

# STRATEGIC PRACTICAL THEOLOGY - PASTORAL REDEMPTIVE COMMUNITIES AS PASTORAL ECCLESIOLOGICAL PRAXIS WITHIN A NARRATIVE THEOLOGICAL ORIENTATION WITHIN THE *POSTMODERN GLOBAL VILLAGE* FROM A URBAN SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

## 1. INTRODUCTION

I have come to the last step of the theological journey in this study and in this step I will return to my specific context of ministry, namely the Evangelical Lutheran Congregation Pretoria, St. Peter's<sup>1</sup>. I return to this context, because it was in this context that part of this journey took place and therefore the congregation is my fellow traveller in this journey. This last chapter will be a reflection on this practical journey with St. Peter's.

At first when I began this study, I was not yet working in this specific congregation. I only joined the congregation half-way through my studies, so the questions raised in the beginning of the study are questions that were raised in various different ministry contexts as well as my personal spiritual/theological questions, but I found many of these questions also to be the questions in St. Peter's. It was then, through various workshops, Bible studies, discussion groups as well as council meetings, that the congregation became the co-travellers and in a certain sense also the co-author of this study and no longer just the 'object' or the context of the study.

The ministry crisis described in Chapter One and Chapter Three is the story of need which was to a large extent the story of need and crisis of the congregation. This ministry crisis and story of need gave rise to various questions. Browning sees there to be at least four questions that motivate strategic practical theological thinking<sup>2</sup>:

- 1) How do we understand this concrete situation in which we must act?
- 2) What would be our praxis in this concrete situation?
- 3) How do we critically defend the norms of our praxis in this concrete situation?
- 4) What means, strategies, and rhetoric should we use in this concrete situation? (Browning 1991:55)

The first question I responded to in Chapters Two, Four and Five. In Chapter Two I described the postmodern context of the concrete situation. In Chapter Four I described the global village and the process of globalization of the concrete situation. In Chapter Five I described the *postmodern global village* as a description of the concrete situation. The second question is what I will be responding to in this chapter.

The third question takes us back to Jürgen Habermas<sup>3</sup> and the need for validity claims

1 I will refer to the congregation from now on only as St. Peter's.

2 I have reflected on Browning's understanding of strategic practical theology in Chapter Two: 12.2.2.1 The four movements

3 I reflected on the thinking of Habermas in Chapter Two: 4.3.8 The critical theory of Jürgen Habermas.

(Habermas 1979:2). I have defended the norms or the theological orientation of this study in Chapter Two as well as Chapter Six, but I will again be critically reflecting on the pastoral action within the context of these validity claims.

The fourth question brings us back again to the concrete context of pastoral praxis which will be discussed in this chapter.

This last step on the strategic practical theological journey is in essence rooting the previous chapters in a specific ministry context, or one could say the practical contextual implication of the previous chapters in a specific congregation. It is to the strategic theological story of St. Peters that I now turn.

## 2. UNDERSTANDING THE CONCRETE SITUATION

The concrete situation is an urban congregation situated in the inner city of Pretoria, the capital of South Africa. It is a congregation faced with the challenges of globalisation and postmodernity and therefore a congregation facing the challenges of the *postmodern global village*.

In the beginning of the year 2001 a few members of the congregation came together over a couple of weeks in an attempt to respond to the concrete situation. We came together with the purpose to understand our praxis and more importantly to define our way forward. Many of the challenges that we were facing were new to us and thus we did not have the dramatic resources of how to respond to these challenges. The congregation needed new wine skins, in other words a new model to respond to these challenges, but the question was: Which model? What transformation should take place?

The challenges of the context were described in the following way (Welcome to St. Peter's<sup>4</sup> 2003:3).

### **Our Challenges:**

- 1) We are an inner city congregation facing all the inner city challenges of multiculturalism, diversity, pluralism, poverty, homelessness, unemployment, refugees, HIV/AIDS, and more.
- 2) We are an English speaking Lutheran congregation, which began about 30 years ago catering for English speaking Lutherans living throughout the city. Later, with the transformation of our country, many new members were added to our family who were Lutherans coming from all over our country and finding work here in the city, as well as Lutherans coming from all over the world. English became our language of love and unity which united us into the one body of Christ.
- 3) We are a congregation in the capital of South Africa and thus a prophetic ministry has been placed on our shoulders.
- 4) We are not only a congregation in an urban context, but also in a postmodern global context.

### **2.1 We are an inner city congregation**

<sup>4</sup> This is a brochure that I wrote in September 2003 for all new members of the congregation. Please find it attached as Addendum One

I believe that it is in the inner city that the reality of the *postmodern global village* is most acutely experienced<sup>5</sup>. I have various reasons for saying this:

- 1) The global competitiveness of the global labour market is experienced in the inner city as the rise in unemployment is experienced most acutely on the streets and in the flats of the inner city.
- 2) It is in the inner city that one also experiences the multiculturalism – a characteristic of the global village.
- 3) It is in the inner city that the marginalisation of the global village is experienced by the numerous homeless people and the informal settlements that appear on the fringes of the inner city.
- 4) The postmodern pluralism of values is also visibly seen in the inner city as it is here that the different lifestyles and life choices are seen in the development of the various sub-cultures.

St. Peter's is faced with all these challenges, some of them from within the congregation and others from the surrounding context of the congregation. The challenges came from both villagers and those marginalised from the village and the question is, how to respond to these challenges and needs. I have discussed these challenges and needs in more detail in Chapters Three, Four and Five.

## **2.2 We are an English speaking Lutheran congregation**

The congregation was originally a German congregation, but as many of her members got married to English speaking South Africans the need arose for English services. These services began about 30 years ago and were very small, but in the meantime they have grown so that today they can be seen as a congregation in their own right. After the transformation in South Africa in 1994 the congregation grew tremendously. Lutheran families from all over South Africa came to Pretoria and looked for a Lutheran congregation that could fulfil their spiritual needs. The result was that our congregation is pre-dominantly Lutheran, although the Lutheran traditions from all over South Africa are very diverse.

## **2.3 We are a congregation in the capital of South Africa**

The fact that St. Peter's is situated in the capital city of South Africa brings with it a special challenge as it challenges us to be a prophetic congregation challenging the political/social and economic issues of the day.

## **2.4 We find ourselves in a postmodern global context**

One cannot look at the context of the inner city, the Lutheran tradition or the capital city in isolation, but all this needs to be interpreted and described within the bigger picture, which I have called the *postmodern global village* in this study.

We found ourselves faced with these challenges and these challenges threw our traditional practices into a crisis. Two things needed to be done: we needed to return to the Gospel and secondly fully describe and thus seek to understand the context that we

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<sup>5</sup> I am not saying that in the suburbs and townships it is not experienced, but I am saying that it is more visible in the inner city.

are trying to respond to. We needed a new transformed model of being church as the classical model of Sunday morning worship services, regular Bible studies together with various interest groups and meetings on regular or irregular intervals such as confirmation groups children's church etcetera, was not sufficient to respond to the crisis of the *postmodern global village*.

The crisis itself cannot bring about transformation, but it can be the catalyst. "Crisis is a necessary but insufficient condition for transformation. Crisis destabilizes older, inadequate structures of practical reasoning exposing their inadequacies"(Browning 1991:281).

The previous 'models' of practical reasoning were in crisis and thus a systematically structured continuous hermeneutical process was needed to reflect on these practices of the congregation in the light of and in dialogue with the various dramatic resources with which the congregation constructs and interprets their reality and understanding of themselves.<sup>6</sup>

Browning argues that older models of praxis may be inadequate for two reasons:

- 1) "They may be inadequate normatively: They may be theologically and philosophically skewed or deficient when tested against the classics of tradition and the demands of experience."
- 2) "The individuals or groups may not be deeply socialized into these structures. They may be held superficially" (Browning 1991:281-282).

I believe in St. Peter's both of these descriptions are appropriate, as normatively there is in the tradition of the congregation a skewed understanding of "grace". One of the core principles of the Reformation was salvation through grace alone (*sola gratia*). This concept of grace I believe is skewed as it is understood within the context of a "I'm okay you're okay" mentality which leads to apathy. This understanding of 'grace' Bonhoeffer referred to as 'cheap grace'.

In the second sense the four pillars of the reformation (*sola scriptura, sola Christus, sola fide, sola gratia*) are not really part of the socialization of the congregation, for example the Biblical narrative (*sola scriptura*) does not stand as centrally as it should in the lives of believers. This also has to do with the whole question of authority in a postmodern world (can one refer to scripture and how does one refer to scripture as an authority?), the danger of fundamentalism or literalism always lurking in the background.

The first step that we as congregation felt should be taken was to return to the Gospel. This step we described as: 'Discovering God's purpose for us as body of Christ in a postmodern, global, urban South African context.'

This journey in the congregation, to be truly transformative, needs to be a journey within the hands and providence of God. It is God's congregation and it is He who is on a journey with us and in His providential Story we need to trust to be able to transform. God is the agent of transformation.

Psalm 136 exemplifies this narrative nature of God. In this Psalm the narrative nature of

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<sup>6</sup> I would like to refer back to the working description of the narrative theological orientation of the study: "The narrative theological orientation of this study can be described as a systematically structured, continuous hermeneutical process of critical reflection on Christian activities (praxis) within the social context and in the light of the various narratives that form the dramatic resources with which the faith community constructs and interprets their reality." (Chapter Two: 12.2.1 Working description)

God's truth is shown. It tells us that God is known in His character as a God of love, not through some abstract theological/philosophical thesis, but through history and the journey with a community which is seeking to live in relationship with this Truth. This Psalm may also give us as believers and as congregation the confidence to take the next step of this adventure in hope.

Ps. 136

Praise the Lord, who is so good;  
 God's love endures forever;  
 Praise the God of gods;  
 God's love endures forever;  
 Praise the Lord of lords;  
 God's love endures forever;  
 Who alone has done great wonders,  
 God's love endures forever;  
 Who skilfully made the heavens,  
 God's love endures forever;  
 Who spread the earth upon the waters,  
 God's love endures forever;  
 Who made the great lights,  
 God's love endures forever;  
 The sun to rule the day,  
 God's love endures forever;  
 The moon and stars to rule the night,  
 God's love endures forever;  
 Who struck down the firstborn of Egypt,  
 God's love endures forever;  
 And led Israel from their midst,  
 God's love endures forever;  
 With mighty hand and outstretched arm,  
 God's love endures forever;  
 Who split in two the Red Sea,  
 God's love endures forever;  
 And led Israel through,  
 God's love endures forever;  
 But swept Pharaoh and his army into the Red Sea,  
 God's love endures forever;  
 Who led the people through the desert,  
 God's love endures forever;  
 Who struck down great kings,  
 God's love endures forever;  
 Slew powerful kings,  
 God's love endures forever;  
 Sihon, king of the Amorites,  
 God's love endures forever;  
 Og, king of Bashan,  
 God's love endures forever;  
 And made their lands a heritage,  
 God's love endures forever;

A heritage for Israel, God's servant,  
 God's love endures forever.  
 The Lord remembered us in our misery,  
 God's love endures forever;  
 Freed us from our foes,  
 God's love endures forever;  
 And gives food to all flesh,  
 God's love endures forever;  
 Praise the God of heaven,  
 God's love endures forever (The African Bible).

