

CHAPTER 4: Samples of stories of five women

1. Introduction

The previous Chapter analysed the Methodology of Caring for the widows under the following headings:

- Epistemology
- The Reputable Way to Provide Caring
- Uniqueness of the Minister's offering
- Love: The Pivotal Point of Departure.

Notions such as the following were employed in an attempt to expatiate the methodology of caring for the widows:

Gerkin's Shepherding Model

Hermeneutical Model of Shepherding

- Boosting Self-Awareness
- Various Facets of a Shepherd such as:
 - Leader
 - Guide
 - Provider
 - Protector.

This current chapter will concentrate on the Stories of women. Five women will be interviewed as co-researchers. Three will be drawn from the Pentecostal Church, which is the primary focus of the study. The study intends to assess the care of the clergy widows with the intention to establish an informed analysis which can better support the care of widows within such circles. The other two women will be drawn from the Mainline Church. The author assumed that these churches are rather better organised and as such can be informative with the required information which can ultimately help the Pentecostal Church with an

illuminated tool of care for their own widows. The interviews will assist in validating the assumed premises and, as such, qualify assumptions as scientific.

Providing an introduction to the Stories of Diakonia in Europe, the General Secretary of the Conference of European Churches, Jean Fischer states the following: “Telling stories about diakonia or Christian service- the “cup of cold water” offered in the name of the Lord- gives a face of both pain and hope. ...The All-European Consultation on Diaconia, held in Bratislava, Slovak Republic, in October 1994, used the methodology of story-telling as the basis of its work. ...Diaconia has a solid biblical basis. The choice of the seven who were “known to be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom” to carry out the diaconal work of the early church (Acts 6) resulted from noticing an injustice within the community: some of the widows “were being overlooked in the daily distribution”” (Gurney 1995: ix).

The author aligns his rationale with Fischer’s, who indicates categorically that the methodology which was applied to solve the plight of the potential schism resultant from the unfair treatment of some widows was purely an engagement of wisdom through telling and listening to stories of the widows in a diaconal way. Attesting to the same is Gurney in the following way: “The art of story-telling predates that of the written word. Since those long gone days when the aural message was the principal means of communications, something of the art of story-telling has been lost. A good story-teller keeps the audience enthralled, and what is told has a lasting effect. That supreme teller of stories, Jesus, lived in an age when, although history was being written down, ordinary folk knew how to listen and how to tell and retell stories both historical and contemporary. It has been said that “at no point are the vitality, relevance and appropriateness of his profundity so clear as they are in his parables”” (Gurney 1995: xi). The author is in support of

what Gurney mentions about the effect of the art of story-telling which is even evident in Christ's own ministry.

It is for the same reason that he will be equally applying this age old powerful methodology of seeking for holistic healing. This method of research will help the clergy widows develop rapport as well as a sense of security through telling their own ordeal encounters of being neglected like the widows in Acts 6. This chapter will unfold the deliberations under the following headings:

- The Advent of the Western System.
- An Undisturbed Traditional System of Communalism among Aboriginal Africans.
- Redressing the Ills Created by Colonialism.
- Interviews:
 - Interviews with Three Women from Pentecostal Church.
 - Interviews with Two Women from Mainline Church.
- An Analysis of the Stories
- Preliminary Conclusion.

2. The Advent of the Western System

Stories are both an inevitable as well as an inseparable part of an African people. They create a base of unity amongst a people as well as give a sense of belonging to a group. Stories come a very long way amongst an African people. They are actually as old as humanity. The author will, as such, hide the identities of the widows not only by using fictitious names, but by distorting the geographic

location as well as utilizing not real figures and numbers where these people are employed.

As it relates directly to storytelling, in the words of the World Council of Churches: “Healing and care become more possible as one “shares the story” within an atmosphere of acceptance, love and continuing concern” (A WCC Study Document 1997:80)

It becomes palpable from rationale provided by the WCC Study Document that stories are an integral therapeutic part of any given society through which they could create, generate as well as draw required pictures of value systems amongst a people. Mnisi reiterates the same fact as follows: “African concept makes sense of their lives through storytelling, it does not matter how painful that story is. Stories are part and parcel of their lives. People make sense of their lives through stories, especially cultural narratives which are born into our lives as they shape our values, and the personal narratives construct in relations to the cultural narratives” (Mnisi 2005:24)

Mnisi buttresses the WCC Document’s opinion on the essence of storytelling, especially that story-telling helps shape the values of a society and create a platform of healing and care. The author agrees with this notion and would further endorse the same with the fact that stories help hand down the cultural heritage of a people in the most secured way and system. This reasoning will, therefore, serve as an instrument which the author will employ in order to establish a ventilation platform for the co-researchers.

It also becomes very evident that there was an even better way for an African people to vent out their conceived ideas and ideals through the medium of story-telling which has ever since been tempered with by the advent of the Western systems of doing and conducting business. Stories are a helpful and therapeutic way through which one finds a way to vent out their hurts and frustrations since “we can never fully enter into the pain of another person, whether or not we have experienced something similar in our own lives” (Campbell 1986:42)

Considering the reality that “of all human experiences, the experience of loss is the most pervasive and potentially the most crippling” (Campbell 1986:42), it is incumbent therefore upon the caregiver to employ what Campbell further conceptualizes as follows: “The wounded healer heals, because he or she is able to convey, as much by presence as by the words used, both an awareness and a transcendence of loss” (1986:42).

The author supports the notion upheld by Campbell that the wounded healer heals not only by words but even by his/her mere presence. This was a prevalent practice amongst an African people before the advent of the Western systems. Hence during the period of grieving and mourning, the widow would not be allowed to be all by herself, but would be in the presence of a company helping her to communicate her story through her feelings of hurt and crying.

On the contrary, in terms of the Western system “as recently as the 1950’s a suicide was not allowed a Christian burial” (Watts, Nye and Savage 2002:158). This shows the extent in which the Advent of such a system was harmful to an otherwise accommodative African system whose primary consideration evolved around what Watts, Nye and Savage considered as follows: “The termination of a

difficult relationship through death tends not to bring a blessed release, as one might wish for, but rather a legacy of unresolved anguish, anger and guilt” (2002:158).

The author agrees with what Watts, Nye and Savage are proposing with regard to the pain and legacy of unresolved anger left by the termination of a difficult relationship. They further attest to the same ideal by an indication of the state of trauma created by such loss as follows: “Survivors of profound trauma may be so wounded that they need to be accepted in their limited ‘ungenerous’ state; to require impossible feats for forgiveness from them may only cause further damage” (Watts, Nye and Savage 2002:30)

A picture is immediately drawn which calls for intense scrutiny to the beauty which the Advent of the Western system brought to Africa in the form of Christianity and its related Western Religions thoughts. Such beauty is painted by Cueni as follows: “We are called to be instruments of healing, not warriors on the ecclesiastical battlefield. Assume pastoral ministry means loving people into wholeness, not winning battles” (Cueni 1988:43).

The author agrees that the fundamental and most immediate duty of the pastoral care-giver is the knowledge that the calling is an instrument of healing and not of boastful warriors in the battlefield. This is the beauty of the analogy depicted by the Western System which is further attested by Pappas in his treatment of the Stress-Transforming Tools where he states the following: “Stress can be an angel, a messenger from God. Stress can be the pinch that wakes you up, the call that alerts you to something worth knowing, the push that gets you started in God’s direction. Stress can be all of those things and more” (Pappas 1995:11)

Whereas Cueni encourages that the pastoral care-giver should not play the role of the warrior, Pappas on the other hand allows the importance of allowing a dialogue with an acceptance of the situation in which the hurting finds herself (sic). This position communicates the deeper need to listen to the story of the widow which is told both in words as well as through emotions and actions.

Whilst the aesthetic position of the Advent of the Western System is appreciated, the authenticity of the undisturbed Traditional System of Communalism among Aboriginal Africans is equally applauded as will be evidenced hereunder. This system and methodology was medicinal when approaching the healing of the widow and the hurt in general in an African society. The framework for this conviction is articulated by Pappas as follows: “So God made us, God made us like divinity itself, and God made us in such a way that we are the locus of God’s activity” (Pappas 1995:13). This proposition by Pappas immediately qualifies the inherent penchant that speaks to the importance of story-telling in the African context.

