

[A paper given at “Christian Mission in the Public Square”, a conference of the Australian Association for Mission Studies (AAMS) and the Public and Contextual Theology Research Centre of Charles Sturt University, held at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture (ACC&C) in Canberra from 2 to 5 October 2008.]

Training Ministers Today

Lynette Edge

“Christian leaders who are growing disciples today are people who feel, think and act differently than leaders of the past. Curiosity oozes from them, they have deep passions, they think outside the box.”¹

Does the above quote sound like the sort of leaders in the church near you? In this paper I will explore the question of training of missional church leaders in a Western post-modern, post-Christendom society. Firstly we will consider some broad issues which leaders must contend with and some responses to those changes. Finally we will explore five key issues in the training of leaders today within the established church.

Considering our context

Post-Modernity and Post-Christendom are twin issues I would like to briefly explore as they shape the context for mission training in the West today.

Steve Taylor suggests that looking at the opening sequences of 2 film productions of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliette* give a simple and profound insight into the changes that have happened in recent times as we are moving from the time of modernity to that of post -modernity.² The opening sequence of the 1968 Franc Zaffarelli version of the film is a single shot which pans over foggy landscape to the castle where the action will take place. The text is narrated by a male voice. The opening sequence of the 1996 Baz Luhrmann’s version stands in stark contrast to the earlier film. Same text, same

¹ Easum, Bill. *Leadership on the Other Side*, Abingdon Press Nashville, 2000. pg 31

² Taylor, S. *The out of bounds church*. Zondervan. Grand Rapids. 2005. Page 20

introductory sequence, completely different experience. This clip starts with static on a TV, is then narrated by a black woman and then moves into a series of extremely fast moving, fragmented shots filled with cities, violence and religious icons.

In the Franc Zaffarelli film we see an ability to view from a distance, we hear a disembodied male voice, there is a dispassionate assessment of the city and it is sequential and linear.

The Baz Luhrmann film demonstrates a multi-media world where there is static and channel surfing, there are constant options & change, a celebration of ethnic and edge, a shift from objectivity to immersion & engagement, the text and images merge and there is much religious iconery.

Taylor himself sums up the differences in these forms and suggests they show four marks of post-modern culture; fast / cutting and fragmentation, pick and mix lifestyle, tribalism and the ethic edge.

We are not in a period where there is a neat transition from one era to another. It is messy, prolonged and necessarily imprecise. Drane adopts the practice of using a hyphen in the word post-modernity to draw attention to the continually evolving nature of the changes which are now taking place and affecting our lives.³

Stuart Murray defines Post Christendom this way; "Post-Christendom is the culture that emerges as the Christian faith loses coherence within a society that has been definitively shaped by the Christian story and as the institutions that have been developed to express Christian convictions decline in influence."⁴

In coming to terms with this period of post-Christendom the church is being forced to consider new ways of being. In the period of Christendom the church

³ Drane, J. 2000. *Cultural Change and Biblical Faith*. Paternoster Press. Cumbria. Page 6

⁴ Murray, Stuart. *Mission After Christendom*. Morling College Press Sydney July 2007

often operated under an assumption that they had a right and an entitlement to a certain place in society and in the lives of the people.

Frost and Hirsch⁵ speak of the church operating with an attractional model of mission during this period. They likened this approach to doing mission as 'Build it and they will come' which was made famous by Kevin Costner in the movie *Field of Dreams* where he was instructed by a disembodied voice to build a baseball field for past greats of the game and he was assured that 'if he builds it, they will come'⁶. The church was here and people we invited to come to it and encounter God within its doors.

Today there is a broadening sense of missional engagement, a wider understanding of Mission Dei and what that means for the church. Our call to incarnational ministry is being heard in our world today.

