

## CHAPTER 5

### THE THEORY OF CARE AND SUPPORT IN RELATION TO THE NARRATIVE APPROACH

#### “THE SEVEN MOVEMENTS AS NARRATIVE”

##### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is an explanation of how the methodology has been interpreted from a narrative perspective. The methodology describes the process of research as it transpired into the narrative of ‘Care Giving’. This action came from ordinary lay-people who were not trained in the tradition of pastoral care but did it from a perspective of love, care and support.

Chapters two, three and four consist of stories where the following were dormant. How people could offer or avail themselves, how they visited and listened to one another, how they invited one another for tea, coffee or sharing a meal, how they lent a car to someone in need, attending relatives’ funerals or give a helping hand or money in the preparation for the funeral, and watching the rugby match of the boys in the congregation (refer to chapter two, section 2.23). The previous chapters give evidence about a form of pastoral outreach or involvement that focuses attention on care and support with an outcome of healing and transformed lives. The previous chapters also illustrate talks of fear and disillusionment, misunderstandings and quarrels as opposed to the faith to survive. The chapters do not show any concrete problems being solved but illustrate the nurturing of caring relationships. The “narrative care giving approach” was a three-year research, which developed into a still standing narrative care giving family relationship. Together with the co-researchers we came up with a model with very specific themes which I, as the researcher, have merged with the narrative approach. As this research developed one identified it as an association that emerged from a communication of expectations, hurt, inadequacies, pleasure, happiness, contentment, encouragements and needs.

##### 5.2. The specific context as narrative

As has already been said in chapter one, section 4.1 the ‘Seven Movements Model’ research procedure is from the specific context described from the perspective of a specific group of lay people in the Valhalla area of Pretoria. When I was invited to

write the story of this congregation I looked at it from a specific story of why people started to care for and support one another. My co-researchers were concerned about the writing of their story as a history for generations to come. My reason for writing this research in this style was to allow the readers of this research to keep track of a specific situation where the action of one character in this research called co-researcher could affect the others in the same context.

The specific context shows how the characters of the different co-researchers fitted into the past and present context of their story. I agree with what Emmott (1997:175) says that: "It is not necessary for the reader to only identify and monitor the context, but also to identify which version of the character is being referred to at any particular point in the text." The information concerning the specific context provided me with knowledge about how I as the researcher could group my co-researchers to add value to this research. In using a specific context I had to guard against making assumptions concerning my co-researchers experiences on their journey.

The description of the specific context shows aspects of where the research was located in history. For me the history was important because it helped me to locate the character of my co-researchers in a local context. In the different stories the location every time referred back to this specific context, which is the story of the Trinity Family Church. This specific context starts with the action of every co-researcher and was linked to the main action as it affected the other co-researchers. The actions of my co-researchers affected the involvement of other co-researchers. The historical background helped me to run the interview sessions with the feedback sessions from a specific background. With reference to chapter three which deals with the pastoral section of this research we realized that looking at the 'Six Calls Model' the co-researchers were confronted with their own stories and how they would go about understanding their mission. The stories of most of my co-researchers changed the knowledge or beliefs of the others who were present in the discussions. In doing this they together delved into a narrative of 'Care Giving'. If I could just refer to the first story of Priscilla and her husband in chapter two then one would see how their action involved a whole group of people. The description of the context is actually also a reflection of where they come from and where they are concerning their own narrative. Their reflection and interaction with the described context brought them to new themes as revealed in chapters three and four. To be able to determine the effects of the action on the other co-researchers I needed to concentrate on everybody who was present in the context. According to Emmott it is

important to note that physical actions by individuals have a direct physical effect on another person. “To judge the effects of an action on other characters, the reader needs to have a continuing awareness of who is present in the context.” (Emmott 1997:103) A description of the specific context gives the reader the details of the time and location and how to read the story or research from the information as it occurred in the narratives in the present and the past narratives which act as a “flashback”.

Emmott refers to the definition that narratologists give to narratives as events in sequence often with a causal link between them (Emmott 1997:105). This fact agrees with what Morgan (2000: 5) sees that a story can be associated with and understood within the context of events linked in sequence across time according to a plot.

According to Morgan stories are brought into the context of therapy, which according to my interpretation of step one of the ‘Seven Movements Model’ is that a specific context is described. I used the description of the specific context to understand the rest of the stories of my co-researchers and used it in the process of reasoning together as to why they are on this journey together. Emmott speaks about inferences that the reader needs to make about what is not mentioned when trying to understand a story. The inferences that Emmott speaks about are the conclusions that the reader should make or reach on the basis of knowledge or facts. The portrayal of the context gives the exact setting of the action of the research. (Emmott 1997:105)

The description of the specific context is used to give the reader information about each new context, as it occurs to hold this information in mind as specific events are described. The description of the specific context shows that all the stories should not be read in conjunction with every story in this research. Certain metaphors like “the eye” or themes could not be understood without the description of the context. The description of the context helps the reader to understand who the co-researchers are and how and where they are located in the research. For me as the researcher the explanation of the context helped me to identify the themes, which helped the co-researchers and me to move from one scene to another. The different themes helped me to introduce new topics or provided embedded discussion about the current topic. The depiction of the context is to orientate the readers into recognizing the context, interpreting events, and assessing the effects of the events on the

individuals present. Besides the individuals the described context will help the readers to understand the different ways of narrative comprehension.

The description of the context helped my co-researchers to listen to their background and history as they gave evidence of the setting of the action of the story. In the writing of this research I became aware that when two things are in the same context they can have an inferred effect on each other. The description of the specific context was important to set the scene for this research and to show how the co-researchers related to their context. I compare the description of the context with the contextual framework as defined by Emmott (1997:121) as the mental store of information about the current context, built up from the text itself and from conclusions made from the text.

### **5.3 Historical background as part of a narrative journey undertaken.**

Vande Kemp (1991:182) says that the “core metaphor of contextualism is the historic event, not the past event but the one alive in the present.” People are historical beings and it is often from the history of people that we can understand them. As I understand Ricoeur (1991:66) if one wants to understand history one needs to look at a condition, which portrays a situation, which needs to be understood and interpreted from a certain perspective. I used the historical background of my co-researchers to help the readers of this thesis to orientate themselves in the situation of the co-researchers. I agree with Kleine Schriften as quoted by Ricoeur that people cannot remove themselves from historical becoming and cannot be distanced from it (Ricoeur 1991:73).