This Psalm encapsulates so much of what I discussed and reflected on in Chapter Six about narrative and truth and thus a narrative orientation of this study.

- 1) God's truth is revealed and cannot be found through any human effort.
- 2) This truth is revealed to us through the story (history).
- 3) This truth is revealed as truth to those who are in and part of the story.
- 4) The response to this truth is to become part of the story.

This is what this Psalm does as it invites one to become part of the adventure of God's history with the world. The Christian faith is imbedded in the history of the triune God within world history. It is within this context that the adventure for transformative practice can be sought. The love of God revealed to us in history forms a "holding environment" (Winnicott 1965), which is a space where we are known to be loved by God and this love allows us to relax our anxieties and fears and boldly take the next step in the adventure with hope.

### 3. WHAT WOULD BE OUR PRAXIS IN THIS CONCRETE SITUATION?

#### 3.1 The Gospel as our guiding authority on praxis

St. Peter's returned to scripture in line with our tradition (*sola scriptura*) to seek a way forward, in other words, we returned to the tradition with the questions and challenges of the context. In Gadamer's understanding we brought the horizons of the context into a critical dialogue with the horizon of the Gospel and allowed the Gospel to re-author and re-formulate our horizons (Chapter Two: 4.3.6 Hans-George Gadamer). Yet we were also very conscious that being an inner city congregation we are daily confronted with the needs and the challenges of those marginalised from the global village, namely the homeless and unemployed community of the inner city. To be able to respond to the needs of the homeless community, those marginalised, we needed an emancipatory and critical element in this dialogue (Chapter Two: 4.3.8 The Critical theory of Jürgen Habermas).

In the process of returning to scripture, one question kept on coming up from amongst those attending the workshop and also in Bible studies and discussion groups: How can we use the Bible as authority? What about all the other religions? This question was normally accompanied by a story which tells of the wonderful colleague who is a Muslim or a Hindu and how can one say to them that only the Bible is true?

This brings me to the reflection in Chapter Six: (2. Historical theology in a *postmodern global village*), where the question of narrative truth was discussed and the movement away from universal and objective truths to a truth which is communicated or passed on through language and the use of metaphor.<sup>7</sup> God's revealed Word as truth is revealed in His story with humanity and this truth is testified to in Scripture. The relevance of truth is not to be found in an objective theory, but in the kind of community this truth forms and how relevant and redeeming this community is within the context of the world. Scripture and tradition form the living tradition of a community and this living tradition is the authority for the community. This authority is not a rigid authority, but an authority that facilitates change and makes transformation possible.<sup>8</sup>

Browning argues that transformation follows the five dimensions<sup>9</sup> (Browning 1991:280). I will be referring to these dimensions in the following sections.

This first section I believe has to do with the visional level as it challenges our metaphysical understanding of reality or as Stephen Crites call them 'sacred stories' (Chapter Two 8.2 Narrative and Human Action). In the postmodern era humanity had lost these sacred stories and in our congregation we were not longer sure what role (authority) these sacred stories could possible have in our lives for guiding our praxis. The narrative understanding of truth and also the narrative understanding of human praxis and action within living tradition allowed for a reinterpretation and thus a revival of this visional level.

Our community could return to its tradition of *sola scriptura*, but not in a modern (universally applicable and verifiable) sense, but in a narrative sense within a narrative orientation.

It was on this basis that we could turn to scripture as our authority (living tradition) and seek God's purpose for us as congregation. The first step was to establish the dimensions of our praxis.

#### 4. SCRIPTURE RE-AUTHORS OUR HORIZONS WITH REGARD TO PRAXIS – HISTORICAL THEOLOGY

This is the practical side of the reflection with St. Peters as compared to the theoretical side reflected on in Chapter Six (4. The dimensions within which the church needs to describe her identity).

In the search for appropriate praxis we turned to scripture to discover the dimensions of this praxis. In our workshops we looked at two texts which would guide this process. The first text was God's calling and commissioning of all believers and the second text was the greatest commandment.

Matthew 28:18-20 "Then Jesus approached and said to them, "All power in

<sup>7</sup> Chapter Two 8.6 Narrative and Truths

<sup>8</sup> Chapter Six:2.5 The Gospel truth as authority and Chapter Two:4.3.6 Hans-George Gadamer, Gadamer's understanding of the authority and rationality of tradition.

<sup>9</sup> I have worked with these five dimensions in Chapter Four: 2.2 Validity claims in the context of descriptive theology and the common human experience.

heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”

Matthew 22:37 “He said to them, “You shall love the Lord your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments”  
(The African Bible).

It was from these two texts that we got our dimensions within which we could understand our praxis. In these two texts nearly all the aspects reflected on in Chapter Six are addressed. I will briefly be reflecting on these aspects.

#### **4.1 Love for God and love for neighbour – the dimension within which the praxis needs to be understood**

In theory I discussed the dimension within which the church needs to describe her identity in Chapter Six. In this section I quoted Moltmann and I would like to refer once more to this quote.

“In the community of the incarnate God and the exalted man Jesus Christ there can be no division here. The church will always have to present itself both in the forum of God and in the forum of the world. For it stands for God to the world, and it stands for the world before God. It confronts the world in critical liberty and is bound to give it the authentic revelation of the new life. At the same time it stands before God in fellowship and solidarity with all men and is bound to send up to him out of the depths the common cry for life and liberty” (Moltmann 1992:1).

In our workshops we reflected on the text from Matthew 22 and realised that what is needed is a commitment to God and to the world. The church needs to find a form of praxis where the believers can love God with all his/her heart, soul and mind so that the believer can holistically turn his/her whole existence towards God. Yet this love for God cannot be separated from the commitment to the world. The church needs to create the space where the believer can serve the world (love the neighbour as himself/herself).

This space, where the believer can serve the world, is guided by the Great Commission of Matthew 28. The service to the neighbour needs to be understood within the framework of the great commission in other words within the framework of the *missio dei* as reflected on in Chapter Six (6.2 The church’s relevance and obligation towards humanity and the world).

In our workshop we then looked at the great commission to understand our praxis with regards to the world, but before we did that we first looked at the world (the neighbour) around us.

We asked the same question that Jesus was confronted with: “Who is my neighbour?” in the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). We asked this question to discover: who are the people around us? We made the following descriptive groupings helping us

describe and understand our reality and context. These groupings are in no way intended to stereotype or classify people. I have borrowed these five descriptive groupings from Warren's book (Warren 1995:153ff), *The Purpose Driven Church*, although my description and interpretation of these groups is totally different to his.

The answer to the question, 'Who is my neighbour', can be described in the following way in the context of St. Peter's:

- 1) The 'community' is the postmodern, global urban community of the greater Pretoria and Centurion.
- 2) The 'crowd' are all those who live and work in and around our city and who have some contact with the congregation.
- 3) The 'congregation' are all those who are on our data-system.
- 4) The 'committed' are all those who regularly attend our worship service and various other activities offered by the church.
- 5) The 'core' are all those who are involved and even have leadership roles in the various ministries of the congregation.

Somehow this diverse description of our 'neighbours' had to be included or incorporated into the commission or the *missio dei*. We tried to do this in the following way.

## 4.2 Baptised into the triune story – in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

The church becomes part of God's triune history with the world as discussed in Chapter Six (7.4 The relationship between the church and the trinitarian history of God).

Believers are baptised into this history and thus become part of the *missio dei*. Members of the congregation are baptised and members of the congregation are guided through preaching and Bible studies to become part of this mission and to understand the world history in the light of the triune history of God.

The praxis with regard to the *congregation* is *inclusion* into the mission which alone is done through baptism and preaching to become part of the *missio dei* - the triune history of the world.

## 4.3 Guided and orientated by the story and teaching of Jesus – teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you

I reflected on this aspect in Chapter Six (8. The story of Christ as the church's narrative), as the church seeks to live in accordance to the story of Christ. The story of Christ, as revealed to us in the New Testament, is the determining story and thus the living tradition of the church. The Gospel as living tradition is the authority for the church. It is this story that determines the actions of believers and the church. The story of Christ is the narrative setting in which the practices and actions of the believers and the church make sense<sup>10</sup>. In this sense the believers are trained and equipped to live as church (as the body of Christ) in the world.

<sup>10</sup> Chapter Two: 8.2.2.2 The narrative history of the social setting of an action

This is the pastoral action for the *committed*, namely those who attend the services and the Bible studies, because it is here in these activities that the individual believer is *equipped* with the story of Christ.

The believer is equipped with the Story of Christ which forms the narrative setting for his/her actions.<sup>11</sup> The Gospel is not the only narrative setting in which the believer finds him or herself. The believer in the *postmodern global village* is set within various narrative settings. That is why he /she experiences the fragmentation described in Chapter Five (1.4 The individual in the *postmodern global village*). So although the congregation has rediscovered two fundamentals, (*sola Christus* and *sola Scriptura*) and the believer would like to live his/her life accordingly he/she still lives in a world that is determined by numerous other narratives.

In this section the transformation came on the obligational level. The story of Christ guides and forms the character of the believer with certain values and thus obliges him/her to live by these values.

#### 4.4 An eschatological dimension – until the end of the age

This story of Christ needs to be seen within both its historical and eschatological dimensions as discussed in Chapter Six (8.3 The liberating lordship of Jesus and the fellowship of the kingdom).

From the historical dimension the church lives in solidarity with the world in following Christ's incarnation and non-identity which culminates on the cross. From the eschatological dimension the church lives in the victory of Christ over law, sin and death as well as the idolatry and godforsakenness of the world. Therefore the church can offer the whole world redemption and freedom from the systems of death that hold the world captive.

The believer has rediscovered the Story of Christ as his/her determining story (narrative setting). Yet the believer lives in the global village where he/she is daily confronted with numerous other narrative settings. The believer for example is also set within the narrative setting of the workplace where the obligations are motivated by the story of profit. These narratives of the global village have certain environmental constraints as is clearly seen in how the consumption of the global village has a detrimental impact on the environment. This addresses the environmental and social dimension as the believer is embedded in the story of the cross and thus is in solidarity with the marginalised and so stands in conflict with the dominant narratives of the *postmodern global village*.

Yet the believer's narrative setting tells the story of victory over these dominant narratives of the global village and this victory narrative will determine his/her role and actions within the global village.

#### 4.5 Christ is present – I am with you always

I discussed this in Chapter Six (8.5 The church of Christ is there where Christ is), where Christ was described to be present in the apostolate, the least of the brothers and

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<sup>11</sup> Chapter Two: 8.2 Narrative and human action

sisters and in his coming (parousia).

The church, in obedience to the story of Christ, experiences His presence in the apostolate (the proclaiming of the Word, the sacraments and in the fellowship), but also in solidarity with the least of the brothers and sisters. This leads the church to be a community of the cross which can accommodate both the Mary Magdalene's of the world (marginalised) and the Zacchaeus' (villagers) and this is only possible in a community defined by the cross of Christ. In the cross Christ overcame the law, sin and the idols and gods of power which marginalise people to the margins of society, but he also overcame the idolatry and godforsakenness caused by worshipping the idols and gods of our time. Therefore only in a community of the cross are both included namely the marginalised and the villagers.