"God is serious about incarnation... There is urgency and force in God's direction towards the world, and if religion is no longer successful in carrying forwards this divine power into the world, then God may be behind the so-called demise of religion. God may be saying to us, 'I will take away the traditional vessels from you, and see what creativity may arise. I will break the religious clichés and images, and see whether something new can be fashioned from the direct experience of spiritual life.' God is serious about spiritual mission, and serious enough to take action if religion appears to be falling short of the mark..... The spirit of God wants to lead us on, and yet our attachment to old forms may be preventing this spirit from being realised."⁷

So we stand at this place where, as Tacey says, God is calling us on to new ways of being and encountering Him, and it may be our attachment to old forms of both mission and mission training which are holding us back.

⁵ Frost, Michael & Hirsch, Alan. *The Shaping of things to come*. Hendrickson, Massachusetts. 2003

⁶ And in the movie, of course, they did!!

⁷ Tacey, David. *The Spirituality Revolution: the emergence of contemporary spirituality*. Harper Collins, Sydney. 2003. p192.

Some responses to this new context

Eddie Gibbs has said “the present cultural upheaval from modernity to post-modernity ... will necessitate not merely the structural re-engineering of denominations, but their death and resurrection”⁸

It seems in many places this process is beginning. In the UK, the Anglican and Presbyterian churches undertook a major piece of research which made far reaching recommendations in the ‘Mission Shaped Church’ document.⁹

In the chapter explaining the changing context in which the church now operated they state that “during the twentieth century Sunday school attendance dropped from 55 per cent to 4 per cent of children, meaning that even the rudiments of the Christian story and of Christian experience are lacking in most young people”¹⁰

They acknowledged the consequences for a national church that had always operated within the context of a Christian culture where the stories and values of Christianity were understood, if not shared. Obviously this is no longer the case in the UK. They went on to say that “as community becomes more complex, mere geographical presence is no longer a guarantee that we can connect. The reality is that mainstream culture no longer brings people to the church door. We can no longer assume that we can automatically reproduce ourselves, because the pool of people who regard church as relevant or important is decreasing with every generation. The Church has got to realize its missionary responsibilities. We live in a society, whether that be urban or rural, which is now basically second or even third generation pagan once again; and we cannot simply work on the premise that all we have to do to bring people to Christ is to ask them to remember their long-held, but dormant faith. Very many people have no residue of Christian faith at all; it’s not just

⁸ Gibbs, Eddie. *Church Next*. InterVarsity Downers Grove IL 2000 Page 70

⁹ Church of England General Synod, *Mission Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context*. Church House Publishing London 2004

¹⁰ Ibid Page 11

dormant, it's nonexistent; in so many instances we have to go back to basics; we are in a critical missionary situation.”¹¹

The Salvation Army¹² in the UK is operating in similar context to where the 'Mission Shaped church' was written, and have also seen a major decline in the amount of people who are finding the Salvation Army church a place to belong and express their Christian discipleship. “Since the mid-twentieth century, the number of soldiers (enrolled members) in the United Kingdom has fallen from 120,000 to somewhere around 38,000.”¹³

In Australia those who call themselves Christian has been in steady decline over the past century with the proportion of people identifying themselves as Christian declining from 96.1% in 1901 to 63.9% in 2006.¹⁴

Here in The Salvation Army in Eastern Australia the number of people who are joining as Soldiers has dropped 30% in 12 years (from 14,060 in 1995 to 9,867 in 2007) , and the number of churches (Corps) has dropped 25% in the same period (from 307 in 1995 to 230 in 2007).^{15 16}

If Eddie Gibbs comment has any merit, then we might be seeing a glimpse of the death and resurrection which he predicted for denominations in light of the present cultural upheaval of our times.

This presents us with some key missional challenges, and not only for mission itself, but also for leadership training in this context.

¹¹ Ibid Page 12

¹² I will refer to The Salvation Army throughout this paper as it is my context for ministry and ministry training.

¹³ Yuill, Chick. *Leadership on the Axis of Change*, The Salvation Army publications Alexandria. 2003. Page 14.

¹⁴ "Religion". 1301.0 - Year Book Australia, 2004. Australian Bureau of Statistics.

¹⁵ The Salvation Army Year Books, 1995 and 2007. The Salvation Army England.