By making use of the historical background a picture is given of how the stories of my co-researchers occurred against a general and historical location and how it continued in their current context. The historical background is of great importance in how the rest of this research took place until the new direction occurred, although some of my co-researchers played a role in the action part of this research and others not. The historical background helped me to express in this research that the presence and the stories of the other co-researchers were important and that the overall context has changed. Emmott (1997:142) speaks about a contextual configuration and describes it as when one character is circled in a story by the author, it does not mean that the other characters are not present or important in that location. Contextual configuration actually tells the reader who is present in a location at a particular time and not affected. The description of the historical

background is in itself a narrative that explains the history and the way of thinking of the researcher. It links the action of the co-researchers to the precedent activities of other Methodist's in the past. The historical background is also a connection between my co-researchers' Methodist past in conjunction with mine but also in relation to their story and my current story as coordinator of the training of lay people in the MCSA.

#### **5.4 My relationship with the context is a narrative.**

The historical background of my co-researchers became the point of departure for my own reflection. I reflected on the historical background conscious of my relationship with the context. I realized that there is a connection between my co-researchers and me, which refers back to my Methodist roots and my relationship with them through this research. In my current position as coordinator for the training of lay ministries the stories of my co-researchers are stories that I continuously hear about congregations that cannot afford the leadership or services of a full time minister. It reflects the stories of laypeople who are not taken care of by the church and her leaders and how some laypeople just take initiative to take care of one another. It also reflects the stories of laypeople who have a calling on their lives.

Lay people are eager to learn more about their ministry in the Church. The "Six Calls Model" of Journey to a New Land as developed by the Methodist Church has been misinterpreted and the people called Methodist realize that their own situation and story continuously needs to be told and retold so that they can find new meaning for being involved in ministry. The old programmes and models for planting and managing churches need to be adjusted according to the context of a specific congregation.

#### **5.5 Epistemology as the narrative of understanding and knowledge**

As mentioned and explained in chapter one section 3 and 4.1.3 it was important for me to be clear about my understanding of epistemology as I progressed through this research because it anticipated the methodology and the way knowledge was maintained. Explanation and understanding brings about the epistemology, which actually shows an analysis of my way of thinking and talking about concepts and things concerning this research. I was sensitized by a postmodern postfoundationalist epistemology in which I accepted the narratives of my co-researchers as local knowledge and an understanding of the narrative story as the explanation of the narrative operation. In this research I could agree with Daiute and

Lightfoot (2004:x) that “Narrative analysis” is a place holder for different ways of conceptualizing the storied nature of human development.” My experience and understanding of the narrative through listening to the stories of my co-researchers was to look at all the narratives in the narrative of the research. I then understood what Daiute and Lightfoot described as the narrative that may be a metaphor for a life course, a developmental theory, a reference to cultural force, and/or the method for interpreting oral or written narrative discourse (Daiute and Lightfoot 2004:x)

In analyzing the narrative I also understood it as a metaphor, which involves an explanation from a psychological event. It consists of information and comments about the implication of that information. I observed and agree with Daiute and Lightfoot (2004: x) that consistent with the previous information the narrative analysis relies on themes, mostly drawn from literary theory, to explain the change of circumstances in peoples’ lives or interpreted lives, which includes time, truth, beauty, character and conflict. The narratives of my co-researchers characterized their values and practices of care and support as they expressed what life should be like, and what should be announced or hidden. My knowledge of narratives helped me to understand the narratives not as separate but as specific discourse forms, occurring as visible forms and ideas of cultural values and personal subjectivity.

The description of the narratives of the co-researchers speaks about postmodern thinking with regard to the research, and how new experience could emerge from it. From a postmodern point of view the community life of my co-researchers was understood in the form of a family, and they claimed that their church relationships influenced the dynamics of family life. Their stories speak about an interconnectedness of church-family life with relationships anchored in the individual stories of the co-researchers. My co-researchers could only get to this perception of interconnectedness through their experience and their life together in the church as a family in a community. Through their situations my co-researchers became consciously aware of how they grew emotionally and spiritually. It is only through their experience that they could know what they know about how their world operates and the challenges they still need to deal with.

In the beginning of this research their understanding of a practice of care is to be mindful of people’s problems, struggles and how they could care and support people to enable them to cope with their situation. The story changed after they experienced situations when people who had been helped (refer to those who only come to fill

their baskets) left the church. They realized that people not only need the physical care and support but they need to be cared for spiritually as well. The reflection, re-telling and deconstruction of the stories helped my co-researchers to regard spirituality as an important dimension of care and support. The moment they looked at this important aspect in the discovery group people started looking at an internal change. This is the new understanding of an old story.

The narrative is an active process, which through analysis can be differently approached and defined by researchers to address the specific questions that could guide a research and reflection on it. My epistemology helped me to understand narratives as discourses with cultural meanings, and interpretations that guided perceptions, thoughts, interaction and actions. From the narrative discourses my co-researchers could re-organize their lives, with regard to social relations, interpretations of the past, and plans for their future. For me it was clear that they needed to be guided as to how they tell their stories which influenced how they perceived, remembered and prepared their future events. To understand the narratives I needed to understand that the meaning of discourse applied to all forms of human communication and symbolization – verbal and nonverbal alike.

My epistemological understanding helped me to guide my co-researchers in understanding their narratives, through interpretation, reflection and interaction on their narratives and they realized that their situation and there narratives are different and unique.

## **5.6 Positioning in terms of a theological paradigm**

I found it very challenging but soothing to read the bible with ordinary people and was confronted with the pluralistic approach, which rejects 'one true theology'. I noticed the important role that the bible played in the theological reflection of my co-researchers who were not theologians. I was immediately challenged by the fact that to do theology in context was to take seriously the biblical understanding of my co-researchers. There was a constant movement between a trained theologian and individuals who understand the bible from what they heard in the past.