#### **4.6 The power of the kingdom of Christ – all authority in heaven and on earth**

The church lives in the power of the kingdom of Christ as discussed in Chapter Six (8.3 The liberating lordship of Jesus and the fellowship of the kingdom). The church is a new creation, a unique outcome which offers an alternative to the *postmodern global village*. The church as a community of the cross is liberated from the constraints of sin, law, idolatry and godforsakenness and can thus live and act in creative freedom.

#### **4.7 A fusion of horizons – a re-authored story for transformative praxis**

In the narrative theological orientation the church returns to scripture in a critical dialogue and in the process of this critical dialogue the congregation's story is re-authored and this opens the door for transformative praxis.

As Browning says, transformative praxis follows the five dimensions.

##### **4.7.1 Visional level**

A narrative orientation made it possible, in a postmodern world, to return to scripture as an authority for the congregation. A narrative orientation made it possible to reflect on truth and allow this truth to be determining for a community without claiming universality.

##### **4.7.2 Obligational level**

The narrative theological orientation enabled the community (St. Peter's) to rediscover scripture as a living tradition which forms and shapes the character of the believer and thus places certain obligations on him/her. It places the believer in a narrative ethical tradition, not offering universal 'does and don'ts', but offering a narrative that shapes a character with certain values. This Gospel formed character negotiates an ethical lifestyle in the *postmodern global village*.

##### **4.7.3 Tendency-need level**

This is the anthropological dimension which raises claims about human nature, basic human needs and the kind of pre-moral goods required to meet these needs. The theological narrative orientation offers the believer the Gospel as the story which defines his/her identity and self-understanding. Yet it cannot ignore the discoveries of anthropology, psychology and sociology, but is in critical hermeneutical dialogue with these stories. The Gospel challenges some of the tendencies and needs that are created by the narratives of the postmodern global village. For example, the idea that the individual is an autonomous individual who defines him/herself through consumption is challenged by the Gospel story which sees the individual as an image of God. Yet the Gospel story which defines the believer also creates certain tendencies and needs, for example the need for narrative/language community. I will return to this point at a later stage.

#### 4.7.4 Environmental and social dimension

The dominant narratives of the postmodern global village are causing tremendous suffering through exclusion and marginalisation as well as destruction of the environment.

The Gospel and specifically the passion narrative of Christ challenge these dominant narratives and expose them as lies and destructive illusions that lead to death and thereby offer the world an alternative. It offers the *postmodern global village* a community of the cross where marginalised and villager can meet and embrace each other. It offers the *postmodern global village* a view of nature as a gift of God and that our relationship to environment is not one of dominance, but of reflecting the image of God<sup>12</sup>.

#### 4.7.5 Rule role dimension

This dimension reflects on the concrete patterns we should enact in our actual praxis in the everyday world. The *postmodern global village* as a narrative setting forms certain rules and roles which MacIntyre describes as certain characters (rich aesthete, manager and therapist).<sup>13</sup> Within the narrative theological orientation the Gospel forms the narrative setting for the church and thus forms and shapes a different kind of character who is trained in the values of the Gospel.

#### 4.7.6 Conclusion

Browning argues that if changes have taken place in the first levels (visional and obligational) and these changes are genuine and deep, then one can speak of conversion (Browning 1991:281). In this sense this journey has been a conversion - transformation.

## 5. SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY – A FUSION OF HORIZONS, A

<sup>12</sup> Chapter Six: 8.3.2 The Story of the Kingdom of God as a Kingdom of Redemption

<sup>13</sup> Chapter Five: 1.4.3 The individual in relation to others in the *postmodern global village*

## UNIQUE OUTCOME AND A CRITICAL DEFENCE OF THE NORMS OF OUR PRAXIS

As the result of the fusion of the horizons between the two texts (Matthew 22 and Matthew 28) and the description of the neighbours around St. Peter's, the following was the outcome of the workshop:

The two texts call St. Peters to the following tasks:

1. Love God - we understood this to mean that we should create a space where people can *commit* themselves holistically to God.
2. Love our neighbour - we understood this to mean to create a ministry space where people can serve the world by offering the world an alternative.
3. Go out and make disciples - we understood this to mean to be open to the world history, but understanding this history within the light of the triune history of God.
4. Baptise them - we understood this to be the ministry that includes people into the community that is defined and lives according to the story of the triune God, revealed to us through Christ.
5. Teach them to obey - we understood this as the ministry that equips people to discipline their lives according to the story of Christ.

We understood the tasks in relation to the description of our neighbours in the following way.

- 1) The *community* – to be *open* to the community and allow the brokenness of the postmodern, global, urban South African and inner city reality to affect us and challenge us. We are guided by the thought of Jesus' incarnation into the brokenness and the cross, to form a community of the cross which embraces the whole world (both villagers and marginalised).
- 2) The *crowd* – to create a space in our midst whereby the crowd can *commit* themselves to God, through the proclamation of His Word and the experience of His grace, love and forgiveness.
- 3) The *congregation* – to invite and *include* all into the *missio dei*.
- 4) The committed – to equip them for discipleship.
- 5) The *core* – to create the space for the servant ministry of all believers where we can *serve* each other as well as the community as members of the body of Christ (refer to 'Welcome to St. Peter's' 2003:4 in Addendum).

### **This process brought us to our purpose statement:**

To embody the love of Christ by reaching out as a servant people to those in need being united by the love of God into his family, to lead to commitment all who share in God's journey with our city by including them into the servant body of Christ being equipped by Christ to serve our community.

Browning argues that in strategic practical theology we need to defend our praxis with the use of five validity claims, so that the community can be in dialogue with other communities and engage in critical dialogue.

### **5.1 A critical defence of our norms of praxis**

I have discussed these dimensions in the previous section (4.7). In this section I need to defend these claims in order to facilitate dialogue between ourselves and other groups. This defence of our norms is based on the thoughts of Jürgen Habermas reflected on in Chapter Two (4.3.8 The critical theory of Jürgen Habermas). Habermas' language communities are not just arbitrary and random and relative to each other, but they need to defend their claims through rational argument. By defending the practice of the church through these rational arguments I am not trying to establish some form of fundamental standard, but opening the door for critical dialogue with other communities of faith or ideology.

### 5.1.1 Visional level

The visional level inevitably raises metaphysical validity claims. The narrative theological orientation rediscovers scripture as a testimony to the revealed truth of the triune living God within history. This truth is:

- 1) not an universal abstract truth, but a narrative truth revealed in story and through story.
- 2) It is thus not a coercive truth and through violence seeks dominance over others.
- 3) It is an inclusive truth as it sees diversity as blessing and includes both villager and marginalised into a community of the cross.
- 4) It responds to the fragmented reality of the postmodern global village not with violence or coercion, but with love and openness – the openness of a sending Father, who sends His Son and Spirit in love and who will one day unite all to himself in glory.

### 5.1.2 The obligational level

In the *postmodern global village* people are in search of global ethical standards, but these standards can no longer be found. It is impossible in a pluralistic society to erect ethical/moral norms, because on what basis could that be done? The only basis there is, is the 'hidden' metanarrative of the *postmodern global village* that says that there are not authoritative narratives and that the individual is the last authority. He or she needs to choose from the religious spiritual market that which best suits his/her lifestyle. We cannot turn the wheel of history back to a modern understanding of universal standards and truths.

The narrative theological orientation does not offer a universal standard nor does it offer the world a moral code which will solve all the problems. It offers the world a narrative truth that shapes and determines community (church) which seeks to live in response to this narrative truth. This narrative shapes a character which is obliged to respond to the world in a certain manner. This cannot be spelled out in a code of conduct, but is a continuous hermeneutical process and thus appropriate to the *postmodern global village*.

### 5.1.3 The tendency-need level

The *postmodern global village's* understanding of the individual has become a self-fulfilled prophecy. It understands the individual to be an autonomous consumer bound

by nothing but him/herself. This kind of understanding creates certain tendencies and needs namely continuous innovation so that consumption never ends. The narrative that the theological orientation, which is in critical dialogue with the social sciences, offers the *postmodern global village* is a different understanding of humanity with different tendencies and needs. Douglas Hall (Hall 1997:57) has identified four quests (tendencies/needs) of the postmodern global villager, but which the global village denies him/her.

“...how our society longs for something that its performance regularly denies and its operative values frustrate...” (Hall 1997:57).

These four quests are:

#### 1) Quest for Moral Authenticity

This need is personal as the individuals experience this need within themselves. They find themselves in various narrative settings (the narrative of the family, the narrative of the work place) and each of these settings has its own demands and obligations. The result is that the individual experiences himself/herself as morally fragmented and the need arises for moral authenticity as the individual experiences himself/herself as morally inauthentic.

I have already responded to this need (5.1.2 Obligational level).

#### 2) Quest for Meaningful Community

“This quest, like the search for authentic morality with which it is closely related, is also conspicuous today because of a double failure – the failure of individualism and the failure of most forms of social cohesiveness” (Hall 1997:59).

Individualism has been one of the dominant narratives of the *postmodern global village* and human needs were interpreted from this perspective. This narrative has even influenced and to a certain extent destroyed the most basic form of community namely the family. The family cannot exist if each individual in the family only strives to fulfil his/her own rights as individual. In Chapter Two (8.3 Narrative understanding of human existence) I discovered that humans are storied people. The individual does not live in a vacuum, but is necessarily part of a language community (a narrative setting), through which he/she understands him/herself. The most basic need of humanity is to be part of a language community with which to understand and interpret themselves and the world around them. Without this community they would not have any access to understanding reality or themselves.

The church can offer community not only in response to this need, but the church needs to be a community. She needs to be a community firstly because this is how Scripture sees and describes her, but secondly the Gospel as narrative truth creates a language community which is formed by this truth. The church in her very essence is a community, which provides believers with a living tradition – a community wherein they can understand themselves and the world around them. The church provides the individual with alternative dramatic resources with which to understand and interpret.

#### 3) Quest for Transcendence and Mystery

The modern secularisation has failed. “During the past ten years – and primarily in the wake of new environmental awareness – Western people have become newly conscious of the devastations of which humanity is capable when it thinks itself

accountable to nothing beyond itself”(Hall 1997:61).

The emergence of the numerous new religious movements in the past few years also indicates this need. Humanity needs a sacred story. The church, understood within narrative theological orientation, can offer the postmodern world this sacred story of the mystery of faith.

#### 4) Quest for Meaning or a Quest for a *Telos*

Humans need a purpose, a *telos*, by which they can order their lives. Humans are essentially narrative, but without a *telos* their narrative is a meaningless succession of events without purpose or meaning.

The church can offer the *postmodern global village* a *telos* within the triune narrative of God which is unfolding within history.

### 5.1.4 The environmental and social level

As discussed in 4.7.4, the narrative theological orientation offers the *postmodern global village* an alternative understanding of humanity’s role within the world. This role is not a role of dominance over creation, but of co-operation and redemption with the creator. Thus the narrative orientation takes into account the environmental constraints. It also takes into consideration the fragmentation and pluralism of the postmodern global village and does not seek to ignore it or through violence remove it, but incorporates this fragmented diverse society into its narrative.