¹⁶ It is noted that Soldiership or membership as a measure is limited as it may be that people are attending without joining up, a feature of our cultural context today. However I believe that the sharp decline is still symptomatic of the crisis we are facing in The Salvation Army today. It should further be noted that denominational survival is not what is most important here; rather this discussion is meant to be an indicator of the state of the church today.

Issues for Ministry Training

The context in which we minister today raises some very real issues in ministry training which I would like to consider now. These issues have grown from reflection upon my own ministry training context at The Salvation Army Training College in Sydney.¹⁷

In light of the missional context today, I would like to identify five key issues which our college, and therefore possibly others, are facing at this critical time.

1. Who is putting up their hands for leadership in the church today?

The first issue which has arisen from this reflection is the very matter of the people we are training. Who is selected or approved for training as denominational leaders and who self selects out?

In a recent article in the *Leadership Journal*, Alan Hirsch reflected upon a time when he questioned what sorts of leaders were being trained for ministry in Melbourne. He said, “we needed a new type of leadership, one with the courage to question the status quo, to dream of new possibilities, and to innovate new ways of being the people of God in a post-Christian culture. We needed missionaries to the West, but our seminaries were not producing them. If we take the five categories of church leadership from Ephesians 4:11, they were training leaders to be teachers and pastors for established congregations, but where were the evangelists, the prophets, and the apostles to lead the mission of the gospel into the world?”¹⁸

¹⁷ The basic training for Officership within The Salvation Army is a 2 year residential course in either Sydney or Melbourne which includes a Dip Th alongside other ministry skills and spiritual formation training.

¹⁸ Hirsch, Alan. “Three Over-looked Leadership Roles “ *Leadership Journal*, Spring 2008
Page 33

Frost and Hirsch claim that the shift from hierarchical to apostolic leadership is perhaps one of the most significant aspects of mission in the post Christendom era¹⁹. They continue to suggest that leaders today will need to have a holy discontent, be embracing of subversive questioning, take more risks and be able to create a climate of change.²⁰

As Drane suggests, students who have responded to a call for life-long ministry may bring also with them a 'settled faith' rather than an inquisitive, quest for faith and its implications for their everyday lives.²¹ These types of people are possibly not the daring, subversive questioners which missional leaders today are required to be.

Dave Male²² also points out what makes a 'good student' is compliance and academic prowess and that colleges are innately 'risk averse' therefore there will always be problems in trying to train pioneers, who must by definition be innovators and risk takers, within the context of existing seminary and colleges.

Furthermore, these 'out of the box' people appear not to be the type of leaders who are attracted to seminaries today, much less to one with a military metaphor like The Salvation Army! How many denominational training colleges are attracting the maverick, the unconventional or the daring?

In our own denomination this can be seen by looking at the personality profile of people who are being trained at the college. If we use the MBTI²³ as a guide, it is clear that the most common 'type' amongst Salvation Army trainer

¹⁹ Frost, Michael & Hirsch, Alan. *The Shaping of things to come* Hendrickson, Massachusetts, 2003 Page 166

²⁰ Ibid Page 192.

²¹ Drane, John. *Cultural Change and Biblical Faith: the future of the church: biblical and missiological essays for the new century*. Paternoster Press, Carlisle, UK 2000 Page 132

²² from personal correspondence with Dave Male, tutor Pioneer Training and advisor for Fresh Expressions UK

²³ The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) assessment is a psychometric questionnaire designed to identify certain psychological differences according to the typological theories of Carl Gustav Jung

Officers (and therefore, we can extrapolate, Officers) is that of ISFJ²⁴. People with this personality style may be described as people who are interested in maintaining order and harmony in every aspect of their lives. They would be describes as being caring, thoughtful and trustworthy.²⁵ Basically one would say that these people are stabilizing rather than revolutionary. They would be more likely to be pastors and teachers than prophets, evangelists or apostles.

