

# Chapter 2: THE NARRATIVE OF THE MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME

In this chapter we will start by looking at the context and the story of the mentorship programme in the Dutch Reformed Church Lynnwood. This will form the background for listening to the story of the ministry leader of the programme. In this chapter we will aim to tell the story of the programme and listen to it. In the next chapter we will listen to the narratives of the co-researchers.

## 1. DESCRIBING THE CONTEXT OF THE MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME

### 1.1 The Dutch Reformed Church Lynnwood

The Dutch Reformed Church Lynnwood is a congregation in the eastern suburb of Lynnwood, Pretoria, South Africa. The congregation has about 3 200 members. The members are mainly people staying in the local community of Lynnwood, but there are also people that attend this congregation that comes from other areas in the city.

The congregation describes itself as follows on its website ([www.lynnwoodng.org.za](http://www.lynnwoodng.org.za)):

Die een, Lynnwood bestaan sedert 1961 en sluit die woongebiede Lynnwood, Lynnwood Glen en Manor in en ongeveer 180 besoekpunte wat buite ons tradisionele grense woon, maar verkies om hier in te skakel. Dit is die Afrikaanse been van die gemeente met 'n goeie getalleverspreiding tussen oud en jonk en verskillende beroepsgroepe. Die gebouekompleks is geleë in Sussexlaan.

Andrew Murray, vroeër die anderstalige gemeente in Pretoria, behartig nou ons multikulturele bediening en die voertaal is Engels. Die gemeente groei wonderlik en dis 'n belewenis om Sondag lidmate uit verskillende kulturele agtergronde saam in die kerk te sien. Die kerkgebou en pastorie is in Whitestraat, Baileys Mucleneuk

As stated, the congregation has an Afrikaans ministry in Sussex Avenue in Lynnwood and an English ministry (called Andrew Murray) in White Street. We will focus in this study on the Afrikaans ministry.

The congregation has various services on a Sunday at the different buildings. Besides two small churches utilising the facilities and the English services at Andrew Murray, the following services are held at the Sussex building:

- Morning service (a more traditional service)
- Family service (in the morning)
- Children's service
- Evening service (aimed more at younger people)

The congregation is quite large and therefore some of the ministers focus on specific groups. The various groups and ministries are mostly linked with the services. The older congregation would be inclined to attend the morning services more than say the evening services. The families would be more inclined to attend the family service than the morning service.

There are three ministers that attend to the congregation based on a geographical approach and grouping. There is a minister for the English ministry and the family ministry. I am currently the minister for the youth ministry and focus most of my time and effort on the young people in high school and students in the congregation. I preach in the evening service most of the time.

The congregation makes an effort to combine various groups in the congregation by holding special worship services aimed at the whole congregation with certain occasions. There is still the element of separation between various groups, ministries and services attended by specific groups of people. This is important for our study of the mentorship programme.

## **1.2 The youth ministry in DRC Lynnwood**

The mentorship programme is specifically initiated from within the youth ministry in the congregation. Therefore I focus on it separately here.

The youth ministry has developed a lot in the congregation since the 1990s. A position was created for a full-time youth minister after a succession of part-time positions in 2001. I was called into this position.

The youth ministry has an office, which is utilised by a part-time youth worker. Other part-time staff includes a worship leader and someone helping with multi-media and marketing.

The youth ministry has a lot of volunteers and leaders that make up the core of the youth ministry and its various ministries. These include Sunday school teachers, outreach, camps, music, mentorship, funds, events, worship services, et cetera. The ministry has an executive committee that forms part of the church council.

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact number of young people in the congregation, because some only attend the services without being registered members. The estimated number of young people up to the age of 19 is 700. About half of that are in the high school section of the ministry and a growing number of students and young adults also form part of the young people in the congregation.

### **1.3 The young people in the congregation**

The young people in the congregation that undergo secondary education attend various high schools. Most of the attend Menlopark High School – a block away from the church building. Others attend public schools, some private schools and some do home schooling.

They are 90% upper class, young white people that live in the eastern parts of the city. These are mostly high-income areas where parents have white-collar jobs. The most of the young people will finish grade 12 and will either go overseas or obtain a tertiary education.

The young people in the congregation that finished their secondary education are mostly students at the University of Pretoria or other tertiary training institutions. They study full-time or part-time. These young people have the same profile and economic background than the high school learners and many have been in the congregation since school and are still involved in the ministry.

We will focus on various discourses about the context in a later chapter, but it is useful to say here that people would generally describe their lives in this context as busy, stressful and on the go. The young people generally would describe their context as one that puts a lot of pressure on them to perform academically and in other areas. They don't have a lot time to themselves, their families or extra activities.

This is a short preliminary description of the context of young people in the congregation.

## **2. THE BACKGROUND OF THE MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME AND ITS DEVELOPMENT**

### **2.1 The start of the programme**

The mentorship programme started on a formal basis in the youth ministry in 2005. This arose from the experience of training the youth ministry's leaders in the previous year. There were a lot of leaders and the ministry needed to find a way of maintaining a close relationship with the leaders during their year of being leaders in the youth ministry.

The first experiment in 2004 was to divide leaders into groups that each had one mentor. There was no formal training for the mentors and no structure as to how to maintain this relationship. The result was that the mentorship relationships gradually faded during the course of the year. There were too many leaders assigned to one mentor and the programme was not structured enough.

After this year we (myself and the leadership executive) decided to formalise the programme and appointed a ministry leader to run this ministry. My role changed and I became involved in the training side of the programme.

### **2.2 The development of the programme**

The programme started by focussing on the leaders in the youth ministry. These leaders were mostly Sunday school teachers and volunteers who organised the various aspects for the ministry like outreach or worship events.

The programme was made compulsory for each leader (there were about 25 leaders). Each leader had to choose his/her own mentor for the duration of their one-year period of leadership in the ministry. These mentors were trained and

guided during the course of the year. There were also meetings for feedback on the process during the year.