### 5.1.5 The rule role level

As discussed in 4.7.5, the *postmodern global village* creates certain characters with certain rules and roles as a response to the tendencies and needs of the capitalist markets. The church can offer the world a different character, a different role and rule. I will elaborate on this level in the following section where I will propose Pastoral Redemptive Communities as a strategy in response to the *postmodern global village* – a strategy which was developed in the specific context of St. Peter’s.

## 6. PASTORAL REDEMPTIVE COMMUNITIES AS A POSSIBLE STRATEGY IN RESPONSE TO THE CONCRETE SITUATION?

A narrative understanding of truth demands a narrative community, as this community is created through the truth. The Gospel as a narrative truth creates the church and functions within the church as the living tradition, but the believers are also involved, through their work and life in the global village, with other narratives which have an influence on them. The church needs a certain degree of separateness to be able to engage in a critical hermeneutical dialogue with these other narratives and to expose the lies and the illusion of some of these narratives. But to be able to do this she needs distance. In the previous chapter I shortly reflected on MacIntyre’s proposition of a new Monasticism. I would now like to propose Pastoral Redemptive Communities as a ecclesiological praxis for the necessary disengagement and engagement with the *postmodern global village*.

## 6.1 Introducing Pastoral Redemptive Communities

I will be describing and introducing the idea of Pastoral Redemptive Communities under six different headings. These six headings was the result of our workshops and can be found in 'Welcome to St. Peter's'.<sup>14</sup>

Pastoral Redemptive Communities are a response to three questions that we (St. Peter's) asked ourselves. These three questions are:<sup>15</sup>

- 1) Have these challenges anything to do with the church?
- 2) How can the redeeming story of the cross become a reality in our city?
- 3) Can we as individuals face the challenges of the city?

All three of these questions are questions about engagement with the world (city), but they are based on disengagement and commitment to the story of Christ.

In response to the first question we came to the following conclusion:

"I believe that it has everything to do with the church, if we believe the following:

- † that the church is the bearer of the story of Christ who was born, suffered and crucified, descended into hell and on the third day rose again from the dead;
- † that Christ was crucified because of sin;
- † and if we understand sin in all its forms of brokenness and evil which holds the world captive in systems which lead to separation between creation and God and eventually ends in death" (Meylahn 2003b:5).

Engagement with the world is only possible if this story of Christ is the determining story which means if the community allows this story to be the narrative setting of the community then for that a degree of disengagement is necessary.

### 6.1.1 Pastoral Redemptive Communities are embedded in the story of Christ crucified

**"The story of Christ Crucified** dear Insight readers, is the central story of our Christian faith. It **is** the story of our faith! Paul says in his first letter to the Corinthians 2:2 "For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." This is the centre of our faith. This is the story that we proclaim, this is the story that we were baptised into, and this is the story that gives birth to the new creation that we are in Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit" (Meylahn 2003a:3).

These communities are understood as narrative (language) communities which are created by the language of the Gospel. Pastoral Redemptive Communities seek to be communities that have this story of Christ as their narrative setting through which the individual members seek to understand themselves and their surrounding reality.<sup>16</sup>

Pastoral Redemptive Communities "are communities which are built and carried by this story of Christ. This story is the leading metaphor with which we understand our

<sup>14</sup> As already mentioned, this document is attached as an addendum.

<sup>15</sup> These three questions are all taken from the brochure 'Welcome to St. Peters' pages 5-6

<sup>16</sup> Chapter Six: 8. The story of Christ as the church's narrative, where I discussed the narrative of Christ giving the church her identity as the body of Christ.

individual and community's stories. It provides us with the spiritual tools with which we try and understand our reality, try and come to terms with the things that happen to us as individuals, families, as community and in our country" (Meylahn 2003a:3).

#### 6.1.1.1 Community of incarnation

In the beginning of this journey I mentioned that the metaphor of Christ's incarnation will guide this study and not only the first step of descriptive theology (insertion),<sup>17</sup> but the whole study. Pastoral Redemptive Communities are guided by the story of Christ's incarnation as the Story of Christ is the determining story of the communities. If the community receives its identity in the story of Christ and seeks to be obedient to this story it is obedient to the whole story of Christ, both the historical and the eschatological. This historical story is the story of Jesus' incarnation. The Pastoral Redemptive Communities seek to follow Christ on this journey of incarnation as they become part of the reality of the world and allow this reality of the world to challenge them and affect them. The community is guided by the scripture taken from Philippians 2: 5-8.

"I would like to understand this purpose statement<sup>18</sup> as a journey of incarnation into the brokenness of our city: 'to embody the love of Christ by reaching out as a servant people to those in need.' The word 'embody' is very similar to the word incarnation – as it means to give body to the love of God/Christ" (Meylahn 2002/2003:3).

#### 6.1.1.2 Community of the cross

A community of the cross is a community of justified sinners,<sup>19</sup> but also a community in solidarity with a world that is condemned by the law.<sup>20</sup>

It is a community that seeks to describe and understand the brokenness and fragmentation which is caused by the 'law' of commercialisation.<sup>21</sup> The individual in the global village has to understand himself/herself and the surrounding world within the narrative global field of experience (Chapter Four: 15. Narrative Global Field of Experience). If the only dramatic resources (narrative resources) at his/her disposal are the 'laws' of the *postmodern global village* then the result is this feeling of homelessness. The narrative community based on the story of Christ's cross offer alternative dramatic resources. These alternative resources of the passion narrative of Christ is not just an alternative story which is offered on the cultural religious market of the global village, but it is a story which directly faces the dominant narratives of the *postmodern global village* and understands, interprets and describes the dominant stories of the *postmodern global village* as illusions and as lies. The passion story of Christ does not offer a flight from reality, but faces the reality of the *postmodern global village*.

17 Chapter Three: 1. Introduction to descriptive theology

18 The purpose statement that I am referring to in this quote is quoted in full in section 5 of this chapter.

19 Chapter Six: 8.2 The Story of Christ's passion – a story of a community of and under the cross

20 Chapter Six: 8.2.1 Justification of the sinner and liberation from the power of sin.

21 Chapter Five: 1.4 The individual in the *postmodern global village* and Chapter Four: 15.4 The disembedded narratives of humanity and 16. Globalisation and homelessness (nostalgia)

The reality of homelessness of both the villagers and those marginalised from the village is the dominant experience of reality of the *postmodern global village*. The story of Christ offers the 'homeless' of the postmodern global village a home by offering them a narrative setting which re-authors their story of homelessness into a story of hope. Thus the Pastoral Redemptive Community is a community of the cross where both villager and marginalised find a home namely a community of the cross. It is planned (in the workshops) that each Pastoral Redemptive Community is in partnership with one of the communities of Pretoria Community Ministries.<sup>22</sup> Through this partnership the community of the cross becomes a community where the villager and those marginalised are united by the cross and a redemptive alternative is offered the *postmodern global village*.

"It is the story that leads and guides our individual, communal and congregational stories out of the brokenness of hopelessness to a future with hope. It is the story that again and again becomes our own story as we are time and again confronted with the cross" (Meylahn 2003a:3).

#### 6.1.1.3 Community under the cross – a community for the godforsaken

The Pastoral Redemptive Communities are communities that seek to be communities under the cross. They are communities that are liberated from the idols of power<sup>23</sup> and liberated from the godforsakenness.<sup>24</sup> They are liberated from the power of idols of the consumer society of the *postmodern global village*. These idols no longer have any defining power over the community, because the community does not see these narratives as its defining narratives, but the narrative of Christ crucified is the defining narrative. The community is liberated from the godforsakenness of the world which has turned towards the worship of the idols of the *postmodern global village*. This idol worship leads to the world into hopelessness yet the community under the cross has hope as this is not the determining story, but the triune story of God is the determining story.

The community is a community under the cross because it needs to remain at the cross otherwise it will itself create ideologies, strategies and theories. Thus the community remains under the cross careful not to create ideologies, universal *truths* and absolutes, but remains absolutely dependent on God's revelation through the cross.

"Moreover, true Christian existence can only be present in the best of all possible societies, or, in symbolic terms, can only 'stand under the cross,' and its identity with the crucified Christian can be demonstrated only by a witnessing non-identification with the demands and interests of society" (Moltmann 1974:17).

22 Pretoria Community Ministries is a social transformation organization within the inner city of Pretoria with various communities. These communities include: 1) A street centre catering for the needs of the homeless and unemployed community, 2) Lerato house catering for the needs of young girls in crisis, 3) Potter's House, a community catering for the needs of women in crisis, 4) YEAST City Housing, a community that caters for the city's need for low cost housing, just to mention a few of their communities.

23 Chapter Six: 8.2.2 Liberation from the idols of power

24 Chapter Six: 8.2.3 Liberation of Godforsakenness and the Godforsaken

#### 6.1.1.4 Community of the Eucharist

Pastoral Redemptive Communities are communities of the Eucharist, because it is here in the Eucharist that the story of Christ is remembered where the poetizing memory is actualised in the celebration of hope.

“For the Lord’s supper is the sign of the actualizing remembrance of the liberating suffering of Christ (*signum rememorativum*). As such it is the prefiguration of Christ’s redeeming future and glory (*signum prognosticum*). In this meal his past and his future are simultaneously made present. This present actualization frees the assembled congregation from the powers of the world which lead to sin and gives it the assurance of the divine future”(Moltmann 1992:243).

A community which is created through the story of Christ “assembles in worship at the Lord’s table, celebrating its bond with Christ and with one another...” (Moltmann 1992:242)

It is in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper that the community disengages to be able to engage in the world, because in the Eucharist the story of Christ becomes actualised in the community as the defining story, but at the same time the narratives of the idols and powers are exposed. Therefore the communities participate in the Eucharist celebration of the congregation as community. The Eucharistic liturgy<sup>25</sup> is also used as the basis for all the meetings. The liturgy has a critical dialogical narrative character where the illusions and idolatry of the narratives of the *postmodern global village* are exposed and our dependence on the passion narrative is expressed in remembered hope.

### **6.1.2 Pastoral Redemptive Communities strive to create alternative realities as a contrast society to the brokenness of the world around us. Under the grace of God they are kingdom communities**

#### 6.1.2.1 Community as *altera civitas*

A community which has the passion story of Christ as its determining story exposes the dominant narratives of the *postmodern global village* as illusions.

The early church understood itself as *altera civitas*, as the alternative city of God within the cities of the world. The Pastoral Redemptive Communities understand this as a possible model for themselves. They see themselves as communities which offer an alternative lifestyle by offering alternative dramatic resources with which the individual can interpret and understand himself/herself and the surrounding world. These are not living communities, but communities that are made up of individuals that meet on a regular basis, besides Sundays for worship, to allow the story of Christ to define their existence.

#### 6.1.2.2 Community of the Lordship of Christ

The story of Christ does not only tell the story of incarnation and the cross, but it also

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<sup>25</sup> I copy of the liturgy for meeting is attached as an addendum two.

tells the story of the victory of Christ's cross over the power of sin and the exaltation of Christ as Lord over the universe. Pastoral Redemptive Communities are defined by the whole story of Christ. If a community confesses the Lordship of Christ this inevitably needs to be a public testimony.<sup>26</sup> This therefore has an influence on the believer's life in the world. The believer does not see history as being at the mercy of the powers that be, but understand history within the context of the triune history of God and thus will always interpret history in the light of hope. Not a utopian hope, but a hope that is born from the cross.