Hirsch's contention is that it is the later leadership styles which will lead the mission of the gospel into the post-Christian culture in the West today. At the very least, one could say that the church needs a mix of different leadership skills and styles so it would appear that recruitment for people for leadership of our churches is a major issue we must contend with²⁶.

Of course, there will be challenges way beyond the scope of the training college alone in the future if churches looked at the implications of attracting leaders who were more daring, ask more subversive questions and take more risks. It would be fair to suggest that the implications would be widespread and affect all dimensions of how we functioned both internally and externally.

The Anglican Church in the UK has acknowledged that in the days ahead there will be new challenges for the "discernment, training, recognition and authorization of leaders."²⁷

2. Mission Studies? Mission Engagement?

"Preparation for ministry needs to be reconceived as engagement in ministry."²⁸

²⁴ Based upon many years records of MBTI results conducted at the college by Pastoral Care teaching staff in Sydney

²⁵ Briggs Myers, Isabel. Introduction to Type. APP Press Melbourne 1987

²⁶ It is acknowledged that there is much discussion about the future of denominations today and therefore the place of denominational leadership, but this paper is written within the context of training denominational leaders and therefore is not able to deal with this wider issue.

²⁷ Church of England General Synod, *Mission Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context* Church House Publishing London 2004 Page 135.

²⁸ Gibbs, Eddie. *Leadership Next* IVP Leicester, 2005. Page 185

The notion of missional studies must come under the microscope and certainly the idea that mission is a subject which is simply on the curriculum must be challenged and opposed. We must allow missional concerns to pervade entire training programme and approaches to learning. “We need not so much a ‘theology of mission’ but a missional theology (or more accurately ‘missional theologies’)... we need an overarching theological approach that is no longer focused so much on the internal debate amongst various theological and ecclesial traditions, but rather represents a theological response to the missional challenges and cultural perspectives that surround the church.” ²⁹

It is not even a question of content per se which is critical in today’s world, but the focus and application have shifted. Bandy suggests that the focus must be less on historical accuracy and more on mission application. “The method is less scientific and more metaphorical. The application has less to do with knowing the truth and more to do with living the truth.” ³⁰

Traditionally ministry training has often worked on the assumption that if we help people to think differently then we will be able to influence behaviour. So we have sought to give people new insights into the scriptures and into themselves and looked forward to the ways that this might bring about positive change. Hirsch inverts this notion and instead suggest that we should ‘act our way into thinking’. ³¹ He suggests that if we encourage different action then peoples thinking will change over time, which is certainly a call to missional engagement over class rooms as a learning model.

In his very challenging book, ‘Mission Mover: Beyond Education for Church Leadership’, Bandy goes on to suggest that existing models of church leadership training are fatally connected to the Christendom model of church and he calls for an end to training for church leadership and a new focus on Mission Immersion. “Mission immersion is different from church leadership... It is all about learning

²⁹ Gibbs, Eddie. *Church Next: InterVarsity* Downers Grove IL 2000 Page 6

³⁰ Bandy, Thomas. *Mission Mover: Beyond Education for Church Leader* Abingdon Press Nashville 2004 Page 98

³¹ Page 122

the trade of being a Christian leader in a cross-disciplinary, cross-cultural, cross-experiential world that is a bubbling cauldron of spiritual ferment in which Christianity is just one small potato”³²

3. Life Long Learning

Another important implication in this environment of rapid and discontinuous change is that leaders must be life long learners and that ministry colleges cannot focus on a 2 year training model alone. Front-end learning is limited in many respects anyway, but in a time of rapid change, continuous learning is even more vital. Upon finishing his theological education Robert Banks thought it had been a positive and appropriate training experience, however upon reflection over the years to come he revised this opinion and concluded that his theological education required him to learn ‘too much too soon and that its pressurised approach had left too little time for thinking and evaluation.’³³

The editors of ‘Multiple Paths to Ministry: New Models for Theological Education’ note that for them, “our approach is not front-end loading, but lifelong learning... Thus the program is not intended to be an extensive, all-inclusive training program, but almost an orientation to the lifelong task of learning”³⁴

4. Models of training

The Salvation Army is largely committed to a 2 year full time residential model of training in Sydney, where Cadets (students) are in a weekly mission placements (approx 15 hours) alongside their college based work and personal reflection.