One can unequivocally bear testimony to the importance of story-telling as reflected in the narrative by one widow interviewed by the author. In compliance with the ethical code of conduct her name will be known as Mrs. Khambule (not real name), for anonymity purposes. It is important to highlight straightaway that this and all other stories were told in African languages and the author translated the content to the nearest most possible equivalent meaning of what was said and intended by the co-researchers. Mrs Khambule started by gawking on the floor for a considerably longer time in her sitting room where the author was interviewing her before she could be relaxed to tell her story. She almost burst into tears like a

baby. After an act similar to wiping her tears gently in her face and a gulp of air, she recounted her story in the following way:

“My husband served the church for thirty five years dedicating his whole life to serving the church he loved until death. I was always supportive to him, his calling and the Lord’s work.

What disappointed and disturbed me most was the following:

- There was and there is still no form of spiritual support I am getting from the church. By this I mean at my age (eighty nine years), there is no one in the church who could volunteer to come and fetch me to the fellowship on Sunday, even if it could be four people in turns, each on their allocated day.
- There is no form of emotional support from the church. I am not the only one hurting; the entire family is bleeding considering my late husband’s commitment to the church and the rejection we are experiencing in turn.
- The church does not have any form of pension scheme or assistance to the widows.
- I have not been given any form of financial assistance. On my birthday recently the church only bought me the grocery. I do not think that the grocery is all I deserved after co-serving the church with my late husband for such a long period of time.
- I have actually never received a R20-00 note from the church.

I believe that there is a better way to show love and live up to such a confession. I would love not to be seen as fighting the church. I would rather limit my story to

what I have mentioned, than to elongate it to the detriment of my emotions and my family's happiness.

This narrative bore testimony to the question posed by McIntyre as follows: "Why does the buried stuff of the heart sometimes burst back up?" (McIntyre 1996:65). The author instantly traces a response to the question in Brenner's dealing of the young widow called Ruth as follows: "Sasson points out in his commentary that Ruth binds herself to Naomi by verbal contract (1.16-17). The concept of 'love' that is applicable here, as in the slave's love for his master in Exod.21.2-6(5), is a legal rather than an emotional concept: it indicates intent as well as consent" (Brenner 1999:159). It becomes apparent that the African story was told by a deeper commitment which transcended even the written contract. The narrated story equalled the innocent content of the heart which uttered it.

Confirming the beauty of story-telling as a therapeutic method of validating the proposed point of conviction, is Musa Dube in her discussion of the unpublished letters of Orpah to Ruth. In her treatment of this subject, she draws this picture: "We were sitting outside, around the fire, during the night" (Brenner 1999:145). As her mother communicated the story to her daughter she indicated the following: "Long before the white people sold us their dresses, their schools and their religions, we wore short skirts and plenty of jewels. Young men wore very short, tight leather shorts around their loins; yet rape, incest, sex outside marriage, teenage pregnancy and divorce were very rare, if not unheard of....Now that we are all Western dressed, Christianized and educated, sexual and sins of all kinds have befallen us" (Brenner 1999:145). This narrative gives legitimacy to the age old practice of story-telling among an African people, the wealth which existed long before the Advent of the Western system.

Mrs Khambule's narrative explicitly indicated that the true wealth of an African people was inherent in the stories they told. This form of telling the story seems to no longer matter much according to her own perception that even if she could wail and cry no one from the church circles seem to care. This could apparently be as a result of the Western System with its limited focus on those who are only alive, here and now. In the same breath, the second voice of a widow that we will name Mrs. Mantoro, (not real name), also had her side of the story to tell which unfolded as follows:

“I tend to think that my story is different. Paul (*not real name-referring to her deceased husband*), passed on still working for the church very faithfully. He was seconded by the church to Chaplaincy, and passed on while in that employment. My greatest pain is that my husband was no ordinary citizen in South Africa. He contributed to the struggle of his people and fought his whole life until the grave; fighting for justice and truth. You are one of his products in your own capacity; (She referred to the author). He did request that I should not allow speeches during his funeral. This was one of his prominent characteristics; he did not want to attract the attention to himself but submit all the glory to the one who called him.

The one thing which became a true thorn in my flesh was the manner in which the Bishop conducted the funeral. I unambiguously deduced the following:

- The Bishop did not know who Paul was.
- He did not know who I was or Paul's family for that matter.
- The sermon and his comments were not speaking about Paul (my husband).
- It was a completely strange person who was being spoken of.

At that point all the friends of Paul were sitting in a corner listening to the cold sermon from the Bishop who did not know him. These are the people who could have enlivened the memories of my husband. This Bishop was only two months in the area when my husband passed on. He did not bother to inquire who he actually was. My true pain started on the Bishop not knowing my husband. He did not even take the trouble to know about us. My husband passed on in ICU and the Rector referred the burial matters to the Bishop, yet he himself knew him better since he was his server in *Polokwane* (one of the South African provinces).

The pain of a widow is that the policy he had taken needed proof from the church that he was a member for tax clearance purposes. The diocese secretary said Paul had left the church: ‘He did not work for me’- he said. He refused altogether with the proof letter which was required. I was appalled by his comment because Paul was truly not working for him but the church. After a week I went back. The lady working in the office was very kind and told me of the widow’s form which I had to complete in order to lodge the necessary claim assistance.

The good side is that the church does have the welfare ministry for the widows. In December they send parcels for widows. In the past three years they have been sending cheques. They do send a word of invitation in a year showing that they have not forgotten me. During Christmas they do send R450-00 (four hundred and fifty rand.) The most exciting part is that during the delivery of the parcels the team will sit down and listen to your story.

The pain of widowhood is felt right through until the grave, especially when you are doing grocery alone. Sitting at the mall one Christmas, a woman of a different race group just decided to talk to me. She said she had been a widow for twelve

years. I was only one for three years. This was comforting because it was right at the point I was imagining how we used to shop for Christmas with my late husband at the same mall. (*At this stage the author thought to himself: 'There was no better way the Lord God Almighty could have sent an angel to comfort Mrs. Mantoro other than this.'*)

I concluded that our dead loved ones are irreplaceable, the real one, the one you lost through death. Money, no matter how much does not replace a person. The value of the person is irreplaceable. I strongly do recommend that those who support the mourners should not only surround or support the widow alone, but the entire bereaved family as well.”

The pride, pain and anguish with which this story was told finds its best reflection in the account narrated by Dube’s mother as follows: “All my life, insisted Grandmother, ‘I have not ceased to tell the beautiful stories of our people. I have recited all the poems of our heroes and heroines, poems of our origin, of our brave battles of survival in drought and in good rains. I have told stories of the intelligent Sechele, Semane, Kgama and Kgamane, Mantatis, Lobengula, Shaka, Nandi, Mbuya Nehanda, Joshua Nkomo, Seretse Kgama, Bessie Head, Kenneth Kaunda, Nelson Mandela and the like. I have written these stories in your ears and hearts” (Brenner 1999:146).

The author echoes the sentiments portrayed by the Grandmother in the foregoing narrative in that this was and still is the way an African people tell their stories. Such stories are not necessarily written with an ink on a paper but in the inextinguishable hearts of a people, so that they can bear testimony to endless generations. This is what necessitates the importance of understanding story-

telling within an African perspective. It eventually becomes the whole purpose and reason of story-telling which will be essential in creating a healing mechanism for the widows in discussion. This will be evident in the next section which deals with an undisturbed traditional system of communalism among aboriginal African people.

Though taken from the British perspective, it seems that the trend of the widow to widower ratio is really appalling as demonstrated by Castle in the following way: “There are many more widows (3 million in Britain) than widowers, and many of the most serious consequences of losing a marriage partner apply more to women than to men. The widow is likely to suffer a severe drop in income and to have less experience and knowledge in running the affairs of the family” (*ed* Castle 1986:196-197). This picture immediately draws the devastating pain which equals the global trend in which the widows find themselves in.