After the first year of mentorship in 2005, the programme had generated positive feedback from those involved. This feedback led to the expansion of the programme to include the grade 11 learners that were in their confirmation year at church. This year required from them that the grade 11s attended a weekly group or class with a minister, participated in a camp at the beginning of the year and eventually to meet all the requirements to participate in the confirmation ceremony, where young people could confess their faith at a service of the congregation.

In the past the requirements for confirmation included a conversation with a church council member at the end of the year. This church council member would then recommend to the church that this young person is ready to be confirmed.

The general feeling grew that this process was inadequate. In the first instance a stranger (in most of the cases) who had no prior relationship with this young person, had to conduct one conversation with the grade 11 learner. This was difficult for both parties. In the second place we sensed the need for a young person to also have a relationship with an individual during the course of the confirmation year. The classes they attended (of which the congregation has five, are attended by an average of 70 young people per annum) were in a group form. This was a positive experience for most of the young people, but it still left the gap of individual relationships.

The positive feedback of the mentorship programme, arising from the leadership group, led to the expansion of the programme to include the confirmees. The programme has basically been implemented in the same way since 2006.

The mentorship programme thus developed into having two legs: the leaders of the youth ministry and the confirmees in grade 11.

The programme initially included about 100 young people per annum, together with their respective mentors.

The programme has developed in various ways since 2005. There was growth in the way the mentors were trained, chosen, et cetera. There were also valuable lessons learned through the years that helped to improve the contents of the programme.

### **2.3 The contents of the programme**

My involvement with the programme had more to do with the contents and training of the mentors. The ministry leader focussed on the narratives, feedback and support of the mentors themselves.

The contents of the programme have always been set within an open, narrative approach to mentorship as opposed to the more modernistic “10 steps” of mentorship approaches. This is due to my own academic positioning on the one hand, but also due to the way mentors would comment on their experiences and what worked well for them through the various years.

The contents of the programme in 2005 also differ from the programme presented in 2008. The contents will also not be same in the future, as it develops with the programme and is constantly informed by the narratives of the mentors and mentees. The context also changes and therefore we adapt the training and the contents to correspond with it.

We will discuss mentorship and the way mentorship is understood extensively in later chapters. We will also look at relevant literature and the various ways that

mentorship is understood in various contexts. I do however deem it necessary to make a few comments on mentorship here as it is understood within the programme. This will help the reader to understand the way mentorship is locally interpreted in the narratives from the programme.

The programme defines mentorship as follows:

Mentorship in DRC Lynnwood is a year long, semi-structured process in which a mentor provides conversation along the journey of a mentee. The mentor was chosen by the mentee on the grounds of a potential trust relationship wherein reciprocal learning, guiding, the forming of meaning and the sharing of stories can take place. The mentorship takes place within the different contexts and guidelines of the program of the congregation. (DRC Lynnwood, Course material 2007) (Translated, Appendix C)

The following is clear from this definition:

- The mentorship takes place over the period of a year.
- It is not fully structured.
- The mentees choose their own mentors.
- The aim is guidance, mutual learning and the sharing of stories.
- There are more than one leg or context in the programme.

Mentorship in this context is mostly focused on young people who have the experience of mentorship for the first time. Some of the mentors also volunteer to participate in the programme without any previous experience. This context differs from other contexts, like for instance a company or a training institution.

We are not focussing in this study on the contents of the programme or training methods. As part of the background and to better describe the context of the

programme, I do however include excerpts of two documents here. The complete documents are included as appendixes.

The first document that helps to sketch the background of the programme in its 2008 form is the letter that explains the programme to the potential mentees and mentors. There are variations of this document (for the leadership group and the confirmation group), but it basically has the same contents. This is an excerpt of the letter for the confirmation group. The complete letter is inserted as Appendix B.

Ons het in Lynnwood nou al 'n hele paar tree gevorder in ons prosesse om jong leiers op te lei en te bemagtig as dissipel-makers in die Here se gemeente, Lynnwood. In ons eie ondervinding die afgelope paar jaar, asook die tendense in die ontwikkeling rondom jeugleierskap in die wêreld, is die waarde van mentorskap as 'n sleutel proses in hierdie ontwikkeling geïdentifiseer.

Die proses vanaf 2005 het in 2007 op die punt gekom dat ons die mentorskap program verbreed het om ook die graad 11's wat belydenis wil aflê in te sluit. Dit beteken dat elke jongmens wat belydenis wil aflê in 2009 nou reeds by hierdie program sal moet inskakel. In ons ondervinding is so 'n mentorskap verhouding net sinvol indien dit oor die minimum van 'n jaar loop. Die klem in hierdie mentorskap periode van 'n graad 11 sal veral lê by geestelike leiding en ondersteuning op die pad na sy/haar belydenis van geloof.

**Daarom verwag ons dat elke graad 11 wat in 2009 wil belydenis aflê 'n mentor sal identifiseer wat saam met hom/haar vir 'n jaar lank 'n pad kan stap van begeleiding.**

**Die inhoud van Mentorskap**



“Mentorskap” is natuurlik vandag ‘n redelik gelaaide term. Die konsep word soms vertaal met “coaching” en in die kerk funksioneer dit dikwels ook in die tradisie van “spiritual guidance”. Die inhoud wat hieraan verleen word kom dikwels uit die besigheidswêreld waar mentorskap ook al hoe meer gebruik word om individuele persone op te lei en te begelei om hulle bepaalde werk/taak/vaardigheid beter te verrig. Hierdie insette is belangrik, maar ons moet in die kerk waak daarteen om sommer net hierdie verstaan te kopiëer in ons denkwyses oor die onderwerp.

