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

by

Christoffel Johannes Viljoen

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

Philosophiae Doctor

in

Practical Theology

at the

University of Pretoria

Promoter: Professor Julian Müller

August 2011

© University of Pretoria
Abstract

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

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

Seafaring is still a dangerous profession where the seafarers many times find themselves being powerless in situations of injustice. On ships there is a lot of diversity. Men and women from many different religions and cultures have to sail together. Occasionally this causes tension between seafarers, but mostly they are working and living together in harmony. A bigger concern than conflict is that diversity might cause social isolation. Seafarers are willing to endure a lot of hardship and especially seafarers from developing countries are making this sacrifice in order to provide a better future for their families. The relationship between seafaring and the family is an ironic one because the seafarers sail in order to provide for the family, but at the same time sailing takes them away from their loved ones. From the perspective of the researcher three general weaknesses were found as far as the ministry to seafarers is concerned: At times there is lack of a
spiritual dimension to the ministry, secondly there is a need for a stronger presence among the seafarers and thirdly more emphasis should be put on involvement with fishers especially as far as justice issues are concerned.
Key terms
Hermeneutical adventure
Social constructionism
Narrative approach
Postfoundationalism
Missio Dei
Seafarers' mission
Seafarer
Co-researcher
Contextuality
Understanding
Declaration

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

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

- My wife Anneke I would like to thank for all that she has done to help me in this project. Thanks for your encouragement. It was priceless. Thank you also for all your ideas and thoughts that you shared, you were my most important co-researcher.

- My mother and father who taught me that Jesus Christ is not only a social construction, but that He is near and that He is an active participant in the narratives that shapes our lives.

- To the official co-researchers who shared in this adventure: Thank you to John, Jonathan, Mohammed, Ivan, Noel, Eric, Paddy, Paul, David, Johan, Hennie, Surita and Doug. Thank you for your time and for co-constructing the understandings and meanings that can hopefully lead to something better.

- To all the unofficial co-researchers, the seafarers who I visited daily and who allowed me onto their ships and into their lives. May this research, somehow, in a small way be to your benefit. Thank you for receiving me as a guest on your ships, which is not only your work space but also your homes.

- Thank you to the chaplains of Richards Bay, where this adventure started and those in Durban, where this adventure developed and took shape. Thank you for being colleagues and friends.

- I also want to acknowledge Professor Julian Müller, my promoter. Thank you for your input and guidance throughout this process. Thank you for your patience and for many times being more enthusiastic and optimistic than I was about this. Your positive attitude really helped me to not get stuck at the A stage. Thank you also for being comfortable with our theological differences.

- Thank you to the Christian Seaman’s Organisation who provides the space for me to live out my calling to spread the gospel to many nations. I would especially like the thank Dr Wimpie Van Schoor, the chairperson of the CSO, for allowing me the time I needed to finish this research.

- Paddy Percival: Thank you for proof reading with speed and for increasing this document’s quality.
• And lastly I want to thank God for being with me every step of this research. May this construction of an understanding serve your mission to spread the good news of your love shown to us in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.
## CONTENT

### Chapter 1: The research as an embedded narrative

1.1 Introduction 1
1.2 Research as story writing: The ABDCE formula 5
1.3 The Action: problems that are being researched and the research problem 13

### Chapter 2: Thickening the background

2.1 Background about seafarers and the seafarers’ mission 17
   2.1.1 Introduction 17
   2.1.2 Existing literature 17
   2.1.3 Seafarers and seafarers’ ministry 19
2.2 The way in which this research story might enrich and thicken existing narratives about seafarers 31

### Chapter 3: The researcher, the research approach and methodology

3.1 Introduction 34
3.2 Epistemological position 34
3.3 Theological position 49
   3.3.1 Introduction 49
   3.3.2 Interdisciplinary concerns 52
      - Van Huyssteen’s postfoundationalist approach 52
      - Evaluation of Van Huyssteen’s postfoundationalist approach 69
3.3.3 Missiological considerations 71
3.4 Methodology 91
   - The ABDCE formula and the different roles of the researcher and co-researchers 91
   - Three movements 99
Chapter 4: The development of a thick research narrative

4.1 Introducing the main research characters
   a. John from Nigeria
   b. Jonathan from Kenya
   c. Mohammed from the East Coast of Africa
   d. Ivan from Bulgaria
   e. Noel from the Philippines
   f. Eric from the Philippines

4.2 Understanding the climax

4.3 The themes: Developed by local and beyond the local movements

A. Stories about a shipmate called Danger
   - Introduction
   - The research characters
     a. John from Nigeria
     b. Jonathan from Kenya
     c. Mohammed from the East Coast of Africa
     d. Ivan from Bulgaria
     e. Noel from the Philippines
     f. Eric from the Philippines
   - Alternative perspective

