

Stoep funerals : A Challenge to Pastoral Care

Thesis

By

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Declaration

I , George Henry Palmer hereby declare that this dissertation which I submit for the degree of PHD (Practical Theology) at the University of Pretoria is a product of my own original work, and has not being submitted by me for a degree at this or any other University. All sources I used have been indicated and duly acknowledged by means of complete references.

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Signature (Supervisor).....

Date.....

Dedication

I dedicate this work to the fond memory of my departed father and mentor, Simon Alfred Palmer (Born 3.02.1935 : Departed 22 . 06 . 2009)

Out of the deepest respect I have for Prof. Maake Masango , this work is also dedicated to all his departed ancestors.

May the souls of the faithful departed through the mercies and merits of God rest in peace and rise in glory. Amen

Summary of the research

This study is concerned with how the black township church leadership mismanage their defunct members especially at times of funerals. In the absence of a pragmatic pastoral method of how to deal with defunct members when they die, the church has devised a church policy which adds to the already experienced pain and grief of mourners. The criteria in the policy stipulates that, if at the time of death, the member has become defunct with regard to:

- Church attendance,
- Dedicated giving (tithing), the person should be given a stoep funeral. The problem with this policy, is the manner in which it is communicated to mourners - cold and insensitive, loaded with arrogance and rigidity. Cases are not viewed on merit but mourners are being emotionally and spiritually destroyed by this practice. Stoep funerals have developed a negative stigma in the townships since everyone is aware of the punishment being meted out to the deceased. Because of their alleged dysfunctionality , defunct members gets treated like spiritual criminals by the leadership through the refusal of church funerals. Church funerals are reserved for those who are in good standing and who enjoy implacable status in the church in relation to the mentioned criteria. The priest is expected to conduct church funerals while the lay ministers are assigned to do stoep funerals. A stoep funeral is an embarrassment and it leaves mourners with feelings of rejection and shame, if not traumatization. The aim of this research is to assist the township church to journey with her defunct members in creating a model directed by scriptural truth from a perspective of African pastoral care.

Explanation of key terms

Parishioners

Congregation members

Church wardens

Lay leader (elected)

Synod of Bishops

Assembly / gathering of Bishops

Defunct: Although this word has a negative connotation, it is precisely used in this research to show how negative the church leadership is towards fallen members.

Table of Contents

Topic Page	i
Acknowledgement	ii
Declaration	iii
Dedication	v
Summary of the research	vi
Explanation of key terms	vii

Chapter one

1.1. Serenity Prayer	1
1.2. Background	8
1.3. Problem Statement	13
1.4. Aims and Objectives	14
1.5. Significance of Study	16
1.6. Research Gap	17
1.7. Methodology	18
1.8. Chapter Outline	22
1.9. Preliminary Conclusion	24

Chapter two

2.1. Introduction	25
2.2. Research Design	27
2.3. Qualitative Approach	31

2.3.1. Empirical Research	34
2.3.2. Grounded Theory	35
2.3.3. Epistemology	36
2.3.4. Styles of Reasoning	37
2.4. Data Collection Techniques	38
2.4.1. Interviews	39
2.4.2. Core Features of Interviews	39
2.4.3. Advantages or Benefits of In- depth Interviews	40
2.4.3.1. Provision of Detailed Information	40
2.4.3.2. Flexibility and Importance of Participants	41
2.5. Sampling	43
2.5.1. Selection Criteria	44
2.5.2. Further Criteria	44
2.6. Data Analyses	45
2.7. Moral and Ethical Stance	48
2.8. The Fundamentals of Pastoral Theology	51
2.9. The Shepherding Model of Gerkin	53
2.10. Positive Deconstruction Model of Nick Pollard	55
2.11. Preliminary Conclusion	56

Chapter three

3.1. Introduction	58
3.2. Thanatology	58

3.3. Perceptions concerning Human Nature	60
3.4. Self-actualization Theory of Abraham Maslow	61
3.5. Existential Theory of Viktor Frankl (Logo Therapy)	64
3.6. Perspectives on Death	66
3.7. A need for a Changed Perspective	68
3.7.1. Kramer	68
3.7.2. Joachim Whaley	68
3.7.3. Elizabeth Kubler Ross	69
3.8. Observation Thus Far	76
3.9. African Perspective	77
3.9.1. Ancestor Worship	78
3.10. The Issue of Mourning and Grief	80
3.11. The Church	84
3.12. The Task , Role , Mission of Church	87
3.13. Authority in the Church	89
3.14. Preliminary Conclusion	92

Chapter four

4.1. Introduction	94
4.2. Societal Diversities	95
4.3. Ceremony and Rituals	96
4.4. Preview of Funeral Services	98
4.5. Western Practices	99

4.5.1. Visible Death	99
4.5.2. Filtered Death	101
4.5.3. Invisible Death	102
4.5.4. An Afrikaner Viewpoint	103
4.6. African Understanding	106
4.6.1. African Religions and Burials	108
4.6.2. Burial and Mourning Customs	112
4.7. Jewish Concept of Death and Dying	117
4.7.1. How Mourners should be treated	119
4.7.2. The Jewish Funeral	120
4.7.3. Period of Mourning	122
4.8. The Islamic Tradition	124
4.8.1. Islamic views on Life, Death and Afterlife	125
4.8.2. Death and Death Ceremonies	127
4.8.3. Funeral Ceremonies and Mourning Period	128
4.9. Christianity	131
4.9.1. Death and Dying	132
4.9.2. Mourning and Bereavement	133
4.9.3. Day of the Funeral	134
4.9.4. Mourning Period	136
4.10 Table Comparison	136
4.11. Preliminary Conclusion	139

Chapter five

5.1. Introduction	142
5.2. Report back Information	142
5.2.1. Profiles (Stoep Funerals)	143
5.2.2. Responses from Questions	144
5.3. Profiles (Church Funerals)	159
5.3.1. Responses (from Questions)	160
5.4. Church Wardens	166
5.5. Priests	180
5.6. Analyses of Responses	190
5.7. Preliminary Conclusion	224

Chapter six

6.1. Introduction	225
6.1.1. Case study one	226
6.1.2. Case study two	227
6.1.3. Case study three	229
6.2. Grief in order to heal	230
6.3. Each one is grieving in his / her own way	233
6.4. Role the Church can play	238
6.5. Practical Theology as Autonomous Discipline	239
6.6. Pastoral Care	243
6.7. Monetary Contributions	245

6.8. Latest Trends in Pastoral Theology	245
6.8.1. Wimberley`s Narrative approach	249
6.8.2. Gordon Dames	252
6.8.3. Ian Hussey	254
6.9. African Pastoral Care	256
6.9.1. Ubuntu	258
6.10. Block Leader System	263
6.11. Ticket System	263
6.12. Community Support	265
6.13. Training of Clergy	266
6.14. African Culture	268
6.15. Involvement of Church in African Customs	270
6.16. Preliminary Conclusion	274

Chapter seven

7.1. Introduction	277
7.2. Summary of Findings	278
7.2.1. Chapter one	278
7.2.2. Chapter two	280
7.2.3. Chapter three	283
7.2.4. Chapter four	286
7.2.5. Chapter five	289
7.2.6. Chapter six	291

7.3. Recommendations for Future Research	294
7.4. Appendix A Questions for Church Wardens	295
7.5. Appendix B Questions for Priests	298
7.6. Appendix C Questions for Stoep and Tent Funerals	301
7.7. Appendix D Questions for Church Funerals	302
7.7. Appendix E Consent Letter from Bishop	304
7.8. Appendix F Consent letter from University	305
7.9. Bibliography	307

CHAPTER ONE

1.1. Serenity Prayer

“God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things that I can and wisdom to know the difference. Living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time. Accepting hardship as the pathway to peace. Taking as he did, the sinful world as it is, not as I would have it, trusting that he will make all things right if I surrender to his will, so that I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with him for ever and ever in the next “. Amen

Reinhold Niebuhr, born June 21 1892 and died June 1 1971

Taking as a starting point the well-known “ serenity prayer, “ composed by world renowned Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, the author would like to introduce his research topic on death, dying, grief and mourning. The serenity prayer is significant in relation to death and dying for two reasons: (a) although we cannot change and alter the fact that all of us are anticipating our own death, we rather choose conveniently not to talk about it. Despite our attempt to treat death and dying as a taboo or some pending, distant enemy, the fact remains that death is real. Our denial of it cannot change the reality. Because of this common human attitude, Elizabeth Kubler Ross has discovered that death in itself is “associated with a bad act, a frightening happening, something that in itself calls for retribution and punishment” Kubler Ross, E; 1969:2

Because of this, it makes proper sense for humanity to explore and investigate more thanatological insights around death and dying that will enable us to cope better and manage differently the death experience This study investigates and evaluate the ways the black township churches manages death, dying and the funeral services of their members. (b) Allowing people to think differently and openly around issues of death and dying is in itself a step in the right direction by way of helping mourners to cope with grief and pain caused by death. The aim of this study is to highlight a rather indifferent practice in South African Black Township in relation to funeral services and it can never claim to come up with a blueprint of what the right way should be. However, concerning

the on-going need for embracing change, George Bowman says “the pastor seeking to minister to the hurts and concerns of troubled persons soon realizes that one never reaches that place of expertise which precludes new ideas and new discoveries. Much of what we learn, is gained through our own experiences of failure and success “.

Bowman, George, W; 1998: x

Hopefully this study will help the black township church leadership to have the courage to change the things we can, as we accept the things we cannot change: for that matter, death is a mystery of life that we cannot change. The agony and shattering feeling of helplessness it brings, cause a lot of misery and pain of which we find difficult to explain and cope with. Elizabeth Kubler Ross eloquently express the finality of facing death, either your own or that of a loved one in this way, “ Death is a subject that is evaded, ignored and denied by our youth worshipping, progress – orientated society. It is also as if we have taken on death as just another disease to be conquered. But the fact is, that death is inevitable. We will all die; it is only a matter of time. Death is as much a part of human existence, of human growth as development and being born. It is one of the few things in life we can count on, that we can be assured will occur. Death is not an enemy to be conquered or a prison to be escaped. It is an integral part of our lives that gives meaning to human existence. It sets a limit on our time in life, urging us on to do something productive with that time as long as it is ours to use. This then, is the meaning of death: the final stage of growth “.

Kubler Ross, Elizabeth, 1975: X

What is fascinating about Kubler Ross`s thought provoking statement, is her insistentence that everyone should try to find the meaning of life in facing death. She attempts to change our mind-sets completely concerning death and dying by introducing death as the final stage of growth instead of prison or enemy. This statement raises a lot of questions:

How do you find the meaning of life in the death of a loved one?

Is this difficult because we struggle to deal with the pain brought about by loss and separation? Pain has a way of clouding one`s judgement and distorting one`s reasonability and sense of objectivity, making it difficult for people to chart the meaning of life in the face of death. Being human also means being vulnerable. Death only adds

to our vulnerability and I think something else is needed to soothe that or to ease the pain caused by death, other than communicating mere words of comfort only. Instead of trying to understand or fully comprehend the mystery around issues of death and dying, a paradigm shift needs to be embarked upon by “developing the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference “. This amazing phenomenon is explored in the black South African Anglican church by bringing under scrutiny the practice of the church in dealing with the death and burial of their members. If one takes seriously the sentiments of Kubler Ross that “death is as much as part of the human existence, of human growth and development,.... and is the final stage of growth”, then surely the nature of the funeral service in the townships, its significance and importance should be investigated in relation to “finding meaning in death. “The main problem under investigation is not so much the township funeral services but the criteria or policies the church leadership is using to determine the place and format of such services. The aim of this research is not to damage the Anglican church but to come up with a pastoral element that would help grieving families to experience funeral services as a step towards healing. Whenever the author uses the terms “Black South African “ or “White South African “, “Black people and culture “, “White people and culture “, it has nothing to do with being racist or promoting racial undertones. The problem that will be investigated is overwhelmingly found in black townships throughout South Africa: this doesn’t preclude white Christian communities, which have their own set of problems concerning death and burial. Rather this study suggests that this particular practice of stoep funerals is prominent in black townships. While those practices are found in particular ethnic communities, the root of the problem is pastoral in nature. As a result this study aims at determining the ways in which the informal criteria for funerals are causing pain, frustration and division in the black church. The researcher’s overarching aim is to create a viable pastoral model to assist church leadership in engaging issues such as death, dying, funerals and grieving. In order to elaborate more about the author’s interest with the topic, I will briefly cite three case studies which attempt to show how these criteria cause more damage, pain and confusion to grieving mourners.

Case Study one

Sharon is a parishioner at St. James Anglican church in the Vaal Triangle which stretches from Orange Farm in the North to Vanderbijlpark in the South. It includes your historical townships like Evaton, Sebokeng, Meyerton, De Deur, Vereeniging and the many others that have mushroomed as a result of new developments. Apart from being a lay minister in her parish church for almost twenty years, Sharon also holds a senior post in the Diocesan Administration office. It so happened that Sharon`s father died. According to Anglican Canon Law, in the absence of a Rector or Priest in charge, the Archdeacon becomes the Rector of the Parish. As the presiding Archdeacon. I expected the wardens to notify me about Sharon`s father`s death and to request directives from me as to how to proceed with the burial, but they did not. They took it upon themselves to communicate with the family after having made their decisions. I eventually phoned Sharon to hear what was happening regarding funeral arrangements. Sharon was extremely distressed and disappointed and in a defeated manner said to me “Leave it Father; the wardens have decided. The lay ministers will bury my father this week from my family home”.

Telephonic conversation 2012

Sharon`s devastation left me disappointed in the ministry of the church. I was angry at the church for giving the church wardens such powerful authority. By using their authority indiscreetly and in an insensitive manner, they also damage grieving families emotionally such as Sharon, rather than using the funeral as a platform for healing.

These decisions were not only misguided, unbiblical, unethical, morally and socially incorrect, they also defied church protocol. When we come to chapter 5 (in the teasing out of consistencies and contrasts regarding fieldwork analyses), we will see what effects this decisions had for Sharon and her family in relation to healing and closure.

Case Study two

Father Themba was working as an ordinand which meant that he would be ordained soon under the leadership of his Rector, Fr. Smith. Father Smith instructed his curate Themba to take the baptism preparation classes for the parents seeking

baptism for their children. Themba obediently obliged, but was surprised by a lone male named Sam coming to classes week by week without the company of his wife. On enquiring one day after class Themba was informed by Sam that his wife was working at one of the well – known food outlets. Her hectic schedule meant that Sam had to attend the classes in order to ensure that their children be baptized. In an interview with Fr. Themba, he mentioned to me that Sam`s dedication was a source of encouragement for him especially because few young men in the townships were actively involved in the church, much less classes. In fact, most men would leave these religious duties to their wives. As a result, Sam was the only male attending classes. Even though he was surrounded by women of all ages, from young women to older women whom he affectionately referred to as “gogo`s”, (grannies), he remained steadfast in his commitment. In fact Sam was not embarrassed to attend classes, but rather he understood his presence as a parental duty. In the end Sam`s children were baptized and everyone was happy. To Father Themba`s surprise after having been transferred from that parish, he was summoned back by the Rector and the churchwardens to testify about Sam. Unfortunately, Sam had suddenly died after a short bout of illness. When Sam`s wife, Pamela, made arrangements with the leadership for Sam`s funeral, she was told that Sam was not a formal member of the parish. In fact, they acted as if they didn`t know Sam. The consequences of this were devastating. It ultimately meant that Sam was given a stoep funeral. Despite the grief of having to deal with the loss of Sam`s sudden death, she now had to react to the decision of the church leadership. In her own words, “That was unfair. Sam used to go to church while he was healthy; it was only since his short spell of illness that he couldn`t attend any longer. Besides, not one of them came to pray for him or to give him Communion reserved for the sick”.

Interviewee 2013

The church leadership was refuting Pamela`s claims. She even went as far as to summon, Fr. Themba as a witness to Sam`s Christian journey particularly because he had witnessed Sam`s dedication to baptism classes. No doubt Themba was distraught and traumatized by these events. This whole ordeal, from the warden`s initial decision to give Sam a stoep funeral to the calling of Fr. Themba to attest to

Sam`s faith and commitment to the church, was traumatic for his family. In many ways they experienced several forms of trauma, from death to loss of dignity, during their grieving process.

Case study three

The last case study is my own. It is a recounting of my father`s death in June 2009. This death had a tremendous impact on my entire nuclear family – especially my mother, brothers and sisters. This was a new experience for us, since my father was the first to depart from the close knit circle. Even the pain and loss were different – they were more severe and intense and the experience was shattering. The Rector of his parish was very helpful. He suggested that, given my own capacity as a priest, I should, in consultation with the family, make all the decisions with regard to the entire funeral arrangements.

He even suggested that I determine how the funeral should be conducted. This meant, for instance that I had to consider whether there should be a requiem mass (funeral service with Holy Communion) or just a simple funeral service in line with the Anglican Prayer Book. Once these details were agreed, the Rector decided to conduct the service.

This was great. It was tremendous. It allowed me and the family to be in control. It gave us power in our hands to create our own model of healing. We knew my father`s wishes in relation to hymn favorites and worship styles. We chose the hymns and style of worship. My own parishioners from Ennerdale were to lead the worship. What a powerful black African style of worship it was, - the singing of Vernacular choruses accompanied by the beating of drums, clattering of triangular symbols and blowing of whistles. That is something we will never forget and the power to decide and to live out and experience our decisions, was surely the first step towards our healing as a family.

In retrospect, I wonder what prompted the Rector to allow us as a family to take all the decisions in relation to the funeral service. Maybe it was one or a combination of the following reasons:

Was it because I was an ordained priest in the church and my mother a licensed lay minister?

Was it the fact that my father use to sing in the church choir and together as a family, we use to attend church services every Sunday?

Was it because my father and mother was up to date with their Dedicated Giving (DG) or tithing?

What made the Rector leave all the decisions with us as a family - very important decisions which would become the catalyst to our healing process. The question I am now battling with is what happens to all the other families who are not quite so “fortunate” as we were. What happens to the families who are forced to rely totally on decisions made by the priest and churchwardens? What if those decisions are biased, unjust, unfair and financially driven? What if those decisions are made on the basis of church attendance and financial contributions in relation to DG, tithing or pledges? in the townships, those decisions would mean that the family were forced to have a “ stoep funeral“ or “tent funeral”, being facilitated by a lay minister. I see this as an insult to our people that they are denied the services of a priest in favour of upholding controversial criteria. This is not to say that there aren’t some families who request quite private funerals from the family home or funeral parlour’s chapel. This is as I said, the odd case in a township setting, but in general the expectation is to have a decent funeral for their loved ones. I have already shown that in their minds “decent” means:

- To have the funeral service in church, presided over by a priest and accompanied by the administration of Holy Communion if possible. Similarly the expectation is also for the priest to attend and manage the committal at the graveside.

I don’t think that these are undue, unfair and unrealistic expectations from the parishioners. We are ordained people, called and set apart by God to serve his people with love and dedication irrespective their state and standing. The problem I am having with stoep or tent funerals where lay ministers are expected to conduct the services, has to do with adequate preparation and coaching.

Lay ministers are just told to go and conduct such services without being properly trained to do so; neither do they have an acceptable level of training in preaching. Most of them don't have the depth of theology to adequately comfort the bereaved family to effect healing.

Out of ignorance the lay ministers cause more damage than healing especially in cases of suicide or unnatural deaths.

I will now move into the background of the study to show why I became intrigued by this topic.

1.2. Background

This thesis examines various decisions that clergy and church leaders make concerning burial rites.¹ It is particularly concerned with the ways these decisions affect the burial process and more importantly the emotional state of those grieving. The primary site of this research, in black townships, is where many clergy have adopted unconventional approaches to the death and burial of their parishioners. Clerics often take the liberty of granting the deceased a church funeral conducted by an ordained member of the clergy at the church if the member was a regular service attendant and tithed. Conversely, if the deceased did not contribute regularly towards his/her DG or tithes, the deceased would be granted a stoep funeral. This means that those who do not attend service regularly or contribute consistently are often denied a funeral in church conducted by an ordained minister.

Stoep funerals have taken on a stigma because they immediately reflect the deceased's status in the church. In fact some funerals are reinstated as an official church funeral solely because family members have paid the deceased person's debt to the church. These families redeem the dignity of their dead by paying their arrears and ensuring that a priest will preside over a church funeral. Debt can be

¹ *For the purpose of this study, the author also includes the disposal ritual of the body at the cemetery as part of the funeral service.*

These seemingly undignified funerals are colloquially referred to as ² “stoep funerals” or “tent funerals”.

rectified, but, there is no viable solution to irregular attendance. In other cases, clergy stand their ground and no amount of money or negotiation can result in a church funeral. These families are subjected to burying their dead at a stoep funeral or tent funeral facilitated by lay leaders. The impact of these experiences is most devastating. It very often negatively shapes an effective grieving process. In fact these decisions in most cases exacerbate the emotional vulnerability of those who are grieving. It adds another dimension of pain to grieving families. These practices, I argue, stand in direct contradiction to the fundamental message of Christian love. These practices do not demonstrate the love and compassion that Christ expects of his people.

While stoep funerals are a pervasive practice throughout many black Southern African churches, this thesis examines the Anglican Church located in the Vaal Triangle. This study’s aim is not to expose or damage the credibility of the Anglican church but rather to make recommendations that will ultimately help rectify some of these issues more especially this thesis seeks to deal with the ways clergy have mishandled this issue by providing a pastoral approach that will help families not only to be reconciled to the death of their loved one but also to restore their standing (or lack thereof) in the church.

In essence, this dissertation will serve to bolster the leadership within the church, particularly when it comes to sensitive issues such as death and bereavement. In the black African mind-set, we are still very much preoccupied with elaborate culture practices, rituals, societal traditions and customs. In order to express who we are as black people, this worldview I believe even influences the way we practice our

² *Stoep or tent funerals – The Funeral Directors pitch a tent at the family home from which the funeral can be conducted. This might be helpful to protect the mourners from the elements because the family home is too small.*

Religion and the relationship we have with God and one another as human beings. Tapiwa Mucherera confirms this statement when he says, “The hopes of African peoples lie in God and humanity – that is, in their religion, in re-villaging and in re-authoring of their life stories from subjugation to hope “. He continues with this argument as he says, “Africans believe that humans were created to be in relationship not only with God but also with each other as well. Thereby hope is encountered from two fronts: primarily from God, who created humanity to be in relationship with God and likewise from one another in relationship”.

Mucherera, Tapiwa, N: 2009:76:77

From this it becomes clear that the distinctive identity of African people lies in relationship. This relationship`s translates into the bond we have with God and the firm connection with fellow human beings i.e. communal existence. This argument will be further explored and developed in later chapters as part of the Literature Review under the section, “African pastoral care”. This notion of the African identity explains our preoccupation with elaborate cultural and religious rituals and ceremonies, which also include funerals, mourning and bereavement customs and rituals. Through Western eyes this might be perceived as unnecessary or at times paganistic, but for black South Africans, it is an expression of who we are as people, having being created in the image of God. The African worldview further believes that this connection of relationship does not end in death, but continues in the spirit world. Concerning this worldview Mucherera affirms that “Life starts with God (spirit world), is lived out on this earth (physical world) and ends with God (spirit world)”.

Mucherera, T. 2009: 78

Pieterse H.J.C. expresses similar thoughts when he says: “When one studies black South African theologians` concepts of liberation, one notes that they regard it as holistic and all encompassing. They see it as something that affects every aspect of human life and human society and consequently reject all dichotomies imposed by Northern theologies”.

Pieterse H.J.C. 2004:99

Pieterse is eloquently communicating what the author is believing and that is: to us, as black Africans, God is the focal point of our existence and from him stems or originates everything that faces human beings. The African believes that the supreme God is the giver or regulator of everything we face, be it blessings or calamities. It comes with God`s sanction and approval.

Unlike Western Christianity, which holds to Western dualism which divides things into natural and supernatural, Black South African Christianity believes that God is not apart from the world but together with the world in which God institutes the spatio – temporal totality of existence. In other words, as the Supreme Being, God is not only the creator of everything but also the regulator thereof. God is in control. He is the source of life, but between him and humans lie many powers of evil, darkness and principalities, which accounts for the strange happenings in the world. Concerning this statement Pieterse says “because of human beings” close relationship to this Supreme Being and all things in this existence and the close system in which they are viewed; tribulations like illness, misfortune and poverty are related directly to God: disasters such as illness and death are explained ontologically”.

Pieterse (2004:98) in Teffo and Roux 1998:38

The author had to start this research from this vantage point because as will be shown later in the research, there is a big difference between the ways in which Westerners, or for that matter white South Africans, and black South Africans view death, dying, bereavement and the disposal of the human body. This research deals mainly with funerals in the townships, but unfortunately the church`s policies do not always take into account African worldviews. Rather they are based on Western notions of the death and burial, which I will have to wrestle with throughout this study. People of other colours and cultures might view these as undue obsessions from black people because they might miss the relevance, importance and significance these things hold for black people. One must be a black person, completely immersed in a black culture, to fully understand the significance we place on laying to rest our deceased in a dignified manner. It is believed that it should happen in dignity and with the utmost respect, since we are still trying to

restore black dignity that was stolen from us by our apartheid past and heavily threatened by a postmodern culture. Funeral services are critical, not only because of their importance in black people`s life, but also the church must be attentive in providing burial rites that is dignified and respectful.

The very people(church leaders) who should have jealously protected the basic black right to human dignity even in death at funerals through services, have become stumbling blocks to me and many likeminded concerned and affected black Christians by the decisions they make regarding funerals of their parishioners. If supposedly repetition of the keywords “ death”, “ dying”, “ mourning”, “ grief”, “bereavement”, occurs throughout the research, it must be remembered that these keywords should be seen as the fabric that hold the entire research together. These keywords will be extensively dealt with in the Literature Research and I believe it will become clear that what might be perceived as important and significant to one group of people might not be for another. I specifically refer here to the funeral services of the departed – the differences between rituals, customs, beliefs and practices of black and white traditions as well as between practices of different religious groupings. I believe that the experience of attachment and loss is the one experience that no human being can ever escape. In most cases grief and mourning are very difficult for human beings to comprehend. We need time and space to deal with our painful emotions brought about by the death of a departed loved one. In some cases, even the services of grief counselors need to be engaged especially if the bereaved are having trouble reintegrating themselves back into life. I believe that funeral services for the deceased should be part and parcel of the process of grieving. In fact they should be the precursor to affecting healing. J. William Worden shares the same sentiments in saying: “The funeral service, if it is done well, can be an important adjunct in aiding and abetting the healthy resolution to grief”. J. William, Worden; 1983:61

In other words, if the church and more specifically the church leadership take seriously the importance of burial rites and practices and do them well as Worden mentions, it can facilitate the process of healing. Conducting a funeral well will

require different standards for different groups of people. Therefore in a place like South Africa, which is a highly multicultural society, there is a variety of standards that might constitute a good funeral. We will explore these issues in greater detail in chapter three where I will provide a comparative context for funeral rites. In black townships however, it is clear that stoep funerals are far from fulfilling the needs of the bereaved.

1.3. Problem Statement

This research is preoccupied with the ways township clergy and church leaders' decisions affect mourning families and ultimately the burial of their deceased. It investigates the impact of added pain and damage to bereaved families through decisions made by the church leadership in relation to funerals. In essence, this study wrestles with the make- shift decision church laity and clergy are using to determine which parishioner receives a funeral in the church and which from the family home. Church funerals are reserved for members who died in good standing (in regard to pledges as well as attendance). The parish priest leads these funerals. These funerals contrast greatly with stoep funerals or tent funerals. Those who receive stoep funerals are former members who are not in good standing. As mentioned above, however it is clear that funerals conducted from the family home contribute to the trauma of the bereaved. From a leadership standpoint, stoep funerals are highly problematic. When stoep funerals are done, there is no follow up or consideration given, to ensure that lay ministers are on time, well prepared, in order to guarantee professionalism. Beyond these issues of leadership, my study grapples with whether stoep funerals provide an ethically sound pastoral approach to issues of grief. It wrestles seriously with whether those family members and friends who are in the midst of processing death and burial rites are adequately cared for by the church. In view of this, the author wonders: can those who are being exposed to stoep funerals profoundly experience the love of God, especially when they are hurting because of bereavement? Can stoep funerals be considered pastoral? Why has the character, task and mission of the church seemed to change especially as it pertains the care of the bereaved? How does the specific context of the township

churches inform these practices? Is this change ethical, more specifically since burial rites depend on standing and status within the church?

Why does the payment of arrears become so critical in the midst of providing relief to the bereaved and burial to the deceased?

What hindered clergy or churchwardens from collecting tithes while the person was still alive? Furthermore, as a church we need to ask what the purpose is of stoep or tent funerals- punishment or education?

Most importantly, can pastoral issues be entrusted to the laity?

1.4. Aims and objectives

The framework that informs this study lies in the criteria that Priests and wardens in the townships formulate in relation to funerals. These decisions cause more damage than healing to bereaved families in times of funerals. To some people these decisions become traumatic. Funeral services are very important events for black people.

Because of our African identity, funeral services become community events: – the community members are expected not only to visit in order to sympathize, but also to contribute whatever they can towards the funeral. In addition, a selected few will participate in the funeral service itself, while the rest are just expected to attend as a support base for the bereaved family. The men especially will be called upon at the graveside to fill the grave with soil, performing hard menial work, but as a consolation if one can call it that, a hot plate of food awaits everyone after the committal at the graveside. Because of this traditional community involvement, funeral services do not only become social events, but are also seen as a parting ritual whereby the departed is handed over to his/her ancestors – a transitional ritual through which the deceased is then commended to join the already departed, but living, ancestors in the spirit world. All dignity and respect should accompany such an event as is customary in African tradition. As part of our culture, we venerate our ancestors, but do not worship them as people of other cultures might assume. In the Anglican tradition, which has a western origin, it has become customary for Anglicans to venerate the saints, to set aside a particular Sunday on our church`s calendar for All Saints day on which special prayers for the saints will be said, with the service to have a special focus on our saints. Years

ago all of them were white but it is only in recent times that black saints like Bernard Mzeki have also been remembered.

For the purpose of this research, I will refer to the western saints as ancestors in the same way we think, venerate and communicate with our departed loved ones in a black cultural perspective. Prof. Masango normally says, “Not every departed person qualifies to be an ancestor”, referring to the lives they have lived on earth.

M. Masango: Contact session 2011

By now our church people have become acquainted with the criteria the church leadership is using before making funeral decisions. These decisions, according to the author, also have cultural implications. If one uses the arguments of priests and wardens, how then can you give a stoep funeral to a “prospective ancestor” in relation to the criteria? Are they not making a statement, saying that all or most of them who are being given “stoep funerals”, are also not worthy to be venerated as ancestors in the long run? One of the aims of this research is to assist our black people not to be caught up in a cultural conundrum in relation to ancestral veneration as a result of decisions taken by religious people around funerals. The funeral should not dictate the status of the deceased. This research sees the opportunity for church and black culture to work together in order to have the same outcome. The missionaries have completely destroyed our indigenous culture in favour of western culture with the planting of Christianity. Mucherera rightfully expresses this fact as follows, “In many cases, the indigenous people were taught the ways of the colonizers before the bible was introduced to them”.

Mucherera T .P: 2009: 9

Observance of black culture was condemned as barbaric and our rituals as pagan rituals and practices. Because of this one of the aims of this research is also to determine what has prompted the black church leadership to treat funeral services with disdain and (impurity) by insisting on stoep funerals for defunct members.

I see the outcome of this research as one of the tools that can effectively contribute towards enculturation of the church even if it is only on the aspect of death, dying, mourning, bereavement and funerals. The following aims for this project are extremely important:

This project aims to offer alternative clerical approaches to the death and burial of inactive members (whether financially or spiritually) of township churches. It seeks to provide models that handle both the bereaved and the deceased with dignity and respect. In doing so, it seeks to provide ministers with the necessary tools to care pastorally for a bereaved family. Further, by shedding light on issues surrounding burial among predominantly black churches, it also seeks to provide elements of pastoral care that are relevant to African Christians. In other words, the holistic aim of the dissertation is to present the church and its clergy with a culturally appropriate model in handling delicate issues of death and dying of defunct church members.

1.5. Significance of the Study

In the life of the church, people will jealously defend a rule, a law or a practice even if they don't know (a) where it originated and for what reason (b) what value it has for us in this day and age. They will always tell you that "it has been like this for many years", implying that it should remain like this for many years to come. It is because of this thinking that one welcomes and values the positive contribution made by practical theologians in the life of the church such as L. M. Heyns and HJC Pieterse, who defines Practical Theology and its task as follows:

"Practical theology concerns itself with theories of ecclesiastical and religious praxis . The task of practical theology is that of identifying and critically evaluating practical theological theories in operation and where necessary, to develop new theories for praxis".

L. M. Heyns and HJC Pieterse 1990: 19

As a practical theological student doing research, I have noted an offensive practice in township churches that is of a discriminatory nature in relation to funerals.

Death is a routine occurrence in post-apartheid South Africa. While death is hardly ever politically driven these days, it is often the result of the looming HIV/AIDS epidemic or other chronic illnesses or violent crime precipitated by the economic downturn. The hardest hit communities are those of working-class blacks, many of whom reside in black townships. Failing health and crime, coupled with the natural loss of life, makes death an ever-present issue in South African society.

Burial rites are now the cornerstone of church work. This dissertation not only demonstrates that gaining an understanding of the church's relationship to death and funerals is necessary but it also makes constructive suggestions for clergy and church leaders, as they engage with the bereaved. Furthermore, this dissertation is particularly attuned to the import of cultural relevance in the context of burial, one of the most sacred rituals in African cultures. In this way, this dissertation is not just an intellectual contribution, but it is also a necessary practical tool for the church and its clergy.

1.6. Research Gap

There is very little secondary literature on stoep funerals. This dissertation will be one of few studies on alternative burial practices in an African Christian context. Its focus on a pastoral perspective will also mean that it will wrestle with issues of death and dying from an African pastoral care perspective. Instead a great deal of research has been undertaken on the related issues of death, dying, mourning, bereavement. However most of this work has been pursued in the field of psychology for example by Makondelele Sarah Radzalani 2012; Phillip Alexander Smith 2000, Elferia Woodrow 2006. Some of the key scholars such as Smith and Woodrow provide a psychological examination of the effects of death and bereavement. Radzilani provides a focused analysis of death from a Southern African perspective, as she explores bereavement rituals in Tshivenda culture. Therefore my work in practical theology not only interrogates African ritual practices much like Radzilani's work, but rather it is concerned with bringing a Christian and specifically a pastoral care perspective to death. Furthermore it moves away from Radzilani's focus on rituals and pursues an examination of informal Christian burial practices in urban spaces. The research contributes to the field of practical theology and in particular pastoral care by providing a unique approach to the informal mechanisms that clergy rely on to bury defunct members in black spaces .

1.7. Methodology

The epistemological framework of this study is hermeneutical and thus undergirded by postmodernism. This paradigm is ideal for investigating, understanding and interpreting the burial practices employed by clergy and laity because it critically examines the relationships between parishioners and clergy, as well as church leaders such as churchwardens. The examination of these relationships especially in the midst of death and mourning is critical to gaining an understanding of these informal and largely accepted practices. As a result, this study uses a qualitative approach rooted in narrative research in order to examine fully these various relationships and the emotional damage caused by stoep funerals to mourning families. These experiences will only be captured through various forms of interviews.

This research will consist of two major parts, namely:

- (a) Review of Literature and
- (b) Empirical Research

(a) Literature Review will be two fold namely

- (i) Key phrases in this research such as “ death and dying ”, “ grief ”, “ mourning”, “ attachment and loss ”, and the like will be investigated especially from different cultural perspectives . That will give us an idea of whether we all put the same emphasis, importance and significance on the topics under discussion.
- (ii) A comparative study on concepts of “mourning”, “bereavement”, “rituals”, and the funeral itself. The research will focus on
 1. Black culture vs. white culture
 2. Christian religion against Judaism and Islam and how it differs from traditional African Religion in relation to issues of death, dying, mourning, grief, and burial practices.

Because my tradition, Christianity has developed from Judaism and the community which I come from is heavily under attack from Islam, I have decided to compare the mentioned concepts from these three religions. I am sure there is something that the Christian tradition can learn from these two or vice versa.

(b) Empirical Research which is qualitative in nature. This research uses a grounded theory approach which relates to theories that are derived at from data collected on the ground. This data will be systematically gathered and analysed throughout the research process. From the collected data the author aims to develop a method of caring for people who are hurting.

The qualitative method that will be used in the investigative process, will be from a hermeneutical approach. This method is chosen based on the interest of the author (in) a post modernistic paradigm regarding pastoral care issues. The aim of this research is to find out what is actually happening on the ground (criteria set by church leadership in townships) and why. That will lead me into evaluating the value of it or to what extent it causes damage and brings division. Questions will be set and people interviewed (see appendix A-C). As the data collected is being analyzed, it will inform perceptions the author has of pastoral issues of caring in relation to Mucherera`s suggestions of re-villaging in the re-authoring of African life,

Collection of data

As previously mentioned, all the data of this study will be collected in the Vaal Triangle, particularly from Anglicans in the following townships: Sebokeng, Sharpeville, and Boipatong. The co - researchers of this study will range from priests and churchwardens to bereaved families, all of whom have experienced both church and stoep or tent funerals. All of these co - researchers will be drawn from my own ministerial network throughout my years as an Anglican priest.

The data that will be collected from the participants will be driven by in-depth interviews based on semi - structured questions. Holistically, these questions will strive to determine the pastoral support and coping mechanisms the church has provided during mourning and bereavement (refer to Appendices B, C, and D for more detailed information on specific questions). The answers to these questions will illuminate the complexity of the problem from various vantage points.

Data analysis

The author will use grounded theory to analyze data. After each interview the findings will immediately be analysed and reviewed to see/evaluate whether the data collected is still in synergy with the topic. This process will be repeated after each interview and then only will the researcher move on towards the next participant. This process is useful in collecting, storing and analyzing data which in the end should be relevant to the problem being researched.

By reviewing Literature , the author hopes to come to a deeper understanding of the key phrases of this research such as “ mourning ”, “ grief ”, “ loss ”, “ death ”, and “ dying ” and the like from:

(a) different cultural perspectives .

(b) different fields of Study like psychology , sociology , anthropology , etc. . My epistemological search will rely heavily on the field of thanatology and information given by my co – researchers through interviews. Pertinent scholarship from the fields of thanatology will be employed to explore the various parts of the data collected such as :

- Parks , Collins Murray , Luangani , Pittu , Young , Bill ; 199 & ; *Death and Bereavement Across Culture*, Routledge Publication , London.

– Smith , W . A ; 2003 ; *Reflection on death , dying and bereavement ; A Manual for Clergy , Counsel and Speakers* ; Baywood Publishing Company Inc. . New York.

- Wass , H ; 1979 ; *Dying Facing the facts* , Hemisphere Publishing Corporation , Washington .

– William Worden, J; 1983; *Grief Counselling and Grief Therapy – A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner*, Routledge Publication, London.

– Wimberley E. P.; 1999; *Moving from Shame to Self – worth: Preaching and Pastoral Care*; Abingdon Press, USA.

This secondary literature alongside the data collected from interviews will allow me to assess the impact of stoep funerals as well as the coping mechanisms that the church has relied on to conduct these burial practices .

Theories of caring

Firstly the author will use the theories of theologian Edward Wimberley as discussed in his book “*Moving from shame to self – worth*. In it, Wimberley demonstrates.

how Jesus came to grips with the shame and humiliation he faced in his own life like the stories of His virgin birth . Jesus must have been told these stories and knew it the way we do, especially Mary`s fear of embarrassment, Joseph`s fear of becoming a laughing stock in the community and the like. According to Wimberley, Jesus was resilient in handling shameful situations in His life. Wimberley urges Christians to embrace this same resillience in their own lives. In fact Wimberley suggest that Christians can overcome shame by internalizing and re – enacting Jesus` stories in our lives.

Wimberley explains the value and relevance of the parables of Jesus which can help us in this day and age to find meaning in our lives, in line with non-shame based values.

Wimberley`s own argument makes sense in this context. People who have been exposed to the trauma, rejection and shame of experiencing stoep funerals need to embrace a state of resillience much as Jesus did.

These theories of caring, worth and dignity from Wimberley will enable me to create a model for people who have experienced shame and rejection through stoep funerals. Additionally I will draw on Nick Pollard`s theories of Positive Deconstruction. In this model, Pollard makes suggestions of how people can deconstruct internalized issues, events and bad experiences. In journeying with the damaged , grieving survivors one should be able to help them to positively deconstruct the bad experience or negative feelings they have of themselves and possibly of their departed loved ones as a result of these stoep and tent funerals . Wimberley`s theories of caring are quite helpful as we guide the grieving mourner to re – enact Jesus` stories of shame and triumph.

Lastly I will use the theories of C .V. Gerkin to provide some recommendations for church leadership. Gerkin`s model of shepherding is found in his book “*An introduction to Pastoral Care*” There he identifies the following models of care:

The Pastor as Priest, Prophet and Wise Guide.

The Pastor as Shepherd of the Flock.

The Pastor as Mediator and Reconciler.

The Pastor as Ritualistic Leader.

In my investigation, while dealing with caring theories in particular appropriate shepherding of the flock, I will also mention how important it is for the Priest to be a ritualistic leader. Chapter six of this study will highlight the importance of sacramental, liturgical and ritualistic expression of care, since the Anglican Church perceives herself to be a sacramental church. This research will make recommendations in relation to how sacraments, rituals and liturgy can be brilliantly used in the context of a funeral to bring about healing to mourners.

1.8. Chapter outline

Chapter One

This chapter is an overview of the entire project. The following subsections seek to illuminate the key problems at stake, the methodology employed, and the prominent theories examined: Introduction, Background, Aims and Objectives, and Significance of the Study.

Chapter Two

The focus on this chapter will be to define the methodological approach this study employs. It will include related discussions on both paradigmatic and practical approaches to data collection. This also includes a portion of the chapter which is dedicated to the ethical considerations that drive the collection of data, as well as a brief discussion of the limitations of the study, based on the parameters of data collections.

Chapter Three

This chapter examines the secondary literature related to issues of the burial of defunct church members. This chapter will investigate secondary literature in the field of thanatology. In particular, it will focus first on the issues of death and dying. It will also examine literature on mourning and bereavement, also based on the field of thanatology. This examination of secondary literature in burial processes will enable pastoral caregivers to suggest practical, workable coping mechanisms for grieving mourners as they journey with survivors of grief. Lastly, it will also explore the literature on burial processes which include funeral services and ceremonies - essentially all aspects of

burial rites. The exploration of this literature will explain religious functionaries' responsibilities in the burial process. Overall this chapter's aim is to provide the theoretical rigour from which to critically analyse the data collected.

Chapter Four

This chapter is a continuation of the literature review. Topic four will be a comparative study of mourning rituals and perspectives on death. This comparison will be conducted among the Christians, Muslims, and Jews. The aim of this chapter is to explore the different ways religious functionaries demonstrate pastoral care. This will be the basis of understanding the need for an African for death and burial rituals that still satisfy the tenets of Christianity. To achieve a holistic goal this chapter will be concluded by examining traditional African burial rites and mourning customs.

Chapter Five

This chapter will analyse the data obtained through the various forms of qualitative research employed in the study. This chapter, will require the recounting of specific information obtained through qualitative research. Its aim is to find a consensus in the subjects' understanding of the problem while the author seeks eventually to present some practical recommendations. This analysis will be fully explored as helpful literature is juxtaposed to the findings.

Chapter Six

This chapter will propose a model for healing bereaved families. In this chapter I will suggest a model of healing for bereaved family members who may have been traumatized by the informal burial practices employed by clergy. Its aim is to resolve the impact of stoep funerals on these families. The model of healing will be strengthened by information supplied by the participants in the interviews, alongside the theories derived from secondary literature. The overarching suggestions will enable the church leadership to find appropriate ways to deal with defunct members when confronted with burials

Chapter Seven

Chapter seven is the concluding chapter that provides an overview of the summary and recommendations. In many ways, it will act as epilogue to the entire project, pointing out the significance of the study while also indicating to the limitations of the study.

1.9. Preliminary conclusion

Having dealt with the research problem, aims and objectives and relevance as well as background to the study, chapter two will deal with the methodology, of the research.

CHAPTER TWO

2.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the research method used, including all associated methodological concepts, such as research design, qualitative approach, grounded theory, population, theoretical sampling, data analysis and the like. It navigates the route that the author will be taking in the process of collecting and analyzing data.

As a practical theological student, the author has noted an offensive practice in township churches (black urban churches) that is of a discriminatory nature in relation to funerals. The church leadership (priest and churchwardens) slavishly follow and implement certain criteria to determine which funerals will be conducted from the church and by whom, and which from the family home. If it is to be facilitated in the church, the priest will preside over the mass but if it is to be conducted from the family home, any available lay minister will be assigned to go and “do” that funeral. The problem under investigation, which has also traumatized the author, is the set criteria being used to inform their decisions such as:

- If the deceased was not a regular worshipper in his/her lifetime, the funeral will not be conducted in church or will a priest presides over such a service. Instead, the funeral service will be conducted from the family home, facilitated by any available lay minister. We loosely refer to such funerals as “stoep or tent funerals” because in reality, that is the space from which the funeral will be conducted. To worsen matters further, stoep or tent funerals carry with them an unavoidable stigma, since everyone in the townships is aware that such funerals are normally awarded to defaulters. The author wonders whether this is punishment or an attempt to educate church members.

In other instances, the church leadership first look at the financial history of the deceased in relation to his/her tithing or dedicated giving. If it is discovered that the person is in arrears at the time of death, the family is expected first to redeem the total debt or a significant part thereof before that funeral can be held in the church, presided over by the priest. In most cases the outstanding money cannot be recovered, which automatically results in a stoep or tent funeral service facilitated by lay ministers who are not even well trained in pastoral care or in bereavement ministry. In some cases

they cause more damage, instead of bringing healing and comfort to hurting bereaved family members. In chapter one it has already been shown that Elizabeth Kubler Ross wants us to understand death as “an integral part of our lives that gives meaning to human existence”.

Kubler Ross Elizabeth; 1975: X

Through informal conversations held with grieving families who had to endure or experience stoep funerals of their relatives, they and the researcher find it difficult to find any meaning in death accompanied by stoep funerals. Instead, mourners are struggling to come to terms with the death of a loved one, but simultaneously also have to deal with the embarrassment and shame caused by stoep funerals. The researcher cannot help wondering whether:

- The church leadership promotes and implement stoep funerals as a means of punishment or education.
- They really classify stoep funerals as dignified.
- An ordained priest can be comfortable with the implementation of such policies.
- In the event of his/her supporting it, what it says about the true nature of the priest's pastoral theology.

Because this study is done from a pastoral care perspective within the broader framework of practical theology, one of the aims of this study is to suggest to the black church leadership how to deal with and manage the burial process of their defunct members. In doing so it aims to suggest to the priest in particular therapeutic ways of journeying with grieving families long after the funeral, in order to assist them to heal.

In view of the above questions, the aim of this research is to come up with a method that will assist the church to care for bereaved families. This chapter lays the foundation for a roadmap that will be followed in the process of data collection and analyses. In view of all this, this chapter will consist of two major parts namely:

- (a) Review of Literature which relates to the following: Fundamental theories on pastoral care with a particular focus on those of Charles Gerkin and Nick Pollard.
- (b) Empirical Research which is qualitative in nature. The research uses a grounded theory approach which refers to theory that is derived from data from the ground which is systematically gathered and analysed throughout the research process. Scholars agree that academics Anselm Strauss and Barney Glaser (1967) should be given credit

as the founders of grounded theory approach in doing research. Corrine Glesne (2011) argues that further credit be given to Strauss and Corbin (1998) and Charmaz (2002) for their contribution in developing the work initiated by Strauss and Glaser. Glesne describes grounded theory as follows, “Grounded theory is not a theory in itself but a methodology for developing theory that is “grounded” in data.

Glesne Corrine, 2011: 21

In other words, grounded theory approach involves a specialized way of collecting data and analyses that includes continual data sampling, coding, categorizing and comparing, in order to generate theory about the social problem under investigation. In simplified terms it means that the researcher following a grounded theory approach collects data mostly through interviews and observation on the topic which gets analysed immediately. The purpose of this is to establish conceptual categories that can be linked into formulation of preliminary theory, after which more data is collected to establish similarities or differences. Renata Tesch (1990) reckons that Glaser and Strauss initially called this process “constant comparison” because the collected data is already categorized into categories, according to their conceptual contexts and these are being constantly compared for the sake of formulating theory.

Tesch Renata; 1990: 23

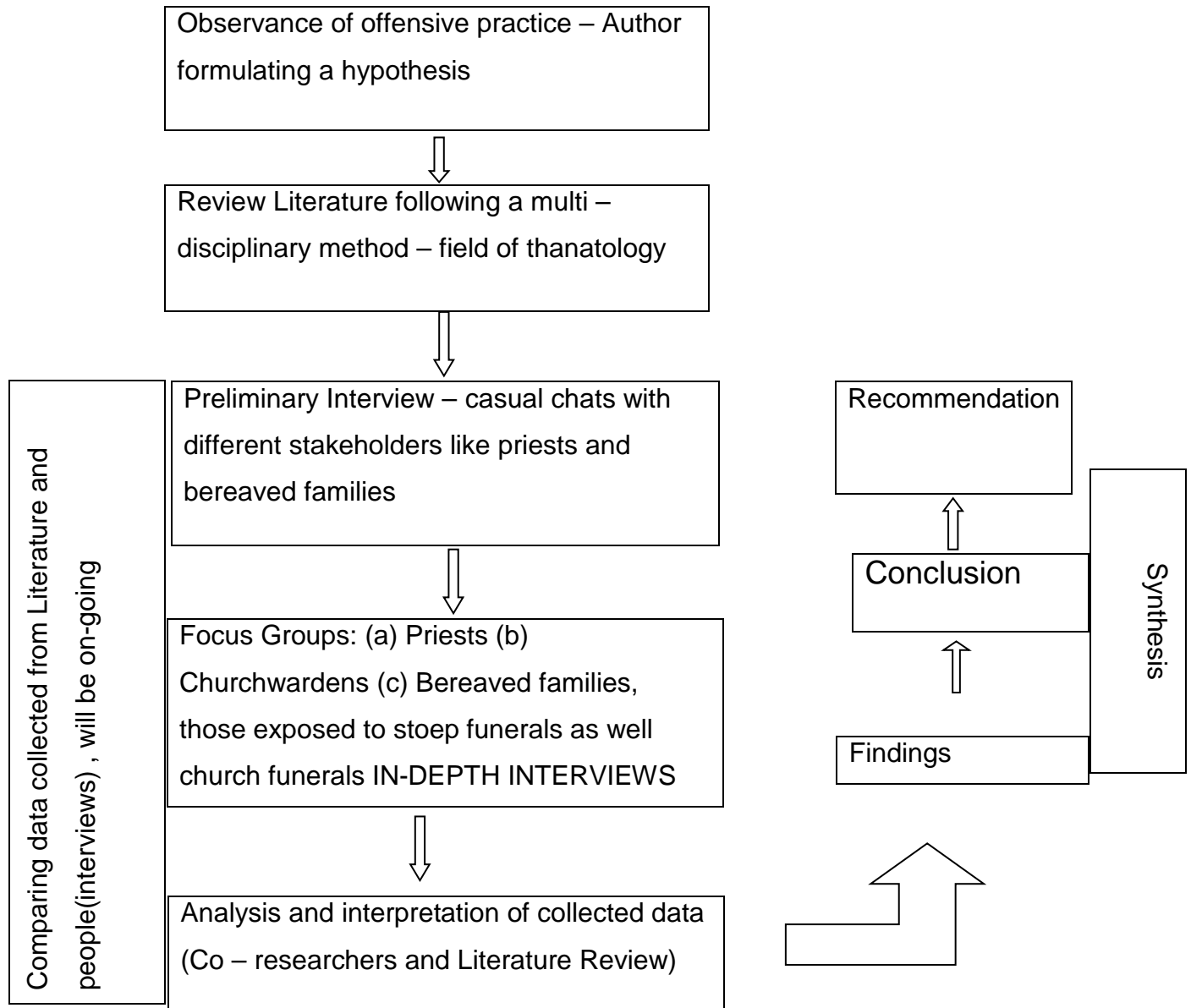
This approach is vital for the topic under research, since very- little or for that matter no- literature exists on stoep or tent funerals. This means that the data that will be collected from the participants through interviews will be treated in this fashion and that collected data will shape, inform or even reshape the hypothesis the researcher held initially concerning the value, significance, meaning and relevance of stoep or tent funerals. This approach is relatively new for the field of Theology and will therefore relies heavily on methods and insights from other Social Sciences. What follows next, will be a discussion on research design.

2.2. Research design

Some qualitative theorists are of the view that research design is considered as a blueprint for doing research, dealing with at least four questions such as:

- What questions to study?
- What data are relevant?
- What data to collect?
- How to analyse the result?

Here follows a flowchart of the steps the author will take to conduct the research.



The flow chart is just an outline or rough scheme that the author will follow to set up the process/steps for the research. Each block has so much more information which needs to be systematically considered and explained as seen in the table from Balnaves Mark and Caputi Peter (2001); cf Rubin et al (1990) here below. In short, I will first start of with a hypothesis and then end with a synthesis. The table below was created by its authors for the purpose of doing quantitative research, but I believe that qualitative researchers like myself can easily use it in conducting qualitative research.

Balnaves and Caputi
Table 2.3 Organizing a quantitative research study
PROBLEM
<p>What is the goal of the research?</p> <p>What is the problem, issue, or critical focus to be researched?</p> <p>What are the important terms? What do they mean?</p> <p>What is the significance of the problem?</p> <p>Do you want to test a theory?</p> <p>Do you want to extend a theory?</p> <p>Do you want to test competing theories?</p> <p>Do you want to test a method?</p> <p>Do you want to replicate a previous study?</p> <p>Do you want to correct previous research that was conducted in an inadequate manner?</p> <p>Do you want to resolve inconsistent results from earlier studies?</p> <p>Do you want to solve a practical problem?</p> <p>Do you want to add to the body of knowledge in another manner?</p>
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

What does previous research reveal about the problem?
What is the theoretical framework for the investigation?
Are there complementary or competing theoretical frameworks?
What are the hypotheses and research questions that have emerged from the literature review?

SAMPLE

Who (what) will provide (constitute) the data for the research?
What is the population being studied?
Who will be the participants for the research?
What sampling technique will be used?
What materials and information are necessary to conduct the research?
How will they be obtained?
What special problems can be anticipated in acquiring needed materials and information?
What are the limitations in the availability and reporting of materials and information?

METHOD

What method or techniques will be used to collect the data? (This holds for applied and non - applied research)
What procedures will be used to apply the methods or the techniques?
What are the limitations of these methods?
What factors will affect the study's internal and external validity?
Will any ethical principles be jeopardized?

DATA ANALYSIS

How will data be analysed?
What statistics will be used?
What criteria will be used to determine whether hypotheses are supported?

What was discovered (about the goal, data, method, and data analysis) as a result of doing preliminary work (if conducted)?
CONCLUDING INFORMATION
How will the final research report be organized? (Outline) What sources have you examined thus far that pertain to your study? (Reference list) What additional information does the reader need? What time frame (deadlines) have you established for collecting, analyzing and presenting data? (Timetable)

It was important for me to bring this table of Mark Balnaves and Peter Caputi into this section of research design because the questions they raise will guide the process in which this research will unfold, including the methods that will be used in doing this research. As the research unfolds, the questions in the foregoing table will be systematically unpacked as the steps in the flow chart are being followed, but for now the author wants to talk more about qualitative research.

2.3. Qualitative Approach

This research will follow a qualitative approach undergirded by a hermeneutical method. My understanding of hermeneutical means to give the victims of stoep funerals, i.e. the mourners a chance to relate their interpreted experience of stoep funerals through interviews. They represent the ones who have suffered an alleged injustice by the set criteria and church policies, which are seen by some as discriminatory, in relation to stoep or tent funerals. Many who are against stoep and tent funerals walk around with uncontrolled anger and unresolved embarrassment and shame. Concerning this Glesne is of the opinion that, "Former subjects of colonization not only have critiqued what was written about their cultures, but also have become ethnographers and taken up representing themselves in ways that reveal the assumptions of the gaze from outside, bringing attention to issues of interpretation and representation".

Glesne, Corrine 2011: 19 This piece of information is crucial for the credibility of this research since very little literature- or none at all for that matter- exists about township stoep or tent funerals. The interpretations related by the represented victims will be

vitaly important for readers to understand the damage that stoep or tent funerals cause. Joyce .V. Zerwekh, a nursing professional who has done qualitative research on issues of representation and interpretation, was inspired by P. Bennet, an academic in the same field. Zerwekh was impressed with Banner`s choice of using hermeneutics to interpret the transcribed texts of nurses` stories. She continues, “To discover content and meanings, she identified exemplars, interpreted them for recurring themes and then validated her interpretation by practice experts”.

Joyce. V. Zerwekh in Susan Diemert Moch and Marie F. Gates; 2000: 40

In the case of this research however the grieving mourners have already been identified as the victims of stoep funerals. As they relate their painful stories of struggling and wrestling with priests and churchwardens against stoep funerals they then become the “practical experts ”, whose stories will be interpreted and analysed after the interviews to understand the pain and embarrassment they have suffered: hence their resentment of stoep and tent funerals.

A word of caution: this hermeneutical method should not be confused with hermeneutics, the art of examining biblical texts (exegesis) which was championed by Martin Heidegger and Paul Ricoeur. The latter is an art of interpreting a written text, while the former is an art of interpreting real life situations. For an ethnographer examining the pain of grieving mourners in their communities, the real life stories of the victims have become indispensable for this research.

Tesch Renata reckons that there is no such thing as qualitative research but only qualitative data. According to her, “Qualitative research, as the term used by many scholars, means a certain approach to knowledge production. It does not only refer to data”. She continues, “Qualitative data is any information the researcher gathers that is not expressed in numbers”.

Tesch, Renata; 1990; 55

In the author`s view, if one accepts this simple definition, it means that all forms such as pictures, drawings, paintings, films, photographs, CD`s, videotapes and even music and sound tracks can be considered as “data”. There are no limits to the human creations and products that one can study. For this reason scholars believe that qualitative research aims to gather in – depth understanding of human behaviour and the reasons

that govern that behaviour. In other words qualitative research is concerned with the issues of “why” and “how” rather than the “what” and “where”. Concerning this, Creswell suggests that it is important to explore a problem rather than use predetermined information from literature or to rely on results of other research studies.

(Creswell, John, W; 1998:40) He goes on to say that this type of research aims to investigate a complex, detailed understanding of the problem at hand. According to Creswell, The best way to accomplish this, is to go “to people`s homes, places of work” and the author adds, “places of worship” in order to listen objectively to people`s stories. Uwe Flick collaborates this statement when he says that, “Qualitative research has developed an identity of its own and is intended to approach the world out there and not simply specialized research in laboratories. Flick, Uwe; 2007: xii

The author believes that the process mentioned by Creswell and Flick is very important when doing a scientific research because then one will formulate views based not only on assumptions but on scholarly research. That is why data from grassroots level forms an important and vital cornerstone where people become the living documents. Flick identifies three characteristics in the qualitative method, i.e.

- Analyzing experiences of individuals or groups, which relates to day to day accounts and stories?
- Analyzing interactions and communications in the making, which relate to observing or recording the interaction or practices of people.
- Analyzing documents or similar traces of experiences or interactions.