Daar is ook in die kerk konteks baie programme rondom mentorskap. Baie Amerikaanse skrywers publiseer boeke oor die onderwerp. Ek heg ook van hierdie inligting aan as agtergrond oor die onderwerp. Die probleem is dat hierdie programme dikwels werk met die “10 goue stappe” of die “19 wette” van mentorskap. Persoonlik hou ek nie van hierdie benadering nie, aangesien ons in ‘n nuwe, post-moderne konteks al baie lesse geleer het rondom regiede programme in die kerk. Maar die inligting is goeie agtergrond en help ‘n mens om jou eie verstaan van mentorskap te vorm.

### **Mentorskap in Lynnwood**

Die benadering wat ek dus graag wil volg in Lynnwood is ‘n meer oop en ongeforsende benadering, maar nie een wat ongestruktureerd funksioneer nie. Dit beteken prakties dat ons nie gesprekke so struktureer dat daar ‘n spesifieke agenda en program vir elke gesprek tussen ‘n mentor en ‘n leier is nie. Dit beteken ook nie dat daar geen kontrole of struktuur is waarbinne hierdie begeleiding plaasvind nie. Ons het in die program al geleer dat as ons nie bietjie rigting gee aan hierdie proses nie, dat dit na ‘n ruk wegraak in ons besige skedules.

Ek dink graag verhalend en metafories. So as ons sou saamdink oor hoe mentorskap neerslag vind in Lynnwood dan sal die volgende paar metafore dalk die proses beskryf:

- John Maxwell praat van 'n mentor as 'n **“enlarger”**. Dit is iemand wat met ander woorde 'n persoon help om sy/haar volle potensiaal te bereik as mens.
- John Maxwell praat ook van 'n mentor as iemand wat optree soos 'n **navigator**. 'n Navigator is dus iemand wat nie self bestuur nie, maar die een wat bestuur by staan en help. Dit veronderstel dus dat 'n mentor kan navigeer.
- Die ander mooi beeld is dié van 'n **reisgenoot**. Die graad 11 stap sy/haar eie pad. Maar om hierdie pad te stap het sy/hy iemand nodig wat vir 'n tyd lank geselskap verleen langs hierdie pad. Iemand wat die pad ken en miskien kan dien as 'n gids, 'n vriend of net iemand wat ondersteun en luister.

Binne hierdie paar metafore word die rol van 'n mentor goed beskryf. Weet ook dat die graad 11 nie noodwendig die enigste een is wat uit hierdie verhouding kan groei en leer nie – waarskynlik sal die mentor ook baie leer by die graad 11.

### **Wie kan 'n mentor wees?**

Verskieslik moet 'n mentor iemand wees wat kan optree as 'n “enlarger”, navigator en 'n reisgenoot. Die persoon moet dus iemand wees wat al 'n entjie pad gestap het, volwasse is in sy/haar verhouding met die Here en voel hy/sy kan die graad 11 bystaan. Die mentor moet ook iemand wees wat 'n verhouding met die Here **uitleef** en bereid is om 'n graad 11 te ondersteun nie net deur gesprekke nie, maar ook deur gebed.



Ons sou dus aanbeveel dat veral die graad 11's iemand moet vra wat ouer is om hulle mentor te wees. Die belangrike is wel dat die graad 11 gemaklik moet wees met die persoon en bereid sal wees om saam met die persoon 'n pad te stap. In ons leer uit die program die afgelope paar jaar beveel ons aan dat jongmense wat nog in die huis bly, twee keer dink voor hulle 'n ouer vra as mentor. Ouers tree reeds op as mentors en ouers vertel dat dit moeilik vir hulle is om rolle te onderskei by die huis.

Dit gebeur ook dat jongmense nie betyds by die mentorskap program inskakel nie, en dan ma of pa vra as 'n vinnige uitweg twv belydenisaflegging. Maar daar is verhale waar ouer/kinder mentor verhoudings positief gewerk het.

'n Paar gedagtes dan oor wie kan mentors wees:

- Baie jongmense kies 'n ander familielid soos 'n ouer broer of suster, tannie of oom.
- Party jongmense kies onderwysers, predikante of ander persone wat 'n rol in hulle lewe speel.
- Jongmense kan selfs studente of vriende kies, maar nie van die teenoorgestelde geslag nie. Ons vind dit help in die geval van jonger persone om eerder iemand van dieselfde geslag te kies.

### **Hoe kies 'n graad 11 'n mentor?**

Elke graad 11 kan dus self hulle eie mentor kies. Ons het gevoel dat as ons sekere persone af forseer op jongmense om hulle mentors te wees, dan moedig dit nie noodwendig 'n oop verhouding aan nie.

In die volgende paar weke tot die **2de Maart 2008** het graad 11's dus kans om mooi te dink en te gesels oor wie hulle mentor kan wees. Die betrokke predikant



in wie se groep die graad 11, moet die mentor-keuse goedkeur. As die predikant gelukkig is oor die jongmens se keuse word die mentor deel van ons program.

Indien 'n graad 11 wel sukkel hiermee en nie weet wie hy/sy graag sou wou vra nie, dan kan hulle kom gesels en ek sal help om 'n geskikte persoon te kies.

The second document excerpt that I include here is the table of contents from the training manual of the programme. The whole manual is included as Appendix C.

## **INHOUDSOPGAWE**

DEEL 1	AGTERGOND
DEEL 2	WAT IS MENTORSKAP?
DEEL 3	ONS BASIESE VERTREK PUNTE
DEEL 4	JY IS GEKIES!
DEEL 5	EIENSKAPPE VAN 'N GOEIE MENTOR
DEEL 6	MULTIMODEL MENTORSKAP
DEEL 7	HOE HANTEER EK 'N GESPREK?
DEEL 8	INHOUD VAN GESPREKKE?
DEEL 9	WAT HET ONS GELEER IN DIE VERLEDE?
DEEL 10	WAT VERWAG LYNNWOOD VAN DIE MENTORS?

The contents has also been informed by the narratives of the programme during the few years that it has been implemented. In listening to the narratives of the ministry leader and the co-researchers we will also hear the reflections on the contents of the programme and the various ways the programme has developed

up to the present. We will also be critical of the programme and try and come to a better understanding of the unheard narratives.