I was challenged with the question 'what do they want from faith, belief or religious convictions?' The bible studies brought many concerns about 'how and what to believe' to the table of discussion. When I spoke about 'theology' in a very simple way it felt as if I had opened an area or a space (like one of the co-researchers

Graham said, a treasure) in their lives, which they knew was there and if they could just have dug a little deeper they would have found it. I realized that for me to read the bible with them was to move into their worlds and to be converted to a sense of family-community consciousness. I guarded against the temptation to interpret the bible for them and had to accept their interpretation, which took long hours of discussion and explanation. It was together through the reflection of their experience in conjunction with the Bible that they found new meaning. I could sense this process was not easy for them because they realized that to understand themselves they needed to try to understand God and vice versa and even the understanding of the rest of the group. This narrative was deconstructed, as they could understand themselves in the image of God.

Through questioning I invited them to unpack their understanding of God and how God fitted into their stories. This moved into a moment of explaining and elaborating on their circumstances and how it fitted into the previous story or the general background as mentioned in chapter one section 1.2.1. The deconstruction of the faith stories helped them to be more open concerning their lives and the challenges they experienced. I can still remember the conversations around the “Fear of non-existence” and “The risk to take a step in faith” as discussed in chapter two section 2.15. This discussion opened my eyes to how they perceived their faith and the actions of God. As a practical theologian the deconstruction of their problem even helped me to guide the co-researchers to gain a wider perspective of their experience, which moved them into the narrative of healing and transformation.

### **5.7 The In-context experiences as part of narration**

The In-context experiences could only be described from the narrative of those who were willing to participate in this research. When I started this research I only had pieces of information, which were disconnected fragments parts of what I heard from my co-researchers that I needed to bring together. From these small pieces of information, the beginning of a story located in a particular group of people was constructed. To bring these small pieces together I selected my co-researchers, but this was such an intense process because they were very firm and strict on what was important and what needed to be written down. In using the narrative approach the chosen participants became the selected co-researchers who brought us to the essence of this research. The in-context experiences became a journey of co-exploration where hidden talents and abilities became explored and known. The process of co-exploration became an intense listening process and the use of

questions that orientated them to open up opportunities that helped them to bypass the problems that had delayed them on their journey.

The problems that they had on the journey were:

- They thought that care and support was only a social need but in the deconstruction of the story they saw the spiritual dimension of it as well.
- They needed to accept one another so that each congregant could play a role.
- Although they were together did they lack the freedom to talk so that everybody's story could be heard?

It is true what Rubin and Rubin (1995:8) say: It is important to get further than everyday listening in what one hears and regards as meaningful. I agree with them that the process of intense listening to the discussions helped me to obtain more depth and detail on a narrower range of topics than what I would have received from ordinary conversations. This process is time consuming because people need to elaborate, present incidents and clarifications, and have lengthy discussions about certain events. To be able to describe these events I needed to concentrate on the “thick” descriptions, which gave more detail about certain stories. The richness of the stories in conversation revealed the complex interweaving of my co-researchers' experiences and memories with problematic issues, like imagination, fictional and factual stories.

In the narration of the stories I learned about the shared knowledge and beliefs of my co-researchers as an essential source of an educational and caring learning experience. The in-context experiences gave insight into the process whereby the cultural self emerged from memory reconstructions.

### **5.8 The methodology as part of narrative analysis.**

The whole mindset behind this research was the telling or writing up of a story of a specific church congregation. As mentioned in chapter one 1.2.3 this group of people was concerned about the correct information in the form of a narrative concerning their congregation or church. They were mindful of real documentation based on sound knowledge as information for their generations to come concerning the origin and history of their congregation.

To hold on to the above mentioned I needed to select the five families as mentioned in chapter one, section 4.2.2. These five families started a story, which I had to arrange through conversational interviews and contextual bible studies. The telling or the writing of the stories became events of telling social stories, which in some cases became personal and unique. In the analysis of the narrative I appreciated everybody's story and agree with Dauite and Lightfoot (2004:115) that the social nature of narrating is often overlooked by research and education. These conversational interviews served their purpose because in the rereading of this document my co-researchers were thrilled and amazed that we together could come up with such a document. This showed them how much value they had added to certain stories and what they discarded as not important. For my co-researchers this, as they sometimes called it "conversational " exercise, became a medium of identity development, healing, learning and planning for the future. The use of the methodology as mentioned in chapter one 4.2.2 brought us to an activity and process of social unity involving interactions among individuals' values and actions. The process of narration involved bible studies and leaders meetings where people were allowed to speak, argue and interpret their journey of care and support. In conjunction with the literature a new story (the story of care giving) has been developed. This was an attentive process of listening to be able to capture the correct mindset and information in the process of narration. The methodology brought us to the point that narrative texts are inter-subjective because it belongs to the context as well as to the authors.

### **5.9 The narration of ethical practice**

The ethics behind this research became a narrative that involved my own integrity in relation to the honesty and professional behaviour of my co-researchers. The stories also contained the unheard evidence that I could sense my co-researchers could not divulge. This became a process of negotiation of consent and putting some of the facts on the table. I regard this whole ethical episode as a story that is part of this research but guarded against my own will on how I would like to write the information. I totally depended and trusted on the information and contribution made by my co-researchers. They were also so ethically inclined and would not divulge information that would be to the detriment of someone in the group. For me this research was an ethical venture or activity. As we journeyed in this research people started creating sound relationships with each other and even I developed relationships with people I never knew before and those I knew but was not on a close footing with.

This whole research moved everybody into a moral commitment towards one another which changed their mindset concerning socialization. I am in agreement with Freedman and Combs (1996:265) that we witnessed how people could transform themselves and their lives in preferred ways within relationships. I could really delve into and experience what Freedman and Combs further say that from a postmodern perspective ethics focuses on particular people in particular experiences, without one-size-fits-all universal truth claims.

The ethical narration of the stories taught me that every story was told from a specific perspective because there are different and competing perspectives and judgments of a story.