This is equally true of what this research aims to achieve – to coin the experiences of people on the ground in relation to the pastoral care given to them by conducting in – depth interviews and lively interrogations of questionnaires. One should not forget that this research will evolve in the arena of the human sciences. Tesch is quick to point out the difference between human sciences and natural sciences. She goes on to say, “Human sciences could be substituted for social sciences. In practice, human science has come to mean: those approaches in the social sciences that do not imitate the natural sciences”. Tesch R; 1990: 33

Scholars are of the opinion that qualitative research is as old as social science itself, i.e. well over a hundred years. According to Tesch, 1842 is regarded as the birth year of Sociology, with August Comte as its founder in 1871 Anthropology graduated into a discipline, with Edward Tylor as the founder, and in 1878 William James established the first course in Psychology. This is important data for it shows how effectively Sociologists have used the qualitative process over the past centuries and how reliable the qualitative approach is as one of the pathways in the search for a sound epistemology. This is far more comforting to us as practical theological students employing the qualitative approach in doing research. The proof of the pudding is in the eating, when one considers the successes of human scientists` research work over the centuries, not forgetting that theology, including practical theology, should be accepted and treated as part and parcel of the human sciences. In the introduction it was mentioned that the author will embark on empirical research which is qualitative in nature and that the research will be using a grounded theory approach. First the author would like to say more on empirical research, and then explain why a grounded theory approach is chosen.

2.3.1. Empirical research

Renata Tesch quotes from the work of Colaizzi, who argued that a distinction should be made between researchers who use their own experience (reflexive form of phenomenology) and those who use descriptive protocols from many subjects (empirical form of phenomenology). She argues that “An empirical phenomenological psychologist is a researcher who is open to all perceivable dimensions and profiles of the phenomenon that is being researched. Hence the experience of the subjects as well as those of the researcher is acknowledged as informative”. Tesch, R; 1990:40

In the author`s understanding, this will become clearer when one does the one- to- one in - depth interviews with the co – researchers. In that process the author will be able to observe facial expressions, body language, eye contact and the like and listen to nuances like communicating exclamations, regrets, surprises, deep pain and the like. This might give you a fair amount of understanding what the interviewer has gone through, is struggling with, his/her emotional state, psychological frame of mind, to

mention but a few. All this is only possible when one is having a one to one contact in the qualitative approach, unlike filling in questionnaires from a distance in the quantitative process. In short, empirical work refers to the fieldwork, the context in which the researcher interacts with the participants during the interviewing process. This is the time when much needed data is collected.

2.3.2. Grounded Theory

At the beginning of this chapter, a short description was given of grounded theory. What now follows should be seen as complimentary to what was already mentioned.

According to Glesne Corrine (2011), sociologists Anselm Strauss and Barney Glaser (1967) should receive credit as the founders of Grounded theory research. It is believed that Grounded theory is not a theory in itself but a methodology for developing theory that is “grounded” in data. According to the author`s understanding this method demands that researchers temporarily suspend prior theoretical notions/data on a specific topic or theme under investigation while concentrating on analyzing collected data. In other words what has already being collected through fieldwork, i.e. through interviews and participant observation, should be placed into categories, to enable similar against differing data to be compared. This will help invaluablely with the analysis of the data. It should also assist in giving a clearer and more objective outcome of the data collected. This process is on-going because as the researcher collects the data, he/she will continually code it into compartments (same or differing reactions or responses) and immediately analyze the data. The process will only be completed after the data obtained from “grounded theory” have been compared with the prior data of the researcher. This method in my view assists the researcher to test his/her initial hypothesis in relation to the topic under investigation. This is the method that the researcher will follow in chapter five – the chapter in which collected data will be interpreted and analysed. This method of data verification is scientific and academic because it should also assist any researcher to determine whether an initially held hypothesis on a subject was justifiable, objective or not. Any objective researcher should be open to change of stance based on proof revealed to you by collected data.

This statement leads the author into explaining his own paradigm within which this research is conducted.

2.3.3. Epistemology

The author is taking a post- modernist stance. According to Corrine Glesne, post-modernism argues that there are no universal truths to be discovered because all human investigators are grounded in human society and can only produce partial, locally and historically specific insights”

Delamont 2002: 157; cf Glesne Corrine 2011: 12

She continues, “Postmodernism is marked by globalization, the spread of information technology and the fragmentation of nation – states, whilst modernity is marked by a belief in science and technology as a means to solve problems. Under postmodernism, the grand theories that have been relied upon as explaining how societies work and how people develop and interact are subject to critique and distrust.”

Glesne Corrine, 2011; 12

Martin Terre Blanche and Kevin Durrheim articulate the same theory of postmodernism in this way, “Post-modernism is a broad term for many different approaches that set themselves up in opposition to the coherence and rationality of the modern world. Post-modernism is the cultural setting within which post-modernism has been able to flourish.”

Terre Blanche, M and Durrheim, K; 1999: 162

These two academics are of the opinion that the post-modernist era started in 1972, the year when the first giant skyscraper was imploded in New York. According to the author’s understanding, there is no such thing as neutrality in inquiry. Any researcher enters the research process with his/her own prejudices, strengths, shortcomings, pre – occupations, beliefs, social context, and the like. What you then produce is riddled with the afore - mentioned. Whoever then receives the produced knowledge should be sceptical, critical and analytical towards the produced knowledge, appreciate it but then be creative in contextualising the received knowledge. In order to create meaning one has to deconstruct what one has received, but then be prophetic and contextual in the interpreted reproduction of it. As the author was surveying literature on the topic under

investigation for instance he was quite impressed with the presentation of the theories of psychologist Robert Merton on how the perspective on death and dying in Western culture has developed from “Visible Death” (thirteenth century to Filtered death (seventeenth century to Invisible death (19th century onwards). Having all that in mind, how do you (in the author’s context) comfort a grieving mother whose young son has been killed in a gang related turf war or has perhaps died a drug related death, as has become the norm in the author’s community? Life’s issues are multifaceted and complex and that is why there can be no easy answers to challenges faced. As a post-modernist, I should be aware of all this and even allow myself or my stance on the topic or my hypothesis to be influenced and changed by comparing it with collected data. The way in which one handles this information is guided by the style in which one articulates the information which leads to the discussion of styles of reasoning.

2.3.4. Styles of reasoning

It is believed that there are three methods of reasoning, interpreting and explaining your data e.g.

(a) Deductive: make deductions from your data and come to conclusions. This method tries to be “objective” An “object” is studied and a “conclusion” reached but the question remains, is it possible for any researcher to remain objective?

(b) Inductive: starts with a hypothesis which is used as the perspective from which data is derived. This method acknowledges the researcher’s background and subjective involvement with the research. Researchers are aware of their own mind-set and are conscious of their perspective. The problem is that all of this can predetermine the results.

(c) Abductive. Though researchers are aware of their own position (hypothesis), they allow the research results to correct their hypothesis. It is an on-going interaction between the investigator and the data. The research result can lead the researchers to revisit and change their hypothesis. Abductive research is open to change. It is compatible with a postmodern paradigm in which “truths” (knowledge) are not seen as “fixed”. The research results affect the researcher. There is a symmetrical relationship between researcher and those who are researched. This is my style of reasoning. To

conclude this section, the author sees himself as a post-modernist, doing qualitative research whose line of reasoning is abductive, not forgetting the grounded theory method he will follow. In following the qualitative approach of doing research, the author will now mention which techniques he is going to use to collect data.

2.4. Data Collection techniques

Swinton John and Mowat Harriet (2006), amongst many other researchers, agree that one will find different types of data collection methods and that these methods can be used in different ways to analyse the data. Of these distinguished scholars Creswell J in particular (1998) identifies four basic types or methods of collecting data viz:

- interviews
- documents
- observations
- audio visual material.

On the other hand Bloomberg Linda Dale and Volpe Marie (2012) accept the following as methods of accumulating data in a qualitative approach.

- document review
- survey
- interview
- focus groups
- observation
- participant observation
- critical incidents
- life history.

The next logical step for any researcher is to make a choice between the listed methods of collecting data, but Swinton: J and Mowat: H remind us that “the choice of method and the mode of analysis are deeply tied in with the epistemological positions that are assumed within the general outlook of the researcher and reflected in the research question”.

Swinton John and Mowat Harriet; 2006: 55

In other words, the researcher can never claim to be a completely neutral collector of information about the social world. Instead the researcher is seen as actively constructing knowledge about that world according to certain principles and using certain methods derived from, or which express, his/her epistemological position. Mason Jennifer (2002) adds, “If we are aware of the logic of our approach and of the ontological and epistemological assumptions we are making, then we can ensure that these are available for scrutiny by ourselves and others, and that they are therefore open to debate, modification and improvement”. She goes on to say: “How we think the social world is constituted or what we think it is (our ontology), shapes how we think we can know about it, but conversely how we look (the epistemology and methods we use) shapes what we can see”

Mason Jennifer 2nd ed. 2009:59

In view of the above the author wishes to repeat what he said previously concerning his position as a researcher. I consider myself as a postmodernist doing qualitative research and follow the Grounded Theory method. My line of reasoning is abductive; therefore the method I will use to generate data will be through interviews.

2.4.1. Interviews

For the kind of study that the research is aiming at in – depth interviewing is the most appropriate, especially with the stated interest of wanting to create a model to heal bereaved mourners. In depth interviews are also an appropriate data collection technique for doing qualitative research following a grounded theory method. It is believed that in-depth interviews are also called “semi – structured” or “informal” interviews. Academics agree that no specific order is followed when in – depth interviews are conducted. For the purpose of this research, in depth interviews are crucial because very little, if any literature has previously been produced on stoep or tent funerals. To formulate much needed literature, this research will rely heavily on information shared by participants in interviews.

2.4.2. Core features of interviews

This is a method in which interactional exchange in the form of dialogue is possible. Qualitative interviews constitute a method most suited for one – to – one interaction

which can take place over the telephone, through the internet or on a face-to-face basis. This research will follow a face-to-face approach that will be informal, but following a formal, question and answer format. This is what Marshall and Rossman term, “a conversation with a purpose” Marshall C and Rossman G 1989:82

Unlike survey interviewing, in depth interviewing does not claim to obtain results that can be generalized for a whole population. It is recommended that ten to twenty participants be regarded as enough, as long as they differ largely from each other on the basis of gender, age, education, experience and the like.

Qualitative researchers believe that knowledge is situated and contextual; in other words, the social context of the participants is important and should be respected. Therefore the task of the interview is to ensure that the relevant contexts are brought into focus, so that situated knowledge can be produced. This means that data and knowledge are constructed or generated through interviews. Academics also believe that through the interviewing process, it is knowledge that is reconstructed, and not simply facts reported in narratives. Concerning this Mason says, “Meanings and understandings are created in an interaction, which is effectively a co – production involving researcher and interviewees.” Mason, Jennifer; 2009: 63

In the view of the author, it is important to mention the profound advantages the in – depth – interview technique has for the scope of qualitative research, of which the author would like to discuss a few.

2.4.3. Advantages or benefits of in depth interviews

2.4.3.1. Provision of detailed information

Unlike the survey method, it is widely believed that the in-depth interview method ensures the gathering of much more detailed information because of the wide range of people sampled. For the purpose of this research, people will not be randomly chosen, but rather a meticulous, well planned selection will follow, complete with categories for which they should qualify in relation to the topic under investigation. The author will say more about this later in this chapter.

It is also believed that this format provides for a much more relaxed atmosphere in the sense that people will feel much more comfortable in having a conversation than filling

in survey forms. The author will allow the co – researchers to speak freely without interruptions. With their permission, short, cryptic notes will be taken that will assist in the analyzing of data at a later stage. It is also believed that people and each situation are different; therefore the author needs to be flexible and not follow the same fixed, rigid pattern with each person.

2.4.3.2. Flexibility and importance of participants

The interviewer should allow the interviewee a lot of freedom in communicating responses. The points under discussion are treated as topics, rather than questions, which allow the respondent to jump around as he/she wishes in responding to questions. No one is bogged down with rigid questions that have to follow a set format or pattern. In this regard people will be allowed to speak freely and hopefully, openly without interruptions. Marshall and Rossman see in this flexibility greater control of the interview situation.

Marshall, C; and Rossman; G, 1989:45

Flick (2007) is of the view that qualitative research seeks to:

1. Analyze the experiences of individuals or groups. This is extremely important as the co – researchers should be seen and treated as experts in the field which the topic is researching. Even Mason communicates the importance of people`s experience in this way, “If you choose qualitative interviewing it may be because your ontological position suggests that people`s knowledge, views, understandings, interpretations, experiences and interactions are meaningful properties of the social reality which your research questions are designed to explore”.

Mason, J, 2009:63

2. Analyze interactions and communications of people. According to Flick, this approach seeks to investigate the world “out there”. In the view of the author, the stories of the people on the ground are extremely important because they are the (experts) of the research. The study therefore tries to say more about the reality of how bereaved people have been neglected and further traumatized in favour of upholding certain criteria of which no one knows the origin or purpose. If one values the co – researcher`s responses then the generating of data is done from the perspective of the participant (Howard 1985, cf Dreyer1991). In this regard, Babbie says “that the participant has a direct, personal knowledge of the subject under investigation”.

Babbie; 1989: 267

In this regard, the traumatized, discriminated against and unduly neglected bereaved are seen as the “living human documents” and are allowed to speak for themselves. According to Flick, “In this line of approach, through interviews, the people on the ground will inform the outcome of the research”. Flick , U ; 2001:1

In the view of the author the co – researchers are the ones who construct the world around them through what they do, or relating what is happening to them on the basis of their experiences. It is worth mentioning again that very little information is available on stoep or tent funerals in relation to the practice of township churches. This then makes the data generated and collected through interviews absolutely essential. This data will form the theoretical framework for this research. I further agree with Mason when she says that if you chose to do interviews in the qualitative approach, your ontological position, in this case mine as a post-modernist, suggests that people`s knowledge, views, understandings, interpretations, experiences are meaningful properties of the social reality which your research questions are designed to explore.

Mason, J. 2002: 63

At the same time, one concern from academics is on the quality and depth of the information from the participants and how it can compromise the success of the research. To illustrate this point Jennifer Mason reminds us that the success of interviews depends on “people`s capacity to remember, to verbalize, interact and conceptualize”.

Mason Jennifer 2002: 64

To me, that shouldn't be a problem if one views the co – researchers as experts in their field. (That experience under investigation). My concern however has to do with the gathering of already published and existing literature on the subject under investigation. Will one be faced with the challenge of too little available literature on the research subject to complement the data gathered from the co – researchers? Apart from this one drawback/limitation, the author fully agrees with the mentioned authors concerning the helpful advantages in depth interviews afford researchers in qualitative research. It is to be remembered that the author will consciously be looking for the painful stories of people, as it was because of the pain of people like those in the Case Studies in chapter one that this research started. The ultimate aim is to journey with those who are hurting

and are feeling let down by the church because of the criteria church leadership use when deciding on funeral services. The author aims to deconstruct positively the frame of mind of church leadership, so that funeral services can be treated as the starting point to effect healing to those who are bereaved. Therefore it becomes crucial for any researcher to make the right sampling decisions.

2.5. Sampling (population)

Concerning the correct decisions to make in choosing which group of people to select for interviews, Jennifer Mason rightly points out that “the key question to ask is whether your sample provides access to enough data and with the right focus, to enable you to address your research questions”.

Mason, J. 2002: 134

Terre Blanche and Durrheim highlight the importance of representativeness in sampling. They argue that the aim is to select a sample that will be representative of the population about which the researcher aims to draw conclusions. Sampling involves decisions about which people, settings, events, behaviours and/or social process to observe.

Terre Blanche, M and Durrheim, K; 1999:44

Flick correctly points out that the qualitative approach is focused on persons or groups in order to observe behaviour, gauge experience, and the like. He cites an example of interviewing people who have experience in living with chronic illnesses. He reckons that the qualitative researcher will have “to go and look for people who have made it in different intensity, for a longer or shorter time or with different types of chronic illnesses.

Flick, U; 2000: 27

The researcher has to consider the people to be interviewed as “experts” in their contexts in order for the information collected to be accepted as reliable. The sample area that the author has targeted is called The Vaal Triangle which stretches from Orange Farm to Vanderbijlpark in the South and includes areas like Meyerton, Evaton and Sebokeng. Some people will come from Orange Farm, others from Sebokeng, Boipatong and Sharpeville. The socio – economic conditions of these areas are all the same. Like those in many other black South African townships, the people in these areas face challenges such as unemployment, crime, teenage pregnancies, drug and alcohol addiction, HIV – Aids and related deaths and premature deaths of young people

through criminal activities or drug-related violence, just to mention a few. In the words of one of the interviewees concerning their desperation, “In times like this, we look to God for answers. Our faith teaches us that God still cares for us and our children. We look to the church to make a bigger impact in our lives and that of the community than it has done during the years of Apartheid”.

Interviewee 2013

2.5.1. Selection Criteria

The author will select co – researchers from the following categories:

- (a) Those who were exposed to stoep or tent funerals when burying their loved ones.
- (b) Those who were privileged enough to have had a church funeral service for their departed loved ones.
- (c) Anglican priests ministering in those areas.
- (d) Church Wardens

2.5.2. Further Criteria

Affected family members will be interviewed in a group as family members or as individuals representing family members. If family members insist that their under age children should sit in, I will allow it and ensure that they sign consent forms. The author will also interview two or three retired priests because the problem under investigation is as old as the mountains, and they in their active ministry had to make those decisions guided by the still standing criteria.

The author believes that this wide range of sampling will give a true reflection of what is happening or not happening. According to Flick, the term “sampling” is associated with selecting the “right” cases from a pool of people and this can be done at one time.

Importantly he notes that the pool of people you have initially sampled might change along the way in the process but the categories may not. Flick; 2000: 30

Creswell is of the view that an enquirer/researcher should deliberately identify a site(s) for study, because the identified respondents can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem, based on knowledge and experience. Creswell; 2007: 25

Creswell has developed workable sampling strategies and he also refers to Marshall and Rossman, both of whom propagate the sampling of aspects, namely

events, settings, actions and articles. Creswell agrees with them and also Flick who maintains that sampling can change in the middle of a study. This means that a qualitative researcher needs to be flexible. The author agrees with all of them concerning sampling as a tool in doing qualitative research. The exploration of the qualitative method is to gain a deeper understanding of analysed cases, in order to construct authentic data for the research topic. This approach will help the author to analyse stories of people who have been affected in one way or the other by the death of a loved one, though they need to comment on the response coming from the church in relation to support, healing and comfort mechanisms.

2.6. Data analyses

For Terre Blanche and Durrheim, when coming to analyzing collected data, one of the key principles is to stay close to the data to interpret it from a position of empathic understanding. In order to highlight this fact, they cite anthropologist Clifford Geertze, (1973) who says, “ The purpose of interpretive analysis is to provide “ thick description” by which is meant a thorough description of the characteristics, processes, transactions and contexts that constitute the phenomenon being studied as well as an account of the researchers` role in constructing this description”.

Terre Blanche, M and Durrheim, K; 1999:139

When coming to organizing the gathered data some qualitative researchers make use of a term called “coding”. Gibbs defines the process of coding as an attempt of “indexing or categorizing a text in order to establish a framework of thematic ideas about it”.

Gibbs, J; 2007:41

On the other hand, Flick suggests a specific method which is called “theoretical coding”, when doing analysis of data.

Flick, U; 2007:74

In the author`s understanding, coding is a process by which you categorize or organize the gathered data obtained in interviews, with a view to interpreting it through critical analyses. The author is of the view that coding is all about grouping the same ideas in a text by giving them the same tag or name. In this way, Gibbs suggests that coding enables the researcher to combine sentences, passages, ideas or texts together that

speak of the same idea or phenomenon. This according to him is a very useful way of managing or organizing data in the process of retrieval. To Gibbs, coding is simply a way of organizing your thinking about the text and your research notes into workable memos. According to Gibbs, various qualitative researchers use other terminologies. However on coding he says, “Ritchie et al (2003) use the (term) “index”, Smith (1995) and King (1998) uses the term “themes” while Dey (1993) speaks of “categories”. In the author’s view, all these terms refer to the same thing and have the same function, which is to group together or combine similar phrases, emotions, behavioral patterns, and the like from different texts. In analyzing the data captured from respondents in the interviewing process the author will attempt to make use of the mentioned coding process to group together what seems to belong together. Flick also points out that in coding “explicit comparisons (among events or among people) should be tagged rather than implicit comparison based on one’s own assumptions”. Flick; 2007:74

Gibbs further suggests that one should write notes about each code one develops. This should be done as early as you can before forgetfulness creeps in. In his view, the writing down of memos from the coded texts is an important way of developing one’s analytical thinking. Gibbs; 2007:44

According to Trochim, data analysis in grounded theory includes the following key analytical strategies: - coding: Already defined.

– “memoing: This is a process for recording the researcher’s thoughts and ideas as they evolve throughout the study”.

– Integrative diagrams and sessions: these diagrams are used to pull all of the details together to help make sense of the data to the emerging theory.

Trochim; 2001:160; cf Neuman 2004:420

Needless to say, this process in data collection follows the interviewing process. While the collection process is under way, data is analysed with the help of grounded theory analyses using the above mentioned strategies of coding, memoing and developing integrative diagrams and sessions. Gibbs however suggests the following way of recording coded texts:

- Name or label of the code you have used in marking up and coding the text.

– The name of the researcher who coded it (if working with other researchers).

- Date when coding was done or changed.
- Definition of the code – a description of the analytical idea or theme it refers to.
- Any other notes of your thinking about the code, e.g. how it relates to other codes; or maybe the text coded could be split into separate codes.

Furthermore he suggests that the following be coded as discovered in the texts (summary of interviews).

- Specific acts, behaviours, what people say or do.
- Events, usually brief or once off, but respondents might say it as a story.
- Activities: they are always longer than events which took place in a particular setting and may involve several people.
- Strategies, practices or tactics, i.e. a group of activities aimed at a goal.
- States/status: - general conditions experienced by people.
- Meanings, a wide range of phenomenon that depicts norms, values, rules, behaviour, emotions and the like.

In the author's view, observation is key when dealing with co – researchers. One should be alert to pick up “meaning” behind what might look obvious in relation to body language and verbal responses from interviewees.

According to Gibbs what follows after the coding process, is equally important, which is, “the methodical retrieval of thematically related sections of the text”. Gibbs; 2007:48

The author is of the view that, this way of storing data will enable the researcher to:

- Quickly collect together all the texts coded in the same way and to read them through to determine the theme.
- Examine how a coded thematic idea changes or is affected by other factors.
- Explore how categorizations of thematic ideas represented by codes vary from respondent to respondent, setting to setting or incident to incident.

In the view of the author, the key to success in analyzing verbal data is to summarize each interview as soon as it has been finished. In concluding this section of data analysis, Linda Bloomberg and Marie Volpe describe it as a process of “inspecting, cleansing, transforming and modelling data with the goal of highlighting useful information, suggesting conclusions and supporting decision making.”

Bloomberg, Linda Volpe, M; 2012: 142

Although the author has written quite extensively on coding, the author in his research will group together similar stories of pain, shame and guilt, from which will flow ideas or suggestions to remedy the situation.

2.7. Moral and ethical stance

No doubt all qualitative researchers are unanimous in promoting “good practice in research”. Therefore, the author binds himself to the point of good practice as tabled by Creswell (2007:69). He states that:

- the principal of informed consent shall be adhered to. No person shall be involved in the research as a participant without knowing about it and giving permission to participate, and without having the chance of refusal. To this end each participant will fill in a consent letter (see appendix D) understand the content of it and then sign if he/she agrees. All the other principles that apply will appear in the consent letter and will be thoroughly explained.

– Under no circumstances will false information be given to participant’s e.g.

(a) they will not be told that they will be remunerated or acknowledged in other ways.

(b) Deceptions of any kind will at all times be avoided.

(c) Privacy of participants will be respected and confidentiality at all times maintained and guaranteed.

(d) The researcher will be guided only by accuracy of the data and its interpretation, which means no omission or fraud with the collection or analysis of data shall occur during the research process.

(e) Respect for the participant is given. Under no circumstances shall participants be coerced into participating. No pressure shall be put on them and they can feel free to withdraw at any stage of the interview if they so wish.

(f) The welfare of participants shall be guaranteed. No one will be threatened or make to feel obliged to participate. Participation is voluntary.

Glesne adds the following precautions that the researcher needs to take:

-Show respect for people.

–Present yourself face-to-face to people.

–Look, listen.....speak.

–Share and host people, be generous.

–Be cautious.

–Do not trample over the manna (fundamental duties and rights of people).

Concerning this point Mason warns researchers to be sensitive in relation to power dynamics.

Mason; 2009: 82

– Glesne reminds us not to flaunt our knowledge as we engage with co – researchers

Glesne; 2011:180

The second part of this chapter will deal with Literature review in relation to Practical Theology and models of Pastoral Care. The aim of this section is to locate the problem under investigation in the broader field of the human sciences and to serve as a framework to assist the author in creating a model of care for bereaved families.

2.8. Practical theology as a discipline

In the author`s view theology as an autonomous discipline stands its ground as a field within the broader human sciences spectrum. Practical Theology for that matter is a stand-out discipline within the theological field of study which, according to Heyns L. M and Pieterse H.J.C., “focuses on people`s religious actions”.

Heyns and Pieterse; 1990: 6

In the author`s understanding, Practical Theology is a discipline within theology whose aim is to evaluate the nature, extent and significance of how people express their faith and belief. For that matter Otto (1974:20) describes Practical Theology “as the critical theory of religious actions in society” and Firet (1987:260) identifies practical theology “within a framework of communicative actions in the service of the gospel”.

Otto; 1974: 201and Firet; 1987:260; cf Heyns L.M. and Pieterse HJC; 1990: 6

It becomes clear that Practical Theology as a separate, autonomous discipline within the field of theology is destined to analyse critically the manner in which people demonstrate their faith and belief in the gospel through their actions in society. While systematic theologians, Old and New Testament scholars and others concentrate on

biblical theories within the scope of their fields, practical theology relates to praxis. It develops practical theological theories that function in practice, evaluate these theories and if necessary, create new theories for practice. The author believes that this is like entering holy ground, because theoretical knowledge of the bible/gospel is important, but the way in which one puts that knowledge into practice through societal interactions actually makes us as human's co – creators with God. It is through our actions, living out biblical theories, that humans are able to buy into God`s salvific plan for the world. This is quite an honourable and daunting task practical theologians have in measuring the relevance of how people live out their faith in God. The author believes that what one does in all circumstances, indicates one`s knowledge, awareness and expectations of God for yourself as well as influencing others accordingly. Having said that, what comes to mind, is the criteria of the township church leadership in relation to funeral services. They are concerned with a person`s status and standing within the church rather than a deep, profound personal relationship with God. That is why if it is determined that a person was a “non-churchgoer” or “behind with your dedicated giving/tithing”, at the time you die, your funeral will not be conducted in church or facilitated by an ordained priest. The praxis in the townships is that funeral services for defaulters should be conducted from the family home, facilitated by a lay minister, which is loosely referred to as “stoep or tent funerals.” No regard is shown for the care and healing of bereaved and grief stricken family members and friends. One is tempted to say that they are hell bent on keeping away and out of the church space this dead, contaminated, sinful body that will defile the church building and that their funeral service might corrupt and negatively influence the so called righteous and dedicated worshippers. Hence one of the research questions in the problem statement raised was, “what are they aiming at – reward or punishment?” As a practical theological student, the author has noticed a practice in the township setting which is of an offensive and discriminatory nature. The theories of the church leadership in relation to the criteria used are under scrutiny. The aim of this study is to create a model for healing grieving families and the basis of the model will inevitably introduce new theories of care of bereaved families, guided by the fundamentals of pastoral theology.

2.9. The fundamentals of pastoral theology

For Louw Daniel J, pastoral care has to do with “Cura animarum”, the cure of souls. In this he believes that the problems confronting human beings are not limited to physical, economic and material issues but include the spiritual side as well. The author might add “emotional challenges” to this argument, because grief stricken people are in need of emotional care to enable them to overcome their hurt and pain. Louw goes further by quoting Hiltner in connection with the latter: “Pastoral care is to bring the person and the congregation to optimal healing”. Louw; 1998:20

Reflecting on the theme of healing, Allistair Campbell sees the pastoral interaction as an attempt to shed light on the cause of the distress in order to bring healing or restoration.

Campbell, A; 1986:3

According to Waruta and Kinoti, pastoral counselling is a specialized approach which can be found within the ambit of general counseling. They continue to argue further that, “the specialization is indicated by the adjective, “pastoral” from the noun, pastor is derived. This word is derived from the Latin pascere, which means “to feed”

Waruta and Kinoti; 2005:3

In the view of the author, it becomes clear that pastoral care and counselling have a biblical foundation, e.g. God`s concern for our total well-being as human beings. As human beings we all have been created in the image of God. God our creator intends us to have a peaceful relationship with him and with one another. The goal of pastoral care and counseling is to restore fallen humans to God and to each other. This is a pain strikingly slow process which needs a caregiver to be skilful as he/she journeys with a help seeker. The ultimate goal of shepherding or journeying with a help seeker is to effect healing. Prof. Masango normally refers to this process as “entering holy ground as the help seeker opens up to relate his/her painful story”. This is where caring for the soul happens. Masango. M.J. contact sessions 2011

In the author's understanding the pastoral counselor really needs to be skilful in order to find an entry point into the life of a troubled soul. Concerning the caring ministry of the church, Wimberley, Edward P, an American pastoral academic, believes that God's will for humans is to "draw all people and nations into God's story. God's story is a story of the defeat of the powers of evil, oppression and suffering. It is a story of healing and wholeness when people live meaningful lives in the community. God seeks to draw people and communities into this story so that the resources of God's reign can be made available to them for their growth and development". Concerning the intended goal of pastoral council he goes on to say, "The mission of the church in drawing others into the story of God has implications for (1) The church in worship
(2) The church as a caring community
(3) The church in care and nurture and
(4) The church in service."

Wimberley. E. P; 1991:26

The author takes note of Wimberley's insistence on healing and care for a troubled soul to enable him/her to make a meaningful contribution in his/her community. This is extremely important for the author, because in previous arguments the author has already shown how critical community life and community involvement are in the African world view. Again the author reiterates the importance the "UBUNTU" principle of caring has for African people. We believe as Africans that a "person is a person through other people" and we value the positive involvement- interference for that-matter and interactions of other people in our lives. The belief is that, as long as the intention is positive and good, the help seeker is able to determine the genuine care, concern and compassion shown by others. The African concept of pastoral care is being nurtured and respected. This is still the way of life that is being practised and followed in urban, as well as village life in South Africa. In this practice community elders or living ancestors (chiefs of the village) become the main role players in situations where disputes or any problem between individuals need to be resolved. Though not calling them by the name of pastoral caregivers, community members respect their involvement, look to them for solutions and show a lot of trust and confidence in them as persons who are able to journey with troubled souls. In defence of this ancient African practice of doing pastoral counseling, African academic, Tapiwa Mucherera, in

dealing with African ways of caring, demonstrates that therapy or counselling as taught in the West will not always suffice in our contexts, since these approaches tend to promote and focus on individuality, autonomy and independence. He argues further, “The training of counsellors in indigenous contexts needs encouraged counselors who will get off their couch or chair and into the neighbourhood. This type of counsellor needed in these contexts is one trained to essentially work with orphans and widows using a holistic, narrative pastoral counseling approach in assessing and servicing the three basic areas of human needs: the body, mind and spirit. This counsellor would need to have the skills of a social worker as well as those of a counsellor”.

Mucherera; Tapiwa; N; 2009: ix

The author will extensively elaborate on this approach in chapter 6 as he seeks to create a model of healing. But what now follows will be brief explanations of pastoral care models that this research will employ.

2.10. The Shepherding model of Gerkin

Concerning the possible ways in which people should be cared for by Pastoral Caregivers Gerkin identifies the following models of pastoral care:

- (1) the prophet as priest and wise guide, or prophetic role of pastoral counsellor.
- (2) The Pastor as shepherd of the flock.
- (3) The Pastor as mediator and reconciler.
- (4) The Pastor as ritualistic leader.
- (5) The Pastor shaping the moral life of the people.
- (6) The Pastor giving spiritual direction. Gerkin argues that pastoral care has been part of the Christian tradition over many centuries of Christian history. He also emphasizes that pastoral care is not a modern day invention, saying, “before Christianity, pastoral care was a significant aspect of the Israelite community’s life and its tradition, out of which the Old Testament or Jewish scriptures emerged”.

Gerkin; Charles; V: 1997: 21

Gerkin adds that one needs to understand and appreciate some of the roots of pastoral practices in earlier times if one wants to make sense of and modify existing pastoral

practices. According to him, the shepherding image is extremely powerful in relation to how people should be cared for. Jesus portrayed himself as the Good Shepherd who is willing to lay down his life for his sheep. The good shepherd knows his sheep. His sheep know the shepherd and recognize his voice at all times. This was particularly important in Jesus` time because different shepherds used to bring their sheep together at night time. In the morning each shepherd would call his sheep using a distinct way which was only recognizable and familiar to his sheep. Hence the words of Jesus, “as the good shepherd, whose sheep know his voice “and act upon it” (John 10:14)”. African people can uniquely relate to this image of Jesus and model of Gerkin because in our villages boys especially are being taught to be cattle herders. Their task is precisely to do what Gerkin is arguing and Jesus is proclaiming and that is to care for the cattle by journeying with them at all times. This relates to human responses in all spheres of life, that they should conduct themselves in a way that has been commanded by Christ. In particular it applies to the black church leadership of how they should care for its defunct members. It is also a pointer to the appointed pastor – to relate and interact with all of God`s people in such a way that is not judgemental and condemning but caring, compassionate and concerned. This requirement is obviously an indictment on township priests who choose to follow criteria rather than to journey with bereaved families who are hurting. Gerkin is supported in his thinking by like-minded theologians such as Pieterse H.J.C. and Heyns. L.M. concerning a natural continuous development of pastoral care strategies. They too believe that pastoral care can never be stagnant. It will continue to undergo modification and adaptations in this changing world of ours. It needs to be re visited and modified continuously to address the present day challenges of caring. See Heyns L.M. and Pieterse H.J.C. 1990: 19-35. From these statements, it is clear that the world around us changes daily and so does the need of the people for which new models of pastoral care need to be developed. Be it as it may, for now the author will only concentrate on Gerkin`s shepherding model. According to Gerkin, his encounter with pastoral care started while he was growing up watching and observing the care that was given by his father to his parishioners. His father used to work with the farmers, storekeepers, housewives, and young people who were the members of his small congregation in

Kansas, USA. He observed his father as he worked in the fields with them, sat, talked and drank coffee with them. He also conducted marriages for their children and buried their dead. On some occasions, he would accompany his father on home visits and as a small boy, would listen to their conversations, where they expressed their concerns to his father or just chatted about the ordinary things of life. At no point then did it dawn to him that his father was busy with pastoral care. Only later in life could he understand and appreciate the interactions of his father with church members - informally on the field, after church on a Sunday, in their homes and on their front porches. According to the author's understanding, this type of ministry is only possible out of a genuine love for God and his people. This sentiment will form the basis from which a model of caring for defunct and grieving members will be suggested in chapter six.

2.11. Positive deconstruction model of Nick Pollard

Gerkin is extremely helpful in proposing the shepherding model of care and concern out of love. Unfortunately this does not fully address the negative, embarrassed and shameful emotions of grieving bereaved members who have been exposed to stoep or tent funerals of their departed loved ones. The shame comes as a result of the negative stigma that has evolved out of such funeral services, because it became apparent that such funerals were afforded to defaulters. To address the feelings of shame and anger in grieving families, the author will employ Nick Pollard's positive deconstruction model. The inspiration to create such a model came to him after he had reconstructed his old car into a new one. When he was still an undergraduate student, he bought his first car which was an old vehicle. The bodywork was still good but other parts were worn out. Then he discovered another car of the same make and model which he bought. By taking apart both cars completely, he was able to use only the good parts of both. What could not be used, he threw away. In his own words, "this wasn't the negative deconstruction of a vandal but rather the positive deconstruction of a mechanic".

Pollard, Nick; 1997:45

The author believes that the above concept of positive reconstruction could be used in therapy in order to help people who have internalized negative feelings about themselves. We need to assist them by taking apart what they feel in finding what had

caused it. In the process, we need to affirm positive elements as they relate their story, doing away with the bad and negative, and to guide them to see and discover new possibilities or alternative outcomes. The alternative story is still “thin” and “new” and needs to “thicken” as the pastoral counselor journeys with the affected help seeker. By helping the help seeker to create alternative stories the author will also make use of Wimberley’s theories of how to assist people of stoep funerals to move from a position of shame and embarrassment to self – worth and dignity. In his book *Moving from Shame to Self -Worth* Wimberley is encouraging affected people to create a resilience against the forces of destruction. He mentions extensively how Jesus dealt with his own shame and the shame and destruction others brought to him. These theories of Wimberley will complement that of Pollard in order to assist the researcher to create a model for healing for those who have been damaged by stoep funerals.

2.12. Preliminary conclusion

This chapter aimed at outlining the route the author will be taking in the process of collecting and analyzing data. The reason for doing this research is to investigate a confusing and problematic praxis implemented in the township churches in relation to funeral services. Some funerals carry the blessings of priests and churchwardens to be conducted in church while others are destined to be from the family home. This practice is based on a set of criteria which is tantamount of practicing double standards. To articulate the difficulty the author has with this practice, important questions were raised. These questions will be treated as research questions that will direct this research and will form the basis for the author’s interaction with his co-researchers.

A research design was formulated that indicated the steps the author would take in doing this research. Since the author will be doing qualitative research, it is important to note the steps tabulated which are only treated as a guideline and not a rigid formula that will be followed from start to finish. An overview of qualitative research was explained together with empirical research and grounded theory. The author then explained that he considers himself a post-modernist whose line of reasoning will follow the abductive approach. The author then explained that because he would be doing qualitative research, in depth interviews would be conducted. Explanation was given

about the sample area from which the co researchers would come as well as the categories they fit. This chapter also explained how the collected data would be captured, processed and analysed. A summary was given of the ethical and moral considerations towards the co-researchers that would be observed throughout the interviewing process.

Towards the conclusion the author explained his understanding of Practical Theology as a discipline or autonomous field in the Social Sciences with special emphasis on pastoral theology. The articulation of the latter was only introductory since an in-depth interrogation thereof will be done in chapter six. This chapter ended of by stating that Gerkin`s pastoral method of shepherding and Pollard`s positive deconstruction model would be used to interrogate the concept of pastoral theology comprehensively. Since the context of this research is embedded in a South African black township reality, a great emphasis will be laid on African Pastoral Theology which will attempt to suggest to the church how to care for defunct members.

CHAPTER THREE

3.1 Introduction

Is bereavement a psychological or emotional hurdle that a damaged person has to overcome or is it a combination of both? What role does pastoral theology have to play in all of this? In doing this research in this chapter, the author finds it necessary to explore other fields of study other than depending on theology alone. With this said, other academic fields like psychology, philosophy, anthropology, sociology will be explored in order to investigate terms such as “bereavement” and its associated phrases “attachment”, “loss”, “dying”, and the like. The reason for doing this I believe, is to have an overall understanding of these concepts from a variety of different academic fields in order for Pastoral Theology to suggest models of healing. In the course of the intended exploration, a lot of emphasis will be placed on the African perspective in relation to the terms under discussion. But firstly I want to discuss a term that I have stumbled across in the course of my exploration.

3.2 Thanatology

According to Robert Marrone, (1997), thanatology is “the interdisciplinary study of death and dying. Despite the classic Greek origins of the word “thanatology”, the field came into being in the mid twentieth century in the wake of World War II. It is a relatively young but well established field of study with roots in psychology, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, theology, biology, medicine, social work, ethics, law and other disciplines as well”

Marrone Robert 1997: v

The aim of the author’s research is to extract as much valuable information as necessary from the field of thanatology in order to create a model of healing for grieving families from a pastoral theological perspective. What immediately comes to mind is Elizabeth Kubler Ross’s statements concerning death. To her, “death is the final stage of growth. Death is not an enemy to be conquered or a prison to be escaped from. It is an integral part of our lives that gives meaning to human existence”.

Kubler Ross, E; 1975: X

For this world renowned psychologist to make such conclusive statements about death and dying, there must have been years of study, investigation and exploration of the subject. In the foreword of her book, *Death, The Final Stage of Growth*, the editors, Joseph Bragdra and Laurie Bragdra pointed out that Kubler Ross approached this subject of death and dying from the premise of her own life experience in working with terminally ill and dying patients in various hospitals. Similarly, she initiated discussions on this topic with ministers of religion, rabbis, doctors, nurses, funeral directors, sociologists and the like. Her statements also come as a result of views expressed in other cultures on this topic as well as insights from dying patients, together with contributive stories shared by people who have lost someone to death. Needless to say, the revolutionary epistemology that Dr. Kubler Ross is presenting and advocating, carries with it a supreme stamp of validity grounded in an encompassing research process. As a priest averaging forty funerals per year over the last twenty years, I still cannot come to grips with her statement depicting death “as an integral part of our lives that gives meaning to human existence”. According to personal South African experience from a black cultural perspective, and as a person who is grappling with the stigmatized practice of stoep funerals, the author is now entering this debate which alleges that death gives meaning to human existence. People who have been exposed to stoep funerals of their loved ones can rightfully ask, “what meaning was learned from the death, funeral service and burial of my departed loved one?” The author believes that one cannot begin to talk about the complexities of death and dying while ignoring the complex life challenges we are daily facing. I tend to agree with Julian Muller (1999) who argues that telling stories of one`s past is tantamount attempting to construct one`s future. He believes that we give meaning to our lives with the stories we tell, because the stories stored in our memories from the framework of our attempts to discover meaning in life.

Muller, J: 1999: 1

With certainty I can now say that one`s past experiences of life`s issues cannot just be wiped away like words on a slate. Past experiences gained is vital, for they help one to construct coping mechanisms to deal with present issues. They should also enable a person to gain better knowledge and wiser understanding of how to deal with and

manage what lies ahead, including even the less favoured and talked about issues of death and dying. It stands to reason that every person becomes the author or designer of the quality of life that he/she creates in the quest for giving meaning to his/her own existence. As one attempts to give meaning to one's own life and tries to create an understanding of the life to come, one needs to be more aware of influential denominators like religion, culture, politics, financial stability or the lack thereof, just to mention a few. Humanistic academic psychologists, two of whom I will deliberate on briefly, believe that satisfying many of our needs involves conscious choices. Beyond the basic needs for food, comfort and shelter, human beings strive for loftier goals such as fulfilling our potential, discovering a sense of personal and spiritual meaning and dying with dignity, grace and wholeness.

3.3 Perceptions concerning human needs

Marrone coins this amazing old Chinese proverb in explaining the reality of death and dying in this way. "You cannot prevent the birds of sorrow from flying over your head, but you can prevent them from building nests in your hair". Marrone R. 1997: 84 in saying this, he wants to show that, it is not the fear of death that is our central concern, but rather the fear of loss of meaning and the fear of personal control. He argues that one can easily imagine what it might be like not to cope any longer, to feel vulnerable and helpless, to be dependent on others to meet our everyday physical needs and no longer to feel that we are in charge of our own lives.

The author can easily identify with this fact as it reminds him of the time when his father fell ill. It was around 1985 that the author's father was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. By taking the correct prescribed medication he could easily continue with his secular work and performed basic routine tasks with ease. After a traumatic car hijacking incident in which he had to jump from a moving car to avoid being shot, the Parkinson's attacks increased severely. The doctors then reckoned that it was because of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) which resulted in uncontrollable depression. Because of all this he had to take early retirement from work. While he was still trying to deal with emotional and psychological trauma, in 1992, he was hospitalized and treated with escalating prostate problems. It was suggested by the professionals that he should

undergo surgery to slow down the effects that the malignant growth was causing, but he refused. His condition deteriorated rapidly to such an extent that in 2007, he became confined to the bed. He then needed the assistance of others to help him in doing basic things like eating, bathing, dressing, turning around on the bed, relieving himself and the like. This was a time that the author will never forget. To look after him and care for him, took its toll on the family, especially the author's mother. It was extremely painful for the author to see how his father became powerless and helpless. The author believes that such a state can destroy one's dignity as you lose control over your basic routine. This is how Marrone describes this condition: "The terminal patient is in a much more vulnerable and tenuous position and much more likely to be overwhelmed with the loss of integrity and control".

Marrone, R; 1997: 84 cf Larson 1993

The suspense of waiting for the imminent and unavoidable dawn of death left us helpless and powerless. As the cancer had eventually spread through the author's father's entire body, the suffering, pain and misery became unbearable. This is the time when the fear of loss became real to us while the fear of the unknown became frightening to him. This is also the time when the importance of fulfilling or reaching all the other basic needs of Maslow and Victor Frankl becomes immaterial because the person is at a point where he just fights for survival. It is a time where you just live one day at a time and when you are still breathing the next day that in itself becomes a victory. The motivation to fulfill the higher psychological needs has by then evaporated, which I believe makes it impossible to create a meaningful existence.

I will now briefly refer to the theories of two humanistic psychologists whom I believe strengthens the arguments about attempting to create meaning in your own existence.

3.4 Self-actualization theory of Abraham Maslow

The self-actualization theory of Abraham Maslow can be defined as a theory setting out how the person's talents, abilities and potential are discovered and used in his/her life. The needs according to him are:

- (a) Physiological needs
 - Air, water, food, sleep

- If these basic needs are not met, a human being cannot survive which then makes the other needs irrelevant.

(b) Safety and Security

- Protection
- Freedom
- A need for law and order

(c) Affiliation and love needs

- This is the need to belong
- Meaningful relationships with other people
- Family, friends
- Need to be part of more than one group

(d) Self esteem

- Self esteem
- Self-regard
- Esteem and regard for others
- Desire to achieve
- Self-assurance
- Functioning satisfactorily
- Striving for attention, recognition and dignity in relationships with others

(e) Self-actualization

- Need to develop to full potential
- It cannot happen if other needs are not met

According to Maslow, in order to live a fulfilled life, one has to satisfy as many needs as possible from each level. The needs must also be satisfied in a specific sequence. The previous level of needs is always more important than the next one. We live in an imperfect environment and it is therefore difficult for the individual to gratify his/ her needs. That is why there are so few people which have reached self – actualization.

Emphasis

- The motive that underlines all human behaviour is the tendency towards self – actualization.
- The ultimate goal is to realize his or her potential and what human development finally leads to.
- It lies within each person`s reach and requires no change in the basic nature of the individual.
- Need gratification is the context in which human behaviour must be explained.
- Need gratification is not only there to relieve tension and stress. It is also there to allow the individual to realize his/ her full potential through self – actualization. It is the basis for growth.
- The view of the person is a holistic one. Maslow, A.H; 1970: 74 -189

In the author`s understanding, this was an important view to be reminded of as one of the tasks of pastoral care is to encourage, motivate, empower and assist people to experience the full range of human needs. The author sees his task as a priest, and a pastoral care –giver, to guide help-seekers and all people in bringing meaning to their existence even at a time when death is approaching. Now the task is to assist the terminal ill patient to embrace death with confidence and hope in the resurrection. This state becomes to me one of the times when one can reach the self-actualization state, because death then signifies the end of one existence, but also announces the beginning of a new perfect existence.

The author believes that the existential theory of Victor Frankl compliments the self – actualization theory of Abraham Maslow. I am saying this because I believe that one has the freedom to decide what type of existence one is going to create for oneself and others. This makes us as human beings co – creators with God, the Creator. Most of the time, every person is the master and author of the quality of life he/she wants to live but each person`s decisions invariably can affect the existence of others – whether towards a more meaningful or miserable state. In saying so I believe that Frankl and the Jewish people of his time were forced into a life of misery through stupid decisions of

others. I understand Frankl's theories as an attempt to emphasize to people the need to make the right choices at all times, but for now let us briefly examine his theories.

3.5 The existential theory of Viktor Frankl (Logo Therapy)

Logo therapy is a theory developed by Viktor Frankl in terms of which the person is guided to search for meaning in his/ her life. The goal of the theory is to find meaning through meaning. It is commonly believed that Frankl developed his theories for his therapeutic method in the Jewish concentration camps during World War 2. He was Jewish prisoner number 199104 in notorious extermination camps like Dachau and Auschwitz. After the war many of his logo therapy clinics were established across the world.

Emphasis

- The human person is a spiritual being. We are searching for something or someone greater than ourselves.
- A human being is a creature that has been given the freedom to be responsible.
- We constantly face choices and we have the freedom to choose.
- We want to know why we have been created.
- The human being needs a reason to live. We need purpose (spiritual direction).
- This purpose allows the human being to experience meaning.
- Meaning can be found in many situations in our lives.
- Meaning can't be created or invented. It has to be found.
- The will to find meaning is the most powerful human motivation.
- Meaning exists in an objective sense.
- Conscience is the vehicle through which we detect meaning.
- Conscience functions on a higher or transcendent level.
- It is our link to the trans-human dimension (spiritual).
- We can understand the higher values and meanings that flow from the trans human dimension and freely embrace them.

- Life`s meaning can be experienced by any one, at any time and under all circumstances. Life is unconditionally meaningful. This experience is called faith by many people.
 - We have the ability to think about each situation or challenge and do something about it. We can rise above it.
 - We are self-aware and we have the freedom to direct our behaviour.
 - Joy is the by-product of completing a task and experiencing meaning or something of value. It is the result of something we have achieved or realized in our lives.
- Frankl, E; 1963: 47 - 122

In understanding the above, the author believes that, as one is seeking for meaning in one`s life, one also needs to seek for meaning in one`s death. In sermons we normally try to strengthen people who are going through suffering by encouraging them to find meaning in that by comparing it with the sufferings of Christ. We normally try to show them how Christ endured his with dignity and a God fuelled resilience. The author fully believes that this continuous search for meaning in suffering and death, and not just for life, can assist practical theologians in creating a model of care for bereaved families.

Frank feels that when people are dominated by their will for pleasure (sexual libido) and power (money), and not the will to find meaning, it is a sign of spiritual emptiness. This existential vacuum causes people to make bad choices. The consequences of these choices result in trauma in our own lives and the lives of others. Henri Nouwen, a renowned pastoral caregiver, deals with related theories and has come up with a concept which he calls “nuclear man”. According to him, ‘nuclear man is a man who has lost naïve faith in the possibilities of technology and is painfully aware that the same powers that enable man (sic) to create new life styles, carry the potential for self – destruction”.

Nouwen. H: 1979:5

In this statement the author believes that Nouwen is actually talking the same language as Frankl in relation to the role a person`s conscience plays in the process of constructing your own lifestyle, i.e. existence, which I believe includes one`s spirituality and religiosity.

In concluding this section on human beings ability to create meaning in their own lives in this present life and in the life to come, the author is of the view that the relationship and understanding one has of death and dying is also influenced by one`s social milieu and cultural beliefs. From an African perspective, Prof. Masango would normally refer to the physical living as the “living ancestors”. Masango: M, 2012 – contact sessions

This means that the type and quality of life you now live will determine whether you will be regarded, remembered or venerated in the future after your passing as a worthy and good ancestor or not. This is one of the facts that the author has in mind when talking about creating meaning for death. The writer will have more to say about this line of thinking later in this chapter.

3.6 Perspectives on death

On introducing his argument on the death perspective, Kenneth Kramer has this incredible, thought provoking theory: “How we perceive death affects the way we live, how we live affects the way we die and how we die gives new meaning to the way others can live.” Kramer, K; 1988:12

In my understanding, this goes back to the statements of narrative therapist Julian Muller to the affect that every individual is the author in giving meaning to his/her or her own life. And the way in which one gives meaning to one`s life is by way of storytelling. As an illustration he uses the event of his mother`s death. According to him, before her death the family gathered around her death bed, obviously to say their last farewells and to prepare her for the journey of death into the hereafter. Robert Marrone calls this step “Ars Moriendi” (art of dying, described step by step in published little manuals between the periods 1100 and 1400). These manuals were combined into the proverbial “how to” books that described in detail how to achieve a peaceful and graceful death at that time. Marrone, R: 1997:4

Julian Muller goes on to say that the story of his mother`s death, especially the struggle to breathe caused by suffering, impacted tremendously on them as a family. Later they would re-tell the story to themselves and also to others, especially the story of the gratitude his late mother expressed right to the end for the smallest things that were

done for her. According to him this helped to preserve her dignity. The most important part of the Julian Muller story to me, is where he says, “By telling these stories, we were not only witnesses to the type of person our mother was and to the way she died, but we were re – organizing our lives. By talking about her death, we attempted to give form to our own life stories which would lead to the day we exhale our last breath”.

Muller; J: 1991: 1

Like Julian Muller I believe that if one can repeatedly retell traumatic events experienced, this exercise has a threefold therapeutic effect on a person. (a) It has the potential to become a catalyst to the healing process especially to mourners needing closure after the death of a loved one. (b) Continued conversations with the dying person or demonstrating only the willingness to listen to what the dying person has to say- that is, if the person can still talk at the time- is an enabling mechanism to help the dying person to die with dignity and in peace. (c) By the retelling of narratives. In this way, ones perspective on death and the approach of one’s own death is sharpened and reshaped. To experience all that and to be afforded the opportunity to re –tell that experience gives one the confidence to approach death and dying on a much wiser and more mature level. What you share with others on this mature level becomes somehow empowering to them in giving them the confidence to deal with death and dying in a different way. This is very important because many people consider this topic taboo. Somehow people are reluctant to talk to others about death and dying, because others fear death immensely. There might be various reasons for that which I will address some later in this chapter. Because death as an event cannot be avoided, it therefore makes sense for all of us to comprehend it, embrace it and to prepare for it. And as we are all “companions on this journey” of life, we should strive to build up ones another`s confidence concerning the certainty, in relation to creating and adopting coping mechanisms. All this brings me back to why the author is embarking on a research of this nature in the first place. The way in which church leaders in our black churches treat the mourners and deal with the disposal of dead bodies through the much anticipated rituals of funerals has become a problem for the author. By using divisive and debatable criteria to decide which funerals can be done in church and which from

the family home and who will officiate (either priest or laypeople) they cause more confusion, pain and trauma at a time when people need healing and closure. I believe that there is a real need for them to reconsider the way in which they treat the mourners and allow for the disposal of the dead bodies. I will now move into trusted theories from scholars on the issue of death and dying in order to enrich my own insight into this topic, for I believe that it will assist me to come up later with a model to heal grieving families.

3.7 A need for a changed perspective

3.7.1 Kramer suggests that death should be viewed through at least three focus areas i.e.

- Physical (the irreversible loss of brain waves, central nervous system, heart and breath functions)

- Psychological (the life of quasi – consciousness, living as if already dead), and

- Spiritual (the death or transformation of old patterns, habits, roles, identities and the birth of a new person).

Kramer, K; 1988:12

In my understanding, these three phases of death help to introduce to us the idea that a person experiences death in three stages such as, (a) the complete and total shutdown of the bodily functions (b) the stage where your psyche wants to fight against imminent death but can't since death is an irreversible process and (c) the actual transition where you leave your physical body and become aware of life within a spiritual body that can even look down and see the physical body lying dead where the event has occurred – the death of one part of yourself which brings the rebirth of another, a transition from a temporary into a permanent state.

3.7.2 Maybe I should have started off with the research work of Joachim Whaley, an English historian whose research work centers on death and dying across centuries. Besides being the author of several publications he is also the editor of a book called *“Mirrors of Mortality: studies in the social history of death”*, In it he introduces us to the work of Christiaane Sourvinou – Inwood. This author's paper is titled, *“To die and enter the house of Hades: Homer, Before and After”*. This paper concentrates on the “Dark

Ages” of ancient Greece and 8th century BC attitudes. The investigation is centered on the Homeric poems in relation to death and dying. According to the collective Greek thought of that time, death at first is seen and experienced as a separation. When it comes, the psyche (soul or shade) leaves the body and flies away; eventually it will enter Hades, the land of the dead. Another component, the thymos, primarily the seat of the emotions, also leaves the body, never to be heard of again. Presumably its existence is tied up with life, and so eventually it also die together with the physical body. What remains is a decomposing corpse whose sinews have ceased to hold flesh and bones together. It is simply senseless matter which will rot unless disposed of. The process of decomposition attracts no interest. The shades enter the “house of Hades” only after the physical remains have been buried. On the afterlife in Hades the beliefs where divergent. These range from witless, senseless ghosts to lively shades whose activities and disputes require the service of a judge. An eternity as a witless, senseless ghost was a frightening prospect to the early Greeks. Everyone aspired to be a lively shade. This aspiration once more becomes a stark reminder to the author how every person is the author who gives meaning to his/her own life, which even extends beyond the boundaries of this life. In Greek thought sleep (Hypnos) is the twin of death (thanatos), who is a personification rather than an agent of death. Sleep walks peacefully and is kind to humans whereas Thanatos has an iron heart and a bronze spirit and never releases his victim. He is abhorrent even to the immortal gods. According to the author of this paper, this description is consistent with the Homeric description of death, which is black, hateful, bringing bitter grief and long woe.

Whaley, J; 1981: 76

There are quite a number of parallels and differences that one can point out between the first description of Kramer and that of the ancient Greeks one but firstly the author would like to introduce another line of thought on this topic.

3.7.3 Elizabeth Kubler Ross, a renowned scientist, has given us helpful insights into what happens at the point of death. For more than twenty years, she has been researching the path of death and dying in terminally ill patients and is widely acclaimed and acknowledged, especially for the work she did with children. She starts off by

saying that one must have the willingness and time just to sit next to the bedside of dying patients, sometimes talking to them, sometimes just listening to them as they speak. You can't do this effectively when you are always in a hurry like myself, rushing for the next appointment. She explains at length how and why the ministry of presence is extremely important to a dying person. In my understanding, as you sit there next to the dying person, you actually assist the person in the transition. Kubler Ross explains it in this way, "after sitting at the deathbeds of children and old people for many years, listening intently to what they are conveying to you, you will recognize that they know when death is approaching. Someone will suddenly bid you farewell when you are not thinking that death will arrive soon. If you do not push this statement aside but continue to sit and listen, then the dying one will tell you all he or she wants to share. After the patient dies you will have a good feeling because you may have been the only person who took his or her words seriously".

Kubler Ross, E; 1991:1

This reminds the author of a similar experience he encountered in 2012. One of my lay ministers was suddenly hospitalized with a heart condition. Because it was not visiting time, I had to ask a nurse at the same hospital who is also a lay minister in the church to "smuggle" me in. As we entered the ward, we found the patient sitting upright and not lying down on the bed as I expected. When I asked the reason he said to me that he had been waiting for me the whole morning for he knew I would come. He caught us by surprise by saying; "actually I am okay. There is nothing wrong with me. I am going home on Thursday. Today is Tuesday, they will perform the ECG test on Thursday but I am not worried about that because, I am going home on Thursday."

Words of Patient, 2012

At that moment we didn't comprehend what he was saying. We thought that the man was confused and was hallucinating. Instead there was something on his face that kept our interest and fascination. There was a perfect peace and calmness on his face that I had never seen in my life. Even now I struggle to find the exact words to describe the calmness, peace and serenity I saw on his face. His assuring smile penetrated our fears and anxiety. He was in control of that encounter and not us. After having administered the sacrament of Holy Communion and anointing with Holy Oil, we prayed, said our

goodbyes and left. As we were exiting the ward, his words, “I am going home on Thursday,” followed us. As we were walking back to the car park, we were discussing what we had seen and heard, given that he still had to undergo the much anticipated ECG tests. We were confused as to how he could for certain say that he was going home on Thursday, although specialists were still conducting tests. From what the family told me afterwards, when they visited him that same Tuesday, he told them the same thing in fact the patient died on Thursday morning at about 10 am. His death even caught the nursing staffing by surprise, because they couldn’t “see it coming”. According to them, the whole morning, he looked fine, was cheerful, even walked up and down the ward chatting happily with the other patients. Suddenly he collapsed, pressed his chest and died.