## **2.4 The context of confirmation in the Dutch Reformed Church**

Although the programme has more than one leg, the strongest leg of the programme with the most participants, is the confirmation year leg. Most of the co-researchers come from this leg of the programme and many of the narratives referred to within Hanlie's narrative relate to this part of the programme. Therefore I choose to make a few background comments on the practice of confirmation in the Dutch Reformed Church to assist the reader in understanding the context better.

Within reformed theology a child is taken to be baptised by the parents of the child when he or she is small. During the baptism the parents promise to teach and model the love of God to this child as he or she grows up. During this time each young person can come to their own understanding of God's love and redemption for them and choose to publically declare their faith and their wish to become part of a congregation of their own accord. Within the reformed tradition and the South African context this is done at a confirmation ceremony in a church service, usually at the end of grade eleven (or at seventeen years of age).

During childhood, children attend Sunday school at church. Here they learn more about faith and the Bible. In the final year of Sunday school (during grade eleven) young people usually attend confirmation classes before the confirmation ceremony. A minister usually conducts these classes. The classes aim at helping young people in this final year to become confirmed members of a congregation.

At the end of such a year, the church council conducts interviews with the confirmees to determine if they are ready to be confirmed.

The mentorship programme of Lynnwood takes place partly within this period in which the young people attend confirmation class. The mentors replace the interviews of the church council with the development of a year long relationship.

### **3. THE NARRATIVE OF HANLIE BEZUIDENHOUT**

Hanlie Bezuidenhout is a mother of two sons and is married to Andre. She is currently in her fifties and lives in Lynnwood, Pretoria. Hanlie has been involved in the congregation for many years and has specifically been involved in the youth ministry. Since 2005, Hanlie has been the ministry leader of the mentorship programme. She has a background in psychology and education, but is currently working as a personal assistant to the owner of a project management company working in construction.

#### **3.1 Deciding to listen to the narrative of the ministry leader**

I was very aware of the fact that I have been part of the programme and its history from the beginning. I had to be very clear on my position as the pastor of the programme on the one hand and a researcher on the other. Within the research approach that I chose it is possible to do research with integrity by describing one's own position as researcher clearly and making decisions that would enhance the integrity of the research and my own position.

For this reason I chose to listen specifically to Hanlie's narrative as the narrative of the programme. The programme has been running for a few years and Hanlie

has been closely involved with the programme and specifically with the narratives from the mentors and mentees from the start. I focus on the training.

The programme has had many participants since its inception and it is an impossible task to include all of these narratives. The groups of the past three years have been aware of the research and have given permission for me to use the group discussions of the past three years in the research. They understand that Hanlie plays an integral part in the process and we agreed that specific narratives (where necessary) would require individual consent if used.

We do not claim however that Hanlie's narrative is the narrative of the programme or the group in a universal sense. Within our positioning in this study, Hanlie's narrative is her own. It is told with subjective integrity, in the same way as my own research narrative. But it doesn't claim to be universal in the sense that it includes the universal or common narrative of the group. It will however be naïve not to acknowledge the group as the informants of Hanlie's narrative over the past years.

Hanlie is therefore seen as one of the co-researchers in this study. We will listen to her story as the first step in hearing the narratives of mentorship from this context.

### **3.2 Deciding to listen to the narrative of the programme**

I deem it necessary to make a few comments on the decision to tell the narrative of the programme by means of listening to Hanlie.

As I explained in the first chapter, Ricoeur speaks about narratives as *discordant concordance*. There are various elements that form the synthesis of the narrative or the plot. They are all related and at once separate.

The narrative of the programme is in “*discordant concordance*” with the narratives of the co-researchers. In the third chapter I will tell the narratives of the four pairs of co-researchers. These are very specific narratives. I thought it important in some way to also tell the narratives arising from the programme over the past few years. The aim is to make a thick description of the narratives of mentorship in Lynnwood. I think the narrative of the programme would help to reach this aim.

The narratives come to the reader in two circles: the broader circle of the programme, through the narrative of Hanlie; and the narrower circle with the narratives of the co-researchers in the third chapter.

### **3.3 How did I listen to Hanlie’s narrative?**

There were three ways in which I listened to the narrative of Hanlie. The first was informal conversations where we discussed the narratives and themes from the programme. There were numerous of these throughout the period of the research. I made use of my own notes in this regard.

The second way was in the form of two formal interviews, which I conducted with Hanlie. One of these interviews was audio recorded and transcribed. For the other I used process notes.

Thirdly, I sent the transcribed interview back to Hanlie and asked her to comment on it herself. I also sent some of my reflections on her narrative back to her as a way of including her in the interpretation of the narrative and keeping her informed as my co-researcher.

Hanlie also took part in the group reflection on the narratives of all the co-researchers and was part of the conclusions as a whole. This is described in chapter 4.

### 3.4 Excerpts from an interview with Hanlie

I decided to insert excerpts from the transcribed interview with Hanlie here as a starting point. This way we can listen to her narrative in her own words. It is clear that there have been conversations prior to this interview and themes that have come out of the programme, is referred to again.

17	Z <sup>1</sup>	Do you think the program, has generated more stories since the beginning? When parents phone, are there more or different stories as opposed to three years ago? Are there more stories or less?
18	H <sup>2</sup>	It is the same stories, but there are more. There is more involvement, maybe because we are better organized. Or we approach it differently. Initially we started and let go. Now we know that we have learned a lot of things in the process and therefore we also send out different information. In other words, questions come back. There always have been questions and involvement, but I think at this stage the people realize the seriousness of the subject and they have more info to work with.
23	Z	If you can say from your side – one of the themes from the program is a lot of structure vs. no structure in terms of the program. What is your experience with this?
24	H	I am more from the old school. You think more - no structure. I don't think it works. I think the people want a bit of structure. So I think there needs to be structure, but not too rigid. And then every person can adjust it, so that it fits his/her personality, circumstances and situation. They need the structure to fall back on. From the feedback I see they ask for more structure.
25	Z	What do they mean with structure?

