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*For my parents, Bob and Irene,
who nurtured me in my faith and who had faith in me*

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Foreword

For some ten years Neil Evans and I were occasional tutors on the now departed Aston Training Scheme for ministerial development. We used to play a little game of encouraging students and colleagues to guess which one of us was formed in the more catholic stable and which in the more evangelical. It amused us if nobody else, and we liked to think that the differences were hard to spot – for the reason that, whatever our ecclesial pedigrees, the intent and the method were the same. The intent was to see people formed as faithful and fruitful Christian disciples and ministers. The method, though probably neither of us then could have named it as such, was that which Neil now articulates and advocates so clearly in this book as organic and relational.

Neil tells us in this book that he finds doing research tedious but seems to come up with creditable results. If that is the case, then this work proves his point. Behind Neil's conclusions lies solid research based on the work of others and his own data collection. But rather more importantly, this work emerges out of many years as a proven practitioner in the field of developing people as disciples and ministers. This is, therefore, a book by a practitioner for practitioners. In relatively few pages it covers a wide range of both practice and theory, drawing on a variety of developmental and educational models. It has clear relevance to the work of developing ministers (both ordained and lay), and also much to say about the equally vital work of developing all Christian people in the vocation of being disciples in all parts of their living. Although emerging from and speaking mainly to a Church of England milieu, there is much here that will be relevant to those of other traditions.

Despite the Church of England focus, Neil has relatively little to say in this book about bishops – perhaps that is deliberate!

And yet much of the thinking that Neil shares with us is almost identical to that which I draw upon when reflecting on our model of *episcopate* as exercised both by those who are formally bishops and by the many others with whom they share ministry. Indeed, as a slight aside, it is uncanny that, though we have not worked together in an active way for some years, I find myself reading here ideas and even particular phrases that I also hear myself using in my own reflection and teaching. Becoming a bishop eight years ago, the only way in which I have been able to approach the role has been to see it as essentially relational – the service for ordaining bishops tells us that they are ‘to know their people and be known by them’. That relatedness to people leads (I fondly hope) to a ministry that takes seriously where people (lay and ordained, individually and collectively) are in terms of context and culture, and is thus able to equip, challenge and accompany them towards full and fruitful Christian living. Neil quotes the bishop who says, ‘Ultimately I can’t make the clergy do anything, but I can woo them.’ Wooing is of course utterly relational, and it is indeed (in my view) only out of the reality of our relatedness to people that any of us who minister can hope to take our place in the work of developing those people whom God has given to us.

Rooting his thinking in the Trinitarian pattern of the inter-relatedness and interdependence of the Godhead, Neil gives us an approach to Christian development which is similarly shaped. This takes seriously the variety of people in terms of culture, tradition, giftedness, experience and personality preferences (‘Jesus never invalidates a person’s experience or situation’). It goes on to affirm the vocation to discipleship of all Christian people and the necessity of growing within the church a whole culture of development which expects people to want to develop. For the ordained, the developing of disciples is to be at the heart of their ministry; and so of course their own continuing development, vitality and relatedness to God are a sine qua non for the vitality of the whole Christian community and its mission.

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Neil tells us that the clergy are not easily line-managed. For that I thank God (most of the time!) because within the church we are not primarily here to run an organization or manage people's performance against targets or criteria. We are here to see people formed individually and in community after the pattern of Christ. In Christ we are ourselves drawn into the dynamic and loving relatedness of the God who is Trinity. We take on the shape and nature of that God, being drawn also into the divine movement outwards to all creation which issues in the growing of God's kingdom. If this book helps us to help one another to develop thus as disciples and ministers, then the writing of it will have proved its value. I am confident that it will.

*The Rt Revd James Langstaff
Bishop of Rochester*

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This book has been in formation over the years I have been involved in training, support and education in London Diocese and beyond. My gratitude, therefore, goes to many clergy and lay people who have taken part in the training and development in which I have been involved. I have learned a huge amount from them in the process.

However, I would particularly like to thank Martyn Percy who, as my doctoral supervisor, was a huge inspiration to the work which has formed a background to this book. I would also like to thank Michael Colclough, Pete Broadbent, Andy Windross, Rachel Treweek, Alan Gyle, Judy Barrett and so many clergy and lay colleagues in London who have been inspirational and supportive of the work and ministry which features in this book.

I am also grateful to James Langstaff, Nicola Slee, Stuart Mitchell and other colleagues with whom I have worked in training and development and who have informed my own development.