The statement of Kubler Ross of having had a “good feeling because you might have been the only person who took the person’s words seriously”, actually haunts me and fills me with guilt and regret. Should I have spent more time with him? Was there something I had missed? This experience has now undoubtedly awakened me to the need to be more alert, attentive, patient and understanding when visiting sick people at home or in hospital. But for now I want to talk about Kubler Ross’s perspective on death and dying. She identifies three stages of death:

- (a) In the first stage she compares what is happening to a butterfly leaving the cocoon. The cocoon can be compared to the human body, but should not be confused with your real self, for the physical body is only a house to live in for a while. From a biblical perspective St. Paul also describes the physical body as a temple that stores God’s Holy Spirit dwelling in you (see 2 Cor 6: 16), or a tent, a shell, whatever one may call it. Jesus in conversation with the Pharisees referred to his physical body as a temple (see John 2: 19-21). According to Kubler Ross, as soon as the cocoon is in an irreparable condition it will release the butterfly, your soul.
- (b) In the second stage, your soul is supplied with psychic energy whereas in the first stage the body had physical energy. There after follows a total shutdown of all bodily functions and awareness which does not necessarily mean that the

body or person has already died. The awareness now shifts to what the soul, loaded with psychic energy is experiencing. If need be, the person can return to the cocoon (body) after having experienced an “out of body awareness”. As soon as the soul leaves the body a person will immediately realize that he/she can perceive everything happening at the place of dying – wherever such occurrence has taken place. You also become aware of how bystanders or professionals attempts to “save you”, or what is being done with your body later. You register every little detail around your stiff, lifeless body with this new awareness supplied with psychic energy. At this point Kubler Ross is quick to explain that we must be careful not to say things we do not understand do not exist. She even uses the analogy of a dog whistle to explain the existence and reality of out of body experiences in this way “If I blew a dog whistle you wouldn’t hear it, but every dog could hear it. The reason is that the human ear is not made for the reception of such high frequencies. In the same way, an average person is unable to behold a soul which is out of the physical body while, on the contrary, this stepped – out soul can still register earthly vibrations and can understand everything that happens at the site of death”. Kubler Ross E, 199:12

Importantly she reminds us to be aware that dying persons even in deep comas can still hear us when we speak to them and even respond in some way. As an illustration of this, with his permission of course, I would like to share what happened around the death bed of Prof. Maake Masango`s mother.

Professor Masango`s mother was hospitalized after what doctors thought might be a slight heart attack. She was admitted to a hospital in Pretoria that specializes in heart diseases. The doctors prescribed a medication that thins the blood to prevent it from clotting. This medication should be taken for a period of six months. The family decided however to get a second opinion from another heart specialist. While Prof. Masango was in Cuba, his mother developed the same problem again. His brother subsequently took her to Kalafong hospital in Atteridgeville, Pretoria. There she was treated for the symptoms of a stroke. Prof. Masango arranged for her to be taken to Steve Biko Hospital in Pretoria. It was only then discovered that a vein near the brain was leaking,

after a scan was done. By this time Mrs. Masango was very weak and subsequently went into a coma. Her sickness even touched the parishioners of Prof. Masango to such an extent that elderly women in the parish started a prayer chain, praying for the mother and her family. A senior church elder even devised a timetable for the parishioners to help ease the congestion during hospital visitation time. The aim of all these visits was just to pray with Mrs. Masango. A nurse advised the family to treat her as you would a normal person under normal circumstances. Although she was in a coma, they should continue speaking to her and relate their stories. The nurse assured the family that Mrs. Masango was able to follow conversations, though in a coma. This news inspired them to relate their daily stories to her without any inhibition. On the 10th day of Mrs. Masango's hospitalization, the doctors informed the family that she was brain dead, and advised them that the machines should be switched off. A family gathering was called to discuss these latest developments. The decision was to perform a sort of farewell ritual first before machines were switched off.

On that day the entire family gathered around the old lady's bed, as nurses and some doctors watched. Her favourite hymn, "Come Holy Spirit", was sung after which followed their granddad's favourite hymn, "Body, Soul and Mind...."

Prof. Masango's wife was appointed to speak to his mother, on behalf of the family. She started off in this fashion, "We know that you have to go. We have deliberately come to release you.....". As she continued, she called the names of each of the children and grandchildren. She named every child with his spouse and their children, for Mrs. Masango could clearly follow who exactly stood around her bed. The appointed speaker then said, "If you need to go, please do so, but I have one last request. Please open your eyes one last time and look at us. See for yourself all children around the bed wanting to say goodbye ", after which the family again sang, "Come Holy Spirit".

In between the doctors protested and called on the professor as a learned man to stop this. It was clear that, on the basis of their clinical knowledge they thought that everything was a waste of time, unnecessary and illogical for "the patient was already brain dead." For a brief moment, Mrs. Masango opened her eyes, and stared at them. All the doctor could now do was to fold his hands in a praying fashion and on his face

every one could see his amazement. The family then prayed the Lord`s prayer and they said “Amen”. The machines stopped by themselves. the Professor`s wife closed his mom`s eyes and then wiped her face. Throughout the entire ritual, only family members gathered around the bed because God worked it in such a way that the group that was supposed to be visiting got lost.

Following on what Kubler Ross believes in, the Professor. is certain that throughout her coma his mother was able to follow their stories. Above all she shared in the ritual just before she closed her life chapter. He also believes that the continuous re telling of this story has greatly helped the family in preparing for another death event, which in this case, was that of his father some years after his mother`s departure. Prof. also believed that the ritual performed around her bed enabled the family to deal with his father`s death. He died and was buried only two weeks before the Professor`s graduation. Seeing that his mother died in this way and was buried in the same grave as his father, the ritual performed has helped them all in finding healing and closure.

This is quite a remarkable story to illustrate the point that Kubler Ross is making. To the ones around a lifeless body, the person has died, since he/she has no vital signs. The soul has left the body and is quite aware of what is happening, as it registers every detail through the help of physic energy. Therefore it makes sense to continue conversations with the person lying there. It may just help the person and you to find peace, closure or reconciliation, stemming from unfinished business, which will allow the person to die in peace and you to carry on peacefully with your own life. These conversations can be quite therapeutic and in addition assist a person to find meaning in life and in death.

According to Kubler Ross, in this second stage the “dead” person will realize that he/she is whole again. People who were blind can see and those who couldn`t walk or speak can walk and speak again. Again, to quantify this point, Prof. Kubler Ross and her team embarked on a scientific project involving a number of blind people in relation to the out of body experience: they meticulously selected blind people who had not had any light perception for at least the last ten years. Remarkably they were amazed by the very detailed descriptions of the blind ones who experienced out- of -body awareness. She

argues further that, in the second stage you will discover that nobody dies alone. In general, the people who are waiting for us on the other side are the ones who loved us the most. You always meet those people first. In the case of very small children whose parents or grandparents and known family members are still alive on this earth, they are met by the personal guardian angel, or Jesus or another religious figure. Be it as it may, at the point of transition every single human being has someone waiting for you, to welcome you on the other side.

(c) In the third and final stage you pass through a phase which is based on items of the physical world imprinted on your mind. According to her, it could be that you float through a tunnel, pass through a gate, cross a bridge, climb a mountain, or whatever image you create which is rooted in your earthly life experience. After you have passed through this tunnel, or over a bridge or mountain, you are embraced by light. This light, according to her, is whiter than white. It is extremely bright and the more you approach this light, the more you are embraced by the greatest, most indescribable, unconditional love you could ever imagine.

To illustrate this point further, the author would like to share what was told to him by one of his parishioners before he died. This man used to be a lay minister in the church. He was a sportsperson as a young man and earned a provincial crown in boxing. By the time he became sick, his children were all grown up and married. His ailment was gangrene. It slowly ate away at his body to such an extent that his right leg had to be amputated just below the knee cap to alleviate pain. After the operation he made a full recovery and could resume his normal life once more, if one can define being confined to a bed “as a normal life”. According to the story he related to me, he dreamed one night that he had died. He could see how his family prepared for his burial, the places they visited, the things they said and he could even share in their pain as they were crying over him. According to him, he also cried with them. On the day of the burial, he witnessed the entire service and even said to me from which text my sermon came. At the graveside he experienced how his body was lowered into the grave and eventually how the grave was covered with soil. After some time, when everyone had left, someone said to him, “Sam now you can see that it is finished. You can never go back

again. You see that bright light in the far distance? Follow it. Do not stray from the light into the darkness. Once you have reached the light, you will experience safety and peace”.

Patient`s words from dream 2007

He went on to say that very slowly, he walked towards the light. As he was pushing forward toward the light, walking on a narrow road, he became aware of the hustle and bustle of everyday life coming from both sides of the road, people carrying on with life as he used to know it on earth. He could hear everything – people talking, singing, screaming and whistling, dogs barking – everything you would hear and experience in a normal night. One or two even called him to join them, but then he remembered the advice given to him before the journey: “Keep walking towards the light. Do not stray off the path of the light if you want to be safe. Once you reach the light, you will indeed be safe”.

According to him that motivated him to reach the light as soon as possible. The moment he reached the beginning of the light, he was awoken from his dream. He died a couple of weeks after having shared this dream with me. Once you hear stories like this and understand what Kubler Ross is trying to share, you somehow gain a new insight into death. To be honest, when this man told me of his dream, I didn’t think much of it, or take it seriously, and even thought that perhaps boredom drove him to fabricate the story. In retrospect, the statement of Prof. Kubler Ross, “if someone doesn’t like a certain truth, he or she will come up with a thousand arguments against it”, forced me to open up my understanding, concentration and alertness when listening to people, especially the sick and dying.

3.8 My observation thus far.

From the statements of Sourvinou Inwood, Kramer and Kubler Ross death and dying constitute a process which can be experienced in three phases. The first phase results in a total shutdown of the vital signs in the physical body. To onlookers and bystanders the person has died because from a medical or scientific perspective all the vital organs have ceased to function. Traditionally physical death has meant the loss of brain

functions, heartbeat, pulse and breath. According to the Harvard medical school Ad Hoc committee, to meet the definition of brain death, (3 criteria) can be identified:

- Lack of receptivity and response to external stimuli.
- Absence of observable reflexes, including brain and spinal reflexes.
- Absence of brain activity, signified by a flat electroencephalogram (EEG).

Kramer 1988:13

Physical death as the first stage demands is the irreversible termination of all essential bodily functions. In the second stage the psyche, soul or shade leaves the body and becomes aware of its other means of existence. It can exist outside the body, is now loaded with psychic energy instead of physical energy and is aware of its surroundings. At this stage it can return to its physical body, after which the person can describe in detail an out-of-body experience. In the third and final stage the soul, shade or psyche embarks on a journey either up a hill through a valley, over a bridge, through a tunnel or the like, until it reaches its destiny which the Greeks call “House of Hades” and Kubler Ross calls the “imposing, indescribable, unconditional beaming light which is the source of unconditional love and external peace.” To the Greeks life in the “House of Hades” can be a regrettable, taunted experience as a witless, senseless ghost or as what everyone aspires to be, a lively shade. Again this shows us that every person is the author of his/her own life experience or existence, whether in this life or in the life to come. Even in Christian thought, from a biblical perspective, human beings are constantly challenged to live good and holy lives because the way in which you have lived and the state in which you have died will determine how and where you will spend eternity. To some this might sound like unsubstantiated rhetoric, but most of the thanatologists are certain about the life that needs to be lived and about an awaiting existence in the hereafter. Their statements are underpinned and quantified with years of experiments or fieldwork and as a result they have come up with undeniable proof of some future existence after death. This is not strange to me because it corresponds with the Christian teaching of eternity after death.

3.9 African perspective

According to Dr. Johannes Seoka, the African conceptualization of God is of a God “who was there before creation, (and or everything) with all things coming into being through him.”

Seoka, Johannes, 1997:2

According to him, African Spirituality is in harmony with biblical mythology. This is supported by historic factors which point to the experience of African people as believers in:

- UMVELINQANGI - The one whose appearance is unknown, ancient of days.
- UNKULUNKULU – The, Great, Great One.
- MODIMO – The one who penetrates and permeates all being.
- MOTLHODI – The source of being.
- HLAHLAHA – MACHOLI – The one whose origin is unknown, ancient of days.

Seoka, Johannes 1997:2

According to Dr. Seoka these ancient and abiding African conceptions of God are amazingly biblical, but predate the arrival of the Christian missionaries. In arguing the African belief of how humans came to be, he argues the African`s conviction and belief in a divine order and power beyond human comprehension, who is responsible for all life forms on earth. And in the African thought, this all powerful, unseen God created everything, even human beings, out of clay. “Their understanding of the nature of God emanates from the created order, the earth and the heavens and all that is contained therein”.

Seoka, J, 1997:3

In no uncertain terms this reference testifies to the religiosity and spirituality of African people in God of creation as a basis for a dispute or confusion in relation to ancestral veneration.

3.9.1. Ancestor Worship

The above has served as introduction to the myths and lies concocted by missionaries regarding the African and his ancestors. Africans do not believe that ancestors can be worshipped at all. According to Seoka, it must have been in someone`s interest to

demonize African culture and religion in order to promote that which appealed to him/her. In the African religious practice, ancestors are venerated and not worshipped. In other words ancestors are given reverence which they had while they were still alive. It is like continuing to show respect and adoration to the one who was an integral part of your life before his / her departure from this earth; thus Africans talk of “*umsebenzi ka baba /u mama*” (a family gathering / ritual dedicated to the memory of my father or mother). Therefore what western missionaries interpreted as ancestor worship was to the African religion nothing more than the veneration of those whose lives had shaped theirs. In gratitude they revered them just as they would have done if they were in human form. People of other cultures must understand that in African culture a person is never dead and forgotten as long as people still remember him/her. They are in real sense the “living dead” to us, in the same way as we venerate “the saints” in western thought. Prof. Maake Masango always makes mention of the “living ancestors” or “living dead”. They, according to African tradition, are people whose lives were unquestionable. They had live faithfully and were perfectly moral and just in their behaviour. They now live close to the creator. Because of their good lives, they have given us a pure and noble revelation of the pure and noble God because their lifestyles were just a projection of God’s expectations. In the same manner Prof. Masango says “that not all departed will be venerated as worthy ancestors”, again making reference to the life one has lived here on earth. Masango, Maake – contact sessions: 2011

This to me is a clear indication that the bond, the communion, the relationship, the communication between the living and the “living dead” is continuous. Death cannot separate or sever that bond; hence Seoka points out that, “There is a clear distinction between the divinity and the ancestors in African traditional religion. God is above everything else and ancestors are less than deity, yet above the living, and are intermediaries between God and their offspring” Seoka, J, 1997:7

If this is true and profound in the African mind-set, the author finds it difficult to comprehend why the black church leadership has come up with criteria for burials, in relation to which funeral will take place in church and which from the family home. This is confusing, painful and offensive. As already pointed out in chapter one, the practice of

conducting some funerals from the family home, with a lay minister officiating, has become stigmatized in the townships. The victims are being regarded as defaulters having failed to:

- Attend church service regularly or
- Pay their dedicated giving or tithing.

Therefore they deserve to have an undignified funeral. To worsen matters, every community member knows these things and is not happy about it but is too scared to raise his/her discontent. The predicament that the author is wrestling with is: what message does the church communicate to the community with regard to remembering these people as ancestors? Since they were not given a proper, dignified burial from church, does that now mean that they will not be respected and venerated as the “living dead?” Are they amongst the “witless, senseless ghosts in the House of Hades” according to the Ancient Greek belief? No wonder some of our black African Anglicans attend the Eucharistic services in the morning, but by night the same ones flock to the “spirit churches” (sephiri). The reason for this is that a vacuum or void has been created by the church leaderships` dubious practices. Our people are not being given the space to live out their cultural beliefs in a religious setting. They love to be Anglican but the Anglican Church denies them the privileges and space to externalize their traditional cultural beliefs in a Eucharistic setting, let alone to bury their dead from the church. With this research, the author would like to create a therapeutic model that will heal grieving families and also educate church leadership to be less English and more African by allowing our people to live out their traditional cultural beliefs in a church setting without feeling guilty or ashamed.

3.10 The issue of mourning and grief

From a biblical perspective, rooted in the significance that the resurrection of Christ from the dead holds for Christians, St. Paul challenges the pain and victory of death in this way: “Death, where is your sting? Grave, where is your victory? It has all been swallowed up by the resurrection of Christ from the dead”. (1 Cor. 15: 54). We normally quote this text of scripture at funeral services, hoping that the words and their meaning

will ease the pain and immense loss that the grieving family is experiencing at that time. This is all a matter of faith in the doctrine of the resurrection of Christ from the dead. I now realize that, despite the best intentions the preacher might have, these words mean very little to the immediate chief (close) mourners of the deceased in the sense of making them feel a bit better, especially if you take the following into account:

- Age of the deceased
- Manner in which he/she has died
- Nature of attachment the mourners enjoyed with the deceased.
- Fear and uncertainty of a future without the deceased.
- Realization of shattered dreams and unfulfilled expectations which to my understanding results in some sort of psychological and emotional paralysis.

The exhortations of St. Paul might bring hope for the future, as the person reconstructs and adjusts his / her life to continue to live without the deceased, but during the funeral service these words and many others mean very little to the grieving family. I am not saying that it should not be mentioned and explained in a sermon, because there might be others there that need it. I am just trying to show that the pain and loss experienced at that time cannot be cured, healed, soothed or eased instantly. Psychologists like Robert Marrone, Bonley and others categorically state that there is a difference between grief and mourning. Experiencing grief to them is the first step towards the mourning process; in other words you must grieve before you can mourn. Marrone articulates it in this way: "For human beings, grieving reactions are actually only the beginning of the much longer and larger process of mourning. Grief reactions, such as shock, protest, sadness, yearning, crying and depression, help us to recognize the loss and prepare us for the work of mourning".

Marrone, R; 1997:108

This definition does not only include the immediate grief reaction to the loss but also encompasses the future resolution of the loss. From this perspective, in order for mourning to be resolved, the bereaved person must comprehend the significance of the seriousness, permanence, and irreversibility of his/her loss. In other words, in addition to feelings typical of grief, such as sadness, anger and guilt, the individual must come to understand that the deceased person will never return and that life can be meaningful

nonetheless. The challenge for me as a pastoral caregiver, is to find suitable scriptural passages that will enable me to address that. Then only will I know that the grief experienced is being addressed and then set my sights on targeting the future mourning process. According to Marrone, Anna Freud, expanding on her father's insights, maintained that, although a very young child is capable of grieving the loss of a parent, the child can mourn only when she / he has developed a mature concept of death, that is, understanding the finality, irreversibility and permanence of the loss. In other words, one must show a comprehension of the finality and meaning of that loss before one can go into mourning over it.

These insights have clearly imprinted on me how to manage the grief reactions before trying to manage the mourning process. In chapter six, where a model of healing will be suggested, the author will elaborate more on this.

Scholars in psychology are clear that one must first work through one's grief before one starts contemplating working through one's mourning. In my understanding the grief has to do with the shock of the untimely death of a loved one. It results in denial, where the cognitive stimuli refuse to accept the occurrence of death. The psyche keeps on rejecting the reality and simply refuses to accept the inevitable. But psychologists also point out that this reaction is a natural human response and the psyche will in the end accept the irreversible situation of someone's departure from this life. I firmly believe that pastoral caregivers have a huge role to play in enabling a grieving person to work through this process, since the psychologists only outline the process that will follow, but do not suggest ways of empowering the grieving person in relation to that person's spirituality and religiosity.

Marrone quotes Robert Wrenn (1994) in describing what a typical grieving person goes through. It reads as follows:

- (a) Expression of feelings such as sadness, anger and guilt.
- (b) Body sensations such as hollowness in the stomach, lack of energy and shortness of breath.

- (c) Thought patterns and dreams involving pre-occupation with, or sense of the presence of the deceased and
- (d) Behaviours such as treasuring objects of the deceased, withdrawing from people and having disturbances in appetite and eating.

He goes on to say that, apart from the grieving reactions, consciously or unconsciously we also experience mourning reactions in the following ways:

- (a) Undoing our ties to our loved one.
 - (b) Revising our assumptions of ourselves in the world.
 - (c) Integrating new roles, skills and behaviours into our lives.
 - (d) Learning how to live fully and meaningfully in a world no longer occupied by the one we loved.
- Marrone, R, 1997:107

Psychologists argue that typical grief reactions to the death of a loved one may last for a number of months. In contrast according to them, mourning involves a search for meaning in our lives and may last a number of years or for some until they eventually die. Much will be said about this topic (mourning) in chapter four as the author will be investigating intercultural concepts with special emphasis on African elements. I would like to conclude this chapter with the famous words of Prof. Kubler Ross: “It takes time to heal. It takes time to mourn. It doesn’t matter how many weeks or months have passed. Everybody needs to be encouraged to take his/her time, to do it his/her own way. Never judge or criticize anyone who tries to cope with the loss in his/her own way”.
Kubler – Ross, E, 1991:79

From this it is clear that what works for some may not work for others. To allow each person the space to discover coping mechanisms to deal with the grief and mourning that will work for him or her is to me is the biggest challenge that pastoral caregivers are facing. This is exactly why the author keeps on emphasizing a change of approach from priests and churchwardens when dealing with grieving families, not to see them as objects who have to pay now for the faults of their departed loved ones but to see them as people who have been created in the image of God – both the family and the deceased. The grieving family now needs help, understanding love and care, in order

for them to work through their grief and mourning. The deceased need to be given a dignified burial, free from the entrapment of condemnation, judgement and stigma-fuelled send offs. The author firmly believes that the funeral service, from the initial arrangements to the actual disposal of the body, can indeed be a starting point for grieving families to find closure and healing. This crucial information, especially from an African perspective will be dealt with extensively in chapter six.

Fundamental to the success of this research is the treatment or lack of it by the church of the deceased in the form of place where the burial takes place. This decision by the church leadership is informed by the standing and status of the deceased in relation to church attendance and financial contributions (DG). Depending on which end of the scale the deceased person finds himself / herself, the decision will either be a church funeral service or a stoep funeral service. In order to justify the decision, the mourners are being informed that the decision is in line with church policy. As already explained in the previous chapters, the level of care to the surviving mourners differs extensively in what one priest terms “high class or high profile funerals and low profile funerals”. This distinction by the church brings into question the credibility of the church to give effective pastoral care to its people. In the next section the research will critically evaluate whether the expectations of church people to be buried from the church and by their minister are justified. But firstly the word, “church,” needs to be interrogated.

3.11 The church

Charles. F. Pfeiffer in presenting his book, *The Combined Bible Dictionary Concordance* describes “ church “ as follows: “ It is a Greek word ekklesia which translated means “ church “ or “ the called out “ . It signifies a group of people assembled for a civil purpose. My understanding is that he means a gathering of fruitful believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

He then distinguishes between the universal church and the local church in the following fashion, “ The church universal includes all those who have believed and obeyed the gospel and the church local has reference to a local congregation”. Importantly he

believes that individuals within the church form a body of people which Christ bought and cleansed with His blood.

Pfeiffer, C, F;

1961:98

Hans Kung develops this thought further as he refers to church as “a community that was constituted after Easter under the impact of the experience of the Resurrection and the Spirit which makes claim to an eschatological orientation. It’s foundations are not initially its own cult, constitution and organization with particular offices but solely the confession in faith of this Jesus as the Messiah, as it is sealed with Baptism and celebrated by the meal in his memory”.

Kung, Hans; 1994: 78

The definition of “church” thus far makes this body or community a very holy, spirit-filled and powerful organization; hence this description of Dr. J.A. Wolfaardts; “The church is seen as entity in itself, standing over and against society of which the church is part and parcel of” In stating this fact he maintains that “religious actions may never be studied in isolation from the social context as a whole” in describing the importance and role of Practical Theology.

Wolfaardt, J.A. in Eybers, I.H, koning, A, Stroop J.A 1980: 272

Khoza Mgojo, president of the South African Council of Churches, sums it all up in this way, “the church is a community of believers in Christ, bound together by His saving work on the cross. It is community of solidarity – for guidance, care and loyal criticism, for the edification of the body of Christ. This metaphor, while not perfect, is practical and biblical. The church is the personal, corporate property of the living Lord. It is *Kuriaken* – that which belongs to the Lord. In his response to Peter’s revelatory confession of His Messiahship and deity, Jesus said “Thou art Peter and upon this rock, I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it “. The church is an eschatological fellowship - a community of people who whilst living in the present are also people who look forward to a different future experience with God. This is not to deny that the church is also a human, social institution. Because of this, the church also experiences the socio-economic, ideological and cultural contradictions that the rest of society does.

The limitations of human frailties exist side by side with the enabling dynamism of God`s spirit of grace”. Khoza Mgojo in Pityana, Barney and Villa Vicencio, Charles; 1995: 9

Having heard what distinguished scholars are saying about the church, in my understanding it can either mean the building in which Christians worship or it may be used to mean a group of Christians who worship God through his Son, Jesus Christ. Such a group of people may be a small number of people who live in one village or town or a very large number of Christians from many places who belong to one denomination. The word may also mean all Christians of all times and places who belong to the one church of Jesus Christ. Today there are Christians in almost every country of the world. According to David A. Brown, most of them belong to one of the following main groups of churches:

- The Eastern churches which are closely linked by their history to the first churches in Palestine and Syria. They include the Coptic church in Egypt, the Armenian church, the church of Ethiopia and the Syrian Orthodox church in India.
- The Orthodox churches which are linked with Greek civilization. They also inherit the tradition of the Byzantine Empire, which ruled Turkey, Syria, Palestine and Egypt before the Muslim conquests. The main Orthodox churches are the Orthodox churches of the Near East and the Orthodox churches in Russia and Eastern Europe, Greece and Cyprus.
- The Roman Catholic Church, which preserved much of the Latin Civilization of the Roman Empire. The Roman Catholic Church emphasizes the importance of discipline and the authority which the leaders of the church have in deciding what Christians should believe and how they should behave. The Bishop of Rome, the Pope has supreme authority in the church as the representative of Christ.
- The Reformed Church,- As the name states, their founders attempted to reform the life of the church. Among other things, they no longer recognized the authority of the Pope, they used their own languages instead of Latin and they made the worship and ministry of the church simpler. They became known as Protestants which includes Anglicans, Baptists, and Lutherans just to mention a few.

- The Pentecostal and Independent churches. These churches are in all parts of the world and they emphasize the spirit of God [& gifts of the spirit] and claim that He guides and lead the church directly in every new circumstances. They do not think that tradition or established authority are important and keep looking for fresh evidence of God`s power and for new spontaneous leadership.
- Brown, David, A; 1975:169
- African Indigenous churches. As the names states they strive to maintain an African identity and character free from Western influence in relation to worship, their belief system, tradition and cultural existence. There are quite a number of splintered fragments of this group operating in South Africa which are mostly black.

All these main groups of Christian churches differ remarkably in doctrine and dogma but it is their belief in God through His Son Jesus Christ and through the power and work of the Holy Spirit that keeps them all together under the same name “ church “. Despite all these doctrinal differences the mission, task or role of the church of God is supposed to be similar in relation to ministry given to all of God`s people and prophetically proclaiming the word of God to humanity. This research will now briefly examine the task, role or mission of the church.

3.12 The task, role or mission of the church.

Not taking the classical route guided by systematic theological theories on a topic like this, this research has opted for theories from Missiologist and Anglican bishops. Contemporary Missiologists] combined their writings together in a book called *Mission in the 21st century, exploring the five marks of global mission*, edited by Andrew Walls and Cathy Ross. In their book they argue that one of the church`s roles is to embark on mission which according to them can be identified by the following five marks:

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
- To teach Baptism and nurture new believers
- To respond to human needs by loving service

- To seek to transform unjust structures in society
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the church.

Walls A, and Ross, C; 2008; 3 -94

Concerning the other half of the debate on this topic, this research will draw on statements by Anglican Bishops at the Lambeth conference in 2008. The Lambeth Conference is a meeting of Bishops from all parts of the world who belong to the Anglican Communion. The first conference was in 1867. Though interrupted by wars, it has met more or less every ten years, with the latest in 2008 and the next one to be in 2018. The last digit moved from 7 to 8 because the second Lambeth conference could not get ready in time for 1877. The Archbishop of Canterbury, who is the Primate of the world wide Anglican church, invites all Anglican Bishops to the Lambeth conference every 10 years. This ancient practice is derived from the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 15) In (Acts 15,6 REB) a description is given of a meeting of the Apostles and elders to settle a difficulty which plagued the church. Since its founding it has become the tradition and practice of the Anglican church to call all its bishops together under the guidance and tutelage of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Coleman, Roger; 1992: 1 –Xli

The last Lambeth Conference was held between 16 July and 3 August 2008 in Canterbury and it was dubbed Lambeth Indaba. What now follows is a summary of the Lambeth¹Indaba concerning Mission and Evangelism. For Anglicans, the² Diocese is the basic unit of the church. It is on this frontline that we must be most effectively engaged in mission. Our reflection on the current status of mission and evangelism in our dioceses involved the sharing of stories, a critique of the present situation and expression of hope in relation to concerns that were highlighted.

- We affirm that evangelism concerns the making of disciples and spiritual growth. By this they mean that evangelism is the cutting edge of mission in the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour by word and deed. The Gospel is the life blood of the church and involves mediating by

1. Indaba - after the African word which can be translated as “discussion forum”
2. Diocese: geographical authority of a bishop and his priests looking after a number of local churches,
proclaiming, by word and by action, the good news of God’s love in Christ which transforms the whole life.
 - We affirm that we minister to the whole community, including young and old. The history of Anglicanism has been characterized by a tradition of pastoral care which has centered on the care of persons through the various traditions in the life cycle. Of particular concern has been the ministry to the sick and housebound, the dying, women, children and young people.
 - We affirm that the Good News (proclaimed) in Christ is especially addressed to the poor and outcasts, to those on the fringes of society and to the dispossessed.
 - We affirm that the Good News should continue to be proclaimed in all circumstances in the joy of the Lord. It is particularly important that the church seeks to minister in situations of need, (distress) and natural disaster.
 - We affirm that the proclamation of the Gospel is the proclamation of the way of life – a vocation to personal holiness.
 - We affirm that the church is called to be faithful in the exercise of its mission in the context within which it is located, with due regard to culture. The bible must be taken as authoritative guiding principle in our proclamation of the gospel. (2 Tim 3: 16) Lambeth Indaba 2008Because decisions are made by prominent church leaders, as in the case discussed in this research, the clergy, the churchwardens and other church leaders, this research is now going to investigate the issue of authority and power in the church

3.12 Authority in the church

Concerning this issue, this research will follow the line that was handed to Anglicans made by the ARCIC (Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission) joint statement argumentation. Thirty years ago, the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church were engaged in unity talks that were initiated by Archbishop Michael

Ramsey and Pope Paul vi. The commission set up to prepare for the dialogue recognized in its 1968 Malta report that one of the urgent and important tasks “would be to examine the question of authority. In essence, this question is at the heart of our sad divisions. When the final report of ARCIC (the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission) was published in 1981, half of it was devoted to the dialogue about authority in the church. In 1988 a recommendation was made to the Lambeth conference to continue to endorse unity talks between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic church. The basis of these discussions was the following agreed decisions:

- Acknowledgement that the spirit of the Risen Lord maintains the people of God in obedience to the Father`s will. By this action of the Holy Spirit, the authority of the Lord is active in the church (cf. The Final Report, Authority in the church 1,3)
- A recognition that, because of their baptism and their participation in the *sensus fidelium*, the laity play an integral part in decision making in the church (cf. Authority in the church, Elucidation, 4)
- The complimenting roles of primary and conciliarity as elements of episcopate within the church (cf. Authority in the church 1,22)
- The need for a universal primacy exercised by the Bishop of Rome as a sign and safeguard of unity within a reunited church (cf. Authority in the church 11,9)
- The need for the universal primate to exercise his ministry in collegial association with the other bishops (cf. Authority in the church 11,19)
- An understanding of universal primacy and conciliarity which complements and does not supplement the exercise of episcopate in local churches (cf. Authority in the church 1,21 -23; Authority in the church 11,19)

Furthermore the parties agree that the way Jesus exercised authority in His earthly ministry was perceived by His contemporaries as something new. It was recognized in his powerful teaching and in His healing and liberating word (cf Mt 7.28 -29; Mk 1.22,27) It is believed that His authority was demonstrated by His self-giving service in sacrificial love (cf. Mk 10. 45). Jesus spoke and acted with authority because of His perfect communion with the Father. His authority came from the Father (cf. Mt 11.27, Jn 14. 10

-12). It is to the risen Lord that all authority is given in heaven and on earth (cf. Mt 28.18)

The ARCIC delegates firmly believed that through the gift of the Holy Spirit the Apostolic community came to recognize in the words and deeds of Jesus the saving activity of God and their mission to proclaim to all people the Good News of salvation. Therefore they preached Jesus through whom God has spoken to the world. Guided by the Holy Spirit, they transmitted what they had heard and seen of the life and words of Jesus and their interpretation of His redemptive work. Consequently these inspired documents in which this is related came to be accepted by the church as a normative record of the authentic foundation of the Christian faith. These documents refer to the Holy Scriptures. Through these written words the authority of the word of God is conveyed in relation to the church's life and mission, its teachings and practice.

The spirit of the risen Lord in turn equips people for the task of mission in the world. By this action of the Holy spirit, the authority of the Lord is active in the church. Since the Lordship of Christ is universal and Christ is accepted as the head of the church, the community of which the church is a part of also bears a responsibility towards all people which demands participation in all that promotes the good of society and responsiveness to every form of human need.

By sharing in the life of the spirit all find within the Koinonia the means to be faithful to the revelation of the Lord. Some respond more fully to his call by offering themselves for ordination. From this premise they now gain the confidence to speak in Christ's name with authority as bishops, priests and deacons – the three fold ministry that is a fundamental belief for Anglicans and Roman Catholics. The Bishop who is the prime authority in the church delegates this authority to the ordained deacons and priests, inviting them to share with him in the apostolic tradition of witness, mission and care. It is the bishop's duty to promote in all the parishes for which he is responsible, the oversight of insisting on the right teaching, holiness of life, unity and the church's mission to the world. For Anglicans, this is traditionally the role of its bishops but for the Roman Catholics, this is the task and responsibility of the Pope. The church's life and work are shaped by its historical origins, by its subsequent experience and by its

endeavour to make the relevance of the Gospel plain to every generation. Through reflection upon the world, through the proclamation of the Gospel, through baptism, through worship, especially the Eucharists, the people of God are moved to the living remembrance of Jesus Christ and of the experience and witness of the apostolic community. The church is called to translate prophetically and interprets the traditional apostolic words in order that the hearers throughout the ages may understand them and respond to them in their unique situations.

Local councils held from the second century determined the limits of the New Testament and gave to the church a canon (laws) which has remained normative. The councilor model of authority exercised in the matter of the canon has also been applied to questions of discipline and fundamental doctrine.

In its mission to proclaim and safeguard the Gospel, the church has the obligation and the competence to make declarations in matters of faith. This mission involves the whole people of God. At times this may result in conflict and debate. Because of this customs, accepted positions, beliefs, formulations and practices as well as innovations and re interpretations may at times be inadequate, mistaken or even inconsistent with the Gospel. Therefore, when conflict endangers unity or threatens to distort the Gospel, the church must have effective means for resolving it.

The Final report; September 1981: The gift of Authority 1999

3.12 Preliminary conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter, the author clearly stated that the phrases “death and dying”, “mourning”, “grief” and the like will be explored from other fields of study other than theology only. Amazingly, in doing so, the author came across a term that psychologists refer to when dealing with this topic and that is “thanatology” - an interdisciplinary field of studying death and dying. It was then mentioned that one cannot just explore the complex issues of death and dying while neglecting the real issues of life that we are daily facing. In order to try and manage that, one must realize that every person is the author of his/her own quality of life existence. Mention was made the theory of narrative therapist Julian Muller that each one of us creates our own

realities, taking outside influences into account. To elaborate further on this matter, the self – actualization theory of Abraham Maslow and Logo therapy of Viktor Frankl were explored in order to show that all of us have basic needs that need to be satisfied but are also challenged by outside powers or forces that might hinder the plans we have in order to build or create our own existence, even our understanding and comprehension of death and dying. An attempt was made to look at different perspectives of death and dying, starting with the ancient Greek mythology which was then compared with perspectives from psychologists and scientists. This exercise has shown the remarkably close resemblance in the stages of death and dying in the three perspectives chosen. It thus became clear that, although death is an event, it is also comprised of different stages, of which entrance into the last stage corresponds with our biblical understanding of eternal life. As an African, the author also had to explore African sentiments of death and dying and it was discovered that in the African mind-set no one really dies and becomes forgotten, because of the tradition of venerating and appeasing the ancestors. The bond between the departed and the living is continuous and not even death can sever it.

The author then pointed out the difference between grief and mourning from a psychological perspective but then ended this chapter with his own understanding thereof. Very briefly the research looked at the concept of “church” from a traditional Roman Catholic and Anglican perspective in order to get their understanding of the church`s role and mission. In concluding this chapter, the research then also explored the issue of authority as defined by Anglican and Roman Catholic structures in relation to unity talks between the two groups. This investigation and discovery were extremely important for me as a pastoral theological caregiver, whose task it is to find a model of healing for grieving families. This investigation will continue in chapter four as the author will attempt to make a comparative intercultural study of grief, mourning and the actual disposal of the body with special emphasis on African elements.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.1. Introduction

In chapter three the author started with a Literature Review on “death”, “dying”, “mourning” and “grief” from other fields of study other than theology. From the study of thanatology, it became clear that academics in different fields have identified different stages of death and dying, of which the entrance into the last stage largely corresponds with our biblical understanding of inheriting eternal life. This to me is important clinical knowledge of death and dying, but does not give us enough resources as pastoral caregivers to help grieving families to overcome the grief, mourning and irreversible loss they experience. An attempt will be made in chapter four to compare how different traditions inter alia Judaism, Islam and Christianity handle death, dying, grief, mourning and the disposal of the body. Some critics may rightfully ask: “Why the Jewish, Islamic and Christian traditions?” The author has decided upon these three for the following reasons.

- (a) In my understanding as a Christian, we have much in common with the Jewish tradition, with regards to religious and cultural perspectives and our religious ancestry. We share the same Old Testament scriptures with a slight difference in eschatological messianic claims which Christians attest to Jesus Christ. The four Gospels, Mark, Luke, Matthew and John speak loud and clear about the on-going tension and confrontation which Jesus experienced with the Jewish authorities and which ultimately resulted in his death. As regards his incarnation, the scriptures refer to Jesus as coming from the line of David, emphasizing His Jewish ancestry. In my understanding there is quite a close religious connection between the Christian faith and the Jewish faith, from which the former originated.
- (b) The author has chosen the Islamic tradition because this tradition also has a close connection with Judaism and Christianity. It is 460 years younger than the Christian tradition, but the tension between the two traditions has been there ever

since, and it reached its climax during the time of the Crusaders – an era in which Christians violently persecuted Muslims in the name of Jesus Christ. Ironically, the situation is reversed now. With the implementation of the Jihad (the holy war), Muslims are waging a bitter war against Christians, especially on the African continent. It looks as though it has become the aim of Muslim fanatical groups to convert the whole of Africa to Islam. The tables have been turned, as minority Christian groups in Muslim countries now live under tremendous fear, anxiety and religious oppression.

- (c) Inter cultural marriages between Muslims and Christians are on the increase in the Coloured communities in which I live. It is not strange for the author to do one out of ten funerals where this is evident – the deceased having had both Christian and Muslim family members. During the funeral service, the Muslim contingent fills the church with their presence, also sharing and demonstrating their bitter grief and mourning over the death of their loved one. So one must actually be very careful and sensitive on such occasions. The author is making a comparative study on these three traditions, because he firmly believes that there is a rich heritage of customs, traditions and practices in relation to funeral services and disposal of the body and that we can learn from each other. This research will also explore the viewpoints of traditional African religion on the issues under comparative study.

4.2. Societal diversities

South Africa, especially since the post 1994 era (year of liberation), has definitely become multi – ethnic with respect to its societal set up. No more are citizens compelled to reside only in the demarcated zones or areas based on race. The legislation of the Group Areas Act was one of the cornerstones of the Apartheid (policy), which promulgated segregation and “separate development”. But since the dawn of liberation the situation has changed. Everyone can settle wherever they want to if they can afford it. But this also has brought with it many social problems in relation to population density and the result is multi – ethnic societies. With regard to the topic under investigation, the most logical question to ask is. “If death is an inevitable, universal characteristic of

human existence, do not all human beings react essentially in the same way?" The fear of death and the sadness it brings, are universal human emotions. Beyond these basic emotions, there are habits of mind and sentiments that are the products of growing up in a particular culture. To think that all human beings experience reality the same way is ethnocentric. There are huge differences based on cultural realities in which people manage their grief, mourning and the disposal of the dead and in the way they give expression to it. This chapter will attempt to make a comparative analysis of three religious groupings. In his book, *Grief and Mourning in cross-cultural perspective*, Rosenbalt and his co – authors rightfully put forward the view that there are universal practices around death and burial which are to be found in all societies and which differ from society to society. They go on to say, "For people in all human societies, the death of familiar people is constant. Grief feelings are not unique to people in Western civilization. The experience of grief seems to be one of the costs of being human. The gains from long term contact and interdependence are often followed by agony, anger and feelings of emptiness and sorrow that result from the death of someone who has been important to us. Two areas of emotionality are fundamentally human: the universality of emotional expression in bereavement and the universality of gender differences in the expression of emotion during bereavement."

Rosenbalt et al. 1976: 1 - 11

It is believed that Rosenbalt's data is essentially of an anthropological nature, which refers to the need of all humans in all societies across the world to give expression to feelings of grief and mourning during bereavement. Interestingly Archaeologists hold the view that the deliberate inhumation of the dead is a unique human characteristic. No wonder they spend hours in excavating patches of land to prove traces of human existence, historic societies and even early burials. These academics reckon that it is possible to infer from the nature of the burial that it was accompanied by some form of ceremony in which a number of people took part.

4.3. Ceremony and Rituals

The part that ceremony plays in a society today is very often a cohesive one in which roles and responsibilities are confirmed and reaffirmed. This is very much so in the African village as will be explained later. It is (believed) that the rite or ceremony brings together a diverse group of people (varying from the family) for a birth, to the community for a death. Humphreys et al communicate it in this way: “The rites of passage welcome and declare new members at the point of transition. There is a sense of ownership or property. The new-born belongs to the family – now recognized as an entity, on his/her marriage, the person belongs to the community. The community bids the person farewell while declaring that the person was one of their own. This action reinforces the group and reaffirms reciprocal obligations.” Humphreys et al 1980:17

It is also believed that rituals and ceremonies have cohesive, loving and bonding consequences on society as a whole. If that is true, the author wonders how the black church leadership can continue to implement a practice that is offensive and divisive as a way of teaching the bereaved about pastoral care. The criteria they use to determine which funerals will be conducted in the church and by whom and which funerals will be conducted from the family home are actually a (denial or indictment of) on dignified rituals and ceremonies suggested by Archaeologists. The author firmly believes that it now becomes absolutely necessary for Practical theologians to examine the extent of damage caused by stoep or tent funerals as practised in the townships and to come up with a model of healing and change. In speaking to many township residents, one can see that the shame and pain that goes with these rituals and ceremonies is caused by:

- (a) The stigma that is associated with it in relation to the already mentioned criteria.
- (b) The negative message such a funeral service communicates about the deceased in relation to the person`s life or lack of commitment to the church. In my understanding this clearly demonstrates an attitude that is judgmental and condemning. What the person`s personal relationship with God and the Lord Jesus Christ was, is not considered.
- (c) When a person is given a stoep or tent funeral, subconsciously an element of doubt or uncertainty is being created by the church concerning the deceased person`s status as a future ancestor. This goes against the African belief, which affirms that nobody really dies. The bond between the dead and the living is

continuous and is being kept alive by the continuous contact with the ancestors through rituals of appeasement and veneration.

- (d) Apart from the disposal of the body, I believe that funeral services are actually designed to enable grieving families to find healing and closure. Psychologists have reminded us that the actual healing and closure take time and will not happen overnight. The author agrees with them and is under no illusion that it can happen immediately: hence my argument that the funeral service should be seen as the starting point of the healing process, if done correctly. The notion “correctly” might differ from person to person and from culture to culture but the average African Christian defines “a dignified funeral as one that is conducted in church by the priest. Interview: 2013

If there was only one rigid type of funeral ritual or proceedings for everyone, I am sure that there wouldn't have been a problem but the reality is that there are two (a) one reserved for “committed churchgoers” and (b) one for defaulters. This is confusing because there is actually a very fine line between “committed churchgoers” and defaulters as was seen in Case Study two in Chapter One. The author believes that, if the church continues unchallenged to implement and propagate such practices, the validity and authenticity of our funeral ceremonies will come into question. For the mourners who are aware of these things, but are afraid to speak out, it is difficult to experience the love, care and concern of God when exposed to stoep or tent funerals during their time of mourning and bereavement. Similarly how does the community bid the person farewell? (a) as one of their own, (b) as one belonging to a church family, or (c) as a defaulter? Over the next pages, the author will trace how when and why institutionalized funeral services came into being.

4.4. Preview of funeral services

The author believes that a historical perspective on funeral practices is important, because it will give us an idea of how the emphasis on death, dying and bereavement has changed over the years and with it, people's attitudes towards death. In his

exploration, the author will investigate Western practices and then consider how they have influenced African practices.

It is widely accepted that people have mourned in different ways during different historical periods. Marrone quotes French social historian Phillipe Aries (1974) who brings home this point by revealing how Western attitudes towards death and dying have developed historically from a visible, naïve acceptance of death in the Middle Ages to an ambivalent, filtered relationship with death and dying in the early nineteenth century and ultimately to an invisible death in the twentieth century, which he describes as “a complex of attitudes towards death and dying characterized by cognitive denial, emotional repression and behavioral passivity” Marrone, R; 1997:4

4.5. Western practices

4.5.1. Visible death

According to Marrone, death, over the centuries has always followed this pattern: - when knowing that the end was near, the dying person would recognize and orchestrate his / her own death by entering into elaborate preparations. It would include lying on the back so that the face could be turned eastward, towards heaven and then initiating a series of ritualized steps as depicted in “Ars Moriendi or art of dying” – a simple manual outlining how to achieve a peaceful and graceful death. Visible death is characterized by the presence of close friends and relatives, including children, surrounding the deathbed of the dying person, because death was regarded as a public ritual. This was the time for the dying person and the ones surrounding the bed to share precious time with one another, which included friendly and reconciliatory chat, sobbing, praying and even offering the dying person his / her favourite meal. When fever and pain intensified, a cool cloth was offered and placed on the forehead. Even when the dying person became frightened and suffered severe pain attacks, friends and family would offer kind reassuring words and a hand to hold. It was believed at that time that, when death was near, so were loved ones. Henri Nouwen, on the other hand, vindicates this practice and further develops it when alluding to the fact that no one wants to die alone. He develops a theory which holds the importance of a one- to- one relationship, especially

to a dying person. Nouwen maintains that we are constantly involved in a process in which one person leads the other from one point to the next, from view to view, and from conviction to conviction. He uses the encounter of John Allen, a theology student, paying a hospital visit to a dying patient, Mr. Harrison. During the conversation it becomes apparent that Mr. Harrison is doubtful of the outcome of a possible life changing operation and also scared to die during the operation. In the words of Mr. Harrison, “I’d rather die a natural death than die through aesthesia”.

Words of Mr. Harrison

Mr. Harrison’s precarious situation is worsened by the fact that he has nobody and nothing to wait for him after the operation or to welcome him home. Because of this tragic situation, Nouwen suggests that everyone wants to be assured that at least someone is waiting for him/her in life and in death. I think that knowledge somehow takes away the feeling of being alone. In my understanding this attitude towards visible death is extremely positive, both to the dying person and to the concerned bystanders, but more especially to the dying person. It gives you the assurance that the people you know and love are waiting for you in life and in death. This thought gives you a chance to fight for the retention and extension of your life. To the bystanders it gives the opportunity to embrace and accept the person’s death easily, because they were part of it and could hold last minute conversations especially, where reconciliation, closure and peace were needed. This attitude towards death and dying would have been even more advantageous and helpful to grieving families in townships if they could have given positive input to the funeral procedures of their loved ones in relation to funeral space, time, actual service, and the like. It would help them to find healing and closure, as seen in Case Study three of Chapter one.

The final step in the visible death process closes with the reciting of final prayers. Should the death occur slowly, the dying as well as everyone in attendance waited in hushed silence. With the last prayer been said, the last chapter was nearing completion and not another word was uttered. For the dying as well as for those in attendance, the presence of death was accepted as inevitable, which according to Marrone in quoting Levine (1991:68), is “conscious dying”.

After the death, the body would sometimes be left in bed, after which rituals were entered into. Some would weep, while others would speak to the deceased, sharing final thoughts, feelings memories and best wishes. The immediate family and close friends would clean and clothe the body while others prepared the wooden coffin, after which the body would be gently placed in it and laid out in parlour for a visitation or wake (night vigil). During the solemn funeral ceremony death was respected, as the purpose was to honour the deceased and his or her connectedness with family and community. Thereafter the body would be carried to the burial ground, to be lowered by neighbours and family into a grave they had dug at the family plot or a nearby churchyard. In honour of the deceased, spouse, children, immediate family, extended family, best friends and neighbours in turn would fill the grave with flowers, mementos and fresh earth. After everything had been said and done, the mourners would return to the deceased`s home to comfort one another, honour the memory of the departed and to socialize together, while enjoying food and drink.

4.5.2 Filtered death

Between the periods 1600 and 1830, it is believed that death still had a presence in American societies and people were touched and moved by it, as in the case of funeral processions. The tolling of the funeral bell in the distance, and perhaps catching a glimpse of the actual funeral procession, made a huge impact on people and their attitudes towards death. It all signified marks of respect. According to Marrone “death occupied space and time. Death still embraced meaning and summoned spiritual yearning in those it touched”.

Marrone, R, 1997:6

Marrone remarks that American social scientist, Laura Smart (1993-1994), has discovered a change in the way in which people gave expression to their grief between periods (a) 1600`s to 1700`s a time in which people strove to keep their emotions in check, (b) from the 1700`s, when the rise of emotion stirring religions brought with it an increase in emotive expressions, (c) the early 1800`s when women recorded patterns of their grief in diaries and letters which describe high level of emotional expression, to (d) the middle of the twentieth century when all these expressions had become non-existent.

In my understanding this change came about after people had discovered and accepted death as a natural and inevitable life event. Maybe the focus has also shifted from the deceased to the family which is experiencing loss, pain and grief. The death of a person means the loss of a profound relationship, which leads to a yearning to be mended or healed. According to Marrone, the wishes of the dying person were now filtered through the wishes and desires of family members and in turn to undertakers. It is believed that from about 1600 to 1914 there were two professions in Europe now almost forgotten i.e., the mute and professional mourners. The main purpose of a funeral mute was to stand around at funerals with a sad, pathetic face. A symbolic protector of the deceased, the mute would usually stand near the door of the home or church. In Victorian times, mutes wore sombre clothing, including black cloaks, top hats with trailing hatbands and gloves.

On the other hand, the professional mourners, generally women, would shriek and wail (often while clawing their faces and tearing at their clothing) to encourage others to weep. These people were commonly employed throughout Europe until the beginning of the nineteenth century. Professional mourners were used to help expedite the entry of a deceased loved one`s soul into heaven by giving the impression that the person was a good and loving human being, well loved by many.

Death had slowly changed from a personal psychological event to a collective, socio – cultural event with the family playing a central role in their loved one`s dying and death. The aim was to keep death out of sight, out of mind by employing a third party to take charge of the body immediately after the actual death, including all the work that goes with it till the body lies covered in a grave.

4.5.3 Invisible death

During the first half of the twentieth century, the western world has seen and experienced huge changes. This became apparent as a result of societal changes, technological advancement, and increase in life expectancy. All these changes resulted in pushing the family away from the centre of the death scene to the periphery as medical and funeral professionals took over the task of caring for the dying and the

dead. Even the site of the death bed changed. Instead of exiting the world at the warm family home, the dying is now exposed to die in sterile, fluorescent – lit hospital complexes. With this change it is believed also came a change in the death perspective. Death is not now seen as natural and inevitable but the role the physician played or lack of it through neglect is question all the time. The art of dying has been replaced by trained and qualified health professionals aided by heart, brain and respiratory machines. A very important fact is picked up by Marrone who says, “It is impossible now to know which of these little digitized steps real death is. Is it the one in which consciousness is lost, or the one in which breathing or the heart stops, or the one in which electrical recordings of brain activity flat line? These are the little “invisible deaths” that have replaced the dramatic deaths and ritual moments of old.

Marrone, R: 1997: 8

Death has become a hidden situation from the moment the body leaves the family home or hospital bed. Even the expression of grief needs to be controlled so as not to disturb or unsettle bystanders. During the funeral service, death is locked away, hidden in a coffin. I call this clinical but impersonal, far removed from reality. These three patterns of death has brilliantly showed us how the perspective on death and dying has changed over the centuries in American and European societies. The author will now focus on African perspectives.

4.5.4. An Afrikaner viewpoint on this debate

E. Oliver in his paper, “ *Die rol en taak van die kerk ten opsigte van begrafnisgebruike*”, argues that the modern trend of keeping death at a distance has a negative impact on Christians. Oliver`s concern is that the church is failing to provide sufficient information and preparation for church members by following societal patterns. This, the argument continues, may be the reason why people who are confronted by the trauma of death are not able to cope or find comfort and security in their faith. The writer believes that the historical development in mentioned funeral rights and the different viewpoints of churches have created a gap in ministry to the bereaved for which the author of the paper recommends a couple of suggestions. These will not be discussed at this point.

Lofland, L argues that funeral practices are generally informed by societal practices, cultural control and societal traditions. Lofland, L ; 1985: 173

Oliver maintains that this statement of Lofland indicates one of the important reasons why the church has become incapable of comforting bereaved mourners fully and comprehensively. This contribution by both authors will be extensively argued in chapter six. Concerning Christian funerary practices, Bardis believes that the Christian perspective is to regard death as a natural part of the lifecycle and that its funerary practices are deeply rooted and anchored in Judaism (see Gen. 50). According to him narratives in the Old Testament communicate to us that funeral practices at that time were expressions of loud, public wailing accompanied by fasting, weeping and the wearing of mourning clothes. The author also cites the usage of the Psalms to illustrate Jewish practices of that time, showing how they dealt with pain, mourning and loss.

Bardis P. D; 1981:47 – 89

Bardis reckons that in New Testament times, the practice was to cover the corpse in a cloth such as linen after which the aim was to dispose of it as soon as possible. Mostly tombs were used to dispose of the body. Only during the time of the early church fathers did formal, funeral practices become the norm. The funeral service started with conveying words honoring to the deceased, after which eulogies that depicted pain and loss brought about by death would culminate in words that would express comfort and condolences. Johnson reckons that up to the fourth century, funeral gatherings were regarded as festive meetings at which mourners were draped in white clothes accompanied by singing of less sombre songs while waving burning torches. Bardis adds that prayer content underwent change in order to include intercessions for the deceased as well. It is at this time that the sacrament of Holy communion was drafted into the Roman Catholic funeral service (the requiem mass).

Johnson, T. E; 2006; 37 - 50

The mentioned thanatologist believes that from the period of the middle Ages up to the 20th century much emphasis was placed on the awaiting or pending judgement to which the deceased had been commended. Consequently people developed a fear of death

because of the emphasis of awaiting judgement. The wearing of black clothes, accompanied by the chiming of church bells, replaced the previous festive ceremonies. A procession of mourners side by side with pallbearers carried the coffin to the church as they sang portions of psalms. The coffin was placed in the church covered with a black cloth. The service that followed was “the last rites of the dead “. That was said and portions of the phrases get repeated by the mourners. The Eucharist or Holy Communion became central to funeral services (the funeral mass). The celebrant pronounced absolution of the deceased and performed a ritual of sprinkling the coffin with holy water and anointing the coffin with a mixture of perfume and incense that was burned on charcoal in a thurible. At the graveside the committal was accompanied by saying of prayers as the body was buried in consecrated ground.

The Reformers however regarded funerals as special occasions meant for the family. This was in stark contrast to the practices already in use and initiated by the Roman Catholics.

NGK 2007; 142

The Reformers were unanimous in their teachings that the funeral ritual is designed for the surviving mourners and not so much for the departed with the result that it became forbidden to even mention the name of the deceased. The view was that such services should be used as an opportunity to or as a platform for teaching on death and dying, to enhance and foster the Christian faith in the risen Lord Jesus Christ.

Johnson T.E. 2006; 39

Concerning the development of funerary practices, Johnson maintains that the American Protestants introduced us to three types of funerals services, viz:

- A service that was focused on the good deeds and achievement of the deceased.
- A service that was focused on teachings on Christology in order to build faith.
- A service whose main aim was to focus on repentance.

Such developments in the Western world promoted societal involvement during funeral services, which resulted in some Protestant funerals being conducted from the family home. The aim was to increase community involvement, according to Aries.

Aries, P; 1981: 50 – 60

Anthropologists and Sociologists will argue that syncretistic tendencies can normally be

detected in human settlements. In other words, people emulate practices with which they can identify and that they like from one society and gradually introduce it in their own. Later in this chapter as African practices are explored, it will be discovered that funerals from the family home, supported by community participation and involvement, were not alien to African tradition and culture, but stoep funerals regulated by church promoted criteria are a new practice. This is precisely why a research of this nature is undertaken. Oliver maintains that since World War 1 many changes crept into the way funerals were conducted to motivate the practice of community involvement. One such development was the chiming of church bells to announce a death to the community. This particular western practice was still recently followed in the community of Ennerdale (South of Johannesburg) where the researcher hails from. In his argument Oliver agrees with Marrone that the advent of professional funeral administrators has completely changed the way in which modern society approaches and handles death. The undertakers provide a professional service covering the handling of the dead body, registering the death and other matters up to the facilitating of the actual burial at the cemetery or cremation at the crematorium. All these services provided to the bereaved illustrate Marrone`s arguments that death has become invisible. This I believe is placing a lot of pressure on the church and its ministry in helping the bereaved to accept and work through the reality of pain and loss. Unfortunately, when all is said and done the township stoep funerals have lost the plot as they add to the trauma and pain of the mourners. The author will now focus on African perspectives.

4.6. African understanding

The author believes that it is important to remind ourselves of the role ceremony and rituals play during funeral services. This remarkable, thought provoking aspect in funeral proceedings is noted by archaeologists. According to Joachim Whaley, “when excavating historic burial sites, we would find remains of animal artefacts with the remains of a body. That suggested to us that during the actual burial some sort of ritual or ceremony was performed with the slaughtering of an animal”. Whaley, J; 1981: 9 - 37

Africans believe that ceremonies and rituals have

cohesive, loving and bonding consequences on societies and this is actually true in the African world.

Humpreys, S.C etal; 1982: 1 – 45

This is what makes African culture and tradition so remarkable. The author believes that African culture is an expressive culture and we give expression to life-changing experiences, be it sadness, joy or difficulties through the passage of performing rituals or ceremonies. During such ceremonial or ritualistic events, the community is invited to come and share with a particular family either in their grief or happiness. This demonstrates the value and significance that African culture puts on community, hence our well known term “UBUNTU”, (humanity) loosely translated “a person is a person through other people”. People in African villages follow the practice of affirming one another. An African scholar, John. S. Mbiti, goes to great lengths to argue this point when he says “I am because you are..... you are because I am”.

Mbiti, J; 1986:85

It is very unfortunate that contact with the Western world has irreversibly affected the African world view. Instead of affirming what they found, the early missionaries became intent on eradicating African spirituality, rituals, customs and ceremonies in the name of promoting Christianity. To them these practices were too barbaric and heathen. J.W. Hofmeyr and J.G. Pillay eloquently elaborate this point “A further reason for the neglect of traditional religion has in the cultural superiority and great condescension which explorers and settlers of European origin showed towards the indigenous groups between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. Almost all dismissed what they observed of the ideas and religious observances of these groups with abhorrence and derision “.