#### **5.10 A description of the experiences that I have heard.**

The shift from listening to the experience in describing the stories was not easy one, and I stand in agreement with Sturges (1992:5) that every narrative is faced by the problem of creating narrative space for itself and thus demonstrating and testifying to its own narrativity. There are no rules for narrative construction in the way that there are rules for sentence construction. He further explains it by saying that one cannot speak of a grammatical or well-formed narrative in the sense that one can speak of a sentence (Sturges 1992:5). The “grammar of a narrative” is not about a set of pre-existent rules and definitions, which have to be carefully integrated and then cautiously applied. It is important to give a comprehensive account of the narrative but it is imperative for the main event to surface and to be understood. It was important for me to work within a framework of possibilities, which could not be determined by a set of rules or even grammar but have proved their worth on an empirical or conventional basis. To be able to present the stories I actively constructed the data that I heard. It is the narrative, which contains narrativity, and this narrativity will precisely include the process by which I as the researcher was encouraged to actively construct the story from the information given to me. In the stories I needed to identify which were narrative events and which were non-narrative. The non-narrative events were the events in the narrative that were accommodated as part of the narrative.

#### **5.11 Narration is a two-way interpretation and description of experience**

Muntigl quotes Garfinkel (1967:31) saying that the interpretive work used to achieve common understanding has an ‘inner’ temporal course. He continues by saying that our practical activities, reasonings and understanding are therefore dependent

actions that continuously evolve over time. “In this way, social actions are constantly reflexively constituting and reconstituting the activities that shape and are reshaped by them.” (Muntigl 2004:28)

When people speak to one another they are confronted with an object of perception. This object represents the world or a social action and people apply their common sense knowledge to understand or make sense of the object Muntigl (2004:29). says this does not mean that objects or perceptions are mapped out onto a pre-existing underlying pattern. He explains Garfinkel’s clarification that an object of perception (i.e. instances) constructs the pattern and is interpreted on the basis of some pattern. Patterns are not complete but instead incompletely specified categories of objects or experience. For a pattern to be applied a situated context needs to be interpreted.

In the interpretation and description of experiences I need to find more clarity in what my co-researchers meant in the telling of the stories. In questioning I could sometimes not find the answers or they could not respond in a clear fashion. In the process I needed to restructure some of my questions until they were comfortable with what they meant. I continuously found myself going back into the past of the story so that the important part of the story could surface. This helped me to get a more detailed analysis and descriptions of what my co-researchers’ social practices included. What was interesting to me was the competence of my co-researchers to describe and interpret their actions which again showed me that social action is contextual, because every time when we went back to specific information on which I needed clarity I realized that social action is shaped by the prior interaction. It was important for me not to give each bit of information, because social actions are spontaneous and are constitutive of the activities in which they occur. Social actions are not regulated by rules but, controlled by prior actions. Muntigl (2004:32) Riccer (1974:179) interprets the art of interpretation in comparison with Freud by saying that in any event there is a sort of comprehension, understanding, or production of intelligibility.

Any person could immediately see the deliberate attempts by the co-researchers as they enter into the worlds of one another in a way that will falsify the common tendency to blame either themselves or others for their troubles, fear and hopelessness. “Social constructionism focuses specifically on the normative

narratives, or social discourses, which both inform and are informed by the meanings people attach to their reality”. (Doan 1997:128-133)

Doan’s statement concerning social constructionism brings out an understanding that could link with what happened in the life of this church. Social constructionism consists of a libratory effect due to the existence of an extreme possible number of alternative constructions of events. The focus of these events is the different meanings with which people’s worlds become improved and they can move forward. The libratory message and action becomes clear in every event when people take themselves and others as constructions and not objective descriptions. Social constructionism helps people to try different avenues to interpret their lives. Parker (1998:13) states that social constructionism seems to offer the same basic message on a wider social scale because of its libratory connotation.

### **5.12 Descriptions of experience and traditions of interpretations**

It is important to note that history plays an amicable role in the interpretation of traditions. In chapter one section 4.4. I mentioned Foucault as quoted by Van Huyssteen that when we enter an interdisciplinary situation we already consist of knowledge that has been influenced by history. Traditions also developed from social actions, which later became a meta-narrative. The narrative research as been understood and endorsed by Müller helped most of us to understand the tradition of interpretation. Our common knowledge has been formed by discourses, which have been understood as systems. In the interpretation of the stories we tend to use or relate this knowledge within a specific context.

### **5.13 The narrative of the scientific community**

The scientific community were people who became interested in this research when my researchers and I invited them to a few meetings of discussion. They were the following people: Social worker, psychologist, two Methodist ministers who spent a day during a weekend seminar with my co-researchers, an educational therapist and a Commander in the Navy (SANDF)

The reason for inviting them was that this structure of social assistance is what my co-researchers were used to in the military and I also respected my co-researcher’s choice of a scientific community so that they could still feel part of this research as a journey.

The narrative of the scientific community was viewed in the form of a group activity, which shows participation in the action that has been researched. Valuable discussions and inputs arose from closer contact and discussions with the scientific community. The narrative of the scientific community was in the form of a group communication where intense meaning was given to the stories. It was a process of questions and answers and even a reflection and response at a later stage. Discussions and talks were facilitated and led by one of the members of the congregation and it was amazing how the essence of this research and the story of 'Care Giving' could surface right through the process.

As the discussion developed the research community became interested in the story of "the eye". They felt that this metaphor became a narrative of action, which formed the centre of a process that actually gave birth to a course of action for healing and transformation and developed into a new story of 'Care Giving'. This endorsed the fact that to be able to show or give "care" comes from the organ of the "eye". The social worker in the group made a remarkable statement in saying that: "What the eye sees is what will move the heart". The primary focus of "the eye" became a narrative of a mission in action.

The group activity of the research distinguished between an objective observer and the subjective subject. Through interaction and questioning my co-researchers could become the active listeners in reflecting on their own stories with the aim of transformation and a new story. The interaction of the scientific community also brought them into a narrative in which they form part of a church and military narrative of guidance and support. They felt that their "eyes" had been opened now to what they see as how lay people and sub-ordinates view a mission of care and support in church and military structures. They also became enlightened to a discourse on that they also have neglected others by not looking through the "eyes" of the community and how the community viewed them. The thoughts and ideas of the co-researchers opened up a new story and a new venture for the scientific community. Emmott (1997: 76) expresses the fact that the factors of the discourse should be taken into consideration to interpret sentences.