Finally, thanks to my sister Phyll Wood, who has read through the text for me, and to my family for their patience and understanding.

Abbreviations

CMD	Continuing ministerial development <i>The Church of England's equivalent of CPD for clergy and other formally recognized ministers</i>
CME	Continuing ministerial education <i>Former term for CMD in the Church of England (and still sometimes used)</i>
CPAS	Church Pastoral Aid Society <i>Church mission agency</i>
CPD	Continuing professional development <i>The generally accepted term for life-long learning and development of those in professional roles and work</i>
MAP	Mission Action Plan <i>A generic term of the church and parish planning and vision process</i>
MDR	Ministerial development review <i>Annual review process for Church of England clergy (and other lay ministers). Roughly parallel to appraisal in commerce, industry, professions, etc., but employed differently</i>
PCC	Parochial Church Council <i>The 'governing body' of the local parish church in the Church of England</i>
SHAPE	Spiritual gifts; Heart's desire; Abilities; Personality; Experiences <i>Acronym for vocational discernment course produced by Carlisle Diocese</i>
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely <i>Acronym for producing sharp objectives in a planning process (see Appendix 2 for more detail)</i>

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Introduction Training and development that sticks

Christianity in the third millennium will essentially be, for the whole Church, the same as before – and yet totally different. It will be in its pure form the same faith, the same demand and the same gospel. But its expression must now be more internally varied and multi-dimensional, more experiential, more lay and more humble. Pray God, the Christian Church will thus become more *human*. It will have to accept variety, and acknowledge its plural humanity. Only in this way can it come closer to Christ.

(Astley 2007)

When I was a curate in Bethnal Green my training incumbent would invariably begin a Monday morning staff-meeting discussion about Sunday's sermon with the line, 'Good sermon, but what *difference* would it have made to people's lives?' It is a line that has stayed with me throughout my ministry. So often we are encouraged to attend courses or conferences, undertake training, read a book because somebody (other than ourselves) thinks it's a good idea: it'll be good for you. There can, of course, be a huge mismatch between what others think will be good for us and what we need – whether it's to develop in our Christian life, to do a job or ministry more effectively or simply to connect with our current situation.

In this book I shall be exploring ways in which we can put together training and development opportunities which can be as fruitful and effective as possible for participants; asking the question, 'What difference does it make?' I will be offering some

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tried and tested models alongside some clear guidelines based on research and experience.

One of the overwhelming themes that strikes me over and again in reading the Gospels is that Jesus began where people were, not where he thought they ‘ought’ to be. Jesus’ parables were concerned with issues that people could readily relate to: sowing crops, caring for sheep, looking after someone who’d been mugged. When discussing issues with a lawyer or a Pharisee he used their language and starting point, but encouraged them to see further, to move on. So with fishermen, with the sick, with those caught up in the language of sin. Jesus never invalidated people’s experience or situation, but always started from where they were and encouraged them to move on, beyond their situations and usually out of their comfort zone.

So it seems to me that a fundamental question that should always be asked of any training, education or development opportunity, whether it’s continuing professional development for clergy or a baptism preparation course for the unchurched, is: where should we be starting from? What are the participants bringing to this situation in terms of their (life and/or ministry) experience, their prior knowledge and their expectations? Or, to put it more simply, what difference will it make?

Different approaches

James Hopewell (1987) proposes four models used by those seeking to join a church (using house-hunting as an analogy): contextual, mechanistic, organic and symbolic. He suggests that house-hunters and church-seekers have a dominant theme when considering a new house or new church (although each of the four perspectives will play a part). So, the contextual seeker will be focused on local environment and context, the mechanistic on functionality, the organic on the future possibilities and the symbolic on what the choice will say of them to the world.

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It is a very useful model for those engaging (or potentially engaging) in any form of ministry or Christian development. The four approaches can be readily identified (although I must emphasize that the approaches are not mutually exclusive, but rather suggest a dominant theme). There will be those who seek development primarily because of the context and environment in which it sits, choosing those elements which particularly suit the landscape of their life or ministry – and perhaps because it fits comfortably with the landscape in which they are situated: the contextual seekers. Then there will be those who seek development opportunities primarily as a result of identifying specific needs in ministry or their Christian journey. They need a new skill or have a particular question or area of concern which they require addressing: the mechanistic seekers. Third, there will be those who undertake development primarily to discover new possibilities in ministry or in their lives, to open new doors and to find out what it is that they don't know, to help them grow organically. Finally, there will be those who will undertake development primarily in order to say something about themselves, anything from showing the vicar or bishop that they are jumping through a particular hoop to having a course or qualification on their CV: the symbolic seeker.