Hofmeyr; J.W. and Pillay; G.J: 1994 XIV

According to them, these attitudes laid the foundation for the indifference, criticism and condemnation of African traditional religion which is still demonstrated by others today. Hofmeyr and Pillay argue that the writings, journals and reports of Christian missionaries bear testimony to the disgust shown towards African religion. They continue, “Such records provide invaluable descriptions and observations of local societies, but they are imbued with the conviction that the role of “ higher civilization”

was to rescue African societies from their “ savage ”, “ primitive “, “ heathen “ and “barbarous “ beliefs and customs .”

Some of the African villages are challenged in such a way that they are now emulating a western way of life. Mucherera, an African scholar, is so concerned about this as he says “The African context still struggles today with some of the rapid changes that took place due to colonization. The villagers are caught between worlds and cultural systems which challenge old patterns of life”. Mucherera, T; 2009:27

The effect of globalization has resulted in Africans being caught up between the traditional socio-economic i.e. urban (those following western concepts) and rural (following traditional way of life) societies. All these factors threaten and affect UBUNTU and influence ways in which problems are resolved. There traditional systems are alive and well in the rural areas, while in the urban areas, Africans operate from the western system, but still the yearning is there to follow traditional rites and rituals. The result is a culturally confused black African trying to make a living in the urban arrears.

4.6.1. African Religions and burials

It is to be noted that this research will focus on the customs and rituals performed by township dwellers in urban areas. It is also difficult to investigate the practice thoroughly since urban areas are multi – ethnic, making it impossible to explore each ethnic practice separately. An attempt will be made to concentrate on general consensus rather than to isolate an ethnic practice. Generally it is accepted in the townships that a funeral is a ceremony for celebrating, respecting, sanctifying or remembering the life of a person who has died. Funerary customs comprise the complex of beliefs and practices used by a culture to remember the dead, from internment itself to various moments, prayers and rituals undertaken in their honour. Customs vary widely between cultures and between religious affiliations within cultures.

George Smith, in his Article, *African traditional burial rites* argues that, In African religions, life does not end with death but continues in another realm. The concepts of “life” and “death” are not mutually exclusive concepts and there are no clear dividing lines between them. Many African religions believe that death does not alter or end the

life or the personality of an individual but only changes their condition. This is expressed in the concept of “ancestors”, people who have died but continue to “live” in the community with their families. George Smith; 2010; African Traditional Burial Rites

Many African scholars have gone to great lengths to simplify and explain this belief but I would like to cite Johannes Seoka as he expresses this crucial belief. He agrees with Smith but adds, “The role of the family therefore is very critical in the spiritual formation of those yet to be born, the living and the living dead (ancestors). It is in this context that moral value systems are taught and nurtured by the philosophy of Ubuntu which is embraced in the context of African cultural systems. To this end, those who have gone before the living are acknowledged as mechanisms through which faith experience is expressed. They are not to be confused with deity but *abaphumeleleyo balindele usuku lwe Nkosi* - loosely translated “The victorious are waiting for the day of the Lord, or “Those who have rested are waiting for the day of resurrection”.

Seoka, Johannes in Dr. Mongezi Guma and Dr. Leslie Milton; 1997:3

As I understand it, Dr. Seoka is attempting to structure the role and place of ancestors in the lives of individuals, family and community according to African belief systems. Concerning belief in the afterlife, nearly all African people have a belief in a singular Supreme Being, the creator of the earth. The dead are believed to be somewhere nearer to the Supreme Being than the living. The separation between the Supreme Being and human kind remains unavoidable and natural in the place of the departed, even though the dead are able to rest there and be safe.

Hexham, I; 1987; 39 - 43

A profound African scholar, John. S. Mbiti states that death is perceived as the beginning of a person`s deeper relationship with all of creation, the beginning of the communication between the visible and invisible worlds. He reckons that the goal of life to an African is to become an ancestor after death. This is why every person who dies must be given a “correct funeral”. George Smith in his paper refers to a proper traditional funeral with accompanying ceremonies. It is further believed that “if this is not done, the person may become a wandering ghost, unable to live properly after death and therefore a danger to those who are still alive. Giving the deceased a befitting burial

rite helps to protect the living from sudden death rather than to secure a safe passage for the dying.

Mbiti, John, S; 1969: 43

Most African people believe that rewards and punishment come to people in this life and not in the hereafter. This I believe stands in distinct contradiction to Christian eschatological teachings of future judgment, condemnation and rewards which many western scholars taught over the years. The author develops this argument by asking: if God is understood to be the epitome of divine love, why would He reserve punishment and condemnation for humans in the hereafter? What pleasures would God possibly derive from this? I tend to disagree with the scare tactics some scholars and preachers use, picturing God as a sadist who is waiting patiently to straighten out all the sinful and wicked departed souls in hell. As an African, I rather depend on God's love and God's grace and am confident that His supreme love will embrace me, a sinner, in the hereafter. Furthermore, according to Magesa Laurent, the African belief that is that in the land of the departed what happens there happens automatically, irrespective of a person's earthly behaviour, provided the correct burial rites have been observed. But, if a person is a wizard, a murderer, a thief, one who has broken the community code of taboos or one who has had an unnatural death or an improper burial, then such a person may be doomed to punishment in the afterlife as a wandering ghost and may be beaten and expelled by the ancestors or subjected to a period of torture according to the seriousness of their misdeeds.

Magesa Laurent; 1997: 53

This is fairly similar to the Christian teaching on punishment and condemnation of the wicked according to Revelation which reads as follows: "But the cowards, traitors, perverts, murderers, the immoral, those who practise magic, those who worship idols and all liars- the place for them is the lake burning with fire and sulphur, which is the second death"

Revelation 21 verse 8 Good News Translation

The author still maintains that he is relying on the love and grace of God and is confident that God who is love will surprise us all in the way in which He changes and pardons the transgressors. Among many African scholars there is a widespread belief that witches and sorcerers are not admitted to the spirit world and therefore they are refused proper burials. Sometimes their bodies are subjected to actions that would

make such burials impossible, such as burning, chopping up and feeding them to hyenas. Among the Africans, to be cut off from the community of the ancestors in death is the nearest equivalent of hell. The author just wonders when reference is made to “those who practise magic” in Rev. 21:8, if they can be equated to “the witches and sorcerers “in African mythology. If these people are to be denied proper burial, why do black church leaders do the same with defaulters by subjecting them to stoep or tent funerals, because arguably these are not proper burials (as will be seen in chapter six). How can victims of stoep or tent funerals be restored in the afterlife in relation of their status of becoming ancestors in the true African sense.

Although death is an undesirable event, it is believed to be the beginning of someone`s deeper relationship with the creator. African religions believe that anyone who dies must be given a proper traditional funeral with accompanying ceremonies. Having said this, one can understand the author`s unhappiness with stoep or tent funerals in relation to the criteria township church leadership use. If proper burial rites and funeral ceremonies are not met, it is believed that the dead person may become a wandering ghost (witless, senseless ghost in Greek mythology), unable to live properly after death and therefore a danger to those who are still alive. It is also believed that giving the dead a befitting burial rite helps to protect the living from sudden death. In some cases, the dead person is moved to the grave with a zigzag movement or a barrier is erected at the grave. In order to emphasize the importance of following the correct African burial practices, Smith reminds us that “ Some Africans have a custom of removing a dead body through a hole created in the wall of the house rather than through the door “. The hole in the wall is closed immediately after the dead person is removed through it. They believe that passing the dead through the hole means it will be impossible for the dead person to remember the way back to the living, since the hole in the wall has been closed. This might be a practice in the rest of Africa but not in South Africa as far as I know. The death of children is regarded as an evil occurrence and because of this many African families give special names to their children to stop the re-occurrence of untimely death. Similarly reincarnation, which refers to the soul of a dead person being reborn in another body, is a common belief amongst Africans. Whenever a child is born into the family, the father of the child makes enquiries from the elders of the family to

know which departed parent or ancestor has been reincarnated. They believe that the dead return to their communities. Sometimes reincarnations of the dead bear the name of the dead person. There could be many reincarnations of a particular dead soul in a family. These reincarnations usually have a character and physical appearance in terms of body size, complexion, facial appearance and mode of movement similar to that of the dead person; hence Daneel, Marthinus, an African scholar says, “In the Yoruba and Ibo ethnic groups of Nigeria, names like *Babatunde* (“reincarnated father”), *Yetunde* or *Iyabo* (“reincarnated mother”), *Nnanna* (“reincarnated grandfather”) an *Nnenna* (“reincarnated grandmother”) are commonly used for reincarnations of their departed parents or ancestors”.

Daneel, Marthinus; 1989: 36-51

If this is the case, the author wonders how some western scholars and early missionaries could have demonized the African by saying that Africans worship their ancestors. How can you worship another human being either in spirit form or in physical reincarnated form? It means *Iyabo*, *Yetunde* or *Nnenna* is a god and should be treated and worshipped as such. It just goes to show how dangerous and destructive it is to make assumptions about something of which you do not fully understand. The more the author thinks about this, the more he believes that “the worshipping of ancestors” statement made by Westerners was a deliberate attempt to dehumanize the African, a cunning, calculated plot to destroy the credibility and integrity of black people as human beings who also have been created in the image of God. In the real African spirit, the author just wonders whether surviving Westerners shouldn't slaughter an animal(s), invite black Africans to lead some sort of ritual which has a cleansing character in order to appease the living and the dead ancestors to forgive them for what they have done and said about African culture being pagan and barbaric.

Smith further argues that transmigration (metempsychosis) which is the changing of the person into an animal is also a common belief among a few ethnic groups in Africa but not South Africa. Some Africans believe that the dead reappear in the form of animals, such as lions, leopards or crocodiles which are regards to that ethnic group. They are symbols of terrible punishments visited on the dead or ancestors if they did not adhere to the moral values of the community while they were alive.

4.6.2. Burial and Mourning customs

Concerning African burials, Smith argues that burial rites of the dead are of great importance to Africans as they mourn for the dead and celebrate the life of the deceased. The dead must be detached from the living and should make a smooth transition to the next life as soon as possible. I see the church as playing such a role in relation to giving people respectful, dignified funeral ceremonies in church, apart from that service becoming a starting point in bringing healing and closure to the bereaved family. In African belief, if the complete funeral rites are not observed, then some of the dead will not rest and may come back to trouble the living relatives.

In most burial rites, animals are usually slaughtered, which also serve as food for the guests. According to Smith some ethnic groups like the Nguni in South Africa slaughter an ox to accompany the departed soul home and to act as a protecting ancestor. Others slaughter another animal sometime after the funeral (three months to two years and even longer) to signify the “home coming ceremony of the deceased”. As an ancestor, the person’s spirit should be welcomed home, since that is the ancestor who will look after and watch over the family. Some people use the hide of the slaughtered animal to cover the corpse, or place it on top of the coffin to serve as a “blanket” for the dead person (for hygienic reasons this is only done at the grave just before the coffin is lowered down into the grave). Traditionally the burial takes place in the early morning (before sunrise in some rural areas) and not late in the afternoon as it is believed that sorcerers move around in the afternoons looking for corpses to use for their evil purposes. Because sorcerers are asleep in the early morning, this is a good time to bury the dead. An Anglican Priest and former university lecturer Luke Pato is quoted in the *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, at 72 of September 1990 by Mariel Ford as he details a Xhosa perspective on African burial customs. According to him, it was customary in the early days to bury the Xhosa dead sitting or standing, accompanied by their weapons, their pipes, tobacco and various other personal items which they would need in the life after death. This belief, he argues, is evident in the fact that Xhosas refer to a funeral as *ukufihla* (hiding) as opposed to the disposal of the body. Pato further

argues that the mourners would cry out to the deceased, begging that he listen to them and ask the ancestors to forgive the ills of the living. The writer of the paper then quotes a scholar, T.B. Soga, who in his *Intlalo ka Xhosa* informs us why Xhosa people have always been horrified by the sight of graves: since to them, a grave was associated with evil and misfortunes. Importantly he says that this horrific image was erased by Christian teaching on resurrection and life after death. To him, “the dead who became ancestors, “through death became “the dead who will arise “ Mariel Ford, 2010

Smith also informs us that during the burial the immediate family of the dead person is expected to stay together on one side of the grave at a designated place. They are forbidden from speaking or taking any vocal part in the burial. It is customary to place the deceased`s personal property, including eating utensils, walking sticks, blankets or any other useful momentos in the grave. After the funeral the people are invited to the deceased`s home for the funeral meal. In the author`s community the young people have introduced a practice which they call “after tears”. This is a party after the funeral. They eat, drink, play loud music from cars and generally just have fun. The reason is to please themselves and to honour the deceased in that way. This is a practice that disturbs the elders tremendously.

Many people follow a cleansing ritual at the gate of the house of the deceased, where everyone must wash their hands (symbolically washing off the graveyard dust) before entering the house. Sometimes pieces of cut aloe are placed in the water. This water is believed to remove bad luck. Some churches that use holy water, sprinkle people to cleanse them from impurity at this time.

Because of urbanization and cross-cultural existence in community life, ancient customs are adopted in many South African urban funerals. When someone has died in a house, all the windows are smeared with ash, all pictures in the house turned around and all mirrors and television sets and any other reflective objects covered. When the author was growing up (in the early 1970`s) when a relative or even a neighbor died, we were even forbidden to switch on the radio till after the person had been buried out of respect of the deceased. Death was then respected and feared. During mourning, before the actual funeral, beds were removed from the deceased`s room and the bereaved women

(female close relatives) sat on the floor, usually on a mattress, as people came into the room to sympathize with them. The day before the funeral the corpse was brought home before sunset and placed in the bedroom. A night vigil then took place which often lasted until the morning. The night vigil was a time for pastoral care, to comfort and encourage the bereaved. A ritual killing of a beast (cow, sheep or goat) was sometimes made for the ancestors as it was believed that blood must be shed at this time to avoid further misfortune. In some communities children and unmarried adults were not allowed to attend the funeral.

Many African theologians believe that in Southern Africa the period of strict mourning usually continues for at least a week after the funeral. During this time the bereaved stay at home and do not socialize or have sexual contact. Some wear black clothing (although in some areas the colour has changed) or black cloths fastened to their clothes and shave their hair (including facial hair) from the day of the funeral because it is believed that life is concentrated in the hair. Having the hair shaved symbolizes death and its growing again indicates the strengthening of life. People in physical contact with a corpse are often regarded as unclean. The things belonging to the deceased should not be used at this time, such as the eating utensils or the chairs the deceased used. Blankets and anything else in contact with the deceased are all washed. The clothes of the deceased are wrapped up in a bundle and put away for a year or until the intended period of mourning has ended. Thereafter they are distributed to family members or destroyed by burning. After a certain period, the house and the family must be cleansed from bad luck, from uncleanness and darkness. The bereaved members are washed and a ritual slaughtering takes place. Traditionally a widow had to remain in mourning for a year after her husband`s death and the children of the deceased parent were in mourning for three months. Now recently the prescribed mourning period is determined by agreement of elders in a family.

Marthinus believes that a practice that has come distinct in African urban areas is the “home coming” ritual although it is still practised in some rural areas. A month or two after the funeral, the grieving family slaughters a beast and then pays a visit to the grave. They ask the ancestors to allow the deceased to return home to rest. It is

believed that at the graves the spirits are hovering over the earth and are restless until they are brought home – an extremely dangerous situation for the family. The family members take some of the earth covering the grave and put it in a bottle. They proceed home with the assurance that the deceased relative is accompanying them to look after the family as an ancestor. Some Independent indigenous Christian churches have a night vigil at the family home after the home-bringing. The theologian, Marthinus Daniel, describes the ceremony in some Zimbabwean churches, where the living believers escort the spirit of the deceased relative to heaven through their prayers after which a mediating role can be exercised by the deceased. Daniel; M, 1974: 65-74

This is a very interesting practice and the author would like to explore this process in depth. We will see later in this chapter that some Jews believe that they should bring earth in a bottle from Israel if the deceased could not be buried in Israel. This bottle of earth is then placed on the grave of the deceased, maybe to show the bond or attachment the Jews have with Israel, the land of their ancestors. Incidentally in the Old Testament book of ii Kings Chapter 5 verse 17, we read of Naaman doing a similar thing after having being cured by the prophet Elisha. Naaman asked to take 2 bags of earth with him from Israel back home to Damascus after the prophet Elisha refused to take any compensation for the healing act. Naaman did that out of gratitude for the healing he received in Israel. On this basis one can say that this practice of taking a bit of soil / earth from the grave or, for that matter, any place of importance is an old African practice. I see nothing barbaric in this, but believe it shows the importance we as Africans attach to the notion of our being “sons or daughters of the soil”. I think that the church can adopt or maybe modify this practice combined with Christian teaching, to help with the healing of mourners after the death of a loved one.

The emphasis is on the transformation of the traditional rite, while providing for the consolation of the bereaved family. This example shows how these churches try to emulate an old practice without neglecting the traditionally conceived need that it has served. Marthinus Daneel suggests that many of these burial and mourning customs still prevail in African Christian funerals and are vestiges of the ancestor cult, especially the ritual killings and the home-bringing rituals. Because a funeral is predominantly a

community affair, in which the church is but one of many role players, the church does not always determine the form of the funeral. The church leaders however bring confusion and are responsible for more pain and hurt because of the criteria they use to determine which funerals will come to church and which not. One can see that some of the indigenous rites have indeed been transformed and given Christian meaning, to which both Christians and those with traditional orientation can relate. Sometimes there are signs of confrontation and the changing and discontinuance of old customs, to such an extent that they are no longer recognizable in that context. The author believes that this is an ideal opportunity for the church to work alongside traditional expectations.

The author still maintains that African funerals are community affairs in which the whole community feels the grief of the bereaved and shares in it. The purpose of the activities preceding the funeral is to comfort, encourage and heal those who are hurting. Thereafter the church's responsibility is to see to it that the bereaved make the transition back to normal life as smoothly and as quickly as possible. This transition during the mourning period is sometimes accompanied by cleansing rituals by which the bereaved are assured of their acceptance and protection by God. Because the dominance of Christianity and Islam in Africa has resulted in the rejection of certain mourning customs, the funeral becomes an opportunity to declare faith. I still maintain that the church through its Practical Theologians should investigate some of the Ancient African rituals and ceremonies assess their relevance and significance and introduce them into our context, accompanied by relevant Christian teaching.

This investigation will now briefly compare mourning rituals and disposal of the body in Christian, Islamic and Jewish cultures.

4.7 Jewish concepts on death and dying.

As the author was surveying brilliant pieces of literature, it became apparent that most, if not all, of it was produced by western authors. In order to find a balance, the author consulted a South African Institution called "Jews for Jesus" who are based in Johannesburg. It was important for the author to hear the views from South African Jews because traditions and customs may vary from community to community. This fact

is also mentioned by Rabbi. D. Crayton who says, “Looking at the Jewish rituals of death and mourning, I do so as a Rabbi of a conservative congregation. There are however reformed and Orthodox Jews practising in America. I will try to reflect the full range of religious practice in American Jewish life, well aware that, although there are certain constraints of mourning rituals among Jews, each denomination approaches these questions differently”.

Irish, Donald, P etal; 1993:115

Karen Kelly, speaking on behalf of the South African Jews for Jesus Institute argues that, just as there is a Jewish way of life, there is also a Jewish way of death. Two basic considerations come into play when death strikes and the laws of death and mourning become applicable. One consideration involves the principle of “*Kevod hamet*”, treatment of the deceased with reverence and respect. The other involves the principle of “*Kenos he – cha*”, concern for the welfare of the living. Concerning the same two principles, Rabbi Crayton refers to them as “*Kavod hamet*”, honouring the dead and “*Nichum Avelim*”, the obligation to comfort the mourners. According to the Rabbi, in each of the specific rites of mourning, one finds present each of these values, as the tradition assists its adherents to show deepest regard for the sanctity of the deceased, while simultaneously helping them bring solace to the mourners. He further emphasize the fact that *Kavod hamet* (honouring the dead) requires that the body of the deceased person be treated with respect and dignity, that the body is considered vulnerable and alone. Judaism demand that those who remain alive must shield it, continually watching over the body until it reaches its resting place within the grave.

Kramer is of the view that, according to Jewish belief, death is not as a result of sin but is intertwined with the theory of reward and punishment. The death of a righteous person for that matter is viewed as a reward, since it marks the end to life`s struggles. He maintains that, in one of the Talmudic passages the sages say that each person has three partners i.e. the father, the mother and God. When death comes, the earth takes back its part (the body) and God takes back God`s part (the soul). Karen Kelly holds the view that Jewish law strongly forbids cremation. This is motivated by the deepest regard for the sanctity of the body and influenced by religious considerations. It is believed that the body must revert to its original state and be buried in the earth from which it came. Cremation is considered an unnaturally speedy way of disposing of the body of a

person who was once a beloved member of a family group. Furthermore she argues that Jewish law also looks with disfavour upon embalming because embalming sometimes involves mutilation of the body – an act of irreverence towards the dead.

Rabbi Crayton however adds his views on the preservation of the dead body by communicating Jewish disfavour towards routine autopsies. According to him, autopsies are prohibited as inappropriate and seen as a serious violation of the integrity of the body. In extreme cases an autopsy is allowed, and then only if it is believed that it can serve life – if it is perceived that performing such an examination will provide immediate useful knowledge that will help others to live, then only it can be performed..

4.7.1. How mourners should be treated.

Karen Kelly points out that Jewish law and custom lay down that the feelings of the survivors of a deceased should never be ignored. Their anxieties must be eased; therefore it is expected that the burial take place promptly, that is, within three days of death, unless there is compelling reason for delay. The same regard for the feelings of the mourners is expressed in the way they are treated upon returning from the burial service. Neighbours traditionally prepare a meal of condolence for the bereaved, as they otherwise might not even bother to prepare food for themselves. Visitors are urged to refrain from paying a condolence call until the third day after the burial, to give mourners a chance to express their grief privately and to collect their thoughts. According to the author, this practice is in complete contrast to the much valued African way of life of showing strong strands of community and UBUNTU. According to the African value system, from the moment of hearing of the death, community members are expected to stream to the family home to show support, express condolences and encouragement and to give strength to the mourners with their presence and prayers. In rural villages community members are even expected to bring with them grocery items such as tea, coffee, sugar, flour for baking of biscuits and the like. The aim is to feed the visitors as they come to convey their condolences.

Rabbi Crayton also highlights the concern for the mourners: “Jewish tradition has developed final rites in which surviving family members can engage. This is a way of

saying “final goodbyes” if the situation permits. In the Orthodox tradition, there is a rite of “confession” which enables the person near death to ask forgiveness for his / her errors of judgment and action, as well as to express hope for the welfare of those who will survive and ask blessings upon them. Within the Conservative and Reformed traditions, some choose to use the traditional language of this “confessional”, while others have replaced it with other forms of a “gathering and farewell” rite. Like the classical confessional, this more modern custom allows the family to say their final goodbyes and recite together prayers of affirmation and hope. “

Irish, Donald, P; 1993; 117

According to the above statement, Rabbi Crayton stresses the importance of family participation and involvement in burials. Retention of family ties is yearned after even beyond the occurrence of physical death. Because of this, the desire is always to have the burial take place in a family plot. He adds that amongst the most traditional of Jews, there is a deep yearning to be buried in the land of Israel. A few actually arrange for their bodies to be transported to Israel and buried on the Mount of Olives outside the ancient walled city of Jerusalem. Many, who are not so fortunate, according to the Rabbi, fulfil this yearning to be buried with the land of Israel through the custom of bringing some earth from that land. The family either places it in the coffin of the deceased or mixes it with the earth that covers the coffin.

Comforting the mourners is enacted in a number of different ways. Before the funeral, the family is excused from many other ritual obligations. They need to occupy themselves with regular prayers and other recurring rituals until the funeral has taken place. This is done so that they may attend to the funeral arrangements. The view is that mourners are too emotionally distraught to be able to devote themselves properly to the routines of normal religious expression.

4.7.2. The Jewish funeral

According to the Rabbi, the Jewish funeral service begins with the cutting of a garment or a black ribbon. The first rite symbolizes the individual being “cut away” from loved ones. For the children, the cut is made before the heart. For all others it is done on the

right side. At the funeral, psalms of comfort are recited, especially Psalms 23 and 90. These and other readings are chosen by the efficient or the Rabbi, after which a eulogy follows. The aim of the eulogy is to highlight the achievements and losses in the deceased life. This, according to the Rabbi, is a means for family to share their grief and memories of their deceased loved one.

Following the eulogy and the chanting of a slow dirge, known as “*el molei rachamin*”, the families slowly make their way to the cemetery for the interment. The funeral service might take place at a funeral home or at a local synagogue. At other times, the entire service might take place at the graveside, for the following reasons:

- (i) The advanced years of the deceased.
- (ii) The family anticipates a small turn out.

Many families choose to participate personally in the act of placing some earth upon the lowered coffin. At the graveside itself, some additional brief prayers are usually recited. Placing earth on the lowered coffin for many symbolizes a powerful way of accepting the finality of death, as well as a means by which those in attendance illustrate their concern for the deceased’s vulnerability by seeing to a proper burial. The author concludes, from this that all cultures and people of faith and even pagans or non-believers, have at least one thing in common, and that is to see to it that the deceased are given a proper burial. By proper burial we mean the following:

- (a) To show due respect to the deceased and the bereaved family.
- (b) To ensure that all acceptable burial rituals and ceremonies are being adhered to.

If this is done correctly according to cultural expectations, a smooth transition from this life to the next is guaranteed to the deceased. This also translates into a dignified funeral. From the above description, one can understand the concern the author has in the decisions the black church leadership is making concerning funerals of their members in relation to observance of certain criteria. Stoep funerals bring into question whether those types of ceremonies can be construed as proper burials or dignified funerals. On the contrary, they do not care pastorally for bereaved people. It will be interesting to see what the co – researchers are saying about this in chapter five.

According to the Rabbi, in the final act of the service the family rises and recites the “homecoming” prayer called *Kaddish*, which affirms life while accepting death. The prayer makes no overt reference to death but is instead an ancient formula praising God as the author of life and its wondrous ways. After the service, the family returns to the home for a special “meal of consolation”. Like Karen, the Rabbi says that the meal is the sole responsibility of family and friends, and includes symbolic foods like eggs, which are signs of life, death and rebirth in many religious traditions.

4.7.3. The period of mourning.

According to the Rabbi, the initial mourning period is one week called *Shiva*, Hebrew for “seven”. During these seven days mourners are expected to withdraw from regular living patterns and habits which might include:

- (i) A man not shaving.
- (ii) Men and women not wearing new clothes
- (iii) Avoiding personal pleasures.
- (iv) Couples choosing to abstain from sexual intimacy.

Each of these deviations from normal routine is meant to show grief by demonstrating acts of self-sacrifice, as well as to increasing awareness of the disruption to all life that death has brought. The period of *Shiva* is meant for mourners to express their deep grief and to bring family members together. The significance of this is to allow grieving family to share memories and stories they have shared with the deceased. It is believed that this narrative practice enables the grieving family to share their loss, anger, guilt or pain. The Rabbi believes that without a shadow of doubt, that this practice enables grief-stricken mourners to find healing and solace. The *Shiva* period ends with a traditional custom of saying prayers together, after which the mourners would rise from their chairs and then go for a short walk outdoors. One can now understand the significance that the “short walk” had for Victor Frankl after his release from the notorious concentration camp of torture, misery, agony, pain and death. By embarking on the short walk, he then embraced his freedom as he breathed in God’s fresh air. Symbolically this is a reminder to mourners to turn from preoccupation with their loss to their responsibilities

to the world around them. The Rabbi also acknowledges that the period of seven days of mourning is too short, but then introduces us to two more rituals that need to be followed. One is *Sheleshim*, or thirty, which refers to the first month after the funeral. The second is the entire year until the first anniversary of the death has arrived. In each period additional customs are observed. Again mourners are encouraged to avoid habitual pleasures, but instead to be engaged in sombre reflection and study. It is up to individuals to decide which habitual pleasures they will forfeit. This act is to suggest to them and others how death has altered their lives, that grief has caused them to feel somewhat estranged from themselves and from life itself and that it takes time and healing to permit one to return to a more normal pattern. In the meantime the mourners are expected to attend regular worship services in the synagogue. This practice of allowing the mourners in the congregation and presence of other worshippers is a commendable aid to restoring normality and healing for the mourner. As a pastoral caregiver, the author is quite impressed with this practice, because this is not the case in some of our black township churches. For as long as the widow is still clothed in black mourning clothes, some churches will not allow the widow to rise from the pews and to go up to the altar rail to receive Holy Communion together with the other worshippers. She has to remain in her pew and only after everyone has received, the priest is then asked to come down to where she is seated to communicate the elements to her. Everyone in those churches accept this to as the norm. The author has on some occasions questioned this practice, but no one could explain why this is done. The author just wonders how this can be helpful to a bereaved widow in the restoration process. The anniversary of the death has a special name called *Yahrzeit*, the *yiddish* word for “year time”. It is customary for the family to gather at a synagogue, to recall the deceased individual, to light a special candle that burns for 24 hours. Again this is a special time to reflect upon the life and gifts of the deceased. It is also customary that at *Yahrzeit*, family members visit the grave, erect a tombstone and dedicate it with the saying of prayers and brief remarks about the deceased. It is usual also to donate to those in need, often in the name of the person whose *Yahrzeit* is being observed.

As he looks back on all this, there is one thing that has left the author thinking – the remarkable way in which the Jewish tradition embraces life even in death. All the

mourning customs and rituals are designed to celebrate the life of the deceased, to treasure and keep dignified and sanctified this great gift of life which comes from God. The author will elaborate more on this in the concluding remarks but for now, an investigation of the Islamic tradition will be undertaken.

4.8. The Islamic tradition

In order to strike a balance by bringing across local viewpoints, the author consulted with local Muslim Council in Lenasia, Johannesburg. Therefore in this presentation, the author will attempt to create dialogue between the Lenasia Muslim Council and other academics on Islam. Academics widely believe that the three great Semitic religions namely Judaism, Christianity and Islam forms the monotheistic cornerstone of western culture. Interestingly there is one single strength of belief to the attitude towards death and life which holds the view that both is from God and therefore each is good in its own way.

The most important principle in Islam is the belief that there is only one God (Allah) and Muhammad is his prophet. They must chant the following words after mentioning Muhammed – “peace be upon him”. The first principle of every Muslim`s faith is Iman: to surrender (Islam) totally to the oneness of Allah and to honour and practise the teachings of the prophet Muhammad (570 – 632). To be a member of the Holy Islamic community (*Ummah*), one must acknowledge and worship Allah as the creator of all life and as its final judge, and one must honour, but not worship, the prophet Muhammad, because it was through him that Allah revealed his divine word in the Holy Qur`an. Everyone who professes the Islamic religion, has to abide by the following:

- To believe in one God, or Allah.
- To believe in the prophet Mohammad and the holy Qur`an.
- To believe that there is a day of judgement and a life after death.
- To make a commitment to fast especially during the holy fast month of Ramadan.
- *Haj*, to go at least once, if at all possible, on a pilgrimage to Mecca, the holy city.
- *Zakat*, to perform the duty of giving generously to poor people.
- *Jihad*, to fight for the sake of Allah and

- To pray five times a day.

Obayashi Hikoshi 1969: 120 -125

The governing of an Islamic state involves the whole community of Muslims and its law is the law of the Koran. This prohibits slavery, emphasizes charity very strongly, and places great importance on education regardless of gender, age and race. Prostitution, drinking alcoholic beverages, gambling, robbery and adultery are prohibited in Islam. Strong attention however is given to family life and the Koran is the guide. It is believed that Muslims that follow the Koran will have a happy and healthy life in this world and in the world to come.

Muslim Council, Lenasia:

2013

4.8.1. Islamic views on life, death and the afterlife

The accepted view is that every Muslim should have a happy life in this world and this situation should continue in the after world. Death is thus considered as a natural part and process of life. In Islam death is seen as a return to God. According to Imam Jafar Sadeh (a renowned Muslim scholar), human beings are created from two things: world and after world. Human beings experience the two worlds while they are still alive in this world. At death, the separation of the world's occurs and thereafter the person only lives in the after world. According to Imams supporting this view, the after world has both beauty and ugliness. Death to believers means to be rid of the ugliness of this world and join the beauty of the after world. For non – believers, death means to return to the ugliness of the after world. Muslims believe that the person will leave everything behind in this world and enter the after world alone. The only thing the person takes there are his / her actions, because these need to be accounted for. It is believed that human beings are aware of their death at the time of departure from this world. Those who are afraid of death are those who panic when they are aware of entering the after world and the hell it probably holds for them. William. C. Chittick, who wrote an article on the Islamic faith in a book published by Hiroshi Obayashi, maintains that the Koran and the Hadith (sayings of the prophet Muhammad) provide many details about the events that will occur after death. He goes on say, "We are told that on the first night in the grave people will be questioned by two angels about their beliefs and will be put into a pleasant or unpleasant situation according to their answers. They will remain in the

grave until the day of the resurrection when everyone will be mustered before God. The scales will be brought out and each person will be judged”.

Obayashi Hiroshi; 1964; 125

About the judgement, the Holy Koran states; “whoso has done an atom`s weight of good shall see it and whoso has done an atom`s weight of evil shall see it”.

Holy Koran 99; 7-9

Finally, people will be given everlasting places in paradise or hell. Concerning the same event of questioning the departed in the grave, Farh Gilanshah, in his article in a book edited by Donald. P. Irish, has this to say, “Muslims believe that when the body is buried two angels will come to the grave. They each have a voice like a thunderstorm and they have eyes like lightning. They will ask the buried person, “Who is your God? Who is your prophet? What is your religion?” If the dead body answers, “Allah is my God; prophet Muhammad is my prophet; Islam is my religion,” the angels will open the grave and pray for the dead person. They will ask that God forgive him or her and take the soul to the beauty and peace of the after world. However the angels will also ask the same questions of a non-believer. If the non-believer responds that he or she does not have a God, the angels will take the soul to the ugliest place where there are fire and snakes”.

Irish, Donald; P; 1990;140

It is believed that believers in heaven are aware of what their family members are doing on earth and can observe them from heaven but this is not the case with non – believers from where they are. A dead person who was a believer and is favoured by God will be able to make family visits more often, whether the family members are believers or not. Believer`s spirits will appear at the porch of the house as birds and join their family members at meals or other gatherings. The day of judgement occurs when there are no humans left in this world. All the dead will appear before God who will ask them questions about their lifestyles and faith. Judgement will be based on good and bad actions.

4.8.2. Death and death ceremonies

It is believed that the funeral ceremony serves to make the dead person ready for the day of judgement. This is a very serious concern for every Muslim, and more especially for those who live in countries where Islam is not the dominant religion. When the dying person enters the last moments, a close relative remains with him / her. The relative prays for God`s blessings and reads the Koran during the last moments. Importantly the person should be reminded through this about:

- The unity of God with the prophets, Muhammad and Immaat and to teach other tenets of the true religion:

It is believed that satan will be close to the person at the time of death but so too will angels. Though the dying person might not be able to see, talk or move, he / she can understand what is happening, and so it remains the relative`s responsibility to keep on praying until the last breath is taken. As soon as the relatives see that the person is dead, they must take the following immediate actions:

- Turn the body to face towards Mecca.
- Have someone sitting near the body reading the Koran.
- Close the body`s mouth and eyes and cover the eyes and face.
- Straighten both legs and stretch both hands by side.
- Announce the death immediately to all friends and relatives and,
- Hasten to bath the body and cover it with white cotton.

A slight variation is practiced by some according to the Muslim Council in Lenasia in that:

- The *Kalima* should be recited repeatedly to the dying person.
- People who are impure should leave the room.
- The room should be perfumed
- After death, the Koran should not be recited near the deceased before the bath has been given.

Furthermore it is widely believed that the dead person should not be left alone. If the death happens at home, the body should be taken immediately to the place where it will

be bathed (nearest mosque / Islamic temple). Before the bathing, a medical doctor should pronounce the person dead. There are always two people who wash / bath (*ghud*) the body – males always bath a male and females a female. It is considered a sin for females to wash a male's body or vice versa. Three kinds of water are used: water with leaves of the plum tree, aphorized water and pure water. If only one kind of water is available, the caretakers are allowed to wash the body three times in the water that is available.

4.8.3. Funeral ceremonies and mourning periods

According to the Lenasia Muslim Council, Muslims are encouraged to hasten the burial of the dead person because if he/she is a good person there is no reason to deprive the person of his/her abode in paradise, and if he/she was an evil person, then there should be no reason to keep such a person with you. Ideally the burial should take place between sunrise and sunset on the day of the death or the following day. At the time of burial, all the family members and friends gather with a religious person. They pray and ask God for forgiveness. No discussion go on, just crying and praying because it is believed that people should weep to release their sorrow. Some mourners may faint at the time of the burial and for that reason tea, sugar and syrup should be available to revive them with. Muslims believe that one's sorrow is released by crying, one's body system will be relieved and the process of coping and attaining peace can proceed. The body can only tolerate a certain amount of sadness, and so people in fact become their own healers. The funeral is both depressing and expressive, and even participants who do not know the deceased, will find themselves moved to cry.

According to the Muslim Council, during bereavement,

- One must control and exercise patience.
- It is unlawful to scream and cry loudly.
- It is also incorrect to tear one's clothes, to roll on the ground and jump.
- It is also incorrect to say words of lament in such a way which displeases Allah Ta'ala.

It is customary to show the face (view the body) of the deceased to some close relatives before burial. Close family like spouses and children are not supposed to view the body. The view is that death is most tragic for those close to the deceased.

In observing and honouring African burial rites, Great emphasis is also placed on the implications the death of the departed holds for the surviving relatives. It is not so much a matter of “bad luck”, but the surviving mourners should be protected from this bad spell of death that has visited them. If the burial rites/ ceremonies are not observed properly by following the expected rituals the surviving members are in danger of experiencing more deaths in the family, or a spell of bad luck may follow that family until appeasing rituals to the ancestors are performed. Through them forgiveness is being sought for something that was done incorrectly. The man who buries the body should be able to stand or sit between the body and the side of the grave and he should not wear shoes. The grave should face Mecca. Following the funeral ceremony, all the friends and family go to the house of the deceased. Usually a meal is prepared and the guests will be there for the whole day and night. Close relatives frequently stay for the entire week. During this time there is a great deal of crying and the immediate family will talk about their sorrow and the problems of adapting to their new situation. They will be constantly in the company of others for the entire week and are not left alone. Socializing is seen as a way of reassuring the relatives of the deceased.

According to the Muslim Council, a Muslim burial is very simple and does not include any custom of feeding or slaughtering of animals. They believe that Islam shuns customs and rituals of the past. One should not get caught up in the pressure of family members or community pressure or the tradition of the forefathers. One should be convinced that the teaching of Allah Ta`ala and his messenger, Muhammad (*sallallahu alaihi wa sallam*) are full blessings. They stress the point that no spirit of a dead person gives harm or benefit to anybody. Allah gives harm and only Allah Ta`ala can benefit one.

It is clear that the Muslim Council takes pride in the simple way of burying Muslims, a way that is not only simple but extremely cost effective. They don't use a coffin but instead a bier to carry the body around. The bier belongs to the mosque, the

community. After the bath the dead body is shrouded in three pieces of cloth, (for a male) and five pieces (for a female). The shrouded body is buried in a grave. Although other traditions may observe one or two other ceremonies in the memory of the deceased in the mosque, the Lenasia Council is adamant that no weekly or yearly ceremonies, rituals or offerings are made. They believe that the mourning period for a widow is 4 months and 10 days and mourning period for anyone else is three days only. It is believed that period should be enough to reveal any pregnancy if there is one.

Other traditions, according to the scholars mentioned the following rituals after the actual burial. On the third day a ceremony lasting several hours is, led by a religious leader in the mosque where friends and family gather to pray. It is believed that the more prayers are said for the deceased, the easier the departed one's life will be in the after world. Praying for the first seven days is crucial. After seven days a tombstone can be erected on the grave with fresh flowers. Again after 40 days, friends and family gather in the cemetery or at the house of the deceased to pray from the Koran and ask for God's blessings. Thereafter all, except close relatives change their dress to colours other than black, although widows will sometime wear black for a year.

Lastly one year after the person's death there is another ceremony to pray for and remember the deceased person. All through the year it is recommended to pray for the deceased, give money to the poor, and ask for God's blessings.

For Muslims, the ultimate goal of living is death through which a desirable transition to the other world takes place. The goal is to do well in this world and to prepare for the after world. The rituals concerning burials are down-to-earth, very simple to follow and non – material (cheap/cost effective) with great emphasis on prayers, cleanliness and purity. It is fitting to conclude with remarks from Farah Osilanshah concerning the simplicity of Muslim burials: "In contrast to the Muslim experience, the most important rituals relating to death and dying in western culture frequently involve displays of luxury and materialism. The one emphasizes cleanliness and purity, the other emphasizes clothes, "make up" and the conspicuous display of the deceased".

Irish, Donald, P; 1993: 143

The author will now focus his attention to the third of the great Semitic religions namely Christianity.

4.9. Christianity

Investigating this tradition is going to pose a huge challenge to the author because Christianity is practised throughout the world, except in some African Islamic countries where it is forbidden. To compound to the difficulty, one finds in a South African context a huge diversity in religious expression based on tradition, culture, denomination and local habitual communal practices. Because the aim of this comparative study is to compare how the three religions approach death in relation to (a) treatment of the dead body (b) comforting the bereaved mourners and (c) disposal of the body, the author will stick to his own cultural practices because of this huge challenge the Christian tradition poses. In the course of the presentation parallels will be drawn and comparisons made with other cultures. Generally it is widely believed and accepted that Christianity is comprised of three main traditions namely Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant. The crux of the belief is the same namely in a monotheistic God who has revealed himself through His son Jesus Christ and then through the Holy Spirit. The teachings of Jesus concerning the Kingdom of God on earth and the future kingdom showed how Christians should live and behave while still alive, but also of what to expect after death. The Christian faith challenges its adherents to develop good relationships with one another and with God. Jesus on numerous occasions spoke about the need to love and forgive, and to show compassion and humility and it is believed that even his death on the cross is a sign of reconciliation, - reconciling sinful people to each other and people to God. Apart from the call to live holy lives, Christianity in my understanding is also directing us into eschatology, The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, His second coming and the assurance of giving eternal life to the repented, committed, dedicated, sanctified and justified sinner have much to do with this. This basic introduction, I believe, shows the way in which Christians approach life and death.

4.9.1. Death and dying

Like most of the major faiths, Christianity holds to the biblical views that humans were formed out of dust (soil) and to dust we shall return. Genesis 3: 19

Over the centuries, therefore it was the practice of Christians, including both black and white Afrikaners to bury the dead rather than cremating them, a practice that is still very much followed in my community (Coloured, according to the former South African classification). White communities however promote cremations and are very much comfortable with it, whereas Coloureds, Indians and Blacks still cling to burials. When death occurs, the Anglican Coloured Christian will call for the priest to go and pray over the dead body. The Anglican prayer book has a neatly laid out service or ritual for the priest to follow in which the soul of the deceased towards the end of the ritual are commanded or directed in this way, “Go forth, Christian soul, on your journey from this world:

In the name of the Almighty Father who created you. **Amen**

In the name of Jesus Christ who suffered for you. **Amen**

In the name of the Holy Spirit who strengthens you. **Amen**

In communion with the Apostles, confessors and martyrs, and all the blessed saints, and aided by angels and archangels and all the enemies of the heavenly host. **Amen**

May you enter this day into the New Jerusalem, the abode of peace and dwell with God for ever. **Amen Alleluia**”. Anglican Prayer Book 1989: 522

Because of the eschatological value of this part of the ritual, the priest is called promptly after the member has died at home or in hospital. In the days and hours before death, family and friends would form a vigil around the sick bed to pray for and talk to the dying person. There is absolutely no restriction in who should lead the prayers and singing. This is a time for the family and friends as well as the sick person to prepare for the inevitable, but also to reconcile with anyone with whom there was some fall-out and to help the person to be reconciled with God. The saying of this ritualistic prayer poses a challenge when an unnatural death has occurred but the author will later in this section

explain how we deal with the situation. The dead body is then removed to the premises of funeral director or mortuary of the family's choice.

4.9.2. Mourning and bereavement

By this time other family members and friends will have been notified of the death and they will flock to the home of the deceased to express condolences, to pray with the family and to put into practice the ministry of presence. Some of the immediate family are freed to go and make arrangements for the burial. In the case of black funerals everyone needs to wait for the elders of the family to come before funeral arrangements can be made, which can take days for practical reasons of distance, finances, and the like. These arrangements on their own take a lot of strength out of a person because you need to consult with (a) The church leadership. (b) The funeral directors / undertakers. (c) Insurance companies for them to release money to finance the entire burial. (d) Consult other role players. (e) Do shopping for groceries because visitors and mourners who visit the family home for the entire week or in some cases two weeks, before the burial need to be fed. (f) Do shopping for new clothes for the close family members to wear on the day of the burial.

The family home is abuzz with mourners during the day, but when night falls, formal church services which we refer to as "services of comfort" are being conducted, after which light refreshments in the form of tea, cake, coffee and biscuits are served. These services, rituals or ceremonies are designed to comfort the bereaved family. In the author's community, the Anglican church normally provides three services (Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings), but in the townships the very criteria that are used in relation to the deceased's standing with the church, will determine the number of services held. If the church of the deceased fails to render services, any local pastor is invited to lead the services, because of the belief that continuous prayers must be said for the deceased and the mourners. Generally family members are encouraged to give expression to their feelings, either through crying, weeping or talking about the deceased and their attachment to him or her. The major arrangements concern the type

and amount of food to be prepared on the day of the burial, and the cost of the coffin. The tradition is to buy the most “decent” coffin that can be afforded. “Decent in community terms means “expensive”.

4.9.3. The day of the burial

A day or two before the actual burial, family members will go to where the body is kept in order to wash and dress the body. This is optional in other communities, but for township dwellers, this ritual is compulsory. Burials were always meant to take place over the weekend, either on a Saturday or Sunday, because during the week, most people are at work. Funerals are meant to be community affairs. Community members are expected to assist the family in bidding the deceased a last farewell. In terms of a synod decision, the Anglican Church will not conduct burials on Sundays.

- Because Sundays are our Sabbath days – a day on which our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead therefore this a day meant for celebrating worship, rest and family leisure.

These days most of the Christian churches conduct burials on Saturdays rather than Sundays. Proper burials for whatever reason are also accepted and performed on weekdays as the family wishes. In the author`s community, the funeral directors are asked to bring the body early on Saturday morning or in case of weekdays, the morning of the day of the burial for a short wake/vigil. During this time, part of the coffin is opened for viewing the face. In the meantime lay ministers will take a short service from the Anglican Prayer Book which comprised of prayers for the dead and the mourners, collections of psalms, singing of hymns or choruses and scripture readings. A short sermon may be preached.

In the township however, the body will come home on Friday afternoon or the afternoon prior to the day of burial for an all-night wake/vigil. Just after the body arrives, an ox or cow will be slaughtered to signify that the dead person has entered the world of the ancestors. Other African traditions see it as an accompanying ritual i.e. to accompany

the deceased on his/her way to join the ancestors. The meat will be cooked and prepared for the mourners to eat after the burial. Some traditions will wrap the cow hide over the coffin just before it is lowered into the grave. After the short service at home, the cortege/funeral procession will leave for the church, where the full funeral service with all burial rites and the administration of Holy Communion, presided over by an ordained priest, will be conducted. As already mentioned in chapter one and three, this type of service is seen as a dignified funeral by township dwellers. In the Anglican tradition, this is called a requiem mass. Anglican ordained priests are supposed to know the significance and value this funeral ceremony has for the deceased and the grieving families. In chapter six the author will attempt to show how the requiem mass complements the African notion of death, dying and the afterlife. The readers will now understand why stoep or tent funerals are not helpful or therapeutic. By conducting stoep or tent funerals therefore the township leadership is actually denying the deceased as well as the family the sense of the full blessings of God at a time when they need them the most. After the funeral service the cortege or procession proceeds to the cemetery where the final disposal (committal) will be done by the priest. Again this is a ritual intended to be performed by the priest as he she now commits to God what came from God in the first place – the dead remains of somebody who once lived. Depending on the family clan or tribe, additional cultural rituals will also be performed for the sake of the deceased and the surviving mourners. This is led by an elder of the family and will only happen once the priest has finished his/her part. Before the grave is filled with soil, close family and friends show their last respect by throwing soil, flowers or any other significant mementos into the grave. Once the grave has been filled, final prayers are said, the priest then pronounces the blessing and dismisses the mourners. When they return from the cemetery a basin with water, at times mixed with cut aloe plants, and a towel are put next to the gate for mourners to wash their hands. This is seen as a cleansing ritual, for in some way or the other, there was contact with the dead body. Everyone will then sit down to enjoy a meal together (meal of condolences in Jewish tradition). This is a time for fellowship, to unwind and relax. Others choose to start conversations in which they will chat about the life of the deceased. Recently the youth in our communities have initiated a ritual which they call “after tears”. To them it is

now a time for drinking alcoholic beverages and playing loud music from their cars, while others engage in dancing. This is a practice that is still new in our communities and we don't know where or how it originated. This is also a practice which does not carry the approval of community elders and the church. As church leadership, we still need to engage the youth in what their intention with this is, but for now, this is widely criticised and condemned.

4.9.4. Mourning period

Traditionally a person should mourn for one year (in the care of the widow for her husband); six months (the man for this wife) and three months the (children for their parents or siblings). Women always mourn for a year, men for six months and children for three months. Males are expected to wear a piece of black cloth on the right shoulder, while females wear full black attire. Now in the townships other mourning colours, like navy blue are also allowed. When each mourning period is over, family gathers at the deceased's home, together with the mourners, to enter some sort of cleansing ritual. A visit to the grave may be undertaken and fresh flowers put on it, accompanied by prayers. Before leaving for the cemetery, the mourners are bathed by family elders of the same sex and dressed in new ordinary clothes, after which the mourning apparel is burned. After the cemetery visit the mourners will enjoy refreshments in the form of cooked food together. This is also a time for social chat and comforting the mourners.

Now that a brief comparison has been made between different traditions, I will now summarise briefly in table form their similarities and differences.

4.10. Table form comparison

Jewish	Islamic	Christianity
(a) <u>Religious form</u>		

<p>Monotheistic: Valued role played by prophets.</p>	<p>Monotheistic: Valued role played by prophets. Acclaim prophet Muhammad as most important.</p>	<p>Monotheistic: Belief in Trinity, God the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit. Valued role played by prophets. Their prophecies are seen as part of God`s salvation plan which points to Jesus Christ as the Messiah.</p>
<p>(b) <u>Perspectives on life</u></p>		
<p>God is the giver and creator of all life. The quality of life lived is important, as it is a foreshadowing of life after death.</p>	<p>Allah is the creator of all life. Life should be lived in accordance with the pillars of Islam.</p>	<p>God is the source of all life. Holy and repentant lives are expected from believers. This life is a dress rehearsal for eternal life.</p>
<p>(c) <u>Perspectives on death</u></p>		
<p>Death is seen as a reward, since it marks the end of life`s struggles.</p>	<p>It is the time when one is going to begin accounting for the life lived.</p>	<p>Death marks the beginning of eternal life. Christian`s look forward to the resurrection of the dead.</p>
<p>(d) <u>Treatment of the dead body</u></p>		
<p>Hold a deepest regard for the sanctity of the body. Someone should</p>	<p>Body should be given compulsory bathing (Gushl) and shrouding.</p>	<p>Body should be handled with respect and dignity. It should not be mutilated or</p>

<p>always be nearby to watch over the body. Embalming, autopsies and cremations are strongly forbidden.</p>		<p>desecrated. Body is washed and dressed at funeral home the day before actual burial.</p>
<p>(e) <u>Treatment of mourners</u></p>		
<p>Burial should happen within three days of death. Mourners and visitors are encouraged to visit the bereaved from three days after the burial; grieving family need private mourning time.</p>	<p>Burial on the same day as death. The next day is a rare exception; visitors and guests can visit any time before and after the burial.</p>	<p>For practical reasons burial is delayed by a week or two after death. In most cases burial will be on a Saturday. Visitors and guests are welcome to come and stay as long as they wish to be with the family.</p>
<p>(f) <u>Perspectives on life after death</u></p>		
<p>Final rites and in Orthodox tradition, rite of confession is entered to. Aim is to prepare the dying for the life that lies ahead.</p>	<p>As soon as the grave is covered with soil, two angels enter the grave to question the dead person. After an unspecified time the soul is taken away and either taken to paradise or a place of torture. Those in heaven enjoy peace and frequently visit their families in the form of birds. Those in hell continue to suffer.</p>	<p>Body is buried and it rests from its labours. The soul is taken away to the place which Jesus has gone to prepare (John 14). Everyone waits for the day of resurrection where the righteous will be rewarded with eternal life in heaven and the wicked punished in fires of Hades. Note: This is a traditional</p>

		belief. Post-modernist differs and points to the grace and love of God in relation to future punishment in fires of Hades.
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<p>(g) <u>Mourning period</u></p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One week - devote yourself to piety and abstinence from all manner of pleasures. - thirty days after the death (remembrance ceremony) - First anniversary of the deceased accompanied by another ritual. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On the third day after the burial, a ceremony is held in the mosque - After seven days a memorial can be erected. - After forty days another ceremony is performed but this time at the cemetery. - On the anniversary of the death another ceremony is performed - Mourning period is actually four months and ten days. (For a widow) and three days only for anyone else. 	<p>Traditionally a widow will wear mourning clothes for a full year but a husband only for six months. And the children and close relatives for three months only. Because of urbanization and Western influence even this practice is disappearing. With the permission from in – laws mourning periods can be shortened. After the mourning period closes, a ritual is performed (ritual of cleansing)</p>

4.11. Preliminary conclusion

In this chapter, the author continued with a Literature search to determine how differing theories of thanatological insight could assist pastoral caregivers in creating a model for bereaved families. An attempt was made to compare three major Semitic religions of a monotheistic nature in relation to:

- (a) Perspectives on life and death.
- (b) Views of life here and in the hereafter.
- (c) Treatment of the dead body and mourners.
- (d) Mourning and burial rituals, with emphasis on funeral ceremonies.
- (e) Actual disposal of the body and mourning period.

Due to the fact that people, habits, customs and inherited traditions vary from culture to culture and society to society, the author thought it wise to explore how western culture over the years developed changing attitudes on issues of death and dying. It was noted however that in the earlier centuries, people embraced death and prepared for it in a more open, acceptable and comfortable manner. This model thanatologist Marrone calls “visible death”. Every single person was encouraged to follow the steps printed in *Ars Moriendi*, a simple booklet outlining easy steps to be followed for the deceased and mourners alike by way of preparing for the inevitable. It was then discovered that from the period 1600 to almost the end of the 1800`s perspectives on death took on another dimension as the emphasis changed from the dead body to the grieving mourners who are feeling the effects of death. People were encouraged to express their feelings openly by recording them in diaries, and/or by loud, bitter wailing and weeping in public. Marrone calls this practice “filtered death”, because it was the beginning of outsourcing the handling of the dead and dying body to professionals like caregivers in nursing homes and to undertakers. From the 19th century, death became hidden and invisible, as people were given specialized treatment in hospitals. With the help of much needed technological advancement, health professionals use an array of machines to try and keep people alive and at the same time to monitor recovery processes, if any. The downside of this is that the same health professionals who attempt to save life become the scapegoats, as they are blamed when a person dies. Death is now not seen as inevitable, and the efforts of the health professionals are scrutinized. Most people die in

hospitals and when that happens, other professionals are called in to handle the dead body right up to the time of disposal in the grave. It is as if humanity has lost its calling and duty to encourage family members to handle and to care properly for their deceased. This practice Marrone calls “Invisible death”. It is as if death is no longer experienced with all human senses of touching, smelling, caressing and the like, because funeral professionals do everything without the family’s involvement. It was shown that in some way this restriction makes it difficult for family and friends to find early closure. In my view they have viewed everything from a distance, as opposed to Marrone’s “visible death”. The literature research has further shown how the Muslims, Jews and Christians deal with this situation. Western practices have always influenced African practices since the advent of Westerners on the African continent. In some ways, the literature search has shown just that, but has also revealed the dilemma it has left our people with – cultural confusion. Our people struggle to balance what they have been exposed to with inherent traditional practices in relation to all the issues around death and dying. The church on the other hand doesn’t make it easier either, by promoting Western practices as a pre-condition or requirement for having a Christian identity. Proof of that is the reasons why the author is doing this research in the first place – the criteria the township church leaders use to determine which funerals will be conducted from church and which from the family home. The decision as to where the funeral service will take place also dictates who will conduct the funeral- the priest or a lay minister. Somehow these decisions degrade the African traditional beliefs about death, dying and treatment of the mourners. In the following chapter, after having done empirical research through field work, the author will attempt to hear first-hand from co – researchers how this practice affects them on all levels.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the author will give a lengthy report on the interviewing process, after which an analysis of the obtained data will follow.

Altogether twenty two people were interviewed who fall into the following categories:

(a) six families who have been exposed to stoep or tent funerals. In one case a husband and wife sat in, while in another case an adult daughter was joined by her mother but in most cases the co – researchers met with me as individuals. (b)

Five families who have experience of church funerals for their departed loved ones.

(c) Five churchwardens, some of whom are still in office while others are not.

(d) Six priests, of whom one is retired. Four of them are either Rectors or priests in charge while one serves as an assistant under a rector. This is important to know, because assistant clergy do not have the authority to take final decisions, especially where funerals are concerned. The person having the final say is either the Rector or priest in charge. The official interviewing process took the author six days to complete. Fortunately the author paid the co-researchers a courtesy visit two months before the actual interviewing process. The aim then was just to become familiar with my co – researchers i.e. to know their surroundings, to know them better, familiarize myself with their domestic situation and to meet other family members. In addition the purpose was to find out their interest in and experience of the research topic, and the like.

In the reporting process the author will not reveal the real names, but all the other information will be authentic as given by them.

5.2. Report back information

The first group is composed of those who have been exposed to tent or stoep funerals.

5.2.1. Profiles of participants of stoep funerals.

The first participants were the husband and wife combination. They come from Zone 11 in Sebokeng. The wife is unemployed while the husband is a pensioner. He took early retirement from work because of ill health. Both are Anglican members who worship at one of the local Anglican churches in the area. The husband has been Anglican since birth, while the wife joined after getting married to him. The husband is happy to be just a worshipping member of his parish, but the wife has joined the Mother`s Union guild, of which she is an active member. The interview was done at their family home in Sebokeng and the duration was two hours and fifteen minutes. Their son died and they will speak about his funeral.

The second participant was a female from Zone 10 in Sebokeng. She is single and self-employed. The house in which she lives belongs to her deceased parents. She is staying with other relatives of which we are not going to give the details. She has been an Anglican since birth and is currently worshipping at one of the local Anglican churches. She is also a licensed council member in her parish and is the chairperson of her church`s Mother`s Union guild. Her brother died and she will tell us about his funeral. This interview took us two hours and ten minutes.

The third participant is a female who is almost one hundred years old. Her adult daughter joined us in the interviewing session. It was only in this case that my interpreter, an ordained Anglican priest, was needed and only when the “gogo” (grandmother) spoke. Otherwise the daughter was quite competent in English. The “gogo” married her husband in 1951. That was the time she joined the Anglican Church, the church of her husband since his birth. She has been a Mother`s Union member for forty four years altogether and a member of her local parish for forty eight years. She comes from Boipatong. She is going to talk to us about the son`s funeral. The duration of this interview was two hours and twelve minutes. She lives with her daughter who is single and looks after six grandchildren.