The statements that my co-researchers made spoke about a discourse that existed over time and represents the total of all written, spoken or recorded thoughts. The discourse of care and support opened up a new interpretation and ideas about 'Care Giving', that has been accepted by the scientific community. The narrative of the

scientific community helped the co-researcher understand that they are active participants in this research and not people on which the research is projected.

#### **5.14 Involvement of the co-researchers in the process of research**

According to the introductory sessions of this research my co-researchers are the forerunners and active participants of this research. Their involvement narrated the whole process of research. The process of action and reflection helped them look at their situation as a process and not a once off act. Their interaction came from a willingness to actively participate from a perspective of care and support. They really helped me to understand their stories as I grouped their responses into categories of similar ideas, concepts and themes. They have been very mindful of how I have interpreted their stories and corrected me and even themselves so that real evidence could become known.

The sessions with the scientific community helped my co-researchers to view themselves in a different light. Their interaction and answers to questions brought them to the conclusion that there is no “one-size-fits-all” model, relating to the ‘Six Calls Model’. The actual design for the mission of this congregation resulted from a journey of open-ended process and not as the product or strategy (as designed in the Six Calls Model) developed ahead of time. From a practical theological narrative perspective, their involvement centred around discovering, acknowledging and deconstruction of beliefs, ideas and practices of an all-embracing culture in which they live.

#### **5.15 Their religious and spiritual aspects became a story of narration**

My co-researchers’ knowledge about God was firstly sighted and acknowledged by the meta-narrative that we all grew up with as Christians. As they were confronted by their own story they realized that they are a people with a language, which could not be separated from their actions. It is so true, as mentioned by de Gruchy and Villa-Vicencio (1994:204), that when a community is bonded they become mindful of the grace and gifts of the Holy Spirit and use them in a mutual ministry for the good of the whole body. This action can only become sound through the language which shaped their consciousness to care and support. This has been allowed by an opportunity of hearing and understanding their religious and spiritual comprehension and experiences of God’s presence in their own language and use of language.

The language of wisdom moved them into an action of compassionate ministry as they experienced the presence of God. All their biblical thoughts and ideas concerning God changed. This moved them to understand that if God is a God of continuous action then their actions need to become visible (refer to chapter four, section 4.3 on prevenient grace). To be able to do this their spirituality took on a new dimension and they experienced a process of deep thought as they became sensitive to their own healing and transformation. The telling and re-telling of the stories further developed the process of healing and transformation.

#### **5.16 A description of experience, thickened through interdisciplinary investigation.**

The interdisciplinary investigation helped me to approach this research from specific conceptions. The merging of the postmodern postfoundationalist, narrative and social constructionist perspectives allowed me to describe the experiences of my co-researchers. The common language of these fields integrated the different perspectives that enhanced deconstruction and emancipation. A new way of interpretation has been developed and opened up new areas of research. The literature from modern and foundationalist perspectives helped me understand this research from a process where I could compare and argue my co-researchers stories in the process of development. Through the use of different interdisciplinary discussions could I determine and decide on a specific research structure. It also helped my co-researchers and me in deciding which themes to use in the interpretation of the stories. The different interdisciplinary approaches came from a scientific, religious and social background.

#### **5.17 The development of alternative interpretations, that point beyond the local community.**

As the research developed the ideas and beliefs of my co-researchers changed and together we looked at a process of transformation, which gave them a new interpretation of a "Journey to a New Land". It was now about their journey of a new story of 'Care Giving'. Different stories emerged with an in depth discussion of the stories and as the new themes were analysed and interpreted.

Together with the co-researchers we engaged in a process of deconstruction and reached a holistic understanding of care and support through the process of social constructionism. The dissemination of the research was done through group discussions and seminars. This thesis can now become a document of important

information for use at church synods, training sessions for lay people, church council meetings and policy-making committees.

### **5.18 My new story as part of Journey to a New Land.**

This research has told me that the deconstruction of the story of my co-researchers helped to find new meaning in their new story of 'Care Giving'. My interpretation of care is to move beyond one's own perception of care through narration and the process of social constructionism. This led to the perception of the laity as people with special gifts and abilities and the opportunity to voice their concerns with regard to mission in action. The Methodist Church of Southern Africa can still hold on to the belief that the ministry of the priesthood of all believers can continue between lay ministries and the ordained. The "Six Calls Model" can still affirm this partnership but with the acknowledgement that there is no "one-size-fits-all" method in ministry even if we come from the same background.

### **REFLECTION**

The methodology has been explained as from a narrative perspective and how this gave evidence to a ministry of 'Care Giving'. The pastoral care given by the co-researchers showed how ordinary people could take care of one another without the necessary theory of pastoral care or counseling. Every step of the 'Seven Movements Model' are described in the form of a narrative which still expresses the essence of this research.

The written story also became a new narrative, which will later serve as a kind of historical background. According to the 'Seven Movements Model' every bit of information as mentioned in the different steps is very important. The information shows the plot, important scenes and the development of the stories into a unique outcome that affirms my co-researchers' plan, action, feelings, vision, thoughts, beliefs, abilities and commitment. "Unique outcomes can be the past, present and/or the future." (Morgan 2000:52)

The unique outcome shows that the mission has been accomplished in the form of a new story of 'Care Giving'. From the start this was the focus of my co-researchers concerning their vision and mission. The unique outcome could only transpire in a local set up that represented their story. To be able to enhance this achievement it was necessary for the historical background and the specific context to be taken into consideration with the help of interviews.

In the interviews the action part made it possible to consider all the stories as valuable information. The context and history of my co-researchers helped the reader to understand this research from the participation and activities of the co-researchers. This vision coincides with my relationship with the context and I could use the information as documented by the context to give more evidence in the stories.

The whole methodology in conjunction with the epistemology brought about a narrative interpretation of the stories and an intense development of the research. Narration is a two-way communication.

