

**THESIS TITLE:**

**EXCESSIVE FUNERAL EXPENDITURE IN THE BLACK TOWNSHIPS, A  
PASTORAL CHALLENGE**

**BY**

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## I. DECLARATION

I Stephen Moreo, declare that this dissertation on, Excessive Funeral Expenditure in the Black Townships, a Pastoral Care challenge, which I submit for the Degree of MA (Practical Theology) at the University of Pretoria. This is my own work and all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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## **II. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:**

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### **III. SUMMARY:**

Funerals are still considered as very important and well attended occasion in the black townships of South Africa. In the recent past, traditional African funerals practices have affected a number of powerful and complex systems that have been interaction in Africa. The three most important being traditional African cultures, modern Western culture and the environment.

The study was conducted to establish factors that led to excessive funerals expenditures in some black townships communities of South Africa, in order to create a pastoral response to this phenomenon. The project was done in Ramatlabama village in the North West province and also in Soweto in the province of Gauteng.

A qualitative methodological plan was followed allowing exclusive experiences to emerge. Families, adults and young church groups, clergy, Bishop, Social group and a Funeral undertaker , an in-depth qualitative analysis was employed in order to find the real reasons that led to excessive funeral expenditure. The data collected and analyzed revealed that factors such as impressing neighbors, meeting community and family expectation were the reasons for the phenomenon. There were other external factors that contributed indirectly to the practice and such as commercialization and politicization.

In order to address this practice that is making the poor more vulnerable, the Shepherding Model of Gerkin's and Pollard's Theory of positive deconstruction was explored. It was found that the Clergy needed to be helped to be aware of the fact that excessive funeral expenditure requires a pastoral response with the right attitude and meaningful dialogues with those affected. The pastoral care-giver with adequate knowledge and exposure to life of pastoral care seeker will have a greater advantage to help most if not all families that usually find themselves in this predicament or dilemma. The best way for the church to help the poor families venture into the future, it's by educating our communities on how not to spend beyond their means.

#### IV. DEFINITION OF TERMS:

Bishop	The Bishop has the oversight of a geographical area — a Diocese. The understanding is that all ministries within a Diocese are the right and property of the Bishop, some of which he may delegate to others.
Canons	Has two meanings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•A senior priest or a lay-person awarded an honorary title which may carry responsibilities.</li><li>•The rules regulating a province, with a Constitution.</li></ul>
Clergy	Persons who are ordained to the office of Bishop, Deacon or Priest in the Anglican Church.
Death of a loved one	The ‘loved one’ in this research is any person who caused the respondent to feel robbed as a result of their death. The death of anyone they have invested in – were emotionally attached to or depended on. This suggests that it is the nature and the quality of the attachment that determines the intensity of grief rather than the magnitude of the psychosocial transition that results. The pangs of grief are more easily explained in the terms of attachment theory than transition Nyanjaya <i>cf.</i> (Dickeson, Malcolm & Katz 2000:330).
Family	According to the Universal English Dictionary

(1996) family is described as “group of persons living under the same roof including both those actually related by blood, and all others, dependents, friends in a household. The term in this article will be used in a broader extended family in Western sense of the word.

## Funeral Rituals

Cook & Oltjenbrun (1998:128) describe ritual as a specific behaviour that gives symbolic expression to certain feelings or thoughts. It serves as a public acknowledgement that death has occurred and provides an opportunity for mourning. It is acknowledgement of death at a formal level, which provides powerful therapeutic experience for both individuals and families. It symbolizes transition, healing and continuity. Rituals invest death with religious, psychological and social meaning for the participants. In spite of it being public, it uniquely benefits the individual in dealing with the unfinished business. For example, the ritual of distribution of the deceased’s items, the remembrance ceremonies and the appointment of guardians for the remaining spouse and children for the mourning period until the final ceremony is carried out, are an acknowledgement that loss has occurred.

## Grief

Refers to, “ the cognitive and emotional reactions that follow the death of a loved one”  
Nyanjaya *cf* (Newman and Newman

1998:491). According to Lewis Nyanjaya cf (1998:6), there is great hurt in grief, generally a feeling that no one else really understands, that no one else has ever suffered in quite the same way or to the same extent. The assumption that is often made by those who have lost loved ones are therefore not fair and are unfounded, when I tell them that “I do understand what you are going through” or “I know what it means”. These utterances might mean that we project our grief into current griever. If grief is the price one pays for the love invested in a relationship then no one can understand how the grieving person feels

#### Mourning

According to the Heinemann English Dictionary (2001) mourning is described as, “the outward signs of bereavement or grief, e.g. the wearing of black clothes.” It denotes the social prescription for the way in which a person is expected to display grief and often reflects the practices of one’s culture.

#### Parish

A smaller geographical area within a Diocese, which usually has a Priest, under the Diocesan Bishop’s research and license, with oversight – usually called a *Rector*. A parish may have one or more congregations which meet in different church buildings.

#### Praxis

Praxis may be defined as an intentional action or behaviour by individuals or group directed

or inspired by their Christian faith.

Priest	A person ordained for the office of priesthood in the Church.
Province	A geographical area – under the oversight of an Archbishop – and part of the <i>Anglican Communion</i> . A province is divided into smaller geographical areas – Dioceses.
Rector	From the Latin word “regular” meaning “rule”. The Rector is appointed by the Diocesan Bishop with the responsibility for pastoral ministry, preaching and teaching in that place.
Trauma	It is defined as a psychic injury as a result of emotional shock, which continues to remain unhealed and sometimes manifest in dissociated memory. This sometimes results in behavioural and emotional disorder. Nyanjaya <i>cf</i> (Dickeson, Malcolm & Katz 2000:330)

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## CHAPTER ONE

### ORIENTATION

#### 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The researcher is an ordained Anglican priest at the Diocese of Johannesburg and has served as rector in three parishes based in Soweto. The development of Soweto was adversely affected by Apartheid policies and is largely a commuter area.

Most working people have to commute by train, bus or taxi to work, at different areas within greater Johannesburg metropolitan district. The researcher has experienced various reactions of people when death occurs within a family. These tendencies, served as motivation for this research. The motivation for this research comes from two levels, namely: pastoral and personal.

Firstly, the researcher has been influenced by a pastoral concern for the members of the congregation and the community.

Secondly, it was because of the researcher's experience of the death of four family members within a span of six months.

The examples to support will be given in 1.2 and 1.3

### **1.1. Pastoral motivation**

There is an African expression is says, '*Lerapo la motho ga le a tshwanelwa ke go selwa ke dintsha*'. Loosely translated, it means: human bones are not supposed to be picked up by dogs. This indicates that the disposal of a human corpse has been a very important ritual occasion within the African culture. With the African society, people are very sensitive to

what is done when there is a death in a family (Mbiti 1991:119). There are many complex and, even, long rituals and ceremonies which are associated with death.

The researcher has witnessed and found it disturbing that funerals are becoming unaffordable to poor people. When death occurs, the family wants to, symbolically, express its love for the deceased. They will do this by preparing an expensive funeral. However, in some instances, families borrow money in order to be able cover funeral costs (Case *et al* 2008:1-3). A group of veterans of the Umkhonto We Sizwe (MK) (a military wing of the African National Congress) made a research in Soweto that showed that funerals costs for residents can be exorbitant. For an example, on average, a household expenses cost 600 pounds in a community where more than half of the households have an annual income of less than 900 pounds ([www.co-op.uk/co-operatives](http://www.co-op.uk/co-operatives)) [Accessed March 2011].

The researcher has dealt with many families that have requested financial assistance for funerals. Among those who had come for help, it was not because they could not afford the costs, but simply because they wanted to spend more than they can afford. In other cases, the researcher had to counsel families who were in trouble because of spending beyond their means.

The researcher has become aware that once a person has been declared dead, the corpse is handed over, by the family, to the funeral parlour to help arrange the funeral. Once this has happened, the family loses significant control. The control of the deceased is granted to the funeral undertaker; who determines the prices and municipalities, who control the cemeteries. The researcher elaborates more on this factor in Chapter Five. The researcher grew up in a rural area; where the model was that the family will bury the deceased, either in the family yard, or cemetery owned by the community, within a day of the person's death. The researcher discusses more about this in Chapter Three.

The subject of funeral rites is the most sensitive among traditional African families. The researcher has preached in many funeral services on what the scriptures say about death, the resurrection of the dead, and comfort for the bereaved. Although having dealt with families in financial crisis because of over spending, he has never preached on the subject of excessive funeral expenditure. This was because the researcher was anticipating negative reaction and the fear of being accused of imposing the ‘Western ideological-Cultural-practices’ on African people. There has been a feeling among the members of the community that the Church was using the bible to impose western culture on traditional African burial rites.

## **1.2. Personal motivation**

The researcher’s father was the first to die because of cancer, followed by the sister and two brothers, who died of HIV/AIDS related diseases.

As the second eldest child and the only one who was working, the researcher and his wife had to organise the funerals. At this time, the sister and the two brothers were in and out of the hospital.

There were lots of things that happened between the day that the researcher’s my father died and the burial. The researcher travelled twice, from Johannesburg (512 kilometres return trip) to his hometown before the weekend of the funeral. The s and church members came to our home from the day they heard about the news of his father’s death; to keep the vigil until the night before the burial. As they visited, the family provided refreshments because it is common practice. Some families contributed money to help. However,-as a result of poverty that caused by unemployment in the researcher’s hometown, contributions were minimal to help them deal with the financial burden that they were faced with.

The custom, within the family, is that relatives will come a few days before the funeral, so that they can be part of the process of mourning. This is especially for researcher's mother benefit. Older women, in the family, are expected to take time to be with her, so that she does not experience loneliness. The practice is good in the sense that it shows family and community support during bereavement, but in the end, its put a financial burden on the members of the family, as they have to provide food and accommodation for relatives and friends.

Various rites are performed before, during the actual burial and after disposal of the body (Mbiti 1991:121). The slaughtering of cattle before the funeral is believed to ensure a smooth transition to the next life because the journey to the world of the dead has many interruptions. It is because of this traditional belief that the researcher had to spend money to buy cattle; even if the he could not afford. The elders in the family insisted and said; "if correct funeral rites were not observed especially the slaughtering of cattle, our father will come back to trouble us". The researcher will elaborate more on this issue of slaughtering, as a ritual, in Chapter Three.

On reflection after the funeral, the researcher was concerned that his family had spent far more than they could afford. It took the researcher and the family a while to recover from financial loss. The researcher's concern was: what would happen if one of the siblings were to die?

After two months, following his father's death, the researcher's sister died. A month, following his sister's death, each of each of his brothers, died within a week of each other. Based on the experience the researcher had during his father's funeral, the siblings funerals where prepared within the family's financial means. The researcher was able to conduct appropriate send off for the dead.

African funerals are community affairs in which the whole community feels the grief of the bereaved and share it. The purpose of the pre-funeral activities preceding burial is to comfort, encourage, and heal those who are hurting. The role of the community is to lighten the burden of the bereaved family. The researcher appreciated the help and presence of s. However, the researcher experienced not only the loss of loved ones, but also finances: which has taken him a long time to recover. Ninja refers to Gillard and James (1993), who distinguishes between two different levels of loss, namely; minor (as loss of job, money, physically illness) and major loss (as death of parent, child, spouse, relative, or close friend (Ninja: 2010).

The death of a family member is likely to evoke an emotional state of upheaval that undermines the family's ability to make a realistic judgement on the reasonable costs that are involved in preparing for a funeral (Nel 2002: 41 quoting Taylor 1979). This state renders the bereaved vulnerable and they often tend to spend more than they can, actually, afford.

### **1.3. Research problem**

The following questions will help the researcher to research this problem, which is facing the poor. The main question to ask is: why do people spend a lot of money when burying their beloved? What role can ministers play in helping the poor?

### **1.4. Research questions**

These research questions are rooted in the search for an understanding one how does the researcher remain faithful to the Christian tradition and still maintain the respect for the

culture; as African clergy in a changing society. The responses of the co-researchers should contribute to a deeper understanding of personal, social, and cultural norms that influence how people within the black townships, observe funeral rites.

1. Is the influence of African culture, in the preparations and conducting of funerals, acknowledged by the Church? The researcher will argue this in Chapter Six that formulating should happen after dialogue with affected family.
2. How do the clergy and lay ministers acknowledge the influence of the African culture during the preparations for funerals? What makes people to spend beyond their means, for funerals?
3. How can the culture of the family be used, positively, for a dignified funeral for its family member; without extravagant expenses?
4. How can a dialogue be created between the Christian tradition and African funeral cultural practices, and what steps can the researcher derive from this research to help other clergy and lay ministers?
5. What is the meaning of the Africa funeral custom in mixed and changing communities within South Africa townships?

### **1.5. Aims and objections of the research**

The aims of the suggested research will be;

1. To understand what is meant by ‘African funeral rites’, in a South Africa context, bearing in mind the fact that our country is exposed to radical processes of cultural, economic, and political change.
2. To establish what factors led black families to spend, excessively, on funerals.
3. To help the clergy and lay ministers to create a model; where they will be able to journey with families with the view to help bury their loved ones with dignity, without being left with a financial burden.
4. To establish facts about how much people spend on funerals and to draw this to the attention of the Clergy, lay ministers, and congregations.

5. To encourage a humble dialogue between the Christian theological tradition and African cultural funeral practices.
6. To offer clergy skills in an effort to facilitate these dialogues. Also, to help families to, constantly, reflect critically on the underlying theories and praxes.

## **1.6. Significance of the study**

The study findings are expected to benefit the following;

1. The church will have an opportunity to identify the strengths and weaknesses of her bereavement support systems.
2. The Clergy and lay ministers, as they identify opportunities for complementing and supporting bereaved families.
3. Create awareness, among communities and/or congregations, on the effects of excessive funeral expenditure.

## **1.7. Research assumptions**

In this Chapter, the researcher deals with families that have requested financial assistance before and after funeral. The following story is about the event that became a fundamental turning point in the way that the researcher thought of pastoral care.