The fourth interviewee was a male from Boipatong. He is going to talk about his wife`s funeral. Being a widower, he now has to raise three adolescents all by himself. He has been an Anglican member since birth and his family have been active church members

in leadership positions. He is just an ordinary worshipper in his local parish. This interview took us one hour and fifty three minutes.

The fifth person is the one in Case study two of chapter one. She comes from Boipatong. She is a widow and is raising three small children all by herself. She is Anglican because of her marriage to her late husband who had been Anglican since birth. She doesn't belong to any guild in the church but is happy to be just an ordinary member and "to worship with my children ". Words of co – researcher 2013

This interview lasted two hours and twenty seven minutes, as she related her story about her husband`s death and funeral.

The sixth person is an ordained priest in the Anglican Church. He is now working with the author in Ennerdale. His story is about his father`s death in Sebokeng. At that time he was already an ordained deacon in the church. The duration of this interview was one hour and forty six minutes.

5.2.2. Responses to questions

Set questions in questionnaire form were asked. The same questions were asked of all six participants. In total thirty two questions were asked (see appendix A). The questions were subdivided into themes or topics; therefore the responses will be reported on in that fashion.

(a) Relationship with deceased

Participant	Relationship	Year of death	Cause of death	Age
One	Son	2012	Sickness	32
Two	Brother	2010	Sickness	46
Three	Son	2011	Heart failure	52
Four	Wife	2012	Stroke	45
Five	Husband	2011	Sickness	39
Six	Father	2009	Sickness	67

(b) How the church leadership was notified of the death and what their responses were.

Questions

Who notified the church about the death?

To whom was the death reported?

What was the response?

Were you happy with the response? Explain

Who made the decision? How did you feel about the decision and why?

Responses from co – researchers: participant one

The mother of the deceased who is a¹ block leader reported the death to a lay minister who is a neighbour. The lay minister in turn reported it to the churchwardens and the churchwardens to the priest. The lay minister was the first representative from the church to visit the family. After prayers were said, the father of the deceased informed the lay minister about the family's intention to have the funeral conducted in church. That Sunday during the "notices", the churchwardens announced the dead to the congregation, encouraged the parishioners to go and visit the family and also announced that the funeral service would be in church. After the Sunday service, a group of parishioners visited the family to pay their respects. A lay minister led a prayer session. There-after the churchwardens asked to speak to the parents privately and informed them that the funeral would not be in church. According to them, they were only communicating that message from the priest. No explanation was given. The father of the deceased demanded explanations from them which they failed to give. Instead "the churchwardens developed an attitude ". Direct words of father – 2013

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1. *Block leader: four to five streets which are adjacent to each other are grouped together. One person is nominated who looks after all the parishioner in that subdivided area which is called a block and the leader thereof, a block leader.*

For the sake of convenience people are being encouraged to report anything to the block leader first.

Because of this, the father became angry. The author asked him the reasons for the anger, to which he replied that it was caused by frustration and disappointment and the fact that they could not explain why that decision was taken. The churchwardens just walked out because by then they were also angry. When asked how he felt about all that, the father responded, “A lot of pain and disappointment because the priest made that decision, but chose not to come and explain it to us”. Direct words of father - 2013

Participant Two

The co – researcher reported the death to a nearby lay minister who is also a family friend. The lay minister insisted that the co – researcher should speak directly to the churchwarden which she did. According to the co – researcher, the first question from the churchwardens was. “Does he have a ticket?”²

She couldn’t answer the question because according to her, the brother did not live with her, and only he and his wife would know that. She admitted however that her brother was not a regular worshipper. The churchwardens advised her that, because of the already mentioned fact (non – church attendance and non – payment of DG), the funeral would be from the family home (stoop or tent funeral), and not from the church. To convince her about the facts, he called the other churchwarden. He came over to the home of the first churchwarden because that was where the meeting was taking place. They suggested that she hire a local hall for the service, because they anticipated that a large number of mourners would attend. The deceased was a teacher at one of the local secondary schools. They ended the discussion by expressing their own helplessness since the deceased “did not pay his church dues “. Direct words of participant - 2013 Asked by the author how that made her to feel, she expressed “hurt” and “pain”. According to her, Parish Council members will always approach the priest to influence him/her negatively against parishioners especially if the council members

2. *Ticket: Dedicated giving (DG) system used in the townships. If you regularly pay your ticket, than surely you appear in the record books.*

Do not have good relationships with the person. She refers to this behaviour as “discriminatory practices.”

Participant three

The sister of the deceased, who sat in during the interviews, acted on behalf of her elderly mother who is almost one hundred years old. The sister was an active choir member at that time. She reported the death to the nearest churchwarden. The churchwarden acknowledged the report and promised that he would inform the rest of the parish council. They promised to help the family “but only if the funeral is conducted from the family home”. When she asked why from the family home, the wardens responded that the church attendance of the deceased was non – existent. Her mother accepted every decision from the church without questioning. Asked how she felt about the decision, she expressed her disappointment and hurt because, according to her “the church wardens knew my brother very well”. He used to sing in the church choir. As a family they had to accept the decision because the elderly mother asked them to do so.

Participant four

The uncle of the widower informed the church of his nephew`s wife`s dead. The uncle knew the priest very, well as they were once both employed in the same secular factory. Because of this, the uncle informed the priest directly after which the priest complained to the parish council about the uncle`s alleged behaviour. According to the priest he felt that the uncle was “bullying him “into conducting the funeral service in church. The priest phoned the sister of the deceased, who is also a council member, to complain about the uncle`s “bullying tactics “.

Direct words of participant - 2013

the participant then admitted to the author that he and his wife were not regular worshippers. This came after the wife had a “fall-out with someone from church “

Direct words of participant - 2013

He then went on to say that they expected a negative response from the church (indicating a refusal of a church service) because, according to them, they knew “the practice of the church in the township”.

Direct words of participant – 2013

Asked about how he felt after the decision of the church was communicated to them through a church warden, he responded, “embarrassing and painful, but what else could we do? “.

Direct words of participant - 2013

they eventually hired a local community hall because in his words, “the house and yard are very small. There`s no space.” It is to be noted that the family home is only two streets away from the church. He testified that he was still struggling with this disappointment because no one explained to him who actually made the decision.

Participant Five

A family member informed the church about the death through a churchwarden. He came to visit and promised the family that the funeral would be in church. On the Sunday, many of the fellow parishioners came to sympathize with her and her family on the husband`s death. The church council members also arrived and once more assured her that the funeral would be from the church. Even late on the Sunday afternoon, the priest also arrived and confirmed what was already said. During the week, while the widow was preparing for the funeral on Saturday, three church council members came to see her. One member said that the funeral could not be conducted in church because she did not know the deceased. Two others confirmed that they knew the deceased but the one member insisted that she did not know him or his wife and because of that the funeral must be from the family home – She cited non-attendance on the part of the deceased as the reason for her decision. In that meeting the initial decision was changed: the funeral would no longer be done from the church but now from the family home. The widow then started to sigh and then cried uncontrollably. After what might have felt like hours she said, “I asked them to call in father Themba. He knew my husband. My husband was always talking about how he enjoyed church services conducted by Fr. Themba.”

Direct words of participant - 2013

Even Fr. Themba could not persuade them because, resulting the widow`s request, he came to explain to the council members all he knew about the deceased. He tried to explain to them how regularly the deceased attended church services during his time at the parish. Asked about how that experience made her feel, she didn`t answer, but`s only shook her head and sobbed bitterly.

(c) Deceased involvement and history in the church

Questions

For how long has the deceased been an Anglican?

Was the deceased baptized and confirmed as an Anglican?

Was the deceased a regular worshipper in church?

Discuss the involvement of the deceased with the church such as in prayer meetings, home cells, fundraising, and the like.

How often did the deceased make financial contributions to the church in the form of DG or donations?

Responses from Co – researchers: participant one.

Their son has been Anglican since birth, was a baptized and confirmed church member. When he was still attending school, he used to be an active member of the church`s Youth Guild. The deceased used to be a regular worshipper until he went to Rustenburg where he worked in the platinum mines of Marikana. The parents thought that he might have contracted one of the diseases in the mines because by the time the mine management laid him off, he was struggling to breathe. When he got home, he was largely confined to bed, still battled to breathe and was in and out of hospital. The desperate father tried to give him some African herbs, to help with the respiratory problem, but he just got weaker by the day. The parents were very worried and concerned about his health. The deceased at that time was the breadwinner in the house. His death was a shock. And his illness and death traumatized the family tremendously.

Participant Two

Her brother has been Anglican since birth. He was a baptized and confirmed Anglican. Before the divorce from his first wife he used to be a regular worshipper and even sang in the church choir. The churchwardens knew him very well. As a school teacher he even taught one of their children. The co – researcher is not aware of the nature of her late brother`s financial contribution to the church. He lived with his “second wife “in Sebokeng where they were renting a back room. The owner of the property refused to let them use the property for the entire funeral proceedings and so she had to make her house available. There must be a place where the mourners visit to pay their last respects. That is why she and the “second wife” sat on the mattress³. Without any warning she talked about this “apartheid policy” of the church. When asked to explain more she remarked that “this policy is working for some and against others”, as she was referring to the inconsistencies of the criteria or policy under investigation.

Direct words - 2013

Participant Three

“Gogo`s” son has been Anglican since birth, was baptized and confirmed and even married in that church. Mother and daughter admitted that the deceased was not a regular worshipper although the “gogo” believes that according to her knowledge, everyone is being “ paid for “ on her “ ticket “.

Participant Four

The participant has been married for thirteen years to his late wife. Since the marriage, she has been an Anglican member. He is not sure about baptism and confirmation, but after the baptism of their children, the wife was a regular worshipper until a “fall out with a fellow parishioner. Asked to explain more about the “fall out “, he kept quiet for a long

3. Mattress: as already explained in chapter four, that is the designated place for the chief female mourners in African culture.

time and then said “I refuse to talk about that.....the way these church people spoke badly about my wife The gossips and how they conjured up ugly stories by spreading lies about my wife. That was too painful ” .That is why he didn’t attend church any more. Direct words - 2013

Asked about whether anyone attempted to intervene to bring mediation he said that he spoke to his mother who was a lay minister and asked her to fetch the other church people involved (referring to clergy and lay ministers) . No one came to assist them. They did not make regular financial contributions.

Participant Five_

The late husband had been Anglican since birth. He was a baptized and confirmed Anglican. She became Anglican after the marriage and then spontaneously said, “I am considering going back to my own church “. Words of participant - 2013

the husband was a regular worshipper right up to the time he fell ill. When the children were to be baptized, he was the one who attended the compulsory preparation classes meant for parents and godparents. At work he was asked to take early retirement. She continued to work, reported the case of her ailing husband to the church (mentioned it to a lay minister). The church never came to see him except that the priest came once, gave him communion reserved for the sick and anointed him. After the arrival of the new priest all church visits dried up. She continued to attend church regularly and also made the expected financial contributions.

(d) Pastoral Care given to family up to the funeral service

Questions

After having notified the church about the death, who representing the church, visited the family?

Was there any form of prayer session arranged by the church?

Did clergy from other churches visit and what contributions did they make?

How do you feel about the support or lack of support given to you by your own church?

(e) Responses from Co – researcher

Participant One

Parishioners came regularly throughout the week even the junior assistant priest. With each visit, prayers were said. The junior assistant priest listened to their story of pain and disappointment. They wanted to know from him who instructed the churchwardens to change their decisions. The assistant had to explain that the decision came directly from the Rector. His reason for a stoep funeral was that he did not know the deceased. The assistant tried to explain to him the work situation of the deceased in Rustenburg but also reminded the Rector that he (Rector), was still new in the area and therefore he might not have known the deceased. But the Rector was adamant that the deceased was not known and even said that the wardens could testify to that. According to the assistant “The Rector said that nothing would change his mind, he had already made the decision that the funeral would be in church and told me to tell you about his decision“ .

Words of assistant - 2013

According to the parents, many ministers of other denominations came on a daily basis and they would say prayers to uplift the family.

Participant Two

Various church representatives came to sympathize with her as she was seated on the “ mattress “. To her surprise, even the churchwardens came every second day and each time visitors would pray with her. She is forever grateful to other clergy and members of other denominations who came to pray and show their respect. She became scared and did not contact the senior priest to talk to him about what was happening. Instead the junior priest visited the family to express his deep regret at what was happening. According to her, he felt helpless because the churchwardens had spoken. She related to me a similar practice from the Mother`s Union Guild. According to her, if the member was behind with monthly and annual subscription fee, the other members were not obliged to visit you or journey with her in the time of death. She was being isolated, because she was financially indebted to the organization or had strayed

from church attendance. Even at her funeral, they would not wear their uniforms but would attend as private, individual members of the parish.

Participant Three

Guilds representing the church came to sympathize and hold prayer sessions. Not a single clergy person came to visit them during that entire week. Instead clergy from other denominations came to support them. The family felt hurt and disappointed at the lack of support from their own parish. The elderly “gogo” (old lady), the matriarch of the family, appealed to her relatives to accept the situation and not to confront any member of the church leadership. The gogo’s daughter who sat in the interviews related to me how confused she was, because in 2005, when her sister died, the same church operated differently. Although the deceased’s sister at that time did not attend church, the priest came to visit them, made the funeral arrangements with them at the family home, allowed the service to take place in church, and conducted himself. He went to the cemetery with the family to do the committal and even after the funeral came back to enjoy refreshments with them. He did all this without asking any questions. It is to be noted that the author was the priest of that parish at that time she is referring to. This time with her brother’s death, she continued,” was a different, painful and embarrassing situation”.

Participant Four

The participant enjoyed the frequent visits from many church people (fellow parishioners). They supported him with their presence and prayers. Even his own priest visited and said prayers, but most of the time clergy from other denominations took charge of that. In response to a question, as to what in his view was actually the reason for the support shown by so many of his own church people , he replied, “ I guess, because my mother was a long serving lay minister at this church”.

Words of interviewee – June 2013

Participant Five

Her own church members supported her throughout that week with prayer sessions. Many clergy from other churches also visited and said prayers. The support from her own church members encouraged her but she remained saddened because of the decisions that were taken to have her husband buried from the family home. She lamented, “It looks as if he was thrown away “.

(f) Funeral Service

Questions

Where did the funeral service take place?

Who conducted the service?

Can you remember any elements within the service that were of comfort to you?

Was the service well attended by worshippers from your own parish?

Would you have preferred that service to be in church? Why do say that?

Did the funeral service help you to deal better with your loss? Why do you say so?

Responses from participants

Participant One

A local community hall was hired because the space was too small at the family home. A pastor from another church was asked to conduct the service. No clergy person from her own church attended, but only a few parishioners. The family will never forget the contributions that were made by the six pastors in attendance. According to the parents, they felt important and loved to have the services of so many Pentecostal pastors. Their honesty and willingness to help brought a great deal of comfort to them, but it could not make up for the disappointment from their own church. They felt abandoned. Their preference was for the service to have been in church because they are members, and their son was a baptized Anglican. According to them, the funeral service was “ok” but the events leading up to the funeral had forever scarred them.

Participant Two

They hired a local community hall because many people were expected. One lay minister conducted the funeral. This particular person was their neighbour and family friend. She can't remember any elements in the service that brought her comfort but she was impressed by the brave ministry of this lone lay minister. Other parishioners attended the service but still they would have liked the service to have been in church. Her reason for that was, that the brother was baptized in that church. She also mentioned that there was a time when he was quite active in that church. Besides, her grandfather was one of the founder members of that church and performed a lay ministry service to the community on behalf of the church. She still regards this church as their spiritual home despite the setback. The funeral service did not help her to deal with the loss, because of "bad attitude" of the church leadership.

Participant Three

The funeral was conducted from the family home by a couple of lay ministers. They could not afford the extra expenditure involved in hiring a local community hall. They will always remember the music items rendered by the church choir because they sang their brother's favourite hymns and the choruses that he used to sing and enjoy at a time when he was still a choir member. The funeral service was well attended by members of her own parish. As an elderly person the gogo does not really have a preference as to where the service should have taken place. According to her, whatever the church says, she will obey and respect. They are not sure whether the funeral service brought some elements of healing to them.

Participant Four

The funeral service took place in a hired community hall. The service was conducted by the lay ministers. The participant said that, considering that the wife did not attend church any longer because of the "fall out" with one parishioner, the lay ministers did a "pretty good job, in his view. Many parishioners from his own church attended. He would have preferred the service to be held in church, because the priest who was there before (referring to the author) did not choose. Everybody got the same treatment,

He said, referring to the practice of the church at that time. “ We saw it and realized how the church grew”.

Words from interviewee – June 2013

The funeral service did not help much, but just to see familiar faces in an unfamiliar surroundings, according to him, brought some comfort.

Participant Five

The lay ministers came to the family home from where the funeral was conducted. When the service started the body was removed from the bedroom where it had lain the whole night and was placed inside the tent from which the service was conducted. They would have preferred the service to have been in church. She can't remember any elements within the service that were of comfort to her. She is still sad because her brother was a member of that parish and deserved to be buried from the church.

(g) Follow - up involvement of the church

Questions

After the funeral did the priest or the church wardens ever pay you a visit?

Are you still in mourning?

How long was your mourning period going to be?

In which way did the church assist you in your mourning period?

Do you have any suggestions that will help the church to improve its care to any other mourners?

Participant One

After the funeral, no one from the church visited them. They are not in mourning anymore for they have only observed a mourning period of three months. When asked why that was so, they replied that the custom and tradition demanded that. Though they were not in mourning any longer, they were still going through endless grieving for their son and needed closure. Their intention was to erect a tombstone for the departed son and they were hopeful that that ritual might bring about the healing and closure they needed. Sadly the pending unveiling ceremony was causing them frustration because they would like their own church to lead the service but would also like to involve the

other six pastors who buried their son. When asked to give suggestions on how the church could improve the way in which they show care, the following were mentioned:

- (a) Mourners should have direct access to the priest.
- (b) Grieving family members should be free to bargain and negotiate with their priest concerning a funeral service.
- (c) Rectors should visit grieving members and not send a delegation or individual to make funeral arrangements.

Participant Two

After the funeral some parishioners came once or twice to visit in the week after the funeral. They are not in mourning any longer but they are still grieving for their brother. They only observed a one month mourning period because “there are no longer hard and fast rules in the community concerning this “

Words of interviewee

She feels that she still need help to ease the pain of the brother`s death, but is still angry with the church and is scared to face another disappointment. Eight months after the death and burial of her brother, her twin sister passed away. Her experience with her brother`s death prevented her and the family from approaching the church to do the burial. She put her precarious position in this manner, “ We were not up for it, to receive the same treatment twice” .

Words of interviewee

Apparently the sister, although a baptized and confirmed Anglican, was not a regular worshipper and according to her, because of that, she knew the church would react in the same manner they did to the brother`s death. When asked to give suggestions on how the church could improve its caring ministry, she had this to say:

1. she feels that the priest is the “leader” and by virtue of this position should make the final decisions regarding funeral services.
2. The church wardens should not be given the authority to make such important decisions.
3. The church leaders should be given more education regarding “support to people in need“

Words of interviewee - 2013

Participant Three

Only the Mother`s Union visited during the week following the funeral. The entire family only observed a one month mourning period and their explanation was, “ Because it was a child of the house , one month was sufficient”. They still grieve for the son that was buried and no one is helping them in that process. When asked how the church can improve its care, they said:

1. they feel that the church has a responsibility to bury every baptized member irrespective of his/her status or standing.
2. The church should treat its members in a better way.
3. The granny`s daughter (co – interviewee) got married and joined her husband`s church, The AME. She wants to come back to the Anglican Church, despite the treatment they have received. She communicates this sense of belonging in this way, “I was brought up in this church. This is the church where I belong” .

Interviewee`s words

4 Referring to the criteria used to ascertain which funerals to come to church and which should be conducted from the family home, the daughter alleged that the church is not doing the right thing. When asked to elaborate on “failing to do the right thing “, she responded “ In baptism the person is welcomed into the church publicly; so at death, the person should be given a proper farewell in the church where he/she was welcomed“

Words of interviewee.

Participant Four

Only the lay ministers came to pray with him and the children the day after the burial. He then attended church for a while after the funeral but lost interest because the church had long forgotten him. He and the close relatives set aside only three months to engage in obligatory mourning. The reason for this was that the cultural expectation in the community had changed. People have become relaxed about this. When asked to elaborate on that, he said that the elders in families have all died and there is no one left to exert pressure that these rituals should be observed. The church is not playing any

part in the mourning and grieving process. When asked to suggest ways in which the church can improve its pastoral Care, he replied. “Sermons should not be judgemental and condemning on funerals of defaulters. Instead the church should uplift and comfort people. The church should be encouraging” . Words of interviewee.

Participant Five

Only a few people came to pray with her two days after the funeral. She observed a mourning period of ten months and the motivation was, “because it was my husband” . During those ten months of mourning, the church leaders and laity did nothing to assist and support her. When asked to suggest ways in which the church could improve its care she responded, “The church must treat all people equally” .

5.3. Exposure to church funerals (Participants in church funerals)

This second category consisted of people who were exposed to church funerals. The same set of questions were put to them as to with those exposed to stoep or tent funerals. What follow is only the recorded responses.

5.3.1. Profiles

The first participant was a pensioner. She was to narrate the story of her husband`s death and burial. The husband became sick and died in 2007 at the age of 56. Her brother in law informed the church about his death. He reported to a lay minister and presumably the lay minister informed the rest of the church leadership. She is from Boipatong and completely happy about the way the church journeyed with her. When asked to explain “happy and completely satisfied “, she responded, “The priest and the church wardens came to see me during the week before the actual burial. The priest made all the arrangements with me and the others”, by “others,” she is referring to chief mourners on the mattress – close female relatives of her own and of the deceased. She has been a long standing member of the Mother`s Union guild. The entire interview took twenty five minutes.

The second participant was also a pensioner from Boipatong. His story is about the death and burial of his wife. She died in 2006 at the age of 55 after a spell of illness. A

relative informed the churchwardens of the death. He does not belong to any guild but is happy just to be an ordinary member. Like many people, he says that he is not a regular worshipper, although he has been in the parish since 1963.

The third participant was a widow who was to relate the story of her husband`s death and burial. She is a pensioner from Boipatong and has worshipped in that parish since her marriage in 1959. After the death and burial of the husband she decided to join the Mother`s Union guild. Her reasons for doing so were “to give back to God and the church because the church was so good and supportive“ at a time she needed them. The entire interview lasted twenty five minutes. She insisted that we continue with our interviews but report back to her house between 1 pm and 1:30 pm for lunch. (At that time it was 10:45). According to her, since the husband`s death and burial, she views clergy through different lenses and will use every little opportunity to spoil them or just to do something for them. The husband died in 2005 of a heart attack. He was 72 years old.

The fourth participant was a pensioner from Sharpeville. He has been a member of his church since 1989. He does not hold any leadership position in the church and considers himself a regular worshipper. This interview lasted forty minutes.

The fifth participant was a widow from Boipatong. She narrated the story of her husband`s death and burial. She is a member of the Mother`s Union Guild and a homemaker (housewife) by profession. Her husband died in 2005 after a short spell of illness. He was 45 years old. The interview lasted twenty five minutes.

5.3.2. (B) How the church leadership was notified and what was the response.

Participant one.

The brother in law informed the church through a lay minister. The churchwarden and priest came to finalize all the arrangements with the family and then prayed with mourners sitting on the mattress. The other church people came every day and supported the family with prayers. She is extremely happy with all the arrangements the priest and church wardens made with her.

Participant two

A relative informed the church about the death. Members representing different guilds visited him and supported him through prayer sessions. One day in the week the priest and churchwardens also visited. The priest made all the funeral arrangements with him. When asked to respond on the decisions made concerning the burial he answered, 'I am the most impressed widower in the world. I got all the support from my priest and church people. That is very wonderful' (sic) Exact words of interviewee.

Participant three

A relative informed the church of the death through a lay minister. She was "very impressed" to see the priest there in the week before the funeral. He visited with his church wardens. The priest made all the funeral arrangements with her and the family. She is very happy with the response from the church.

Participant four

He informed the church himself on both occasions. His wife died in 2007 and his son in 2005, both from natural causes. His son was 36 years old and his wife 57. Many parishioners representing all the guilds came at different times and days to support him. Each time the group visiting would pray for them. He was surprised in 2005 (after the death of the son) to have the priest in his house. He was even shocked to hear the priest making funeral arrangements for his son who had been out living and working in Mafikeng for four years. He never expected the priest to do that but for the wife's burial in 2007, he anticipated a visit from the priest. He is extremely happy about the support given to him by the priest and laity on both occasions when he faced death of his relatives. He cannot contain his excitement and gratitude for what the priest has done.

Participant five

The participant informed the church herself. Many people from the church came to sympathize with her by offering prayers and condolences. The priest came to visit one day in the week before the actual funeral. He used that time to arrange the funeral with the family. She is totally happy and satisfied with the treatment she got from her

church.

The following responses deals with questions (c) and (d)

(c) Deceased is involvement with the church.

(d) Pastoral care given to family up to the funeral service.

Participant one

The deceased was Anglican from birth. He was baptized and confirmed and attended church most of the time – not all the time as expected. Neither was the deceased involved with church activities other than making financial contributions in the form of regular DG. As already mentioned, members of all guilds visited and prayed with the family including pastors and worshippers from other churches. When asked to respond to the support given to her by the priest and church members, she remarked, “Very good, incredible “.

Participant two

His wife joined the Anglican Church in 1974 after their marriage. Despite being baptized and confirmed, the deceased “received a call “from the ancestors to offer herself to be trained as a sangoma. It is believed in the African world view that training as a sangoma is prompted by a call from the ancestors. Failing to obey and listen to such a call can and will result in calamities befalling that person and the one`s close to you. This will only stop when you obey that call. As a practising sangoma the wife would only go to church on the odd occasions. Despite all this, many church people came to pay their respects during which they would offer condolences and words of comfort. Even Christians from other denominations came to pray with them. He is extremely happy with the support he received from the priest and the people.

Participant three

Although a baptized and confirmed Anglican, the husband didn’t go to church that much. He was a business man and had to manage his taxi on Sundays too. On hearing of his death, the parishioners visited her on a daily basis to pray and offer words of

comfort. Members of other denominations also visited, together with their clergy but she is very “grateful, happy and proud” for what her church did.

Participant four

His son was baptized and confirmed in the Anglican Church, where-as the mother only joined in 1972 after the marriage. The son was living and working in Mafikeng and all that time (almost five years) could not attend church. Even when he visited over weekends, he chose not to attend worship services. The wife on the other hand, was not a regular worshipper, but after the death and burial of the son (2005) she became a regular worshipper out of sheer “joy and happiness.” She then joined the Anglican Women`s Fellowship (AWF) guild. On both occasions different guild members came to pray for and support them. He then said that he is a “happy and satisfied” man, because of the support from the priest and people on both occasions.

Participant five

The deceased after being baptized and confirmed, became a member of that parish in 2003. He subsequently joined a men`s guild called Brotherhood of St. Andrew. Because of that, he was a regular worshipper and “ paid ” his DG consistently. After his death a large number of church members came to support and pray for the family. Up to now, she is “very happy” with the support she got from the church.

The next set of responses deals with (e) and (f):

(e) Funeral service

(f) Follow – up involvement of the church

Participant one

The funeral service was conducted by the priest. The manner in which the service was conducted brought comfort to the participant. According to her, it was done “properly with respect.” She is happy that many of her fellow churchgoers attended. The funeral service helped her to deal with her loss with special reference to the following:

- The way in which the service was conducted.
- The comforting words which the priest delivered in his sermon.

- The sacrament of communion gave her an inner peace.
- The prayers were uplifting.

After the funeral service in the days and weeks that followed, different guild members visited her, especially while she was observing the obligatory mourning period of six months. She is not in a position to make any suggestions, because the way in which the church cared for her was good enough.

Participant two

The funeral service took place in church and was conducted by the priest. The support element, especially from the priest, will for ever stay with him. He will never forget that on that day of the funeral the church was doing two funerals. Theirs was the first. The priest could not go to the cemetery with them as he had to prepare for the second funeral. He then went to the cemetery with the mourners of the second funeral to do the committal after which he went back with them to their family home. Later that afternoon before he went home, he came to the family home of the participant, enjoyed light refreshments and fellowship and then eventually went home. According to him, it was the first time he experienced such a thing and will therefore always remember that. The entire funeral service and the interest that the priest showed in him, was the beginning of his healing. His mourning period was three months and during that times the church people, were very faithful in bringing “*matshidiso*” (comfort in Setswana). He cannot recommend any improvement in the care of the church for grieving mourners, because “what he got, should be given to all people “.

Participant three

The funeral service took place in church and was conducted by the priest. The only element that she will always remember, was the “support and love she received from the priest and the parishioners.” She cannot recall much detail of the service itself because, she was too emotional. She finds comfort in the testimonies of family and friends in relation to the care, love and support the church gave her. “To think that my husband was not even a churchgoer; yet they did all this for me – even a communion service“.

Words of participant

Days after the emotional funeral service, the church people still visited her and prayed with her. All this actually prompted her to join the Mother`s Union guild of the church. According to the “tradition and custom of her family “, she observed a one year mourning period. On the day of traditional cleansing, the church took an active role in the proceedings. When asked to suggest ways in which the church could improve its care she said “How could I, They have given me everything and even went the extra mile. I am so happy “.

Words of participant

Participant four

Both funerals took place in church, conducted by the same priest. The element in the services that he will always remember was especially the sermon at his wife`s funeral. The words of the priest comforted him so much that he broke the expectations of tradition and culture which dictates that the close mourners should be quiet and passive during service proceedings. (IsiXhosa) he couldn`t contain his “ joy and peace “ any longer. He stood up from where he was seated to join the young choir members in singing, dancing and clapping of hands. The communion was also a moving part in the service for him. On that day the church was doing two funerals. Theirs was the first and therefore the priest could not accompany them to the cemetery and back to the family home. He was so heartened to see the priest late in the afternoon after he had been with the other family.

The family observed a three months mourning period. Although he is “happy” with what the church did for him, he still suggests the following:

- What was done for him, should be done for everyone.
- All people should be buried from church because of the “ quality of the services” in church.

His relatives mostly from the Eastern Cape cannot stop singing the praises of his church. This he expressed as follows:

- All people should have a proper sent-off like his wife`s. He is even glad that, during the illness of his wife the priest came once a week to pray, anoint and to

give Communion. That went on for months until the day she died. He then mentioned, “God was so good. She died later on that day of the priest’s visit.”

Words of participant

- The funeral service should be a platform for evangelizing.

Participant five

The funeral service took place in church and was conducted by the priest. The funeral service helped her to deal better with her loss because according to her, “it was held in church and conducted by the priest. He even gave us Holy Communion “.

Words of participant

even days after the funeral church members visited her. She observed a three months mourning period. She will always value the ministry of the Mother’s Union guild. They visited her almost every second day throughout her mourning period. Their continued prayers and support gave her comfort and inspired her to join that particular guild. The only other suggestion she can make is that:

Because of a person’s baptism, all people should be buried in the manner that her husband was buried and not thrown away from the stoep .

Words of participant

5.4. Church wardens

Five churchwardens were interviewed of which two are still in office. It is important to mention one aspect of our Diocesan policy on churchwardens at this point. A decision was taken five years ago that the term of office for a churchwarden should not exceed five years. Prior to this ground-breaking decision, you would find instances where churchwardens would serve in that office continuously for many years, some exceeding twenty, while others would hold office until they died. Many at that time considered it to be a lifelong position. Needless to say, with the many years of experience came the inability to work with the priest and other lay people. They become untouchable and a law unto themselves. Many clergy and people treated them with respect and were unwilling to challenge their power and authority. This prompted a synod decision to reduce the term of office for churchwardens to five years. After that the person needs to

step down for a year but after that year can once again become available for election. The interview with the churchwardens had three dimensions:

Dimension one

(a) Knowledge about job functions

the following questions were put to them:

How long have you been a churchwarden?

In your understanding, what do you think is the job description or function of a churchwarden?

Describe the relationship you have with

- *Your Priest*
- *Fellow council members*
- *Fellow church wardens*
- *Parishioners*

How often do you have council meetings and who is the chairperson at such meetings?

Do you give feedback on such meetings to the parishioners. When and why?

Participant one

This female is a 62 year old practising churchwarden from Sebokeng. She has been a warden for four years. According to her, her job is to see to the “needs of the parishioners and smooth running of the parish”. She believes that the parishioners need to report everything to the churchwardens. When asked what the reason for that was, she said, “It was like this all these years. This is what my predecessors told me and what I believe.” She also believes that it is the church warden`s task to see to the well-being of the priest. When asked to describe her relationship with the other role players she said

- Priest : good
- Fellow council members : perfect
- Fellow churchwardens : good
- Parishioners : good: they can trust me

Their council meetings take place on a monthly basis. The three wardens and the priest take turns to chair the meeting. She says that the report-back from the meetings to the parishioners always happens once a week after the actual meeting (meeting on Sunday after church), the reason for that is, “ They have to know what is going on “.

Participant two

This participant is a 60 year old male from Sebokeng who is a practising warden. This is his third year in that position. According to him, his job function is to see to the pastoral care of the priest, oversee the properties of the church and the management of buildings and facilities. On the issue of relationships with fellow stakeholders, he responded in this way.

- Priest : good
- Other council members : good
- Other churchwardens : healthy
- Parishioners; cordial – they (have confidence in me) and I trust them.

Their council meetings happen once a month on a Sunday after church. The report back happens the next Sunday during the “notices” time.

The responsibility of chairing the meeting is that of churchwardens. To them, the priest is just an ex – officio member of Parish Council. When asked to explain what that means, he said, “ There are clear boundaries between the churchwardens, priest and other laity. The main decision makers are the parish council. The priest cannot steamroll us.” According to him, it is important to keep the parishioners informed of what is happening

Participant three

This participant is a 52 year old self-employed female. She is a practising churchwarden and has been one for 13 years in total. She is from Boipatong. According to her, her job description is “to look after the priest and the affairs of the church.” In answer to the relational question she describes her relationships as follows:

- Priest : good

- Fellow council members : very good
- Fellow churchwardens : very good
- Parishioners : good, they trust her and have confidence in her.

As a council, they meet once a month on a Sunday and the feed-back to the congregation follows the next Sunday. The church wardens should always chair the meetings. In addition the parish council also meet once a month with all the leaders of the different guilds. According to her the reason for this is to hear what is bothering them and they are then informed what is expected of them. She believes that the parishioners need to be informed all the time of the guild`s activities.

Participant four

This participant is a retired widow. She has been a churchwarden for many years. When asked to comment on whether she is knowledgeable about the current job description as opposed to that in her day, she answered, “ Nothing has changed much. The expectation from the people is still the same. Even the actual job of the warden is still to oversee all activities of the church and the smooth running of the church.” This particular participant is a retired school teacher and has been a licensed lay minister for close to thirty years. In order to protect this participant, the author will not state from which township she comes. On relational issues while she was a church warden, she has this to say with regards to fellow leaders:

- Priest : fine, first class
- Others council members : fine
- Fellow churchwardens : good
- Parishioners : very good

During her term as church warden, they have met once a month on a Sunday after church. Feedback is given the following Sunday and the pattern is still the same.

Participant five

This participant is still a member of parish council and has been so for more than 25 years. In total he has held the office of churchwarden for 15 years. His secular job is that of a school principal. According to him, the task of a churchwarden is to:

- Respond to the needs of the congregation (baptism, confirmation, funerals, which take place regularly)
- Taking care of the clergy

Their meetings take place once a month on a Sunday after church. Feedback to the parishioners is given the very next Sunday. According to him, the parishioners should know about all “issues and projects “. Priest and churchwardens take turns to be chairperson.

Dimension two

- (b) Funerals and decisions from where the service will be conducted.

The following questions were put to them.

- *What is your role when you hear about a death in your parish?*
- *Is it parish policy that you should be notified?*
- *Who normally notifies you?*
- *Who is supposed to notify you?*
- *Who decides where the funeral will happen?*
- *What factors about the deceased influence such decisions?*
- *Is the funeral all about the deceased or the deceased and the bereaved?*
- *Who communicates the decisions of the church to the family?*
- *If the priest decides about all of them, are you being notified and what is your response?*

Participant one

According to her, her church follows a procedure which requires that any member of parish council who has been notified of a death in the parish, should inform all other

members immediately. Afterwards a delegation spearheaded by churchwardens then expected to visit the bereaved family. The aim is to “ make arrangements “ with the family. During these discussions the family will be informed from where the funeral will be conducted – either from church or the family home. She calls this procedure “ policy of the church “ which new members inherit when taking up office. The family normally notifies the council members but in other instances the priest instructs them to visit the family if he /she was informed before them. She insists that the family is expected to contact them (parish council) first and once again refers to the policy of their parish. The participant is adamant that the family decides where the funeral will take place, not the priest nor the church wardens. She declines to comment on the status and standing of the deceased having an influence in deciding from where the funeral is to be conducted. In responding to the question about where the emphasis should be in the course of the discussion- the deceased or the deceased and the bereaved family, she remarked that they normally concentrate on the deceased. “It is about the one who died”.

Words of participant

she then admits that the final directive comes from the delegation visiting the family.

Participant two

After having received notification about a death, a delegation consisting of council members would visit the family. He calls this procedure “protocol of the church that everyone knows and follows “.

Words of participant

this participant also insists that the decision from where the funeral will take place comes from the family. He goes on to say that the council considers the following: (a) whether the person is a fully pledged member of the parish by reviewing the parish roll and (b) the standing and status of the deceased in relation to Dedicated Giving / Tithing. He then concedes that church attendance and final contribution of the deceased influence decisions.

In his understanding the decisions are all about the deceased and the family since “ the family needs to be taken care of”

Words of participant

The participant mentioned that on each visit to bereaved families, the “ policy of the church “ is explained to the family but then he conceded that this policy resulted in a

decline of membership, “ we lose most of the congregation members to other churches, mostly Pentecostals because of our strictness and rigidity “. Words of participant ultimately he admitted that the decision rested with the churchwardens.

Participant three

According to her, a delegation visits the family to comfort them but nothing about the funeral is communicated since they, the council members need to “ talk first “. Future communication with the family then becomes the responsibility of the church wardens because they decide where the funeral will take place. They consider the church attendance and financial contribution of the deceased as the influential factors, which she communicated in this way, “In 2008 there was a discussion in church about a policy where the church just buried everyone (referring to priest conducting the funeral in church). A new policy was made to go back to the old practice of looking at church attendance and contribution of money”. Words of participant

She admits that at times they become flexible when it came to financial contributions because “our people are poor and many of them are not working “. But in all cases they considered church attendance as the main factor because the “ticket system“ might not tell them the whole truth.

The churchwardens see to it that this policy is implemented without prejudice.

Participant four

According to her, the churchwardens should be informed, because they represent the priest and the church. After that they will visit the family. Again she reiterated that as was the case with the other churchwardens before her, church attendance of and financial contributions by the deceased are considered. According to her, the ultimate decision lies with the churchwardens, which she related in this way, “ At times you might find that the priest does not even know the deceased “. Words of participant

she goes on to say that the discussions, arrangements and decisions are all about the deceased (status and standing). Whichever decisions come from the church, the wardens are the ones expected to communicate with the family. The policy of the church needs to be implemented to the letter.

Participant five

According to him, a delegation from the parish council will visit the family to confirm the death report /. Discussions between priest and parish council need to happen first before the decision is communicated to the family. He refers to these steps before the funeral as “agreed church procedure”. In his experience the priest has a role to play in decision making. In most cases they attempt to make a joint/unified decision as parish council members, priest and wardens on the basis of regular attendance and financial contributions of the deceased. He admits that their policy is all about the deceased. There is no room in it for the care of the bereaved. The churchwardens normally communicate the church`s decision to the family but sometimes they will ask a lay minister to do it on their behalf.

Dimension three

Stoep funerals and church funerals.

The following questions were put to them:

- *Why do some funerals go to the church and some are conducted from the family home?*
- *What factors inform such decisions?*
- *If the funeral is from the family home, who is expected to do the funeral?*
- *Is this church policy? If so, when did it start and by whom and for what reason?*
- *What in your understanding is the difference between policy, procedures and tradition?*
- *What in your understanding is a dignified funeral ? Can you honestly say stoep funerals are dignified?*
- *Why do you say so?*
- *Explain to me how a stoep funeral shows any respect to the deceased and bereaved family.*
- *Comment about the negative stigma stoep funerals carries in the community.*
- *Do you think stoep funerals are education or punishment?*
- *Do you think people like to do stoep funerals?. Why do say so?*

- *Isn't it possible that stoep funeral cause the family more trauma, embarrassment, shame and pain? Why do you say so?*
- *What steps do you follow to heal the bereaved in general and specifically those who have been exposed to stoep funerals?*
- *Do you think that it is time to stop this practice ?*
- *In your view, is this the right way African black people should care for one another?*
- *Would you be comfortable and happy to do such funerals for (a) yourself (b) close family members and why?*
- *What made you not to collect the DG / Tithing from the deceased while he / she was still alive?*
- *What prevented you or any other church leaders from visiting the deceased while he / she was still alive?*
- *Can you honestly say that you have tried everything in your power to get the deceased to the church while he/she was still alive ? What was the response?*

Participant one

According to her, the parish council reviews the financial contributions and church attendance record of any deceased person. If the funeral is to be conducted from the family home it is expected that the lay ministers conduct that funeral. The priest is not involved. She could not explain to why such a practice is followed, but continues to say that it is parish policy. According to her something becomes policy when the whole parish has decided upon it; tradition is what they believe to be right and procedure is interlinked with policy. A dignified funeral, she says, is a funeral where respect is shown to the deceased, not to the bereaved family. She maintains that a dignified funeral can be conducted from any place (church or family home) as long as respect is shown. But then she concedes that a stoep or tent funeral cannot be considered a dignified funeral. At this point she declines to elaborate and to respond honestly to questions. She declines to comment on whether stoep funerals should be regarded as education or punishment. According to her, some families ask for the funeral to be from the family home. She is quick to agree however that this is not the norm but only happens on odd

occasions. The majority would like to see and experience the services / ministry in the church but are reluctant to “pay their DG`s” and attend church regularly.

Words of participant

According to her, stoep funerals: (1) are not embarrassing to grieving mourners (2) do not add to their pain and therefore can never be traumatic (3) do not carry a negative stigma with them (4) are not afforded to defaulters. They go through this by choice.

Surprisingly she agrees that the practice of stoep funerals should stop because according to her, “The defaulters need to become serious then there will be no need for such a policy “

Words of participant

She also agrees that the practice of stoep funerals is not the right way in which black people should care for one another but adds “ What else can we do? “

Words of participant

she would not like to have a stoep funeral for herself or close family member, because she says “ we pay our church dues and attend church regularly “. Concerning collecting DG`s physically from those not coming to church, she responded by citing time constraints and the need to fulfill their family commitments. She admits that they have not tried everything in their power to (a) get people to church and (b) collect DG from defaulting parishioners, but could not say how/what they did.

Participant two

He is quick to point out that church attendance by their members and DG records are used as the criteria to determine from where the funeral will take place. He calls this practice “protocol that has now developed into policy and we stick to it”

Words of participant

He goes on to explain that lay ministers are assigned to conduct stoep funerals while the priest is expected to conduct church funerals. Without being asked he expressed his dissatisfaction with stoep funerals in this way. “It is being regarded as second class funerals and this practice only happens in the townships. It is an embarrassing practice that only hurts our people more because of how it is viewed in the community. That is

why we lose a lot of people to the Pentecostals because they just bury anyone. People are grumbling about this practice. Words of participant

when asked how this practice became policy, he responded by referring to a joint meeting which was held some years ago. Apparently these issues around funerals were discussed on a Sunday after church service. At that meeting, it was decided to continue with this practice because it has been happening all along. The wardens only needed the approval of the parishioners. He pointed out that he has no knowledge where, when, why and how such practice came into being. They have inherited it and thus call it “Anglican practice “.

He does not believe that stoep funerals can be regarded as dignified funerals because according to him, these funerals are always “noisy, disorderly and is characterized by unruly interferences and disruptions “. When asked what the reasons for these disturbances might be, he alluded to the absence of a priestly figure.

He is aware of the negative stigma associated with stoep funerals and according to him, these funerals can in no way show any respect to the deceased and the bereaved family. He went on to highlight the dislike of and dissatisfaction of the people with stoep funerals but then said “What can we do? *bafu ba pate bafu ba bona* “. (Loosely translated from Sesotho, “Let the dead bury the dead”). When asked to explain what he meant, he continued “ The people with whom you have associated in your lifetime instead of coming to church, must bury you. If you were a tavern dweller, let the tavern patrons bury you. You were spiritually dead while alive, Why should your corpse come to church ?”.

In his understanding, stoep funerals cause grieving families more pain and shame because of the disrespect with which the church is treating such services and grieving family members. He believes that the practice of the church in distinguishing between church and stoep funerals should stop, because nothing is being done to care pastorally for grieving families, especially those who have gone through a stoep funeral. But he still wants to hear from me what they should do with the members who have not come to church or contributed towards the DG. At that point I chose not to comment.

As an African Christian, he does not believe that stoep funerals can be regarded as an acceptable practice by which Africans should care for one another. In explaining this he

said, “ *mathlo ho tjaa mabapi, mathlo ho tjaa mabapi* (loosely translated, if I am in need as an African, I expect my fellow brothers and sisters to come to my aid as I will in return do the same for others in need). He went on to say, “ If my house is burning this side, I expect my neighbours to come and help me because I will do the same if they need help “.He said, he would not like to have a stoep funeral for himself or close family members, because it is a “demeaning way of burying people”. They would not encourage council members to knock on doors of defaulters, because there is no “ guarantee that the money will reach the church – corruption is rife. In addition they do not have the time to walk after defaulters. They must come to church on their own “.

Participant three

According to her, stoep funerals were meant for people who do not attend church services despite the regular attendance of their other family members. The determining criteria being used to decide the place from which the burial will take place, are according to her (a) church attendance

(b) money matters – referring to Dedicated Giving / Tithing

All funerals from the family home, are assigned to lay ministers while the priest is expected to conduct the church funerals. According to her, this is church policy and is being “pushed by the priest “. She understands a dignified funeral to be a church funeral, conducted by a priest, but according to her, fellow church members can bring dignity to a stoep funeral by their presence. She cannot see how a stoep funeral can show respect to the deceased and the grieving family, knowing the negative stigma such a funeral carries. In her view, stoep funerals should be viewed as punishment although the majority of people are “not in favour of such funerals”. According to her, the mere fact that the community knows the reasons behind stoep funerals results in the whole situation being one of “sadness “.

Her view on this practice is that it should be stopped by allowing all funerals at least to come to church irrespective whether a priest conducts them or not. Her reason for this is to save grieving mourners from embarrassment and shame. As an African Anglican she is not comfortable with the current practice of the church because according to her it is “cold and heartless“. Because of this, she would not like to have such a funeral for

herself or either a close relative. This wish she communicated in this way, “ I go to church regularly and pay my dues “. She feels that the priest “ gets paid “ to visit his / her members”; and in any case they as the council do not have the time to do that.

Participant four

The church policy under discussion is accepted by her as an obvious practice and she could not understand why this study was questioning it. The overriding criteria of church attendance and tithing determine from where the funeral will take place. She only knows that stoep funerals are being conducted by lay ministers and church funerals by priests but does not know the reason behind this. She perceives a church funeral where the priest administers the sacrament of Holy Communion to be a dignified funeral. To her therefore, a stoep funeral cannot be seen as dignified, because “ there is no priest to bring dignity. These funerals can be disruptive.”

In her understanding, stoep funerals do not show any respect to the deceased and the grieving mourners. She then communicates the inability of members to effect change in this way “It is not the right thing, but it has been the church policy for all these years. This is what we know. This is what our parents before us knew.” Despite all this, she is painfully aware that stoep funerals carry a negative stigma and that church members dislike stoep funerals, but defends it this way, “We have no choice. It is church policy.” She considers stoep funerals to be a form of punishment of the deceased for not doing what he / she was supposed to do and education (to the surviving members to “change their ways or else the same fate awaits them”). She believes that stoep funerals cause the grieving members relentless pain, shame and embarrassment because “it is not fair”. She advocates for the termination of this practice in these words, “People should be treated all the same”. In the same breath she is also adamant that such funerals do not carry her approval and she would not like to have one for herself or her relatives. She communicated it in this way, “Ninety percent of my life has been dedicated to church work. Only a church funeral is good enough for me because the “world“ needs to see that I was a church person.” She also believes that every person

should come to church by him /herself. Concerning collection of tithing from defaulters, she argues that it will not work because they don't have the time to do that.

Participant five

According to him, stoep funerals are meant for defaulters. The message is "They were not good enough or clean enough to have a church funeral. Church funerals are meant for those who attended church consistently and regularly and are up to date with their dedicated giving." To him, stoep or church funerals have more to say about the religious standing of the person in relation to his / her church than the social standing of the person in the community. He regards stoep funerals as second and third class funerals because of the lack of sympathy, empathy and sensitivity to the mourners shown by the church. In contrast, he sees church funerals as first class funerals, because according to him priests normally promote such as "high profile funerals which need a lot of attention to detail " .

He says that he despises the criteria used to determine from where the funeral will take place as well as the fact that the lay ministers are sent for stoep funeral services while the priest "is saved "for church funerals. He acknowledges that this is unwritten church policy that is always promoted in church. The problem he has with this policy is that most of the time it gets manipulated either by the priest or the parish council members. He communicated it this way "This unfair policy is not consistently implemented in a fair manner."

He understands, a dignified funeral to be one in which the priest and leadership adhere to the wishes of the family and the funeral service is attended by many church members in support of the family. Stoep funerals can never be dignified, because in his view they are always disorderly. These funerals in no way show any respect to the deceased and the grieving family because of the negative stigma of which the whole township is aware. He is not in favour of this policy, and therefore considers stoep funerals as a punitive method used by the church, with the aim of educating the rest of the parishioners. As a churchwarden with many years of experience, he can say with certainty that people are not in favour of stoep funerals and he supports these views. In

his words, “Stoep services are not therapeutic. They are just a cold procedure delegated to lay ministers. The church regards that act as its duty to defaulters”. He believes that this practice should stop, but first believers should be re – educated about funeral issues, starting with the clergy, the leadership and then moving on to the people. On training of clergy he said, “In future, we should only have academically qualified priests”.

He believes that this practice of stoep funerals should stop because it is unAfrican. He describes the African notion of caring in this way, “ *Iminiyeza Naguwe* “. This is an extract from an Isizulu gospel chorus and loosely translated means “ Today it is you; tomorrow it is me.” He continues to emphasise how important it is for Africans to show concern, compassion, love by sharing one another`s burdens. This he calls giving the other person support and strength. He refers to an African practice in which sympathizers would come with grocery items like flour, milk, sugar and even money to hand over to the grieving mourners as (i) a token of respect to the deceased and the mourners.

(ii) an inherent African way of sharing one another`s burdens, because African funerals are very expensive and mourning before the actual burial can drag on up to three weeks. During this time visiting mourners need to be fed;

(iii) the African way of living is that of community involvement. He would not like to see stoep funerals for himself or close family members, because he feels that, such funerals are not dignified; and so he believes that the church should “change its pastoral systems “through education. He continued,” “The church should journey with all people irrespective of social standing. This church should show care and compassion.”

5.5. Priests

Six priests were interviewed of which five are either Rectors or Priests – in -charge. This is important because by virtue of their office, they have the leverage to assert authority over churchwardens and parish council members. This cannot be done at will, but they can be extremely influential. Of the five in pertinent leadership one is a white Anglican priest whose parish is in a predominantly white suburb but has many years of

experience of township ministry. The Rector or Priest – in – charge in Anglican circles has the power to make decisions and to influence laity and leadership in a way which curates or assistant clergy cannot. The experience of the participants can be tabulated as follows:

Participant	Years in ordained ministry	Years in leadership	Years in multicultural exposure	Ethnicity	Gender	Theological qualifications	Current position
1.	4 years	1year 3 months	4 years	B	M	D	P.I.C
2.	7 years	2 years	none	B	M	C	P.I.C
3.	32 years	30 years	30 years	W	M	D + B	R
4.	9 years	6 years	none	B	M	C	P.I.C
5.	29 years	26 years	None but has taken services in other cultural settings	B	M	D +B	R

Keys to table

B = Black South African

W = White South African

M = Male

D = Diploma, C = Certificate, B = Bachelor's Degree

PIC = Priest in charge

R = Rector

Dimension one

(a) Relationship with church wardens and parish council.

The following questions were put to them.

- *Describe your relationship with your church wardens*
- *Describe your relationship with your parish council*
- *How often do you have council meetings and who is normally the chairperson of such meetings?*
- *Do you give feedback to the parishioners after such meetings and who is doing that?*

Participant one

This participant describes his relationship with his church wardens as cordial and with the rest of the council members as friendly and amicable. By this he means that the relationship with the wardens is marked by mutual respect in a manner which allows him and the wardens to influence one another. According to him, the catch lies in his acceptance of their authority to dictate church policy more often than not in the life and activity of the parish. Without playing a subservient role, for the sake of peace he allows them to initiate and implement such policies, although he might disagree with their opinions. The rest of the council members will always align themselves with churchwardens` opinions, despite the Rector`s approval. He tries therefore not to “rock the boat,” but to “go with the flow “. He argues that they meet once a month for council meetings of which he is the chairperson. For some unknown reasons they haven’t given any feedback from council meetings to the parishioners yet.

Participant two

He describes his relationship with the church wardens and parish council as “good” and “very good”. By this he means that he allows them to initiate and implement church policies without opposing them. To his mind, they are the policy makers and even he has to abide by their decisions. They meet once a month as a parish council for meetings where the priest is normally the chairperson. After such meetings, feedback is given to the parishioners, normally by the churchwardens.

Participant three

He describes his relationship with the parish leadership as ‘good “. By this he means that they respect him as their “spiritual leader set over them by the Lord. This enables him to influence them most of the time. They respect his leadership and trust his opinions and ability to lead. They very seldom question, doubt or challenge him although at times they might differ with him. They meet once a month for meetings and the report back is published in the monthly parish magazine.

Participant four

This participant describes his relationship with the parish leadership as “ good “. As he understands it they very seldom differ in opinion because “ they share the same values, beliefs, history and dreams for the parish “. They have all been influenced by parish practices which they value greatly and would like to continue.

They meet once a month for council meetings, of which he is the chairperson. They will only give feedback to the parishioners “if there is something that affects them”

Participant five

He describes his relationship with both the wardens and council members as excellent. By this he means that they very seldom differ in opinion, because he regards himself as an influential man by virtue of his experience. This makes it difficult for them to challenge him if need be. He believes that, his experience also gives him the leverage

to be influential. As a parish council they meet once a month after which the churchwardens give feedback to the parishioners.

Dimension two

(b) Decisions about funerals

The following questions were asked:

- *When a parishioner dies, who normally notifies you?*
- *Do you and your churchwardens discuss where the funeral will take place?*
- *What factors influence your decisions?*
- *Who communicates the decisions about where the funeral will be to the bereaved family?*
- *How do you as a priest journey with bereaved families?*
- *Is the funeral service all about the deceased or are the bereaved family included?*

Participant one

Their parish policy is to have a “block leader” – a trusted parishioner in charge of a demarcated area. All Anglicans who live in that area report to that person any related church or ministerial needs. The block leader will notify the churchwardens and priest about a death. According to him, “Sometimes it depends on the profile of the deceased. If a high profile person dies, anyone just rushes to inform the priest but in the case of a not so well known or ordinary person, the news takes days to reach us.”

Words of participant

He reckons that the decision about the funeral is the prerogative of the priest who is informed by the churchwardens. The factors that influence from where the funeral will happen are (a) church attendance and (b) DG contributions. He allows the parish council members to communicate any decisions to the bereaved family members. He can't see a conflict of interest between priest and parish council concerning funeral services because all parties know the church policy. He might be new at that parish, but

he is conversant with the particular policy from childhood days and is comfortable with it. After any funeral notice, he normally pays the bereaved a pastoral visit because in his mind, the funeral service is all about the deceased and the bereaved family.

Participant two

They also follow a block leader system. According to him their church policy also allows the churchwardens to liaise directly with the lay ministers to arrange for and to do a stoep funeral without the priest getting involved. He will get the notice but the wardens will already have explained to him what has been arranged thus far. The priest is fairly comfortable with the policy and the procedure and therefore cannot understand why this research has an issue with the policy and practice because according to him “if I have time, I even visit those who had stoep funerals “. On responding to the question why they have stoep funerals and church funerals he went on to say, that they consider church attendance and dedication (tithing) of the deceased. In response to further probing as to why this is being done, to which he responded, “there is nothing abnormal about this. This is the way we have been operating for many years”.

Participant three

The family informs the priest directly, after which he immediately visits them. During the visit, he tries to console them even if it means counselling , which he describes in this way; “ My criterion is compassion for the bereaved family, whether you have known the deceased or not”. He makes all the decisions and his decision is always to conduct all funeral services in the church although he will respect the wishes of the family if they want an alternative venue. Nothing about the deceased`s standing with the church is considered. He feels compassion for his members who are now hurting and “will do everything in my power to journey with them”.

Participant four

They also follow a block leader system. According to him, there is no need for him and the council members to have different opinions about funeral services because they are all acquainted with the church`s policy with which they are happy and comfortable with

They consider the church attendance and financial contributions of the deceased in relation to his / her dedicated giving and tithing. He also acknowledges that he allows the churchwardens to manage the proceedings and they will then “ notify him when he is needed”. At times he says that he will arrange for services at the family home before the day of the actual burial and at times the churchwardens do that. He declines to comment who is operative in which instance.

Participant five

According to the priest, they also follow a block leader system. The reason for involving so many people in this order or system of managing the needs of the people, is the desired “practice of a ministry of all believers“. According to him, “as many hands as possible should get dirty”. After the death notification has passed through various hands and finally reached him, he will allow the parish practice to dictate. The churchwardens will manage some funeral arrangements and he will manage some, but in no way will there be a conflict of interest because everyone knows the church policy very well. The criteria that they use to inform where the funeral will take place, are regular attendance and financial standing in relation to tithing. Whatever the outcome might be, he believes that everyone is getting a “decent funeral “. He allows the block leader to liaise throughout with the family. He says that, he normally visits the bereaved family to show his support as their parish priest. In his understanding “those who cry should also be taken care of “.

Dimension three

(c) Stoep funeral and church funerals

Under this dimension, the same set of questions that was set for churchwardens was also used here; therefore there is no need to write them down.

Participant one

The place where the funeral will take place is determined by the criteria they use as church policy. Lay ministers are expected to do the stoep funerals, while the priest does

the church funerals. In their church, funerals done from church are regarded as “high profile funerals”. The participant acknowledges that the policy used provides for a clear distinction between the two types of funeral services in this way: “Stoep funerals can be viewed as second or even third class funerals”. Despite sharing this, he then concedes that he is quite comfortable with the policy. He has no idea how and why it originated. According to him, a dignified funeral is conducted in church and presided over by a priest, and not the one conducted from the family home. The latter lacks all the burial rituals which a priest is normally supposed to perform/lead. To him stoep funerals neglect proper care and pastoral intervention by the priest in relation to the family. In other words no respect is shown to the deceased. By sending the lay ministers to conduct the service, the church is actually doing the family a favour. In his view, stoep funerals are a way of punishing the deceased and the family. He is aware that people do not like to have stoep funerals. As he puts it, “is denigrating. There is no dignity in it”. Despite all this, there is no attempt to stop this practice, partly because they don’t have a method of dealing with defunct members. According to him, the implementation of the church policy and its effect under study began out of necessity. He is of the opinion that the way that they deal with defunct members and their bereaved families is not the proper way African pastoral care needs to happen. He then mentioned the restrictions on visitations, owing to time constraints. He would not be comfortable to have a stoep funeral for himself or his relatives.

