workers, the local police station, the primary school at the end of your street, the magistrates court in session day after day. These familiar places are often invisible to local people because they are part of the fabric of the community. Yet in each place, there are people who would benefit from the presence of chaplains.”

Chaplaincy Everywhere session 6

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Even if you've lived all your life in a community, **you only know what it is like to experience that community as you**. Until you've done some community profiling, you cannot claim to know the community, its assets or what it needs.

Just as Jesus instructs his disciples in the story of the feeding of the 5,000, ABCD invites us to 'go and see'.

Taking the time to sit and listen to people's stories is a powerful statement for a church to make, one that says people are important and that every single person has strengths, resources and assets they can share with others.

“Context is one of the most important considerations when thinking about engaging in God’s mission. The ministry of chaplaincy is the ultimate responsive ministry.”

“Each and every community is different; no two places have precisely the same set of social factors. Therefore, as we seek to respond to our local community, we must bear in mind that although we can learn from other chaplains and examples of chaplaincy, the chaplaincy work we will be involved in needs to respond to the local context. There is no ‘one size fits all’ model when it comes to chaplaincy!”

Chaplaincy Everywhere (Intro & Session 6)

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Basically, a community profile is asking the following types of questions:

Who lives in your community?

What happens in your community?

When do those things happen?

Where does it happen?

What specific needs are there?

What social factors do you need to bear in mind?

What are the rhythms of the town?

When is market day?

When are the quiet times and the busy times?

What is special about the community?

Are there canals? Is there a river?

Are there sporting venues with regular events or competitions?

Is there a show ground with regular community events?

What are the key civic events?

What types of business exist? Who are the large employers?

What is the breakdown of gender, ethnicity, religion, age...

How healthy is the community? What health provisions are there?

How many people are in work and what sort of work are they employed in?

What education facilities are there and what are the educational standards?

What kind of housing is there?

Who owns a car? What other transport links are there?

How about the environment? How clean are streets? How much green space?

What are the crime statistics like and what police presence is there?

What other places of worship are there? What do they do?...

Where are conversations had in your community?

What events and experiences, good and bad, have helped to make it the way it is now? What do you know of particular relationship issues or community pain?

[www.churchandcommunity.org.uk/
WindowForEveryChurch.html](http://www.churchandcommunity.org.uk/WindowForEveryChurch.html)

Community profiling made simple:

- Ask!
- Be...
- Explore, research
- **PRAY**

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If you want to 'ease in' to community profiling, then here are some slightly more simple ideas:

- You could simply **ask!** Speak to the people in your community to find out what they like and what they don't. If they could find two or three other people to join them, what would they start in their neighbourhood?' Run a **consultation** event with local people. Use **appreciative inquiry** techniques – SOAR, appreciative conversations. Use **maps** – ask people to mark their 'hot spots' and 'grot spots' and points of significance. **Church Action on Poverty's 'Good Society'** project has done some great work on talking to local people about what a good society looks like for them.
- Take time to simply **'be'** where people are – become a regular at your local pub and engage in 'bar talk', speak to parents at the school gates, listen to your neighbours. Chaplains are really well-placed and good at this! Listen for an opportunity to engage someone in a **trivial conversation**, and see where it might lead. **Don't have an agenda here**. Just allow opportunities to arise. Relationships begin at a very basic level. Let God lead you and build on small beginnings.
- **Explore and research! Walk the streets** and chat to shop keepers and business leaders. Read the **local paper** and listen to the **local radio**. Study the **local authority's** strategic plan, their research and priorities. Look at relevant **social media** pages. Check out every **notice board** and **community space**. Visit the local **library**.
- **Pray!** Pray over a **map** of the area, **asking for God to reveal his plan**. Take an **imaginary or an actual prayer walk** around your community. Start a **prayer group! Rooftop people**.

A chaplain...

- offers ministry beyond the walls to where people are.
- is an invited guest and not the host
- is vulnerable, not powerful
- is commissioned by the church and accredited by the host
- is an intentional presence, rather than a gathering
- is an authentic expression of Christian mission – sharing in what God is doing in the world

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- Which of these marks might also resonate with the things I've talked about today?
- **If you changed the word 'chaplain' to 'church community worker', how many of the marks might still ring true?**

Community Development worker beyond the walls:

- If we want to make God's love known to our communities we must **move into the neighbourhood** and love and serve as Jesus Christ modelled for us.
- New trend in 'urban theology' tells us **God is more likely found at the margins.**

Community development worker as guest:

- Starts with the issues that people identify as important to them, **not what an outside agency (including the Church!) wants to tackle.** Works 'inside-out', not top-down or outside-in.

Community development worker as powerless:

- Development **does not claim to have the answers to people's problems.**
- The **service delivery model is about power, those with positions of expertise or authority or material wealth identify problems and find ways to fix them.** But those in the communities are **no longer the recipients of a service but are co-creators of their own future.**
- The **distinction between 'us' the saved and 'them' the unsaved is gone and the dignity, value, worth and gifts of a person or group are recognised.**

Community development work as intentional presence:

- Community development **shuns 'attractional' model. Don't want church to be just another local service provider,** but representation of the kingdom of God.

Community development work as mission:

- Incarnational way of engaging in mission. If, as **Rowan Williams** put it, **'mission is finding out what God is doing and joining in'**.
- Service delivery model can be more about process than people.


“If you have come here to help us, you are wasting our time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with ours, then let us work together.”

Native Australian Activist Group (c. 1970)

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Why I love community development and ABCD:

- It's just **good business sense!** **Funders** like to know that you have put **people first** – thought about how the work you are doing will benefit the community.
- Putting the thinking in means you are much more likely to produce something **sustainable** and **something people understand/support/own**.
- It's key to **discipleship** of the whole people of God and will lead to **kingdom growth**. Makes you look to your **human resources as a top priority**. By starting with the questions, “who do we have?” and “what can they offer?” then you are much more likely to release the potential of everyone in the congregation, not just the few who you think might be good at an already identified role.
- Everyone is offered the opportunity to work out their discipleship through exploring their calling and vocation.
- Looking back over church history – especially the history of the Methodist Church – **growth has often happened when the church stops asking, “What do we need?” and starts asking the question, “What does the community around us need?”**



Go, with a fresh perspective; with eyes that see the familiar with new clarity.


Go, with an openness and sensitivity to God's invitation to join in his work.

Go, with courage, knowing that God remains with you always.

Equipping you with all you need through the power of the Holy Spirit.

So go, and live for God's eternal glory.

Amen.



With your gifts,
with my gifts,
the people will be well.

Maori proverb