B. Stories about God and faith in a multi-religious environment
   - Introduction
   - The research characters
     a. John from Nigeria
     b. Jonathan from Kenya
     c. Mohammed from the East Coast of Africa
     d. Ivan from Bulgaria
     e. Noel from the Philippines
     f. Eric from the Philippines
C. Injustices on board: Floating prisons
- Introduction 185
- The research characters
  a. John from Nigeria 194
  b. Jonathan from Kenya 198
  c. Douglas Stevenson: A transversal interdisciplinary conversation with maritime law 216
- Alternative perspective 223

D. The social dynamics of women on board
- Introduction and the research characters 235
- Alternative perspective 240

E. Coping with and appreciating diversity: Stories of many cultures living under the same roof
- Introduction 243
- The research characters 247
  a. Jonathan from Kenya 247
  b. Mohammed from the East Coast of Africa 249
  c. Ivan from Bulgaria 249
  d. Noel from the Philippines 252
  e. Eric from the Philippines 254
- Alternative perspective 256

F. Seafarers and the stories of their families: An ironic relationship
- Introduction 261
- The research characters 268
a. John from Nigeria 268
b. Jonathan from Kenya 274
c. Mohammed from the East Coast of Africa 279
d. Ivan from Bulgaria 280
e. Noel from the Philippines 286
f. Eric from the Philippines 293
g. Surita Stipp: A transversal interdisciplinary conversation with systemic family therapy 307
- Alternative perspective 314

G. Seafarers and seafarers’ mission: Shaving things, a little drinking and even a spiritual dimension
- Introduction 329
- The research characters 330
  a. John from Nigeria 330
  b. Jonathan from Kenya 331
  c. Mohammed from the East Coast of Africa 331
  d. Ivan from Bulgaria 332
  e. Noel from the Philippines 332
  f. Eric from the Philippines 334
- Alternative perspective 337

H. Positive narratives about being a seafarer: A profession of hope
- Introduction 345
  The research characters 346
    a. John from Nigeria 346
    b. Jonathan from Kenya 346
    c. Mohammed from the East Coast of Africa 347
    d. Ivan from Bulgaria 347
    e. Noel from the Philippines 348
    f. Eric from the Philippines 348
- Alternative perspective 352
I. Relationships between seafarers: Friendships and fistfights

- Introduction 355
- The research characters 356
  a. John from Nigeria 356
  b. Jonathan from Kenya 357
  c. Mohammed from the East Coast of Africa 357
  d. Ivan from Bulgaria 359
  e. Noel from the Philippines 360
  f. Eric from the Philippines 360
- Alternative perspective 364

Chapter 5: The Ending

6.1 Introduction 369
6.2 The E in the ABDCE formula 369
6.3 The four main objectives of this research 372
6.4 Critical evaluation and summary of the ABDC stages 374
  6.4.1 Chapter 1: Introduction 374
  6.4.2 Chapter 2: Thickening the background 377
  6.4.3 Chapter 3: The researcher, the research approach and methodology 381
    6.4.3.1 Epistemology 381
    6.4.3.2 Theology 384
    6.4.3.3 Methodology 393
    6.4.3.4 Methods 396
  6.4.4 Chapter 4: The development of a thick understanding 399
  6.5 The E of the different themes: some thoughts on "beyond the local"
    6.5.1 Introduction 400
    6.5.2 Sharing some ideas of possible implications beyond the local
      a. Stories about a shipmate called Danger 401
      b. Stories about God and faith in a multi-religious environment 403
      c. Injustices on board: Floating prisons 404
      d. The social dynamics of women on board 404
      e. Coping with and appreciating diversity: Stories of many cultures living
under the same roof 406
f. Seafarers and the stories of their families: An ironic relationship 407
g. Seafarers and seafarers’ mission: Shaving things, a little drinking and
   even a spiritual dimension 408
h. Positive narratives about being a seafarer: A profession of hope 409
i. Relationships between seafarers: Friendships and fistfights 409
6.6 Possible new research narratives 410
6.7 A weakness? 414
6.8 The End 415

**Works consulted**

420

**Addenda**

Addendum A: Understanding the world seafarers are living in 431

Addendum B: Interdisciplinary conversation concerning seafarers and justice
   issues 438

Addendum C: Interdisciplinary conversation concerning seafarers and their
   families 446

Addendum D: Works consulted by Surita Stipp in the interdisciplinary
   conversation 455