Participant two

This participant is extremely vocal in defending church policy on funerals and saying how comfortable he is with it. He translates his approval of it in this way, “*Ha motho a saje ntho as phela, o k eke wa mofa yona na ase a shwele* “. Loosely translated this means, “if someone didn’t eat something while still alive, why give him / her when dead?” He adds that the criteria used to determine the venue for the funeral service are (a) DG contributions and (b) church attendance. Stoep funerals are the responsibility of lay ministers and church funerals that of the priest. In their understanding the reason why they implement this policy, is to “correct certain practices of their members”. They consider it as education since the aim is to teach others to “pay their DG regularly and

to encourage them to be active as Christian members belonging to a particular church”. Stoep funerals are only dignified when a priest is present, but then he says that all church funerals are dignified. He cannot explain how stoep funerals show any respect to the deceased and bereaved family but agrees that such funerals add to the pain that bereaved families are experiencing. Concerning the issue of embarrassment, he says, “Yes the family might feel embarrassed about having a stoep funeral, but the church should not be blamed for it. It is because of the deceased’s own behaviour while he / she was still alive “.

Words of participant

He expressed the need for this practice to be stopped but admits that they need to find a way of “stopping people using the church when it suits them”.

According to him this is not the proper way in which African people, and in particular black Africans, should care for each other. Although they follow this policy they are also concerned that the implementation of it can be manipulated to suit certain individuals. He would not like to have a stoep funeral for himself or close family members. He then cited time constraints that prohibit them from visiting defunct members.

Participant three

This participant believes that no one deserves to have a stoep funeral, especially in relation to the criteria used in township churches. He again stressed the fact that this is not the way in which he operates. His method of pastoral care is to treat everyone the same, irrespective who they are. His parish council supports him in this practice. He defends his method by saying, “The Anglican prayer book demands that the priest conducts the same funeral for a pauper or a prince. There is only one funeral service recorded, with obligatory burial rituals which the priest needs to conduct “.

Words of participant

To this end, he cannot see how a stoep funeral can be considered dignified. He is critical towards the criteria used in the townships and regards it as discriminatory. This he sums up in this way: “The church is communicating that people subjected to stoep funerals were not good enough to have been buried from the church. This is preposterous and ridiculous”.

Words of participant

He describes stoep funerals as demeaning to the deceased and a slap in the face to bereaved mourners. For those reasons, he argues, they can never be accepted as dignified. He blames the ancient township practice of the “ticket system” for the continuation of stoep funeral practices.

He fully agrees that stoep funerals cause more pain and embarrassment to the bereaved families. He is totally against this practice and equates it to “brutal treatment of the deceased resulting from ex – communication”. In this practice he foresees the possibility of manipulation by those managing this process but even worse, the possibility of priests being “bribed” to do the funeral from church instead of from the family home. He is of the opinion that the church should adopt a common method / strategy to deal with defunct members. Needless to say, he would not like to have such a funeral for himself or family members.

Participant four

This participant is happy and comfortable with stoep funeral practice, which he defends in this way: “You cannot give someone something at death that he / she never liked while he was alive”. He is very supportive of this practice and the criteria used to determine place of funeral service, i.e. Church attendance and DG contributions. He feels that it is right and proper for lay ministers to be in charge of stoep funerals and priests of church funerals and above all for churchwardens to manage funeral decisions on behalf of the entire church. When asked to elaborate he said that most of the time the church wardens would arrange everything with the bereaved families and only notify him when there was a church funeral. He would not like to interfere with the management therefore. In all cases, they would never contradict each other. He believed bereaved families should be thankful to have the lay ministers doing the stoep funeral, because in that case, the church is “helping” them, because the bereaved was not in “good standing with the church “. Here he refers to church attendance and DG contributions. To him even stoep funerals can be dignified, as long as someone representing the church is facilitating the ministry. Undignified funerals he maintains happen when “the family pay / buy a minister to do the funeral for them “. He continues to defend the dignity of stoep funerals by saying, “The prayers that are being said at the

stoep funeral are the same prayers we say at church funerals “, referring to the set Anglican Liturgy at funeral services in the Anglican prayer book.

He fails to see how stoep funerals can add to the pain of the mourners, because “everyone is supposed to know the policy. Why should the implementation of it cause them distress?”

Words of participant

He does not view stoep funerals as education or punishment but just the right thing for the church to do and adds that people are generally happy and comfortable with it. He is supporting this policy. He is not willing to “disrupt the smooth running of the church “by questioning its logic and relevance. He is adamant that this policy should continue “for the sake of peace and unity, irrespective whether anyone knows where it has originated and for what reasons “.

He would not want to have a stoep funeral either for him or any close relative.

Participant five

This participant knows the criteria, supports them and is quite comfortable with them.

He argues that, if a person is to have a stoep funeral, the deceased should be blamed for it because he / she had a choice whether to observe the criteria or not. According to him, stoep funerals are education because the ones remaining are being challenged to observe the criteria set. He sees stoep funerals as a way of dealing with non –

committed members. Stoep funerals according to him are dignified, because “the word of God is being preached “. He is of the opinion that, if scripture is utilized appropriately

and effectively, whether by a priest or lay minister, that brings respect to the deceased and the bereaved. He is aware of the negative stigma of stoep funerals but maintains that people know the policy and therefore they should observe the set criteria. In

defending the practice of stoep funerals he adds, “ You cannot give people something to eat now that they are dead although when they were alive, they refused it “. He even

said that some view stoep funerals as an attempt by the church to enforce scare tactics, but he feels that such practice is necessary, otherwise “ How will the stipends of priests be paid?.” He is aware that the majority of people are not in favor of stoep funerals but

according to him, “there is nothing we can do at this point. It can be stopped once we have a workable alternative “.

Words of participant He fails to see

anything wrong in the implementation of such a policy and therefore accepts it as acceptable African way of caring. He would not like to have such a funeral for himself or any other family member. When asked to explain why, the response was, “it will not be befitting.”

Dimension Four

(d) Comforting the bereaved

The following questions were asked

- *Can you honestly say that lay ministers do not cause more harm and damage at funerals or are perfectly equipped to perform that pastoral function including preaching?.*
- *How do you prepare you lay ministers to conduct stoep funerals? Are they competent enough? Motivate*
- *What follow – up mechanisms do you employ to ensure that your lay ministers conduct a dignified funeral that will bring healing and closure to the bereaved families?*
- *What in your mind constitutes a dignified funeral?*
- *How can we defend and justify stoep funerals when lay ministers are not allowed to perform certain rituals at a funeral?*
- *After the burial, how do you attempt to effect healing for those in mourning?*
- *Is it fair and right for some to have a stoep funeral and others a church funeral? Motivate.*

Participant one

He admits that the lay ministers are not priests and are canonically bound to perform ministry only that is set aside for lay ministers. Whether they do more harm than damage is difficult for him to say, because when they conduct these stoep funerals, he is not there to see whether they are doing the right thing or not. He knows for sure that his lay ministers still need a lot of training on various levels. There is actually no formal training that takes place, but only discussions at lay ministers meetings about how

particular services went. He appreciates the challenge that this study is aiming at addressing, since no mechanisms are in place to monitor the pastoral elements of stoep funerals in relation to healing and comfort to bereaved family members. Part of his healing ministry is to pay visits to bereaved families. In his understanding, the current practice of the church is unfair and of a discriminatory nature where funerals are concerned and he therefore feels that this practice should stop.

Participant two

He cannot say for certain whether lay ministers are doing the right thing or not, because when they do these stoep funerals, “I am not there with them. They might slip up or even outshine themselves. “He admits that training for them to do stoep funerals is non-existent. Because they regularly talk about these services in lay ministers meetings, he is fairly confident that they are “up to scratch “. According to him this is another way of his to follow up on bereaved families. He is reluctant to comment or elaborate on question 5. He doesn’t see anything wrong or out of the ordinary with the current policy and practice and therefore does not see the “sense in stopping this practice “.

Participant three

He is of the opinion that stoep funerals are derogative, an embarrassment to the church and to the family who are being exposed to them. The absence of an ordained priest on such an important occasion is a disgrace. He will never entrust such a special ministry to his lay minister while “he is only sitting around in the parish. Only will I allow them under serious circumstances well beyond my control “ Words of participant
His pastoral approach to the bereaved family is a continued reminder “that God loves them “. Words of participant

Participant four

He is adamant that his lay ministers do not cause further harm and damage to bereaved families because he always provides them with on-going training. He is confident that they are adequately equipped to perform funeral services in his absence and therefore cannot support the idea that such a practice should stop. For his part, he normally visits

the bereaved family therefore he feels that they are “cared for.” On the unfairness issue, he strongly feels that the church can never be criticised for the policy that is in place because it is there to protect the church from abuse. It is unfair for people to insist that their relatives should be buried from the church, even though when they were alive they did not bother to be involved with the life and activities of the church. He stops short of saying that “they need to be buried without proper burial rites said by a priest because it was of their own doing.”

Participant five

He is happy and comfortable with the ministry of lay ministers at stoep funerals, because“ the family must understand that we are only helping them”

Words of participant

He is referring here to the funeral service of a defunct member. The way he deals with stoep funerals is to concentrate on follow – up meetings with his lay ministers after the event. If anything needs to be corrected, that is the platform to do so. He avoids talking about the nature of the distinctive functions of priests and lay ministers at funerals which is enshrined in the canons of the church. This he articulates in this fashion: “The important thing here is for lazy people not to take the church for a ride. We are not dealing with anyone but attempting to bring a message across” Words of participant

He feels that the implementation of the policy which translates into their practice should constitute a wakeup call to all others who are “still fast asleep”

5.6. Analysis of responses from participants

In the first instance the response from mourners who have experienced stoep funerals will be analysed. An attempt will be made to identify similar or different experiences in relation to:

(a) Exploring the impact of their pain caused by death

Five different people were interviewed. The first ones were elderly parents who lost a son; the second was a female who lost her brother. The third was a very old granny who

lost her son. She was supported in the interview by her middle-aged daughter. The fourth was a male who lost his wife and the fifth was a female who lost her husband. This mixture of mourners was deliberately chosen so that this research might examine the grief experienced by parents, a parent, a widow and a widower. According to my observation the pain, shock and trauma caused by the death of their loved ones was consistent. The death event was an unfortunate painful experience for all of them which reminded me of Elizabeth Kubler Ross's statement, "Death strikes indiscriminately – it cares not at all for the status or position of the ones it chooses; everyone must die, whether rich or poor; famous or unknown. Even good deeds will not excuse their doers from the sentence of death; the good die as often as the bad". She adds that it is perhaps the inevitability and unpredictability of death that scares and frightens people.

Kubler Ross, E; 1975; 5

Alida Gersie describes death as a "natural process which is universal, inevitable, irreversible and final. It exists and it exists for everyone." Gersie, A; 1991: 33

From the stories of the participants to our own, death comes suddenly and often most of us struggle immensely to deal with the challenge posed by death. Gersie's advise is that we have to ask ourselves what we understand by death and how we acquired our ideas. She believes that this exercise will help us to come to grips with the loss endured in bereavement, once we have explored our relationship with death both as an experience and as a concept. She also comments that the "meaning of death to us is influenced by the meaning of death to the important people in our life"

Gersie, A; 1991: 34,

What I observed or was the emptiness and helplessness of how the loss of loved ones irreversibly damaged and altered the lives of grieving mourners. One could not but noticed the intense pain brought about by the unresolved death, and how the bereaved continue to struggle with it. This observation was noted in both the groups of people who have experienced stoep funerals and those with church funerals.

Mention was made in chapter one of how the implementation of the church policies or criteria concerning funerals causes people to suffer added pain, especially in cases of

stoep funerals. This distress and feeling of abandonment are brought about by the stigma that stoep funerals carry in the townships. Everyone knows that a person being afforded a stoep funeral in most cases is a defaulter, either through non – attendance and non - participation in the life and witness of the church or through lack of financial contributions via “the ticket system “(supposedly dedicated giving). After hearing from church representatives that the loved ones should be given a stoep funeral, the participants gave vent to their feelings in this way:

(b) How the decision of the church added to their existing pain. – Stoep funerals.

Participant one: The parents said that they felt hurt, pain, frustration and disappointment as well as anger.

Participant two: She felt hurt and pain and regards the practice in townships as a “discriminatory practice.”

Participant three: the sister of the deceased expressed her “hurt and disappointment” because the church-wardens knew her brother and was aware of his previous involvement with the church through his membership of the choir. His elderly mother on the other hand had encouraged the family to accept peacefully and abide by the decisions of the church. Although she did not say it, one can assume that she also felt hurt and disappointed. Is this the classic case where elderly people just accept and describes actions by the church leadership as the will of God?

Participant four: He said that; he expected this “negative decision “from the church as a result of their non – attendance, owing to a previous conflict with a fellow parishioner(s). He described the decision as “embarrassing and painful.”

Participant five: found it difficult to express her shock, disappointment and pain verbally but only cried uncontrollably as she relived the events of that day. Nothing is obvious, but from the above responses it is apparent that stoep funerals add to the pain and hurt of grieving mourners. It is clear that, the participants have used more or less similar expressions to articulate their disappointment, shock, trauma and grief. The most worrying aspect for me was to discover my helplessness and inability to console them in the added grief and pain brought about by the church-leadership’s decisions. It became

apparent that all the mourners interviewed found it difficult to have something good to say about the church`s ministry to them during their time of loss and bereavement. They clearly feel that the church has failed them in their hour of need. This was articulated by them in the answers they gave to the question, “Do you have any suggestions that will help the church to improve its care to other mourners”?

Participant one: Mourners should have direct access to the priest when arranging funerals. Rectors should come and visit the survivors, instead of sending churchwardens and lay ministers to facilitate funeral arrangements. The family was in a process of erecting a tombstone for the departed son but they were not sure whether to approach their own priest. Because of the church`s refusal to bury the son from church, the majority of the family is now considering the services of the Pentecostal pastors who buried their son. But still there is the desire to ask their own church to do it. They are facing a serious dilemma.

Participant two: eight months after the death of her brother her twin sister died. She was afraid to go to the very church that disappointed her in the first place. She could not face another rejection from the church. She feels that the church should be available for all its members in times of need. What troubled her most was that her siblings were baptized and confirmed Anglican Christians and therefore she believes the church has a responsibility to give them proper burials.

Participant three: By virtue of their baptism, she thinks that there should have been more compassion shown by the church. Although the granny`s daughter is now a member of the AME church by virtue of her marriage, she still wants to go back to her Anglican roots, but feels that the church should treat its members better.

Participant four: He feels that the church should not be judgmental when dealing with defunct members. Instead the church should “uplift and console mourners.” He articulates his concern as follows “. How will the church encourage defunct members if they treat them so harshly?” These are very serious questions that this research attempts to address.

Participant five: She feels that the church should treat all people on a fair and equal basis by showing them love and respect.

(c) Church`s apparent failure in ministering to the bereaved.

From this response it is clear that the church has somewhat failed in its ministry to bereaved families. The families are not so enthusiastic of being associated with their church. They don't have confidence in the ministry of the church any longer. They all expressed the need for the church to change its practice in dealing with bereaved families but vowed not to leave the church because of a long standing allegiance with it. The fact that I represented the priestly component of the church enabled them to ventilate their frustration and anger with ease but in a respectful manner. I suspect that they trusted me and wanted me to communicate the content of the research to my colleagues. Participant four was more direct when he said at the beginning of the interview, "I don't mind being a co – researcher as long as some of the findings are to be revealed to the leadership of my church so that they can treat people better". These five families are hurting. I am thankful that they have allowed me to enter into their space of pain and disappointment. Pollard`s therapeutic model of positive deconstruction was helpful in this case. I had to allow them to relate freely their stories of pain, rejection and especially anger towards the church. Their criticism of the church`s practice and policy of funerals was relevant. I agree with them that the outcome could have been different if sensitivity, tolerance and understanding had been displayed. They were not angry with the entire parishioners but only with the leadership who took the decision. In fact they applauded the parishioners and expressed their gratitude by explaining how the parishioners supported them throughout the week. The parishioners visited every day and with each visit prayed with them. This side of the church is commendable and should be encouraged and affirmed, as Pollard is suggesting in his model. I had to explain to some of them that the problem did not lie with the people who are executing the policy but with the policy itself. Their anger should be directed towards the policy and not to the ministry of the church or to individuals such as priests and churchwardens. This conversation will enable them to view the church in a different light, because all of them have concluded that the entire church is not so bad but only certain elements of it which can be addressed. Where Pollard falls short, Wimberley will help us (supervisor and myself) to journey with them from a position of shame and embarrassment to a position of grace and worth. My

supervisor has suggested that I should arrange a workshop with the five families on a Saturday. The venue can either be my own church or any Anglican church in the Vaal triangle. At that meeting the professor will facilitate the healing process, which will, if need be, allow me to journey further with them. He also mentioned that anyone else who is experiencing bereavement could be invited, because he is contemplating doing Group Therapy as part of the healing methods for that day. This will be the starting point where therapeutic shepherding with bereaved mourners commences. The goal is to effect healing, but I am quite aware that this will take a great deal of time and patience.

(d) Communicating channels used by church.

All the people interviewed informed the church of the death through a neighbour, a fellow parishioner, a lay minister or a church council member. None of them contacted the priest directly. When asked why that did not happen, they all agreed that it was the required procedure. No one is allowed to contact the priest directly. This is what they were taught and this is how the church has been operating for many years. The author condemns this way of operating in the strongest terms because this is the ideal opportunity for the priest to journey with the bereaved family through the ministry of presence. By visiting them personally the priest demonstrates his / her care, love, concern, sympathy and empathy with the mourners. This is also the time when the priest can and should give advice on how to arrange the funeral, whom to speak to, what to say, where to start and the like. This is also the opportune time to advise the mourners against “vultures” who might exploit them financially. The author also uses this time to pray with the mourners and to inform them about regular services of comfort throughout the week following the Saturday of the burial. It is rather unfortunate and regrettable that this ministry is only given to the families whose deceased member will be buried from the church; this is what makes the stoep funeral group so bitter and angry towards the church.

(e) Visitation by fellow parishioners

During the notices the churchwardens announce the death and encourage people to go and pay their respects, despite knowing that they will decide on a stoep funeral. The

author fails to understand the rationale behind this. Lay ministers in particular are encouraged if not instructed to visit the mourners and to communicate the news of the steep funeral to them. The author sees this as lay minister abuse. They are being used to do the dirty work for the churchwardens and priest. In cases where family members demand proper explanations of decisions, the lay ministers are found wanting. They are not in a position to explain the reasons that informed the decision. They might know then, but are too scared to explain. Because there is no direct contact with the priest, bereaved mourners are left helpless and frustrated. They are left with anger but the person who has caused it is not there to feel the wrath. This is the added pain which the author refers to in chapter one. It is an extremely insensitive way of dealing with people who are hurting. In other instances the churchwardens or members of parish council deem it necessary to visit the mourners themselves, perhaps as a result of knowing the family or to prove a point through authoritative communication. Be it as it may, the mourners are not in a position to argue with them but have to take whatever they say and to internalize it into anger and bitterness (compare profile and responses of participant three). The author assumes that the main aim of the church warden`s visit is to confirm whether the deceased has been contributing financially to the church (paying a ticket) and to find out if the deceased was a regular worshipper. In proposing a therapeutic model for healing, the author in chapter six will also deal with “ticket system“. In order to cover their tracks, the churchwardens in most cases advise the family to hire a local community hall, from which the funeral can take place. The author views this visit by the churchwardens and parish council members as a farce. It is misleading. The aim is not to give pastoral assistance but to see to it that the policy is executed. This very same policy might also encourage church leaders to act vindictively towards mourners, especially in situations where they don’t like a particular person. Participant two refers to such behaviour as “discriminatory.” She maintains that the churchwardens use the policy to wage personal vendettas against their foes, because they are the ones who tell the priests what form the funeral will take. They will especially take advantage when a priest is still new in a parish or after they have discovered that the priest is too weak and scared to question their decisions. They will always remind the priest that they know the people better and this places them in the

best position to make decisions. The church leadership regards their decision to conduct a stoep funeral as a way in which the church “ helps ” that family. This is how they justify stoep funerals. It was also discovered that the parishioners and pastors from other churches especially Pentecostal and African indigenous churches, are the ones who journey with the family throughout and even long after the funeral. One of my colleagues argues that this is one of the reasons why some people in the townships cross the floor from mainline to charismatic churches.

(f) Previous commitment of deceased to the church.

The churchwardens will either claim that they don't know the deceased or they are new in office; hence previous involvement is nullified. Through the interviews it became obvious how involved some of the deceased people were in their church:

Participant one: The son was baptized and confirmed. He used to be an active member of the church`s youth guild. Only after his relocation to Rustenburg because of employment was he no longer able attend church any longer.

Participant two: Her brother had been an Anglican since birth. He was baptized and confirmed. He used to be a regular worshipper as an active choir member.

Participant three: The granny`s son had been an Anglican since birth. He was a baptized and confirmed Anglican. Even his marriage took place in the very church which denied his existence at death. The granny confirmed that she “paid his ticket” together with all the others all along.

Participant four: the wife joined the Anglican church after their marriage, thirteen years ago. It is the accepted practice and norm in black South African culture that the wife should join the church of her husband. All the children born in the marriage should grow up as full active members of that church after their baptism and confirmation. This tradition has its advantages and disadvantages which can be taken up by another researcher.

Participant five: the late husband had been Anglican since birth and was a baptized and confirmed member of his local church. He was a regular worshipper which even impressed Fr. Themba when he attended the baptism classes for their children. The

wife could not because of work commitments. It all began when the man became ill and could no longer attend. Although the wife reported his illness to the church leadership, no one came to visit him. She testified that she expected the priest at least to come around, give the husband communion reserved for the sick, anoint the man with holy oil, pray with them and journey with them. This did not happen and when he died they claimed not to know him. This is how he was disowned by his own church and given a stoep funeral. Even Fr. Themba`s effort fell on deaf ears as he tried to reason with them by testifying to the man`s commitment.

It became clear to the researcher that a person`s previous commitment to his / her church is not taken into account but only the present standing and status. Each case is supposed to be different and to be viewed on merit, meaning that many factors need to be considered. It doesn`t seem as if holistic evaluation takes place, but a rather vigorous judgemental attitude is adopted which, can be criticized as one sided.

(g) Funeral service and follow up - ministry

Three funerals took place in a hired community hall while the other two were from the family home. The families who hired local halls complained about the extra financial costs, and yet the church was standing empty at that time. The families who used the stoeps complained that the tents were too small. The rest of the mourners were standing outside the yard in the street, with the result that they could not follow the service. All five families were happy with the attendance of fellow parishioners, but could not remember anything remarkable from the service itself that they would treasure for ever. Instead the disappointment and rejection they suffered from their church will cause them to remember this event for ever. The funeral service that was supposed to be the starting point of their healing process became for them an event of shame and embarrassment because of the church`s practice of stoep funerals. In all cases, the church leadership failed to pay follow up visits. Only their fellow parishioners supported them throughout their mourning period by offering prayers and words of comfort. They feel as if their own church has disowned them. This feeling of abandonment and despair that they experience can be compared with Wimberley`s description of relational

refugees. According to him, relational refugees are persons not grounded in nurturing and liberating relationships. They are detached and without significant connections with others that can bolster their self-esteem. They lack a warm relational environment in which to define and nurture their self – identity. As a consequence, they withdraw into destructive relationships that exacerbate, rather than alleviate, their predicament.

Wimberley, Edward; P; 2000; 20

In the author`s understanding the families who have been exposed to stoep funerals have been left bitter and angry by the church`s decision. There has been a break down in significant relationships between them and the church leadership because of the leadership`s decision. To me what is important is the factors that have influenced them to take that decision as well as the factors that were overlooked and disregarded which were important to the families. The families feel that the obvious factors which they put forward as arguments for a church funeral were brushed off with contempt by the church leadership. For this reason, there is no profound, nurturing, liberating relationship between them and the church leadership. Some feel that their personality, character and identity as human beings has been undermined by the church leadership. No wonder some of them have withdrawn to the confines of their homes, do not feel like going to church and instead visit other churches at times. They need to be shown a great deal of love if they are to rebuild their self – esteem and identity. It is for this reason that my supervisor has proposed a counselling session with them that will enable them to ventilate their bitterness and anger. It is sad that the church and its ministry if incorrectly applied can become a source of destructive behaviour in people.

5.6.2. Interviewing responses from people whose loved ones have had church funerals

The first observation was that this group of interviewees was far more relaxed, less anxious and that they had a remarkably confident tone in their voices. This seems to be a clear indication that one of the reasons for their self – confidence had to do with better ways of dealing with their grief and mourning. The average interview lasted for only one and a half hours while those of the group with stoep funerals averaged two and a half

hours. The mood was lighter, the people pleasant and one could observe that emotionally they were in a better space than the group with stoep funerals. The latter group spoke with great difficulty and every fact communicated was loaded with bitterness and anger.

(a) Impact of pain caused by death.

The first participant is a pensioner who spoke about her husband`s death and burial. Although saddened by her husband`s departure, she could have dealt with the grief because the priest and lay ministers regularly visited her husband while he was still sick. He was given communion reserved for the sick, prayed for and anointed with holy oil on a monthly basis. According to her this special ministry somehow prepared them for the inevitable. The priest not only journeyed with the husband but with the family as well by providing counselling and much needed encouragement each time he ministered to the husband.

The second participant is also a pensioner in the same area. Like the first co – researcher, he was prepared to deal with the wife`s death because of the same ministry mentioned above. He articulated his satisfaction in this way: “I am the happiest widower because of what the church did for me”.

Participant three: this co – researcher is also a pensioner and spoke about her husband`s sudden death. He was not only a taxi owner but also an administrator in the industry. She says that, although she still misses her late husband, she is forever grateful for the support and love that the church gave her during the time of grief and mourning.

Participant four: also a pensioner and believes that he would not have survived if it were not for the ministry of the church. He spoke openly about the events of his wife`s and son`s deaths and burials.

Participant five: this co – researcher confidently spoke about her husband`s death and how the priest and parishioners journeyed with her at that time.

(b) How the decision of the church added to their existing pain

All the people interviewed had nothing bad to say about the church; instead they all praised the support, encouragement and understanding given to them by the priest and parishioners. In all cases the priest went to visit the family as soon as the death was reported. At that visit the priest and churchwardens invited the family members to make suggestions with regard to the funeral arrangements. Everything was transparent and the families wishes were taken into account. All the funeral services were to be conducted in the church. The author remembers these events quite well because he was the priest that these stories speak about. The decision to take all the funeral services in church came as a surprise to some of them. The participants used words such as “ shock,” “ surprise,” “ amazed,” “ unexpected,” “ incredible,” in order to express their joy at having had their loved ones buried from the church.

(c) Church`s apparent failure in ministry to the bereaved.

The words from participant three sum it all up: “I am truly grateful, happy, and proud of what my church did for me”.

Participant four even remarked that his wife was a practising sangoma who didn't attend church. After the son`s death and burial, she was so impressed with the love and ministerial support given by the clergy and church people that she decided to join the church and to worship regularly. She even became a member of the church`s AWF Guild (women`s guild). All the people interviewed expressed their satisfaction and happiness with how the church journeyed with them at the time of death.

(d) Communication channels used by the church

The standing practice was observed. People asked either a neighbour, a relative, a church member, lay minister or a parish council member to notify the church about the death. The difference is that in all five cases, as soon as the priest was notified, he immediately took a churchwarden with him to visit the family to make funeral arrangements. According to the author`s observation, it seems as if this humble act of servant hood was highly appreciated by the affected family members. Even the decision

to conduct all funeral services in the church came us a pleasant surprise to them, because the people were not used to this treatment.

(e) Visitation by fellow parishioners

This ministry was not lacking. It is commendable how fellow parishioners support each other in times of death. As soon as they hear of a death, they will flock to the house of the deceased to bring condolences, support and comfort. Much was said in the Literature Review chapter about how African people usually support grieving family members. It has much to do with the mind-set we have about death, funerals, the care of the dead body and the love to be shown to the survivors. Funerals in the townships become a community affair. Because of the already mentioned UBUNTU principle which we live, it is expected of community members to show their presence and support in times of bereavement. It is expected of community members to journey with the grieving survivors because we believe in the saying, “ To day is someone else; tomorrow it might be you – therefore play your part “. This model of care is warm and loving, unlike the western one which (emphasizes) privacy and individualism.

This research has also noted that whether the deceased was given a stoep or a church funeral, the community members were always present in droves to give support. This happened not only on the day of the funeral but each day of the week up to the funeral day. This model of care shown by the community members transcends denominational allegiances because all ten of the interviewees could proudly say, “People from different churches, including clergy, came to support us “. The author believes that this supportive ministry comes at a cost to the grieving mourners because the visitors need to be fed and nourished as they visit and more expense is incurred on the day of the funeral. Unfortunately this places a heavy burden on surviving family members and even traumatization. The question of how to be culturally correct , and at the same time to cope with financial expectations, can be taken up by another researcher.

(f) Previous commitment of deceased to the church.

The participants were very open and honest about this.

Participant one: The deceased was not a regular worshipper and actively involved with the life and activities of the church, although he was a regular tithing member; yet the funeral was conducted from the church.

Participant two: The deceased was a practising sangoma and so she was not seen as a practising Christian. The husband paid the “ticket” for all the family members. Only after the death and burial of her son did she decide to become a practising Christian as a result of the care and love shown by the priest. This ministry from the church impressed her so much that she even joined one of the church’s women’s guilds, the AWF.

Participant three: Owing to work commitments the husband never attended church. For a taxi owner, Sundays are very busy days for business and therefore only the wife and children attended. Despite all this, the husband was given a church funeral without questions asked by the priest. This attitude makes the author wonder: Whom do we seek to minister to at times of death – the deceased or the grieving families? Who needs the church’s ministry the most- the deceased or the grieving mourners?

Participant four: the son used to attend regularly but only when he took up employment in Mafikeng did he become a defunct member; and yet his funeral was conducted in church.

Participant five: the husband was a regular worshipper and a member of the men’s guild. As a result, he made regular DG contributions.

What was apparent in all the interviews was that the deceased (both from stoep and tent funerals) were baptized and confirmed members of the Anglican church. Most of them did not attend church at the time of death but had previously been involved in the life and activities of the church. In the cases of those who received stoep funerals, it seems as if these factors, as well the ones that caused them not to attend at the time of death, were not considered. This to the author are a travesty and is regrettable. It shows how power and authority is being used to the detriment of God’s people.

(g) Funeral service and follow - up ministry

All five interviewees could (proudly) say that the funeral service took place in church and the service was conducted by a priest. They were all extremely happy with how the service was conducted. According to participant one, it was done “properly with respect.” She was particularly happy that the priest celebrated the sacrament of Holy Communion and everyone was invited to (participate the body of Christ and to drink from his blood.)

Participant two: What stood out for him was the fact that the priest even made time to go to the family home after the funeral despite the fact that the priest was doing two funerals on that day. According to him it was the first time that he experienced such a thing and he will always remember that.

Participant three: She felt that she had to join one of the guilds after what the church did for her. She expressed it in this way. “I have to give back to God and the church because the church was so good to me. To think that my husband was not even a churchgoer, yet they did all that for me.”

Participant four: What stood out for him at his wife`s funeral, was the powerful, healing sermon of the priest, to such an extent that the participant even breached cultural expectations. This demands that the close mourners be quiet, sombre and passive during the funeral rituals. He couldn`t contain himself any longer, but jumped up and joined the congregation in singing, dancing and clapping of hands.

In the author`s view this distinctive mode of expression distinguishes us as Africans from the Western mode of expression. Singing and dancing have become to us a way of expressing our emotions. We use singing and dancing to express our emotions even in times of joy or sadness. This is one of the things that makes us African. We are an expressive breed of people and this we gladly show at funerals, ordinary church meetings, protest marches, school gatherings, joyful occasions and others.

Participant five: This participant articulated her complete satisfaction in this way: “the funeral service helped me to deal better with my sorrow, because it was held in church and conducted by the priest. He even gave us Holy Communion.”

It is to be noted that all five funerals were held in church, conducted by the priest and the sacrament of Holy Communion was administered. The priest went back to all the family homes after the committal at the cemetery was done, just to socialize with the mourners. Again this points to the important role and significance the ministry of presence has for grieving mourners and any one in need.

From what the author can gather from the responses of the co – researches, the person and presence of the priest is extremely important when people face bereavement. This is uniquely complemented by the ministry that he is expected to give as an ordained minister in the church of God. This ritualistic role of the priest brings to mind an image of Moses standing on a rock at the Red Sea holding his staff over the waters, as God divided the waters while God`s people crossed on dry ground. God then eventually closed the walls of water and drowned the pursuing Egyptians that day. While Moses was standing on the rock that day, the people had hope in seeing his presence which prompted them to cross (in spite of gripping) fear and anxiety.

(Slightly adapted from Exodus 14 and 15)

The author believes that this is the image that all priests should have in front of them when taking up the ordained ministry in the quest of journeying with God`s people. The priest should be keenly aware that this is the image in the minds of the people which will give them the hope and courage to face adversity knowing that their God appointed leader is there to journey with them. Much of this will be explored in chapter six, where a proposed model of healing will be investigated.

5.6.2. Brief summary in table form of similarities and differences between people who have experienced stoep funerals and those with church funerals

(a) Similarities

Stoep Funerals	Church Funerals
1. Exposed to death of a loved one and were deeply affected by it.	1. Exposed to death of a loved one and were deeply affected by it.

2. Informed the church of the death through a third party.	2. Same
3. A church representative came to verify the death and communicated funeral arrangements.	3. Same
4. Parishioners and community members came in droves to support the family.	4. Same
5. Deceased was a baptized and confirmed communicant of the parish.	5. Same
6. At the point of death the deceased was not actively involved in the life and ministry of the church.	6. Same
7. For practical reasons there was a need to have the funeral in a big space other than the family home	7. Same
8. The grieving families desperately needed the priest to journey with them	8. Same
9. Clergy from other churches i.e., charismatic and indigenous churches attended the service, or at times were asked to take the leading role	9. Clergy were asked to join in the proceedings.

(b) Differences

Stoep Funerals	Church funerals
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1. Lay ministers conducted the funeral service either from the family home or hired community hall.	1. Service took place in church and was conducted by the priest.
2. Priest never came around to see the family.	2. The priest came virtually every day to make his / her presence felt.
3. No discussions were held with family members regarding funeral services.	3. Families were allowed to negotiate their preferences. Nothing was forced on them.
4. Mourners cannot mention any joy or satisfaction which they experienced during the funeral service.	4. Mourners are ecstatic over the presiding role that was played by the priest during the funeral service and particularly pointed to the sermon, the singing and , the administration of Holy Communion.
5. Funeral service will be remembered with anger, bitterness, rejection and frustration.	5. Funeral service will be remembered with pride joy and satisfaction.
6. They are not happy with the treatment they have received from their own church.	6. Mourners are extremely happy and proud of their church.
7. Some of them are considering leaving the church .	7. The thought of leaving has never crossed their minds instead they are now involved in the life of the church as never before
8. Whoever came to see the family reminded them of the church policy which was non-negotiable.	8. Church policy was never mentioned. Some were pleasantly surprised that their deceased was to be given a church funeral despite being defunct in relation to DG or church attendance.

<p>9. The mourners feel that the funeral service did not actually help them to deal with their loss; instead they were more traumatized.</p>	<p>9. They don't have the words to describe their joy, happiness and peace of mind. They all agree that the funeral was respectful and dignified. It has enabled them to deal better with their loss. The funeral service was the beginning of their healing.</p>
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5.7. The following section will focus on responses of churchwardens and 5.8 those of priests (insulting from) interviews.

(a) Churchwardens and their knowledge about their job description / role / function

Participant one: She described her role as follows: "To see to the needs of the parishioners and smooth running of the parish ". When asked to explain what she meant by that, she bluntly said "They need to report everything to us. It was like this all these years. This is what my predecessors told me and this is what I believe ".

Participant two: expressed a similar view, but added pastoral care of the priest and, overseeing and managing the properties of the church.

Participant three: she believes that their role "is to look after the priest and the affairs of the church".

Participant four: according to him their task is "to respond to the needs of the congregation and to take care of the clergy".

This research has noted that churchwardens need to be educated in their roles and functions. Canon 29 reads as follows:

(i) Churchwardens are the officers of the Bishop and the principal representatives of the congregation.

(ii) Together with the Incumbent they constitute the executive of the parish council and have special responsibility in the following matters:

- To ensure that a register is kept of all parishioners.
- To keep an inventory of all goods, ornaments and furniture belonging to the church and to deliver the same to their successors on ceasing to hold office.
- To provide for the safety and preservation of all registers.
- To execute the policy of the parish council regarding property and parochial finance and to be responsible for the preparation of annual estimates of Revenue and expenditure and the presentation of the accounts to the vestry.
- To see to the seating of the congregation without respect of persons
- To aid the Incumbent with information and counsel in all matters relating to the parish and in particularly in cases contemplated in the rubrics before the service of Holy Communion.

Constitution and Canons of the Anglican
church of Southern Africa, Revised 2011 : 67
and 68

Together with the other elected members of Parish Council the churchwardens also have the following duties, according to Canon 28:

- To consider matters affecting worship, stewardship, evangelism, education, social responsibility and pastoral care, to examine the needs of the community and to initiate such actions as shall be determined in any of these concerned.
- To consider the general welfare and accommodation of all licensed clergy and where applicable, their families and dependants, and to take such action as they may deem necessary.
- To seek at all levels such contacts with other Christians as shall strengthen Christian witness and promote Christian unity.
- To have direction and control of the properties and revenue and expenditure of the parish, subject to articles xviii and xix of the Constitution, the Canons of the Province and the rules of the Diocese in which the parish is situated.
- To receive, consider and approve the estimates in respect of each financial year.
- To receive and act upon all matters referred to(them) by the Bishop, the Diocesan Synod and other competent bodies.

Constitution and Canons of the Anglican church of Southern
African, Revised 2011: 65 - 66

In all respects the Rules of the Diocese in which this research is taking place, are the same as the canon law, for the rules cannot supersede the canons.

Participant two was very evasive in her response. In the interviews the author could pick up how suspicious she was after I had explained her scope of the research in relation to the title. The others also hinted that the topic was a “sensitive holy cow”. They preferred not to talk about it because, according to participant four “it might lead to confusion”. It seemed to the author that they all knew that something was wrong in their church policy: hence the evasiveness, for fear of incriminating themselves and their predecessors. Even after I had given them the assurance that the answers they give only be used for research purposes, one could see that they were still uncomfortable. Most of them were agitated and annoyed by the questions and one could easily read irritation on their faces during responses.

(b) Regarding decisions about funerals and other communication around burial.

They all agree that they should be notified before the priest and in turn will communicate the death to the priest. It really doesn't matter how the news comes to them but after notification, they will take parish council members with them to visit the family. They view this as a verification matter but also agree that this is normally the ideal time when final decisions will be communicated to the family. This they do without consulting the priest. They will only later give him / her report back. In some cases they will communicate with each other concerning the death, make a decision and ask the nearest lay minister to convey the responses of the church to the family. According to participant three the parish council needs to “talk first to each other” before the priest is notified about the death and the family informed which form the funeral service will take. A colleague has also informed the author that priests are very hesitant to administer pastoral care to families if the wardens are not informed about it. Ministries like visitation, taking Holy Communion to the sick at home or in hospital, visiting those in need of counseling, the bereaved and all others are to be undertaken with the

knowledge of the parish council. If they are not, the priest is likely to find himself / herself in hot water.

(c) Factors that inform Council members in deciding from where the funeral will be.

They all agree that the reason why the Parish Council members need to consult with one another first, is to evaluate the deceased on:

- Church attendance
- Regular financial contributions in the form of DG. If it is found that the deceased is lacking in one or both, the result will be a stoep funeral. This practice in their understanding, is church policy, of which the origins are unknown. All they know is that lay ministers are to conduct stoep funerals from the family home and the priest, church funerals. This is an inherited practice followed in townships for many years. They maintain that parishioners don't know anything else but this practice.

(d) Status of stoep funerals

As already mentioned, participant one was very evasive and tried to confuse the author in her responses.

Participant two was the most vocal person and had this to say about stoep funerals: "They are being regarded as second class funerals and this practice only happens in the townships. It is an embarrassing practice that only hurt our people more because of how it is viewed in the community. For this reason we lose a lot of our members to the Pentecostals, because they just bury any one. People are grumbling about this practice".

Participant three: in her responses she fails to see how stoep funerals show any respect to the deceased and family because of the known negative stigma.

Participant four: he asserts that the practice of enforcing stoep funerals is obvious. That is all she knows and she cannot understand why this research is questioning it. She articulates her bemusement as follows: "This is what we know. This is what our

parents before us knew. It has been church policy for many years”. She believes however that stoep funerals cause grieving mourners relentless pain, shame and embarrassment, because in her own words, “ it is not fair “.

Participant five: according to him, stoep funerals are designed for defaulters. The message is “They were not good enough or clean enough to have had a church funeral”. He regards stoep funerals as second, or even third, class funerals, because of the lack of sympathy, empathy and sensitivity shown to the mourners by the church. He despises this practice utterly because most of the time this policy is manipulated either by priest or parish council members, to the detriment of ordinary parishioners. He communicated his disgust in the following way: “This unfair policy is not consistently implemented in a fair manner”.

The interviews have shown that even the church wardens are not comfortable with this policy because:

- It is open to abuse.
- It is not implemented fairly and consistently.
- It is seen as a way of punishing the deceased for his / her lack of commitment to the church.
- This policy has no room for showing sympathy, empathy and love to the bereaved mourners, because of the rigid and non –negotiable way it is being implemented.

Participant five sums it up in this way, “A stoep service is not therapeutic. It is just cold procedure delegated to lay ministers. The church regards the implementation of it as a duty towards defaulters”.

- Stoep funerals are embarrassing to bereaved members, but they as church leaders cannot stop the practice. They don’t know any other method of dealing with defunct members.
- Stoep funerals are not respectful and dignified.

Participant two has this to say: “These funerals are always noisy, disorderly and are characterized by unruly interferences and disruptions”. When asked why this always happens he said, “Maybe everyone can see the absence of a priest and thus takes advantage. The small, space where the ceremony is taking place also has a role to play. The tent is too small with the result that most mourners are standing outside

the yard in the street while the ceremony is on. They don't follow but chat to one another". According to participant four a dignified funeral is a church funeral where the priest presides and even administers the sacrament of Holy Communion. She argues that "Stoep funerals cannot be seen as dignified because there is no priest to bring dignity. These funerals can become very disruptive".

This statement of participant four "there is no priest to bring dignity ", vindicates the image of Moses on the rock for the people to see, that the author introduced previously. Much will be said about this in chapter six.

– They are all aware that parishioners painfully dislike stoep funerals because they are painful experiences.

– They all agree that this practice should stop, but simultaneously communicate their paralysis, for they don't know what to introduce as a replacement. Some even say that priests will not agree with replacements.

– All five co – researchers would not like to have stoep funerals for themselves or for family members, even if family members "qualifies, "according to their criteria.

Participant four communicated it strongly in this way: "Ninety percent of my life has been dedicated to church work. Only a church funeral is good enough for me because the world needs to see that I was a church person." Concerning the same statement, although very evasive, participant one strongly communicates her own dislike of stoep funerals in this way: "I would not like to experience a stoep funeral for myself and family because we pay our church dues and attend church regularly". All three of the other churchwardens strongly condemned stoep funerals especially where their family members were concerned as can be seen under the section "Dimension three, Responses from churchwardens ". One cannot understand this contradiction. On the one hand they would not like to have a stoep funeral for themselves and their relatives, but on the other hand they think nothing of vigorously enforcing this policy on parishioners without any consideration. This to my mind underscores the sentiments from people interviewed that this policy is open to abuse, is unfair and undermines parishioners.

The author is also puzzled by the various vernacular sayings the churchwardens use to justify the on-going practice of stoep funerals. I think that they are using them to scare the parishioners and thereby are trying to force them to attend church regularly and to make consistent financial contributions. When they are they not using the same statements when it comes to their own family members?

Remarkably most of them including priests are using the biblical saying of Jesus “Let the dead bury the dead” to justify why defunct members should be given a stoep funeral, but their interpretation and implementation of that saying, is out of context. This is not what Jesus meant. Another point of interest that the interviews have picked up is the notion of African identity and pastoral care in relation to stoep funerals. The participants all believe that this continued practice cannot be seen as the way in which African people traditionally cared for one another. Participant one eloquently communicated it in this fashion, “*Mathlo ho tjhaa mabapi, mathlo ho tjhaa mabapi*” (Sesotho). Loosely translated it means, “If I am in need as an African, I expect my fellow brothers and sisters to come to my aid, as I will in return do the same for others in need”. He followed this by saying: “If my house is burning this side, I expect my neighbours to come and help me, because I will do the same if they need help”. According to participant three stoep funerals are “cold and heartless”. Participant five describes the African way of care in this way “*Iminiyeza naguewe*” (Isizulu). This he quotes from an isiZulu gospel song which, loosely translated, means, “Today it is you; tomorrow it is me”

They all know how important it is for African people to show concern, compassion, sympathy and love by sharing one another`s burdens: cf. A Dimension Three in Chapter six in which participant five will propose a model for healing. More will be said about the African way of caring, but for now this research will move into responses from priests.

(a) Regarding decisions about funerals and other communication concerning burials.

All the black priests interviewed are in agreement that the notification normally comes from a person other than a family member. This according to them, is not a law but an

expectation. Most of them have appointed block leaders, whose role it is to communicate any need from parishioners in their area to the priest. Simultaneously they also expect communication from their churchwardens but not directly from the family. If it so happens that a family member unknowingly contacts them, they will refer the person back to the church wardens. From the author`s observation, this is a smart way for the priest to abandon pastoral responsibility and to pass it on to the church wardens. They are actually giving the church wardens the power and freedom to make choices such as where the funeral service will be conducted. In my view, if the church wardens and parish council offend people by their manner of speaking or attitude at the time when they make arrangements with the family, the priest should also be blamed for that blunder. This way of operating to me is like abandoning or abdicating your pastoral duties. Unfortunately there is no directive in the church`s canon law nor in the diocesan rules that speaks directly into this situation. To me, it is a grey area and that is the reason why the priests are getting away with a wrong practice.

Concerning notification to the priest, participant one said, “Sometimes it depends on the profile of the deceased. If a high profile person dies anyone rushes to inform the priest, but in the case of not so well known, ordinary people, the news take days to reach the priest. Sometimes the news might reach him a day before the funeral via the churchwardens because they were in negotiations with the family all the time”. The exception was participant three, a white priest ministering in black communities as well. It was not clearly spelled out by him how funerals were managed in those communities in relation to who makes the decisions regarding funeral services. Instead he communicated his availability and readiness to do any funeral in this way: “My criterion is compassion for the bereaved, whether I have known the deceased or not “. He makes all the decisions and his decision is always to conduct every funeral in the church though he will respect the wishes of the family if they decide otherwise. He emphasizes the point that all decisions are made by him and parishioners are always reminded to speak directly to him in times of funeral arrangements.

(b)Criteria that determines where the services will take place.

The place where the funeral service is to take place is determined by the criteria they use as church policy, which relate inter alia to (a) church attendance of the deceased (b) regular financial contributions in the form of tithing or dedicated giving. All four participants conceded that they knew the policy very well, but would not like to challenge the policy, for they felt comfortable with it and that they had no idea of how and when this policy originated. Participant one assumed that such a practice started out of necessity, “to get people committed to the church”. They all shared in the interviewing process that the policy dictates that a clear distinction should be observed in the sense that lay ministers are expected to conduct stoep funerals from the family home. Whereas the priests do not become involved in such services. Church funerals are reserved for them and they are expected to conduct such funerals from the church, where they have to perform all the burial rites including the administering of Holy Communion to the mourners. Participant two defended this policy in this way: “It is to correct a practice and certain behaviour of our members. We consider it as education, since the aim is to teach others to pay their DG continuously and to encourage them to attend church regularly.”

(c)Nature of stoep funerals as seen by priests.

Participant four defended this policy with very strong convictions when he said, “ I am not willing to disrupt the smooth running of the church by questioning its logic and relevance “. He is adamant that this policy should continue for the sake of “ peace and unity irrespective whether anyone knows where it has originated and for what purpose. He emphasizes the view that bereaved families should be thankful to the church for “ sending “ lay ministers to conduct stoep funerals as the church is only “ helping “ them, because the deceased was not in good standing with the church in relation to attendance and DG.

Although participant one criticises the essence of stoep funerals, he remains comfortable with the practice. He describes stoep funerals as “second or even third class funerals “ and refers to the profile of a person in the church and sometimes in the

community. To the author's mind, this participant is falling short by saying that they would not like to upset the church council by deviating from the policy. As participant two was saying, "that is to play with your allowances and future in that parish".

Participant one is concerned that stoep funerals "neglects proper care and pastoral intervention by the priest for the family." He then asserted that stoep funerals were not dignified and showed no respect to the deceased and the bereaved especially in the manner in which they are implemented. He refers here to the lack of contact between priest and the bereaved. According to him the stoep funeral is a form of punishment of the bereaved and the deceased and he describes this practice as "denigrating". All the participants mentioned the fact that they are fully aware that the parishioners do not like this policy, but, according to participant five, "Everyone has to live with it because it is church policy. To the author this statement sounded like admitting defeat but also helplessness because participant one conceded, "We have no method to deal with defunct members".

Participant two expressed his defence of stoep funerals in this way, "*Ha motho a saje ntho as phela, o k eke wa mofa yona na ase a shwele.*" (Sesotho) which loosely translated means, "If someone didn't eat something while still alive, why give it to him/her when dead". To him only church funerals are dignified, because of the presence and ministry of the priest, but he quickly adds that "The church should not be blamed for stoep funerals. It is the deceased's own doing while he / she was still alive." Participant four however defends stoep funerals in this way: "You cannot give someone something to eat at death that he or she never liked while alive". He is here referring to the functionality of the deceased in relation to church attendance and DG contribution.

According to him the churchwardens should continue to arrange and manage funerals with the bereaved. He is extremely happy with this practice and would not like to interfere because he is confident that they will never contravene the policy or show any bias. He believes that lay ministers are "helping the bereaved", bring dignity to stoep funerals and stated it in this way, "They say the same prayers from the prayer book which we say in church." He however fails to see how stoep funerals can add to the pain of the bereaved because in his view "They are supposed to know the policy".

Participant five asserts that if a deceased is to have a stoep funeral, only the deceased

person is directly responsible for it because he / she while alive, had a choice to “show appreciation of the criteria or church policy “To him. stoep funerals are meant to educate the remaining survivors, because in this way they are being challenged to observe the church policy. Despite being aware of the stigma associated with stoep funerals, he remains adamant that people should abide by the expectations of the church policy, otherwise the stipends of priests will not be paid. According to him,“ “There is nothing that we can do at this point. Stoep funerals can only stop once we have a workable alternative “.

All four participants would not like to have a stoep funeral for themselves or relatives for that matter Participant five put it this way:; “It would not be befitting “. On the dignity and respect aspect of stoep funerals, the participants differed in their opinion. According to participant one, stoep funerals are not dignified and do not show any respect to the bereaved. According to participant two, the presence of lay ministers in helping “ the bereaved brings dignity to stoep funerals and according to participant four, the prayers said by lay ministers from the prayer book are the same as are being said in the church and that brings the dignity to stoep funerals. Participant five however dealt with the dignity aspects in this way, “ if scriptures is utilized appropriately and effectively, whether by a priest or lay minister, that brings respect to the deceased and bereaved ,endorsing the dignity of the funeral “.From the responses of the participants, it seems to the author that they are all aware of the divisive, negative and destructive nature of stoep funerals but they use every little means to defend this practice, because they are incapable of introducing an alternative model to deal with defunct members. One of the aims of this research is to suggest a model that the church can use to journey pastorally with bereaved members of a deceased defunct church member. This will be treated in chapter six, but for now it is important to assess the opinions of participant three, a white priest working in the townships. The participant believes that nobody deserves to have a stoep funeral according to the criteria used in township churches. This is also the philosophy and theology of the author. This is not challenged in the two historically white parishes where the participant ministers but not accepted in his third, a black parish. The parish council in the township church would like to continue with the practice that they know and which others and they themselves have been following for years. In

the opinion of the author the challenge for the priest is to educate the black church in such a way that they allow the theology that he practises in the other two parishes to be allowed in the black church. This transition comes with its own challenges in relation to race, culture and politics. A fair amount of skill and persuasiveness and Nick Pollard's positive deconstruction are needed to change the mind-set of the black church. This participant describes stoep funerals as demeaning to the deceased and a slap in the face of the bereaved and therefore according to him, it can never be accepted as respectful and dignified based on the rigid, non – negotiable manner in which it is being implemented in the townships. He blames the ancient township practice of the “ticket system” for the continuation of stoep funerals. He strongly describes his disgust at this practice as “brutal treatment of the deceased”.

(d) Follow-up ministry to bereaved families

All four priests are at one in their attempts to journey with bereaved families by way of follow – up visitation after the funeral. In no uncertain terms do they acknowledge just that in the case of church funerals. It was however very disturbing to the author when the same could not be said about those having faced stoep funerals. It was clear in their responses that no follow-up visits were paid to the latter. Instead those funeral proceedings might be discussed in monthly meetings which they have with the lay ministers. This omission the author sees as an afterthought, an indictment on stoep funerals and a clear failure of this practice to journey effectively with bereaved family members. Participant three describes his follow – up ministry as a priestly function which he exercises for all bereaved family members. According to him, the absence of ordained priests at funerals services is a disgrace, especially if it happens because of observing the so-called church policy. This he communicated as follows: “I will never entrust such a special ministry to my lay ministers while at the same time I am only sitting around in the parish. I will only allow my lay ministers under serious circumstances beyond my control to perform such a ministry, or if it was the wishes of the family. But after that funeral, I will still make it a point to visit the family in question”. The author is not convinced by the responses of the other four priests concerning follow-up visits to families who had stoep funerals. In their responses they hinted at

doing it but without stating clear reasons for doing so. The author just wonders, if they were so clear in their convictions about not doing those funerals in the first place, what will motivate them to visit the families after the funeral. They did not visit the families in the week running up to the funeral nor did they bother to do the funeral; so what will now make them to visit the family after the funeral? This they could not answer, which makes the author suspicious about the truthfulness of their responses. Both groups (priests and churchwardens) are aware of the stigma the said policy carries in the community but for reasons of their own, show no intention of stopping the stoep funeral practice. Despite their attitude towards stoep funerals both groups interviewed are supportive of the criteria which inform the policy and see nothing wrong in it, they would not like to have a stoep funeral for themselves or relatives however. This contradiction is noted, hence the doing of this research which hopes not only to challenge their mind-sets but also to suggest an alternative model of dealing with defunct members.

The interviews have also exposed the deep feeling of pain, resentment, shame and embarrassment the people of stoep funerals are wrestling with. When interviewed, they found it very difficult to revisit the event, they struggled to control their emotions and deep scars of pain were still noticeable in their responses. Their feeling towards and perception of the church are negative, for obvious reasons. They are definitely in need of therapeutic intervention. The other group who have experienced church funerals are extremely happy with the way in which the church has ministered to them. Unlike the stoep funerals group, they were fortunate to have experienced the funeral service as a first step towards their healing process.

5.7. Preliminary conclusion

The interviews have shown that the church wardens and priests similar views regarding:

- (a) The need and importance of this church policy.
- (b) The continuation and defence of stoep funerals.
- (c) The inability to manage the defunct members and the inclination to display a tending not to know which model to introduce as an alternative.
- (d) The role and expectation of the priest to perform only in the church for church

funerals. The author is deliberately using the word “perform” instead of minister because that is what they do when the funeral goes is in the church.

It has been revealed through the interviews that the priests and churchwardens turn a blind eye to the need, for comfort and consolation of the families who have experienced stoep funerals. It is even more distressing that priests do not even bother to visit these families the moment they hear of a death. It is just accepted as common practice that churchwardens manage funeral proceedings. This is cold and insensitive. The interviews have shown that priests for their part are comfortable with the church policies. They do not see the need to challenge this policy and some have questioned the reason to do so believing it will not work out in their favour. No regard or very little is shown for the need to journey with the survivors. Concerning church funerals, the overwhelming responses resonated that the funeral service was dignified, respectful and a sign that the church cares. The entire funeral service to them was just an extension of the already known UBUNTU, an African way of showing love and care especially to those in need. Asked to say in what ways the church could improve in its quest to minister to bereaved families, most of them responded to the effect that, “What the church has done for us, we wish it could do for everyone else. We can definitely identify with the pain those mourners of stoep funerals are going through”. This emotion of happiness and satisfaction was evident in the duration of the two sets of interviews - those with church funerals lasted about one and a half hours, while stoep funeral lasted an hour longer. There is undoubtedly a need for the author and his supervisor to intervene by offering counseling to the traumatized and dejected groups associated with stoep funerals. The whole of the next chapter is set aside to deal with exploring a healing model.

CHAPTER SIX

6.1. Introduction

From the outset the point has been made that the black church is struggling to find a pastoral method to deal with its defunct members; hence the introduction of stoepfunerals. From the responses made by the priests and churchwardens in the interviews, it became apparent that stoep funerals were seen and accepted as the right way to deal with those who at the point of death;

- Were in arrears with their dedicated giving or tithing, as well as
- Those displaying irregular church attendance.

The practice of stoep funerals has been legitimized through its acceptance as church policy but with detrimental effects of added pain to the bereaved, frustration to community members and division among the people of God. In further discussion with various clerical and lay leadership on various levels, it has become apparent that everyone is aware of the negative effects stoep funerals have for the church but very little effort is made to deal with the problem. The inability to interrogate the practice of stoep funerals and its effect has reduced the church to a level of paralysis. On further reflection, I stand corrected in calling it an “inability”. It is also not an unwillingness or reluctance to discuss the matter but I suspect it could be fear driven by a complete helplessness. This fear of upsetting the status quo was nicely expressed by participant four (the old lady who was assisted by her grown up daughter) when she said, “When the leadership refused to bury my son from the church, I urged my family members just to accept the decision and let it go “. The decision surely caused her added pain and stress but she chose not to challenge the church policy because the “church is always right “. It is to be noted that the living ancestors in our black communities (the elderly) wholeheartedly believe that whatever directives come from the church, they can never be wrong and should always be respected. They always meticulously reminds the younger generation not to question or challenge church teachings and church directives, for they honestly believe these are revelations from God. They believe and accept anything you tell them as a church leader. These people who have been

displaying an exemplary faith and confidence in God and the church are the very ones whom this church policy hurts the most. Quite a number of them for whatever reason has taken it upon themselves to rear their grandchildren while the parents are

- (a) Either not interested.
- (b) Live somewhere else because of work related demands.
- (c) Have separated and stay somewhere else with other partners.
- (d) Might still be studying or at school and therefore cannot support the child.
- (e) Are deceased. The spread and devastation of HIV/AIDS infections and deaths have compounded this problem.

The reason why I argue that this policy hurts the living ancestors the most, is that all of them are pensioners and often, the entire household is dependent on their pension grants. With the meagre R1200 monthly grants, they miraculously administers the day to day running of their households, and yet from this they are still expected to contribute between R20 and R50 towards the church ticket. (system used in the townships in place of dedicated giving). The agreement with the church is that this ticket covers everyone that stays with the contributor which means that the paid ticket goes a long way towards ensuring a church funeral for the giver and the ones living under one roof with her. The grown up children who live elsewhere are not covered by her ticket (as was the case with participant two). The research will now revisit the case studies in chapter one to highlight the damage to the mourners and the church through stoep funerals. This does not mean that the circumstances of the participants in the interviews are being overlooked.

