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## Appendix 1. Letter of Invitation

### A Life That Matters

Some call it a “life that matters”, others prefer to think of it in terms of “making a difference”, “contributing something to life”, the “significance of everything I do”, a “meaningful life” or being happy or content with one’s life. The point is: it seems as if we all have a desire to live meaningfully or significantly...

I am busy with a doctoral study about what makes life meaningful or significant for people. But being true to what the study is all about, I want this study to be meaningful... to make a difference in people’s lives; this should never be a piece of research which will just lie on some shelf gathering dust as it does. The study therefore has to be action-oriented: in studying the topic of meaningfulness or significance it should generate knowledge which will make a difference in the lives of those who feel that their lives have started to run rather low on the significance scale!

I am therefore inviting people who would like to participate in the study, being interested to contribute their stories of meaningfulness or the lack of significance so that together we could build a resource which could empower ourselves and others to live more significant lives. The study will be narrative; therefore we will be working with life stories. The study will also be participatory, meaning that you will all become co-researchers or fellow researchers. And then, it will be action research, requiring that it will need to make a (“meaningful”!) difference to our own lives.

So what would it require of me? you would be asking. I would like you to become involved in interviews (individual or group; in person or by means of a suitable communication medium, depending on the circumstances) through which we would be sharing stories of significance. Once these stories have been recorded, I would share them with your consent with the rest of the group for everybody to reflect on everything which was told. The group would also be invited to do their own research on the topic, contributing these stories to our own as they do. Through a process of

researching, implementing and reflecting in a cyclical fashion, we would therefore be developing our own resource of meaningful living knowledge, applying it in our own lives and moving towards meaning or significance ourselves. Altogether you should not be spending more than 24 hours over 8 months on the project.

If you are interested to become involved in this study, do contact me on 082 920 0481, or send an email to [stories@kune.co.za](mailto:stories@kune.co.za).

I am looking forward to your responses.

Yours in significance,

François Wessels



## Appendix 2. Preliminary Informed Consent Form

# PASTORAL NARRATIVE MEANS TO A LIFE THAT MATTERS

### PRELIMINARY INFORMED CONSENT FORM:

Research Facilitator: François Wessels

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study which will take place from April 2008 to November 2008. This form outlines the purposes of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant.

The purposes of this project are:

- 1) to gain insight and experience in the topic of Meaningfulness (in personal and professional life);
- 2) to facilitate participants' journey to "a life that matters";
- 3) to fulfil the course requirements for a PhD in Practical Theology (Family and Personal Therapy), through the University of Pretoria.

The methods to be used to collect information for this study are explained below. Your stories will be included in the Doctoral Thesis.

We shall collaborate in this participatory action research project to explore ways of enriching the meaningfulness in people's lives. The group will decide collectively how we shall know that we have progressed in our quest for meaningfulness, describing measures of meaningfulness as we do. The process will be narrative in nature. We shall start with our own life stories, sharing meaningful episodes and events with each other. I shall respond to individual stories, reflecting on certain significant themes and discourses. These will be interrogated by us (individual participants and me) and the shared learning will be communicated to the rest of the research group. They will in turn be invited to reflect and apply some of the learning in their own lives. I shall then invite all participants to share their experience, exploring how these "knowledges" enriched their lives or facilitated meaningfulness in their own lives. This cyclical process will continue until the group decides that we have met our own expectations as per the meaningfulness measures defined upfront.

You are encouraged to ask any questions at any time about the nature of the study and the methods that I am using. Your suggestions and concerns are important to me; please contact me at any time at the address/phone number listed above.

I will include the information from this study in a doctoral thesis. This thesis or at least the relevant chapters of the thesis will be read by you, my internal promoter and any co-promoters, and optionally, by one other person if you give permission, in order to check on the accuracy of your stories. The stories will not be available to any other person to be read without your permission.

I guarantee that the following conditions will be met:

The University of Pretoria requires that a record of all research data needs to be stored on CD in UP appointed archives.

Your real name will not be used at any point of information collection, or in the written thesis; instead, you and any other person and place names involved in your case will be given pseudonyms that will be used in all verbal and written records and reports.

If you grant permission for audio taping, no audio tapes will be used for any purpose other than to do this study, and will not be played for any reason other than to do this study. At your discretion, these tapes will either be destroyed or returned to you.

Your participation in this research is voluntary; you have the right to withdraw at any point of the study, for any reason, and without any prejudice, and the information collected and records and reports written will be turned over to you.

You will receive a copy of the final thesis before it is handed in, so that you have the opportunity to suggest changes to the researcher, if necessary.

You will receive a copy of the thesis that is handed in for publication.

Do you grant permission to be quoted directly?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Do you grant permission to be audiotaped if necessary?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to the terms

Co-researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to the terms:

Researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 3. Confirmatory Informed Consent Form

# Narrative Reflections on a Life that Matters

Research Facilitator: François Wessels

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for agreeing to review the account of the study which took place from April 2008 to November 2008. This form invites you to reflect on the description of the process and comment on whether it accurately describes the process and content of the research process in which you participated.

The purposes of this project were:

- 1) to gain insight and experience in the topic of Meaningfulness (in personal and professional life);
- 1) to facilitate participants' journey to "a life that matters";
- 2) to fulfil the course requirements for a PhD in Practical Theology (Family and Personal Therapy), through the University of Pretoria.

The methods which were used to collect information for this study are explained below. Your stories will be included in the Doctoral Thesis.

[The actual research process is described here – this may differ from what was planned, because of suggestions by the co-researchers.]

I will include the information from this study in a doctoral thesis. This thesis or at least the relevant chapters of the thesis have been read by you, my internal promoter and any co-promoters, and optionally, by one other person if you give permission, in order to check on the accuracy of your stories. The stories will not be available to any other person to be read without your permission.

To the best of your knowledge, have the following conditions been met?

“The University of Pretoria requires that a record of all research data needs to be stored on CD in UP appointed archives.

Your real name will not be used at any point of information collection, or in the written thesis; instead, you and any other person and place names involved in your case will be given pseudonyms that will be used in all verbal and written records and reports.

If you grant permission for audio taping, no audio tapes will be used for any purpose other than to do this study, and will not be played for any reason other than to do this study. At your discretion, these tapes will either be destroyed or returned to you.

Your participation in this research is voluntary; you have the right to withdraw at any point of the study, for any reason, and without any prejudice, and the information collected and records and reports written will be turned over to you.

You will receive a copy of the final thesis before it is handed in, so that you have the opportunity to suggest changes to the researcher, if necessary.

You will receive a copy of the thesis that is handed in to the instructor.”

Have you been quoted correctly?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Do you grant permission for the texts to be included in the thesis as reported?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to the publication of the text

Co-researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to the publication of the text

Researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_