<sup>1</sup> Z - Zander

<sup>2</sup> H - Hanlie

26	H	They want more themes for conversations. They ask for example at least six. There was one guy who asked for six. I feel that some of the mentors are not creative enough to take a book or a theme or story. It must just be something that gets them going. It doesn't have to be the whole thing photocopied. It can be a magazine article. It's almost enough. It gives an idea. Then they can find a magazine article themselves. They want ideas. So maybe we must give them more ideas and photocopy a few things. Simple things like watching a movie, or any other ideas. That is the one thing. The other thing is, they struggle to give the feedback, but they say if they had to give more feedback, they will be forced to see the child more. So if they almost had to give feedback every month or two months, then you must see the child. Two months cannot pass without seeing the child. So it's the ideas, the feedback and the meetings.
27	Z	What do you think are the things that make the mentorship relationship work or not?
28	H	I think personally if you make time, it will work. If there are problems or issues you will be able to sort them out with time.
29	Z	Do you hear the "time thing" a lot?
30	H	Yes, you will be able to build the relationship within time. In other words, if the relationship is right time-wise, all the other stuff will be easy. But if you only see the child once every three months, then it's almost again a church council situation. Here you see the uncle, and then you have to pour out your heart with stories of the past three months. It's better than nothing, but on the one hand (we are sometimes negative about the children choosing parents) this is why they choose parents, because they see each other a lot more informally. It is not planned.
31	Z	What do you think is the common idea about time in our context, with children?
32	H	There is little time, and the children are very busy, but I think the

		<p>children...I don't know. I always feel you can make time for something that is important, but I don't know if the children always realize how important it is. If they wanted to make time for it, they will fit it in at weird times. And I think that most of the mentors are available to adjust to the the children. A child lives a bit in compartments. You are now at school and now you are too busy to think about anything else. Its holiday and it is rugby tour...now it's just the tour. While there are opportunities in between. But the children must somehow be led to understand this. One thing, I think we can change, is we leave the children alone too much. We must have feedback from the children. At least twice a year they must give feedback to someone, so that the whole responsibility is not only with the mentor. The children must realize that they must make it easier for the mentor. They must understand the value of it.</p>
33	Z	There are stories of mentors that did create time in creative ways?
34	H	<p>It is stuff like when they do not get around to see the children; they are forced to think of alternative means to get to the children. They sms. There is for example a mentor who sends an sms to the child every morning. This meant a lot to the child. Because in that sms the mentor sometimes only says how it goes with him as the mentor and the child knows at least this. I know of one time the mentor was overseas, and he did not send an sms while he was on the plane. And the child worried about it the whole day. Because it was something he was used to. It was something nice they told us about in the feedback. It was an easy thing for the mentor to do. And then there is stuff like the mentor who went running with the child, because the child was an athlete. And the mentor decided to go running with the mentee. I think initially the child probably didn't like it, but with time it worked. Mentors also realized that you don't always have to speak, you can just do something. You can also go to the movies. One mentor wrote that he couldn't see the child much, and he had to go somewhere for the day</p>

		and asked the child to drive with him . And the child did. This was a precious day. It wasn't a 'mentor appointment', it was just a drive together, and they chatted along the way.
35	Z	What did you learn about stuff like roles: parents/no parents, brothers/sisters, all the choices the children make about who are their mentors? Some are family, some not etc.
36	H	It depends from person to person. Something that is interesting to me is, and we don't say much about it during training, is brothers and sisters. I think some of the children choose brothers and sisters because it is the easiest. There are brothers and sisters that do absolutely nothing. I don't think they understand the seriousness of the subject. Or they think they are there in any case . I don't know if it is maybe because they are a bit young and do not really understand what it is about, and do not realize I can actually make a big difference in my brother's life. But then there are brothers and sisters, which work fantastically. Where the brother or sister realizes, I've got a job and I am going to do it well. It is not a general thing. The parents work because we tell them it is not going to work. Then they are motivated to show that it will work. Some of the parents are different. There was one dad who came to the first session of the training and decided, no. And in the next session he brought his replacement. He said he realized that there could be more value added to his child's life with someone else as a mentor. This is a father who thinks, he realized (not that he was going to be a bad mentor for the child) but that he will be a mentor in any case to the child. But he wants to add another dimension for the child, and therefore he brought a replacement
37	Z	So what will be the stories behind the program's opinion that says: "be careful for parents"?
38	H	Mainly, because the children are the age that they are and the children don't make decision on their own, but with the parents. So the parents have too much of an input in the child's life. So maybe when they are

		older and the parent gives advice it will be different. But because they are at school, the parents are too involved and involved with the everyday emotions.
39	Z	Does it work differently with the students in the program?
40	H	I think so. The parents have the benefit of time. They are with the children more. With the students they aren't always in the home anymore. So there is a bit of distance. The parents know the children better, but maybe too well. There are some things the child doesn't want to tell the parents. Otherwise it stays an issue in the house. If I told my mom everything that happened at school, the mom won't listen and leave it. It will become a bigger issue. Or the mom will take action. So some things you just leave.
41	Z	Are there any marginalized stories in the program? Stories we don't hear?
42	H	There are obviously stories we don't hear. And in a way I think the mentors write what we want to hear. But the feedback is there and they are checked up, so if I don't hear anything from them I contact them. But obviously the mentor doesn't tell me everything, so things happen that we don't hear. But does it matter?
43	Z	Do you think we hear more stories of the relationships where it works than stories where relationships don't work?
44	H	Not necessarily. There are many mentors that phone and say they are worried, or it doesn't work. I think the mentors are honest. Like the one saying it doesn't work with her grandchild. I think it was difficult for her to admit. I think it was difficult to admit it to herself. But she did. Then there are mentors that have issues in their own lives, and they are honest about it. They would say they are now worried that, "I don't do enough or do it like I should, because at the moment it is going very bad in my own life". "It doesn't have anything to do with the child, but I don't want to do something wrong towards her, because I am very busy with this". Or, "I am busy with a divorce" or so on. They will say it.