6.1.1. Case Study One

As already mentioned, Sharon held a responsible and respected office in the hierarchy of the Diocese. She is widely loved and respected by all and sundry. When the news of her father`s death broke, a large number of concerned people either phoned or visited her and the family to express their condolences. Apart from her office work for the church, she also serves as a lay minister in her local congregation. Logically speaking, these are mitigating circumstances that the parish council could have considered before

decisions were made. One does not here promote the idea that people should be treated differently but rather the notion of exploring all avenues, dealing with each case on merit or introducing some sort of flexibility into your church policy. In conversation with the author Sharon voiced similar nuances, saying “ I thought that the council would have been sympathetic to my case-not that they should do me a favour, but just consider my contribution to the church ”. Frustration clearly took hold of her. It is quite clear that obvious elements like sympathy and consideration are not taken into account when funeral decisions are made. By the time I enquired from her about funeral arrangements, she spoke in a defeated tone, extremely hurt and disappointed. Sharon`s disappointment, embarrassment and pain were equally reflected by the family at the time I visited them a day after our conversation. As was seen from the participants in chapter five, the scars of shame and pain lie dormant if not addressed properly through healing interventions. This has the potential to scar a person for life if not, worst case scenario, to lead the person to start questioning the love and care of God.

6.1.2. **Case Study two**

Father Themba was very impressed with Sam`s commitment to the church and dedication to his family. He saw in him a model of real Christian witness to other men in the townships who are in the habit of leaving church duties and demands to the women. Pamela, his wife, expressed similar sentiments when she said, “ When he was still healthy and active, he used to attend church worship regularly if not slavishly. But from the time he fell ill, not one of them came to visit him, or to give him communion reserved for the sick “. When he died, the parish council controversially decided on a stoep funeral. Pamela was astonished, puzzled and flabbergasted by the decision. She tried every means in her power to have the decision rescinded, but to no avail. Out of desperation, she even called for Fr. Themba to testify in favour of her husband`s standing with the church. Even this desperate move did not change the minds of the policy makers but left Pamela in an unprecedented state of traumatization Pamela`s pain and shame were indescribable. The discussions about her husband`s funeral arrangements, the tone in which these discussions were conducted and the actual funeral itself, do not come close to bringing closure and healing to Pamela. One is

irrevocably reminded of J. William Worden`s comments, “The funeral service, if done well, can be an important adjunct in aiding and abetting the mourner in grief “.

J. William Worden 1983: 61

Elisabeth Kubler Ross express similar sentiments, “When you think of a funeral and the preparation preceding it, what images come to mind – a body artificially made – up to look natural? Hypocritical and meaningless services? Impersonal and uncaring persons? These are some of the typical responses most people have to make around funerals and all that surrounds them. Funerals have become for many people, meaningless and uncomfortable rituals. A funeral should be a time to say your last goodbye, to begin to work through your grief, to make death real through actively participating in the preparation and final service, to begin living again and growing through your experience “.

Kubler – Ross, E; 1975: 81

Funeral service is never meaningless in an African context. It is part of our cultural tradition that funeral services should be attended by every single community member if possible. Funeral services in the African context are community-oriented. Because of the UBUNTU principle of “ I am because of you, you are because of me ” funeral services have become events where African people demonstrates their love, concern and compassion towards those who are grieving. The genuineness of it is up for debate but the intention is what counts. The only downside of this cultural expectation is that it has the potential to become very expensive. On a daily basis the grieving family need to feed the mourners who come to pay their respects. On the actual day of the funeral an ox is slaughtered and traditional beer is brewed so that everyone should eat and drink in a manner which resembles a feast. The important part of the above sentiments is that they describe in real terms the feelings of the author and his family and of those who have experienced church funerals in the interviews.

This chapter aims to explore models that the church as an agent of care could employ in journeying with bereaved mourners as they continue to practise cultural mourning rites. The author firmly believes that black people should not feel ashamed to practise ancient mourning rites, now that they have become Christian. The church can indeed play a vital role in allowing, assisting and encouraging black people to practise these

mourning rituals publicly without losing their dignity, credibility and identity. The same can be said of the church as well. The Christian church will not become polluted or less holy and relevant while mingling with the people as they practice their cultural rites. Much more of this will be argued later in the chapter, but for now the third case study in chapter one will be examined.

6.1.3. Case Study three

This case study speaks about the death and funeral of the author's father. It is not difficult to see how events leading up to the funeral and the funeral itself differs tremendously from those depicted in case study one and two. The author and his family were given the opportunity to plan the entire funeral with the Rector of the parish, to make suggestions in relation to special requests, to take decisions regarding the time and duration of the funeral as well as the liturgical style of the funeral service. The power to decide and to live out our decisions gave us peace of mind and left us with a joy too great to describe. When the reality of death's pain threatened to engulf us, the concession by the Rector that put us in control of the arrangements was extremely liberating. It somehow gave us control over death. It became much easier to internalize the message and accompanying scriptures of that day, which I still remember with joy. The funeral service indeed became the first step towards our healing.

If one compares the events in the story of case study three with that of one and two, one can instantly see two totally different sides of the same coin. These contrasting stories of pain and joy was also discovered in the interviews. Those who were exposed to stoep funerals and those exposed to church funerals were at two different opposite places when it comes to emotionality, handling of grief and mourning, and perceptions of the church. The ones who experienced church funerals were happy and could not stop thanking the church leadership for excellent ministry received. They all agreed that the events leading up to the funeral service and the funeral itself helped them tremendously to deal with their loss and grief. They expressed only positive sentiments towards the church, in contrast to the ones exposed to stoep funerals. Their stories of pain, shame, rejection and deceit left them disappointed, if not bitter, and much traumatized. In most cases they even struggled to relate their stories. In fact the

interviews unfortunately once more opened the wounds of shame and embarrassment. We all then realized that they still need to be assisted to find healing and closure. It is an unfortunate and sad indictment on the church that God`s people can find themselves at such a place of indescribable pain and sadness caused through death, which is then exacerbated by the church`s lack of grief ministry at that time. Ironically, when the priests were interviewed, participant three described the involvement of the church with stoep funerals as “ helping the bereaved “. This statement comes close to the concerns shared by Kubler – Ross when she says, “ We routinely shield the bereaved from coming face to face with the reality of the death of their loved one, we take over for them and invite them to observe. And in doing this, we force them to submerge their grief, extending and expanding their pain and making it increasingly difficult for them to come to grips with the death.”

Kubler – Ross, E; 1975: 81

Kubler – Ross describes this intervention as “well – meaning deception.” This is exactly how one can describe the involvement of the church in stoep funerals, not forgetting the disastrous effects it leaves the surviving mourners with. Stoep funerals and the dramatic events leading up to them catastrophically sabotage the grieving process of mourners and this is what this research will look at now.

6.2. Grief in order to heal

The argument that was already put forward is that the funeral service, if done well, can become the first step towards the healing of a bereaved person. Concerning the word, “ bereavement “, Alida Gensie states, “ The etymological dictionary tells us that centuries ago in Old English the word, “ bereaved, “ conveyed the meaning that one had been robbed of someone`s presence. The dead person had been violently taken away. The Anglo – Saxons understood that therefore life was spoiled. More literally they knew that the death of someone we love leaves us standing naked before life. The term “ bereaved “ suggested that clothes and armour had been forcibly removed. We recognize the echoes of this meaning, for the death of someone we love initially seems to remove our protective layers. Thus we are twice violated:

- First because death has taken away the person we love and probably need.

- Secondly the death of a loved one has left us feeling naked and unprotected.”

Gersie, A, 1991: 31

Before one explores in detail the expectations of a funeral service, one would do well to firstly talk about the profound loss the surviving mourners are experiencing. This loss brought about by death, either expected (through prolonged sickness) or unexpected (sudden death), results in emotions of bereavement, sadness and pain. The surviving mourners struggle to come to terms with what has just happened. People reacts differently when trying to deal with the shocking experience, because a rupture in the lives they have known has occurred. Someone near and dear to them has been unceremoniously taken away from them, with the result that they now experience an irrevocable loss? The psyche for that moment cannot cope with the massive devastating message and at times is unable to interpret what has just happened hence in some cases we come across cases of denial.

Death has violated the safety, protection, comfort and life of the surviving mourners. We are then dumped into grief for the one we have just lost. According to Marrone, the loss of a companion leads to a sequence of grieving behaviour which is neither unvarying nor smooth. This will differ alarmingly from yearning, protest and rage to withdrawal, depression and silent despair. According to this psychologist, grieving reactions are actually only the beginning of the much longer and larger process of mourning. Grief reactions, such as shock, protest, sadness, yearning, crying and depression, help us to recognize the loss and prepare us for the work of mourning.

As I understand it, Marrone wants to tell us that grief is actually the beginning of mourning because he continues, “Mourning refers to the ways in which we come to live with loss, grief and bereavement, to know how we weave loss into the fabric of our lives.”

Marrone, R; 1997:108

Marrone quotes Robert Wrenn (1994) in elaborating extensively on grief and maintains that it manifests in four ways:

- (a) The expression of feelings of sadness, anger and guilt.
- (b) Body sensations such as hollowness in the stomach, lack of energy and shortness of breath.

- (c) Thought patterns and dreams involving preoccupation with, or sense of the presence of the deceased and
- (d) Behaviour such as treasuring objects of the deceased, withdrawing from people and having disturbance in appetite and eating.

Marrone goes on to argue that, apart from this grief reactions, we also experience mourning reactions, both conscious and unconscious that have to do with:

- (a) Undoing our ties to our loved ones.
- (b) Revising our assumptions about ourselves in the world.
- (c) Integrating new roles, skills and behaviours into our lives and
- (d) Learning how to live fully and meaningfully in a world no longer occupied by the one we loved.

Concerning time periods, Marrone has this to say: “Typical grief reactions to the death of a loved one may last a number of months or even longer. In contrast, mourning involves a search for meaning in our loss and profound changes in our assumptive world that can last for years and for some of us may last until we ourselves die. In order to make a clear distinction between grief and mourning, Marrone cites Rando 1995: 20, who says, “Grief is a part of mourning, but mourning is not necessarily a part of grief “. Rando believes that “mourning encompasses much more than grief and the distinction between grief and mourning is crucial to treatment and care giving. Many care givers assist the bereaved with the beginning process of acute grieving (expressing their reaction to the loss) but not with the important later mourning process (reorienting in relation to the deceased, the self and external world). As a result mourners are frequently left alone to reshape their lives and their world after the loss of a loved one and they suffer additionally as a consequence “. Rando; T; A. 1995:20

Marrone maintains that the grieving process often involves painful and heart – wrenching expressions of loss. Mourning on the other hand, though moving towards and working with our grief and sorrow, can eventually bring us comfort and a sense of personal reintegration and, for some, spiritual transformation hence the statement of Shneidman, E;S, (1980) “ Mourning is one of the most profound human experiences

that it is possible to have. The deep capacity to weep for the loss of a loved one and to continue to treasure the memory of that loss is one of our noblest human traits “.

Shneidman; E, S; 1980:179

The mourners in case studies one to three including the participants interviewed clearly stated that they were still in mourning, i.e. still trying to adjust and adapt to a life without the deceased. Those who had been exposed to church funerals were at a far better place emotionally than those who had stoep funerals. That week before the actual funeral, as the latter were still reeling from shock of the relative`s death, the church leaders violated them further with the news of a stoep funeral. They were struggling to work through the grief, but then suddenly also had to work through insensitive destructive decisions taken by church leaders. From what Marrone has said about grieving and mourning I can now deduce that, because they were not allowed to grieve properly without inhibitions, they still find it very difficult to get to grips with their emotional state in their mourning period. It is also possible that their mourning period might take longer than that of those who experienced church funerals or they might never get over it. This is the extent of the damage that stoep funerals are causing and those making the decisions and promoting this policy might not be aware of the trail of destruction.

6.3. Each one is grieving in his / her own way.

Roy Nichols in his paper “Funerals: a time for grief and growth.” speaks with a tangible peace of mind, unquestionable serenity and a deep conviction as he explains his family`s involvement in his father`s funeral arrangements.

Roy and Jane Nichols in Kubler Ross, E; 1975: 81 – 96

Being a funeral director himself, he starts off by explaining how and when his father died. His father died in the presence of his mother, on her birthday and in the presence of his brother. Roy was holding his father`s hand when he died. He then goes on to describe the feeling of helpless and desperation that he encountered. As they were weeping, he called for a funeral director to come and remove the body. Overtaken by emotion and being a funeral director himself, he asked the gentleman who came to

fetch the body to move aside. He goes on to say, “Hesitantly they obliged while I took the cover from the cot, positioned the cot and gathered dad’s limp body into my arms. It was my job. I was his son. It was our love.”

He describes how he felt a sense of desertion as he watched those two strangers disappear down the hall with his dad because dad didn’t know them. The following day he then asked one of his best friends also a funeral director to secure the body and do the preparatory embalming for the funeral. The rest he did himself – the death certificate, the notification of newspapers, cemetery, minister, church, family, friends, neighbours all the scores of details which funeral directors normally does. The motivation behind doing everything himself, he sums up in this way; “I needed to be a son – it was my dad, it was our love, it was my emotion, it was a son’s job “.

He also encouraged his siblings to become involved. As life evolves, unknowingly family become detached from each other and at times far removed from each other, as everyone tries to make a living. But he reckons that working through the many details and the sharing of responsibilities feelings of togetherness renewed some of the childhood closeness. On how they have prepared for the actual funeral itself, he continues: ‘ late in the evening the night before the funeral our minister, another close minister friend, and one of our favourite priests were, by coincidence, at the funeral home along with some thirty or forty friends. We had an impromptu prayer service - something which just happened. Thus gathered around in a circle, which included some flowers and dad’s body in the casket, several of us shared our deepest feelings about dad’s life and death and our own sense of mortality and immortality. It was very warming. My mother, sister and I carried dad to his grave, we lowered him into his grave with straps and our own muscle power. We closed the vault and shovelled the dirt ourselves. We closed out his life ourselves “.

When reflecting on what they did as a family he says, “ My grief work started promptly because I had the opportunity to participate, to be involved on every level “.

Without a shadow of a doubt, the author can identify with this liberating experience. As explained in case study three, my dad’s priest, contrary to what generally happens in our context, allowed me and my family to make crucial decisions. As it now turns out, these are decisions that can either help one’s grief lead to healing or retard it, which

results in prolonged mourning and healing.

Roy then questions his role as a funeral director in aiding the healing process in other mourners in this way, “For how many sons, daughters, parents and spouses had I delayed the grief work because I, as a functionary, had usurped their role as care giving family members? How many times had I made decisions for a family without their opinion because I assumed “they couldn’t take it”?

No doubt Roy’s personal experience with his father’s death and burial changed his mind-set and perspective as a functionary, a funeral director, completely. It has allowed him to consider the needs, feelings and emotions of “clients” first before rushing in and making decisions on their behalf. In order to explain his changed perspective, he relates the story of Butchie a two year old boy who tragically died in a neighbour’s pond. At the time of the incident the 19 and 20 year old parents sat in a stunned shock staring into a cup of coffee and watching smoke curl from a cigarette. Almost twenty four hours later, a neighbour stumbled into the situation and summoned the funeral directors. He remembers that during the initial meeting with Butchie’s parents their minds drifted. They were not with it, they could not believe it, and they wished to be somewhere else. Struck by the severity of their denial and numbness, and armed with the lessons taught of his father’s death, he simply said, “ when you bring Butchie’s clothing to the funeral home you tell us whether or not you want to dress Butchie’s body. Don’t tell us now, think it over and tell us then “.

He continues, “Three hours later they came and Carol stated that they wanted to dress their son. We sat on the floor and talked for quite a while preparing them for what they wanted to do. It would hurt. So let it hurt. Someday they would understand, and then it would be okay. But not today. It took over three hours to dress Butchie. We stared, we swore, we cried, we talked, we apologized, we shared, we probed, we took time. Together the four of us found our way through shock and disbelief, the beginning of emotional acceptance of what had happened. “He concluded this story by saying,” When friends came, Carol and Charles were quite at ease with themselves. They had unloaded tremendous surges of emotion and were ready to receive the affection, concern and support of their community. Shock, denial and some hostility were behind them and their grief work was moving.” These two stories strengthen my initial

argument that the funeral service, if done well, can surely be effective to affect healing in grief-stricken mourners. Grief work begins with acceptance, with facing up. People need to come to grips with the reality of the death. This acceptance must not only be intellectual, it must also be emotional. According to Roy, “What appears to be acceptance can be deceptive and can be very, very destructive when the acceptance is only intellectual.”

Ibid: 1975:92

With this statement in mind, what can one say about the grief acceptance of the participants in stoep funerals who were interviewed? These mourners are still dealing with the shock of a relative`s death when they are being told that the funeral will be a stoep funeral. At times the church leaders explain the basis of their decisions but most of the time it is assumed that the mourners are aware that the deceased was not in good standing with the church. When their decisions are questioned, they become annoyed and displays intolerance, impatience and a great deal of indifference. This research points to the conclusion that what mourners accept at that time, is deceptive and surely this acceptance is very destructive. This has been revealed and exposed in the interviewing process – the struggle to relate their stories, their emotional paralysis, the bitterness and anger towards the church, the feeling of rejection, desertion, alienation and marginalization. They “ accept “ decisions because they want to get the ordeal behind them, but this acceptance is superficial and deceptive. Like Roy Nichols, the author is also wondering, what is going to happen to all those who have been subjected to stoep funerals? When will this practice come to an end? What must happen before church leaders come to the realization that this practice is destructive both to the image of the church and to the healing and closure of mourners? Roy maintains that “Emotional acceptance takes time and work and pain and hurt.” but cautions that, “we should allow the grieving person to accept the death that has happened. Participation in the funeral will facilitate that goal. ”To this the researcher adds, participation, coupled with freedom of choices in the funeral arrangements. When one listens to all these stories from Roy Nichols, and considers the Julian Muller story and that of Prof. Masango, it raises the question whether the church shouldn’t encourage her people to internalize and follow the visible death model, as described by Marrone in chapter four. It is clear that death in this model is portrayed as warm,

embracing, welcoming, and necessary but less frightening. The death event necessitates the ministry of presence on the part of family, friends and perhaps a minister. When they are present and around the deathbed of the deceased, an opportunity for closure and reconciliation is created for both the dying person and surviving family members and friends. A great deal of preparation and planning both from the victim (patient) and bystanders is happening so that, when death eventually comes, people are left with a greater understanding and acceptance. All this in my view, can ease the intensity of the grief and mourning of survivors. Although for purposes of this research this proposed model is preferred, and therefore recommended, it is also a fact that quite a number of people die in institutions like hospitals, hospices or old age villages. When Marrone describes the essence of this model, one come to realize that dying in this fashion can be cold and far removed from loved ones. This I chose to term a “lonesome death”. Many people encounter this death not as a matter of choice, but through medical necessity. Hospital management therefore needs to be encouraged to summoned relatives and friends when they can see the time for a patient to die is drawing closer. In all my years of active priestly ministry, I have discovered that the practice of calling for family and friends only happens in private clinics and hospitals. This practice is non – existent in Provincial hospitals (government- managed hospitals). In most cases family members will only be notified hours after the death has occurred with the friendly advise from a ward sister that they should not bother to come in because the body has already been removed to the hospital mortuary. The notification flows into an instruction, “ Please come tomorrow and bring your funeral undertaker “. This is done in accordance with the hospital regulation that a body should be removed from a hospital mortuary as soon as it has been identified. Only when the body reaches the mortuary of your funeral parlour, are family members and friends allowed to spend time with it. This access is also limited and in the majority of instances personnel will not encourage family members to take advantage of it. You will be given the option to come and wash and dress the body the day before the burial. Again you will be reminded of limited time, because a number of significant others are waiting to do the same. When the body is eventually brought home the morning on the day of the burial or in our black tradition, the afternoon before the actual burial, private time to spend with the body is

non – existent. By then the family home is swamped with relatives, friends and community mourners. This way of dealing with death and dying, is rather a bit cold and hard. Death causes pain, but that pain cannot be touched or addressed because death is also far removed. Marrone calls this reality “invisible death,” preceded by “filtered death.” Imagine the trauma that family members have to deal with when on top of this the church unleashes more pain by imposing steep funerals. There is no time or space for family to accept, and understand, to grieve and to prepare for a dignified funeral service which will initiate a manageable mourning process. In addition, the church should encourage her members to resist the temptation of dumping ailing and ageing relatives in institutions. If it is done just to get rid of them, then surely it is inhumane, selfish and unloving. One understands when it happens out of necessity, but even then, people should look after their loved ones and show compassion, care and concern up to the point of death.

6.4. The Role the church can play

In addition to conscientising hospital management to create time and space for relatives of dying patients, I believe that the church can also:

- Become involved by training some of its members (volunteers) to operate as caregivers. Employ the service of qualified nursing professionals, print manuals and distribute them amongst the trainees. The content of the manuals will empower the caregivers and family members of patients to care for the terminally ill and dying. Use the qualified and practising nurses in your parish as anchors for your caregivers groups. Hospitals normally send the near – death patients home with the excuse, “There is nothing more that we can do for him / her”. These are the people that the church`s care group can target. When they do this, family members are being assisted, encouraged and supported.
- Adopt hospices, clinics or hospitals in your community. These institutions can be serviced by the same support groups, assisted by lay ministers and clergy of the parish in order to effect spiritual and physical shepherding.
- This ministry should be open to all parishioners, irrespective their status and standing to the church.

- Church councils can adopt this practice as church policy and oversee the smooth running of this ministry.
- In order to streamline this type of ministry in the parish, churches can insist that members of youth guilds should become involved. By doing so, one is also inculcating a culture of tolerance and care for the aged and home-bound in the young people. In addition, churches and in particular the Anglican church, can insist that members of women`s guild become involved. We invariably have a number of such members without the guidance of distinct job descriptions They receive guidance on what stands in their constitution but not usually on practical, active parochial ministry. In the absence of clearly defined roles and responsibilities, they choose to compete with each on trivial things, such as petty issues of uniform, dates of fundraisings, the quest to secure the biggest membership and the like.
- The church in its teaching and spiritual guidance should stress to its members the need for a collective culture of care. This is one of the characteristics and hallmarks of the Christian church that is lacking in the townships. People expect the priest to do everything, even the impossible. No wonder the priests are comfortable with and supportive of, and even promote (destructive) practices like stoep funerals. This is a good time for this research to look at issues of caring within a practical theological paradigm.

6.5. The scope of Practical Theology as an autonomous discipline

Heinz L.M and Pieterse H.J.C. explain Theology as a discipline as follows;

“Communicative actions that propagate the Gospel and promote God`s coming into this world “. In the authors understanding this statement implies the following:

- God`s action and our response as human beings.
- Human response to God`s love, demands and expectations which inter alia includes how we live out our faith in practice. Heinz and Pieterse quote Fiet and label this interaction between God and humans “communicative action”.

- Our knowledge and understanding about God in relation to human existence are being fuelled by scriptural internalization, the way we live out our faith in the world. By doing so, we humans can then talk about our religious experience.
- In simple terms, our understanding of the above statement should enable us as human beings to create our own world view in relation to God and fellow human beings. In other words, this is the field that Practical Theologians are interested in. Again we need to be reminded of the views of Julian Muller (1999:1) who says that, by continuously telling stories of one`s past one is actually constructing one`s future. Muller believes that we give meaning to our lives with the stories we tell because the stories which are stored in our memories from the framework of our attempts to discover meaning in life. In chapter 3 the author has already discussed the importance and essence of past experience. It helps one to construct coping mechanisms in dealing with present issues. It should also enable one to gain a better knowledge and a wiser understanding of how to deal with what lies ahead, including even the less favoured and talked about issues of death and dying. Every person therefore becomes the author or designer of the quality of life that he / she creates in the quest for giving meaning to his/her own existence. The author`s argument continues with the explanation that, as one attempts to give meaning to one`s own life (creating one`s worldview) and tries to create an understanding of the life to come (eschatological anticipation), one needs to be aware of other influential denominators like religion, culture, politics, and financial stability. The argument then flows into how all this hinges on fulfilling basic human needs. Pastoral care and the definite art of doing it right, through proper guidance by practical theologians undoubtedly assists us in our attempts to create a world view which is compatible with Christian theology. Heinz and Pieterse argue that Practical Theology is a sub - discipline of theology with special emphasis on the role of human beings in our encounter with God. In this they quote Heitink by saying that, “other theological subjects have the bible as their text but in practical theology it, is the religious person”

Heinz. L. M and Pieterse H.J.C; 1984; 22

Again Heinz and Pieterse quote the words of Bastian: “Other theological subjects interpret the bible and gospel to people, whereas practical theology interprets the interaction between gospel and people”. Heinz and Pieterse 1990: 8

In the author`s view effective communication of the gospel message is reliant on the preacher`s understanding of his / her audience and context in relation to the experience they have of God. This experience will inform our interactions with one another as human beings and with God. One can say that practical theology is the field in which the conduct and behaviour of the human “(documents)” are being explored and investigated as we evaluate and assess the pastoral care that is being given to the people. Practical theology examines the religious actions of people in a congregational context (service of worship, instruction of church members and children, pastoral care, etc.) as well as our conduct and behaviour in the community (societal and cultural response). In this instance the church policy on stoep funerals with particular emphasis on its negative impact on mourners, is being investigated. The scope of the research also evaluates the quality of the pastoral care the church is providing to bereaved families, as both church leaders and people are being governed by a set of criteria which informs the so called church policy. Issues like fairness, journeying with people out of love, the role of the church in leading people to wholeness, just to mention a few, have come under scrutiny. I firmly believe that the exploration of such issues can only be done effectively from a practical theological perspective, because the emphasis is on the praxis of the church and how that practice positively or negatively impacts on the life of God`s people. This statement does not differ from the understanding of John Swinton and Harriet Mowat concerning a definition of practical theology. They believe that “ Practical theology is critical, theological reflection on the practices of the church as they interact with the practices of the world, with a view to ensuring and enabling faithful participation in God`s redemptive practices in, to and for the world.”

Swinton, J and Mowat, H; 2006: 6

From this definition they identify four key elements that needs to be explained as follows:

Firstly, according to them, practical theological enquiry is critical. The assumption is that various practices performed by the Christian community are deeply meaningful and require honest critical reflection in order to assess whether that practice carries God`s approval.

Secondly, Practical theology is theological reflection. Stated differently, it is aimed at reflecting on church and world practices, viewed against a biblical backdrop, to assess whether those practices carry God`s approval. God`s approval is clearly revealed in scriptural passages.

Thirdly, according to Swinton and Mowat, practical theology also explores the interplay between those practices carried out by the church as well as the world. In chapter one mention was made of how the stoep funeral practice of the church carries a negative stigma in the community. All community members, irrespective of their denominational affiliation are pain stakingly aware for whom a stoep funeral is reserved. Although this research is done within an Anglican framework, initial discussions with black ministers from other denominations has indicated that this practice stands out like a soar thumb in all denominations in the townships. For this reason it has become a communal or societal problem. Practical theology is the ideal discipline to investigate, explore and examine this church practice which has a huge impact on black communities and how their bereaved are being cared for by the church.

Fourthly, the primary task of practical theology is to ensure and enable faithful practices. Swinton and Mowat quote Ackermann and Bons – Storm as the latter defines practical theology as “the theological discipline which is essentially involved with living, communicating and practicing the life of faith“.

Ackermann and Bons – Storm (1998:1) in Swinton and Mowat, 2006:9

The argument is that practical theology has a biblical foundation and therefore takes seriously the interpretive – (hermeneutical) issues surrounding the interpretation and authentic performance of that revelation. This takes into account the faith of the people and how that faith is translated into the praxis of those believers. Part of it is captured in church laws or policies, and so such laws and policies should always be assessed and scrutinized. By doing so, practical theology thus examines the relevance of the church`s

practice in a particular context and if need be, suggests a model that will replace the existing because of its flaws or redundancy.

Concerning the status of practical theology amidst other theological disciplines, Heinz and Pieterse quote Schleiermacher who passionately refers to practical theology as the queen of theological sciences, “ because it is clear that other disciplines are concerned with true insight” (theories) while practical theology is concerned with true action. Again the author in this regard would like to make reference to the investigation of the living human documents, which refers to people in relation to our communicative actions. In addition, Heinz and Pieterse, when referring to practical theology as a science say that, because of its practical (praxis) nature, this discipline develops theories that function in practice through evaluation and, if necessary, creates new ones. In my view, this mode is vital, because it enables practical theologians to keep up with the demands of the times, always evaluating, modifying and recreating new theories of communicative actions. This research falls within the ambit of pastoral care, pointing to the added pain and hurt that bereaved families suffer as a result of stoep funerals.

6.6. Pastoral care

According to Daniel Louw, *cura animarum* - cure of human souls, remains the essential function of pastoral care. He maintains that our human search for meaning and the contemporary quest for spirituality in a post – modern society have challenged the church to re – evaluate the task and purpose of pastoral ministry. He goes on to argue that the challenge pastoral theology is facing is to develop a model which not only takes the salvation of the gospel seriously but also tries to understand and to interpret our human existence within contexts and relationships. What is at stake is the conversation of the gospel in terms of the life experience of human souls and vice versa. He says that this challenge is essentially a hermeneutical one and in this connection particular attention should be paid to the following:

- The specific hermeneutical process which takes place in the pastoral encounter.
- The implications of salvation for individuals in their social context.
- The method used in pastoral counselling.
- The ultimate healing or therapeutic effect of pastoral intervention.

The main question for Daniel Louw is this: “how the good news of the kingdom of God and salvation should be interpreted in terms of human experience / reality and social context so that the substance of our Christian faith may contribute to a life of meaning and quality.” Concerning the scope and nature of this research, the author would like to add the following question to the that of Daniel Louw: to what extent does the church`s practice of stoep funerals undermine and tarnish the Christian teaching that all human beings have been created in the image of God or likeness of God ?

Both questions has to do with the quality of care the township churches give to bereaved families. Thus far this research has examined and assessed whether the township churches effectively contribute to the care of human souls during critical times of bereavement by ensuring a smooth healing process. It was discovered that stoep funerals paralyses this process from the initial grief moment and sometimes for years in the mourning stage. Those interviewed have never overcome it. They cannot forget the pain, rejection and embarrassment the church has caused them. They struggle to find any meaning in the church`s practice, with the result that they are now very negative and sceptical towards the church. They treat all church leaders with resentment because of this stoep funeral church policy, which they view as an unjust, unfair and unbiblical form of punishment. I tend to agree with Daniel Louw concerning the task of the church in re – evaluating its pastoral ministry in a post – modern society. The issue of stoep funerals and their continuation should seriously be re – evaluated by the church, especially as regards the manner in which it is being communicated to bereaved mourners. During the interviews it was discovered that the entire pastoral ministry of the church needed to be reviewed and overhauled. Side issues with which the people struggle have to do with the church`s involvement in baptisms, confirmations, tombstone unveilings, house blessings, home visitations, hospital visitations, just to mention a few. For each ministry a pre – condition is imposed on members. This is an aspect that another researcher can take on but the bottom line remains, that there is a dire need for the black township church to re – evaluate the ministry it gives the people of God. What is the driving force behind the ministry that the church is giving? If it is money, then we need to talk about it.

6.7. Monetary contributions of parishioners

In the interviews one of the priests mentioned that, in his view, parishioners are bound to “pay their tickets, otherwise the priest will not get his / her stipend. “This is a clear indication that there is a great need for some priests and all parishioners to be educated on Christian giving.” which translates into dedicated giving or tithing. Special emphasis should also be placed on the language usage. At the beginning of this chapter an attempt was made to explain the failure of the ticket system and how that can contribute towards punishing the deceased and the survivors. Although in the responses both priests and churchwardens avoided at all cost the notion of punishment, it became clear that stoep funerals are being “ used to teach others a lesson.” For me, no one is being taught anything, but defunct members are being dealt with very harshly. Stoep funerals can never be accepted as a substitute for proper Christian teaching. Concerning how things have changed in pastoral care, John Patton firstly reminds us about the “broadly” changing patterns in Christian theology over the last centuries. He quotes Peter Hodgeson who says that three great paradigms of the Christian theological tradition are “the classical (from the patristic period to the reformation), the modern (from the early eighteenth to the late twentieth century, the enlightenment age, and the postmodern.”

Patton, John, 1993:4

6.8. Latest trends in Pastoral theology

Developing from Hodgeson`s ideas, Patton believes that one can also distinguish three major types for the ministry of pastoral care: the classical, the clinical pastoral and the communal contextual. He believes that the classical paradigm of pastoral care extended from the beginning of Christendom beyond the Reformation to the beginning of modern dynamic psychology`s impact on ministry. The major emphasis here was upon the message of pastoral care, i.e. the caring elements in Christian theology and tradition. He maintains that the clinical pastoral paradigm which has extended over approximately the last fifty years has emphasized the person`s involvement in giving and receiving the message of care. He sums up Edward Thornton`s thoughts by describing the emphasis on the persons in clinical pastoral education as beginning with a concern with what the

minister must do, moving to a concern with what the minister must know, then emphasizing what a minister should say and finally evolving to the question of what a minister must be. Concerning communal contextual care, he believes that in both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism the emphasis is on the shifting of ecclesiastical authority away from the church's clerical hierarchy towards particular Christian communities. It has been further developed by the liberation movement in relation to economic circumstances, to race and to gender. The communal contextual paradigm broadens the clinical pastoral focus beyond the clergy to include the caring community of clergy and laity. It also calls attention to contextual factors affecting both the message of care and those bringing it and receiving it. Patton goes on to argue that all three paradigms are needed to rethink and carry out the pastoral care of the church at this point in history. He is convinced that one should preserve the most valuable features of the previous paradigm, but discard the less useful, in order to present a view of care that is less hierarchical, less naively provincial and less critically individualistic. In developing this point he argues "The central feature of the classical paradigm that must be preserved and reinterpreted for today is the message of a God who caringly creates human beings for relationships and who continues to care by hearing and remembering them." In my view this is an extremely important message for the adherents of stoep funerals. In chapter five mention was made of how bitter and dejected some people who have been exposed to stoep funerals, feel. They fail to experience the love and care of God through this practice. Instead this form of punishment of them and the deceased leaves them with a great deal of pain, hurt and trauma. There is a real need for the church to rethink the ways in which it deals with its defunct members, so that it exercises genuine love, care and compassion in its ministry to them. By failing to do so, the church is creating a recipe for disastrous human relationships and stifling peoples joyous spontaneous responses to God's love.

Patton then argues that features of the clinical pastoral paradigm that must be preserved are:

1. The way one cares for others is inescapably related to the way one cares for oneself.
2. Pastoral caring always involves being someone as well as doing something and

3. One can best learn about oneself and how to care for others through experiential and reflective participation in caring relationships.

Interestingly during the interviews, when especially the churchwardens and priests were asked whether they would prefer stoep funerals for themselves and close relatives, the response was an emphatic “no.” When they were asked to motivate the negative response, they gave various answers which varied from “Stoep funerals are noisy and not orderly, very few mourners follow the proceedings because of practical logistics; lay ministers are not priests and therefore inadequately equipped; there is no administration of holy communion and priestly involvement in officiating proper burial rites; we have been committed to the church and religion in church attendance and the like”.

Because these services spring from a failure to show adequate love and care towards the mourners at a time they need it most, one’s wish is that those defending this policy so vigorously should encounter the pain and desertion that others are feeling. The feeling of hopelessness and abandonment that they were experiencing is tragic especially in an African context which prides itself in its exercise of UBUNTU – communal togetherness, communal support in action driven by love and care.

Concerning the communal contextual paradigm itself, Patton argues that this paradigm offers both an old and a new understanding of pastoral care. “It is old in that it is based on the biblical tradition’s presentation of a God who cares and who forms those who have been claimed as God’s own into a community celebrating that care and extending it to others. It is new in that it emphasizes the caring community and the various contexts of care, rather than focusing on pastoral care as the work of the ordained pastor” In the communal contextual paradigm pastoral care is understood to be a ministry of a faith community which reminds members of God’s scattered people that they are remembered. Pastoral care today should employ elements of all three paradigms, being attentive to the message, the persons communicating it and receiving it, and the contexts that affect its meaning.”

Patton, John; 1993: 4

In light of this, I find it difficult to understand how the church can continue to promote the unloving and uncaring practice of stoep funerals in the townships. There is no biblical proof that this practice especially the way it is being implemented, can carry God’s approval, nor can it be ethically and morally justified. God has created us to live in an

acceptable and significant relationship with him and with one another as human beings. This relationship demands proper, Christian care for one another, just as God cares for us and loves us. These demand that the black township church revisits the pastoral care it gives God's people. Later in this chapter suggestions will be made on how the church can properly show care and love in its pastoral ministry, especially to bereaved families. Patton in his book presents a rethinking of pastoral care in terms of its message, person and context and calls for the carers to remember God's action for them, to remember who they are as God's people and to hear and remember those to whom they minister to. The central part of this argument that "God created human beings for relationships with creation by hearing us, remembering us and bringing us into relationship with one another. Human care and community are possible because of our being held in God's memory; therefore, as members of caring communities we express our caring as an analogue of the caring of God by also hearing and remembering".

Ibid, 1989:6

In his main argument he asserts that the central biblical theme for pastoral care is being remembered and remembering. The bible is used as a source of authority for the ministry of pastoral care. He holds that the bible does not tell us, how to do pastoral care, but it offers empowering themes for expression in the contexts of care today. What this means for Patton is that the thematic view of scripture suggests that, although the authority for care as remembering is biblical and expressive of the classical paradigm for pastoral care, it can be exposed through the clinical pastoral and the communal contextual paradigms as well. Wimberley in his presentation takes his argument further when he says that he has become firmly convinced that black pastors approach pastoral care through narratives.

6.8.1. Wimberley's narrative approach

I am fully aware that Wimberley's presentation is from an African American perspective while this research is done in South Africa. His context and mine are different, but the challenges confronting the church in relation to (a) managing of defunct members (b) the role of the church in critiquing political, social, economic ills in society (c) the role of the church in strengthening the faith by instilling hope in believers, to mention a few, is

similar. Wimberley is suggesting another model for the church and its care-givers in journeying with troubled people. He is suggesting that we use bible stories in our quest to effect healing in troubled souls. The narrative approach, the way to understand is that it is an attempt by the care givers to organize the counselling session in such a way that space and freedom are afforded to the help seeker to relate his / her story uninhibited and uninterrupted. After having listened carefully to the help seeker`s story as a point of reference, the caregiver employs bible stories which are similar to the story of the help seeker and which the person can identify with. Wimberley articulates this method of pastoral care as follows: “Genuine pastoral care from a narrative perspective involves the use of stories by pastors in ways that help persons and families to visualize how and where God is at work in their lives and thereby receive healing and wholeness“.

Wimberley, E.P. 1991:9

This method ,I believe, is consistent with the fundamental argument of John Patton in relation to the use of the bible as a source for remembering and being remembered. Patton emphasizes a thematic approach, while Wimberley focuses on the sharing of stories, but both work towards the same goal, viz to effect healing and wholeness. As in Patton`s case, Wimberley`s method can also be expressive of the classical paradigm for doing pastoral care as well as through the clinical pastoral and the communal contextual models. It is one thing to know the method but is another thing to create a model by using the same method. In this instance, Wimberley is pointing to the strengths one can draw from small group settings, which he says are often informal, but carry with them ritualistic benefits, Here ritual is referred to as repetitive actions which have as their goal the drawing of people into the major story of the faith community. He believes that “Whenever the goal of ritual draw persons into the major story of the faith community, worship takes place. Moreover when ritual and worship draws persons into the major story of the faith community, worship and communal resources are brought to bear on personal needs; and when the emotional interpersonal and psychological needs of persons are met in the context of ritual and worship, pastoral care takes place “.

Ibid; 1991:24

According to Wimberley, caring within a local black congregation is a response pattern

to God`s unfolding story in its midst. The purpose of God`s rule is to draw all people and nations into God`s story. God`s story is a story of the defeat of the powers of evil, oppression and suffering. It is a story of healing and wholeness when people live meaningful lives in the community. He believes that God seeks to draw people and communities into His story so that the resources of God`s reign can be made available to them for their growth and development. Thus God`s reign is about drawing people into God`s story ,so that they might be shaped by the story and begin to see reality the way it is shaped by God`s hand and teachings. This mission of the church of drawing people into God`s story, Wimberley believes, has implications for (1) the church in worship (2) the church as a caring community (3) the church in care and nurture and (4) the church in service. On further reflection on the above, he has come to believe that worship is shaped by God`s unfolding story. Worship is the act of people in the local church, as they gather to celebrate and give praise to God for being drawn into God`s story. It is a celebration of the fact that they have found meaning and purpose in their lives as a result of being drawn into God`s story. Worship is seen as the time when people are drawn deeper into the unfolding story of God and are further shaped by this movement, Their vision and character are transformed because of this increased participation in God`s story. Increased involvement in God`s story leads to an increased ability to be concerned about the things that God is concerned about within the church and within the world.

Secondly he believes that the local church as a community shapes the individual stories of its members into a communal story which reflects the unfolding story of God. This communal story is shaped by the vision that is caught when the community interacts, as the people participate in God`s unfolding story. The church as community becomes aware of God`s intention for it and the world, as God is revealed in the unfolding drama. Thirdly he is convinced that care and nurture result from the faithfulness to God`s vision revealed within the community. God cares for us and draws people into the richness of God`s caring resources for healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling. Caring is visualizing God`s story as it unfolds in churchgoers` lives, in spite of the suffering, pain and cries, but on the other hand simultaneously helping people to respond to God`s presence and story in their lives.

Concerning the church`s nurturing role, Wimberley believes that nurture in the context of care is an awareness of what it means to be a care giver in God`s unfolding story within the life of the church. Nurturing implies the ability of caregivers to take seriously the need and plight of people, understand them and come up with the best possible way of addressing them, particularly within a ritualistic context. Wimberley is suggesting that the church consider the following framework in order to make this model succeed. (1) One needs to look at the support parishioners bring to those in need. This support, I believe, should never be undermined and undervalued and proof of this, was seen in the responses from the co – researchers. All ten of them could not stop praising the support given to them by parishioners and community members as they were facing death.

(2) Furthermore, he suggests that immediate family members as well as extended ones should be given total support and encouragement when needed. This works ideally in the context of this research, which is funerals in black townships. This is an occasion where our African identity comes to the fore, as the culture dictates that the elderly in the family, the living ancestors, should come in and run the entire proceedings. Arrangements will not be made until the elders come in. Once they have arrived, they will hold an impromptu family meeting involving all significant others and role players, so that even the young are part of discussions pertaining the funeral. To illustrate this, one of the participants who was interviewed mentioned that, in her case the elders, the living ancestors, announced to the family how long the mourning period would be and also gave reasons for that decision.

(3) He also identifies social network as one the framework for support.

(4) Next he points to the church and its heritage as becoming part and parcel of the needed support structure to people in need. This is where formal church worship, informal bible study group sessions, home cells, individual / personal visits by clergy or laity, counseling sessions and extended ministry, which Wimberley sees as ritual, come into play.

(5) Lastly he mentions the value of the black culture which defines the behaviour of persons towards others in crisis. At this point I am proud to point the readers to our African Ubuntu principle for in one sentence it points to the way African people should

care for and nurture each other, especially those in need. With reference to the above model proposed by Wimberley in relation to pastoral care of the church as community and the community as large, this research has proven that stoep funerals promoted by the black township church need to be looked at again.

This section of the research deals with latest trends in pastoral care and for this reason we will now consider what other researchers are suggesting.

6.8.2. Gordon Dames (Unisa)

In his paper, the researcher is concerned about the impact of Western culture on the African traditional villages in so far as traditional African values and practices are being lost at the expense of Western ideology, technology, media, and other aspects of Western cultures. He argues that the previous dominant monodisciplinary approach of Practical Theology contributed immensely to a growing private, individualistic world view. As a result Practical Theology has since developed into an interdisciplinary approach. He believes that this new-found reciprocity in the social sciences led to constructive changes in the church and society. In his view the new democratic era in South African brought Western cultural influences forcefully into public and private domains, and this dichotomy is responsible for deforming African cultures in many ways. Local communities were previously public set ups, living and worshipping in transformative hermeneutical communities. He is concerned that this scenario has changed and has driven local communities steadily into private spaces. Having said this, Dames believe that the task of practical theology is to question what the undergirding epistemology and beliefs for this shift are and to reinterpret it in the light of the gospel. In response to his concerns, his research suggests the need for appropriate and relevant theology to address the concrete and practical contemporary challenges which we are currently facing in South Africa. He believes that since the 1980`s the approach has changed from a scientific to a hermeneutical empirical one. In other words, the complexity of life and the influence of Western culture on South African cultures demand that Practical Theology come up with a fresh approach that will address the issues our societies are facing including the practice of stoep funerals. He quotes Dreyer J.S. (2002) in advocating the challenge that Practical Theology is facing

in searching for a sound theological, theoretical and empirical direction and a renewed engagement between praxis and theory. He is suggesting the need for theoretical studies on moral norms, in other words a dire need for the redress of the current moral vacuum and cultural fragmentation in society is critical. To this end he hails the contributions of Fretz's communicative action, a scientific approach based on empirical phenomenological findings as the most revolutionary research yet concerning the standing of Practical Theology amongst other scientific disciplines. He believes that the deductive (objective) approach changed because of this hermeneutical and contextual perspective, based on the normative role of scripture. In this he wants to show how critical the relation between gospel and culture is in dealing with existential conditions. To this end, he believes that Practical Theology needs to address the dwindling authority of scripture, church and leadership and local cultures as well as the discontinuity between church and society. He suggests the need for a transactional methodology, which means that practical reasons and actions should interact with an intersubjective reflexive engagement between gospel / faith and culture. This statement brings me back to the question I have raised at the beginning of this chapter.

Considering that one uses the bible as the source of authority, does the practice of stoep funerals and especially the way they are being managed and communicated carry God's approval? How does this practice help the faith communities to remember God's story in relation to love, care and nurture of one another and showing allegiance to God's demand as it unfolds in the God's story (being remembered and remembering)? Furthermore Prof. Dames believes there is a need for practical theology to retain the approach of consulting other disciplines to come up with authentic ways of addressing the challenges of our multicultural communities. In this way the church can adopt a public, prophetic missional vocation. He believes that the challenge in this approach is to develop "culture creators" and practices to bridge the chasms between the gospel and culture, public and private, science and experience, Western and African cultures and between South African multicultural contexts. He believes that this is achievable by training and educating skilled spiritual and moral leaders for an authentic witness and mission. The topic of Prof. Gordon Dames in his article which is entitled: *Knowing*,

believing, and living in Africa: a practical theology perspective of the past, present and future.

6.8.3. Ian Hussey (Maylan College)

The topic for his article is entitled: *Sense of community in churches: a practical theological perspective (2013)*. His article employs a practical theological methodology to the ¹ McMillan and Chavis model in order to consider its applicability to church contexts. He reminds us that the goal of the research is not primarily pragmatic – to solve problems and help communities function more effectively. Rather the goal is interacting with situations and challenging practices in order that individuals and communities remain faithful to God and participate fully in God`s mission. The Australian author is of the opinion that a sense of community has significant positive impacts on a range of outcomes for individuals and groups. He maintains that research has proven that a sense of community is made up of operating factors like strong connections, identity and mutual support. He argues that a strong sense of community not only meets our basic human needs, but is also linked to church growth. According to him this is because belonging, as expressed in the interactions between members, is fundamental in generating and maintaining commitment. When belonging is provided in a consistent and comprehensive way, the commitment of the members is remarkably strong and enables the provision of services which is attractive to new members. These points of Hussey are particularly relevant to the practice of stoep funerals in relation to the added pain and hurt suffered by grieving mourners. To strengthen this sense of belonging in the faith community, the author of this paper is convinced the point of departure should be the conversion and baptism experience of its members. He also refers to the wearing of a particular uniform by members. In this he points to the Salvation Army church. To me, this is a point worth considering, because in our African context the rich variety of colourful uniforms in our black churches is notable. It

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1. *McMillan, David W and Chavis, D.W; 1986: 6 – 19; “ Sense of community: A definition and theory” , Journal of community psychology 14*

strengthens that sense of belonging to a particular guild and invariably to a particular denomination. In our churches, people wear their uniforms with pride and even choose to be buried with them. In some cases the uniform will be draped over the coffin of the deceased for all and sundry to see to which organization the deceased belonged to in other words they have internalized that sense of belonging, that group identity which is now externalized at death. To me wearing of uniforms is a powerful tool which demonstrates to the community the person's faith in God, as well as the person's allegiance to his / her organization (guild) and denomination. It is rather unfortunate that, owing to the rigid implementation of the church policy and criteria on township funerals, these powerful strands of faith proclamation and witness are not considered. A person's church attendance and DG contributions or lack of it, will still dictate whether you will be buried from the church or relegated to a stoep funeral. The experience of stoep funerals is painful because nowhere in the whole proceedings do church leaders consider a person's prior commitment to the church. What is on display is a spectacle for the entire community to see that a person has become defunct in one way or the other hence this public display of relegation, demotion and rejection in the form of a stoep funeral. Ian Hussey summarises his whole argument by basing it on the following four elements of McMillan and Chavis' model:

- Membership: churches should maintain strong boundaries to emphasize who is in and out of the community and what one needs to do to get "in".
- Influence: churches need to maintain a focus on discipleship to build influence, but they also need to emphasize consultation in order to ensure that church members feel they have influence on the operation of their community.
- Need fulfilment: churches should focus on strong communication of the shared values of the community, especially in seeking to put the needs of others first.
- Shared emotional connection: churches need to invest strongly in creating the environment where history is shared, memories are created and individuals are able to relate to others on a deep level. This may occur on a church-wide basis or in mission-driven small groups.

When we get to “how the church can deal with its defunct members,” a critique of the above will be given and other suggestions made as a proposed model is suggested, but for now we will look at pastoral care in an African context.

6.9. African Pastoral care

Pastoral theology has always been a practice among human beings especially for those who are broken, abused and violated in some way by people and societal structures. It is and has been a ministry that cares for human souls, hence the definition of Daniel Louw “cura animarum”, the care / cure of souls. Pastoral care is defined through helping acts. It therefore has a pragmatic focus with a messianic tone. This can at times be deceptive, since it was initially thought that pastoral care was the ministry and responsibility only of clergy people. Research has shown that even lay persons are able to perform acts of mercy and care out of love. Such a pragmatic service or ministry transcends faiths and cultures, in other words, the ability to care for troubled people is not only a Christian practice but also a human act which includes people of other faiths as well. Because pastoral care deals with troubled souls, it has become vital for pastoral ministry to collaborate with other scientific disciplines like psychology, social work, anthropology, etc., as well as practices from other cultures in relation to types of therapies, educational philosophies and management techniques, to come up with the best possible practices in doing pastoral care. One can say that this kind of practice is for ever evolving, adapting, changing as human advances and demands increase. As a distinguished pastoral counsellor and psychotherapist, Prof. Masango believes that H. Clinebell, an authority in his own right, was introduced to African theologians in the 1950`s on issues of caring and pastoral assistance. This was a profound introduction for African care, to say the least, because Clinebell`s theories have prompted African theologians to reflect on issues of care in an African context which has its own unique challenges. Masango says that Clinebell introduced the concept of one-on-one or small group relationships counselling sessions when dealing with troubled souls in the community. It is to be noted that the Western world has always promoted the idea that individuals should be given space when dealing with problems. They always respect the space of an individual and his or her rights. This mode of doing pastoral care became a

huge challenge for African pastoral care based on the inherent unique social and cultural practices of Africans which invariably prompted African guru's like John Mbiti, Jesse Mugambi and others to create models that will serve our context. This paves the way for a new African philosophy to be developed by Mbiti from an already existing practice. As he says, "It takes a whole village to raise a child." Mbiti; John; 1980: 80

The thought and wisdom of an African village come to light; in other words, it is the responsibility of the whole-village, not only of biological parents but all those who live with the child-to take care of him or her. This opens up new possibilities of calling on the entire family, clan, tribe or village to take care of those who are deeply troubled. It is an act of compassion and commitment sealed in vows made to each other (cultural practice) to make sure that children are raised well, with values that will alter and bless the villages. Similarly it is a commitment which resonates in social and cultural practices that the vulnerable, the voiceless, the elderly and those whom society normally neglects should be taken care of by the collective. Prof. Masango argues that for Africans Pastoral Theology begins from conception and goes on until death. He quantifies this fact by citing A. K. Armah (2000:91) who advocates the preservation and safe keeping of the unborn child, from outside harmful forces. This concept of pastoral care care does not concern troubled souls in particular, but is concerned with the raising of the child to be a good person among other villagers. He/she is nurtured from conception, so that the child is cared by those who are capable of being good influences on the child. Good people take care of the weak. This command is biblical and is in line with Jesus' teachings. This is in fact the heart and soul of the Christian gospel, a privileged call to practising Christians to take care of the weak and vulnerable as an act of love. This process of caring involves not only the mother or parents, but the whole village. This kind of caring does not allow individualism to develop. Mbiti speaks of caring as the responsibility of everyone who lives among other people in the village. He maintains that if children are pastorally cared for, there will be less problems when these children reach adulthood. Pastoral care that is offered within a village cares for life instead of problems. This model of care is demonstrated in the everyday life and activities of villagers and is still operative in South African rural communities and other parts of Africa. In those communities the main form of caring is based on the concept of

“Ubuntu” (humanity). It is interesting to note how this process differs from caring in the western world. In the western world it begins with individuals, but includes families. When they grow up it is time for the children to leave the nest. In Africa, the caring involves the villages, community, relatives, tribes or clans. Individualism or privacy is not accepted as a way of life. Prof. Masango cites the marriage of young adults in this regard. He points out that advice is given to them by adults especially. Women, and there is an open invitation is to all villagers to contribute. It is their responsibility to come and affirm the couple and finally bless them. In this Masango cites (M. N. Getui and M. M. Theuri 1996: 176) who say, “it is the responsibility of the whole village to care for life, especially among the young (children) and old (senior citizens). It is also our responsibility to help them towards the restoration of the wholeness”

Getui and Theuri 1996: 176

6.9.2. The concept of Ubuntu

The Zulu saying: “ *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* “ help us to understand what the concept of Ubuntu means, namely, “ a person is only a person through his or her interactions with other people “. This is realized in practice by being hospitable, compassionate, fair and acting kindly towards others. In a village when African people meet and greet each other there is an element of caring in their exchange of greetings. One will say to the other: “ *Siya kubona unfowethu* “ (I see you my brother or sister). The person greeted will then respond, in: “*Ngiya ku bona umfowethu* “ (I see myself in you my brother or sister). They will continue sharing about family; and Prof. Masango points out that even animals are part of their lives. This process affirms the way people care for each other as well as the life in the other, including all the household and animals. As the conversation continues the person will stop using “I” and talk about “we,” which means that the person includes the family, tribe, clan and villagers. As they speak, they think inclusively of others. A person having Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirms others, makes time to talk and listen to others and does not feel threatened on hearing others are prospering. There is always this self-assurance that, no matter what, I belong to the village which nurtures and care for me out of love. The Ubuntu concept reminds us of the what Mbiti is saying, “ I am because you are –

you are because I am”

Mbiti, J; 1986: 85

The above way of thinking helps people to affirm each other, but sadly this mode of caring is severely stretched and threatened under the influence of globalization.

Because of this threat, some of the villagers cave in and are emulating a western life pattern. This is a cause of great concern for Tapiwa Mucherera, which he relates as follows, “The African context still struggles today with some of the rapid changes that took place due to colonization. The villagers are caught between worlds and cultural systems which challenge old patterns of life

Mucherera,

T; 2009: 27. The global world has divided people into two groups, the urban (who follow western concepts) and rural (follow traditional way of life). Africans are caught up between the traditional socio-economic culture and the modern western systems. These factors affect the concept of Ubuntu and influence ways in which problems are resolved. The practice of township stoep funerals comes to mind at this point. Comparative observations have brought to the fore that westerns employ a cold, calculated and swift response in dealing with problems. All this is operative within an individualistic mind frame, with its goal of reforming or rehabilitating the individual. Unlike its western counterpart, African pastoral care involves significant others in its quest to trace the origin of a problem. A point of reference is the wisdom of Mucherera when he points to “palaver.” a meeting place designated by elders in Zimbabwean culture where problems, differences and issues are listened to, deliberated on and advice given. The palaver might be a meeting place under a tree where community justice is seen to be meted out. He articulates this mode of caring in this way, “One of the main functions of the palaver is to provide people in general with a place where they can come and learn in a safe educational environment. Together those who come to the palaver can learn and discuss the dynamics of grief, spiritual questions about God and how to prevent infection”

Mucherera, T; 2009: 132

At such a meeting the community does not only trace the origins of issues but also suggests solutions. This is done at a slow pace because everyone must be given the opportunity to ventilate his/her views. Mucherera believes that, since people`s wounds or pain occurred in the context of relationships or community, it is only out of the context of relationships or community that healing can be achieved. One finds healing in the

wisdom of many and in the support and empathy of others. At the palaver one can learn from others` wisdom and experiences and one can learn from one`s own mistakes, as one is held accountable. In the light of, what was said before, one can attribute the township stoep funerals to the rise of globalization and western influences in dealing with difficulties. African pastoral care and the manner in which it is being practiced, should suggest to the African township churches a better method for dealing with defunct members. Globalization and its new values are a big challenge to African pastoral care. Other methods of African pastoral care includes the following:

- The role departed ancestors play in our lives. Mbiti says a good ancestor becomes good by virtue of the way he / she lived. The honour continues when he / she dies for the person`s memory and the person`s goodness are kept alive in people`s memories. A case in point is the departed president, Mr. Nelson Mandela. People speak openly about his legacy that needs to be honoured. In this all and sundry attest to his philosophy, the values and principles he stood for, the judgement calls he made at a time when South Africa was on the verge of a bloody civil war, etc. Ancestors like Mandela can never be forgotten by villagers. President Mandela was so huge in stature that even the global village can never forget him. The memory of departed ancestors is kept alive by the villagers. This departed person cannot be removed from the lips of those who are alive. The beauty of the African villages lies in honouring those who had lived good or exemplary lives. This is another way of pastorally caring for others. Those who were bad are never quoted by others, because they will introduce bad elements in their lives. The good ones help us to correct the wrongs in our lives as they are quoted with the aim of shaping areas in our lives where we are lacking.
- The role in the form of mentorship played by adults should not be underestimated in village life. Children are constantly being reminded to respect and honour adults. If one considers the book of Proverbs in particular, one will discover there is a biblical connotation attached to this mode of African pastoral care.
- .Oral tradition plays a pivotal role in the passing of stories of great value from one generation to another. When children listen to these stories in the African context, this is another way in which pastoral care takes place

Given the African village and its concept of caring, Prof. Masango is of the opinion that caring is designed in such a way that it creates an effective caring method that leads to growth among villagers. It is a guiding process that seeks to change behaviour to a better way of functioning. Even though some of the quotations focus on individuals, they do serve the purpose of working and teaching other persons and this leads to growth that finally blesses the entire village. This process creates a cycle of pastoral care that make villagers emulate, learn and later share a way of caring for each other.

- Apart from listening to the wise counsel of elders (living ancestors) through mentorship, looking after them and caring for them is another way villagers demonstrate African pastoral care. This involves the concept of honouring the elderly; hence, families are included in the activity of honouring elders or recipients of care until death. Most of them will be cared for within their own homes, with their children participating in their lives. Africans have always believed that living with the elderly brings blessings, not only to the family but to the entire community or village. Prof. Masango reckons that Africans have always viewed their elderly as walking universities. In other words, they are seen as having wisdom and experience of life, and as bearers of history, African values and culture that need to be passed on to the next generation. Their role is to pass on the past stories to the present as well as future leaders, as the next generation will do for the future villagers. To illustrate this point further, Prof. Masango cites the late Masamba Ma Mpolo, who argued, “When we connect with people at a time of crisis, illness, bereavement and even at death, we are connected with the living ancestors as well as the dead”.