A call is then extended for the pastoral caregivers to be sensitively committed to the need of the widows when dealing with the envisaged care for this group of people. We will now focus on the value which has always been attributed to an undisturbed traditional system of communalism among aboriginal Africans.

3. An Undisturbed Traditional System of Communalism among Aboriginal Africans

Magesa presents a painful argument advocating for the need to preserve the tradition of a people as follows: “The fundamental element, or foundational “principle,” so to speak, of African religious life and thought centres on the fact of creation. Created reality, including humanity, exists on account of the will of God. To continue to live peacefully, therefore, created reality must organize itself

according to that will which God established for it from the very beginning. God's will for creation is preserved in the traditions of the people and is transmitted from generation to generation through the instruction of the elders and mystical actions of ancestors" (Magesa 1969:285).

This notion of transmitting the instructions of the elders from generation to generation is attested by Brenner on Dube's conversations in the following way: "I do not like to write, since in my culture, we do not write. We speak, listen and hear. In my culture some write, but they have no publisher. I do not know from where Lesedi picked these letters. Yet the fact that these letters are among her collections attest to the fact that Orpah is one of us: most of her stories have been written for her, and the stories she writes end up in the 'No Publisher' box. I believe, therefore, that these attached four letters are signed with Orature-the culture of speaking, hearing, re/writing and finding no publisher" (Brenner 1999:147).

The sad picture provided by Dube in Brenner indicates that the traditional system of communalism among the aboriginal Africans is never swayed by circumstances regardless of its publishing shortfall and misfortune. It could be bankrupt of publishing deals, yet it is ironically wealthy with the history of stories such as those narrated by Mrs. Lesedi (not real name), in the following manner:

"The sad part of my story is that the loss of a spouse is irreplaceable. I had a fair share of a pleasant life being married to a well known and respected clergy in the church as well as in the political world. He made a very great contribution to the wellbeing of many lives. His passing on will be the only haunting life time encounter I am compelled to live with.

In as far as the support from the church is concerned I must truly admit that I have both observed and experienced what an African people are capable of doing. During the week of mourning, the house was flooded with a countless number of my husband's co-workers from all walks of life. These people ranged from prominent politicians to outspoken clergies who all came to comfort the family. I was impressed that some of my late husband's acquaintances were Pastoral Counsellors who knew that I was not the only one hurting but the entire family as well. The ministers from all walks of life came and provided support at home, at the church and at the graveyard. I felt secured and covered. The local church came after the funeral to provide emotional and spiritual support. They provided such support to everybody in the family.

What surprises are the peace and the presence of God which made it seem as if nothing had actually happened? This was experienced before and after the funeral. This is amazing that I also had peaceful sleep as if there was no death in the family. I can attest this to the overwhelming support we experienced as a family. I am convinced that I have tasted the meaning of a true religion which is defined by James in the following manner: "Pure, unstained religion, according to God our Father is to take care of orphans and widows when they suffer" (James 1:27). Now the only question I have is: 'Whose responsibility is it to take care of the orphans and widows?' It is truly the role of the church."

This story depicts the reality of the inherent wealth of knowledge and wisdom among the aboriginal Africans. This is a practical helpful way which can finally help the widows to arrive at a therapeutic yet cost effective state of desired healing.

The unity and the undisturbed system of communalism among aboriginal Africans displayed to Mrs. Lesedi is best reiterated by Magesa who construes of such as the orderliness brought by cooperating with the Divine Order in following way: “The interaction between the visible and invisible spheres of the universe and human responsibility for them is not simply random. It is controlled by a moral order instituted and sanctioned by God and channelled through the ancestors of any given community. This order is reserved by tradition and, if followed, has the power or force to sustain the existence and operation of the universe, ensuring a bountiful life for humanity” (Magesa 1969:72).

The methodology of reaching healing through story-telling is seen as a means and method which is as old as an aboriginal African people themselves. The author supports the reasoning of sustenance which is inherently built into such a system. Such reasoning finds a parallel existence in what Oden states as: “and I hope that you may, serve the Lord in the holy temple, that is, in His church with a new upright conscience, with prayer and fasting, night and day serving the needy saints, which the virtuous widow of Sarepta in Sidon did for faithful Elijah in the time of drought and scarcity when she received him in her hospitality and fed him with her tiny bit of meal and oil” (Oden 1986:157).

The reasoning of sustenance, coupled with the commitment and the duty of the widow proposed by Oden, become necessary tools which serve as a motivation and encouragement to an African widow. Such reasoning constantly resonate the sentiment echoed by Castle as follows: “Giving ourselves to the poor is the most marvellous work on earth, for there we can be truly ourselves-rid of pretensions and notions of superiority, helpless in the face of the immensity of the problem being alive to new possibilities” (*ed* Castle 1986:191). The author agrees with the

concept of taking care of the poor and is further articulated by Castle as follows: “a moment when the ‘do-gooder’ attitude is found wanting, and the Beatitude ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit’ explodes into meaning” (*ed* Castle 1986:190)

This position of being committed to the broken-hearted, who represent the poor in heart, is exactly what defined the undisturbed traditional system of communalism among aboriginal Africans. They had always been bound by an unbreakable bond of unity and care put by Oates as follows: “The business of “letting loose. Letting go, and letting be” has a stern note to it. It is tough loving care” (Oates 1980:36). It was in these formidable bonds of unity that the care of the widowed could be mapped in a more meaningful manner and is articulated as follows: “Mood refers to our feeling tone. In this sense we are always “in” some sort of mood” (Ciarrochi 1993:69).

The author agrees that humanity is in some kind of mood which at all instances dictate to the requirements of caring at any given moment. He further agrees with Oates that such mood is affected by the attitude that calls for acceptance of the state of affairs and as such demands the recipients of the situation to get into that mood that will let loose of those circumstances we have no control over as best illustrated in the Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi which states: “God grant me serenity, to overcome the things I cannot change; Wisdom to change those I can; and courage to know the difference.”

This popular prayer of St Francis reflects in no uncertain terms the care inherent in the undisturbed system of the aboriginal African people. This outlook is equally encapsulated by an African people even in their religious systems. The African Traditional Religion views the person of a widow in a holistic manner. This is

attested by Magesa in a narrative of the Luo people, where a young widow was taken care of by the surviving brother of the deceased. He presents the pastoral consideration as follows: “On account of pastoral considerations (the widow was still young, and Luo custom not only allows but insists on the need for him to “take care of her” for his brother)” (Magesa 1969:141).

This argument presents the genius Afro centric manner which was both a lifestyle and method of communicating the holistic approach into the care of the widows. The author calls this: The African story fully lived out, enacted and told by an African people.

Attesting to the opinion that calls for the Imperative to maintain tradition, Uka states: “Other beliefs, practices and institutions that call for a serious theological rethinking are issues connected with authority, death, life after death, the living-dead (Ancestors, widowhood, mourning and funeral rites” (*ed* Uka 1991:162). The author agrees with the content of the African Theology presented by Uka which indicates the necessary imperative to maintain the African Traditional values, which will finally be instrumental if the care for the widows is to be exercised both effectively and holistically.

This undisturbed traditional system of the aboriginals in which the widows had a special role in society and could tell their stories in an empathetic, manner is equivalent to what Oden portrays in the following way: “From the earliest decades of Christian pastoral care, widows have given much to the Christian community, and have been perceived as a central concern of Christian social service. The directions for care of widows given in 1Tim. 5:3-16 indicate that widows had a well-defined social role in early Christianity” (Oden 1986:156)

This is the story of an African people prior to the advent of the Western system and colonization. A people had a way of narrating and living their lives in a manner that communicated their value systems; a system commensurate to their anticipated healing. It was an undisturbed way of collective communalism of an aboriginal people which knew no boundaries of discriminating those hurting. This way was rooted on the knowledge, hope and belief of the deceased's destiny portrayed by Mbiti as follows: "When a person dies, he (sic) (now as a living-dead) goes to the land of the departed which is on this world and next to that of human beings but invisible to men." (Mbiti 1971:86)

The author supports the attestation by Mbiti that a core to the system of caring among an African people, is the knowledge that their deceased are a continuous sleeping part of them.