		Because they want it to work for the child. But I think if a mentor is prepared to admit that, they will go to a lot of trouble for the child's sake.
45	Z	You hear more the story of the mentor than the story of the child?
46	H	I never speak to the children. That is why I feel it is a gap. But maybe the pastors do it? You say to the children how they must select etc. I think the pastors must attend the training, so that they can know what it is all about. Because if they ask us about choosing a mentor, they will get a different answer to when they ask one of the pastors. Because they are not so involved.
47	Z	There are two stories we don't hear directly: that of the pastors taking the classes and the stories of the children?
48	H	We hear their stories via the mentors. But I think we can do more about it. We have in the past had a feedback session with the mentors and the children. That was good. The practical thing is that there are too many and that is why I think we should involve the pastors. They must take their group's feedback. Then the pastors can give feedback to us.
49	Z	What do you think is people's general idea about mentorship?
50	H	I think, different to what we want it to be. I think they think it is a 60 years old man that guides and gives advice to a young person. And very specific advice. That is why some of our mentors are worried, because they feel they don't know enough or they need to be trained specifically to do it. They don't realize that the journey of their life is enough. They think you must be Einstein.
51	Z	Where does this idea come from?
52	H	I don't know.
53	Z	Is it a general idea in society that the older you are the more you know?
54	H	Maybe it is so from history. And because in the past it wasn't part of a spiritual guidance, it was always more about learning something,

		maybe like in a business environment or life advice. In the church context, people are anxious to be chosen, because they think they must know everything about the Bible. They must be pastors. They don't feel comfortable with that. Because there is always someone else who knows more or better. They are afraid they must know the catechisms or something.
55	Z	What do you think you yourself have learned about mentorship?
56	H	(Laugh) I think I have learned everything together with everyone else and that things don't always go as you think it will. There are a lot of surprises. If you see two together, then you think – this is not going to work. And then they surprise you and it works fantastically. Others you think will work together because everything is right, don't. So I think it has to do with personalities. I think it is important how you choose. Those who thought about it, they work. Those who grab someone just before the deadline, works sometimes and sometimes not. I have learned that, as with anything in life, what you put into it, is what you get out, from both sides. If you put effort into it, it will work. And if you don't, it won't work.

### 3.5 Hanlie's reflection on her narrative

I asked Hanlie to reflect with me on her narrative and look at the interview again. This is her reflection in her own words.

#### The process

The road travelled, the process, was very interesting. It kept us on our toes. We adapted, changed certain things, tried new things and learned a lot in the process. We will however probably never sit back and say: "This is the way it should be done." It remains a dynamic process, mainly because people and personalities are involved and new ideas and individual stories are constantly added.

## **Expectations and surprises**

All the role-players enter into this relationship with certain expectations. It was interesting to see how most of them were pleasantly surprised at the way in which the relationship developed. The Grade 11s mostly entered the relationship without much expectation – it was just another thing that they had to do. Along the way, they realised the value of ‘someone who cares’ in their lives and blossomed in the process. The mentors entered with specific ideas and often realised that these pre-conceived ideas are not what it is all about. They often think they have to teach the child something and that they know all the answers. It was always good to hear from mentors how they learned a lot from the children and realised that it was all about a two-way relationship. The ministry leaders also had expectations of how certain relationships would work, but were often surprised when things proceeded differently. It made us realise that everyone would write their own narrative. Other people cannot write it for you! The narrative will then be true and better than expected.

Another thing that could not be predicted was which mentor would work best in the relationship: a parent, sibling, family member, friend, teacher or neighbour. Once again we were surprised by the combinations that worked but we could never identify specific guidelines. The combinations that worked were those that the participants decided to make it work. They tried harder, worked harder at the relationship and realised the value of growing and learning together. The combinations that didn’t work well were where one or both of the parties didn’t go to enough trouble to make it work.

## **Time and creativity**

As with most things in life we realised that if you make time for something, you will reap the benefits. Grade 11s are exceptionally busy and mentors often struggle to make appointments. When they do however persevere and manage

to see the mentees, it invariably works! Quantity is also just as important as quality. You cannot see someone every three months and expect a relationship to grow. Mentees should experience that the mentor is always available and 'present', whether you see each other often or not.

As mentioned in the interview, creativity is important because of the time factor and because of the stage of their lives the mentees are at. They like change, unpredictability, surprises, et cetera. They are also technically oriented, so mentors should use all the technical aids such as sms, email, facebook, et cetera to build the relationship.

### **In summary**

I realised that human nature and a mix of personalities in the mentoring process will guarantee:

- unexpected surprises
- a host of heart-warming stories
- that it will work if you are serious about making it work
- that every effort you put into a relationship, will be rewarded
- that you will be surprised from whom you can learn something in life
- that mentors who believe in the potential of their mentees, will help them to realise it!

### **3.6 My notes from conversations with Hanlie**

During various informal conversations with Hanlie there were a few things that I made notes of concerning her narrative with the mentorship programme.

Hanlie has a lot of contact with the mentors. They phone her, discuss things with her and always ask for advice. I picked this up from the mentors as well as from the examples she uses in training. This is not the case with me. I stand in front

of the group and give training, but in terms of feedback and narratives, Hanlie is the one that in the front seat. This is important for me as researcher, because it strengthens her narrative as the one person involved in the programme that would help us to listen to the narratives of mentorship coming from the programme.

Another important fact about Hanlie is that she knows the community well and also knows a lot of people in the community. In many cases Hanlie and the mentors know one another or at least have a nodding acquaintance.