### **SUMMARY**

The previous chapters explain the make-up of the whole structure and development of this research. The chapters one to four find essence and explanation of development in chapter five. Chapter five is written in a story form as this whole research speaks about the stories and interpretation of the narratives of my co-researchers.

## CHAPTER SIX

### REFLECTION ON THE RESEARCH

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter brings out the importance of this research as an in depth study of pastoral care as a ministry that is not only for the ordained ministry but also for the laity. It is research done from a specific tradition, which speaks about a Methodist background belief and development of a “Six Calls Model”. The stories of my co-researchers corresponded with the Methodist tradition of the “Priesthood of all believers” as discussed in chapter one, section 5.

The writing down of the stories took shape and developed into this research project and the introduction of a new story of ‘Care Giving’. The research shows a participatory event of people who are journeying with one another in a process of care and support. This chapter reviews the research narrative from a perspective of a postmodern postfoundationalist social constructionist narrative approach. This participatory research shows the participation of the researcher as a participant observer and not someone that looked upon the co-researchers as objects. The participatory action research valued the inputs of my co-researchers as they gave meaning to the process of this research. The narratives of pastoral care were interpreted and understood from a perspective of experience that was told through the process of re-telling, reformulation, reconstruction and co-construction.

This chapter shows the intertwining of the postmodern, postfoundationalist practical theology as practiced in a social constructionist narrative approach. It also reflects my experience of the research process as narrative, which resulted in a process of healing and transformation in my own life and ministry in the MCSA.

#### 6.2 Reflection on Researched Topic (Title)

My co-researchers and I together formulated the topic (Narratives of pastoral care, healing and transformation in a community of laity) of this research. The reason for involving them was that they invited me to write down the history of their congregation which developed into a process of participatory action research. Although this does not divulge any traces of Methodism it does entail some of the memories and historicity of the Methodist roots of some of my co-researchers and my own. Although the aim of the research was clear, it still was very difficult to come up

with a suitable topic. Different titles were discussed but due to the experiences of my co-researchers this topic was decided upon. The topic was only accepted and thought through after the research had been in motion for almost two years and was finalised with the help of literature studies. The reason why it took us two years was that I wanted to make certain whether my co-researchers understood the process of research and that they were serious concerning the writing up of this research. At this stage my co-researchers were not sure whether this congregation would develop the way it has develop thus far.

The topic speaks about specific narratives which centre around the stories of my co-researchers and how we interpreted those stories. From my perception as researcher it speaks about my involvement in the training of lay people who serve the Methodist Church of Southern Africa at different church levels.

This topic can only be understood from the interpretation of the stories of how pastoral care was applied through the application of the methodology. At the end of this research the same topic could be used to evaluate the new story of 'Care Giving'. My co-researchers felt that the topic helped them to concentrate on their experiences as real and important as the research developed.

### **6.3 The overall aim and specific objectives**

Narrative research is an approach that emphasizes the telling, listening, re-telling, deconstruction, re-construction and the co-construction of the stories of the research participants and helps the researcher to interpret and understand these stories. The overall aim and the specific objectives could only be developed after I had met a few times with my co-researchers concerning their journey.

The different times of meeting and talking about the writing up of their stories made me pose the following question to my co-researchers, which became the research question: Is it possible for ordinary lay people to start and manage a church based on love, care and support and what stumbling blocks could stand in the way of such a goal?

My co-researchers told their stories and together we listened to them as narratives of love, care and support. In the telling of the stories we went through processes of reconstruction, re-authoring and co-construction ultimately to understand their experiences, which were painful and had become a problem to them. The

methodology helped us to listen and explore the spiritual qualities of these stories and their connection, which brought about healing and transformation. The stories which were explored in the process of listening, were the stories that moved this congregation to interpret their understanding of care and support. Chapters three and four show evidence of unique outcomes that helped them to re-tell and re-construct these stories. This process was conducted through questions and answers until my co-researchers formulated the unique outcomes. This was an attempt from my side to take on a “not-knowing” position, which led to the development of a new story of ‘Care Giving’. The opening up of explanations and interpretations concerning the unique outcomes helped me to understand the things that they see as important for their mission. The adherence to the “not-knowing” position gave my co-researchers the freedom to develop their own perception of what their new story means to them.

The co-construction of the new story developed a new meaning, which was understood in the light of spiritual transformation and healing. The importance of healing in their context was further interpreted through the use of the literature. I feel that the essence of healing and transformation as objectives of this research has been dealt with in the light of re-telling, re-construction and co-construction. The discovery group meetings were used to re-tell all the stories in conjunction with the rest of the stories of the congregation. The discovery group was an opportunity for people to listen to their stories and even to my interpretation of it and to hear the interpretation of the scientific community. People expressed their feelings towards one another and how they moved into a process of spiritual transformation that through the processes of re-construction and co-construction could re-author their lives, which then brought about healing and spiritual transformation.

#### **6.4 Reflection on the epistemological and theological points of departure**

As the researcher I approached this research from the knowledge that was at hand, which I could only interpret when my co-researchers told it to me in the way they perceived their own knowledge. The field of knowledge from which I approached the research process was embedded in a pastoral postmodern postfoundationalist theological practice and is introduced from a subjective and personal narrative approach. In this approach I have focussed on an empowering and spiritual process of change, which involved the social constructionist concept.

Epistemologically I tried to interpret the narratives of my co-researchers through telling, re-telling, re-formulation, deconstruction and externalisation to understand their experiences. It was also a process through which they understood their experiences. Through discussions and reformulations we together looked collectively at their stories to find meaning in them. This process has been upheld with the interaction of foundationalist, rationalist, modernist and other theories to show how these theories supported or opposed the belief system of my co-researchers and me and how we formulated certain perceptions of experience.

#### **6.4.1 Postmodern epistemological point of departure**

This research took place within a framework of local knowledge, which refers to contextualization through the telling of stories. The local knowledge was interpreted from the postmodern paradigm that rejects the belief that knowledge is universally constructed. My co-researchers were invited to give accounts of their lives and of the meanings they derived from aspects of their experiences. We used the stories to uphold the postmodern idea that through the understanding of their experiences my co-researchers could find meaning and purpose in their lives. This could only happen when my co-researchers and I could put their realities together through social construction in a process of listening.