This very knowledge serves as the breeding ground of the strength of an undisturbed system of communalism among an aboriginal Africans. It is in this system that the pivotal healing and caring is derived. It is in the uncompromised unity and homogeneity of this people that communalism is an obligatory imperative defined by Mugambi as follows: "One way by which the homogeneity of Africa has been described is the identification of certain sociological and cultural factors peculiar to Africa" (Mugambi 1989:5). The author agrees with Mugambi that such sociological and cultural factors that are unique to Africa serve as her defining attributes in the manner she conducts and carries on her healing and caring business. It is the very notion that informs the collective society that when one member is ailing, the whole community is equally ailing.

Shelp and Sunderland view this system of communalism as follows: “In its communitarian mode, justice is envisioned in its positive rather than its defensive aspect. In this mode, justice is seen to be not only as protective, but also as joyful. It is revealed to be not merely the absence of injustice, but the abundance of life in harmony” (Shelp & Sunderland 1986:53-54). This is the critical knowledge which constitutes the basis upon which a people find solace in telling their stories with the full assurance of confidentiality.

It is important at this stage to engage deliberations aimed at redressing the ills created by colonialism. This will be helpful to reposition the desired pastoral care for the widows. In the stories told by form of the interviews conducted, there seemed to have been breakthroughs which can be instrumental in assisting to readjust the care for the widows in an acceptable manner both for the widows and the ecclesiastical gatherings they belong to.

4. Redressing the Ills Created by Colonialism

In order to realign the destabilized and affected Afro centric system of caring, the stories told by women will be viewed with the right spectacles. This suggests that in order to create a model of healing proportionate to the ideals of an African people, the elementary requirement is the redress mechanism to that effect. This redress demands the motion which suggests, first and foremost, that the purpose of the cross and the central message of the Great Shepherd, Jesus Christ Himself be put in the correct perspective as suggested by Mugambi in the following mode: “Though the cross is a symbol of death, at the same time, the cross is a symbol of new life: it is the symbol of new creation for Christian. The cross may be seen to declare: even though death has been imposed on the innocent in his (sic) struggle for salvation, this death is the proclamation of new life, of a new creation. God

will raise life out of death, and the powerless will become powerful again through God's will" (Mugambi 1989:115).

In the stories of pain and anguish, loss and grief, hopelessness and despair, narrated by the widows, one such widow started by looking out through the window in utter defencelessness and powerlessness as she prepared to tell her story. Her face was amazingly sparkling with exuberance though.

The author could immediately tell that she was most probably looking at the direction her deceased husband could miraculously emerge from. The author could as such identify with the utterance by Mugambi that God could raise the powerless to be powerful again as indicated above. This substantiation in itself becomes the pillar of hope in an attempt to redress the ills created by colonialism. It serves as a cornerstone of hope to the hurting widows. This one in particular, whom we will name Mrs. Madonsela, (not real name), unfolded her story as follows:

"When my husband passed on, I knew for a fact that there was an inescapable unpardonable plight ahead of the family. How did I know that? It was a very obvious given reality which the entire family was going through, namely; a time of serious financial constraints. The only money which was available in the house was R1600-00 (one thousand six hundred rand only). I knew for a fact that there was nothing I could do to increase the value of the available currency. I had but one option, namely; to do as the book of Hebrews advises: "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2).

This knowledge immediately gave me succour and reminded me of the prominent maxim in Matthew which reasons out that: “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:33). This once upon a life time encounter: the loss of my husband immediately propelled me to devising a new survival strategy. I converted the mourning place into an altar of worship and brokenness to the Lord. Little did I know that such an application of faith and defenceless brokenness to the Lord will sooner than later result with what was to turn my life for the best.

The age old traditional education and belief about widows is that they are considered to be objects of scorn and ridicule. On the contrary I felt that I should break the cycle of fallacious customary beliefs by applying for a tender. As it is at the moment, I own a very big shop. I was awarded a tender in the state institution. This beautiful expensive car which I am driving is paid up. In fact, I bought it for cash.

I was truly privileged to belong to the kind of church in which I am fellowshiping. The church is extremely supportive. During the week of mourning, the Pastor, his assistants, the elders, various committees and the whole congregation provided an incredible support. This support was holistic in that it was extended to all family members. There was one elder in particular who owned a shop, who provided me with airtime, bread and food throughout the period of mourning in the afternoons and beyond that period. He would provide transport not only during the bereavement period but even when I started the business still struggling with transport.

The congregation so arranged that they should provide me with transport in turns so as to assist me to be established in the business. During the time I had a burglary at home, my Pastor bought me a Television set and a decoder. What a measure of love was this which I received from the church? Words cannot start to explain what I would genuinely love to sincerely express. As it is currently, my daughter is getting married and the church is behind it all. We truly suffer the feeling of the loss of my husband which is an irreplaceable reality, yet we are comforted to be in the midst of such a supportive people.

This narrative clearly indicates what Mugambi further construes as follows: “Traditional religions are not universal: they are tribal or national. Each religion is bound and limited to the people among whom it has evolved. One traditional religion cannot be propagated in another tribal group” (Mugambi 1989:4-5). In the pursuit to redress the ills imposed by colonialism with its foreign imported religious systems, the author cherishes Mugambi’s rationalization and conceptualization of the locality of the religious belief.

The interviewed widows seemed to have had this very religious inclination albeit that it was suppressed by the adoption and internalization of the newly adopted religious beliefs. This was evident in the following utterance by Mrs. Madonsela: “I do not only feel belonging to a religious organization, but above it all, I feel an important part of a local assembly which has my best interests at heart and concern about the wellbeing of my family. This as such makes me realize that true religion transcends individual personal interests.”

As the widows were telling their stories, the author came to the conclusion that, in order to redress the ills which were caused by colonialism: “The Church has a mission to be a visible sign of Christ’s presence in the world. The vitality of the Church depends to some extent on the health and integral well-being of the society and the culture within which the people of God live” (Waruta & Kinoti 2005:133). The vitality of the church within the context in which it is operating, plays a vital role in creating a sound redress mechanism required to be able to explore the Theology of Caring for widows.

The church has to redefine its understanding of caring and check if it comes anywhere closer to what Switzer considers as: “What is caring, anyway? It’s obviously not just a Christian word. One person who has sought to elaborate a definition of human caring and its meaning of human life from a purely secular point of view is Mayeroff (1971)” (Switzer 1989:12). In expatiating on the meaning of caring, Switzer quotes Mayeroff stating: “To care for another person, in the most significant sense, is to help (that person) grow and actualize himself (sic).... (It) is the antithesis of simply using the other person to satisfy one’s own needs. The meaning of caring...is not to be confused with such meaning as wishing (another person) well, liking...or simply having an interest in what happens to another. Also, it is not an isolated feeling or a momentary relationship, nor is it simply a matter of wanting to care for some person. Caring, as helping another grow and actualize himself (sic), is a process, a way of relating to someone that involves development ...” (Switzer 1989:13).

The author supports this copious and elaborate definition of caring espoused by Switzer. It serves as a functional rehabilitative tool to the loss an African people suffered in the hands of colonization. It is imperative to seek the Theology and

Methodology of a people even in the stories they tell as a means of seeking personal and collective healing.

In listening to the narratives of the widows, it was very important to note that there is a need to redress the colonialisation discord so portrayed by Oduyoye: “The theology of mission was, especially in the Roman Catholic enterprise, ecclesiocentric. All that obtained in the Latin countries of the West was to be duplicated in Africa. Western structures and Western standards of living were paid for by the West, so Africa, puzzled awed, accepted them as necessary to the religion. But are they essential to Christianity? The close association of colonial power and particular denominations gave mission the appearance of an arm of colonialism” (Oduyoye 1986:41)

The stories narrated by widows no longer carry the originality of the holistic Africanism until such a period that these virtues are redressed. To this end, Oduyoye states: “The traditional ordering of society placed its own burdens on the African people....it was an oppressive system to the extent that to opt out was to be cast out....The colonial period was not much different” (Oduyoye 1986:81). The author agrees unequivocally with Oduyoye that the subtle requirements of the colonial system did more harm to an otherwise Afrocentric system of a people which had definable terms of reference rooted in a peoples’ culture and traditions.