*The researcher was sitting in the office, seemingly, enjoying catching up on administration and hoping that no one will interrupt. Then, the family that the parish had helped bury their daughter, came to see the researcher. In their conversations, the family told the researcher that they had borrowed money for the funeral and that they have spent beyond their means. As a result, they had nothing to eat and were asking for food parcels.*

*The researcher listened, respectfully because this was not just one of those usual visits from the parishioners, and had to pay attention. As the conversation continued, the researcher learned that they were in debt. Although their immediate need was food, but the long term struggle was how they were going to pay back the money. The challenge for the researcher was also to help them avoid the same mistake in the future.*

Reflecting further on this visit, the researcher came to realise that ministry experience is meant to lead him into the real world of the parishioners. This story triggered the concern that the researcher always had about the excessive spending on the funeral, particularly, by the poor. This has led the researcher to the research.

The research which examines that, the excessive spending on funerals among communities, is grounded in the field of Practical Theology. The researcher elaborates more on the meaning and objective of practical theology, in Chapter Six.

Based on the above experience and reflection of the researcher, the following assumptions of the study state as follows:

1. Some families will be willing to volunteer information.
2. Some funeral undertakers will be willing to furnish information.
3. That the church (particularly, the local congregations) is the most appropriate instrument in helping the society in dealing with excessive funeral expenditure.

### **1.8. Limitations of the research**

The following factors contribute to the limitations the study:

1. Interviews were used to collect data thus; participants responded that they think will please the researcher.

2. Only few families from Soweto and from the researcher's hometown were studied; thereby, limiting the generalisation of the findings.

## **1.9. Research Methodology**

The portion of the research paper deals with the research methodology employed in the study. The researcher used both the qualitative and quantitative approaches. The Shepherding Model Theory by Gerkin and Pollard's Positive Deconstruction Theory were used. Brief explanations of these models are extensively expounded in the following paragraphs. Chapter Two will be on the methodology.

The Shepherding Model Theory is based on one of the four Biblical models (priest, prophet, wisdom, and shepherd) for pastoral care that is used by Gerkin and which was first appropriated within the religious life of Israel as a metaphor with which to speak of the care of Yahweh for His people. Gerkin alludes that, "the prophetic, priestly, and wisdom models of caring ministry we inherit from the Israelite community are not, to be sure, the only biblical images with which we pastors have to identify. Another, in certain way a more significant, model is that of the caring leader as shepherd" (Gerkin 1997:27). Shepherding the poor will help the care-giver address the problem of over spending.

Pollard explains Positive Deconstruction as: "The recognizing and affirming of the elements of truth to which individuals already hold, but also helps them to discover for themselves the inadequacies of the underlying world views they have absorbed. Deconstruction means helping people to deconstruct (take apart) what they believe in order to look carefully at the belief and analyze it. Positive refers to when deconstruction is done in a positive way in order

to replace it with something better”. (Pollard 1997:44) In short, Pollard’s Theory helps the researcher to reconstruct the lives of those who spend in funerals beyond their means.

Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were employed in this research. The primary approach that was used is qualitative. The reason being, that the researcher believed that there are a multiple possible realities that are constructed by families and individuals and that the available literature are limited and narrative methods were used. The nature of the data collected are documentary, statistics (how much people spend), interviews data and questionnaires. The researcher interviewed families, individuals, funeral directors, lay ministers and clergy. Abductive analysis (combination of deductive and inductive analysis), was used in argumentation. The main aim was to create a model that will empower the Clergy in order to help families spend within their means, on funerals.

### **1.10. Research Gap**

Research has been done on funeral expenditure, from the sociological perspective. These research projects address the following: its impact on household’s socio-economic issues and family relations. Other research has focused on emotional causes that led to excessive funeral expenditure and how it is used as therapy. The researcher has not come across a research that is done by the church on the households suffering, financially, as a result of excessive funeral expenditure.

### **1.11. CONCLUSION**

The research emphasis is on excessive funeral expenditure and the loss of money, which is experienced by families. The main aim is for the local church, through the clergy, to partner with bereaved families in empowering them. However, the researcher is aware that there are other role players like funeral undertakers and burial societies, who would want to offer emotional support to the grieving families. The researcher is also aware that there are other factors that contribute to the excessive funerals expenditure that is experienced in the black townships.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **2. Introduction**

In Chapter one, the researcher mentioned that the researcher had to deal with families that have requested financial assistance before and after funeral. The following story is about the event that became a fundamental turning point in the way the researcher thought of pastoral care. The researcher was sitting in the office seemingly enjoying catching up on administration hoping that no one will interrupt. Then a family of which the parish helped bury their daughter came to see the researcher. In their conversation they told the researcher that they went to lend money for the funeral and have spent beyond their means. As a result they had nothing to eat and were asking for food parcels.

The researcher listened respectfully, because this was not just another one of those usual visits from the parishioners, and had to pay attention. As the conversation continued, the researcher learnt that they were in debt. Although their immediate need was food, but the long term struggle was how to pay back the money. The challenge for the researcher was also to help them avoid the same mistake in the future. Reflecting further on this visit, the researcher came to realise that ministry experiences lead the researcher into the real world of the parishioners. This story triggered the concern the researcher always had about the excessive spending for funeral, by the poor in particular.

## **2.1. Methodology**

Methodology is defined as: “a system of methods used in a particular field” (Oxford Dictionary 2001:529). According to J Mouton, these methods are concerned with the questions: How do we attain knowledge? How do we ensure that we reach our research goal? In other words, this is the knowledge of how to do things or the total set of means that scientists employ in reaching their goal of valid knowledge (1996: 35-36)

## **2.2. Purpose of methodology in this research**

The purpose of the method employed in this research addresses excessive funeral expenditure among impoverished communities in black townships.

Poor families are always indebted to some financial institutions. The crisis they face dominates their lives so much that, it seems impossible for them to escape from debt. These families feel helpless; and have accepted and now subscribe to the philosophy of excessive credit, as a way of life. In the researcher’s experience, excessive expenditure seems to be the

way of life in other areas, as well, for an example: weddings, unveiling of tombstones birthday parties etc. However, this occurs, mainly, around funerals. Hence; the researcher wishes to research the reason poor people spend more than they can afford; especially, when preparing for funerals. The families arrange these funerals through borrowing money. Danie Voster has this to say after consulting a number of families who are trapped in debt that; “each time these families enter into a transaction on credit, they give away power. They lose control and freedom to institution or person called the creditor, who has control over, and entitlement to, the fruits of their labour” (1996: IX). In the researcher’s experience is that most of these families live in absolute poverty: a situation where the poor are so poor that some of them do not know where their next meal will come from.

The prolonged poverty, as a result of excessive expenditure for funerals, affects the family’s security and comfort. Moeletsi Mbeki, in his innovative and challenging book, *Architect of Poverty*, says that an estimation of one billion people in the world are trapped in poverty and a disproportion number live in Sub-Sahara Africa and many people face hunger, disease and starvation (Mbeki 2009:13). Anita Cloete speaks of unemployment as being closely linked to poverty (2009:84). She continues to say that unemployment is one of the main causes of family breakdown, because people are unable to support families and this has devastating effects in the community in general (2009:84). It is the researcher's view that helping families spend money within their means during preparations for funerals, will contribute towards relief from financial burden that is caused by unemployment that leads to poverty.

The researcher was aware that there may be other causes that contribute to poverty. As mentioned earlier, Cloete (2009:84) is of the view that unemployment does. Whereas, Mbeki (2009:54-60) in his thesis, concludes that fault does not lie with the masses but with rulers the political elites who contrive to keep their fellow citizens poor; while enriching themselves.

The researcher believed that excessive funeral expenditure is also a contributing factor to the problem of poverty. From this arises the expectation that the church must play a role in this challenging social issue. We needed to ask what is happening, here. How should we react to what confronts us?

In this context, the methodology that is used should help the researcher create a model that would liberate the poor families that hinder them to living fully, as human beings. In this case, it would mean helping poor families to bury their loved ones within their means and avoid debt at all cost. The following methods will be used as a vehicle to carry out the aims of this research. The qualitative and quantitative approach, semi-structured questionnaires and open-ended/unstructured interviews, will be used for the development of the research instrument.

### **2.3. Qualitative and Quantitative Research**

Both, the quantitative and qualitative approaches, were employed. Although both of them will be needed, the primary approach that was used is: qualitative. There are multiple realities which are constructed by families and individual. The available literature is limited and narrative methods were used because by conducting both, the interviews and giving out questionnaires, helped to ascertain as much information as possible. The researcher believed that this approach was unique as it helped the evaluator to get closer, study and understand reasons for excessive funeral expenditure. Also the co-researchers that were involved believed in sharing stories. The researcher visited people's homes and in that way, the researcher was able to listen, objectively, to their stories.

J.W.Creswell defines qualitative research as: “ inquiry into social or human problem, based on testing a theory composed of variables, measured with numbers and analyzed with statically procedures, in order to determine whether the predictive generalization of the theory hold true” (1994:2). Creswell further defines qualitative research as an: “ inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting” (1994:2). The qualitative research methodology was inductive by using the families’ first person account of their experience with the crisis, to explore what it means to be poor and to identify the implications for community development.

This type of approach was suitable for the problem that the researcher attempts to research. The concern of the researcher was about the types of funerals that were held in black townships; where poor people spend excessively and suffer more, as a result.

#### **2.4. Semi-structured interviews**

In order to get as much information as possible, the researcher approached the study by also using the most commonly used and acceptable techniques. Textbooks on research, tell us that we use our data to test our theories. One such method is personal interviewing of informants, who are directly involved in the areas essential to this study (Bernard 1995:5). This was the method that was employed when interviewing key role–players such as the clergy, funeral undertakers, young people and families.

The primary research tool to be used was semi-structured interviews; where all the respondents were asked, roughly, the same set of questions from a designed questionnaire. The researcher made every attempt to bring uniformity to the questions, so that the output

could be reliably evaluated. These questionnaires were translated in several languages; catering for different cultural groups. The purpose of using several languages was intended to help gather as much information as possible; using languages that are easily understandable by the people. Sharing these experiences with the families concerned may help in planning towards a therapeutic solution (Rakuba 2008:46). The questionnaire will endeavour to achieve the following;

- A questionnaire, which was especially, aimed at collecting stories from affected families, themselves. These poor bereaved families are still in our midst and continue to be faced with exploitation from undertakers. That is the reason there are still challenges to pastoral care.
- A questionnaire, which was specifically, aimed at collecting stories from the clergy and lay ministers, who minister to the families during their work in parishes. The purpose of this questionnaire was to reveal what the clergy and lay ministers can do as a way of caring for these families.
- The questionnaire was also aimed at helping the clergy and lay ministers, who have to deal with these families before and after the funeral. The aim was to challenge the pastoral care for these ministers, who have to deal with these stories. To help the clergy to create a model where they would be able to journey with families with the view to help them bury their loved ones with dignity; without being left with a financial burden.
- These helped the researcher to have a theoretical perspective as he visits these families. This perspective was not to be imposed on their situation, but helped in understanding their situation. It can either be confirmed or even done away with; depending on the research information (Mobie 2005:52).

In the context of this research, the researcher was of the view that in the qualitative research approach, the participants that he intends to interview should be approached with open mind

which is devoid from pre-conceived ideas in order to construct reliable, authentic theories, regarding pastoral care.

## **2.5. Open-ended/ unstructured Interviews**

Bernard writes that: “unstructured interviewing is the most widely used method of data collection in a cultural anthropology”. He continues: “Unstructured interviews are based on a clear plan that keep constantly in mind... the idea is to get people to open up and let them express themselves in their own terms.” (1995:209). There is no specific order when unstructured interviews are done. The respondent may jump from one subject to the other. In other instances, the respondent may raise issues that the interviewer had never thought of. While the interviewer had a list of things to be discovered, the wording and sequence of the ‘questions’ depend on the ‘answers’ that the respondent gives; and it was normally done with people who are different and are as far as possible from each other ( Bernard 1995:208).

In other instances, the researcher used simple interviews to guide and ask open-ended questions that directed the participants towards the line of inquiry. The intention of the researcher was to facilitate narrative telling and not interfere with the participant’s responses. The researcher hoped to create an environment that allowed the respondent to make sense of their experience. This was the structure of information gathering that the researcher engaged in when interviewing funeral undertakers, possibly, young people, to ascertain how they view funerals and the expenditure for funerals. Demographic information about the participants and their community-setting were collected through the interviews, as well as, other

documents, where possible. Confidentiality was kept for each participant, because of the sensitive nature of the stories. The researcher and respondent agreed to change names and places when using the narrator's words, to ensure privacy; yet never at the expense of the meaning of what he or she said (Ackerman and Maslin-Ostrowski 2002:139).

Joseph Molapo suggests that when we deal with any research, we should have ethical consideration especially when dealing with questionnaires and people's stories, so that we may not destabilize the family life style, which has been spending excessively for funerals and do not have any problem with it. Molapo further suggests that; it was ethical to explain clearly the purpose of these assessments to those who took part in answering the questionnaire, and be prudent enough not to disclose the issues which would need their permission (2004:15). The researcher was of the view that assuring interviewees with confidentiality will create a more relaxed atmosphere in the sense that people will feel much more comfortable about having a conversation. The researcher will have to exercise the seal of confidentiality, which will not be a problem for the researcher as an Anglican priest who administers the sacrament of confession on a regular basis. This assisted in building a high level of trust and confidence in the whole process, which in the end bear good fruits of mutual understanding and readiness to share openly.

The interviews were conducted among two separate communities of Soweto and those that are based in the North West Province, particularly, in Sannieshof and Mafikeng; where the researcher had experienced excessive funeral expenditure. This is the context that in which the poor families are caught up in.

In the interview process, the researcher identified the following categories in the selection of the respondents;

- 7 families in Soweto

- 7 families in Sannieshof and Mafikeng
- 3 funeral undertakers
- 10 young people
- 7 Clergy
- 2 Bishops

Once the researcher had gathered the information from the empirical study (based on people's real experiences and scientific experience), the researcher then needed a model that would help in the caring ministry of the pastor. In order to address this practice that was making the poor more vulnerable, the researcher choose to explore two writers, namely Charles Gerkin (1997) on shepherding elements and Nick Pollard (1997) on the theory of positive deconstruction, which led to reconstruction of life.