Many of our conversations were about the contents of the training and how the programme worked. We had a lot of conversations on how the contents could be structured better, what we should do differently in the next year, what some mentors and children said and how feedback would work. This meant that naturally a lot of the contents of Hanlie's narrative had to do with the mechanics of the programme as well.

Hanlie made a lot of reference to the feedback she got per email. In the programme there is feedback required from the mentors on set times during the course of the year. This is done on paper, either by email or on hard copy. The mentors don't always give feedback in the same way. Some of the mentors would only write a short sentence that says something like "it is going well, thank you" with their name. Others would write pages and pages of feedback, or include drawings or other creative ways to give feedback.

Hanlie noted that she was always worried about some of the feedback. The short feedbacks could be an indication that not much was going on within the mentorship relationship, hence the short feedback. Others that gave long feedback often wrote more about themselves than about the mentorship relationship. Little was said about their meetings. The programme doesn't ask for feedback on the contents of discussions between mentors and mentees. This is specifically the case so that the mentees do not get the impression

that their conversations are not confidential. The programme asks only for feedback on the process. Hanlie says that often in the feedback this kind of specific feedback lacks. She says that she would get the impression in some cases that the mentors deal more with their own issues during the programme and write about it in the feedback or say something about their own issues over the phone, than actually listening to the mentee and his or her problems.

I got the impression in my conversations with Hanlie that she has the ability to take the feedback of all the different years and group it together in her mind to identify general themes from the narratives. She would often use examples from conversations and feedback specifically, but more often I would hear her speak in general terms.

### **3.7 Reflection on Hanlie's narrative**

I decided to have a preliminary reflection after each narrative to help us along the road of describing and developing the overall research narrative. The aim of this research is to come to a greater understanding about mentorship in the context of the Lynnwood congregation. Keeping this in mind, I will reflect on the narratives by looking at certain themes and aspects of Hanlie's narrative that became evident for both of us from the conversations and written collaboration. I will also try and formulate good questions that arise from Hanlie's narrative that might help us later in the research process. This reflection is not only based on the excerpt that is given in this section from interviews, but on all the material that I have available.

I list various themes and give a short reflection about each of them.

#### **The aim of the programme**

While listening to Hanlie's story on the start of the programme, I deduced that she said that the aim of the mentorship programme was to "guide and help" the leaders at first and later the confirmees. This is an important aspect of the meaning attached to the programme in the congregation. The question could be asked if this is really where the meaning of the programme lies? Is there other meanings within the narratives from the mentors and mentees that surprise us? And if this is the aim of the programme, has it been reached?

## **Discourses**

I went through a lot of my notes and conversations and as I was going through them, I circled discourses that Hanlie mentioned or touched on. I found that there were quite a few. I list them here with a short description of each:

### ***Confirmation***

There are certain ideas about confirmation in the Dutch Reformed Church that comes to light from the narratives. We picked this up initially when the programme started. The idea that a young person had to go to a church council member for an interview in order to obtain a blessing to take part in confirmation was challenged and replaced by the programme. There is still the idea of evaluation that is a part of the confirmation leg of the mentorship programme, although it has now been significantly downplayed.

Within the deconstruction approach there is a lot to deconstruct here. Who decides if a young person is fit to be confirmed? Who is in power in this relationship and who is not? Why do young people still do confirmation? What role does the programme play in changing the general ideas about confirmation?

### ***Who qualifies to be a good mentor?***

Hanlie tells about the one mentor who asked in her feedback that the mentors be screened before they were chosen to be a mentor. She felt that Hanlie didn't know her at all and trusted her with a mentee. She felt there were other mentors who were not fit to be mentors because they had too many problems themselves.

This poses the question of who is fit to be a mentor. Who has bigger or smaller problems? How do you decide on who were fit to be mentors? Who decides? What are the general ideas about mentors and what makes them fit to be mentors?

### ***Ideas about structure***

Hanlie says in her one interview that she prefers more structure because she is a bit more "old school" than me (who prefers less structure). The whole theme about a lot of structure (which refers to prescribed contents for mentorship conversations in the programme) against having very little or no structure is a prominent theme in the programme. This poses questions like – What is meant by structure? How do you balance structure in a programme? Is structure 'old-school' and no structure 'new-school'? What are the ideas people have about structure and how does it influence the concept of how a mentorship relationship should work?

### ***The availability of time***

It seems that from own experience and Hanlie's narrative that the general idea in this community is that young people (and adults) are very busy people. Time is of the essence and only important things are given time in their lives. People are too busy for certain things, and school and related activities take up a lot of time. The question remains where the religious or church should fit in? Are

church and the programmes of the church seen as just another thing that needs to be fitted in? Are the young people really so busy or is it a certain cultural paradigm of the community?

### ***Living compartmental lives***

Another interesting comment from Hanlie that I want to pick up on is her comment that she thinks young people live in compartments. School, family and church are all compartmented into their lives. This also brings questions to the fore. How do the young people in this community think about their lives? Where do church and religion fit in? What about a holistic paradigm where everything in life is integrated? What meaning lies in a compartmental approach to life? Is this true of all young people in this community? What is the influence of this on the mentorship programme?

### ***Mentorship***

This is one of the most important discourses we want to look at during this study – how people think about mentorship. Hanlie says that she thinks the people’s ideas regarding the programme differ. Many people live with the idea that mentorship is about an older person (who is wise and have all the answers) who gives a younger person guidance and advice. The whole idea of mentorship then centres around advice and input from the mentor to the mentee. The programme uses the metaphor of partners or people together on a journey. In this approach the mentor is not the “expert” and the mentee the “one who needs guidance”. Both influence one another. Both have a life’s journey behind them.

But it seems from Hanlie’s narrative that some people do have the idea that mentorship is only about giving advice to a young person.

The question then arises whose idea about mentorship is correct – the programme or the general idea of the people in the programme? Does everybody think the same way? Are there more than two ideas about mentorship? What do we learn from these ideas?