Buttressing Oduyoye’s sentiment is Dickson who reasons as follows: “To speak of the process of doing Christian theology in Africa as indigenising or translating Christian theology is to misunderstand the nature of the theological task facing the Church in Africa: this task consists not primarily in thinking through the theological deposit from the West, it consists in thinking through faith in Christ” (Dickson 1984:7-8). This notion indicates that the point of departure towards

setting up a healing platform congruent to the healing of the widows within the African context, calls for the maximum knowledge of the context within which such a Theology has to be exercised.

In redressing the ills of colonialism, a conducive platform has to be created in which the widows will feel at ease to tell their stories as it was the case with the interviewed widows. This opinion requires an absolute embodiment of Jesus' compassion uttered thus: "Whether one's exercise of "Christian presence" is in the form of verbal proclamation or is expressed in the form of loving concern that embodies Jesus' compassion for a broken humanity, the intention is to serve by announcing that love" (Shelp & Sunderland 1986:40).

This is the kind of admission which led the widows to feel belonging to a broader forum of people queuing for their ultimate healing as they narrated their stories. Anchoring this position in the most benevolent words is Rottenberg in the following way: "The God of the Bible hears the cries of his people and comes to liberate" (Rottenberg 1980:25). The author supports the proposition by Rottenberg that God does hear the cries of His people as they tell their stories and does eventually descend to liberate them. This becomes the vital tool in an attempt to redress the ills of colonialism.

5. Interviews

The interviews which were conducted with the widows formed an important part of this research work. They afforded the author an ample opportunity to observe what is construed by Healey and Sybertz as follows: "One important dimension of Story Theology or Narrative Theology is the double experience of telling the story of healing and the healing power of telling the story" (Healey & Sybertz

1996:324). The author agrees with the two authorities that story-telling is not only for the sake of telling but it is an exercise inherent with healing.

In an attempt to forge a way commensurate with both the healing grace and the holistic therapy, the author noticed that story-telling is the best way to the ultimate healing. Such a premise is backed-up by the utterance which was made by the Bishop Desmond Tutu. He provides the message of hope in the following manner: “There is no such thing as a totally hopeless case. Our God is an expert in dealing with chaos, with brokenness, with all the worst that we can imagine” (Tutu 2004: vii-viii). The author would love to unequivocally align his opinion with Tutu that God is an expert in dealing with chaos and brokenness. God’s such inherent expertise is best experienced in the healing grace flowing from the stories and interviews in which the author engaged the core researchers as will be established hereunder.

5.1. Interviews with Three Women from Pentecostal Church

By telling the stories among the Pentecostals, there is a wealth of educational information that can be elicited drawn by Healey and Sybertz in the following manner: “...the Catholic and mainline Protestant Churches can learn from the experience of the new Pentecostal Churches in Africa. The double experience of telling the story of healing and the healing power of telling the story come together in this description of the manner of worship in these Pentecostal groups: *The service is also characterized by testimonies, miracle stories, tales of divine encounter, prophecies. Often the stories are told by ordinary members. This is significant; people who in the larger world count for nothing here have the chance to express themselves, to tell others of their lives. This procedure is vitally*

important for people in oral cultures; the story, rather than theory or ideas, is their normal way of communicating” (Healey & Sybertz 1999:326).

The author supports the foregoing rationale by Healey and Sybertz in that it confirms the findings of the research he was conducting. The three succinctly conducted interviews with widows from the Pentecostal church revealed the following critical trends about the manner in which they thought of the virtue and value inherent in story-telling:

5.1.1. Story-Telling is an Art of Empathy

Stories are an integral part of an African community: “Stories become part of life for Africans because they shape their lives. This leads to people understanding pains and joys that are expressed through story telling” (Mnisi 2005:24)

In an attempt to search for the element of therapy through story telling as portrayed by Mnisi that story telling shapes the values of a people, the author will employ, among others, the following questions to help give direction to the discourse as well as help set the interviewees at ease:

- Did the church provide a comforting base and support since the death of your husband?
- If it did, how was such a support given?
- How have you best understood the message of Caring as portrayed in the Bible?
- What meaningful lesson(s) have you learnt from your own encounters with the church which you can utilize to minister to others?

As the author was interviewing the widows, he immediately observed that their stories were told in a manner which intensely expressed a deep-rooted

maternalistic approach articulated thus by Johnson: “In texts widely scattered throughout the Hebrew Scriptures different aspects of being a mother-conceiving, being pregnant, going into labor, delivering, midwifing, nursing, carrying, rearing-become metaphors pointing to God’s ways of relating to the world” (Johnson 1992:100). This apprehension of God as possibly feminine as well, becomes the healing method as women tell their stories. Another bird of the same feather that is flocking together with Johnson, is Fiorenza who states: “Not “biological” sex differences, but patriarchal household and marriage relationships generate the social-political inferiority and oppression of women” (Fiorenza 1998:86).

This depiction by Johnson clearly reinforces Fiorenza’s opinion that the inferiority of women in the narratives of Biblical stories has been buttressed by patriarchal undertones in the recording of Bible history. Hence, the author supports the notion that calls for the medium of story-telling to consider such to be told within the open gender confines. In this way story-telling becomes an empathy mode to the hurts and wounds of women. This was evident as the widows were telling their stories with the kind of openness which allowed them to empathize unapologetically.

Story-telling as an art of empathy uncovers and unravels the hidden truths the validity of which can only be confirmed when taken from the horse’s mouth. In the stories narrated by the widows, the author discovered some form of coldness and latent damnation similar to the one Queen Michal felt and expressed in the following way. “The Michal of the first meeting with David was not the same woman who was returned to him several years later. She had undergone not so much a personality change as a kind of death. The heart, the emotion, the excitement had gone out of the woman, and what remained was the shell: an

aristocrat, and nothing more” (Clines & Eskenazi 1991:283). The author sympathizes with the situation of women who would love to use story-telling as an art of empathy, yet being heavily laden by the brutality of patriarchy which overloads them with the sense of inferiority.

This art of empathizing proves to be true in substantiating what Gregory the Great in Culbertson and Shippe conceptualizes in the following way: “For who does not realize that the wounds of the mind are more hidden than the internal wounds of the body?” (Culbertson & Shippe 1990:197). It is these hidden wounds which the art of story-telling is attempting to address by allowing the widows to tell their undiluted stories in an attempt to seek personal healing. Another dimension of equal importance which was noted during the interviews addresses the notion of the meanings of the words in story-telling will be handled hereunder.

5.1.2 Meaning of Words in Story-Telling

Words utilized to tell the story do not always mean what they are articulated to mean. This causes an even deeper understanding beyond the spoken words, in order to hear the pain conveyed in words that are not spoken i.e. in implied, obscured and hidden words. In this subject Capps says: “The very survival of human society requires the masking of our real desires. If we were to say what our real desires are, especially our erotic and aggressive desires, and this means learning to speak in ways that conceal or only indirectly reveal our desires. This process of revealing through concealment is one reason our language is polysemic, meaning more than one thing at a time” (Capps 1984:33)

Fiorenza represents the same notion in a rather very strong manner in her treatment of destabilizing linguistic frames of meaning as follows: “The androcentric

linguistic sex/gender system that uses gender classifications rooted in biological sex cannot but reify and naturalize socio-political gender constructs. In such a linguistic system, masculine terms function as “generic” language in which man/male/masculine/he stands for human and male, whereas woman/female/feminine/she only connotes femaleness. Grammatically androcentric “generic” Western languages that are based on the classical grammatical systems of Greek and Latin explicitly mention women only as exception to the rule, as problematic, or specifically as particular individuals” (Fiorenza 1998 :xix).

The author agrees with Capps that true human stories cannot be effectively told due to the fact that there is a traditionally adopted concealment which results with ambiguity in the interpretation of the narrated meaning. He equally agrees with the eye opening presentation by Fiorenza which speaks about the customary and very notorious gender insensitive daily usage of the language.

