

Discipleship & Ministries Learning Network  
Church & Community Development

The **Methodist** Church

## Lecture 9 A Community Vocation



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

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“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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“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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“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(Brown, S Unpublished, Chapter 2)

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### 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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“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)

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“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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Needs-based approach	Asset-based approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start with problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start with assets</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People are ‘victims’, ‘recipients’, ‘clients’</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People are active agents for change</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Looks outward to find solutions, funding according to level of need/deprivation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Builds community from the inside-out</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Labels people according to need, ‘professionalised’ solutions extract people from community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focuses on relationship building and collaboration, drawing on strengths, building communal resilience</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focused on targets, end results or outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The journey is as important as the destination, discovering and learning together</li> </ul>

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“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

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“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](http://www.abcdinstitute.org))”

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- 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?

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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

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### 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](http://www.abcdinstitute.org))

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“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](http://www.abcdinstitute.org))

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### 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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- 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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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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"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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“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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[www.churchandcommunity.org.uk/  
WindowForEveryChurch.html](http://www.churchandcommunity.org.uk/WindowForEveryChurch.html)

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**Community profiling made simple:**

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

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**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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“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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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.**

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

Maori proverb

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