³² Ibid Page 25

³³ Banks, Robert. *Re-envisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models*. Eerdmans publishing, Cambridge UK. 1999. Page 2.

³⁴ Martin, B Edmon and Lance R Barker. 2004. Re-visioning ministry leadership: Beyond adapting congregational and clerical models. In Barker, Lance R & B Edmon Martin (ed.). *Multiple paths to ministry: New models for theological education*. The Pilgrim Press. Cleveland Page 8

There are great strengths for a residential / full time model of training. Banks identifies various strengths of this model including “engaging in regular corporate worship as a cornerstone of spiritual growth, learning corporately how to handle conflict and diversity creatively, enhancing the analysis and communication of others’ ideas, insights and experiences and developing an appreciation of collaborative ministry through reflecting on life in the home, work and church as well as school.”³⁵ I would add to this list the accelerated personal growth which often results from the depth of relationship, vulnerability and personal awareness found in the communal living environment. Another dimension of residential training is that of the cultural contextualisation to the denomination which occurs at the colleges. This is an often unarticulated dimension of training which is more about sharing values and norms than it is about learning knowledge or skills, but it remains a powerful, if yet under-explored dimension of the training process.

However there are also strong arguments for non-residential and non college based models of training, including internships and decentralised training.

Martin and Barker have found that “recent research has suggested that clergy trained in regional seminaries are more related to their peers – other clergy trained in seminaries – while clergy trained within their local or geographic communities tend to relate more closely with their parishioners”³⁶

If this is the case, then residential training may be working against the very incarnational models of ministry which we aim to inspire in mission leaders today.

A key missional leadership training group, Forge Network in Australia, have a clearly stated educational philosophy that the “actional context is primary... We believe that one cannot learn mission divorced from the context of mission. The same applies to leadership and ministry. Therefore, the vast majority of the learning and

³⁵ Banks, Robert. *Re-envisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models*. Eerdmans publishing, Cambridge UK. 1999. Page 242

³⁶ Martin, B Edmon and Lance R Barker. 2004. Re-visioning ministry leadership: Beyond adapting congregational and clerical models. In Barker, Lance R & B Edmon Martin (ed.). *Multiple paths to ministry: New models for theological education*. Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press. Page 178

training must take place in the organic context of the student's/intern's workplace or mission setting. Furthermore different leadership styles will also emerge from different mission contexts. Context is everything.”³⁷

There are other concerns which a residential model has to contend with, including the perception (and possibly the reality) that they are out of touch with grass roots mission and ministry, not to mention the sheer cost of running a residential college.

In response to these types of issues the Churches of Christ in Australia have recently closed down their centralised college which was in Sydney and now train ministers exclusively in internship models with local churches and ministries throughout Australia alongside part time mission, theological and leadership studies through the Australian College of Ministries (ACOM).³⁸

Some years ago a small pilot study of graduates from their centralised college showed that generally the better a student had done in their studies the less effective they were assessed to be ministry. This was one of the factors which led to a fundamental change in how their training was delivered. There were many other factors influencing this change as well. Accessibility was a concern for their college which was based in Sydney, requiring a major inter-state move for some, only to return 'home' and have to re-establish networks and ministries. The churches used for practicums were chosen for proximity to the college rather than missional effectiveness which meant that the best training contexts were often not available for geographical reasons, not missional training ones.

Other factors influencing the decision to change models included that they wanted to move to a 'just in time' learning model which was also deemed economically, missionally and pastorally more effective.

³⁷ Forge Prospectus 2007, New South Wales Network, Page 2

³⁸ Information gathered through conversation with Keith Farmer, who was the Principal of the college at the time of the change and Ross Pelling who was on the working party which made the recommendations.