The author discovered the importance of the true meaning of words and that if such communication is taken into heart, there is bound to be a sound model of caring for the widows as they tell their stories with the texture of their desired languages. This reasoning gives rise to the whole new notion in the understanding of words. It suggests that words should be used and allowed to minister, with the full knowledge that the ministry is meant to serve the church and not *visa versa*. The same argument is put by Oden as follows: “Ministry is, therefore, classically thought to be necessary to God’s purpose in ordering the church for the salvation of humankind (Calvin, 1559, 4.1)” (Oden 1983:14). Only when the stories are told from the heart, can healing be derived.

The manner in which the widows were communicating their stories bore witness to the fact that spoken words carry another meaning which cannot be verbalized. The author views this as the most critical part of pastoral care, namely; to listen to the untold words which may be calling for deeper attention. Oduyoye in Fiorenza's "The Power of Naming" indicates that the failure by women to tell their stories in the most explicit terms results with their impoverishment in the following way: "The impoverishment of women in Africa is an aspect of the impoverishment of the third world which has remained undisclosed or ignored until women themselves made their voices heard" (Fiorenza 1996:127).

The author views this impoverishment not only as material, but spiritual and otherwise. This was proven by the wealth of information which was both shared and acquired in the engagement with the widows whom the author interviewed.

Wimberly attests to the importance of conversation as: "Persons, including practitioners, who come to therapy bring with them problem-laden issues related to certain truths about themselves, their character, their nature, and purposes that dominate their lives. Thus, they have internalized conversations that do not facilitate growth and that prevent them from becoming a fully authentic self" (Wimberly 2003:99). This is an indication which the author alluded to earlier that there are some hidden words which the counselee cannot articulate as Wimberly points out, and this becomes the source of the poverty as indicated by Fiorenza.

It is vital though to share stories since they present an opportunity for rapport. To this effect, the Wimberlys point out that: "For some, story-sharing may not come easily. It will mean shedding inhibitions or fears of self-disclosure. For others, it will mean creating a time-enough time-for stories to unfold. For all who embark upon the experience of shared story, it will mean making sense of the stories and

envisioning not only what facing forward means, but also what must be done to move forward with purpose and hope” (Wimberly & Wimberly 2007:37)

The Wimbelys indicate an intricate side of story-telling which, in the case of the author and the co-researchers, was able to assist with the technical movement towards moving forward as well as map out the purpose and hope of the envisaged pastoral care. As indicated, this story-telling mechanism becomes a pillar of healing portrayed by the Wimberlys in the following way: “The mutual support that emerges from empathic connectedness also creates the ground for the tough work of unpacking our stories” (2007:44).

The author supports the proposal by the Wimberlys that in unpacking our stories there is an empathic connectedness. It is this kind of connectedness which serves as a bridge towards formulating a sound pastoral theology of caring for the widows as they develop trust and rapport which enable them to tell their stories without fears or reservations.

5.2. Interviews with Two Women from Mainline Church

The interviews with the widows from the Mainline Churches revealed a deeper understanding of the role of the widow and their significant contribution to the entire ecclesiastical gathering in the following manner:

5.2.1. Understanding the role of the widow

This understanding is reflected by Oden as follows: “Pray, therefore, as a widow of Christ, not yet seeing Him whose hope you implore” (Oden 1986:157). From the very first interview, the author could deduce that the stories were not only told as part of the research engagement, but that there was an even deeper yearning from the hearts of each of the participating widows. They had a zest which displayed

itself with the willingness to serve. This was an equal outcry enquiring into the role which the widows can play in the ecclesiastical gathering as a way and form of seeking personal healing hence the author's agreement with the proposition by Oden.

Widows need to be advised of the importance of their role to pray since this can be a highly beneficial endeavour to both themselves and the church at large. The proposition by Oden clearly indicates that there is a special anointing bestowed upon the widows. This, therefore, suggests that a prayer of faith made by the widow prevails much as James states: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man (sic) availeth much" (James 5:16).

This indispensable role which the widows can benefit the ecclesiastical body with, finds its pathway in the pillars of how their own families were structured. This is a suggestion that calls for the formulation of what the Wimberlys view as follows: "The beliefs and convictions of clergy family members form a mythology that cannot be ignored in the story-telling process. Indeed, the mythology may be a key factor in developing individual and family resilience in the face of challenge" (Wimberly & Wimberly 2007:41). As the author was listening to the stories told by the widowed women, he was deeply impressed by the courage of their presentation as well as the richness of their own family mythologies.

These mythologies empower the widows to be better care-givers themselves whilst receiving therapy. They constitute a healing methodology depicted by Healey and Sybertz in the following way: "Telling stories and sharing stories in community is very important for African people" (Healey & Sybertz 1996:325). As the widows were narrating their stories, the author could perceive a sense of relief they

displayed as a way of confirming an African way of creating a platform of healing through story-telling.

5.2.2. Emotional Upliftment in the Narrative

From the stories narrated by the widows, the one which sounded the most emotional was narrated by one person who seemed to have fought her way out of the deepest abyss of despondency and loneliness. It is the one which was delivered by Mrs. Mahalane (not real name). Her story raised apprehensions that proved to have been well founded on pain, distress and disappointment as the narrative progressed. She spoke like a person without any hope for emotional survival. She presented it in the following manner:

“*Moruti* (meaning Pastor in *Sesotho*-one of the eleven South African official languages), who gave you my cellular phone numbers that you should request for an appointment with me?” Since this question was directed to the author, he immediately indicated that he got them from the new Reverend who had occupied the manse. After a pause of surprise she continued her narrative. “I do not understand how that young boy could give you my cellular phone numbers. He approached me in a very insensitive manner and said to me: ‘Your husband is dead.’”

This is how it actually started. I phoned the district President telling him I am coming to the conference. He asked me where I belonged. I told him that I belonged to the Umtata region. He asked if I am still cared for. I was given the new Reverend’s telephone numbers. He was apparently given my numbers as well. He said we did not care for certain supernumeraries (pensioners in the Morning Star Church). I told him they were not under our jurisdiction but

Umndeni's. They resided in Umtata but fellowshipped in Umndeni. He insisted that we were supposed to have cared for them. Some leaders are not called but break the church. That boy wants to destroy my Samuel (the late husband-not real name) or take over his reign.

He said we were supposed to have cared for them, we did something wrong. He said I want to be taken care of though I did not care for the supernumeraries. He further said I am not any different. He said Samuel is gone, now I want to be taken care of. He indicated that he had spoken with the Umtata people who said they only take care of an active wife to the Reverend, who is his wife in this instance and not me. This was first telephonic discussion I had with him.

In our second telephonic discussion the Reverend called me and said he spoke with the Umtata people who said I am no longer a member. This boy is not the church. While my husband was in a mortuary the Umtata people spoke before his corpse and said that they will not throw away his children and family. The Reverend fought and said I was actually saying he was lying. He treated me arrogantly. The women executive informed me that he would be apparently inviting me to the formal farewell bidding function. Up to now the church did not come, call or do anything.

My late husband's people served him very well. I must acknowledge though that I cannot punish the whole church because of this one young minister. We do get allowances from my husband's pension fund and the kids get an allowance of R475-00 (four hundred and seventy five rand). Other senior ministers are not happy about what happened between me and that young minister."

This story revealed the truth espoused by Healey and Sybertz that: “Telling stories frees, reveals, opens up and empowers-both in relation to the narrator and the hearers. There is a grace of naming, a journey of self-understanding and self-discovery and a healing of memories. There is a healing power for the individual who lets out his or her deep feelings and emotions and shares them in a larger support group. Often there is affirmation and support in telling the story in a community setting. In fact, the whole community is strengthened as wounded healers journey together. One hand washes the other” (Healey & Sybertz 1999:325). The author supports the strong notion upheld by Healey and Sybertz that story-telling has a strong healing power. He observed this truism as the widows were sharing their stories and being emotionally uplifted in so doing. The importance of the naming aspect featured where Mrs. Mahalane called the Reverend a boy, and this was healing to her as she told her story.