Masamba Ma Mpolo 1994: 73

The argument is that in this kind of village pastoral care is not only a care for the living, but includes the honouring of the dead, because they were created in the image of God (Imago Dei). He calls them saints who are with the Lord. (Only those who lived a good life on earth). The concept of speaking through the Induna in order to communicate with the chief emerges here. One cannot directly speak to the king. Therefore, when we honour the elders, we are honouring life itself which was given to them by God. It is only

now when I become aware of this African practice that I understand the conduct and behaviour of my black parishioners. In times of need, I was always frustrated by their tendency to approach me via one of the other church leaders, either a lay minister or council member. Even when I was a school principal in a black community, I could never understand why the educators always approached me through an intermediary and not directly. I always thought that:

- They were avoiding me.
- It was time consuming.
- They were undermining me.
- When they were in need or trouble they were prematurely contracting the services of a third person so that together they could conspire against me. It only makes sense to me now that our people approach significant, influential and respected others first and use them as an intermediary to get my attention. This knowledge really liberates me. To think that people honour and respect me as a leader, as they are honouring life itself is a humbling thought. When they approach me, it signifies that they view me as the one whose assistance in need has the potential to contribute towards changing their lives. It elevates me to the status of becoming a co – creator with God as I guide them / shepherd them / journey with them in times of need, with the aim of bringing restoration, wholeness and healing. The next part of this chapter will focus on creating models of care for bereaved families. Suggestions will be made to the township church as a contextual communal village of faith on how to care for bereaved mourners as well as defunct members.

6.10. **Block leader system**

The reader will remember well that in chapter 5 in the analysis of captured data from both the priests and churchwardens both groups alluded to the practice of the block leader system as the means through which communication happens in township communities. Notification does not happen directly to the priest. This is seen as an exception to the rule rather than the accepted practice itself. One of the aims of this research is not to declare all the township practices as dysfunctional and wrong, but

to affirm proper African pastoral methods by building on those and discarding those that are damaging. With this in mind, this researcher would be comfortable with the block leader system if:

- If the intention were to be associated with remnants of the Induna to Chief channel of communication.
- The point of departure is to display a sincere, honest and open willingness to listen to people while agreeing to examine each case on merit.
- The cleric in charge of the parish is involved in the deliberations but to respect his / her judgement call as the ordained minister who is in charge of shepherding the flock.
- The chiefs (lay council members) agree that the clergy person will take the leading role in decisions of a pastoral nature.
- Parishioners are allowed to exercise their choice by approaching the clergy person directly in times of pastoral need if they so wish.
- It is agreed that all people will receive the same treatment, as decisions are made from a premise of love, concern and compassion.

The block leader system model is practical and has a distinct flavour of African pastoral care. I believe it can succeed if the above is taken into account.

6.11. Ticket system

This is one of the practices that the township churches can do without because it is one of the root causes of stoep funerals. Proper education and training on all levels are vital if the aim is to grow the church and in the end to effect healing and wholeness. This research therefore has identified a need for special measures for the clergy and laity to educate the parishioners in dedicated giving. This research suggests that the leadership should set aside one or two months in the year which can be profitably used to effect this. The identified months can be termed “dedication months”. Because the aim is to re-educate, visiting preachers can be invited to come and do the teaching on giving on all the Sundays of one month. Such a practice promotes ecumenical co – operation via “pulpit exchanges”. The whole teaching should evolve around tithing, financial

administration, the counting of money, a proper banking system, monthly financial reporting, accepted procedures when making payments, etc. Furthermore people should be taught to use proper language, for instance to talk about their “tithe or dedicated giving” instead of “paying my ticket”. as was noticed during the interviews. Parishioners should be encouraged to make substantial donations and offerings as thank - offerings to the church, instead of to the priest. In cases where the latter is happening, clergy can so easily slip into the habit of charging for ministries rendered. The administration of the Sacraments by God`s ordained shepherd is not for sale. Clergy should refrain from soliciting money from parishioners when doing unveiling, funerals, home blessings and even when performing the Sacrament of baptism and others. In the interviews the participants alluded to such practices in their churches even though this was not policy. If it is happening it is a serious indictment on the image and sanctity of the church as God`s elected faith community. The interviews have shown that some clergy are promoting stoep funerals out of fear “we just bury everyone from the church, how will our stipends be paid?” I believe that stipends will always be paid if proper teaching on stewardship is happening. People will always be generous when they see transparency and accountability. Similarly it needs to be clearly explained to them why they should contribute R500.00, for instance, instead of R50.00 per month, and how the church leadership spends every cent of their R500.00. To get the message across, the leadership will have to display a lot of patience, courage and perseverance. All this is possible if the church leadership become flexible in accommodating the pensioners and unemployed. Each parishioner who receives an income, be it from salary, grants or from which ever source, should be encouraged to give a portion of that to the church as a tithe and not as” payment of a ticket”.

6.12. Support from fellow parishioners and community members at large

It is quite encouraging to have noted in the interviews how the participants (both from stoep and church funerals) praised the support given to them by fellow parishioners and community members. This practice is supported by the arguments of the various authors that was referred to in this chapter.

John Patton`s theories on communal contextual model of pastoral care speaks about

community love, care and support to troubled souls in need.

Wimberley, in explaining his narrative model, suggests the involvement of significant others through small group ministry to those in need. The church is seen and accepted as a faith community where members exist for one another, as they minister to each other by listening to one another's stories. Wimberley hold up edifies this model with its ritualistic benefits as one of the models that churches can use to share in God's story as people move to wholeness.

Gordon Dames reminds us of how local communities were previously seen, experienced and used as public environments in which people could live and worship in transformative hermeneutical spaces. If there is a shift in this practice, Dames believes that Practical Theology should thoroughly research the reasons for that, but still maintains that community involvement is paramount in effecting pastoral care. On the same point of community involvement, Ian Hussey argues that a strong sense of community not only meets a basic human need but also provides the link to church growth. It stresses that sense of belonging in each individual and on another level the need everyone has to be loved and accepted.

As already seen, community involvement is the basis of African pastoral care. The value of group identity can never be under estimated in the attempt to shepherd troubled souls: hence the concept of village dynamics, in which a person becomes a person through other people.

The church already has an ally – community involvement in its pursuit to effect healing and wholeness to those in need. This model of pastoral care in an African context is as ancient as the mountains and this is a gift from Africa to the western world. This model of pastoral caring is what the outcome this research is affirming and encouraging.

6.13. Training of clergy

Prof. Dames is strongly advocating the need for the churches to train their clergy to become skilled spiritual and moral leaders for authentic witness and mission. In this he believes that the clergy can set the pace for communal change as culture creators, in order to bridge the gap between gospel and culture, public and private life, science and experience, western and African culture in a South African multi-cultural context.

Concerning models of pastoral care in relation to the training of clergy, Charles Gerkin in 1997 made suggestions in his book “*An introduction to pastoral care*”, of tools clergy should be aware of and can use in journeying with God`s people. Drawing on the rich history and heritage of ancient Israel, he believes that the ministry of the clergy should be fashioned on the following lines:

- The pastor as priest, prophet and wise guide. This can so easily complement the block leader system, which I still believe has remnants of the ancient African practice of two –way communication between chiefs and induna. As already mentioned, it can also ease the tension between priests and lay leaders concerning pivotal decision making.
- The pastor as shepherd of the flock. In this model, Gerkin wisely points to the person of Jesus Christ, where he is depicted in the New Testament as the good shepherd who knows his sheep and is known by his sheep (John 10:14). As the good shepherd, Christ showed deep love, concern and compassion towards the needy who approached him. This is the image that township clergy should have in front of them when dealing with defunct members, as well as strangers that cross their path. Gerkin warns the clergy by pointing to some of the pastors in the past who distorted the image of the pastor as Christ`s shepherd and in the Anglican ethos, representative, by assuming the authority to judge and direct God`s people, an authority that rightfully belongs only to Christ. As was the case in the Middle Ages, pastors in the townships exercise authoritarian powers over the people in ways that result in misery, added pain during bereavement, if not traumatization at a time when people need them the most. Clothed in authoritarian robes, they cause dead bodies to be taxed and grieving families overlooked in the name of a deceptive or dishonest church policy. Our township clergy need to be reminded, and new ones trained in the knowledge, that shepherding authority is meant to empower and not to judge, punish and condemn people as is done in the case of stoep funerals.
- The pastor as mediator and reconciler. Gerkin believes that in the New Testament no one demonstrates a better example of this role than the apostle Paul, who strove to lead a ministry of reconciling people to one another and to

Christ, the head of the church. Clergy should follow suit, but unfortunately the roles township clergy play in bringing about stoep funerals is a far cry from the ideal.

- The pastor as ritualistic leader. Gerkin brilliantly introduces this model in this way: “What do we desire to take with us from our ancestors of the Middle Ages? Probably not their tight-fisted control of the keys of salvation, the right to administer indulgences, or the giving and withholding of the sacraments

Gerkin, Charles, V; 1997; 82

Gerkin is giving the priest a prominent, distinguished, unique role as an ordained person within the church. As the priest administers the sacraments, through His spirit, God blesses His people, answers their prayers, imparts and bestows His grace and thereby effects healing and wholeness. No wonder all those people in the interviews who had experienced church funerals where the priest officiated in the service and the Sacraments, were in a far better space (place) spiritually, emotionally and psychologically than their counterparts in stoep funerals. Still concerning appropriate training for clergy, Emmanuel Obeng is concerned specifically that the clergy should receive training relevant to the needs and challenges of contemporary African society. He observes in the introduction of his chapter:” An African cleric can cite endlessly biblical passages to expound the care of Jesus for humanity but has no inkling of how to relate to his poverty-stricken neighbour or how to organize his congregation so that members can develop themselves and rise economically above the poverty level. He has no idea how to influence positively the local politics, social life and morality of his community” Obeng, E in Waruta D and Kinoti, H; 2005: 8

Obeng believes that training of clergy should encourage and emphasize critical thinking rather than spiritual leadership. He advocates the kind of training that will enable the priest to meet and direct the challenges of contemporary society. In this he suggests the inclusion of the following in the training curriculum:

- Inter – religious dialogue.
- African religion and culture, social concern and counselling services.

In addition he suggests that the churches should encourage their clergy to become graduates in full- time ministry in Africa: - further theological training is the key to getting the best out of our township clergy. Most of our clergy operate with only a diploma in theology and some with a certificate. This relegates them to the position of semi – literate clerics in charge of parishes which have a number of university graduates. Surely such a cleric will add very little value to the growth and enrichment of that parish.

The above suggestions and others already mentioned concerning training and education of clergy and laity complement some of the proposed aims of this research. The last part of this chapter will discuss creative methods that the church can follow in making Christianity relevant in African township communities.

6.14. African Culture

In his paper Prof. Gordon Dames has already pointed out how rich our multi – cultural South African societies are, but in a township context, this scenario goes further. It is not strange to find a mixture of Isizulu, Southern Sotho, Northern Sotho, IsiXhosa, Setswana as well as other people of indigenous tongues worshipping in one parish. Since the dawn of a new democratic South Africa in 1994 a host of foreign African nationals has also flocked to our shores and they have found themselves by choice in the same township parishes. To the skilled, well trained priest, this situation presents a challenge, but to the semi – literate one, a nightmare, because each tribe represents a distinct culture, history, heritage, values and practices. They all belong to the same faith community (the local church) and are equally in need of proper shepherding. Each tribe even has its own mourning rituals and burial customs by which they try to maintain the links with “*emakhaya*” (Isizulu and IsiXhosa for rural village way of life). It might sound complicated but the observance of mourning rituals and burial customs is generally similar with minute differences here and there. The literature review in chapter 4 has attempted to present a brief overview of such customs. The challenge for the priest is to acknowledge and recognize the ancient customs, while at the same time as a church leader, skilfully leading God`s people into God`s story by virtue of witness and worship. And in so doing to create a God culture that will make Christianity relevant in the 21st

century in a black township setting. As it now stands, African Christian, religiosity and spirituality are now playing catch up because of European missions to Africa. Since the dawn of the missionaries, the voices and the stories of Africans have been silenced and marginalized. The European way of life was the standard. Tapiwa Mucherera asserts that Christianity came packaged together with western culture. Some of the missionaries did not take advantage of what they perceived as the “notoriously religious” way of life of the indigenous people in spreading the gospel. Others, according to Mucherera did not see this religiousness as something to be desired, but it was to be stamped out at all costs since it was pagan. Civilization and Christianity meant that the African religious culture had to be countered, changed and the European culture established in these new lands. Mucherera cites Godfrey Kapenzi, a Zimbabwean Shona writer, who says, “The missionary thus anointed the European as the superior custodian of values, morals and ethics and as the sole measure of culture, civilization and history. Consequently, imperialism and colonialism were made to look like humanitarian responsibilities”.

According to Mucherera, for the missionaries, Africans were to be converted physically and spiritually into humans. Not only was the religion of the Africans heathen, pagan and evil, but even skin colour was to be changed to look like that of white people. The African was not human, but needed to be totally transformed to be anything close to human standards. A human being, according to some of these early Europeans, was the African who had mastered the European way of life. For this reason some of these European missionaries and colonists rejected the traditional religio-cultural counselling and healing methods of Africans.

Mucherera argues that the missionaries should have adopted St. Paul’s approach at Athens (Acts 17: 16 – 34) in doing mission and that was not to take a condemning attitude to the religious beliefs he found amongst the indigenous people but to start where they were.

Mucherera, T. N; 2009: 16 -20

This is the same model that Nick Pollard is promoting which he terms, “Positive deconstruction”, (which has fully being explained in chapter 2). Briefly this model implies that if you intend to change the mind-set of people, first acknowledge what you find and affirm it and then unpack their set of beliefs. Gradually introduce what you believe to be

true. As you dismantle the belief system that you have found, retain the good and positive but discard the bad and improbable. Take from what you have retained and blend it now with your belief system that you intend introducing. By doing so, you have positively deconstructed a belief system which you believe should have changed. This research has done exactly that with the ancient township practices of the ticket system and the block leader system and is gradually doing so with the practice of stoep funerals. In the interviews it was discovered that the participants could share stories of a positive nature, egg (a) the support they got from fellow parishioners, (b) support from community members, (c) support from clergy who were not Anglicans, who mostly represented indigenous churches and charismatics.

and (d) support from family members etc.

It looks as though support for the bereaved was coming from all quarters, except from the ones from whom they needed it the most, i.e. their priests. Because of their unfulfilled expectations, this research will now make suggestions to how the Anglican township church can indeed journey with bereaved families.

6.15. Church involvement in African mourning and burial customs

What initially comes to mind is the contact I had at the beginning of the year with a bereaved family. They lost a son at the tender age of 19. He was tragically shot and killed and understandably the family was experiencing severe shock. As soon as I got the news of his death, I immediately went to see the family, as I normally do. At that time, there is not much that one can do but just to take time to listen to them and to allow them to grieve and weep. When we eventually got to the point of making funeral arrangements, they said to me that on the Saturday of the funeral, before bringing the body home, they wanted to take the body to the house in which the young man was killed, because they needed to perform some African rituals before bringing him home. I immediately saw the opportunity for the church to become involved. I offered the church ministry and asked to be part of that ceremony. They were hugely surprised but one could observe their relief and joy. On the day of the funeral, at 6:30 am in the morning, I waited with the family at the house of horrors for the body to come. As we led the body

in procession into that house, an elder of the family was speaking to the deceased (briefly telling him where we are, who are there, what we intend doing, etc.). I asked them to place the body in the passage and to take me to the exact spot where he died. At that spot, I asked one of the family members to place a wreath / flower bouquet and a lighted candle as I was leading the prayers. There- after I asked them to sing a chorus softly while I was sprinkling the entire house with holy water, after which incensing of the house followed. Throughout, as we were performing this cleansing ceremony, the lay ministers, some members of the family and I was saying appropriate prayers while others continued with the singing of choruses. When that was done, I called for the members living in that house to step forward. I laid hands on them and asked family members of the deceased to assist me in praying for them. The content of the prayers to God was to enable both the relatives of the deceased and the family staying in that house to have peace, reconciliation, forgiveness and truth. When the cleansing ritual was completed, the elder concluded his conversation with the deceased (basically telling him about the ritual that was performed, but more importantly inviting his spirit to accompany us and not to remain behind to torture and disturb anyone staying in that house). Again in procession, we led the body out, placed it in the mortuary car, ready to be taken to his own family home. At that time everyone believed that we had successfully “fetched the spirit”, and the person could now be given a dignified funeral. The important point to stress here, is the church`s involvement in this ancient African custom of “fetching the spirit”. Our parishioners continue to practise this custom but they do it in secret, not involving the church. Because the missionaries did not introduce this type of ministry of the church to bereaved families, families do not ask for it and the church does not offer it. This to me is African pastoral ministry, where the church`s ministry accepts the traditional customs and practices of African people, allows it to happen, promotes it and then blends denominational ministry with that. In this way contemporary Christianity is affirmed, African cultural practices are affirmed and Christianity becomes revolutionary and relevant in the 21st century within a black township context.

The lay ministers held a short service at the family home after which the cortege moved to the church. The priest, assisted by lay ministers, conducted the entire funeral service

in the church. A requiem mass (communion service) was celebrated and the entire Anglican funeral service observed which includes

- Holy communion for everyone (people can exercise their preference)
- Anglican burial rites administered. – According to this church custom, only the ordained priest can do that. (This is the heart of the problem that this research is struggling with. – How is this to be done at stoep funerals where lay ministers are doing the service? Because of the deceased's standing and status within the church, he / she is denied the ministry of proper burial rites. What is the message that the church is sending out and how influential is it? In the interviews, the participants related that, in the African mind-set, if a person is not properly buried, that person will not find rest. For the purpose of this research “properly buried” and “dignified funeral” points to the priest's presence and ministry in the church and at the graveside doing the committal. When we got to the cemetery, an elder was given the privilege to walk in the procession with us and to once more to talk to the deceased. Thereafter, as the body was still on the stand ready to be lowered into the grave, family members were given the opportunity to perform their tribal or clan ritual if they so wished. Generally, most of them cover the coffin with a blanket or the hide of the cow that was slaughtered the previous day. The Sotho people will place a straw mat on the base of the grave on which the body will rest. In the same way the Zulus and Xhosas do what is required in their culture. Others leave personal belongings or treasured artefacts inside or on top of the grave that the deceased can use on his / her journey to the ancestors. After the committal the mourners proceed to the family home, where everyone can indulge in cooked food. Before that they wash their hands in a basin filled with water with pieces of aloe plants in it, towels are readily available to dry the hands. This is seen as some form of cleansing. I do this cleansing at the graveside. Before we place the body on the stand, we incense the open grave and then sprinkle it with holy water (a sign that the resting place is made secure from evil influence). At the same time I normally take the opportunity to sprinkle the mourners with holy water (accompanied by prayers). This is a substitute for the sprinkling back at the family home and allows them to wash their hands only.

By doing so I have allowed the ancient custom of cleansing after being in contact with a dead body to happen. This is how the church affirms the cleansing and how the custom affirms the cleansing of the mourners.

Of note in the entire proceedings, is the willingness of the church to allow a family elder to speak to the body throughout. By doing so, it affirms the African belief that death cannot sever the bond between the living and the departed. A person never dies but just enters another realm and can still be accessed, though they do not respond immediately. That might happen later through dreams and perhaps visions of the deceased. European theology and pastoral care might not agree, but remember the argument of Kubler Ross: “If something is too difficult for you to accept, it does not mean that it can’t be true”.

Communicating with the dead person is a fundamental method of African pastoral care, for it is in line with the African belief of ancestor veneration, most of the time seeking the assistance of the ancestors to bless the surviving family and village. It is also an affirmation of the powerful and therapeutic value story telling has for African pastoral care. Constant communication with the deceased helps the mourner in the grief and mourning processes. The funeral service is just one area where the church can encourage our people to practise our ancient customs openly, so that the church takes a leading role without making our people feel any form of guilt, inferiority or shame. Other possible areas are:

- When mourners unveil a tombstone.
- When mourners end their mourning period.
- Initiation, the birth of a new-born child incorporated into the baptism service.
- Releasing still -borns.
- Creatively to resurrect the “home - coming ritual “ of the deceased some days after the burial.
- The whole issue of African Christian marriage service (Our Anglican prayer book and the church’s practice only talk about “Christian marriage”. No mention is made about the African heritage, of lobola negotiations, customary unions, etc. The church is in no way involved with the delicate African negotiations of lobola and the like but only with the actual English church marriage.

- Blessing of homes, cars, etc.: the liturgical service for this type of ministry doesn't allow for African beliefs to surface.

The practice of stoep funerals is one area which clearly demonstrates how destructive the inherited classical European theology and pastoral care are for black Christians in the townships. This situation cries out for proper African pastoral care to take effect in bringing healing and wholeness to township Christians.

6.16. Preliminary Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter, the point was made that the black township church is facing a huge challenge when facing issues of death and dying. The situation worsens when a church member becomes defunct and dies. The church does not have a pastoral method to deal with such members. Stoep funerals are seen as the easy way out and in order to defend the church's dysfunctionality and inaptness, the stoep funeral is entrenched in church policy. Because the church leaders (Priest and parish council) do not have a therapeutic model to deal with mourners and defunct members, they become indifferent, hostile and agitated when confronted with a demand to explain the logic of their "policy"; and at the same time they promote the ticket system as a means of securing funds for the church. Ironically the much debated ticket system is not working. It is on life support and is generally kept going by pensioners with at least R50.00 donation per month furnished from their meagre pension grants. With this their ticket to a church funeral and those of the grandchildren living with them, is assured. The problem comes when the immediate but extended adult family members, not living with the granny, die. For reasons of their own, they are not catered for by the granny's ticket and therefore do not appear as "paid up" members in the books of the parish council. Through other factors known mostly by themselves, their church attendance was also lacking, which is displeasing to the church leadership. When they die, the verdict concerning their burial is no doubt a stoep funeral. The leaders' intention is to punish the deceased in the harshest possible way, and therefore no room is allowed for negotiations. The deceased's failure has made the leadership outrageously blind to such an extent that they have forgotten about the emotional needs of the survivors. Three case studies were considered in order to examine the extent of the added pain

and hurt suffered by the mourners through steep funerals. Through their stories, the difference in emotional states of those involved in steep funerals and to those in church funerals was quite evident.

Again theories of scholars concerning grief, loss, and mourning were revisited and they were all in agreement that we must allow a person the space to grieve before we can talk about the mourning process. We must be flexible in allowing a person to grieve and mourn in his / her own way and at his / her own time and pace. Roy Nichols in the presentation of his paper pointed out how beneficial it is to grieving mourners to have as much close contact with the dead body as possible (whether physically or by means of playing a significant role in funeral arrangements). We examined a couple of scenarios with him, in order to hear the stories of those who have experienced such. All these stories supported the initial hypothesis of the research that, people need to be allowed to make contributions and choices at a crucial time when they lay to rest a loved one, not forgetting to honour the African heritage. Ultimately, the research suggested ways in which the church can open new possibilities of involvement, ministry and partnership with secular society in order to facilitate the healing process of bereaved mourners. Once more it was necessary for the research to survey the scope of pastoral care, first from a classical, traditional perspective, then taking into account the latest trends in pastoral care, and finally by a detailed exploration of African pastoral care. The role played by community care throughout was significant, because that is similar to one of the methods that African pastoral care is emphasizing. The second part of the chapter was more of a pragmatic nature. Suggestions were made as to how the church can modify:

- The block leader system.
- Ticket system.
- Community support.
- Training and education of clergy.
- How to deal with defunct members, taking the different cultures of parishioners into consideration.
- How the church can lead mourners into God's story by allowing for proper African church burials, as well as which other areas of ministry the church can

concentrate on to bring an African flavour into township Christian ministry. The next chapter will deal with findings and recommendations.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Summary of findings and recommendations

7.1. Introduction

In defending this research effort, the writer will close the research attempt in this chapter with a summary of findings to support chapters one to six with the backing of solid facts that have been presented thus far. This is the section for the (collection and) interpretation of data collected and in this chapter all the loose threads will be gathered together. As far as possible, the summary of findings will be grouped according to the respective chapters. As P.D. Leedy puts it, “Defending one’s research effort is an academic tradition. Defend in this sense means, to justify one’s conclusions, to support one’s statement with the backing of solid facts that have been presented in the document. Nothing short of this will suffice. In the final section of the interpretation of the data the report should close with a chapter that aims to tie up all loose ends. Here is the place for looking backward, for distilling into a few paragraphs precisely what has been accomplished in each phase of the research activity..... . On the basis of this summary, the researcher should state clearly the findings and conclusions reached with respect to the problem and sub-problems investigated. This conclusion should be supported entirely by facts previously presented “. Leedy, P.D; 1989: 240

For Bloomberg and Volpe, this way of closing your collected data is an academic exercise which demands of the researcher to “probe and dig deeper beneath the surface of your findings by asking over and over again “Why?” and “Why not?”. In this way you will be able to brainstorm a number of possible interpretations that explain your findings, that is, you develop some ideas of what you think the findings really meant.

Bloomberg, L.D and Volpe, M; 2012: 204

These two authors believe that the order of presentation in the final chapter should be: findings, interpretations, conclusions and recommendations. As far possible this research will try to comply with this expectation.

7.2. Summary of Findings

7.2.1. Chapter one

7.2.1. (a) Research Topic

Chapter one firstly dealt with the research topic, namely stoep funerals. It was explained that this practice in dealing with defunct members was mainly found in the black township churches. It was discovered that the term “defunct”, pointed exclusively to members at the point of death who have fallen behind with their dedicated giving or tithing and whose church attendance has become non – existent. Their funerals were not allowed to be conducted in church but from the family home, this was termed a stoep funeral. This practice was formalised into church policy which the church wardens and the priest had to defend at all costs. The expectation is that lay ministers will facilitate stoep funerals and the priest will preside over church funerals. Mention was made of how the implementation of this practice results in added pain for the bereaved families because of the rejection, humiliation and embarrassment they experience, knowing that community members are all aware of the stigma that goes with stoep funerals.

The aims of this research were:

- (i) to create a pastoral model for the church to assist grieving families to experience the funeral service as a first stoep towards the healing process:
- (ii) to assist our black people not to be caught up in a cultural conundrum in relation to ancestral veneration as a result of decisions taken by church leaders on funerals; also to interpret what is causing the black church leadership to treat funeral services with disdain and impurity (?) by insisting on stoep funerals for defunct members.
- (iii) To offer alternative pastoral approaches for the death and burial of members considered defunct (financially or spiritually) and simultaneously to create a model of care for bereaved families.
- (iv) To present the township church with a culturally appropriate model in handling delicate issues of death and dying of defunct members, as a holistic solution to the problem.

To my knowledge, the aims of the research has been met. A model of how to deal with defunct members has been suggested. The key to those suggestions, is to treat all people in the same way, regardless of their standing and status within the church. By virtue of our baptism and being created in the likeness of God (Imago Dei), all people should be buried from church and an ordained priest should be present to conduct the service.

7.2.1.(b) Objectives of the study

In research of this nature the objective was to make the church leadership aware that the criteria or church policy concerning funerals is causing more damage to bereaved families. Steep funerals results in division, frustration and trauma, instead of managing the healing process of defunct members. Surviving relatives should be treated with respect and dignity instead of using church policies to punish the deceased and ultimately to embarrass and hurt the grieving survivors. To my knowledge, this research will reach the set objectives when church leaders (as in the case of my Diocese) start to talk openly about this practice. People may rightfully differ with my opinions and suggestions but at least this research has already ignited vigorous debates on issues of death, dying and funerals, and in particular steep funerals.

7.2.1.(c) The research gap showed that this particular topic was unique and no attempt at researching steep funerals in township churches has been undertaken thus far. Instead, a great deal of academic research has been undertaken on related issues of death, dying, mourning, bereavement mostly in the field of psychology. This research however makes a contribution in the field of Practical Theology and in particular pastoral care, by providing a unique approach to the informal mechanisms that clergy rely on to bury defunct members in South African black townships.

7.2.1.(d) The significance of this study can be appreciated through the proposed suggestions it makes for clergy and church leaders as they engage with the bereaved. Suggestions are made to the clergy and in particular, to the church leadership as to how to practice African pastoral care within the field of Practical Theology when dealing with their defunct members in cases of death and burial.

7.2.2. Summary of research findings for chapter two

7.2.2. (a) Hypothesis

The hypothesis the author held initially was that stoep funerals were unbiblical, unethical and an unjust practice of the church in dealing with her defunct members.

From this hypothesis the following problem questions were developed:

Can stoep funerals be regarded as punishment or education? if so, can any pastoral care benefits or gains be derived from stoep funerals which contribute to the healing, comfort and wholeness of grieving survivors? The responses in the interview process varied however. The church wardens and priests were generally in agreement that the practice of stoep funerals should be considered as education but their arguments to that effect were not convincing. Those exposed to church funerals and stoep funerals thought otherwise. Their responses undoubtedly confirmed the hypothesis that the research held initially in that stoep funerals were considered as punishment of the defunct deceased. The research has shown that stoep funerals are unjust and culturally inappropriate. This fact was clearly communicated by the grieving mourners in the strongest manner, as they showed their disapproval of this practice.

7.2.2. (B) this research followed a qualitative approach and used a hermeneutical method, grounded theory, observation and in-depth interviews as academic methods to implement the qualitative approach.

A hermeneutical method was necessary because, in the absence of any available material on stoep funerals, the research depended entirely on data from interviews. The research relied entirely on the stories of the victims of stoep funerals and experiences of those who have been exposed to church funerals, in order to tease out the extent of African pastoral care given by the church to township mourners. In the interviews it was discovered that people who have been exposed to stoep funerals are still battling with uncontrolled anger, bitterness, embarrassment and shame, and therefore this research can never support the practice of stoep funerals. Concerning observation as an academic method within the qualitative approach, the empirical fieldwork done through in depth interviews helped a great deal. It was then that the real pain, disappointment and feeling of abandonment and rejection of victims of stoep funeral surfaced. As they

related their painful stories, their facial expressions and body language overwhelmingly became evident of the negative and nasty encounters they had experienced with the church leadership. Certain questions drove them to the point of agitation and anger which resulted in moments of silence and expression of anger: some raised their voices while others broke down in uncontrollable weeping. In some instances they deliberately avoided eye contact as the eyes glazed and stared aimlessly in oblivion. By merely observing them as they gave their responses, one could detect whether:

- They had deliberately avoided the questions in giving an honest responses to the questions
- They were unable to verbalize their painful experiences or
- They were comfortable in reporting their experiences, as in the case of those who had been exposed to church funerals.

In stark contrast to the stoep funerals group, the church funerals participants were very comfortable, confident and extremely happy. Their facial expressions were radiant and their body language pregnant with satisfaction, gratitude and joy. Through the observation method during the one-to-one contact session in the in-depth interviews, an honest reflection of the participant`s emotional state was given. This assisted the author with the implementation of the grounded theory method. One could immediately categorize the data that one had observed and gathered into sub-topics or sub-themes, which eventually made the interpretation and analyses there of much easier. This way of collecting and storing data also assisted me during the literature search, as various books and articles were consulted. As one was exploring information relevant to the topic, one could immediately capture some information under the already identified sub-themes or sub-topics. This process was on-going and even applies here now as this chapter unfolds. Gradually, as this method was followed, I became increasingly comfortable with my initial hypothesis and considered it to be justifiable and objective (open to change) and even up to now it hasn't changed. In fact it is the synthesis by which I stand and because of which a model of change has been suggested. This does not mean that this research does not note and respect differing views (like that of the churchwardens and fellow priests) on reasons for doing stoep funerals but their

arguments and responses were not convincing, in fact, they conceded that they do not have a pastoral method to deal with defunct members. Stoep funerals is considered as the easy way out.

7.2.2. (c) Sampling

Co – researchers from the following categories were selected:

- Those who were exposed to stoep or tent funerals when burying their loved ones.
- Those who were lucky enough to have had a church funeral service for their departed ones.
- Anglican priests ministering in the sampled area.
- Church wardens.

All the data that the author needed for this research, was extracted from the participants. The same set of questions with few variations were set for participants of stoep and church funerals as well as priests and churchwardens. This exposed the fragmentation that stoep funerals causes in the townships. The priests and churchwardens were found to be in the same camp concerning their attitude to the topic. They went to great lengths to defend the practice, but was mostly unconvincing, as they either avoided some of the questions or resorted to “There is nothing I can do to change it “. Fortunately this research suggests a model that they can follow in managing their defunct members. The participants in stoep funerals and those of church funerals however is found to be at completely opposite positions because of exposure to the two types of funerals. Those of church funerals are extremely happy and satisfied with the ministry of the church, whereas those of stoep funerals is visibly damaged. They are negative, bitter and angry towards the church to such an extent that some of them were even questioning the love of God for them and their departed.

The proposed model of how the church can journey with bereaved mourners might not help them; only professional counselling can. To this end, my supervisor has suggested a healing workshop which hopefully will take place shortly. This research subsequently suggested immediate alternative intervention strategies to priests and church wardens

concerning death, burial and mourning practices in the townships. If this is done, proper African pastoral care practices will be followed that will ultimately limit the damage that is now so conspicuous.

The intention was also to interview retired priests in the townships but because of ill – health and death, one could not. The remaining one unfortunately declined. Because of ethical considerations, I had to accept that respectfully but the outcome and intention of the research were never compromised. I got all the information that I needed from the ones that were interviewed.

7.2.3. Summary of research findings for chapter three

The biggest challenge that this research had to cope with was the conspicuous absence of pertinent literature on stoep funerals. In order to deal with the situation, the author was compelled to surf the world of thanatology in order to acquire relevant knowledge on “ death “, “ dying ”, “ loss ”, “ bereavement” , “ mourning” and “ grief”. Importantly, from the information retrieved, it became clear that some psychologists believe that any caregiver should first allow a person to grieve before attempting to manage the mourning process. This information was important for me in attempting to enter the debate initiated by Elisabeth Kubler Ross in which she says that “ Death is the final stage of growth. Death is not an enemy to be conquered or a prison to be escaped. It is an integral part of our lives that gives meaning to human existence “.

Kubler Ross, E; 1975: X

The views of Julian Muller assisted me greatly in following the debate especially where he argues that, in order for a person to construct his/her present reality, the telling of past life stories is essential. He believes that we give meaning to our lives with the stories we tell, because the stories stored in our memories from the framework of our attempts to discover meaning in life.

Muller, J: 1999: 1

This argument assisted me in concluding how important past experience is in attempting to construct coping mechanisms when trying to deal with present life issues. It should also enable a person to gain better knowledge and wiser understanding of how to deal with future events especially in instances of death and dying. These thought provoking views of Julian Muller assisted me greatly in understanding Kubler Ross`s

views of death as “giving meaning to human existence”, for one can now encourage anyone to prepare consciously for a dignified death, whatever form it might take. But then the township church needs to continue with this task in providing everyone with dignified funerals, whether from the church or family home. In addition, these thoughts of Kubler Ross and Muller prompted the author to conclude the debate by stating that the continuous search for meaning in suffering and death, and not just in life, can assist practical theologians in creating a model of care for bereaved families - precisely what this research has done. Furthermore, these insights from Muller and Kubler Ross feed into perceived theories held by thanatologists that every person is the author of his / her own life experience or existence, whether in this life or in the life to come. This means that every person is the decision maker initiator of where your soul will spend eternity. You don't need the church to take up a judgemental role by deciding which funeral should be from church and which from the family home on the basis of unclear church policies created in terms of dubious criteria. Township dwellers regard stoep funerals as undignified funerals (see chapter five) and in the African belief, if a person is not given a proper burial, it is unlikely that the person's soul will rest. That soul is destined to become a “wandering ghost”, as in ancient Greek belief. Based on these facts, this research again makes a clear call to township leadership to stop this practice as it now penetrates the spirit world, according to cultural beliefs about departed ancestors. Another point of interest in this chapter is the notion that psychologists hold concerning grief and mourning. They are of the opinion that a person should be given the space to grieve first before one can even think of managing the mourning process. Kubler Ross put it in this way, “it takes time to mourn. It doesn't matter how many weeks or months have passed. Everybody needs to be encouraged to take his / her time do it his / her own way. Never judge or criticize anyone who tries to cope with the loss in his / her own way “.

Kubler Ross, E; 1991: 79

This research has found that the practice of stoep funerals does not observe or respect that fact in especially the manner in which this group of mourners is handled from the onset up to the burial itself. It leaves no room for pastoral caregivers to journey sympathetically with grieving mourners, and this proves that this practice should be terminated. The last part of this chapter dealt with, the task, or mission of the church as

well as the origin of authority in the church. Concerning the role and mission of the church, the following were identified:

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom.
- To teach baptism and nurture new believers.
- To respond to human needs by loving service.
- To seek to transform unjust structures in society.
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the church.

For the purpose of confining myself only to findings in this chapter, I will isolate number three – “ to respond to human needs by loving service “. This researcher firmly believes that the church is doing exactly that when it commits itself in journeying with bereaved families and to dispose of a dead body in a dignified manner through proper funeral services. The practice of stoep funerals in the townships falls short of the expectations set by the Anglican Bishops at the Lambeth Conference of 2008.

As far as authority in the church was concerned, it was noted that the Anglican bishops agreed that the scriptures be accepted as the ultimate source of authority and considered as medium of God`s self-revelation to us. Jesus Christ is acclaimed and accepted as the head of the church to whom all authority on earth and heaven is given. Authority was given to the apostles in turn, as spiritual church leaders and healers of the soul. This is the beginning of Apostolic succession through which, in the Anglican view, authority is being handed over to every ordained bishop in the church. When ordaining priests and deacons, the Bishop in turn invites the ordained person to share, with him the execution of authority by the laying on of hands. It becomes clear that the belief is that priests, deacons and Bishops share in the authority of Christ. Again we should visit the scriptures to see how Christ handled His authority – always with genuine love and compassion. The question now remains, what went wrong that township priests misuse and abuse this sacred gift of being an authoritative pastoral caregiver When it comes to the practice of stoep funerals? Instead of using their God given authority to heal, to comfort and to unite, they now use it to bring dissension, embarrassment and pain. Their collaborators in this practice, the parish council, should never have been involved

in pastoral matters of this nature in the first place. This research is now questioning the level of involvement of the laity on pastoral matters, but recommends that another researcher explore this matter.

7.2.4. Summary of research findings for chapter four

Every person is the author of his / her own existence but this existence does not take place in isolation. We live in a community together with significant others sharing the same values and principles, where ceremonies are supposed to play a cohesive role in which roles and responsibilities are continuously confirmed and re-affirmed. Every person is born into a community and then belongs to that community. At birth the person is welcomed into that community and at death the same community bids the person farewell. Ceremonies and rituals are the glue that keep together reciprocal obligations and actions because they have a loving, cohesive and bonding consequences on societies as a whole. This is the ideal opportunity for the church to collaborate with societal obligations as they bury not only their own members but a person who has also belonged to a community and was owned by that society. In conducting the ceremonies and rituals in church, instead of the family home, guided by their church policy, the church is being given that sacred space in which to continue the mission of Christ by promoting love , compassion and unity. This is also an opportunity for the church to cement its sacred position by being the elected group of God-fearing people for the proclamation of the Word and the administering of Holy Communion at funeral services. In this way the church becomes God`s prophetic voice to a society facing all manner of struggles and social ills. Apart from being entrusted with performing dignified burials and by doing so beginning the healing process of bereaved families, the church is also expected to embark on mission and evangelism. Instead, the church leadership in the townships choose to follow this dubious practice which compromises or even negates, the roles and functions of the church in relation to offering healing rituals. It is hoped that this research will inspire the church to examine its failures on this level and to consider the proposed model as it continues to function in township communities.

7.2.4. (a) Developments in funeral rites from a Western perspective

By using a thanatological approach, this research has shown how western mourning rituals and funeral customs have developed from Visible Death (Middle Ages) to Filtered Death (16 – 17th century) and ultimately to Invisible Death (20th century) . Of importance here is the practice at funeral services that was promoted by the Protestant Reformers. In order to promote community involvement and to reform traditional Roman Catholic practice, the Reformers insisted that some funerals be conducted from the family home .As I understand it, the aim was to redirect the focus from the deceased to the surviving mourners, since the Roman Catholic practice of that time was to base the entire service on saying elaborate prayers for the deceased forgetting the bereaved. Academics like P. Aries identifies the reason for Protestant Reformers` actions as a way of involving the much-needed care of community members for bereaved families during times of mourning and grief. This to me was a significant step because western culture has always promoted individualism and the respect for private space, whereas African pastoral care relies on community involvement. The researcher now wonders whether that move should be considered as the beginning of stoep funerals. When that practice started however,it appears to have been a brilliant move to involve community participation at funerals, especially if one argues from an African perspective. This is completely different from what the township church is doing in the 21st century where funerals from the family home is concerned. The reasons are different, the aim is different and the way in which the policy is being executed is different. It is done from a premise of condemning which results in added pain and feelings of embarrassment , rejection and shame for the bereaved family. Am I right to conclude that, by the continued promoting of this practice, the township church is still trapped in the euphoria of the Middle Ages and is need of a revolutionary reform?

7.2.4.(b) Western infiltration into African practices

Throughout, especially in chapter five and six, this research has gone to great lengths to point out how the early missionaries made it their mission to destroy indigenous African culture, beliefs, rituals and ceremonies. This was because, to them, what they found

was barbaric and heathen. They were driven by the philosophy that for a black person to become human that person needed to take up a white identity and personality by adopting white culture and beliefs. The result of these destructive attempts is a culturally confused black African trying to exist in South African urban areas. Traditional systems are alive and well in rural villages while in the urban areas black Africans operate through the western systems but still yearn to follow traditional rituals.

This researcher believes that the church can play a huge role in restoring cultural equilibrium to urban black South Africans, instead of adding to our people's confusion. If stoep funerals are considered by township people themselves to be undignified burials, why continue with this practice? The church needs to take seriously the African belief that "if a person is a wizard, a murderer, a thief, one who has broken the community code of taboos, or one who has had an unnatural death or an improper burial, then such a person may be doomed to punishment in the afterlife as a wandering ghost and may even be beaten and expelled by the ancestors or subjected to a period of torture, according to the seriousness of their misdeeds". Magesa, Laurent; 1997: 53

In short, stoep funeral communicates that the deceased was a "criminal" - a spiritual criminal who was found to be defunct in terms of church policy.

7.2.4.(c) Comparative study of Islam, Judaism, Christianity and Indigenous African religion

The aim of this comparative study was to compare how these traditions approach death in relation to:

- (a) Treatment of the dead body
- (b) Practice of comforting the bereaved.
- (c) Disposal of the dead body.

It was important to note the meticulous approach of all these traditions to the care and dignified preservation of the dead body, as well as care to the bereaved. An important aspect that also runs through all the traditions is the belief in the living dead - the departed ancestors. They are alive somewhere in a spirit world not yet seen and are directly or indirectly involved in how we live our lives on earth. They can either influence

us directly by visiting us, protecting, us or watching over us, or indirectly by praying for us. All the traditions emphasizes the need for correct, dignified , accepted burial rites to be the norm as a way of securing a safe and restful passage and transition of the deceased into the hereafter. The practice of stoep funerals and care of the bereaved in the black Christian tradition is found to be the only exception and to be problematic for various reasons therefore; this practice should definitely come to an end.

7.2.5. Summary of research findings in chapter five.

This chapter firstly dealt comprehensively with a report of detailed data gathered from participants during the in – depth interviewing process and went on to analyze the data. In the absence of any research work done thus far, this data was extremely important in relation to stoep funerals. It was also important to compare the gathered data from the living documents (experiences of people) to the literature on death, dying , mourning and burial customs supported by academics in the literature review. The first inference of note was the remarkable statement made by one of the participants under the group of stoep funerals. She was asked to make suggestions about how the church could improve on the pastoral care given to bereaved families. Amazingly she confirmed the fact that was articulated by one of the Archaeologists as follows: “concerning rites of passage, baptismal ceremonies and rituals are designed to welcome a new member into the life of the community while funeral ceremonies are designed for the community to bid the person a final farewell”. This is proof of how important proper church funerals for township dwellers are because two participants are of the view that the church is supposed to bury every baptized person from the church instead of giving them stoep funerals regardless of their status and standing within the church. They regard the sacrament or rite of baptism as a prerequisite to church funerals, because they argue that baptism of people is publicity administered in church, and therefore the funeral service should enjoy the same status. I fully support this argument for precisely the same reasons. The Sacrament of baptism in the Anglican tradition is regarded as a public sacred rite and should always take place in the context of the Eucharistic service. No private baptism is allowed (either in hospital or at home)except in an emergency. This is only accepted if a person`s health is critically threatened by death but the

provision clearly states that, once the person has made a complete recovery, the newly baptized person should be publicly welcomed at church in the context of the Eucharist. This provision points to the importance of the public welcoming of the newly baptized person in church and perhaps should have gone on to stress the same importance for the person`s funeral.

Also of note is the argument posed by J. W. Worden that “ funeral services, if done correctly, be considered as the first step towards the healing process of bereaved people.”

It has already been demonstrated that, for township Christians “ if done correctly.” means a funeral service conducted by a priest in church accompanied by all the ceremonial rites like:

- Administration of holy communion
- Administering of full burial rites,
- The committal at the cemetery,(ALSO CONDUCTED BY A PRIEST).

Only If this is done will people accept that the funeral is dignified. The responses from participants in the church funeral group strengthens this argument. The research has proven that emotionally they are in a better space compared to those of stoep funerals; in other words, because of the dignified funeral service, their healing process has started started. Concerning the dignity of church funerals, most of the participants believe that the presence of a priest at a funeral ceremony brings dignity to that service. This demonstrates the value and importance people place on the ministry of the priest. This research is completely in support of the above arguments and concludes by suggesting that the township clergy should take seriously “the ministry of presence.” In support of the above concluding suggestions, I once more would like to refer to the figure of Moses in the Old Testament. His presence amongst the Israelites gave them hope especially in times of adversity. In the same manner the presence of Anglican priests should bring much needed hope and confidence to township mourners. Another point of importance that was raised by participant five (churchwardens) in chapter six has to do with the theological educational level of clergy. He is of the opinion that clergy should continually upgrade their qualifications. He is not alone in this statement,

because in the Anglican Prayer Book in the ordination service of priests, reference is made of further study as one of the many disciplines which we should accept. This is quite remarkable because in chapter six we have seen how Prof. James Dames argues that churches should train their clergy to become skilled spiritual and moral leaders for authentic witness and mission. Simultaneously we have seen how Emmanuel Obeng also in chapter six makes a serious call to clergy to receive training relevant to the needs and challenges of contemporary African society. He warns against semi – literate clergy. This research is completely in agreement with the above authors and thus recommends that the church should seriously examine the knowledge that is being imparted to pastors or clergy in training. Proper training of clergy for harvesting in the African mission field is essential, because this is our context and our training is supposed to be relevant to our context. Semi – literate clergy can only cause extensive damage to God`s people.

7.2.6. Summary of research findings in chapter six

The point of departure for this study was that stoep funerals is destructive and cause added pain to grieving families. In the literature that was surveyed, it was revealed that people should be given a chance to grieve first and should be assisted in the grieving process before one can even think of managing their mourning. From the responses gathered from participants, it was proven that stoep funeral is negative, destructive, unfair and dehumanizing: in fact, the church is wrong in thinking that stoep funerals are the answer in dealing with its defunct members. A model was therefore suggested to assist the church with regard to “fallen “or defunct members. It can be summarized as follows :

- Consider the statements of Marrone regarding Visible Death. The church needs to educate our people to demonstrate active support to the sick and dying and the church`s ministry team and appointed caregivers should commit themselves to journeying with the sick and dying as well as their immediate family. This is the ministry of presence which the study was talking about.
- When death occurs the family should be given the time to accept, and grasp fully what is happening so that they can grieve freely.

- The church should adopt an attitude of assisting family members in preparing for a dignified funeral by allowing them to make as many suggestions as possible at the time of the arrangements-in other words the church should be flexible and open to accommodating preferences of bereaved mourners in relation to the funeral service.
- The church should encourage her people to have as much contact, and spend as much time with the dead body as possible
- The church should create enough space and time for the grieving family to practise their mourning rituals and as far possible creatively allow for the blending of such rituals into the Anglican funeral liturgy.
- As far as possible the church should encourage Africans to mourn and grieve the way their culture expect them to as a means of respect to that culture. African pastoral care allows the elders to speak to the dead bodies during funeral rituals . This has a tremendous therapeutic value and significance for African grief stricken mourners. If this is allowed the funeral service will be seen as the starting point of the healing process, which will inevitably ease the mourning process.
- The church should journey with bereaved mourners. The leadership should not lose sight of the vital role that community involvement plays in African pastoral care. This fact was emphasized by the participants in expressing their gratitude for the support given them by fellow parishioners and community members. In addition the surveyed literature was in full support of community involvement in enabling people to progress to wholeness:
 - (i) African pastoral care pointed out the importance of nurturing, from the cradle to the grave, from conception to death, which is the responsibility of the entire community. It also argued in support for the observance of the African Ubuntu principles which shapes the holistic values of a village.
 - (ii) John Patton in his argument stressed the importance of the communal contextual paradigm in pastoral caring.

- (iii) Prof. Dames is concerned about western influence in African societies, as he points out the importance of community care in the quest for restoration and wholeness.
- (iv) Ian Hussey has developed a model of care for troubled people. Central to that model is his persuasive arguments for community involvement.
- (v) Wimberley`s model of care depends on narratives using appropriate biblical stories in which a troubled person can see his / her own life story, in order to move from need to wholeness. He argues that, for it this method to effective ritual (worship in small groups) is vital and necessary.
- (vi) Mucherera reminded us that people`s wounds occurred in the context of relationships in community; therefore he is of the opinion that it is only in the context of relationships in the community that healing can be achieved.

Having said the above, this research once more advocates that church funerals be conducted by the priest of the parish and the family being supported by fellow parishioners. This should be done for everyone, regardless of standing and status within the church.

Crucial to this model is the need for education, not only for parishioners but priest as well:

- Priests – Education in principles of African pastoral care.
- Parishioners – Continuous teachings on contextual issues affecting the life and ministry of the church.

7.3. Recommendation for future research

(a) This cremation of dead bodies was always a practice that Africans avoided at all costs. The question that another researcher could explore is

- In an African mind-set can cremations be considered to be a dignified way of disposing of dead bodies?

(b) This research has discovered that the lay leadership and clergy undermined the authority of the church through the stoep funeral practice. The authority exercised by the lay leadership is an, assumed authority while that of the clergy has been delegated to them. An issue that could be researched is : how authority in the church can be used to effect healing and wholeness in an African context.

(c) According to the African belief, if a person is not given a proper burial, it is unlikely that the person`s soul will rest. The soul is destined to become what the ancient Greeks called a “wandering ghost “. A question worthy of future research is : can Africans accept that the departed who have been punished by the church through stoep funerals be venerated as worthy ancestors ?

(d) At the time of the Reformation the Protestant reformers encouraged that funerals be conducted from the family home, in order to increase community involvement. The issue at stake is the unfortunate situation of Western influences on African practices. Another researcher could research the extent of such influences on the township church, with a particular focus on death and burials.

(e)The liturgy in the Anglican Prayer Book has a proud tradition and heritage, but unfortunately this research has exposed its shortcomings in an African context. The set services does not provide for the observance of African rituals and customs. Another researcher could review the set liturgical services and creatively combine appropriate African rituals and ceremonies with those that deal with

- Tombstone unveilings
- Cleansing ceremonies
- Baptisms
- House blessings, etc.

(f) There is an emerging youth culture in our communities which is perceived by community elders as offensive and disrespectful towards the deceased. The youth indulge in excessive celebrations after a funeral service which they call “after tears “. Another researcher could research this practice extensively.

APPENDIX A

Churchwardens

Knowledge about job function

How long have you been a ChurchWarden?

In your understanding, what do you think is the job description or function of a ChurchWarden?

Describe to me the relationship you have with:

Your Priest.

Other Council members.

Other Churchwardens

Parishioners.

How often do you have Council meetings and who is the Chairperson at such meetings?

Do you give feedback from meetings to the Parishioners? When and why?

Funerals and decisions from where they will be

What is your role when you hear about a death in your Parish?

Is it policy that you should be notified?

Who normally notifies you?

Who is supposed to notify you?

Who decides where the funeral will take place?

What factors about the deceased influence such decisions?

Is the funeral all about the deceased or the deceased and the bereaved family?

Who communicates decisions of the church to the family?

If the Priest decides about all of them, are you being notified and what is your response?

Stoep funerals and Church funerals

Why do some funerals go to church, while others are conducted from the family home?

What factors inform such decisions?

If the funeral is from the house, who is expected to do the funeral?

If the funeral is from the church, who is expected to do the funeral?

Is this church policy? If so, when did it start and by whom and why?

What in your understanding is the difference between policy, procedures and tradition?

What in your understanding is a dignified funeral?

Can you honestly say that stoep funerals are dignified? Why do say so?

Explain to me how a stoep funeral shows any respect to the deceased and his/her family.

Are you aware that stoep funerals carry with them a negative stigma about the deceased?

Do you think that stoep funerals is education or punishment?

Do you think that people like to have stoep funerals? Why do you say so?

Isn't it possible that stoep funerals cause the family more trauma, embarrassment, shame and pain? Motivate/ elaborate more.

What steps do you follow to heal them?

Don't you think it is time to stop this practice?

In your view, is this the right way African black people should care for one another?

Would you be comfortable and happy to have such a funeral for:

(a) yourself and (b) Close family members and why?

What stopped you from collecting the DG/Tithing from the deceased while he/she was still alive?

What prevented you or any other church leader from visiting the deceased while he/she was still alive?

Can you honestly say that you tried everything in your power to get the deceased to the church while she/he was still alive? What was the response?

APPENDIX B

Priests

Relationship with Churchwardens and Parish Council

What is your relationship with your Churchwardens?

What is your relationship with your Parish Council?

How often do you have council meetings and who is the Chairperson at such meetings?

Is feedback given to the Parishioners after such meetings and who does that?

Decisions about funerals

When a Parishioner dies, who normally notifies you?

Do you and your Churchwardens discuss where the funeral will take place?

Who makes the decisions – you or the Churchwardens?

What factors influence your decisions?

Who communicates the decision about the funeral to the bereaved family?

How do you as a Priest pastorally journey with bereaved families?

Is the funeral service all about the deceased, or are the bereaved family included?

Stoep funerals and Church funerals

Why are some funerals held in church and others conducted from the family home?

What factors inform such decisions?

If the funeral is from the home, who is expected to do the funeral?

If the funeral is from the church, who is expected to do the funeral?

Is this church policy? If so, when did it start and by whom was it started and why?

What in your understanding is the difference between policy, procedures and tradition?

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Can you honestly say that stoep funerals is dignified? Why do you say so?

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Do you think that stoep funerals is education or punishment?

Do you think that people like to have stoep funerals? Why do you say so?

Isn't it possible that stoep funerals causes the family more trauma, embarrassment, shame and pain? Why do you say so?

What steps do you follow to heal them?

Isn't it time to stop this practice?

In your view, is this the right way African black people should care for one another?

Would you be comfortable and happy to do such a funeral for: (a)

Yourself and (b) close family members and why?

What prevented you from collecting the DG/Tithing from the deceased while he/she was still alive?

What prevented you or any other church leader from visiting the deceased while he/she was still alive?

Can you honestly say that you tried everything in your power to get the deceased to the church while he/she was still alive? What was the response?

Comforting the bereaved

Can you say with certainty that lay ministers do not cause more damage at funerals and are perfectly equipped and trained to do a pastoral function?

How do you prepare your lay ministers to conduct funerals at home? Are they competent enough? Motivate.

What follow – up mechanisms do you employ to ensure that your lay ministers conduct a dignified funeral that will bring healing to the bereaved family?

What in your mind constitutes a dignified funeral?

The performing of the burial ritual rites by a priest with the incensing of the coffin and the sprinkling of it with Holy Water accompanied by the uttering of relevant set prayers is the climax of our funeral service in the Anglican Church. How then can we justify stoep funerals when lay ministers are not allowed to perform this ministry? Doesn't this show an element of injustice to the dead and their family who are exposed to stoep funerals?

After the burial, how do you attempt to effect healing in those in mourning?

Is it fair and right for some to have a church funeral and others a stoep funeral? If so why?

Isn't it time that such a practice should stop?

APPENDIX C

Mourners who have experienced stoep or tent funerals

Co – researcher`s relationship with the deceased

What is your relationship with the person who was buried?

When did the person die?

What was the cause of death?

How old was the person at that time?

How the church leadership was notified and their response

Who notified the church about the death?

To whom was the death reported?

What was the response?

Were you happy with the response? Explain

Did they give any explanation as to why the funeral was conducted from the home or church?

Who made the decision? How did you feel about the decision and why?

Deceased`s involvement and history with the church

For how long has the deceased been an Anglican?

Was the deceased baptized and confirmed as Anglican?

Was the deceased a regular worshipper in church?

Describe the involvement of the deceased in the activities of the church, such as prayer meetings, home cells, fundraisings.

How often did the deceased make financial contributions in the form of DG/Tithing to the church?

Pastoral care given to family up to the funeral service

After the church was notified of the death, who representing the church visited the family?

How often did they visit?

Was there any form of prayer session or service arranged by the church?

Did clergy from other churches visit and what contributions did they make?

How do you feel about the support or lack of support given to you by your own church?

Funeral service

Where did the funeral service take place?

Who conducted the service?

Can you remember any elements within the service that were of comfort to you?

Was the service well attended by worshippers from your own Parish?

Would you have preferred the service to be in church?

Why do you say so?

Did the funeral service help you to deal better with your loss? Why do you say so?

Follow up involvement of the church

After the burial, did the Priest or the churchwardens ever pay you a visit?

Are you still in mourning?

How long is your mourning period going to be?

In which way is the church assisting you in your mourning period?

Do you have any suggestions that will help the church to improve her care to other mourners?



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From the Bishop: The Rt. Revd Peter John Lee

To: Prof M Masango, University of Pretoria
Re: George Palmer proposed doctoral studies
Date: 11 October 2012

Dear Prof Masango,

This is to confirm that Archdeacon George Palmer has my permission, both to deploy some of his working hours towards his pursuit of doctoral studies beginning in 2013, and to interview clergy, churchwardens and parishioners in Anglican churches in the Vaal Triangle in the course of these studies.

Yours sincerely

Peter Lee
Bishop

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Research Topic: Stoep funerals – A Challenge to Pastoral Care

Purpose of Study: The holistic aim of this study is to present the township churches and clergy with a culturally appropriate model in handling delicate issues of death and dying of defunct church members (whether financially spiritually). By doing so, this study aims to suggest models that handle both the bereaved and the deceased with dignity and respect.

Procedures: The following are expected of you:

- To relate verbatim (in your own words) the extent of the church`s support or lack there off at a time when you were experiencing the death and burial of a loved one.
- In the re – telling of your story, guiding questions will be put to you that will enable you to re – live that experience.
- The researcher will afterwards analyze and interpret your report. The outcomes there off will be made available to you if you so wish.

Risks and Discomforts: The reflections of your painful experience may trigger emotional distress. In that case, the researcher and his supervisor will arrange a group session therapy to effect healing and closure.

Benefits: No promise is made of remuneration or reward in any form.

The aim of your participation is to contribute solely towards research and academics

Page 2 of Consent letter

Participant`s rights: your participation is voluntary and you may with draw at any time.

- Under no circumstances will your participation lead to sell – denigration, embarrassment, victimization or a violation of any ethical or moral principles or beliefs.

Confidentiality: Your anonymity as co – researcher or interviewee is guaranteed.

- All information given will be treated in strict confidence by the researcher and his supervisor.
- All original reports will be destroyed after completion of the thesis and therefore, under no circumstances can the University of Pretoria be held liable because of neglect by the researcher.

I fully understand the information as set out above. It has been thoroughly explained to me and I agree to participate in the research process.

Signature of participant:

Date:

Place:

Signature of researcher:

Date:

Place:

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