#### 6.1.2.3 Community of the kingdom – a community of grace

Christ proclaimed the kingdom of God and through faith we are included in this kingdom which is now already present in the world there where Christ is. This is a kingdom of grace as it is given or inherited, but not constructed through human will or desire. The community seeks to live in obedience to Christ. The community seeks to live as an alternative to the destructive narratives of the *postmodern global village*, but the community does not construct an alternative reality and proclaims this as the kingdom of God. The alternative reality is constructed by the cross of Christ alone and remains under the cross of Christ. This means that Pastoral Redemptive Communities do not propose a new theory of social construction or a social-political programme. All that these communities propose is a space where the members of the community can seek to allow the narrative of Christ crucified to re-author their stories and where they can support each other to live according to that re-authored story. This is the only kingdom of redemption that the pastoral redemptive communities can offer.

#### 6.1.2.4 Community of the Feast without end

Pastoral Redemptive Communities are communities which celebrate the signs of hope, the signs of the kingdom that are visible in the world, but they do this in remembrance of the cross. In the community meeting time is always given to tell the stories of hope which are seen as kingdom signs. These signs of hope are celebrated.

### **6.1.3 Pastoral Redemptive Communities are places where individuals and families experience healing and reach out to the community**

#### 6.1.3.1 Community of healing from the fragmentation

In Chapter Three I reflected on the various stories of need which were told by both the villagers as well as those from the margins of the global village. At the end of Chapter Four I came to the conclusion "that although the dominant story (discourse) in the global village is one of unity and connectedness the most common story of the individuals and communities (both villagers and marginalised) living in the global village is one of disembeddedness and 'homelessness'" (Chapter Four: 16. Globalisation and homelessness (nostalgia)).

The dominant discourse of the *postmodern global village* that seeks to create certain characters (the rich aesthete, the manager and the therapist) which should respond to the tendencies and needs of the *postmodern global village's* dominant economic story,

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<sup>26</sup> Chapter Six 8.3 The liberating lordship of Jesus and the fellowship of the Kingdom

just does not have the necessary dramatic resources to address the actual day to day tendencies and needs of the villagers and the marginalised. Nor does it provide the villager and marginalised with the necessary dramatic tools to interpret and understand the pluralistic and fragmented world of this highly technologically organised global village which is organised into various knowledge environments and systems of expertise.

In the Pastoral Redemptive Community meetings the first part of the meetings is always geared towards sharing of stories of need. The stories that are shared are similar to the ones described in Chapter Three, but many other stories are also told of the daily frustrations in the family and at the work place.

These stories are then brought into a critical dialogue with scripture. In this process they are re-authored in the light of the scriptures and scripture's call to be a redemptive alternative to the *postmodern global village*.

It is with the help of the story of the cross of Christ that the frustrations and often the hopeless situations can be interpreted and given new meaning within the context of the hopeful story of the Triune history of God with the world.

These reinterpretations or re-authoring of stories can only be done within the context of God's story and within the context of a supportive community which shares the same story (language). It is in these communities (Pastoral Redemptive Communities) that individuals find healing (re-authoring) of their stories of need into stories of hope.

#### 6.1.3.2 Community of healing from the exclusions of the *postmodern global village*

Each community is embedded in the story of Christ and thus each community is commissioned with the Great Commission to be part of the openness of the triune God, who opened Himself to the suffering, the non-identity and the godforsakenness of history through the sending of His Son, and calls us into this story (of openness for the suffering of history) through the power of the Spirit. The community is thus open to the suffering caused by the exclusions of the *postmodern global village*. Each Pastoral Redemptive Community is called to be in partnership with one of the communities of Pretoria Community Ministry and get involved in one social-diaconic ministry in their area or start a project themselves.

One proposal that came out of the Pastoral Redemptive Communities as a joint project is the St. Peter's counselling centre.<sup>27</sup>

#### 6.1.3.3 Community of conversion of values

A community that offers healing from the fragmentation and 'homelessness' of the *postmodern global village* as well as healing from the exclusions from the village is a community that is created by a different truth to the illusions and lies of the *postmodern global village*.

The dominant discourses of the *postmodern global village* seek to create certain

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<sup>27</sup> The proposal for this counseling centre is attached as Addendum Three. This counseling centre will be launched in November 2003.

characters (MacIntyre 1984) which will be able to effectively respond to the market needs of the village. These characters act within certain 'values' created by the narrative setting of the *postmodern global village*. These values are guided by the ideological media story of the village and are values such as individualism, egoism, competitiveness, effectiveness and consumerism. These values are constrained by the social and environmental dimensions as the environment can only absorb so much consumption and the social relations can only accommodate so much individualism and competitiveness before it ends in violence.

Communities embedded in the story of Christ are formed into characters which are determined by the story of Christ and thus allow the truth of Christ to become visible through their values and actions. The values that the Gospel teaches can accommodate the diversity and fragmentation as it sees this in the light of God's story with the world and therefore can equip members of the community to respond in a redemptive way to the pluralism and fragmentation of the *postmodern global village*.

#### **6.1.4 Pastoral Redemptive Communities share and proclaim hope**

##### **6.1.4.1 Community of disengagement to engage**

From the above characteristics of the Pastoral Redemptive Communities it becomes clear that a certain disengagement from the world is necessary for the Gospel to be able to re-author these stories of the individuals. Yet this is not possible as the members of these communities cannot afford to create isolated living communities similar to monasteries.

All that the Pastoral Redemptive Communities can offer the members are spaces of respite where the Gospel can create a community and where Christ is present (through the apostolate, through the least of the brothers and sisters, and as the eschatological Christ). The Pastoral Redemptive Communities seek to provide this space through a basic liturgical format.<sup>28</sup> This format is not only used at the Pastoral Redemptive Community meetings, but at all meetings in the congregation.

##### **6.1.4.2 Story telling communities**

The space of respite, where the Gospel creates community and where Christ is present, is created through narrative (telling of stories).

The whole format of the liturgy is in a story form which tells the story of a critical dialogue between God's story (Scripture) and the community's story.

- 1) The meetings begin by placing the whole meeting within the context of the triune story of God. "We meet this evening in the name of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit."  
The community humbles itself before God in praising Him by praying a Psalm together.
- 2) In the light of God's story and relationship with the world the community's story of

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<sup>28</sup> Refer to liturgy: 'Divine service of community meetings' attached as Addendum Two.

brokenness, fragmentation, homelessness is told. The community disengages from the world by seeing the world through the perspective of God's story and through this perspective realises the illusions and lies of the *postmodern global village*.

- 3) The community is a community of memory as these stories are placed in the light of Christ's passion narrative, where sin is forgiven, freedom is proclaimed from the laws which hold the individual and community captive, and freedom from the idols of power and redemption is proclaimed for a godforsaken world.
- 4) The community tells the story of Christ's victory and shares the signs of His victory present in the community which are signs of hope and signs of grace of a kingdom given (inherited) and not earned.
- 5) Christ speaks to the community from His Word.
- 6) The community's story is retold (the community's purpose affirmed).
- 7) Christ includes the community in His narrative by inviting the community to partake in the Eucharist.
- 8) Time is given for the telling of the re-authored story in the light of the re-engagement with the world. This is done in prayer.
- 9) The meeting is closed by placing the story of re-engagement with the world under God's blessing.

### **6.1.5 Pastoral Redemptive Communities function as the body of Christ within the city**

The body of Christ is there where Christ is.<sup>29</sup> The body of Christ is to be found there where the head of the body is. Jesus Himself proclaimed to the church where he is.

#### 6.1.5.1 Community of the apostolate

The Pastoral Redemptive Communities are the body of Christ as they gather in his name (Matthew 18:20), proclaim His story (2 Corinthians 4:8-1) and administer the sacraments (1 Corinthians 11:23).

The communities meet with the understanding that they meet as a community which is created by the truth of God revealed in His story. This truth is proclaimed in the meeting and at times the Lord's Supper is celebrated in these communities.

#### 6.1.5.2 Community of the least of the brothers and sisters

The Pastoral Redemptive Communities are the body of Christ as they include and welcome the least of the brothers and sisters (Matthew 25:31-46) of Christ into the community.

#### 6.1.5.3 Community of the coming Lord

The Pastoral Redemptive Communities are the body of Christ as they participate in the anticipation of the coming Lord as He is already present in the least of the brothers and sisters.

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<sup>29</sup> Chapter Six: 8.5 The church of Christ is there where Christ is

### **6.1.6 Pastoral Redemptive Communities are open communities of hospitality where the lost, seeking, hungry, thirsty and needy are invited as Christ**

#### **6.1.6.1 Community that is present there where Christ is present**

As mentioned above (6.1.5.2) Pastoral Redemptive Communities are communities which are present there where Christ identifies himself with the least of the brothers and sisters and therefore the community also identifies with the least of the brothers and sisters. The communities, embedded in the triune history of God, are open to the suffering of history.<sup>30</sup>

The communities are open to the community, which means open to welcome the lost, seeking, hungry, thirsty and needy into the community. They are not invited as victims or as candidates for social diaconic projects, but invited as Christ. The communities, being communities of the cross, believe that it is from the perspective of the lost, hungry, seeking and fragmented that the illusions of the 'laws' (dominant discourses) are exposed and where the truth of Christ's cross is revealed.<sup>31</sup>

#### **6.1.6.2 Community of brokenness**

Pastoral Redemptive Communities are in solidarity with the lost, seeking and hungry and therefore it is a community of brokenness. Yet it is also a community of brokenness because it is embedded in the story of Christ. It follows Him into the world (incarnation) in solidarity with the least of the brothers and sisters. It follows him to the cross and the non-identity of the cross in the godforsakenness. Therefore these communities can never be communities of power, but always communities of weakness and they take on the character of the foolishness of the cross.

## **6.2 Pastoral Redemptive Communities in the context of the theory-laden questions**

### **6.2.1 Introduction**

At the end of the journey of this study I would like to return now to the questions that were asked at the beginning and see if any answers have been found in response to these questions and more specifically if the Pastoral Redemptive Communities offer an appropriate or possible response to these questions.

In Chapter One the questions (summary of the challenge) were primary as they were questions raised by myself (the primary story of the study). To these primary questions were added the questions of the secondary stories which were the stories of those with whom I journeyed in the various ministry contexts, or whose stories I read about. These questions were described in Chapter Three at the beginning of the descriptive theological journey.

These questions guided the descriptive theological journey as these stories of need (out

<sup>30</sup> Chapter Six: 7.4 The relationship between the church and the trinitarian history of God

<sup>31</sup> Chapter Six: 8.2 The story of Christ's passion – a story of a community of and under the cross

of which the questions arose) were unpacked within the context of the cultural symbols, the institutional patterns and practices and inner motivations and socio-cultural history of the individual's stories of need. This unpacking was done in Chapter Two (postmodern world), Chapter Four (global village/globalisation) and Chapter Five (*postmodern global village* and history of the church in the *postmodern global village*).