Whilst there is an element of emotional upliftment, there is yet another dimension of a stern calling incumbent upon the person of a widow. This is demonstrated thus: “In a “Comforting Letter to a Widow,” Menno Simons viewed widowhood as a calling to benefit others through hospitality, holy living, and prayer” (Oden 1986:156). It is upon the acceptance of the state of widowhood that the person of a widow can unashamedly confess that such a calling is both painful yet noble in the sight of the Lord. This very knowledge in itself will serve as an all-time motivator to the widow.

Further attesting to this noble and high calling, the widow has is Oden as follows: “The vocation of the widow, accordingly, may not fit neatly into modern expectations, but there can be no doubt that in the early church the widow was regarded as having a distinctive, purposeful, significant vocation. Widows are especially called to a ministry of intercession for the whole community. Augustine

in his poignant letter to the widow Proba, sought to understand and describe the special ministry of intercession that may be given to the widow: Pray in hope, pray in faith, pray in love, pray earnestly and patiently, pray as a widow belonging to Christ” (Oden 1986:157). This is yet another reflection to the fact that the story-telling mechanism of the widows should equally present them before God as intercessors for both themselves and the ecclesiastical body.

6. An analysis of the research data

All five widows had a story to tell about their pains, especially the irreplaceable loss of their loved ones. This unbearable common pain resulted with punitive feelings as if they were completely rejected by the churches which their husbands once faithfully served. Their stories indicate a cry and yearning which holds subtle grudges. This is evidence in one common articulation in *SeSotho* (One of the South African official languages) which says: “*Ho baneng re geswa renyefolwa?*” This means, why are we ridiculed and scorned?

The author used a research method of both the interviews and the questionnaires considered to be the method that “entails the use of different methods to collect information. All methods have their limitations, their own validity threats and distortions. A danger of using only one method is that the findings may merely be an artefact of method.” (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor and Tindall 1994:23). This method is known as triangulation. Some other kinds or categories of this method are: data, investigator and theoretical triangulation.

The author will love to point out that: “Data elements represent facts. These facts concern people, objects, events, products and so on. Information comes from selecting this data and presenting it in such a way that is meaningful and useful to

the users. Information needs to be accurate, relevant, complete, timely and to the correct level of detail” (Avison and Cuthbertson 2002:14). The author supports the view upheld by Avison and Cuthbertson that the collected information should be accurate. This notion immediately qualifies what Banister *et al* propose on the employment of a combination of methods if the research conducted is to be both credible and valid. In the following section the author will present the field research results.

6.1. Analysing the clergy widows’ responses

PART A:

1. How did the Church display the care since the passing on of your spouse?
 - Through regular prayer support.
 - Through pastoral visits.
 - Through continuous counselling sessions.

Responses:

PCW: 2 said all of the above and 1 said none of the above.

M/LCW: 1 said it was provided only until burial and 1 said none of the above.

Similarities: In both churches there seemed to exist a poor care for the widows.

Differences: There seemed to have existed better care in the PC as opposed to the MLC in as far as counselling is concerned.

Author’s Comment: It is evident that in the PC 2 out of 3 widows did receive the pastoral care and that in the MLC 1 did receive pastoral care only until the burial whereas 1 did not receive it at all.

2. How frequently was the above care demonstrated?

- At regular intervals.
- At random.
- At scheduled and coordinated intervals.

Responses:

PCW: 2 said at regular intervals and 1 said at random.

M/LCW: 1 said at regular intervals and 1 said not at all.

Similarities: The frequency of the care was at regular intervals with 1 case where it was not done at all.

Differences: There was no instance in the PC where such care was not provided.

Author's Comment: There seems to be an acute concern for widows to a certain degree within the PC.

3. What kind of team was conducting the counselling sessions?

- The Pastor and spouse.
- The Church deacons/board.
- Delegated Supportive women.

Responses:

PCW: 2 said it was the pastor and spouse and 1 included the delegated supportive women. The other woman said it was all of the above including the youth.

M/LCW: 1 said it was the Reverends and 1 said it was all of the above.

Similarities: The clergy and their church teams were supportive.

Differences: In the PC the youth has been to sensitized on the role of Pastoral Counselling.

Author's Comment: The clergy recognized the importance of Pastoral Counselling together with their respective congregations.

4. What kind of training did the counselling team have?

- Formal.
- Informal.
- No training.

Responses:

PCW: 1 said people who came only brought prayer support with no training, 1 said people who came had formal training whereas 1 said they had a combination of training.

M/LCW: 1 said the counselling team had formal training whereas 1 said there was no formal counselling but only mourning with the family.

Similarities: There is a credible formal training among those who managed to offer counselling to the widows.

Differences: There seems to be no clear understanding of the concept of counselling in both churches.

Author's Comment: Consistentization of the churches about Pastoral Counselling is an imperative.

5. Who was/were the recipient(s) of the counselling?

- The whole bereaved family.
- Only the clergy widow.
- Some members of the family.

Responses:

PCW: 1 said only the clergy widow (indirectly though) and 2 said the whole bereaved family.

M/LCW: 1 said the whole bereaved family and 1 said no one.

Similarities: Counselling the whole bereaved family seemed to have been understood by the churches.

Differences: The PC did provide pastoral counselling as opposed to an instance of no counselling at all in the MLC.

Author's Comment: There is a need to educate the church about counselling bereaved families.

PART B:

Please tick a Yes or a No.

1. My own Church is supportive to widows in general.

- Yes.
- No.

Responses:

PCW: 1 marked Yes and 2 No.

M/LCW: 1 marked Yes and 1 No.

Similarities: There is a sound understanding of the churches' role towards widows.

Differences: Observed differences are mostly on a personal vendetta basis as qualified by the interviews above.

Author's Comment: No cohesion can be enforced for the care of widows where people have their own agenda against the surviving clergy widow.

2. My Church is supportive to clergy widows in particular.

- Yes.
- No.

Responses:

PCW: 2 said No and 1 said Yes.

M/LCW: 1 said Yes and 1 said No.

Similarities: There is a particular care provided to widows in both organizations.

Differences: The PC cares on the social status of deceased whereas in the MLC such status creates hatred to the surviving clergy family.

Author's Comment: The surviving clergy widow is respected based on the role the deceased husband played in life.

3. I can use my church as a Biblical model for the required care of widows.

- Yes.
- No.

Responses:

PCW: 2 said Yes and 1 said No.

M/LCW: 2 said Yes.

Similarities: Both groups credited their churches to a large degree.

Differences: The PC has got some doubts on using their church as a Biblical model whereas the MLC is certain on the matter.

Author's Comment: This validates the intended research that the MLC is more certain about their care for widows.

4. I am not ashamed to quote instances where care was shown to me and other widows in the church.

- Yes.
- No.

Responses:

PCW: 1 marked No and 2 marked Yes.

M/LCW: Both marked Yes.

Similarities: All the widows felt they could quote instances where care was shown with the exception of 1.

Differences: The sampled care evidenced works in the favour of the widows from the MLC who have got tangible instances for example, of financial support which they could quote.

Author's Comment: MLC have fixed benefits for the widows.

5. My church has an outreach programme for widows.

- Yes.
- No.

Responses:

PCW: 1 marked No and 2 marked Yes.

M/LCW: Both marked Yes.

Similarities: All widows acknowledged an outreach programme does exist with the exception of 1 PCW.

Differences: The MLC has fixed programmes whereas the PC still needs to organize themselves in this regard.

Author's Comment: The PC can learn from the MLC about the Widows' Outreach Programmes.

PART C:

1. Did the church provide a comforting base and support since the death of your husband?

Responses:

PCW: 2 said Yes and 1 said not at all.

M/LCW: 1 said they do not communicate anymore and 1 said they do allow widows to approach the welfare unit.

Similarities: Widows can approach the relevant church structure for help.

Differences: The MLC has got a defined platform of addressing material needs of the widow whereas the PC does not have.

Author's Comment: The PC can engage with the MLC to learn about their defined care schemes.

2. If it did, how was such a support provided?

Responses:

PCW: 1 said it was not provided at all. 1 said people of all social statuses came to comfort them inclusive of lawyers, doctors, politicians and the like. 1 said they by her grocery.