Since this change was made ACOM has many more students than it has ever had. They have achieved the goal of accessibility and open-ness to students who would not, or could not have accessed the residential centralised training programme. They have also noticed that graduates are less keen to go to established congregations after training in preference of staying in their local ministries or moving to more innovative ones. This poses some important questions and challenges for the denomination. ACOM would now say that they are truly national and draws from a very wide diversity of backgrounds. Everyone is not positive however and the loss of collegiality and denominational identity are issues which have been raised since the change.

In light of all that has been said, there is much to challenge a full time and / or residential (which may be seen as extractionist) model of training, however it is vital to note that internships or other decentralised training options are proposed as a way to encourage much great incarnational and missional engagement for the trainee mission leader, but it is not calling into question the need for high quality learning and biblical literacy. “There is a core, and it must be learned, or the leader of the mission movement will find himself or herself cornered by ambiguity and unable to find that way forward” ³⁹

Again Bandy helps draw out this point further by suggesting that people today “are omni-literate. Sometimes they learn in linear fashion reading a book. Most often they learn in lateral fashion by experiencing a data byte, or viewing a movie, or experimenting with a new idea, or conversing... It happens in life, not in class. It happens with a peer group, not an expert... Traditional linear education, classroom, seminary education, like all education in all subjects, is being outpaced by the postmodern world... Learning today happens after failure, not before risk. It happens in immersion, not in retreat.” ⁴⁰

³⁹ Bandy, Thomas. *Mission Mover: Beyond Education for Church Leader* Abingdon Press, Nashville, 2004 Page 100

⁴⁰ Ibid page 81

He suggests the following table to explain some key ways that learning is changing today. ⁴¹

The Learning Methodology	
MODERN	POST-MODERN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom • Curriculum • Teacher • Linear, by subject • Passive • Solo • Add-on to schedule • Uniform, transferable • Traditional technology • Face to Face • Class Size 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action Reflection • Image, sound, data-byte • Mentor and coach • Lateral, by “issue” • Interactive • Team based, cohorts • Blended into lifestyle • Contextualised, customised • Indigenous, contemporary technology • Face to face and web-based • Compatible companions

5. Pioneering training

Albert Einstein is widely quoted as having said that “The thinking it took to get us into this mess is not the same thinking that is going to get us out of it”. I believe that this has something to say to the way we have trained ministers in the past. We have effectively been re-creating ministers in the mould of the previous generations, when in fact a whole new approach is needful at this time in history. The same thinking, or could we say, training, that got the church into this mess is unlikely to be the same as the training that is going to get us out of it.

The Mission Shaped Church report clearly sees this issue as critical. Amongst its recommendation is included that “priority attention needs to be given by the

⁴¹ Bandy, Thomas. *Mission Mover: Beyond Education for Church Leader* Abingdon Press Nashville 2004 Page 93

Church of England to the identification and training of leaders for pioneering missionary projects potential missionary leaders should be identified among ordinands and trainee Church Army evangelists. A course, college or other institution with *specialist* training skills should be identified within each region, to provide key training modules. Similarly, training curacies and similar key first posts should be provided with proven leaders of church plants and fresh expressions of church. It is then important that they are not pressed into becoming ministers of existing churches, but are deployed in pioneering contexts.”⁴² (emphasis mine)

The Anglican church in the UK has clearly realised the need for and committed to the development of pioneer training. The above quote comes from the Mission Shaped church from 2004. Since that time they have developed a pioneer ministry programme which is currently being rolled out throughout the UK. The Archbishops Council has produced guidelines for the identification, training and deployment of pioneer ministers which demonstrates a real commitment from this recommendation of the Mission Shaped Church report. Dave Male is one of the developers of this new training programme in Cambridge, UK and he explained to me some of the strengths and challenges of this training model.⁴³

The Pioneer training is basically a stream within the conventional training programme for Ordinands. They complete the basic Bachelor of Theology course and other spiritual formation elements of the ‘normal stream’ of training. In addition to that they have a weekly Practical Ministry class which focuses on developing passion, skills and entrepreneurship in the pioneer trainees. They also spend time (about 6 hours a week) in a Fresh Expression Ministry placement⁴⁴. Whilst most students are full time residential over a 2 or 3 year period, they are exploring ‘mixed mode’ training in which the content of

⁴² Church of England General Synod, *Mission Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context* Church House Publishing, London 2004 Page 134.