## **2.6. Reasons for choosing Gerkin Shepherding Model**

Charles Gerkin's model of shepherding (to be explained later) appeals to the researcher because of the background that connects with the shepherding model. The researcher grew up and lived in a farm, where he was mentored by his grandfather as a herd boy. The researcher has great memories on how the grandfather, as a shepherd, was committed to the welfare of the sheep, at all times. Now, being a priest of God's flock, this model challenges the researcher's pastoral ministry even more and it also helps the researcher to better understand ways of caring, for the people of God. This model also reminds the researcher of his ordination charge to the diaconate and priesthood, which states that;

“... Following the Good Shepherd, you will care for the sick, bring back those who have strayed, guide his people through this life and prepare them for death and the life to come, that they may be saved through Christ forever. At all times your life and teaching are to show Christ’s people that in serving those in need, they are serving Christ” (An Anglican Prayer Book 1989:588). During the Anglican ordination services of Deacons, Priests and Bishops, the candidates are always reminded that they have been called by Christ to share in his ministry of shepherding God’s people and to speak in His name. The researcher believes that pastoral care is about addressing all areas of people’s lives.

The pastoral care-giver should reflect the life and the caring demeanour of Christ. The attitude to pastoral ministry should be to follow the example of the Lord Jesus Christ; who proclaimed himself as the Good shepherd (John 10:1-18). By doing so, he pointed to the several characteristics of the reliable pastor. Throughout the Holy Scripture, those who care for God’s people and lead them in God’s ways are commended; but those who neglect or exploit God’s people are condemned. Every minister, whether bishop; priest; deacon; lay minister or other volunteer, is called to model his or her life and the ministry on the example of Christ. (CPSA Shepherding the Flock 1999: 4-8)

It is for these reasons that the researcher employed the pastoral care model by Gerkin (1997), in order to enter the world of those who spent excessive money for funerals.

## **2.7. Historical background of a Shepherd**

In the Old Testament, God is often pictured as the shepherd, and the people as his flock. The psalmist depicts the Lord God as his shepherd (Psalm 23:1). The picture of the shepherd is deeply woven into the language and the imagery of the bible. A shepherd took the sheep out

of the village to a place where there was grass for them to eat. Very often, the shepherd had to walk long distances and over rocky dry ground in search for grass for his flock. He had to lead his sheep through dark and narrow places. He walked in front of them to show the way and to protect them from thieves and wild animals such as hyenas and jackals, which might pounce upon them.

The life of Palestinian shepherd was very hard. This was dangerous work indeed, as Palestine was known to have many wild animals, (1 Samuel 17:34-35). In that part of the world, no flock ever grazes without a shepherd, and the shepherd is never off duty. There were no protecting walls, and the sheep had to be watched at all times. On the either side of the narrow plateau, the ground dips sharply down to the craggy deserts and the sheep are always prone to wander away or to get lost. The shepherd's task was constant and dangerous, for in addition, he had to guard the flock against wild animals and there were thieves and robbers who were ready to steal the sheep. When David was looking after his sheep, he fought a lion and a bear. These actions are pastorally orientated. The shepherd had to continue to look for his sheep in the heat of the day and throughout the very cold nights. The shepherd's work was to bring the sheep safely back to the village.

The work of a shepherd was clearly described by Phillip Keller in his book: *'A Shepherd and his sheep'* when he says: "Folding sheep is another way of saying a shepherd is maintaining his flock with maximum skill. It is to say that he handles them with expertise, moving them from field to field, pasture to pasture, range to range in order to benefit them as much as he can, as well as to enhance his own land" (1983:23).

He continues to share about an intense devotion and affection that was shown by the Masai people of East Africa to their flock, as deeply moving. Out in the grazing lands or besides the watering places, they will call their pets by name, and it was a sheer joy to watch their

response as they came to the shepherd's call to be examined, handled, fondled, petted, and adored (1983:47).

This is the abundant life that the Good shepherd wants for his sheep. As Keller puts it, this is the graphic picture our Lord had in His mind when He stated simply; *"I come that they may have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep"* (1983:109). Maluleke also supports this when he says: "The church should understand that the main purpose of Jesus' coming on earth as recorded in John 10:10 is to give people abundant life" (1999:11).

Just as in the Old Testament's picture, the leaders of the Church were the shepherds and the people were the flock. It was the duty of the leader to feed the flock of God, to accept the oversight willingly and not by constraint, to do eagerly and not to use the position for the exercise of power and to be the example of the flock (Peter 5:2, 3). When we think of the word: 'shepherd', it should paint to us a picture of the unceasing vigilance and patience of the love of God; and it should remind pastoral care-givers of their duty towards others; especially if we hold any kind of office in the Church of Christ.

The description by Gerkin's Shepherding Model helped the researcher to design a model aimed at responding to human experience and the changing needs of the people. The researcher believed that the poor vulnerable families needed to be shepherded towards financial stability and freedom from debt, resulting from borrowing money to use for over spending, when arranging funerals.

## **2.8. Gerkin's Shepherding Model**

In the introduction of his book, *Introduction to Pastoral Care*, Gerkin summarizes what pastoral care is, “It is care not only to the individual and families, but also the care of the Christian community and the tradition that gives that community its identity” (Gerkin 1997:19). Further in his discussion of his model, he argues that, “there is cultural context that surrounds the Christian community” (Gerkin 1997:35). For Gerkin, “the caring leader will have to play the role of being prophet, priestly and needs to have wisdom” (Gerkin 1997:27). The researcher elaborated later on these roles and their importance of caring in his thesis. Gerkin describes the caring leader, “as facilitator of the dialogue between people stories and the Christian tradition and offer interpretative guidance” (Gerkin 1997: 112-114).

Gerkin uses the metaphor of a shepherd as a model of the caring leader. Gerkin is of the view that the pastor should be “viewed as shepherd as the image clearly and powerfully given to us by Jesus” (1997:80). He further suggests that, “like Jesus, the shepherding incorporates not only the wisdom expressed in certain parables and sermon on the mount, not only in his priestly leadership in his relationship to his followers, but also elements of prophecy such as are found in the story of Jesus’ cleansing the temple and his confrontations with the Pharisees and Sadducees” (1997:27). In other words, Gerkin is saying that the wisdom role and priestly leadership are not sufficient to help the pastor to be able to relate to people at all levels of their social, individual and Christian community life.

Michael Taylor (1983), in his book entitled, *Learning to Care (Christian’s Reflection on Practical Theology)* suggests that, “we should be careful on how we use metaphors when it comes to Jesus”. Further, he says that, “there are two difficulties about this. First is that we don’t have first-hand information about Christ as the documents were not written by him. Secondly, we don’t have the real image of who Jesus is? (Taylor 1983: 87-89) For instance, we can think of Jesus as a gentle shepherd, not Jesus the ‘courageous shepherd’. In relation to

shepherding, Taylor has this to say ; “It is worth noting that where the shepherding is mentioned in so many words it appears to be of a political rather than what we think of as a ‘pastoral kind ....’ (1983:07).

Taylor agrees with Gerkin that pastoral care is about Christian leaders who are informed by theological insights to provide leadership, and serving people for their common good. The researcher was also aware that most of the hymns and choruses that are sung in the parishes, where he ministered, also emphasise on the metaphor of Jesus as a lamb. These led to the leaders embracing humility and not act courageously to deal with issues that affected lives of the poor. Or the metaphor of a lamb may be used by the care-givers as a way to take advantage of the people because they will have to be gentle, and mild like the lamb Jesus, and not stand to be self-sufficient.

## **2.9. The focus of pastoral care-givers**

According to Gerkin, “the pastoral care-givers have focused primarily on the wise men and women of the early Israelite history as a root model for pastoral care. Four models of care, i.e. guidance, healing, reconciling and sustaining carry a primary connotation of wise care of the individual or family” (Gerkin 1997:23)

A large communal role of the caring leadership that sprang from the priestly and prophetic ancestral models has not received substantial attention in relation to the models and methods of pastoral care. A more holistic understanding the caring ministry requires that we lay a broader ancestral claim that is based on the wisdom tradition and its practitioners. Although Gerkin uses the word recently, other authors like Jay Adams (1975) are of the view that wisdom is, primarily, for overseeing the flock. Co- researchers Shawchurck and Heuser, in

their book entitled, *leading the Congregation*, refers to the study that focused on exploring the expectations of the congregation and judicatory executive, regarding the role of the pastor within the congregation. The result was that, ministry activities were ranked as second, in importance, as compared to the personal qualities (1993:115-117).

The researcher agrees with Gerkin, Adams, and co-researchers Shawchurck and Heuser that the model of wise care to individuals and family was important. But Gerkin would argue that the image of a wise and caring pastor should be placed alongside the prophetic and priestly pastoral care practice rather than be ranked according to their importance (Gerkin 1997:27). The researcher was of the view that putting the models of being a priest, prophet and wise care, alongside each other, would bring about holistic care to the people who need care in this research. The researcher further believed that the ranking of these pastoral care models may lead the pastor in identifying with one over the other. This could not help the pastor to deal, holistically, with the problems that people are facing.

## **2.10. The need for an inclusive approach**

To claim the prophetic and priestly Hebrew ancestors as equally important to the wise men and women of the early Israelite history as a root model for pastoral care practice, involves us in a configuration of the primary images that shape our understanding of what is involved in the pastoral care of God's people.

Gerkin reminded us of our need to reclaim all the three Old Testament priestly, prophetic and wisdom guide role models as the primary caring ministry of the Christian community and its leadership by interpreting and examining the long history of this pastoral care; because it grounds the faith and practice of the lives of the people of God (Gerkin 1997:26).

The Israelite community provides a prophetic, priestly and wisdom model that ministers can be employed as caring leaders, like a shepherd. Gerkin offers these explanations on the roles. The prophet was the one who spoke for the tradition and was concerned with the response to the voice of God; the priest is the one who leads the community in the cultic worship and the wise one is the one who offers guidance to the people in their daily affairs of individual and family life.

According to Gerkin, the motif of the shepherding leaders is most clearly captured in the imagery of Psalm 23. Here the Lord God is depicted as the good shepherd who leads the people in the paths of righteousness, restores the soul of the people, and walks with the people among their enemies, and even into valley of the shadow of death” (1997:27).

Yet; for Gerkin, “evidence is lacking that the shepherd model ever attained a place of significance equal to those of the prophetic, the priestly, and the wise guide in the later Old Testament (OT) literature, probably it lacked institutionalized role.” (1997:27). According to him, it was “with the coming of Jesus” that “shepherding image took its place as the primary grounding image for ministry.” (1997:27).

In the New Testament, Christ is spoken of as “*the shepherd and overseer of your soul*” (1 Peter 2; 25). Jesus, himself, clearly confirmed his Shepherd-hood when he said: “*I am a good shepherd. I know my own sheep and they know me.*”(John10:14). The sheep also know and trust their shepherd because they have experience of his guidance. So the pastoral care-giver cannot be effective shepherd as a stranger. This was the good shepherd who came to serve and not be served. The one who came “that they may have life, and have it to the full.” (John 10:10). The shepherd does not exploit the sheep as thieves and robbers do, rather, he comes to bless the sheep with abundant life. As shepherd of the flock, pastors are to care for the sheep

at the cost of themselves. The example of this we saw in the shepherd, when he laid down his life for the sheep.

This shepherding model is the one that needs to be employed in order to improve the situation of the poor bereaved families, in particular, and the, generally, exploited families during their time of mourning. It has been the researcher's personal experience that during the time of bereavement, funeral undertakers take advantage of the families. The shepherding model helped the researcher to be prophetic i.e. to deal with the issue of the injustice that was perpetuated against the poor, who were grieving.

The poor families, who are experiencing the persistent traumatic poverty, need such a shepherd. The God who is with us, is always in their midst. The good shepherd will use his church to show mercy, compassion and love so as to give these traumatized people strength in their pain, suffering, fear, doubt, loneliness and despair.

The prophetic dimension must be complemented by pastoral concern for sheer enormity of human suffering. The church is an essential tool in the building of God's kingdom on earth. Due to this prophetic mission, the church cannot lose interest in what is happening in the lives of the people; especially the broken hearted. The mission of Christ is directed toward the poor, in the first place, and the kingdom of God would bring shalom to the poor and reverse their situation.

The church is expected to fulfil this calling by implementing; supporting and promoting initiatives that uproot people and the poor to trade their way out of poverty. "We need to care for people, nursing the wounds of the oppressed and bleeding people." (Pityana and Villa-Vicentio 1995:11) In support of what Gerkin is saying above, Pieterse (2001:111) says that, if we want to communicate God's love, grace and liberation to the poor in our country, we

will have to do so by demonstrating physical acts of uplifting. The church has to minister to the poor in deeds and in the word, and in that order, by being impelled by “Christian love”.

It is against this background of Gerkin’s Shepherding Model of an inclusive and grounding metaphor for pastoral care, which the researcher has chosen to employ in this research. Gerkin empowers the pastoral practitioner to face the challenge that is ahead. The researcher had to deal with the pain of seeing families not being able to bury their loved ones, because they cannot afford the burial costs. These were unexpected problems and opportunities for profound insight into the situation.

In such situations, “the pastoral care counsellor should depend on the skills of the great shepherd who leads the flock into the paths of righteousness, restoring the broken families, walks with the oppressed and hurting people among their enemies and “even into the valley of the shadow of death” (Ps 23:1-4) (Gerkin 1997:27). Jesus was the Good Shepherd who will risked his life to seek and save the one straying sheep (Matthew 18:12, Luke 15:40).

Jesus, as the Good Shepherd, the saviour, the redeemer and the liberator has used inductive method for liberation, which starts from the people’s life experience, and finally, comes up with concrete practical solutions. This means that the shepherd cares no more to what extent of injury that caused to the sheep, but to how he can contribute in the healing process of the sheep. For example, women were stoned according to Jewish tradition when caught in the act of adultery (John 8:1-14). Jesus is, indeed, the model of a flexible and faith nourishing pastoral care-giver. His ministry is the answer to any unexpected crisis in human suffering. He was able to exercise his priestly, prophetic and kingly functions, concurrently, as a way of responding to various basic needs of the poor and the oppressed.