After the primary and secondary questions had been unpacked and fully described these questions were re-authored into theory-laden questions. These are theory-laden questions because the theories, narratives and dominant discourses behind the primary and secondary questions had been unpacked.

These questions were the basis of the 'prejudiced' hermeneutical turn towards the historical texts. I say prejudiced turn, because I did not turn to the text from a neutral point of view, but wanted answers to specific questions and with this in mind turned to scripture. This journey was described in Chapter Six.

In the context of this critical hermeneutical dialogue between the theory laden questions and the historical texts a fusion of horizons took place as the stories of need were re-authored into stories of hope as in the narrative of Christ unique outcomes were revealed.

At the end of Chapter Six this fusion of horizons was summarised. In this current chapter this re-authored story needed to be placed into a concrete ministry context. The concrete ministry context is that of St. Peter's and the development of Pastoral Redemptive Communities as a possible form of pastoral ecclesiological action within a narrative theological orientation within the *postmodern global village* from an urban South African perspective.

I will be reflecting on the Pastoral Redemptive Communities as a possible form of pastoral ecclesiological action within a narrative orientation as a response to the theory-laden questions summarised in Chapter Five.

### **6.2.2 What kind of church, which finds itself within the postmodern, urban, global, South African context and which has the calling to unify all in the body of Christ, could respond to the stories of need of both the villagers and the marginalised, when this ethical and pastoral task is made rather difficult in a postmodern context?**

This question is broken down into six smaller questions<sup>32</sup> which I have already responded to in Chapter Six (10. Fusion of horizons – the questions from the theory-laden practices and historical theology: – a systematic theological story). I will now reflect on these questions only in the light of the Pastoral Redemptive Communities.

#### **6.2.2.1 What kind of pastoral ecclesiological action unites villagers and marginalised into one body?**

A narrative pastoral ecclesiological action unites villagers and marginalised into one body as the narrative of Christ which is revealed to us in the Gospels creates a community of the cross. This community of the cross does not function as a socio-

<sup>32</sup> Chapter Five: 3.4 The core questions which will guide the rest of the theological journey of this study.

economic or political project seeking to create more justice within the *postmodern global village* and thereby sustaining and condoning the *postmodern global village*. Nor can a community, created by the narrative of Christ crucified, be the spiritual/moral supra-structure which offers the villager therapy to make him/her more effective within the *postmodern global village*.<sup>33</sup>

The Pastoral Redemptive Communities are embedded in the story of Christ<sup>34</sup> and thus are created and sustained by the Gospel's narrative truth. This narrative truth, being an alternative to the illusion of the *postmodern global village* narrative, creates a polity which is fundamentally different from the *postmodern global village*.<sup>35</sup> The Pastoral Redemptive Communities created and sustained by the passion narrative of Christ challenge the dominant discourses (narratives) of the *postmodern global village* and thus offer an alternative to the fragmentation, homelessness and exclusions of the *postmodern global village*.

The Pastoral Redemptive Communities, which are embedded in the story of Christ crucified, are communities which proclaim the kingdom of God in the world. This kingdom is proclaimed to the poor, defined as those who are dependent on God and no longer dependent on the idols or dominant narratives of the *postmodern global village*. This message is often the topic of Bible studies. The *postmodern global village* leads people to believe that their lives depend on the technical organization of the village, yet the message of the cross liberates the believer from that enslavement. In Romans 6: 1-12, Paul explains what it means to be embedded in (baptised into) the story of Christ crucified. It means that the believer dies with Christ and is raised with Him to a new life of righteousness. The believer dies to the laws (dominant narratives) of this world and lives in the new narrative of Christ's kingdom. This new narrative of Christ's kingdom is in solidarity with the poor. Therefore the Pastoral Redemptive Communities have a partnership with the communities of Pretoria Community Ministries.

#### 6.2.2.2 What kind of pastoral ecclesiological action can guide and lead villagers and marginalised with regard to ethical questions and with regard to a faithful life within a fragmented *postmodern global village*?

The Pastoral Redemptive Community can only offer the believer the narrative of Christ crucified. The community does this through creating a space where the believer's (villager or marginalised) story can be told and interpreted in the light of the Gospel. The story will then be re-authored by the Gospel story. This re-authored story has different values to the values of the dominant story of the *postmodern global village*. The dominant story of the *postmodern global village* has certain values which creates a specific kind of character. MacIntyre described three different kinds of characters which are the result of the *postmodern global village* narrative, namely rich aesthete, manager and therapist.<sup>36</sup>

These three characters embody the values of the *postmodern global village*. The narrative of Christ however offers the *postmodern global village* a different set of values based on the Gospel story.

33 Chapter Six: 10.2.1 Temptations

34 Chapter Seven: 6.1.1 Pastoral Redemptive Communities are embedded in the story of Christ crucified.

35 Refer back to Chapter Six: 8.2.2.1 The church's mission is comprehensive and challenges the whole of the *postmodern global village*

36 Chapter Five: 1.4.3 The individual in relation to others in the *postmodern global village*

If the story of Christ becomes the dominant or primary story in an individual's life he/she will be shaped by these values and a character will be formed which embodies these Gospel values. For this to be able to happen the church needs to be a living community where the Gospel is the determining story. This is not really possible unless the church returns to some form of monasticism. In St. Peter's this was impossible as the members of the congregation had their jobs and their families and thus could not afford to retreat to a monastery. The Pastoral Redemptive Communities sought to find a way between total disengagement (as in a monastery) and total engagement where the church cannot really offer an alternative.

This way was found in these communities which meet during the week and keep regular contact with each other, seeking continually to re-author the stories of life in the *postmodern global village*, through the story of Christ, and in the process shaping and training a character that embodies the values of the Gospel in contrast to the values of the *postmodern global village*.

The Pastoral Redemptive Communities do not propose to have answers to the ethical challenges of the villagers and those marginalised. All the Pastoral Redemptive Communities can offer is a space within the week of the villagers and those marginalised where the stories of the *postmodern global village* can be told. The communities offer a space where the ethical challenges can be shared and the stories re-authored/reinterpreted by the story of Christ. This re-authored story has a different set of values (a conversion of values) and these values slowly and in a continuous process of storytelling and re-authoring form and shape a certain character. This character negotiates a lifestyle which is faithful to Christ (discipleship) within the *postmodern global village*.

The Pastoral Redemptive Communities have sought to respond to this challenge by offering a space of disengagement from the *postmodern global village* where the stories can be told, re-authored and reinterpreted and a character is shaped and formed in obedience to Christ to re-engage with the *postmodern global village*. The Pastoral Redemptive Communities cannot prescribe ethical action as it would then not be a community under the cross, but a community which has created an idol and absolute universal norm. The story of the cross can form a character and this character responds ethically to the challenges according to the values of a community which is *of* and *under* the cross.

#### 6.2.2.3 What kind of pastoral ecclesiological action is appropriate where both the stories of the villagers and the marginalised can be re-authored by the redemptive story of a triune God, revealed in Christ, into a story of hope?

The Pastoral Redemptive Communities have sought to respond to this challenge by providing a space for re-authoring. This space for re-authoring is within a community which describes and understands itself to be a community of the cross as well as a community under the cross.<sup>37</sup>

As a community embedded in the story of Christ crucified the Pastoral Redemptive

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<sup>37</sup> Chapter Six: 10.4.1 Fusion of horizons – the questions with historical theology

Communities are communities of the cross and under the cross.

As community of the cross the Pastoral Redemptive Community is in solidarity with all those who have been marginalised by the laws, powers and idols of the *postmodern global village* and therefore will seek partnership with these communities (PCM communities). A partnership which consists of joint activities as well as offering counselling services through the St. Peter's counselling centre and joint celebrations (spaces for joint story telling and re-authoring).

As community under the cross the Pastoral Redemptive Communities are in solidarity with the whole godforsaken world. A godforsaken world is a world which continually seeks to create idols and gods of power and thereby turn its back on the true living God of history, a community that is in solidarity with a world that continually worships these false gods, a community which itself continually is tempted to create these false gods and certainties by creating absolutes and universal norms and standards. The Pastoral Redemptive Community thus seeks to remain under the cross challenging and re-authoring her own icons of power and thus also offering the villager a space for re-interpreting these godforsaken stories of power and prestige.

6.2.2.4 What kind of pastoral ecclesiological action is appropriate where the redemptive narrative of Christ can function as a prophetic alternative to the dominant discourses of the *postmodern global village*?

In Chapter Six (10.5.1 Fusion of horizons – the questions with historical theology) I reflected on the kind of church which is necessary to respond to the *postmodern global village* as a redemptive alternative and came to the following conclusion: This must be a church that has the passion story of Christ as her defining narrative. In other words it is a church which is created by the truth of Christ's passion narrative.

The Pastoral Redemptive Communities see themselves as communities embedded in the story of Christ crucified.

The New Testament and the early church understood being a church with the concept of the city of God within the cities of the world. This city was not defined by space, but by time as a present anticipated reality of the eschatological time of Christ's coming.<sup>38</sup> The Pastoral Redemptive Communities are communities which are organised by space (according to areas of the city) but defined by time (eschatological time of Christ) and characterised by an alternative story (story of Christ). The Pastoral Redemptive Communities which are defined by the story of Christ offer the *postmodern global village* an alternative through the characters it creates and thus the Eucharistic lifestyle of these characters in the *postmodern global village*.<sup>39</sup> The meetings of the Pastoral Redemptive Communities follow a basic Eucharistic liturgy where the passion story of Christ becomes the poetizing memory of the community which forms and shapes its lifestyle and characters. These characters seek to live obediently to this Eucharistic lifestyle in the *postmodern global village* and thus offer the village an alternative.

This lifestyle is an alternative as it is based on a completely different narrative to the dominant narratives of the *postmodern global village*. The Gospel narrative offers an alternative to the *postmodern global village's* need to control space from which others can be controlled, managed and manipulated. The Gospel narrative does not require

38 Chapter Six: 9. The story of the early church's identity

39 Chapter Six: 10.5.1 Fusion of horizons – the questions with historical theology

control over space, because the believer is seen as an alien, who does not have any space (land) but the kingdom of God (which is not spatially defined but temporally). The believer is thus homeless (spatially) within the *postmodern global village*. The believer in contrast to the *postmodern global village* does not see the other as a threat that needs to be managed or manipulated, but sees the other as a gift from God and his/her differences as a blessing.

This lifestyle thus offers a redemptive alternative to the *postmodern global village*.

The Pastoral Redemptive Communities cannot verbally and publically proclaim her truth as an alternative to the lies and illusions of the *postmodern global village*, because that would be beyond the dimensions of a narrative truth.<sup>40</sup> If the Pastoral Redemptive Communities should proclaim an universal absolute truth as an alternative to the lies of the *postmodern global village* they would no longer be communities under the cross and thus no longer be embedded in the story of Christ crucified, because then they would have created/constructed their own ideological truth, which is not the narrative truth of Christ crucified.

This means that the only redemptive alternative the Pastoral Redemptive Communities can offer the *postmodern global village*, is the Eucharistic lifestyle and character of her members who live and work in the *postmodern global village*.

#### 6.2.2.5 What kind of pastoral ecclesiological action is necessary for the Gospel to be proclaimed as a redemptive truth for all?