⁴³ This information is from an extended phone conversation with Dave Male on 9th July 2008.

⁴⁴ A fresh expression is a form of church for our changing culture, established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church.

the Pioneer training is delivered in more accessible ways (part time / intensives / in placement). This has been principally developed for those who are already active in Fresh Expression ministries.

Dave recognises that this has been a major step forward for the Anglican church to recognise the need for people to be trained specifically for pioneer ministries and acknowledges the positive step that this training is in mission training for our Post Christendom missional context today. He is also aware that there are still some serious limitations to the programme. The most major one is that pioneer ministers are still expected to complete all the 'normal training' and that the pioneering stuff is added on to an already full programme. In light of the earlier discussion about the problems of inadequate time for reflection and integration of learning, this could be a serious matter for the pioneer trainers to deal with in the future.

One other critical issue which Dave raised was that most, if not all, of the people who are undertaking the Pioneer training stream in Cambridge have said quite openly that whilst they felt a calling to ministry, that they did not feel able to undertake the conventional training which would have led them to working in established parish settings. In terms of the earlier discussion about who selects in for ministry training, then having a dedicated stream of training for pioneer ministry, clearly opens a way for those who don't feel able to conform to the more traditional or conventional models. This in itself is an important dimension of the importance of pioneer training .

In Australia pioneer training has been developed over the past 10 years by the Forge network. They are clear in their goal of training for pioneering ministries and are a “mission training network designed to shape and equip a very particular style of leadership—one appropriate for the task of mission and church planting in the “first world” setting. Mission strategists have long agreed that the development of the missionary/ church planter requires a different approach to that of standard ministry leadership formation. It is with this in mind that the Forge Mission Training Network has emerged.”⁴⁵ The Forge training requires the students to be involved as interns in a

⁴⁵ Forge Prospectus 2007, New South Wales Network, Page 2

missional placement, attendance annually at 3 intensive mission training courses, be involved in at least once a month coaching sessions, be part of a cluster of other interns for support and skills development and undertake a significant reading programme.

In researching for this paper I have discovered that there are a growing number of denominations and mission organisations who are exploring these matters and developing innovative pioneer training programmes, all of which are worthy of discussion, but beyond the scope of this paper.⁴⁶

Current challenges for The Salvation Army College in Sydney.

Through the insights and questions raised in this paper, a number challenges confronting the training for leadership in traditional denominational theological college settings have become more apparent;

- The ability of the organisation to attract and retain missional leaders who think outside the box and are able to blaze the new paths needed in our post-modern, Post-Christendom world
- Exploring the development of pioneer training and its implications within a denominational context.
- The need to offer more diverse models of training and maximise the existing training for meaningful missional engagement and leadership development
- The importance of valuing the ongoing nature of learning in training design and delivery to a life long learning model.

Conclusion

The focus of this paper has been in the training of missional leadership for our denominations in the context of our society today.

⁴⁶ For example. St Mellitus in London, the Church Army in Australia, Emerging Leadership Network in the US,

Each different ministry context will need to contend with their own contextualised issues, but it has been the aim of this paper to raise a few questions which might add to the discussions at local levels.

It is important to conclude by saying that any training or learning about missional leadership is far more than the development of the skills and knowledge needful to undertake a ministry role itself. Robert Webber says very wisely,

“True education forms character, wisdom, spiritual sensitivity, and servanthood leadership. True education is not only knowledge but knowledge embodied and lived out individually and in community. The mission of the church in education is not to provide factual information that is memorized but wisdom that forms character and is embodied in a life.”⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Webber, Robert E. *Ancient-future faith: Rethinking evangelicalism for a postmodern World*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books. 1991 Page 171

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