



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

# **Mentorship narratives in a local congregation:**

a postfoundational practical theological study

by

Zander van der Westhuizen

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**Supervisor: Prof JC Müller**

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## DECLARATION

I, Zander van der Westhuizen, declare that MENTORSHIP NARRATIVES IN A LOCAL CONGREGATION – A POSTFOUNDATIONAL PRACTICAL THEOLOGICAL STUDY, is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signature

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## SUMMARY

In this study narratives of mentorship are listened to and described from the local context of the Dutch Reformed Church Lynnwood. These narratives originate from the mentorship programme in the youth ministry of the congregation.

The research approach in this study flows from an epistemology based on narrative theory, social constructionism and a postfoundational approach. It is a practical theological study that aims to come to a greater understanding of these narratives. Based on the epistemology discussed here, I position myself within the framework of a postfoundational practical theology. Within this framework the praxis is the starting point of this research. This is local knowledge, interpreted and described by a community of co-researchers as informed by traditions of interpretation. The in-context experiences are interpreted and thickened through interdisciplinary investigation. This is done through a study of relevant literature as well as interdisciplinary discussion based on the theory of transversal rationality. At the end of this research process, alternative interpretations and suggestions are made that point beyond this local context and contribute to the larger field of mentorship.

The research process in this study is developed from the postfoundational practical theological positioning. Seven movements are used to listen to the narratives of the eight co-researchers participating in this study.

The narratives of the co-researchers lead to the identification of certain themes from their experiences that resonate with themes available to us in literature. The same themes also emerge from the interdisciplinary conversation in this study. These themes are critically discussed and certain questions are raised with regards to mentorship and the way mentorship is understood in different contexts.

The issue of language and how the various fields concerned with mentorship use language is discussed. It is clear from this study that the local context of mentorship in this study differs in certain aspects from other contexts where mentorship is practiced. The difference between coaching and mentorship is investigated and reflected upon.

I argue in the concluding chapter that from this context three basic foundation blocks for mentorship emerge. Firstly, the relationship forms the first basic building block of mentorship. Secondly, growth is the second basic building block and also the aim of mentorship. Although the way growth is understood may vary from context to context, it still forms one of the basic building blocks of mentoring relationships. The third basic building block is the fact that the mentorship relationship is reciprocal.

I suggest an approach to mentorship that emerged from the narratives of the local praxis studied. This approach is based on values. The following values are suggested as necessary in a meaningful mentorship programme or relationship: clarity, context, the ordinary, relationship, listening, adding value, reflection and ethics.

I conclude that mentorship is a landscape with many voices. The values suggested in this study can be used to construct the understanding of mentorship in a specific, local context. This is done with the aim to facilitate a meaningful mentorship programme or relationship.



## KEYWORDS

- Mentorship
- Narrative
- Postfoundationalism
- Practical Theology
- Interdisciplinarity
- Spirituality
- Social Constructionism
- Postmodernism
- Co-researchers
- Narrative research
- Value based approach to mentorship
- Coaching
- Youth ministry
- Local congregation

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