The researcher chooses this model because, as a shepherd, he can see the danger that is faced by most of the poor people, who are spending beyond their means to bury their loved ones.

The growing phenomenon of excessive funeral expenditure was not the custom of Africans. According to John Mbiti, “the traditional way of burying the dead in the African culture was an affordable way. They used to wrap up the corpse with a blanket or animal skin from the slaughtered ox and lay it to rest” (1985:150). The researcher had not thought that people in the township will go back to that type of burial; as the context has changed. The type of burial that Mbiti refers to would not be practical for a number of reasons. Most families in the past, had cows and could slaughter them and use their skins. Now, poor people still continue to buy cattle and do not to use the skin, as it was the case.

The church is to play an important role of facilitating a dialogue to highlight the need for simplicity and dignity for burials. In this way, the church will begin to contribute, practically, towards financial comfort and security of the poor. Like Pieterse, who argues that, “the Christian church like the good shepherd needs to be at the forefront in the not only witnessing to Christ, but also making real contribution in its action of showing God’s love so that the world may see the good she is doing and give praise to our Father in heaven” ( Pieterse, 2001:115).

## **2.11. Conclusion**

The researcher believed that the shepherding model will help him listen to poor families with great sensitivity. The model also encouraged the researcher to deal with his own perceptions about the reasons behind people spending excessively for funerals. The researcher’s view was that poor families, who are caught up in this phenomenon, can think and will also be given reasons to review their way of doing things. The metaphor of the leader, as being the shepherd, should not assume that the sheep (i.e. the poor) are powerless. The researcher believes that the care-giver would have succeeded in caring for these people by leading them

to self-sufficiency and independence. It was the aim of the researcher to mentor the poor families until they become care-givers to each other.

Although the researcher has elected to employ the shepherding model by Gerkin, it was the researcher's view that he does not offer a practical tool to implement the model. The researcher's aim, with Gerkin's model, is to offer pastoral care to families and individuals, but also to care for the Christian family, in accordance with the tradition that the community identifies with (1997:13). In order to, practically, achieve Gerkin's model, Nick Pollard's (1997) theory of positive deconstruction, will be used.

## **2.12 Pollard's positive Deconstruction Theory**

Pollard has formulated a concept called 'positive deconstruction'. It is a tool to engage, through dialogue, with the people who have developed and adopted a certain world view (Pollard, 1997:46). The process is done in a positive way, in order to understand what people believe. "It is only when the leader is able to comprehend what the world views is, that he or she can start to ask questions" (1997: 47). He also suggests four elements that need to be involved in the process of deconstruction (1997: 48). The researcher explains these elements latter part of this Chapter.

The purpose is "to help people to step outside their world view loops and ask themselves difficult questions" (1997: 41 &73). "The aim is to assist people to discover the inadequacies of the world view they have adopted" (1997: 29 & 73).

On the other hand, "the process is 'positive', and this means that the deconstruction will be done to benefit those who are being assisted. This will be done in order to replace the world view with a view that will not be counterproductive to those who are adopting the ideology.

The process of positive deconstruction, recognises and affirms the elements of truth that individuals already hold” (1997:44).

### **2.12.1. What is positive deconstruction?**

Pollard believes that Christian leaders should not be apologetics. He defines apologetics as, “giving a reasoned defence for your faith”. Pollard, instead, encourages the care-givers to enter into a meaning full conversation with people. There are three questions that Pollard suggests that they need to be asked, and they are: What do people believe? Why do they believe it and what difference it makes in their lives? For Pollard, the process is ‘deconstruction’ because it is helping people deconstruct (that is, taking apart) what they believe, in order to look, carefully, at that belief.

Fernando Segovia says, “Deconstruction is both a philosophical and a literary movement in contemporary western world. Philosophical, it is associated with Jacques Derrida and series of works beginning in the late 1960s. The central tenet is that the language is endlessly unstable and indeterminate (*difference*). Literary, it is associated with a number of American critics in the 1970 and 1980s” (Segovia 2000:67). He further states that, “the process of deconstruct is going on in Third world theologies without using the term. One of the terms, he uses is decolonizing theology, which is a form of deconstruction” (2000:67).

Pollard is of the view that in the process of positive deconstruction, the role of the deconstructing is to demonstrate genuine love for the people by being there, serving them as they think through their world view at their own speed (1997:73) Segovia argues that the process, in the case of the third world, should be facilitated by the leaders from within the

church. He is of the view that theology should be from the grassroots, and allowing faith articulation to arise from the marginalized, for relevance (2000:67).

The researcher agrees with, both, Pollard and Segovia that the person deconstructing is not to abuse the people he or she needs to help, by rudely seeking to impose his/her own conclusion on them, at the DE constructor's own speed. The researcher agrees more with Segovia that, "the person deconstructing should not come with the mentality that the traditional African funeral is wrong. Deconstruction should be an opportunity to step with Jesus into people's religion and African culture and identify with the poor families that are being exploited". According to Segovia, "deconstruction in its beginning, process, and conclusions, must be open to challenge". Pollard suggests that, "those helping people to deconstruct should be prepared to change their perception and must be ready to deconstruct what they believe themselves." In other words, they should also go through the process of deconstructing their world view.

The researcher believed that no effective deconstruction was possible, if the pastoral care-giver is not prepared to listen to God's word that is spoken outside the Judeo-Christian tradition. In order for the deconstruction to be effective, Pollard suggests the following process:

### **2.12.2. The process of positive deconstruction.**

The positive deconstruction process contains four elements, and they include: identifying the underlying world view, analysing it, affirming the elements of the truth which it contains and finally, discovering its errors.

### **2.12.3. Identifying of the world view**

The first task of the process of positive deconstruction then, is to identify the underlying world view. This requires us to have a grasp of a wide range of views (Pollard 1997:50). In the researcher's experience, there is a popular belief among people who live in black townships, which has been adopted to perpetuate spending excessively in funerals. This phenomenon has become a popular culture. The first task will be to discover reasons which have made people to adopt the belief that excessive funeral expenditure is the best way to bury the deceased, which results in the circle of constant debt.

The researcher had a view that African funerals were not expensive events. In the researcher's view, there was a belief that the main reason for a funerals was to make sure that humans bones where not to be seen lying around. The researcher will then have to consider the new belief that the excessive funeral, as expressed by contemporary African practice in the black townships. The researcher will have to engage poor families in an effort to match the old and new beliefs; thus; identifying the underlying world view.

### **2.13. Analyzing the Worldview**

The second element of the positive deconstruction methodology is to analyze the world view. In order to analyze this world view, the researcher has to ask, 'is it true?' In the researcher's experience, African people living in the townships, have a popular belief that the dead are 'laid' to rest. Therefore, the family of the deceased are to make everything possible to help them experience peace. One of the ways to do this, according to the contemporary belief, is through excessive spending for funerals.

In order to analyze this world view, the researcher will employ three standard philosophical tests for the truth. Does it cohere? Does it correspond with reality? Does it work? (Pollard 1997: 53)

**2.13.1. Firstly, *does it cohere?*** (That is, does it make sense?) In the researcher's experience as a priest, he has seen poor families struggling to provide for sick family members. In other cases, families (whether poor or rich) would neglect those who are frail and weak. Yet, when they die, the next of kin will disburse the money for funeral, as a way to ensure that the deceased rests in peace. The researcher will analyze whether it makes sense to ignore your loved one and show them little care whilst they are alive and then give them an expensive funeral. So, can it be true that the dead are given rest through excessive funeral expenditure?

**2.13.2. Secondly, *does it correspond with reality?*** This question derives from the theory that says that if the belief is true, it will correspond with reality. The researcher is to find out, through positive deconstruction, whether the belief that the dead are given rest through expensive burials, is consistent with reality. The researcher will find out whether holding on to this belief describes the real world of poor families in the township during their struggle to bury the deceased. What families claim to be the best way to rest the dead, is not consistent with reality. For poor families, it leads to debt and poverty.

**2.13.3. Thirdly, *does it work?*** If the belief that the dead are given rest through excessive funeral expenditure is true, it will work. In the researcher's experience the belief has not helped poor families rise above poverty. The researcher will have to help poor families through positive engagement and to find out that excessive funeral expenditure is not working by considering the reality that they find themselves in.

#### **2.14. Affirming the truth**

The third element in the process of deconstruction involves affirming the truth which is contained in the African culture that attends to the proper care of their dead. There are things that are important in the African culture, in relation to death and disposition of the body. A funeral rite is one of the last transitional stages of life that requires a proper ceremony. The aim is to make sure that the dead rests in a sacred place. African funerals are community affairs, where the whole community feels the grief of the bereaved and shares in it. To view this belief as not proper, from our own perspectives, we will push ourselves into error. This attitude will not help us to know that, ultimately, all truth is God's truth and all world views contain elements of truth. (Pollard 1997:56)

#### **2.15. Discovering the error**

The process of positive deconstruction involves identifying the belief, which means: discovering the reason that causes the proponents to adopt the belief. This will be followed by analyzing and affirming the truth in that belief. The fourth element is about discovering the errors, should there be any, by objectively analysing the belief beyond the shadow of doubt (Pollard 1997:48).

In the researcher's experience there are roles that the fear, of the spirits of the dead, play in preparation for the disposal of the body. There are families that have a fear that if the deceased is buried in a cheap coffin, the spirit of that person might come to haunt them and cause misfortune. For an example, staying poor and unemployed may be attributed to the lack of conducting proper ceremonies and rituals for the dead. The researcher's view is that this belief is an error that leads poor people into poverty. It is the intention of the researcher,

through positive deconstruction, to help poor families to see this error, so that they can become uncomfortable with the current view that excessive funeral expenditure is the correct way to dispose of the body and to honour the departed.

## **2. 16. Summary of the theory of Deconstruction**

In summary, Pollard's positive deconstruction is about the pastoral care-giver being able to help people to deconstruct their current views and is preceded by knowing and serving people. Once that has happened, you help people step outside their world view to take apart what they believe and ask themselves questions. These questions should help them discover the inadequacies in what they believe. The aim is to help people replace what they believe with something positive. The purpose is not for the pastoral care-giver to impose his/her own view and leave people traumatised in the process. Ultimately positive deconstruction is doing the opposite of what negative deconstruction wants to achieve.

Mollie Pointer Morland, in the article entitled *Dealing with 'Differences'* in South Africa, has this to say that, "Postmodernism is often accused of deconstructing and there by undermining the human attempts to make the world comprehensible and liveable without replacing it with some other suggestions on how to handle the problem of human conditions" (1999:156). For the purpose of helping poor individuals and families, positive deconstruction will help the researcher to be able make viable suggestions regarding the problem of excessive funeral expenditures?

## 2.17. Preliminary conclusion

In Chapter One, the researcher highlighted the problem that will be explored in this research and to consider whether African burial rites need adjustments. The main questions to ask is: why do people spend a lot of money when burying their beloved? What role can the minister play in helping the poor?

The pastor-researcher aims to encourage parishioners, in their living, to be able to deal with the challenge that they face of being indebted because of excessive expenditure for funerals. The reason for developing the tool of questionnaires will help the researcher to find out the reasons for these expenditures. The researcher assumes that there is a story behind this practice and maybe, valid reasons.

The researcher is of a view that any metaphor that is used will be informed by the cultural background and context. The researcher is aware that Gerkin is writing from the western context and experience. The researcher has experienced the same challenge that poor families are facing. The researcher is an African, with an African cultural background and has to deal with what Christian tradition has to be about the culture in which the people live. The challenge will be how to create a dialogue between the two. The researcher believes that Gerkin will be helpful so that, “a care can be given to individuals and families, but also care for the Christian communities and the traditions that give that community identity” (1997:19). Gerkin also encourages the pastoral care-giver, “to take the cultural context of the people in consideration” (1997:35).

Although the shepherding model of Gerkin will be used, the researcher is aware of the African concept of caring. Maake Masango in his article entitled ‘*Concept of for life*’ states: “The African concept of caring involves all members of family, relatives, tribes and ancestors” (2005:916). On the hand, Emmanuel Lartey reminds us that, “pastoral theology

has a strong praxis orientation”. He is of the view that, “the pastoral care-givers should seek more culturally appropriate ways of understanding and communicating the gospel” (2000:14).

The three researchers Gerkin, Masango and Lartey seem to all agree that in pastoral care giving, understanding the background of the community, its culture and identity; is crucial. Masango is suggesting that the pastor should be able to use the caring models that are in the community. (2005: 915). The researcher hopes to use that model in his effort to assist families to continue helping each other with the view to avoid excessive expenditure for funerals. Lartey suggest that, “the pastor should also use traditional practices of healing to help families deal with their bereavement” (2005:161).

The researcher’s conclusion is that, whatever pastoral care model, concept or practice in pastoral theology is used, should aim at helping the community be self-reliant. This will mean that whatever model that the researcher suggests, should help individuals, families and communities to, ultimately, work their way out of this phenomenon. The researcher agrees with Lartey that, “this praxis will assist people to be able to deal with all their human experience- socially, economically, politically, and spiritually” (2000:162). It is the researcher’s experience in the ministry that when one person suffers in one area of his/her life, it affects others, as well.

The researcher is of the view that at the heart of Pollard’s Theory of positive deconstruction, is dialogue. This element of dialogue helped the researcher to assist the clergy to deal with certain challenges; when it comes to Christianity and African culture in the townships. Any suggestion to re-look at certain practices is considered with suspicion, among the black community. This has been caused by some of the churches that have been using the bible to

criticize African cultural practices without a dialogue. There are still some community members who feel that anything that wishes to touch African practices should be rejected.

The researcher was aware that there are families that have strong views about the need to spend excessively, for their loved ones' funerals. In order to achieve the process of positive deconstruction, the researcher needed to meet with individuals, families and community; as equals and with mutual openness and respect.