Not only are these dominant starting points not mutually exclusive – seekers are likely to have mixed motives, which can change during the experience of undertaking a particular piece of development – neither are they necessarily predominant in a particular person or personality. Different stages in life, different life experiences and different ministries and ministry situations are all likely to influence the dominant theme adopted by an individual.

Perhaps the most important lesson for those providing a development opportunity is awareness of potential participants' mixed motives. When providing such opportunities a variety of approaches will always need to be adopted, a theme I will return to.

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Importantly, though, for those providing development opportunities there will almost inevitably be a tendency to adopt either the mechanistic or the organic approach. It would actually be much less easy – though not impossible – to adopt either the contextual or symbolic approach, as the contextual approach will tend to be far too specific to an individual’s own situation and the symbolic approach to an individual’s personal needs.

An organic approach

In any given situation the temptation will be to choose a mechanistic approach to development, for one very simple reason. Whether I’m a trainer of clergy or a parish priest, a bishop or a consultant brought in to do some training, I will believe that I have a fairly clear understanding of what the organization (diocese, parish, small group) needs. The issue will be, therefore: how do I best get my message across? How do I train this bunch of people to be better leaders, to grasp better the basics of baptism, to have a better understanding of St John’s Gospel?

The task seems to be clear; the issue is, how do I best fulfil the given task? It seems a simple ‘from point A to point B’ formula. But what this approach loses is the baggage, the history, the personalities, the needs that any participant brings to the given situation.

A simple example – and huge learning point for me – was the yearly round of annual parochial church meetings as a vicar. Each year we would go through the grind of persuading (or dissuading!) people to stand for election as churchwardens and to the Parochial Church Council (PCC). We had a certain number of places to fill so we had to find people to fill them.

It gradually dawned on me that it wouldn’t be the end of the world if the vacancies were not filled, and rather than asking how I should fill these spaces the better question was, ‘How do I help develop in appropriate roles the people God has sent to

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this church?’ Rather than cramming roundish pegs into fairly square holes, I began to think along the lines of ‘Here are some round pegs: how can I hone the holes so that there is a good fit?’ We began to develop ministries which suited the skills and talents that people brought, rather than doing stuff because ‘that’s what churches do’.

This process in turn challenged me to look at the way that PCCs were run. For those who were prepared to sit on PCCs, was the way that we ran the PCC making the best use of their time, their talents and their energy – or were we running a meeting because we’ve always done it this way? Transforming the meeting not only raised the energy levels but also gradually had an effect on those who were prepared to stand for election. And the amazing reality was that by using this organic approach not only did we get as much work done (usually in a shorter period) but we also had people who were more fulfilled in their ministry.

Ultimately, people began to see that they were being fulfilled in ministry, and the very clear side effect was that God’s Church increasingly became a place of mission, growing accordingly. In common parlance, people discovered that there was something in it for them (and then for others, because they brought their friends).

I developed this approach in my work with clergy training and development when introducing a Work and Ministry Consultancy Scheme for clergy. I was aware that in some parishes there were a number of people who worked in the area of management consultancy, human relations, etc., and had considerable skills which could assist clergy in their ministry. I therefore advertised for such people to offer their services, undertook an interview process, and appointed some (though not all) of the applicants – to offer their services for free!

Those appointed were delighted, first, to be taken seriously and approached professionally and, second, to be offering back something to the Church, in a real spirit of stewardship, which

And yet much of the thinking that Neil shares with us is almost identical to that which I draw upon when reflecting on our model of *episcopate* as exercised both by those who are formally bishops and by the many others with whom they share ministry. Indeed, as a slight aside, it is uncanny that, though we have not worked together in an active way for some years, I find myself reading here ideas and even particular phrases that I also hear myself using in my own reflection and teaching. Becoming a bishop eight years ago, the only way in which I have been able to approach the role has been to see it as essentially relational – the service for ordaining bishops tells us that they are ‘to know their people and be known by them’. That relatedness to people leads (I fondly hope) to a ministry that takes seriously where people (lay and ordained, individually and collectively) are in terms of context and culture, and is thus able to equip, challenge and accompany them towards full and fruitful Christian living. Neil quotes the bishop who says, ‘Ultimately I can’t make the clergy do anything, but I can woo them.’ Wooing is of course utterly relational, and it is indeed (in my view) only out of the reality of our relatedness to people that any of us who minister can hope to take our place in the work of developing those people whom God has given to us.

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