In the previous section I mentioned that the Gospel cannot be proclaimed as a universal truth as it is a narrative truth, which reveals itself in the mystery of narrative and faith. The only thing that the Pastoral Redemptive Communities can proclaim is the narrative of the Gospel. This Gospel is redemptive for all, but that can only be discovered in the response of faith and not as a postulate formulated as a universal truth. The only action the Pastoral Redemptive Communities can take to proclaim the Gospel as redemptive for all is to be a community of and under the cross.

This means that it is a community that lives in the memory of Christ crucified and in the anticipated hope of the coming eschatological Lord and thereby the Pastoral Redemptive Communities challenge the dominant narratives of the *postmodern global village* offering an alternative, liberating and redeeming interpretation of reality, life and history. Pastoral Redemptive Communities also live in the anticipated hope of the coming Lord, and in obedience to Christ seek the fulfilment of the kingdom in this world through this alternative lifestyle. This alternative lifestyle is lived in memory of the cross and therefore is never proclaimed as the 'answer' (a universal truth), but it is lived in weakness and humility and under the iconoclasm of the cross, which destroys any theory or ideology which claims divine (universal) status.

In conclusion, Pastoral Redemptive Communities proclaim nothing but a lifestyle formed and shaped by the story of Christ crucified and lived in the anticipated hope of the coming Lord.

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40 Chapter Six: 2. Historical theology in a *postmodern global village*

## 7. PASTORAL ECCLESIOLOGICAL ACTION IN A *POSTMODERN GLOBAL VILLAGE* WITHIN A NARRATIVE THEOLOGICAL ORIENTATION AS AN IMAGINED STORY OF THE FUTURE

### 7.1 Introduction

The pastoral ecclesiological action in a *postmodern global village* is interpreted in the context of the five dimensions as each human action can be seen within the context of these five dimensions of practical reason.<sup>41</sup>

I would like to reflect on the ecclesiological action of the Pastoral Redemptive Communities in the context of these five dimensions. The question guiding this reflection is: Can Pastoral Redemptive Communities be seen as a redemptive alternative (redemptive outcome) to the actions within the *postmodern global village* and thus offer an imagined story of the future?

The reflection of these 'actions' will be in the context of the narrative orientation (a narrative understanding of human action and praxis). I hope to thereby conclude this study as a search for a narrative theological orientation in a global village from a postmodern urban South African perspective, proposing an ecclesiological pastoral action (praxis) as understood within this narrative theological understanding. This proposal can be seen as a unique outcome for a specific ministry context, as the result of a specific theological journey of a congregation and myself. This proposal in no way assumes to be applicable in other contexts, but it has engaged critically with the five validity claims and therefore I believe it can enter into critical dialogue with other proposals/orientations. These actions form the basis for an imagined story of the future which is inspired by the re-authored (rediscovered) story of the past, making it possible for St. Peter's to take the next step into the future with hope.

### 7.2 Pastoral ecclesiological action made up of concrete practices (rules and roles, communication patterns)

In Chapter Two I discovered narrative as a response to the postmodern context. I discovered it by looking at very basic human actions and in the process of trying to understand these basic human actions discovered the usefulness of narrative understanding of human action, experience and personality. The Pastoral Redemptive Communities are communities which seek to create a narrative setting for understanding, interpreting and forming the actions of its members.

The Sunday service in isolation cannot be described as a narrative setting for the congregants which can shape and form human actions. The members of the congregation, who attend the Sunday service during the week, live and work in a totally

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<sup>41</sup> Chapter Four: 2.2 Validity claims in the context of descriptive theology and the common human experience in the global village.

different narrative setting, namely that which I have described in this study as the *postmodern global village*.

This *postmodern global village*, as a narrative setting<sup>42</sup>, forms and shapes the actions, determines the rules and roles of practice as well as the communication patterns in which the members of the congregation are embedded from Sunday after church to Sunday before church.

The workplace of many of the congregants in the *postmodern global village* is embedded in the language (communication patterns) of the global economy. These communication patterns proclaim certain values and thus form certain characters that act according to certain rules and roles. These values are diametrically opposed to the values of the Gospel and thus many of the members of the congregation are in conflict with themselves as their workplace demands of them certain actions which they cannot identify with because of their Christian upbringing.<sup>43</sup> If the 'Christian upbringing' is reduced to Sunday services the Gospel narrative (as a narrative setting) becomes very insignificant and not at all influential enough to form and shape the rules and roles of actions of the individual members of the congregation.

In response to this dominant narrative setting of the *postmodern global village* the Pastoral Redemptive Communities meet on a regular basis specifically to discuss these practical issues of everyday life in the *postmodern global village*. The actions demanded by rules and roles of the *postmodern global village* workplace are placed into a different narrative setting – not the setting of the *postmodern global village*, but the setting of the Gospel, and are thereby re-authored and alternative rules and roles are found which are based on different communicative patterns. In the Pastoral Redemptive Communities individuals are formed and shaped by the language/ communication patterns (narrative setting) of the Gospel, in other words it is the Gospel that shapes and forms their character with which they negotiate a truthful (that of a disciple) lifestyle within the *postmodern global village*.

The values of the *postmodern global village* form certain rules and roles through its communication patterns that shape and form a certain kind of character (for example rich aesthete, manager and therapist).<sup>44</sup>

The Gospel, as a narrative setting, also shapes and forms the rules and roles through its communication pattern (narrative setting) that shapes a certain character. This character is shaped by values (rules and roles) such as humility, grace, forgiveness, reconciliation and love. The character is formed in the likeness of Christ (Philippians 2: 5) by the story of Christ as testified to in the Gospel.

The Pastoral Redemptive Communities are not communities where everybody lives together and separate from the *postmodern global village* and thus their influence, as narrative setting, is minimal. The narrative setting of the *postmodern global village* is very powerful as it has full use of the media, but Pastoral Redemptive Communities in their weekly meetings create an awareness of an alternative way of understanding and

42 Chapter Four: 15. Narrative global field of experience

43 Chapter Three: 3.2.3 The stories of families in the global village

44 Chapter Five: 1.4.3 The individual in relation to others in the *postmodern global village*

interpreting the world.

This awareness is based on the passion narrative of Christ which exposes the lies and illusions of the *postmodern global village*.

The Pastoral Redemptive Communities, as narrative communities, cannot offer the individual member concrete answers or concrete rules and roles, but the language (narratives) of these communities shape a certain kind of character who has the necessary dramatic resources to negotiate his/her rules and roles in the *postmodern global village* which I believe are a redemptive and alternative response to the characters, rules and roles formed and shaped by the communication patterns of the *postmodern global village*.

### 7.3 Pastoral ecclesiological action is motivated by needs and tendencies

Any human action is motivated by certain needs and tendencies. These needs and tendencies can be understood as basic needs and tendencies, such as food, water and shelter or as psychologically induced needs and tendencies. These induced needs and tendencies are socially constructed needs and tendencies. "These needs and tendencies determine what we value and disvalue, what we need for survival and enjoyment, and what is harmful to survival and enjoyment" (Browning 1991:103).

Some of these basic needs are actually necessary for survival and then the individuals are made to believe that the psychologically induced needs are also absolutely necessary for their survival.

These tendencies and needs are based on the understanding of what it means to be a human. In the *postmodern global village* to be human means to understand oneself within the narrative setting of the *postmodern global village* with the dominant stories of consumption, individualism, and individual autonomy. This result of this narrative setting and the consequent understanding of what it means to be human is that the tendencies and needs are very egocentric. If needs and tendencies are understood mainly from the point of view of **my** needs and tendencies the result will very soon be that everybody is seen as a threat or as competitor.<sup>45</sup> Needs and tendencies within the context of the *postmodern global village* narrative setting are seen as something that must be defended against the others. For example the basic needs such as food and shelter is dependent, in the technically organised world of the *postmodern global village*, on employment opportunities. In the highly competitive global labour market everybody is a possible threat. Humanity is fragmented as others are seen as threats or possible threats to my fulfilment of my needs and tendencies. The result is a fragmented world, and in many instances very competitive, stressful situations at work and sometimes even antagonistic work environments.<sup>46</sup> If everybody is seen as a threat or as a possible threat it also explains the rise in xenophobia throughout the world as the foreigners are seen as 'those who steal our jobs'.<sup>47</sup>

Another basic need is the need for meaning and security. The individual in the

45 Chapter Five: 1.4.3 The individual in relation to others in the *postmodern global village*

46 Chapter Three: 3.2.3 The stories of families in the global village, as well as Chapter Four, first perspective: 7.3 Unpacking the story of fragmentation and marginalization – the division of labour.

47 Chapter Four: 10.3 Unpacking the story of fragmentation and marginalization – the division of labour.

*postmodern global village* has the need to understand and interpret him/herself and to understand the world around him/her. The individual has a need for sacred stories.<sup>48</sup> In the *postmodern global village* the individual is denied the possibility of these sacred stories of tradition and is told that he/she has to construct his/her own sacred stories from the religious goods available on the consumer market.

The individual, urged on by the need for security and meaning, constructs a sacred story and this story gives a momentary feeling of security and meaning, but in the global village this story is immediately threatened by the other constructed stories, or the other stories of various religious or ideological traditions.<sup>49</sup> The result of this disembedding and the need for security and meaning is fundamentalism. In the last few decades there has been a rise in religious or ideological fundamentalism. In a *postmodern global village* other religions or ideologies are seen as threats because they threaten the individual's understanding of reality and of him/herself.

I have mentioned a few tendencies and needs within the *postmodern global village* which are not fulfilled and the result is fragmentation and a feeling of homelessness.<sup>50</sup> The Pastoral Redemptive Communities seek to respond to these tendencies and needs by offering the individual member alternative dramatic resources by which to understand him/herself and the world around him/her and therefore offering a different understanding of his/her tendencies and needs.

In the Pastoral Redemptive Communities individuals are not seen as autonomous and egocentric consumers, but as humans created in the image of God embedded in the divine history of the triune God. The individual members are given the dramatic resources to interpret the pluralism of the *postmodern global village* as a gift of God and not as a threat, and thus the pluralism of the global village is incorporated into the understanding, description and interpretation of the history of the world. These dramatic resources are found in the narratives of scripture.

#### **7.4 Pastoral ecclesiological action is limited and channelled by social-systemic and ecological constraints**

Human actions are formed by certain rules and roles, formed by the narrative setting (communication patterns), and are a response to basic human tendencies and needs as well as psychologically induced tendencies and needs.

Yet these actions are limited by certain social-systemic and ecological constraints.

Actions in the *postmodern global village* are formed by the rules and roles of the narrative setting (consumerism, individual autonomy and individualism) where the basic needs and tendencies are continuously seen to be threatened by others and thereby fragmenting the globe through fear and violence.<sup>51</sup>

This egocentric consumption is limited by the limited natural resources available. This means that a certain luxury lifestyle is only available to a few and excluding many others

48 Chapter Two: 8.4.1 Sacred stories.

49 Chapter Four: 15.3 The disembedded narratives of selves.

50 Chapter Four: 16. Globalisation and homelessness

51 Chapter Five: 1.6 The effects of the *postmodern global village*.

from this luxury lifestyle. If the majority of the world's population are excluded or marginalised from this luxury lifestyle then this lifestyle will continuously be threatened.

