

7. CONCLUSION TO STUDY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 RETROSPECT

This section gives a summary of the important points discussed in this dissertation. The aim of the author is to; further, tabulate the conclusion he has reached pertaining pastoral family divorce in the Volkskerk van Afrika (Peoples Church of Africa).

7.1.2 OUTLINE

The central focus of this study was on the traumatic experience of divorce within a church pastoral family in the VVA (PCA). The intention of the author was to find ways of understanding why this phenomenon happens in a pastoral family. This research was carried out because the author has observed the painful struggle and trauma of a colleague and friend due to the impact of the divorce phenomenon. The emphasis of this research was on the role of the denomination of the VVA (PCA) when divorce strikes the parsonage and how the church, as custodian of pastoral care can therapeutically help those individuals especially pastoral families.

In Chapter two, the author has helped the reader understand the science of methodology and how this discipline functions in pastoral care. In this

dissertation, the methods of Gerkin, Taylor and Collins were used to emphasize the high calling of the shepherding model. The author has guided the reader into the art of the pastoral care model, and how the denomination of the VVA (PCA), as shepherd/ pastor, can apply this model, therapeutically, on those individuals, especially church pastoral families who were traumatized by the unnatural phenomenon of divorce.

In Chapter three, the author has helped the reader understand the sacredness of marriage. The author has also helped the reader understand the different marriage customs in the world today and how, if at all, we can learn from them. However, the main emphasis was on how we understand marriage in the Christian tradition. The following aspects have been emphasized. They are:

- Marriage as an expression of the relational nature of God;
- Marriage as a journey towards intimacy;
- Key expressions that shape our view of a successful Christian marriage;
- Marriage as a covenant relationship;

This Chapter also discussed marriage after the Fall and the redemption thereof. It also discussed the sociological ideas about marriage and family life. This Chapter has in addition looked at some critical opinions of marriage and

discussed the impact of patriachalism on marriage and family life. Factors which give rise to conflict and tension within the minister's family and how pastoral families can strengthen their marriages have been discussed.

In Chapter Four, the author has helped the reader understand the impact of divorce on pastoral families and how, in the aftermath, it leads to trauma. The author has also discussed the common causes which lead to divorce in marriage and highlighted divorce as a comprehensive loss on those who endure it. The author helped the reader understand the stages in the divorce process and looked into the effect of divorce on pastoral families. The impact of divorce on children was also discussed in this dissertation. The author guided the reader in the psychological effect of divorce on children. The stance of the Bible pertaining to divorce was touched on. The author has also looked at trauma in the aftermath of the divorce phenomenon. The author has also guided the reader into the psychological aspects pertaining to trauma and how the community can be of positive help towards traumatized individuals, especially church pastoral families who have to endure the onslaught of the divorce phenomenon.

Chapter Five of this dissertation contains a sad anecdote of how divorce has traumatized the author's colleague and friend. This anecdote has brought the author to the realization of how the church's pastoral capabilities were

confronted by this tragic occurrence. In looking back on this painful divorce which took place years ago, the author realized how important the shepherding tool, as a method, is in the hands of the church. This anecdote has also exposed the author to the pain of the pastor and his family, not to mention the congregation, and the community, when faced with such a traumatic experience such as the divorce phenomenon. This Chapter has also proposed guidelines to the author's denomination on how to handle pastoral divorce whenever it happens or occurs. As a result of the above story, the author became aware of the lack of pastoral care by the VVA (PCA) towards its clergy, hence this study.

The closing Chapter of this dissertation suggests the creation of a pastoral care manual for the VVA (PCA) which will specifically deal with marriage, divorce, remarriage whenever it occurs. The author, specifically, looked at other denominations on how they deal with divorce and how the denomination of the VVA (PCA) can learn from them. The Uniting Presbyterian Church of South Africa and the Apostolic Faith Mission in South Africa were used as a model. This Chapter also called for the recruitment and training of the clergy; and how ministers can journey forward despite the pressures of the ordained ministry. The author has also looked at the aspect of how individuals can keep love alive. The author moved the lens of healing in the direction of the denomination and

how they can give direct services to clergy marriages and, in doing so, foster stronger and healthy families within our church. The church, being the body of Christ, should be a caring community which should bring healing and spiritual wholeness to those individuals affected by the onslaught of the divorce phenomenon. It is anticipated that this research will in due course stimulate further research on trauma in the clergy in South Africa.

7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The author recommends the following to the denomination of the VVA (PCA) in order to enhance their pastoral capabilities.

- That the author's denomination compile a pastoral manual which deals specifically with marriage, divorce, remarriage and other issues in order to avoid a situation like the one discussed in chapter five of this dissertation;
- That the denomination ascertain itself of what is its responsibility when divorce strikes the parsonage;
- That the denomination re-examine its recruitment and training criteria of pastors for the ordained ministry;
- That the denomination introduce, as a matter of urgency, retreats for clergy which is in fact a marriage enrichment seminar;

- This marriage enrichment retreat should be a quarterly event and should be compulsory for all pastors and their families;
- That the denomination provides direct services to clergy marriages; which could help with prevention and early detection of dysfunction in pastoral families;

That the denomination, as a custodian of pastoral care, takes up its God given calling and become the shepherd pastor to pastoral families.