

**Mission work and pastoral care in the port of Durban: A narrative
hermeneutical adventure**

by

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

Philosophiae Doctor

in

Practical Theology

at the

University of Pretoria

Promoter: Professor Julian Müller

August 2011

Abstract

This research was an attempt at a social construction of an understanding that came into being through the collaboration between the researcher and the co-researchers concerning the life and circumstances of seafarers. The purpose of this construction was to participate, together with the co-researchers, in developing a research narrative that can be beneficial to seafarers. The aim is for it to lead to their emancipation and empowerment. The title of this research indicates that this is a hermeneutical adventure. It is hermeneutical because it is about a construction of meaning and about coming to an understanding. It is an adventure because whatever meaning and understanding was constructed in the end was unknown at the beginning. New knowledge was constructed in which all who participated had a say.

The development of this research narrative was guided by the ABDCE formula which uses the metaphor of research as story writing. The researcher's epistemology was informed by the notions of social constructionism, the narrative approach based on social constructionism and postfoundationalism. Theological issues in this research had to do with postfoundationalist practical theology, with its emphasis on embeddedness, contextuality and particularity while also trying to move beyond the local. In addition to this there was also a focus on missiology and the concept of *Missio Dei* was emphasised.

Seafaring is still a dangerous profession where the seafarers many times find themselves being powerless in situations of injustice. On ships there is a lot of diversity. Men and women from many different religions and cultures have to sail together. Occasionally this causes tension between seafarers, but mostly they are working and living together in harmony. A bigger concern than conflict is that diversity might cause social isolation. Seafarers are willing to endure a lot of hardship and especially seafarers from developing countries are making this sacrifice in order to provide a better future for their families. The relationship between seafaring and the family is an ironic one because the seafarers sail in order to provide for the family, but at the same time sailing takes them away from their loved ones. From the perspective of the researcher three general weaknesses were found as far as the ministry to seafarers is concerned: At times there is lack of a

spiritual dimension to the ministry, secondly there is a need for a stronger presence among the seafarers and thirdly more emphasis should be put on involvement with fishers especially as far as justice issues are concerned.



Key terms

Hermeneutical adventure

Social constructionism

Narrative approach

Postfoundationalism

Missio Dei

Seafarersqmission

Seafarer

Co-researcher

Contextuality

Understanding



Declaration

I declare that the dissertation, which I hereby submit for the degree of PhD (narrative and family counselling) at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not been submitted by me for a degree at another university.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank and acknowledge the following persons who made this hermeneutical adventure a colourful and exiting one:

- My wife Anneke I would like to thank for all that she has done to help me in this project. Thanks for your encouragement. It was priceless. Thank you also for all your ideas and thoughts that you shared, you were my most important co-researcher.
- My mother and father who taught me that Jesus Christ is not only a social construction, but that He is near and that He is an active participant in the narratives that shapes our lives.
- To the official co-researchers who shared in this adventure: Thank you to John, Jonathan, Mohammed, Ivan, Noel, Eric, Paddy, Paul, David, Johan, Hennie, Surita and Doug. Thank you for your time and for co-constructing the understandings and meanings that can hopefully lead to something better.
- To all the unofficial co-researchers, the seafarers who I visited daily and who allowed me onto their ships and into their lives. May this research, somehow, in a small way be to your benefit. Thank you for receiving me as a guest on your ships, which is not only your work space but also your homes.
- Thank you to the chaplains of Richards Bay, where this adventure started and those in Durban, where this adventured developed and took shape. Thank you for being colleagues and friends.
- I also want to acknowledge Professor Julian Müller, my promoter. Thank you for your input and guidance throughout this process. Thank you for your patience and for many times being more enthusiastic and optimistic than I was about this. Your positive attitude really helped me to not get stuck at the A stage. Thank you also for being comfortable with our theological differences.
- Thank you to the Christian Seaman's Organisation who provides the space for me to live out my calling to spread the gospel to many nations. I would especially like the thank Dr Wimpie Van Schoor, the chairperson of the CSO, for allowing me the time I needed to finish this research.
- Paddy Percival: Thank you for proof reading with speed and for increasing this document's quality.

- And lastly I want to thank God for being with me every step of this research. May this construction of an understanding serve your mission to spread the good news of your love shown to us in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

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