This would not be possible if the researcher viewed African funeral practices as inferior. The researcher needed to also allow his own views on excessive funeral expenditure, to be challenged.

The researcher had certain presupposition that he began within this research, which the researcher wanted to apply to the present situation, by seeking to understand it and arrive at knowledge. The researcher believed that because families are poor, they are not supposed to spend a lot for the dead as a way of showing them love. It was the researcher's hope to use the theory of positive deconstruction and research questionnaires, to gather the data, analyze it and to also analyze the respondents' world views about their belief. He will then let the results of the analysis, lead to knowledge.

In order to understand this situation, insight into the nature of funerals and funeral rites among black African communities, will be helpful. The following Chapter will deal with the topic.

## CHAPTER THREE

### AFRICAN PARADIGM ABOUT LIFE, DEATH, BURIAL RITES AND AFTERLIFE

#### 3. Introduction

The purpose of this Chapter is to understand the African view of life, reaction to death, burial rites and issues relating to the afterlife. The underlying assumption is that cultural beliefs, rituals and ceremonies prepare individuals for the eventuality of death and, in fact, bring healing to the survivors after the occurrence of death. The necessity of cultural therapeutic values such as proper preparation for burial, respect for ancestor's values and communal consciousness, in particular, are highlighted.

Although this thesis is not about comparative studies between African and Western perspectives on funerals, the researcher will share the experiences that are gained from pastoring in congregations of, predominantly, Western origin.

### 3.1. African reaction to death

Death in African communities is one of the last and the most transitional stages of life that require passage rites and this takes time to complete. Keya has observed that, “work stops when death is announced and does not resume until at least two weeks after funerals” (2010:61). In the townships, family members will request to be excused from work so that they can immediately begin with the preparations. If the death occurs during the time of wedding preparations, if possible, the wedding will be postponed.

Death, indeed, disrupts the circle of life and threatens human livelihood. Craffert explains this by saying, “because of the inevitability of death, humans have to re-establish equilibrium or balance after each such instance” (1999:23).

Cultural beliefs are passed on from generation to generation through the process of socialization. Keya has observed that, “death is neither liberally mentioned nor spoken about in the ordinary life” (2010:29 cf Malusu 1978:7). Talking about death, on a personal level, creates discomfort. For instance, people do not joke about death or the dead.

The South African Catholic Bishop’s conference has become aware that African families have a certain way to deal with the disequilibrium which is caused by death. The following quotation defines their observation. “Most African families, during difficult moments in their lives, resort to practices of traditional religion: the intervention of ancestral spirit, the engagement of spirit mediums, spirit possession, consulting the diviners about lost items and about the future, magical practices and identifying (smelling out) one’s enemies etc...” (Pastoral statement of the SACBC: Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference 2006).

The answer is found in Mbiti who says that, “most people in African communities believe that sorcery, witchcraft, and evil magic cause death”. He further explains that, “when someone has died, people often try to find out who used sorcery, witchcraft or magic against

the dead person” (1991:117). Often, someone is blamed for it, “Relatives of the deceased may also take other types of revenge, which are less open” (Mbiti 1991:117). In most cases, people find or suspect someone in the township, village, or in the family.

It is sometimes believed that God may call old people to leave this life. Mbiti says that, “this is rare, and only in a few societies is such belief entertained” (1991:118). There are families that will go into a lot of trouble to establish the mystical causes of death and this is done through consulting diviners and medicine men or women, or by suspicion or guess work. Trying to find the cause of death leads to conflict, if the suspect is related to the deceased. As a result, the suspect in most cases is not allowed to participate in the rituals and rites relating to the funeral. In their reaction to death, cremation has not been an option to dispose the body among people who live in black townships.

### **3.2. Cremation**

Cremation is an alternative to earth burial or entombment as a form of disposing of the body. Masango states that, “cremation is an ancient practice that has caused a problem to the church” (HTS 61 (4) 2005:1285). Masango has observed that, “a lot of people still have a problem with cremation. Africans and Afrikaners seem to have more objections to it than the English speaking South Africans” (HTS 61 (4) 2005:1285). Masango gives other possibilities of why little thought is given to disposing the body through cremation. “Either there is resistance to major innovation in the sacred ritual and secular customs surrounding death or there is emotional reaction against the thought of burning the dead body” (HTS 61 (4)2005:1286). The rapid destruction of the body and the mental picture of the process could deter some people from giving consideration to cremation. Masango is of the opinion that, “Africans and Afrikaners, traditionally, hold the view that sacredness of the body belonging

to God and one does not tamper with God's creation" (HTS 61 (4)2005:1285). "Most of the people prefer the body to be buried so that the body can remain intact for a longer period. There is not the same strong repugnance to the slower, but equally destructive, deterioration of the body in the grave" (Masango HTS 61 (4)2005:1285).

The researcher was aware of the continued resistance about cremation that was building up among African communities, even within the researcher's own family.

The people are not yet ready to face cremation. Masango has made an observation that, "South Africa is going through a difficult time due to HIV/AIDS: a lot of young people are dying. Some graveyards in KwaZulu Natal, Alexander and Soweto are full" (HTS 66 (4) 2005:86-87). The researcher believed that African communities needed to be prepared for this new culture that is developing and not to shy away from embracing cremation as an alternative to being buried. In an interview with the undertaker, the researcher asked him about how many cremations he has done. The answer was that, "in the forty years of their business they have only done one cremation" (Mr Tlholoe, Kagiso, on the 5th January 2012). The researcher had an interview with a group of women in one of the parishes. During that interview, there was an openness to consider cremation as another way of disposing the body, due to the eminent and evitable shortage of the land for burial places (Interview 11<sup>th</sup> January 2012 Soweto).

### **3.3. African funerals**

Generally speaking, bearing in mind variation in tribal customs, "a funeral in the African context refers to what happens from the moment a person dies to the time the mourners depart from the grave to the home of the deceased. These would include the rites of burial and the rites of mourning which would be employed to guide the dead and the bereaved family in the calamity caused by death" (Craffert 1999: v).

Pieter Craffert was of the view that, “the way people deal with their dead was often a window on the way they see themselves in relation to others, the gods and their place in the universe” (1999: IV). Formerly, other methods of disposal were used in some places, such as throwing the body in the bush to be eaten by animals and birds, throwing it into a running stream, or keeping it in a small house nearby so that it could decompose completely until the bare skeleton was left. They would be buried or otherwise kept (Mbiti 1991:120).

In African society, “people are very sensitive to what is done when there is a death in the family. The disposal of the human corpse has been a very important ritual occasion in their culture” (Mbiti 1991:119). He further states that, “the deceased are to be given as smooth a transition as possible to the next life, so that the journey to the world of the dead may be a smooth one. It is important that meticulous care is taken to fulfil the funeral rites and to avoid causing offense to the dead. This contributed complex and sometimes long rituals and ceremonies associated with death (Mbiti 1991:119). The post death activities for African people are of vital importance because they are more than just the disposal of the body. It is about the family and community remembering and honouring their loved ones in a special way.

Of all the ministries that the researcher has been involved in, it seems that the ministry to the bereaved was the most sensitive. The pastoral care-giver can fail with respect to kitchen parties, baptisms, weddings and remarriage and get away with a few bruises. But try and miss the opportunity to care for the bereaved, with respect to the funerals, and you will be accused of not being a caring pastor. During the preparation for the funerals, people are very emotional. They need the church to help them face the pain of their loss and to express their thoughts and feelings. The pastoral care-giver, as a shepherd, has to be involved in the post

death activities; this may include any type of meaningful ceremonies to commemorate the life of the deceased. The pre-funeral phase is very important.

### 3.4. Preparing for Funeral

There are several meetings that are arranged to prepare for the funeral. These are held by relatives, shortly after death has occurred. “In these meetings issues concerning cultural beliefs and practices related to death are highlighted, burial decisions made and expectations clarified” (Keya 2010:35). In the researcher’s family, it is an elderly member of the family who will raise these expectations, and this included, taboos to be observed and members’ contributions towards the funeral arrangements. Although this was a common practice, it does create a problem when the elderly family member is far away. Then the family would make means to contact him or her, or to delegate the responsibility to someone else. The will of the deceased, concerning issues like place of burial, would be considered. The researcher had been part of the meetings where the family had inquired from the last person to speak to the deceased to find out if he or she has left any special message. The bearer of the last message from the deceased is considered to be very special. Keya has observed that, “these verbal wills are absolutely binding and are strictly reinforced by the surviving members of the extended family –Community” (2010:34).

Within the community of Sannieshof, where the researcher grew up, there is a saying that; *‘lehoko la moswi le agelwa mosako’* (what the deceased said should be preserved). Mbiti points out that after a dead person has given instructions concerning matters relating to his wishes, all family members should sit around to make sure that they are fulfilled (1969:152). It is believed that to go against a dying person’s will, is to invite not only a curse, but the evil spirits; which may cause misfortune or *Senyama* (a dark cloud over one’s life in Sesotho).

Keya (cf Malusu 1978:7) explains that, “failure to fulfill the dying person’s request endangers the living, as the spirit of the dead person might visit them to see to it that his or her wishes have been fulfilled” (2010:34). There have been, in some cases, incidents where the deceased left messages with a particular member of the family and that these were divisive, abusive, manipulative and unreasonable. For instance, within the family of the researcher, they were told that their grandfather had left an instruction before he died, that all his children should all build their homes near his home in the rural area. The researcher’s father and some of his brothers did not do so, for economic reasons.

The researcher has been part of meetings where the family did not believe the person who gave the last message from the deceased. This was the primary cause of family conflicts before the death occurred. The conflicts within the family caused strife and made them to be reluctant in fulfilling the wishes of the deceased.

In addition, the death bed provides an opportunity for forgiveness and reconciliation. The researcher had, personally, ministered a rite of confession and absolution according to the Anglican practice, to those who requested it from their death bed (APB 1989:447-448) (See Appendix B). It had been the researcher’s experience to see the person dying in peace and having the knowledge that they have been reconciled to God through the caring ministry of the church and the blood of Jesus. This rite has often been followed by the dying person requesting to see people he or she has sinned against, so that he or she can be given the opportunity to ask for forgiveness and reconciliation. Keya, in his experience says that, “on the other hand anybody who has anything against the dying person is expected to bring it up so that they can be reconciled before death. They gathered relatives, and especially the siblings, to use the opportunity to reconcile with each other” (2010:34). “Reconciliation that has been encouraged through apologies for known and inadvertent offenses committed

against each other, it is invaluable in inculcating acceptance of one another despite their situation. The aim of consultation in the decision-making process is to bring all concerned people on board and so avoid blame for error, but also to seek specialized opinion if necessary” (Keya 2010:35). This decision-making process, which is necessary for funeral arrangements, can be a source of healing for the bereaved. However, if not handled well, it could bring serious family feuds that may lead to more hurts.

“Generally, the time for preparing for funeral in the African community, can also be employed to reconcile former ‘enemies’ within the same family and to resolve conflicts” (Hendricks 2004: 162). Hendriks further says that, “this happens because families do not wish to stand in the way of the departed. Burying their differences was a sign of respect to the deceased and is a way for those who are Christians, to allow God to start new life in the family” (2004: 163). Masango emphasizes what Hendriks says, that; “the understanding in the African concept of caring is that, a broken relationship leads to alienation and needs to be healed in the process of restoring to wholeness” (2005: 919). It was the researcher’s view that the pastoral care-giver should not be content with leading a funeral service but seek for an opportunity for a post-funeral phase ministry and follow up. This included, “encouraging processes towards healing, restoration and creating interventions with families in crisis after the funerals. Seeco has observed that relatives and families are able to shelve possible grudges or tensions during preparation until the day of the funeral” (2010:217). He further says that, “this does not help because these resentments surface after the burial. When family members and mourners return home to wash their hands and be provided with food and drink, those bearing grudges will refrain from eating prepared food and will leave the home of the bereaved without saying goodbyes” (2010:216).

Most families, if they are members of a church, will send a delegation to the church to report the death. It has been the researcher's observation that among the predominantly western congregations, sometimes it was one family member that came to report and organizes the funeral with the church secretary and the priest. The reason in many of the cases is that most family members are overseas or live in other areas. It was mainly out of financial consideration that they would request the one near to make the arrangements.

“Depending on the policies and procedures of the local church and denomination, members would be notified about the death of a member” (Nyawa 2004:50). It is then that the pastor or priest would visit the family to make final funeral arrangements with the family at home. In the western practice, the researcher had found that as a priest, he would visit the family per invitation. Otherwise, all arrangements are done in the church. There were differences in the way parishioners of Western origin arrange their funerals.

“In the African culture whenever the family prepared for the funeral they have the whole community in mind. They believed that the bereaved should receive attentive care from extended family and both social and religious communities” (Keya 2010:36).

### **3.5. Funeral: a community affair**

Funerals have, over the centuries, brought families, relatives, friends and neighbors together. Seeco makes this point that, “even where families have not communicated for years, they would come together to bury a family member or community member” (2010:217). According to Bae, “the sense of community and unity is a critical concept in the African cosmology. This underlines the African worldview” on community (2007:50).

African funerals are community affairs, where the whole community feels the grief of the bereaved and shares in it. Families, who cannot afford to bury their dead, find that financial support often arrives from distant family members or a Good Samaritan in the community. Seeco, in his research, had experienced that, “no family was prepared to be seen as unable to bury a family member or relative” (2010:217).

Hendriks observation was that; “in western society, the funeral service tends to be a more private affair” (2004: 162). Hendriks, in his research of studying congregations in Africa, said that, “African society viewed funerals as a public or community event in which the whole community shows their care and respect to the bereaved family, thus displaying the fact that they belong and are not alone in their tragic circumstances” (Hendriks 2004:162). The researcher’s experienced that within the western society, during preparations for the funeral, the family was able to let the organizer know approximately how many people will attend. The funeral rite was more for family members, close friends and colleagues. On the other hand, Masango reminds us that, “in an African village there is no individualism and privacy is not accepted” (2005: 915). He further states that, “the African concept of caring involves all members of the village or community, relatives, tribes and ancestors” (2005: 915).