The process of research made it clear that the knowledge and experiences of my co-researchers have been influenced by a Methodist tradition and through reflection on their experiences we came to the conclusion that there are certain ways of doing things (refer to the “Six Calls Model”) but that they also have a story to tell through their own experiences. This was one of the unique outcomes that affirmed their mission and the belief that they can run a church without the assistance or leadership of a fulltime minister. The answer from a pluralistic approach or listening to other voices and ways of doing of things, rejected a “one-size-fits-all” model approach. The participation from the scientific community in the process of listening acknowledged the fact that postmodernism is an approach that discards an objective approach to knowledge and accommodates subjective and personal narratives and contexts of reality. The pluralistic approach was further enhanced by interdisciplinary discussions and reasoning from a psychological background in relation to pastoral theology and how my co-researchers understood their experience. Chapter three gives clear evidence of the interdisciplinary interaction through the use of literature and the scientific community. Through a postmodernist approach I was confronted with the issues of my co-researchers which made them feel insecure and fearful, but

in the process of re-telling and deconstruction we could together interpret their stories and describe their experiences. The insecurity and fears could be critically evaluated in the bible studies and other discussions. My co-researchers felt empowered in the co-construction of their new story of 'Care Giving', because they understood their situation from different angles of thought but could also give their own opinion. My co-researchers' togetherness in this new story implemented a reality that the emergence of their new experience gave meaning to them and can also give meaning to the rest of the world.

#### **6.4.2 Postfoundationalist practical theology**

When we look at theology as a discipline that critically reflects on people's experiences of faith in a specific situation one can say that this research adhered to the process of reflection and interaction from a theological point of departure. The intense move from an objective approach to knowledge represented a postmodern shift as characterized and reflected by the co-researcher's personal narratives. The postfoundationalist approach gave opportunity to speak and reflect from a personal faith perspective in conjunction with other disciplines. The epistemology of postfoundationalism recognizes the collective resources of human rationality in different modes of reflection which points further than the barriers of our own epistemic communities in cross-contextual, cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary conversation (Van Huyssteen 1997:4).

This research adhered to a local and practical condition, which affected our approach with regard to care and support and even changed our mindset. In this research we continuously focussed on the experienced knowledge and understanding that developed from the personal faith experiences of my co-researchers. These experiences have been told, discussed and evaluated and gave rise to a process of healing and spiritual transformation through the interpretation of other voices like those of the scientific community and those who criticised my co-researchers through the spreading of rumours.

My co-researchers explored the experiential and interpretive roots of their Methodist belief system, but on the grounds of commitment and how they have reflected and interpreted their experience they could discover that they related to a specific context or story. I feel that this research upholds a postfoundationalist theological view of faith as a condition, because in the process of reconstruction and reformulation of the stories my co-researchers could use their experiences of faith to rediscover their

spirituality. Through this they understood God differently and through interpreting their experiences could find God as someone that is actively busy in people's lives. Through practical theology as a means of pastoral care my co-researchers could understand their relationship with God and also how that understanding relates to the rest of the congregation and those who only came for help. Through dialogue they could see their actions and relationships with God and with others in a new way.

The practical theological position required from me was to listen to the conversations of my co-researchers from a perspective of how their experiences made sense to them and gave meaning to their lives. Their perspectives of faith made me curious to understand their understanding and experiences of God and I also questioned them on this. With the interaction between the literature studies and their experiences my co-researchers could understand their mission in the light of a God that is present in their situation and the fact that God is a God of action in which their actions are portrayed.

Their human experience also presented us with a language, which could be related to a Christian tradition. Through language my co-researchers could go back into the memory and tradition that communicated and connected practical reason and practical wisdom. My engagement in the conversations helped me to understand this language as co-participant and co-author of their narratives to understand and handle problems in relation to their relationship with God. This language supported a dialogue structured through questions and answers in a discourse that could develop into a new way of gaining knowledge. My co-researchers could no longer see their actions and participation in this research as separate, but as an integrated vision of human life. My co-researchers everyday or ordinary concerns became a positive intention to practice 'care giving' through the implementation of practical theology. Their understanding of God through a language could help them to understand their concrete situation. This language was further developed through the interpretation of the biblical text. My interpretation is that their own mission became a step towards and a process of transformation in their lives.

The involvement of my co-researchers in this research showed that they could reason about their perceptions of their situation and how the outsiders (those who only came to fill their baskets) and even the visitors interpreted their actions and accept this as a challenge which tests how they reason and conduct their mission. With this they acknowledged and appreciated the literature in the bible studies and

other meetings that helped them understand their context which at the end of the day gave meaning to their life.

### **6.5 The Narrative Approach as a structured ‘given’.**

Although postmodernism does not justify the use of meta-narrative my co-researchers were attached to a biblical story of how they felt connected to God. The narrative approach helped us to acknowledge the contextuality of the interpretation of my co-researcher’s story and the way their Methodist tradition shaped their understanding of care and support. The interpretation of the stories, which brought out a specific language made it easier for us to understand their narratives in relation to the biblical text. The re-telling, reformulation and deconstruction of the stories helped my co-researchers to understand that they deal with their own life story, which gave meaning to them.

Different narratives have been told as part of a participant’s journey with the same story. The stories of my co-researchers, which were drawn from the reality of their contextual encounters with God and those they cared for, justified the fact that their personal faith was embedded in the history of their experience of being part of a community. The actions of my co-researchers became a text as mentioned in this thesis and can now be used in a Methodist context or any other context that speaks about pastoral care.

The use of language in how my co-researchers explained their context and experiences was understood from the re-telling and deconstruction of their stories. Words like “a mafia operation” brought light to the explanation of a painful and intolerant situation that my co-researchers experienced.