### ***Church***

Another interesting theme or discourse that we pick up from Hanlie's narrative, is the ideas people have about church, namely how church is perceived, what church is about. This links with the ideas about confirmation and the way the church council plays a role.

The other aspect about church that we hear from the narratives of the programme is that the mentorship programme is a church programme, and needs to be fitted in according to their priorities and time. This links with the comments on the compartmental lives some of the children live. The programme is compulsory for the confirmees especially. This can also bring about a certain association with the church.

### **Choosing a mentor**

A lot of the conversations and contact Hanlie has with the mentors and the children focus on the start of the programme each year. The process of choosing a mentor is very important. This sparks a lot of conversation in some houses as some of the stories proved. It also seems to determine a lot of the success of the relationship. Again here are also some general ideas on various relationships. There are comments on brothers and sisters, parents being mentors and other relatives. There are some relationships that work and others that don't. We hear the narrative about the granny who struggled to connect to her granddaughter since she started to talk about spiritual topics.

In any mentorship programme it seems that the choosing of a mentor is a central process that needs a lot of attention and guidance. This programme in Lynnwood started out by assigning a mentor to a leader. This proved unsuccessful in this context and it seemed that switching to having the children and leaders choose their own mentor made a difference in how the programme was experienced.

We will have to listen some more to the co-researchers' narratives concerning this topic.

## **Growth**

One thing that I hear a lot while listening to Hanlie's narrative is that there has been a lot of growth and development in the programme up to now. The programme is not the same in terms of contents and structure as it started out. Hanlie says that they have learned a lot in the few years that programme has been running and changes have been made from lessons learned. It seems that the programme draws a lot on its own experiences, more than just merely copying from another mentorship programme or just simply taking a prescribed course and implementing it. I see the growth in Hanlie's own narrative as well and in the way she handles herself in the programme.

In my involvement with the programme, my own experiences (that are linked to this research) also grew. I wanted to make sure that the programme and its contents are contextual and local to Lynnwood. The programme evolves from the narratives and input of each mentor and group every year. In a sense the programme learns from itself.

This is important also for my own understanding of the research. I want to listen to the narrative of this local and contextual programme. This is the moment of praxis. And this would hopefully point beyond the local.

## **Feedback**

Feedback seems to play an important role in the narrative of Hanlie. Feedback helps the mentors to work towards some kind of a deadline. It also gives them the opportunity at these feedback sessions to get some input from some of the other mentors. These sessions have meant a lot to them in the past and they always ask for more of these sessions.

Most of the information Hanlie bases her ideas and experience on either come from the written feedback or the feedback in groups or sessions. There is also the feedback she gets over the phone from a mentor or an informal conversation after a church service. The feedback is crucial in this sense for the programme and also for getting a general idea about the narratives and relationships in the programme.

To me it seems clear that feedback is also something a programme can't do without. It informs the narratives and it informs the programme in the future. This feedback needs to be process orientated and not contents orientated. This way the mentees can feel safe and know that the things they discuss with their mentors are confidential.

## **Time**

Another theme that arises a lot from Hanlie's narrative and that we will be on the lookout for during the discussion of the other narratives, are the role that time plays in building a mentorship relationship. It seems that time is more of a determining factor for a meaningful mentorship relationship than for instance the relation to the mentor (like parents or relatives, different generations, et cetera) or training. The more time is spent together in building the relationship, the more it builds the relationship, which leads to a more meaningful experience.

## **The narratives we don't listen to enough**

Hanlie mentioned that she didn't listen enough to the stories of the children. She asked if the pastors who had weekly meetings with the confirmees couldn't listen to the stories of the children themselves about the mentorship. She didn't mention listening to the leaders in the programme. This might be a marginalised narrative.

I initially thought that maybe she did not hear a lot of stories of where the mentorship did not work. But it seems that she does. The programme has ways of telling the narrative of the mentorship relationships where there is not much happening. Mentors who don't give feedback or do not show up for any of the meetings also tell a narrative by their absence. The reasons for their absence are sometimes unknown, but most phone or make excuses. Some even say directly that they are struggling and are not getting around to it.

In the narrative approach we are always sensitive to also listen to the untold stories or ask questions about the marginalised stories. Why are they marginalised? Who gains by keeping them marginalised?

This is why it is important to me to ask these questions about the untold stories and keep on reflecting on them. This is a specific question I will ask the co-researchers as well.

## **Meaning within the narratives of the programme**

In narrative therapy one listens to narratives with the quest to find meaning in them. As a researcher I think my process is similar. The purpose is different. In research we are trying to come to a greater understanding about certain stories

or subjects. But in the process of listening to stories there will always be meaning in the stories.

In listening to Hanlie's narrative this has grown in my mind. I want to reflect on this specifically. Wherein lies the meaning – the meaning in the narratives arising from the programme? What kind of meaning do mentors and mentees find in their relationships? What meaning do they ascribe to the programme? What have they experienced? What do these narratives tell us?

These are the kind of questions that I take further in this study.

#### **4. IN CLOSING**

In my research design and proposal I wasn't sure what would be the best way to approach the narrative of the programme and the narrative of the co-researchers. In a sense they are linked and in a sense not. This made it difficult for me to decide if I should put these narratives all in the same chapter or not.

I think a lot has opened up for me in this chapter by looking at the narrative of the programme separately. It has also helped me to listen and reflect on the narrative of Hanlie as a researcher and not as someone in the programme leadership. This was a good decision because it helped me to listen to the narrative of the programme from a different perspective. It also helped to truly listen to Hanlie as a co-researcher in the whole process of this research.

I wish that it could have been possible to somehow listen to more of the programme's narratives by means of the many people in the programme's narratives. This was not possible due to the practicalities. I do however think that for the purpose of this research, Hanlie's narrative helped me a lot with it.

In the next chapter we are narrowing the circle by listening to the co-researchers' narratives.