The researcher was of the view that the diversity of culture, in some urban areas, has posed a challenge to the concept of *Ubuntu*. Mbiti states that Ubuntu means: “I am because you are, you are because I am” (1969:61). Other factors of social integration, globalization and urbanization also make it difficult for some urban and township people to understand the reasons and motives for *ubuntu*.

Some of the youth in the township think *ubuntu* is irrelevant because they believe it does not encourage respect for personal space. The researcher believed that this was caused by the fact that most of the young people in the townships are exposed to fellow learners with western

concepts of respect for individualism. Some of these people believe that, as Masango points out; “African concept of life sometimes crowds and overshadows one’s personal life” (2005:918). It does not allow personal human rights.

The challenge is for community leaders (including the church) to engage in a dialogue on how to keep the balance between respect for personal space and *Ubuntu*. The leaders can also offer structures and programs for parents, children and youth, for that dialogue to happen.

### **3.6. Signs and symbols**

In the village where the researcher grew up, there are signs and symbols of mourning. Mbiti has observed that signs and symbols are used to show that death has occurred in the family. The shaving of hair was one of the commonest. In some communities, people smear themselves with white clay, as a sign of death and mourning (1991:122). In other communities, women and girls would wear scarves and cover their heads until the day of the funeral. Men will show respect by wearing jackets. The household where death has occurred is often identified by window panes which will be smeared with white or grey soluble paint-like material made by mixing ash and water. Seeco has observed that, “neighbors passing by would then offer their condolences, make plan to visit the bereaved another time, and find out the date and time of the funeral” (2010:218). The members of the community, who see the symbol, will spread the word around to relatives, friends and the community. Seeco further said that, “the constant traffic of people coming to pay their homage and offer their condolences was a sign to others that a death has occurred” (2010:127). It is believed in many African communities that you can bring condolences; even if it’s a year or two later. This is because of the saying in Setswana that; ‘Matshidiso *ga a bole*’ loosely translated, it means condolences never get rotten. In other words, one could come to visit the family even after six months to share respect for their loss.

### 3.7. Hospitality

At this time, the family knows that their home must be open to the community. If necessary, furniture is re-arranged so that mourners will have ample space for keeping vigil. Sometimes, all pictures in the house are turned around and all mirrors, televisions and any other reflective objects are covered. The beds are removed from the deceased's room, and the bereaved wife or mother sits on the floor, usually on the mattress. At that time, close relatives would start arriving to encourage the bereaved family to face the pain of their loss, to help them better cope with their grief and enable them to move forward with preparations for the funeral.

“During preparations for the funeral, relatives and neighbors of the deceased make their homes and houses available to offer hospitality to mourners who came to pay their last respect and comfort the bereaved” (Keya 2010:36). Healey and Sybertz say that, “hospitality is a very important cultural and social value in the African culture. They further highlight this fact by referring to a number of African proverbs that relate to the importance of visitors (1996:173). Visitors should always be given a warm welcome and genuine hospitality. According to Healy and Sybertz, this is a similar value of hospitality that is described in the Bible. “Share with God's people who are in need, practice hospitality” (Romans 12:13 NIV). As Mbiti points out that, “on this sad occasion, the neighboring villagers bring food from their homes to feed those mourners who have come from far away” (Mbiti 1969: 153). Craffert points out that, “in the Biblical times during the week of the funeral the relatives did not prepare food but ate the ‘bread of sorrow’ which neighbors brought them. The relatives and neighbors are also expected to offer practical assistance like fetching water, splitting fire wood and, generally, being available whenever their help is needed” (Keya 2010: 36).

In the situation where the house is too small, the family will hire tents and chairs, and local men in the community will help with pitching up the tent. Mbogori acknowledges that, “these family relationships and the community support system contribute to personal functioning in the time of loss by death” (Mbogori 2002: 68).

It is therefore, “the responsibility of the relatives and friends to make sure that the bereaved are well catered for in their bereavement” (Keya 2010:37). They often offer hospitality and carry out these chores willingly because as Mbiti records, “to be human is to belong to the community and to do so involved participating in their beliefs and practices” (1969:2). Obligation, strengthening the sense of community, is actively involved (Malusu 1978:5). Mbogori rightly comments that, “death occurring within the traditional milieu is catered for in terms of provisions and made both in the material and spiritual welfare to the bereaved. It is the bounden duty of the extended family to support and maintain an ongoing relationship with the bereaved. It is also believed that the deceased can see to it that those who come to the funeral and those who act kindly and generously to the mourners are rewarded, while those who do not are punished accordingly” (2002:55). A good example follows.

If the deceased was a member of the church, then the local congregation will play a very important part in making sure that the family is visited and prayed for daily. Although the mourners are reduced to minimum during the day, due to their occupations, evenings become quite crowded. Almost the entire hood descends to the house of the bereaved. For the more religious ones, this is the time for prayer, comforting words from the Bible or singing by the choir. It is clear, therefore, that no one is left alone during bereavement among most African communities. “In addition to the neighborliness and acts of compassion and caring, rituals possibly provide the greatest meaning and coping mechanism to the African communities

faced with death and grief” (Keya 2010: 39). Therefore, it is vital to consider some of the therapeutic rituals, sacrifices and ceremonies. These are discussed in the next paragraphs.

### **3.8. Rituals and Sacrifices**

Rituals, ceremonies and sacrifice form a very important part of the African world view. Within an African community, according to Masango, “ritual relates to crisis such as death and also contains therapeutic healing elements” (HTS 62 (32) 2005). Masango is of the view that, “the more threatening and potentially disruptive the crisis, the more detailed and carefully patterned the ritual is which addresses the crisis” (HTS 62 (3) 2005). “The different rituals and ceremonies are experienced at all stages of all life which is marked by prescribed rites of passage” (Keya 2010: 38). There are rituals and ceremonies which are connected to the birth of a child, celebration of first year after birth, initiation into adulthood, marriage and at death. Masango says that, “in other words, the crucial moments in life such as birth, marriage, vocation, and death are accompanied by complex series of ritual and liturgical acts” (HTS 62(3) 1030).

Margaret Shanthi observed that, “most indigenous communities in the Third World, maintaining that spirits are everywhere, perform primordial rituals for different purposes” (2000: 238). These included, “revering the good spirits and appeasing the malevolent and angry ones, maintaining the harmonious relationships with the invisible world and celebrating the cosmic cycle of birth, death and new life” (Shanthi 2000: 238). According to the *Universal Dictionary*, (1961) the term ritual refers to rites and ceremonies collectively: religious or other solemn ceremonies. Mbiti defines, “a rite or ritual as a set form of carrying out a religious action or ceremony a means of communicating something of religious significance through word, symbol and action. These symbols: embody a belief or set of

beliefs” (1991: 131). Shanthi on the other hand, says that, “in the African contexts that during a liturgy, incorporating of movements and gesture derive their meaning from the community’s experience of the universe”... She further makes a point and says that, “these actions will include going barefoot, tapping the hands, swaying of the body in dance, and emitting strident cries during a religious ceremony” (2000: 238).

Keya has observed that, “the process of ritualistic expression is essential for ordering individual survival and security and the life of the society. The built-in worship embedded in ritualism provides the internal locus of control and governs the people’s total life activities” (2010: 38 cf. Nwachuku 1992:57). According to Mbogori, “rituals reinforce the group and reaffirm reciprocal obligation” (2002: 127). Shanthi made the observation that, rituals reflect the interconnectedness of humans, their relationship to nature, the need for healing, and the promotion of peace, justice, and unity in the family. She was of the view that true worship that allows creative symbols wherein the people express struggle for life, would liberate and call them to wholeness (2000: 239).

Keya argues that, “rituals are developed and maintained within the community” (cf. Switzer 1970:213). He further observes that, “community provides the symbols and rituals with power both to strengthen the fellowship and as one aspect of its strengthening function, to dramatize the major events, including the crisis of life” (Keya 2010: 39).

The main purpose of the rituals which are related to bereavement through death was to help the family members to deal with their loss and to engender life here and hereafter. Dames and Dames are of the view that, “the rituals serve to help family work through the pain of grief and to adjust to an environment in which the deceased is missing. This depends; to a large extend, on the nature of the relationship and roles fulfilled by the deceased” (2009:43). Dames and Dames correctly point out that, “the goal of rituals is to emotionally relocate the

deceased and move on with life” (2009:43). Dames and Dames (cf. Worden 1991:16) stress that, “this does not imply mechanically withdrawing all emotional investment in the deceased or giving up on them, rather it can be seen as relocating or evolving a new relationship with the deceased that leaves no room for new relationships and growth” (2009:43). It was always a matter of community interest that this passage be satisfactorily completed. Mborogi (2000:126) adds that, “rituals have a curative value to the bereaved. This value is said to derive from social interaction which brings people together to share in grief”.

### **3.9. Funeral Rites and Rituals**

The preparation of the funeral ritual occurs within the context of a family. Cook and Oltjenbrun describe a ritual “as a specific behavior that gives symbolic expression to certain feelings or thoughts. In the case of a funeral, it serves as a public acknowledgement that death has occurred and provides an opportunity for mourning. It was the acknowledgement of death at a formal level, which provided a powerful therapeutic experience for both individual and family (1998: 128). After the death has occurred, several rituals are observed before, during and after the burial. The rituals vary slightly; depending on the nature of the death, gender, and social standing of the deceased. According to Keya, “there are also slight variations from clan to clan. However, most of the rituals are similar across the subgroups (2010:41). For instance; there are no long rituals, ceremonies or mourning for children and prenatal deaths.

Due to their status occasioned by death, the bereaved observe certain prohibitions and restrictions. The bereaved are expected to conduct themselves in ways that will restore their ritual status to neutrality. Keya explains that, “neutrality is a state where one is at peace with oneself, the extended family (community which includes one’s ancestors); the environment and God” (2010:61). The prohibitions involve daily activities such as general movement that

will include visitations and sexual relationships. The bereaved are also expected to be home before sunset. It is believed that death can be spread around. In other families, lowering of the voice is encouraged when having conversations during the time of bereavement. It has been the researcher's observation that in some of the African groups, it is a customary that the widow or the mother of the deceased should sit on a matras.

There are however, other women who do not follow this practice. It is because of different convictions. The main one is religious; mostly those who belong to charismatic churches, who do not believe in most of the traditional African funeral rites. The researcher had also observed that among the Zulu families, the widow is expected to cover her face with a blanket. This made it difficult for the researcher, as pastoral care-giver and the community, as they bring commiserations because it is difficult to talk to someone when you do not see their face. The researcher believed that women do not need to be subjected to this practice of hiding their faces. The researcher's assumption is that it is because of patriarchy.

Keya points out that for this reason, "the bereaved are not free to visit other homes or participate in daily happenings in the community before all cleansing rituals associated with death have been completed" (2010:62).

Before the funeral, there are pre-burial rituals that are observed concerning the preparation of the corpse for burial; for instance, washing of the body. According to Mbiti, "in some places the body is washed either with water or with water and traditional medicine. In other areas it is shaved and the nails are trimmed". Keya explains that in the past, "the body would be stripped bare of any clothes and ornaments before burial" (2010:45). Mbiti records that, "this 'naked' state symbolizes birth in the afterlife" (1969: 155). Nowadays, the body is often well dressed and wrapped in white clothes, but no ornaments are permitted and a tie must be loosened before burial. Mbiti has observed that, "for all these preparations, there are ritual

leaders and elders in every village who will perform the ritual. Some individuals are not allowed to touch or come near the corpse in case misfortune should befall them or the family” (1991: 119). Bujo is of the view that, “it is the task of the living to help the dying on their way. He explains that in many communities it is the custom to place coins in the hands or mouth of the dead. These coins are to be interpreted as his or her “fare” to the next world (1992: 122). Craffert states that, “in Biblical times the eyes of the deceased were closed as were all orifices” (1999:27).

During funeral arrangements with the funeral undertaker, the family will make a request for the time of the arrival of the corpse at home. The purpose is to inform the community and the church, so that they can be part of the ritual. Usually an animal is slaughtered after the arrival of the corpse at home. According to Mbiti, throughout Africa, “parts of the animals are used for the different rituals and purposes”. He cites an example that in Tanzania, the skin is used to wrap the corpse of the dead for burial. According to most families who practice this ritual, it is to make sure that the spirit of the deceased does not remain there. He is of the view that probably the idea behind the use of the animal parts for rituals is that the life of the animal is passed on to that of the people concerned, to strengthen and protect it” (1991: 136).

Some people use the hide of the slaughtered beast to cover or place it on the coffin as a ‘blanket’ for the deceased. Keya (cf. Shisaya 1996: 189) has observed that, “some communities in Africa have an obligation to kill at least one animal as a sacrifice to facilitate the incorporation of the deceased into the ancestral world” (2010: 45). Keya explains that, “if the animal is not killed the spirit of the dead person will be restless and angry and will come back to kill the animals in the home in the form of an epidemic, or thunderbolt, or some other serious catastrophe” (Keya 2010:45). It is, however, the researcher’s experience that the killing of the animal also serves the practical purpose of providing food for the many guests.

Some portions of the meat are preserved for the day following the funeral; when the clothes of the deceased will be washed and the families will have something to eat.

The day before the funeral, the corpse is brought home before sunset to be placed in the main bedroom. Upon the arrival of the deceased at home, an elder in the family will, before the coffin is carried out of the hearse, speak to the deceased. The purpose is to let the deceased know that he or she is now coming home where he or she lived, for the last time. Some will, poetically, recite their names. Mbiti explains that, “keeping the body inside the house has been the practice for a while” (1969:153). The invitation to the home will be followed by funeral sentences by the religious leader until the coffin is inside. A short service will take place at home, before the funeral. The Anglican Church has the service (See Appendix Funeral Service).