The question therefore is: How long will the earth be able to accommodate this egocentric consumption and the resulting potential for violence?

Human action, as interpreted within the narrative setting of the *postmodern global village*, is limited and constrained, firstly by the environmental factors (limited natural resources) and secondly by the social-systemic factors (rising violence and frustration because of the unequal distribution of resources and the continuous fear and threat of the other).

The Pastoral Redemptive Communities offer an alternative understanding of human action. Human action is formed by the rules and roles of the narrative setting of the Gospel where the basic needs and tendencies are interpreted within the story of the triune history of the world thereby placing humanity and the world within the context of the holistic redemptive history of the Trinity.<sup>52</sup>

Within this narrative setting the environment, history and other humans are seen as a gift which comes to the present generation from the past. It is given to the present generation to work and develop in partnership with God<sup>53</sup> and then is passed on to future generations.

The environment is not seen as a resource that is exploited by humans and unequally distributed, but as a gift that is shared and developed within the context of the redemptive history of God's kingdom. Other humans (social-systemic limitations) are not seen as threats, but as a blessing of God's manifold glory.

## 7.5 Pastoral ecclesiological action is ordered by the principles of obligation

Human actions are ordered by principles of obligation. Humans as rational beings will always develop certain principles of obligation rationally explaining their actions (Browning 1991:105).<sup>54</sup> Human action within the *postmodern global village* is regulated by the rational principles of the global economy. These principles of obligation form the values (roles and rules) of the characters<sup>55</sup> which are created by the *postmodern global village* story.

One of the dominant stories of the *postmodern global village* is that there is no dominant story, but that each individual creates his/her own metanarrative. This dominant story is exactly what is necessary for the dominant economic story to flourish in the *postmodern global village*.<sup>56</sup>

This dominant economic story is therefore seen as the rational global story which is not

52 Chapter Six: 7.4 The relationship between the church and the trinitarian history of God.

53 Chapter Six: 8.3.2 The Story of the kingdom of God as a kingdom of redemption.

54 Chapter Four: 2.2 Validity claims in the context of descriptive theology and the common human experience in the global village.

55 Chapter Five: 1.4.3 The individual in relation to others in the *postmodern global village*

56 Chapter Five: 1.2 The global village a postmodern village

constructed but inevitable and therefore forms the rational basis for the obligations of the characters in the *postmodern global village*. The obligations of the character of the *postmodern global village* are not seen as arbitrary, but founded on rational principles of the global market economy which are understood as natural. In other words, the global economy is not part of the socially constructive narratives of the global village, but is a universal and natural phenomenon. This is an illusion as the market mechanisms are not natural (based on natural human needs and tendencies)/rational or universal, but are indeed socially constructed.<sup>57</sup>

The Pastoral Redemptive Communities, which are communities of the cross of Christ, are liberated from the laws (obligations) of the *postmodern global village*. The cross of Christ exposes the so-called 'natural law' of the market economy, which creates certain inevitable obligations, as illusions. The passion story of Christ exposes this law (obligation) as an illusion that ends in death. It exposes the obligation for what it truly is namely as a law that leads to the death of the individual as well as the death of the planet.<sup>58</sup>

Pastoral Redemptive Communities place the individual under a new obligation and that is the obligation of the cross and to remain under the cross, thereby exposing the lies and illusions of the laws (universal truths) that humanity creates. The obligation to remain under the cross is an obligation to remain faithful to Christ only without creating idols, universal truths or universal systems of meaning.<sup>59</sup> The narrative of Christ's passion is the narrative truth which places the individual under the rational obligation of the story of the cross.

## 7.6 Pastoral ecclesiological action is given meaning by visions, narratives and metaphors (sacred stories)

Human actions have meaning by being placed within a certain narrative settings.<sup>60</sup> These narrative settings have histories and traditions (sacred stories).<sup>61</sup> It is within the context of the visions (*telos*) of the sacred stories that human actions find their meaning and purpose.

Within the *postmodern global village* it is believed that there is no one universal sacred story and therefore there also is no binding *telos* that can give general meaning and purpose to human actions.<sup>62</sup>

Without this unifying *telos* humanity has no other option than to turn to emotivism to justify their actions. I would like to argue that behind this 'loss of telos' there is a vision and a sacred story namely the 'non-story' story of the *postmodern global village*.

This is the sacred story that tells the story that in the *postmodern global village* there is no sacred story, but rather a pluralism of sacred stories from which the individual can choose. This sacred story creates the moral relativism necessary for the sacred

57 Chapter Four: 7.1 The early beginnings of the story

58 Chapter Six: 8.2.1 Justification of the sinner and liberation from the power of sin

59 Chapter Six: 8.2.3 Liberation of godforsakenness and the godforsaken

60 Chapter Two: 8.2.2 Narrative intelligibility of human actions

61 Chapter Two: 8.4 Social setting of narrative

62 Chapter Five: 2.4.5 The result of the church's position towards these developments. In this section I reflect on MacIntyre's argument that in postmodernity the world lost its telos.

economic story of the *postmodern global village* to advance in history unchallenged. For example, the American led war on Iraq could not be challenged because of the moral relativism which is created by the sacred story (that there is no unifying sacred story) of the *postmodern global village*. The fact that this war could go on, although challenged from many sides, was because all arguments against it were relative and could thus be reduced to emotional arguments.

This does not mean that the actions on the world stage of the *postmodern global village* do not have meaning or are arbitrary just because the arguments for or against these actions are relative and emotive. Nor does it mean that this action was not placed within a sacred story that gave it meaning and purpose. The war on Iraq makes absolute sense, has meaning and purpose within the 'sacred' economic story of the *postmodern global village*.

The Pastoral Redemptive Communities are set within the sacred story of God's revealed truth. This truth is revealed in the story of God with humanity and thus is a narrative truth. This divine story is revealed in the story and passion of Christ and the Gospels testify to this narrative truth. The actions of the individuals are placed within this setting and thus find meaning and purpose within this narrative setting.

This sacred story also gives the individuals the dramatic resources to understand and interpret the actions within world history as history is understood and interpreted within the history of the triune God with the world.<sup>63</sup>

The dramatic resources of the narrative of the cross enables the community to interpret and expose the illusions of the sacred story of the *postmodern global village* as it understands history within the context of the trinitarian history of God revealed in Christ. The cross of Christ enables the members of the community to expose the gods and the idols of power of the sacred story of the *postmodern global village*. The Pastoral Redemptive Communities can therefore offer the world a redemptive alternative which is a unique outcome because it offers liberation from the obligations of the sacred stories of the *postmodern global village*. The Pastoral Redemptive Communities do not offer an alternative system of truth, or society, but offers the world the narrative of the cross as truth and in that there is liberation, redemption and a unique outcome that offers a future filled with hope.

## 7.7 Conclusion

I have reflected on the pastoral ecclesiological action of the Pastoral Redemptive Communities within a narrative theological orientation as a response to the *postmodern global village* within the context of these five validity claims. I did this not to formulate a new theory or model, but to create the possibility for rational critique and dialogue with other communities. The pastoral action of the Pastoral Redemptive Communities is not just arbitrary and emotive, but they have a rational basis as I tried to defend this action within these five dimensions.

The truth or appropriateness of these actions is not to be found in a universally valid social or ecclesiological theory or in a transcendental theorem, but in the narrative of Christ and the kind of character this narrative creates. The truthfulness of the narrative

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63 Chapter Six: 7.4 The relationship between the church and the trinitarian history of God.

or the appropriateness of the narrative will be known by the kind of character which is formed and shaped by the narrative and which can truthfully and redemptively respond to the *postmodern global village*.

In conclusion I would like to compare these two narratives (*postmodern global village* and the narrative of Christ as the narrative of the Pastoral Redemptive Communities) and the kind of character they form and shape.

<b>Characters, values, rules and roles, obligations formed by the vision (sacred story) of the <i>Postmodern global village</i></b>	<b>Characters, values, rules and roles, obligations formed by the vision (sacred story) of the story of Christ in the Pastoral redemptive communities</b>
<b>The commodity form</b> of the consumer society of the <i>postmodern global village</i>	<b>The personal form</b> as discovered in the story of the revealed Word of God that addresses the individual and re-authors his/her story in the moment of faith and which becomes the foundation narrative of the pastoral redemptive communities
<b>Value Grounded in Thinghood</b> Marketability of the person Production: worth as what you do Consumption	<b>Value Grounded in Personhood</b> Intrinsic value of persons Worth as who you are Self-gift
<b>Thing-Knowledge</b> Observation and description Measurement and control Quality as quantity Emphasis on derived knowledge How-questions	<b>Personal Knowledge</b> Faith: self-consciousness and interiority Understanding and trust Human quality as non-measurable Immediate experience Why questions
<b>Thing-Willing</b> Determinism Escape Non-commitment Passivity Deadness	<b>Personal-Willing</b> Limited freedom Self-investment Covenant Engagement Aliveness
<b>Thing-Behaviour</b> Violence: Domination Manipulation Retaliation Punishment Defence Devaluation of life Demand Competition Retention	<b>Person-Behaviour</b> Peace: Acceptance of weakness Respect of freedom Forgiveness Healing Defenselessness Exaltation of least person Invitation Sharing Giving
<b>Thing-Like Affectivity</b> Sexuality as mechanics Body as machine Fear/threat	<b>Personal Affectivity</b> Sexuality as sign of person Body as temple- sacral presence Fear not

Non-commitment Retention of self Technique Externality Replaceability Coolness Hardness Accumulation Invulnerability Exchange Hedonism: immediate self-gratification	Covenant – committed devotedness Self-donation Telos Interiority Uniqueness Tenderness Compassion Detachment Vulnerability Prodigal love Generosity: suffering love
<b>Thing-Reality</b> Having What is Human scepticism Human paralysis and doubt Individual isolation Unfreedom as final condition Death	<b>Person-Reality</b> Being What we can be Faith and fidelity Hope and trust Love Freedom as final condition Life
<b>Thing-Life</b> Flight from the self Fragmented relationship Addiction to things Degradation of persons Fear of vulnerable	<b>Person-life</b> Recovery of solitude Rediscovery of community Simplicity of life Commitment to justice Open to wounded

This table I have adapted from John Kavanaugh's (Kavanaugh 1991:110-111) book, *Following Christ in a Consumer Society*.

The Gospel of Christ shapes and forms a character who lives by certain rules and roles, shaped by a certain understanding of humanity (tendencies and needs), has certain values and lives under certain Gospel values and obligations, which all find meaning in the Gospel narrative.

This character, set within the narrative of the Gospel, can live truthfully and redemptively within the environmental and social-systemic constraints of the world today in contrast to the character set within the narrative setting of the *postmodern global village*.

I am not proposing that my understanding, description and interpretation of the *postmodern global village* is correct or the only possible description, nor that my understanding and interpretation of scripture's understanding of church is correct, but I am proposing a narrative orientation for doing theology in the *postmodern global village* that is not just relative and arbitrary, but can enter into a critical rational dialogue with other orientations.

I have come to the end of the study and yet it is only the beginning of the journey.