M/LCW: 1 said they did not provide it at all and 1 said such support is provided through the welfare organization of the church.

Similarities: Such support is provided depending on the social status of the deceased spouse.

Differences: The PC did not seem to have a definable welfare unit.

Author's Comment: Support should not be provided based on the status of the deceased clergy but to all widow equally.

3. How have you best understood the message of Caring as portrayed in the Bible?

Responses:

PCW: All three alluded to the fact that it is a Biblical obligation to take care of the widows.



M/LCW: 1 said it is the mission of their church to care for the bereaved family. 1 said the church does follow the Bible principles.

Similarities: All 5 widows agreed that the care of widows is a Biblical necessity.

Differences: This is one area in which there was no contrary opinion on the understanding of the Biblical message on caring for the widows.

Author's Comment: The Bible should be followed as the guideline for the care of the widows.

4. What meaningful lesson(s) have you learnt from your own encounters with the church which you can utilize to minister to others?

Responses:

PCW: 1 said hurting widows and their families need to be taken care of; 1 said “things we took for granted matter much” and the other said: “The love and the care I was given, I will pass on to others. Even though my husband is gone but the Lord is there.”

M/LCW: 1 commented that the church belongs to God and not the Reverend whereas the other commented that she could recommend her church's caring model for widows to other churches.

Similarities: Positive encounters gave birth to the desire to plough the same back to humanity.

Differences: Whereas all widows had a positive self esteem resultant from both their encounters and understanding of the Biblical message, 1 PW was devastated by the kind of rejection she suffered.

Author's Comment: Each of the 5 widows did learn something positive out of their painful encounter which they would individually love to utilize to benefit others.

6.2. Conclusive evidence drawn

This section seeks to provide the broader scope of the results derived from the widows from both the Pentecostal and the Mainline Churches in the following manner:

PART A:

1. How did the Church display the care since the passing on of your spouse?

- Through regular prayer support.
- Through pastoral visits.
- Through continuous counselling sessions.

There is therefore conclusive evidence that Pastoral Counselling does exist to a certain degree in the PC.

5. How frequently was the above care demonstrated?

- At regular intervals.
- At random.
- At scheduled and coordinated intervals.

The frequency of the pastoral care seems to be reasonably practiced in the PC as opposed to the MLC.

6. What kind of team was conducting the counselling sessions?

- The Pastor and spouse.
- The Church deacons/board.
- Delegated Supportive women.

In both church organizations there seemed to be an understanding of the role of the clergy and his team in terms of pastoral counselling support, so much so that in the PC there youth was also involved.

7. What kind of training did the counselling team have?

- Formal.
- Informal.
- No training.

There is a great need for a formal pastoral counselling campaign to inform the clergy and the churches about its importance.

8. Who was/were the recipient(s) of the counselling?

- The whole bereaved family.
- Only the clergy widow.
- Some members of the family.

Both organizations do understand the importance of counselling the whole bereaved family and there is yet a greater need to advocate an education for the same.

PART B:

Please tick a Yes or a No.

1. My own Church is supportive to widows in general.

- Yes.
- No.

Both organizations seem to have a sound functional pastoral care for widows.

2. My Church is supportive to clergy widows in particular.

- Yes.
- No.

Both organizations do understand such a support but the victimization of the clergy widow is more of revenge for some discontentment held by the congregation against the bereaved family.

3. I can use my church as a Biblical model for the required care of widows.

- Yes.
- No.

Four of the five widows were confident to use their churches as a model of care which is indeed a credible fact about what the church should be seen as.

4. I am not ashamed to quote instances where care was shown to me and other widows in the church.

- Yes.
- No.

Four of the widows were once confident to quote the care shown which proves that the church is seen as a shelter for the broken.

5. My church has an outreach programme for widows.

- Yes.

- No.

Four of the widows were appreciative of the outreach programme their churches have with an exception of a PC widow. This shows the extent of brokenness in the PC organization.

PART C:

1. Did the church provide a comforting base and support since the death of your husband?

It is evident from the responses that the MLC is does allow widows to approach them. Anything to the contrary is of a personal revenge. In the PC such comforting base does exist except in instances of personal revenge.

2. If it did, how was such a support provided?

In the PC such support is provided on the strength of status and fame and in the ML they allow widows to follow the procedures of approaching the welfare unit. Care is therefore earned and not granted as a deserved merit in both organizations.

3. How have you best understood the message of Caring as portrayed in the Bible?

The PCW emphatically saw such a care as a Biblical imperative even quoting James 1:27. The MLC see the church as following such principles as well in line with the Biblical requirements.

4. What meaningful lesson(s) have you learnt from your own encounters with the church which you can utilize to minister to others?

All widows narrowed their reasoning and arguments to but one point, namely; that if one could find in her heart to forgive any differences by the church, she should do that and continue serving other people for the sake of Christ.

Having presented the research results the author would love to submit a preliminary conclusion in preparation of the following chapter.

7 Preliminary Conclusion

The author learned from the interviews that it is important to allow people to speak out and tell their stories as a way of emotional catharsis. This is viewed by Oden as follows: “Theodicy means to speak justly of God amid the awesome fact of suffering. Its task is to vindicate the divine attributes, especially justice, mercy, and love, in relation to the continuing existence of evil. It wishes to speak about God (*theos*) with justice (*dike*) precisely at those points at which the divine purpose seems most implausible and questionable, namely, amid suffering” (Oden 1983:223). It is the author’s submission that, as Oden puts it, God is the God of justice always willing to identify with the hurting especially when this divine virtue is under scrutiny. This will be at instances the widows ask themselves: “Why me in particular.”

This chapter dealt with the sample stories of five widows, three from the Pentecostal Church and two from the Mainline Church. The chapter addressed these topics under the following headings:

- The Advent of the Western System.
- An Undisturbed Traditional System of Communalism among Aboriginal Africans.

- Redressing the Ills Created by Colonialism.
- Interviews:
 - Interviews with Three Women from Pentecostal Church.
 - Interviews with Two Women from Mainline Church.
- An Analysis of the Stories.
- Preliminary Conclusion.

The author touched on the impact of the Advent of the Western System as it relates to the Afro centric Pastoral Caring. He went on to indicate how pastoral caring was conceptualized by an African people in an undisturbed system of communalism among the aboriginal Africans. An attempt to redress the ills created by colonialism was entertained whilst pursuing the cause of storytelling by the widows.

The author views this current chapter as the most critical and that he almost considers it the climax of the research journey. It is the climax in that it created a base of emotional ventilation by the widows who had a platform to speak out their hurts without any threat or potential prejudice. It is in this chapter where the importance of the family movement appeared to be a critical necessity as displayed by Nolan in the following way: “A family movement would not alone deal adequately with the rights of women and other gender issues. We need a strong and well organized women’s movement in the churches in South Africa” (Pityana & Villa-Vicencio 1995:155).

The author supports this proposed stance by Pityana and Villa-Vicencio in that it draws women into the centre of the ecclesiastical movement. This in itself will be a healthy endeavour to challenge women to take their destinies into their own hands.

The next chapter will handle the integration of the methodology of how to care under the following headings:

- Analysis of Various Methodologies of Caring
- Creating a Synergy of a Range of Methods.
- Integration of the Caring System Currently Available within the Pentecostal Churches.
- Natural Endowment with Force and Power to Sustain Life
- Preliminary Conclusion.

In the next chapter, the overall intention of the author's presentation will be to seek the recommendable method which can finally integrate and synergize the required pastoral care practice. In order to enliven the methodology of the care of widows, the pastoral ministry needs to be exercised beyond margins as resonated by Carr in the following way: "Whereas, however, worship is central to the Church's life, pastoral ministry is exercised at its margins, where belief coincides with unbelief and half-belief, and where the gospel's adequacy is constantly tested" (Carr 1989:11-12).

The author agrees with Carr that pastoral ministry needs to be exercised beyond margins and this could in itself lead to the creation of an authentic synthetic method of caring for the widows. Consequently, the clergy widows will benefit from by the caring system which regards and recognizes them as a worthy people.