Listening attentively to the stories and how the stories developed made me take on a “not-knowing” position as the co-researchers described and dealt with their stories from the position of being experts of their own lives. Most of the time I allowed them to understand, interpret and explain their own stories without the influence of theoretical information. Their practical wisdom was not taken for granted but used to open up new dimensions especially from their spiritual endeavours.

#### **6.5.1 The expertise of the co-researchers**

Respecting them as the experts of their own lives brought out the assurance that my co-researchers knew how they wanted to perform a ministry of care and support.

They were the authors of their own stories and the opportunity in the discovery groups caused them to understand their stories differently and to explore new dimensions in their spirituality that brought about healing and transformation. Through this process the aims and objectives of this research have been accomplished. Everybody's story was taken seriously and this process guided me so I did not see my version of this research as more authentic and indisputable than theirs. I respected their expertise and never regarded my knowledge as the dominant source of information.

### **6.5.2 The problem as storied**

The problem has been narrated as seen from the different interpretations of my co-researchers. They interpreted the problem from how they experienced and perceived it, and how they listened to their own voices in conveying the impact of it on their lives. The narration of the problem helped my co-researchers to concentrate on the positive aspects of their story. The stories communicated precious memories and interpretations of actions and events that influenced or affected their lives in situations where care and support was given to my co-researchers. The informal and formal telling of the stories was influenced by the social context in which my co-researchers lived and understood their experiences. The re-authoring of their lives was an engagement of all of us in the problematic stories of my co-researchers and constructed a new reality. The setting of the correct question helped them to stay with the description of the problem and to elaborate on it.

### **6.5.3 Deconstruction of the problem**

The problem is the perception of people who thought that lay people could not manage and sustain a congregation in the absence of a fulltime pastor or minister. This perception created a problem for them, which made it almost impossible for them to be recognised as a church. This also adds to the sensitivity of outsiders or visitors (those who only come to fill their baskets) that a church building seems to be more appropriate as a place of worship.

This perception caused confusion and complicated their expectations of running their own congregation. The process of re-telling, listening and deconstructing the problem helped them to discover their unique outcomes and not to be distracted by the perceptions of people. Deconstructing the problem led to long and continuous hours of discussion and construction. This process did not need any academic cleverness or theoretical skilfulness. My co-researchers were led by their desire and

eagerness to perform a deed of care and support. Listening deconstructively to my co-researcher's stories and experience meant I needed to listen to the many possible meanings that emerged from the discussions. I concentrated on the uncertainties of what their spirituality meant to them and how their thinking was transformed. They bravely said that their perception about God is that God listened to their cries when they went through difficult moments (refer chapter four). Deconstruction of the problem helped me to evaluate whether I had interpreted their experiences in relation to the problem correctly.

## **6.6 Social constructionism**

The group discussions revealed the incidents and events that were explained in the form of stories by my co-researchers. My co-researchers could through the help of social theory (literature that I brought to the discussions) reason about incidents (like the rugby matches of the boys and the borrowing of the car) that made them feel together and supportive to one another. In the social interactions with one another the interpretations and construction of the events expressed how they used their take-for-granted commonsense knowledge in the composition of new knowledge. This led to hours and hours of dialogue and interpretations that led to the construction of a new story. The composition of knowledge also gave evidence of how they interpreted and regarded certain realities on their journey and how it coincided with the unique outcomes. The unique outcomes were used to co-construct, describe and discover their new experiences and understandings. The co-construction led to reconstruction of knowledge and social interaction and showed that we were all participants in this research and no one was an object.

Their genuine behaviour or attitude helped them to relate to one another from a perspective of social change that was affected by a spiritual transformation. They acted upon their common understanding of their situation as a real and unique condition, which helped them to focus on their vision and mission and become stronger and more supportive. Through social interaction they could discover and describe their new story.

## **6.6 Feedback Loops**

The process of discussions was an intense process of telling, interpretation, reflection, re-telling and deconstruction with the involvement and interactions of the co-researchers, scientific community and myself. I led some of the discussions and feedbacks through the use of the literature which helped in the process of the

understanding of the stories. This process helped with the interpretation of unclear events that might have brought confusion and misunderstanding amongst us. It was also a process of co-exploration and emancipation and helped all of us to understand the research process.

For me it was a process of writing down the stories and some important evidence that surfaced at unexpected moments. I reflected on the information and the interpretation given by my co-researchers and then organised another meeting or discussion session. This was also a time to listen again to other interpretations and to bring them inline with the story of research. The unclear evidence was put together and sometimes dismantled to get the finer detail and interpretation when the co-researchers felt we misinterpreted their story. This was an open opportunity for consultation to put things straight. To be able to understand all the data from my co-researchers I needed to understand the title as a guide with which to approach this research. Although the title was finalised and researched there is still room for deconstructing the process of spirituality.

Although the new story of 'Care giving' has been developed the aspect of spirituality was not interpreted for further developments. I would like to understand the process of spirituality and transformation in the new story.

### **6.8 Reflection on the whole process of research**

I think it was during the final stages of this research that I started to delve deeper into the topic, but was overwhelmed by the stories of the co-researchers. I was also concerned about their understanding of their stories and if they would survive as a congregation because there was a period of almost six months when we did not have any discussions. Academically I feel I could have done more. Although I read most of the literature concerning the research method it was very difficult for me to grapple with the concepts. I found the narrative approach very interesting and would like to do some more research in this approach. The narrative approach will always be of help in my current job situation as the coordinator of the training of lay ministries in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa.

This research was a period of intense and continuous growth and reflection on the narrative way of listening to people's stories. The narrative approach helped me to understand the difficult concepts of postmodernism and postfoundationalism. It took hours of reading, reflection and restructuring of my own perceptions in relation to a

meta-narrative. This whole process helped me to wait for the moments of surprise when I thought that we would not reach the aim and objectives of the research. Academically I have grown through hours of reading and interpretation of the stories and the literature. Research is an ongoing process that every time opens up new avenues for research.

What transpired from this research is that there will always be meta-narratives due to person's perceptions of their own story and how others could use this story in a process of learning. My co-researchers even feel that their story could become a meta-narrative as a story that could be used by the rest of the Methodist Connexion and even other churches. I feel I can use this story to develop training manuals for lay people in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa.