PART ONE

PRAXIS AND THEOLOGY OF CONSULTANCY

Introduction

This Part is about a way of helping practitioners, individually and collectively, to be more effective at church and community work without doing their work for them or directing them or supervising them or taking over from them in any way whatsoever. The help is a particular form of non-directive consultancy through reflective engagement with practitioners about their work. Consultations are designed to help people to pursue their vocational aspirations, to do the work in which they are currently engaged and to tackle the problems they are facing. They enable consultors to bring their working world forward into the centre stage of consultancy processes. Indeed, their ability to bring to life their work and their approach to it, is a critical aspect of effective consulting. Consultors are the go-betweens their working and consulting worlds and play key roles in relating them. Consultancy sessions are not ends in themselves. They are subordinate, occasional sub-systems which at best serve and boost consultors and their work systems. They do this through rigorous analytical and reflective processes which interact constructively with all the other ways in which practitioners are thinking about things on their own and with many different people in a range of relationships and contexts. Consultancy processes come full circle when what emerges from consultations generates increasingly more creative thinking in consultors and through them in their working relationships. Providing help in this way avoids consultors submitting themselves to another echelon of control or to others trespassing on their work territory, so it builds up the ability of people to act in their own right as independent and interdependent reflective practitioners. .

Specialist consultants can make important contributions but they simply cannot meet all the consultancy needs. To do that, and to ensure that practitioners are as self-contained and self-reliant as possible, it is necessary that they are able and willing to make do-it-yourself consultancy help readily available to each other in the work place. Fortunately, with some training and a modicum of experience this is possible through the approach to consultancy advocated and described in this book.

This Part has five chapters.The first, is a general introduction to the critical features of the particular approach to work and vocational consultancy central to this book. Chapter Two describes seven elements of the practice theory of this approach. This is an unusually long chapter. To have subdivided it would have partitioned elements which must be held together in praxis. Chapter Three is a worked example of the approach. Chapter Four is about ways and means by which consultants can form their own consultancy models. Chapter Five is about recurring challenges and problems and contains troubleshooting charts for consultors and consultants.