This service will be followed by a wake, which is a night vigil. If the family follows Christian religion, the minister, helped by the community, will lead the wake. Singing and prayer will be offered for the part or the whole night. The night vigil is a time for pastoral care, to comfort and encourage the bereaved. The collective approach to life and co-existence plays a major role in ensuring that the burden of the grief, and the challenges in preparing for the day of the funeral, are shared. Seeco has observed, “That during the wake, sympathizers are offered tea, coffee and usually biscuits, which can prove to be an expensive, and time consuming undertakings will support by offering utensils” (2010:218). Preparing a meal for a large number of people can be a time consuming exercise, requiring assistance from a number of men and women to ensure that meat and other food is ready to be served the following day. Some of the food is prepared to feed the mourners, who come for the wake.

Where the family belongs to a burial society, the society will come to offer support for its member. Burial societies are a financial scheme; where a group of people will contribute

money to the pool. It operates according to a common understanding that when a member (or a relative of a member) of the burial society passes away, the burial society makes a contribution towards the burial. Members of the burial society, particularly, women, will also offer practical help on the day by preparing and serving food and drinks during the gathering after the funeral. Men from the burial society will join other men of the family to offer help. Most of the burial societies wear uniforms. Seeco explains that, “these uniforms are not worn at any other time except during group gatherings, or at the members’ wedding and funerals” (2010:226).

During the preparations, there is always an elderly member of the family or men folk, who will make sure that customs are followed. There will also be an elderly woman in the family, who will see to it that women cook the food well. The food that is prepared for the funeral, among the Batswana, is called *mogoga*. The food was supposed to be eaten and be finished on the same day of the burial. No food was to be taken out of the yard where the funeral took place. No spices or salt was added. It was believed that food without spices was simple, and was a very good sign of mourning. No vegetables were cooked and particularly, the pumpkin. There is a view that the pumpkin spreads when it grows, therefore if people eat it, they will spread death in the community.

According to the traditional customs, all attendants of the vigil are not expected to leave the home until the early hours of the morning. Keya explains, “formerly the night vigil was kept in order to look out for sorcerers who might come to see the results of his or her wicked doings; to ward off the possibility of witchcraft which is always suspected in death not caused by old age; to ward off wild animals so that they do not carry away the body; to appease the dead and most importantly, to comfort the bereaved” (Keya 2010: 42). In other “families, a diviner (*Sangoma*) with super natural powers, is invited to perform a ritual of

protection so that no witch should be able to bring the spirit of disturbance” (Sundkler 1948:23). There are other families that attend *kereke tsa mowa*, (Spirit type churches’ see Anderson 1991), who at midnight, during the wake, would have a special spiritual ritual to release the deceased into the hands of *Modimo* ( the one who is higher) and the world of *Badimo* ( ancestors); and request the dead to take their greetings and requests to the ancestors.

### **3.10. Mourning**

According to the Heinemann English Dictionary (2001), mourning is described as, “the outward sign of bereavement or grief, e.g. the wearing of black clothes.” It denotes the social prescription for the way in which a person is expected to display grief and often reflects the practices of one culture. It also helps those who come to know the state of affairs in your life.

The morning of the burial is preceded by the viewing of the body by family and if the family wishes, they can invite some members of the community. This ritual is to acknowledge the fact that the family and community will never meet the deceased again, in this life. It is also to have a closure of the life of a person. Writing on the rage of bereavement, Keya states that seeing a dead body does ram home the message that our minds and bodies quite naturally resist: the dead person is dead indeed (2010:42 cf. Ironside 1996:18). It is one thing to know, intellectually, that someone has died and quite another to accept it at a deep and unconscious level. Alexander adds that viewing the body of the person, who has died, can help in beginning to acknowledge the loss (1993: 35).

Before the deceased leaves home, the ritual of sending off is observed. It is an opportunity to wish the deceased a pleasant journey and to request the deceased to take messages to the ancestors. It is mostly messages of greetings and requests for blessings. There is a religious

service that is held at home or in the church building before proceeding to the graveside. There is always a long program where various speakers will have the opportunity to speak about the life of the deceased (See Appendix L). The reason for such a long service is to show that the person, who has passed on, was connected to the family and the extended family. It is important to note that, when it comes to rituals that are performed to deal with death and mourning, African people will take their time. The service before departing to the cemetery can take between one and four hours. Africans have a different world view about community, family and people. A summary list by O'Donovan (2000:21) of the basic differences between African and Western world view will be helpful in understanding why services take long (See Appendix C). For further reading on the African concept of cyclic time, consult Bae (2007:51-52).

In the case where the person has died of a car accident, his or her body is, sometimes, not allowed to enter the home. It is believed that if the body is allowed to enter the house, it may bring about another tragic death to the family. In this instance, the hearse will bring the body in the morning. If the funeral service takes place at home, not at the church, the body will only be allowed in the yard but not in the house. After a family ritual and church service, if the accident happened nearby, the procession will pass the place. The family will take the coffin out of the hearse and place it on the ground while an elderly person performs a ritual.

When a person dies away from home and the body cannot be returned for burial, each family and clan has a certain ritual that is followed. Seeco has observed that, "the Zulu people revere the soul, and their tradition dictates that the body be buried with *amadlozi* (ancestral spirits) in the cattle byre, so that the soul may be at peace and look kindly upon its descendants" (2010:213).

Although this practice might be common to other black African cultures, there might be slight differences. The researcher would like to share the story; for the reader to understand how a family from *Bapedi* people (*a tribe from the Northern part of South Africa*) performed a ritual for their loved one, who died from a car accident in another city.

*I was approached by Tlhogo (not the real surname) who shared the story of their son, who died in another city and needed closure on the matter. The problem I was faced with was that I never had this pastoral challenge before. The other problem was that we did not have a liturgy for this in our denomination. I had to support the family. I decided to meet with the family on a weekly basis until I came to understand what their ritual in this matter involved. What they elected to do was that together we should go to the place where the accident happened. We had a short family memorial service. They also spoke to his spirit and wished him well and also promised to meet him in the future. They also asked him to take greetings to the ancestors who have gone before. After this ritual, the researcher could tell that the family felt there was closure.*

The fundamentals about respect for the dead, the role of the ancestral spirits, and the manner in which the deceased is treated, are equally dignified in black African communities.

### **3.11. Places of burial**

The place of burial and grave's position is pre-determined. In some cases, the couple is buried next to each other or in the same grave. Keya explains that, "in cases where a couple is buried in a family graveyard, the husband's grave will be closer to the outer fence of the homestead" (2010:44). Keya further gives the reason for this practice that; "the belief is that even in death the husband continues to protect their families from external attack" (2010:44

cf Alembi 2002: 58). As already noted, the orientation of the grave and the position of the head are crucial. This varies from clan to clan but the general direction is the east-west orientation with head on the end (facing the sun).

In the rural Tswana areas, only a special group of men (named *diphiri*) are allowed to dig the grave and to cover it after the rituals are performed. Letsosa has observed that African people are very hesitant to leave the grave if it has not been covered (*Verbum et Ecclesia* Vol. 31 No.1 2010). The digging in the areas happens, mostly, at night. The other concept is that graves are only dug when there is going to be burial. It was a belief that open graves call people to fill them up. So graves are never left open.

Keya has observed that, “in other communities it is only the circumcised men who are permitted to dig the grave or may touch the dead in their last moments to the grave. The circumcision rite is said to put men at peace with the dead” (2010:43 cf Malusu 1978:6). Mbiti points out that, “in other communities a father may not dig a grave for his son or daughter, or a husband for his wife” (1969:153). The situation is different in urban areas because it is the municipality that takes care of digging the grave in order to fulfill the by-laws regarding the size of the graves. A woman may not dig the grave or be involved in the covering. What is expected is that, while people are waiting for the grave to be covered at the cemetery, women should lead in singing of suitable hymns, psalms or choruses (Letsosa *Verbum et Ecclesia* Vol. 31 No.1 2010). This situation has since changed; as women also participate in the ritual of filling the grave. However, this only happens in the townships. There is a slight chance that women would be allowed to do so in the rural areas where most of traditional practices are still kept.

The researcher has observed that, recently, there are families that hire out companies to cover the grave for a fee before everybody leaves. Most of the modern men in the townships cannot stand the dust.

During the burial, itself, the immediate family of the deceased is expected to stay together on one side of the grave, at a designated place. Seeco has made an observation that, “at the grave side it is possible to see who are the family and the relatives of the deceased. This takes place after the deceased’s coffin has been lowered into the grave, when the family and relatives are expected to approach and drop a handful of sand into the grave, as a sign of respect and grief” (2010:216). In other families, it will be an uncle who will make sure that the right people are the ones who perform these rituals. In others, it is in the order of seniority within the family and in others, it will be men who start and then, followed by women. Keya says that as they do so, they announce their acceptance of death as the lot of human kind saying: “don’t worry brother/sister; we too shall follow you because where you are going is our real home” (2010:46 cf Malusu 1978:9). In the case where the deceased was a member of a church organization, such as a woman’s organization, they will also perform their ritual before the final dismissal by the officiating minister.

Mbiti has observed that, “it is customary in many parts of Africa to bury some belongings with the body, such as a spear, bows, arrows, stools, snuff, foodstuff, beads, ornaments, money, tools and domestic utensils and a walking stick”... Mbiti further explains the reason for this practice, and says, “It is the belief that the departed needs weapons to protect him or herself along the way to the next world, or food to eat on the journey” (1991:120). Seeco is of the view that, “items placed on the graves are a sign of connecting the deceased with items they loved or used during their lives” (2010:215). Putting items, as a way of showing respect for the dead, is less practiced these days. The reason is that, recently, people do not walk

through cemeteries to show respect for the dead but to steal items. Therefore, placing of flowers or wreaths on the graves has become a popular phenomenon in black African communities. Many say flowers would show love and respect to the deceased and provide comforting qualities for the families. Others will lower flowers with the coffin into the grave.

According to Craffert, “feeding of the dead represents a long standing practice from biblical times. Bowls and platters for foodstuff were common among the tomb articles found in every period of the Israelites and Judean history. There are three explanations have been offered for the burial gifts placed inside Israelites and Judean tombs” (See Craffert 1999:32-34).

### **3.12. Conduct and behavior at Funerals**

Funerals in the rural areas and some urban areas are handled with respect and dignity. The rules of behavior have been set by the communities over a period of time. In the village where the researcher’s grandfather lived, the young men previously mentioned *diphiri*, are not only responsible for preparing the grave and keeping order at the cemetery, but also to ensure that the mourners are dressed properly. Seeco has observed that, “in some communities *diphiri* will even usher the mourners out of the graveyard in an orderly way” (2010:220). Women are expected to cover their heads, wear a jacket or long sleeves jersey or to place a blanket or a shawl over their shoulders. Men must wear a jacket, long sleeved jersey or coat. It has been the researcher’s observation that there has been a change in this behavior. No cell phones are operated during the funeral service.

Absolute silence is observed by those present; while the grave is filled and if there is no singing during the proceedings. No conversations or cellphones are allowed in the graveyard. Seeco says that, “children are urged to behave in a particularly restrained manner”

(2010:220). In many urban areas, children and adults alike know that the right thing to do when a funeral procession is passing is to sit down or kneel. Men take off their hats, with respect and dignity, until the cortege has passed by. It is the researcher's experience that funerals are no longer respected and no longer feared by young people in many black communities, particularly in urban areas.

Many see the conduct on display at more and more funerals as a decline in moral values and lack of respect for the dead (Seeco 2010:221). It is becoming common at a funeral in certain townships, to have people ignoring the burial service, standing under trees or next to the vehicles, talking, usually to the annoyance of the bereaved families and mourners. The researcher thinks that there is no reason for this behavior. But he is also aware that there are so many funerals that people attend where this behavior is displayed, that it now seen as normal. There is also a view that a life well lived must be celebrated and being sad does not make sense.

It has become the custom for the family of the deceased to summon one of the family members to thank the people for their ministry and care of the deceased during their time of bereavement, and for their ministry and support in the funeral service, itself (Letsosa Verbum et ecclesia Volume 31 No1 2010). It has also become a custom for the family to encourage the community to continue to do well to others. The Batswana people will always wish everyone present blessings.

### **3.13. Post- burial Rituals**

Burial marks the start of purification rituals and ceremonies. The practice of washing one's hands after a burial, before having refreshments, is common among most communities. Seeco

has observed that mourners are expected to wash their hands in the bathtubs and containers provided (2010:217). Many people follow a cleansing ritual at the gate of the house, where everyone must wash off the dust of the graveyard before entering the home. Sometimes herbs, *muti* or the succulent parts of aloe are placed in the water, and this water is believed to remove bad luck. Seeco says that, “what is put in the water remains known only to the family of the deceased. Some people, depending on their religion or culture, will wash their hands, and some not”. Some of the researcher’s family members attend the Zion Christian Church; they will use special “holy water” to sprinkle their members to cleanse them from impurities at this time. “Others will even go to the extent of washing their faces and feet at the grave side or home” (Keya 2010:47). Different reasons are given for this practice. Seeco says that, “while some believe it represents washing of all the negative things associated with death, others view this as a symbolic cleansing event, or simply a washing of the dirt from using spades and shovels to cover the grave” (2010:217). The family and relatives of the deceased are expected to wash their hands first, before the mourners do likewise.

Mbiti has observed that, “normally feasting follows the funeral rites”. He further explains that, “it is partly to comfort the bereaved and to bring life back to normal, and partly to thank the mourners and those who officiated at the funeral” (1991:121). For a community to share a meal with the family after the burial is a sign of knowing that they are accepted within that community. If most of the people just wash their hands and leave without eating, it is an indication that specific family have not participated in the funerals within the community.

In some black African cultures, mostly the Batswana, people are not expected to eat before a ritual called *ditatudi* (loosely translated as time to inform people who the deceased is). This ritual is observed, mostly, in the rural areas. The elderly member of the family will take this opportunity to tell the mourners about the background of the deceased and the clan from

which he or she originates. All the children of the deceased will be introduced and instructed on how to continue to live, before the community. It is a custom that on this day, all secrets will come out in the open. To explain this, the researcher will relate a real story that happened in his community and family.

*It was after the funeral of my uncle, who is my mother's blood brother. We all grew up knowing that he was our uncle and we respected him. He was, however, using a different surname from my mother's maiden surname. At the time of his death, he was married and had children. It was on this day during this ritual, that we were told who his real mother and father were and the reason why he had been using a different surname. While we thought that was all, another child from the crowd was called to join the children of my uncle. It was on that day that the rumor that my uncle had a child with another woman was made public. It was expected that the family would welcome this child as part of the family.*

*Funerals as mentioned before, have over the centuries brought families, relatives, friends and neighbors and community together. On this day, those who have come to bury the deceased are requested to spread the message around to those who were not able to come to tell them who has died. Those who were not able to come will bring their condolences at a later stage. There is a saying in Setswana that; "Matshidiso ga a bole" (loosely translated it means that you can offer your condolences any time after the burial). In iSi-Xhosa it called "ukubheka ilitye" (meaning to put a stone on the grave of the deceased as a sign of respect)*

*It is also at this ritual that community announcements are made by the leaders of the community. It is only after the chief or delegates appointed by him or her have spoken, that food can be dished out to the community.*

The researcher has attended some of these *ditatudi* rituals. Reflecting upon the practice, the researcher has wondered how effective this is in contributing towards healing for the

bereaved; especially when the spouse gets to know unpleasant things about the deceased, after his/her death. The researcher has always wondered how much trauma it brings on the surviving spouse and the children. These reflections challenge the researcher to consider possible research on this ritual - its advantages and disadvantages.

Immediately after *ditatudi*, those who participated in the burial will be served food. The women who have been sitting on the mattress or the floor will have their meal in the same room; where the body of the deceased was kept. They will be served with special meat put aside for the widow. Older widows are assigned the role of introducing the new widow to her status (Keya 2010:62 cf Sishanya 1996:191). In this way, the newly widowed is assured not only of comfort and support, but also guidance in the process of bereavement and required rituals. In the case of a widower he will have a special member of the family to see to it that he is looked after. The widower does not sit in a special room as the widow. The researcher tried to establish the reason why widowers do not sit on the mattress, but none was given, except that it is the tradition. Widowers on their part, find continual help from their age group and especially from those with similar experience.

This room would have been cleaned by a special member of the family after the corpse has left for burial. All work in some families, before the burial, would be discouraged. Keya explains that, “all rubbish would be swept away from the room for the first time following the death; after burial has taken place” (2010:48). Alembe explains further that, “once death occurs in home, dirt is not swept out of the house. Each time the house is cleaned; particularly the room of the deceased, the dirt is heaped in a corner until the day is set for ritual sweeping” (2002:136). Mbiti is of the view that, “the ritual of sweeping symbolizes a new start. Generally, cleansing rituals imply that ritual impurity, caused by death, is not permanent since after the prescribed cleansing, normal life is resumed”. The researcher has

experienced that other families, because of their religious belief or any other belief, do not have this practice but make sure that their homes are cleaned every day before mourners come in. Some will find leaving the dirt on the corner as unwelcoming and unhygienic.

Blankets and everything in contact with the deceased would be washed. After washing the clothes of the deceased, the clothes are wrapped in a bundle and put away for a period that would be determined by the family. Some families light a candle next to the blankets and clothes of the deceased. The next day after the burial, a hair shaving ritual is held at home. Because it is believed that life is concentrated in the hair, shaving the hair symbolizes death and its growing again, indicates strengthening. In most families, this is performed by the uncle. Keya also affirms this that, some families, “do it after two or three days and it is performed at the grave site” (2010:47 cf Wako 1985: 31 & Malusu 1978:18). Mbiti explains that, “the shaving of the hair is a symbol of separation, showing that one of the family members has been separated from them. At the same time it is an indication of people’s belief that death does not destroy life, since the growth of new hair indicates that life continues to spring up” (1991:122).

The shaving ritual still persists today; although not so much in the urban areas. In some families, it does not happen as some relatives need to be allowed to return to work as soon as they can. Nowadays, however, the way the hair is styled and worn in some traditional communities, is a sign of status and position. Seeco has observed that, “in some communities, hair can be used to send a particular message. It can be shown as a sign of mourning. Hair can also be shown as a sign of defiance – by refusing to cut one’s hair when an important person in the household has died, or to show disrespect for the person who has passed on” (2010:324). The researcher has been present in families where the hair shaving ritual was

performed and the younger generation refused to be shaved, not because of disrespect but lack of explanation from the elderly as to why it is done.

Young people in the townships and rural areas, admit that there is great pressure to conform to a particular look, fashion and hairstyle, which will also provide support and protection from the group. Seeco says that, “some people would safeguard their hair with their lives—after trimming and cutting, by burning it to ensure that evil-doers cannot use their hair to bewitch them, cast spells and take their power from them” (2010:324). The trends in hair styling and the industry of hair dressers, seeking to create different styles and to keep fashion in a constant state of flux, will continue to affect the hair shaving ritual. The shaving ritual is followed by other cleansing rituals. “This ritual is called, according to Letsosa in Setswana *dithhapiso* (cleansing rituals) after the burial for purification” (Verbum et Ecclesia Vol. 31 No 1 2010).

In the past, the bereaved would go to the river for a ritual bath. Keya explains that, “flowing water is regarded as a purifying agent ‘because it carries the evil things away’” (2010; 48 cf Wagner 1954:51). The times of the cleansing is usually seven days after the funeral. Mbiti says that, “in some places people smear themselves with white clay as a sign of death and mourning, in others they refrain from washing their bodies and clothes for several days or months” (1991:122). Craffert says that, “this was also a practice in the biblical times. The mourning customs adhered to the next of kin and included abstaining from washing, anointing and wearing of perfumes. Mourners took off their shoes, ornaments and headdress and shaved their hair” (1999:28). Nowadays, in some families, the bereaved do not take a full bath. The uncle will simply sprinkle them with water. In other families, it is expected that all the children should take a full bath with herbs in it. The ritual bath was believed to make the bereaved ritually clean and ready for a new start (Keya 2010:48).

During the ritual of cleansing, certain goats or bulls may be killed to mark the death of someone. In the researcher's experience, certain animals will be slaughtered depending on who had died. For an example, within the researcher's family, if it is the father who has died, a sheep will be slaughtered for the ritual of cleansing. Mbiti explains that, in some communities, "sometimes animals go without being milked for several days" (1991:122). Mbiti has observed that, "as an indication that someone has died, pots are broken in the houses; certain houses in the homestead are abandoned for good and many other things" (1991:122). During this time, the bereaved stay at home and do not socialize or have sexual contact. "Chanting of lamentations were discouraged, families had to abstain from all pleasurable activities" (Craffert 1999:28).

In other cases, "people suspend sleeping with their marriage partners for several weeks or months" (Mbiti 1991:122). Keya has observed that, "among the Abaluyia there are no elaborate separation rituals to terminate the coital rights of the deceased partner. A widower is encouraged to obtain a sexual partner soon after the shaving ceremony. For the Abaluyia, it is believed that it will in fact make the spirit of the deceased rest in peace" (Keya 2010:63). Oduyoye says that, "unlike among the Asante of Ghana, the acquisition of a sexual partner is not done in order to disgust the spirit of the deceased wife, who will then never again visit him" (1992:15). Among the Batswana, "the young women (called *siyantlu*), who are chosen by the elderly in the family, would automatically step in her dead sister's marital position if the dowry had been completed and the man has treated his late wife well.

Keya explains that it is held that these *sororate* (sorority) unions were meant to provide stability and continuity as a sister is thought to be the best suited to look after her late kin's children" (2010:63), it is also argued that having someone that the children are already acquainted with, contributes to a steady healing process for them, following the loss of their

mother. In a similar way, a widow is expected to remarry following the death of her husband unless she is advanced in age with grown up children and has no need for a partner. Keya explains that, “in the past, the late husband’s brother, cousin or son by another woman, was expected to marry the widow”... He further explains that, “this was done in order to keep alive the name of the deceased and also to retain his wealth (measured in herds of cattle, sheep and goats) to keep them in the same kraal” (2010:63). Mbiti explains that, “the person who inherits the wife and children of his deceased relative is expected to perform all the duties of a husband and father” (1969:144). It is Mbiti’s view that, “by doing these things people are able to come to terms with the agonies, sorrows and disruption caused by death. He continues that by ritualizing death, people dance it away, drive it away and renew their own life after it has taken away one of their members” ( 1991:122).

In the Old Testament, *levirate* union was an ancient custom, which was sanctioned by the practice (Genesis 38:6-10) and by law (Deuteronomy 25:5-10). A dead male brother or a closest male relative was required to marry his brother’s widow and raise the children in the dead man’s name. This ancient *levirate* law underlies the story of Ruth. Boaz, her husband’s relative, was righteous enough to support the legitimate claims of a widow, including her right to glean and to contract a levirate union (Ruth 4:13). These days, processes of ritual cleansing and wife and children inheritance and stepping in for the dead sister, have undergone several changes in view of contemporary realities.

It is the researcher’s view that widow inheritance conflicts with the Christian belief that death ends the marriage union. A married woman is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives, but when he dies, she is free from the law that binds them (Romans 7:2). The researcher agrees with Reggy-Mamo that, “in marriage, the contract is absolutely and completely dissolved by the death of the one partner, whence the phrase ‘till do us part’ in the Christian

marriage ceremony” (2006:323). It is the researcher’s views that allowing the widow to be taken over by the in-laws, constitutes a denial of that Christian belief, because such an action is based on the view that the marriage contract continues even after the death of the husband. Christian widows need affirmation and support.

The local congregation needs to find new ways of caring for the widows that respect their dignity, personal freedom and choice. Reggy-Mamo puts forward a challenge by saying; “Otherwise, they may give in to cultural pressure and agree to widow- inheritance. In an area where HIV/AIDS is widespread, such a practice can lead to death.” (2006:323). Rituals have a spiritual and psychological power. Christian care-givers should not simply ban them, but should, thoughtfully and sensitively, replace them with alternative ritual that meets the spiritual and psychological needs of the fearful person.

Letsosa has observed that, “there are other families that have another ritual called *ho rola thapo* (a ritual to end the mourning process) after a month or two” (Verbum et Ecclesia Vol.31.No 1). The researcher has observed that in other groupings in South Africa, if the woman is widowed, the mourning period takes between six months to a year.

### **3.14. Ritual of bringing back the deceased**

The practice of the home bringing ritual is still observed in some rural areas and seems to be disappearing in the urban townships. Based on the researcher’s experience, the ritual of home-bringing is observed by the Zulu tribe in South Africa. Sundkler states that, “the real and vital tradition of the Zulu speaking is there in making sure that the spirit of the departed is resting” (1948:21). The spirit of the departed called in isiZulu *idlozi*, plural *amadlozi* become the guardian spirits of their descendants. *Amadlozi* are believed to look after their

well-being in all respects. Sundkler states that, in some communities the spirit of chiefs and royal ancestors are naturally more important than common spirits. The source of communal well-being is prosperity (1948:21). Seeco points out that, “the Zulu people revere the soul and their tradition dictates that a body be buried with the *amadlozi* (ancestral spirit) in the byre, so that the soul maybe at peace and look kindly upon its descendants” (2010:213).

Mbiti has observed that, “for some societies the departed remain in the neighborhood, they are still part of the family” (1991:123). He further states that, “the surviving relatives and friends feel that the departed are close to them. Mbiti explains that Funeral rites are aimed at marking the separation of the departed from the living, even though it is believed that the dead continue to live in the hereafter” (1991:123). Those who practice the ritual of home-coming believe that once a person has died he or she cannot return to human life in his total being but his/her spirit can come and live in the home. Other families believe that at the spirits are hovering over the graves on the earth and are restless until they are brought back home. To African families, for the spirit of the deceased to be restless, is an extremely dangerous situation.

Mbiti has coined a term ‘living dead’ as a way to describe the deceased in the African context (1971:10; 1991:124). It has since been adopted, fairly generally, by scholars and representative of the African Traditional Religion. Bae cites the meaning behind the explanation by Amanze (2003:44) that: “To many African people the dead people are not dead at all. Death is only a transitional state to a spiritual life free from material hindrances. The deceased are at once dead and alive and because of their paradoxical nature they are known...as living- dead.” In Mbiti’s own words, “the living dead is a person who is physically dead but alive in the memory of those who knew him in life, as well as being alive

in the world of the spirits. The living dead are still part of the extended family and as such, have a close relationship with the living”. (1971:10)

Bae is of the view that the “living dead” then refers to persons who continue to live on in the spiritual realm (i.e. minus physical bodies). He continues to say that, “this idea of the immortality of the soul is one that occurs often in the Western and Eastern thinking, and is partly compatible with the Christian view of life-after-death. It is believed in East Asia that the life after death parallels the life of the earth and the spirits still live in the same way we do and have the same needs” (2007:27). According to Mbiti, as long as they are still remembered, these living-dead are still people and have not yet become ‘things’, ‘spirits’ or ‘its’ (1969:25).

Earlier, the researcher mentioned that the ritual of bringing home the spirit was performed if a person had died away from home. Here, the researcher refers to the ritual that is performed after the deceased has been buried and that the relatives will return to the grave to bring back the spirit (Keya 2010:49). A month or two after the funeral, the bereaved family would slaughter a beast and go to the grave. The elderly member of the family will recite the praises of the clan to introduce him or her and those who are present. After that, they will request the ancestor to allow the deceased to return home.

When the deceased person is brought back home, the Zulu people have a way of doing so. Seeco has observed that; “This is done with the branch of the buffalo thorn tree which, the Zulu people believe, has the power to draw in the dead spirit. The person carrying the branch treats it like a living person, buying the ticket for the deceased on the return journey, lest the spirit feels abandoned and slips away. Once home, the branch is absorbed and laid to rest in the home ground.” (2010: 213, *cf.* Hone and de la Harpe, 2003). Some families will take some of the soil that is covering the grave and put in a container to be kept at home.

The ritual of bringing back the deceased highlights the African concept of life. Keya has observed that, “African people acknowledge a three-tier world. The world was brought into being by God. God, who is believed to have assistants, created human beings to occupy the physical world. “Human beings depart: the physical world through death to join the world of the ancestors” (2010:18). As Keya notes, “there is a continuation communion between these worlds especially between those who are alive in the body and those who exist among the departed”. Beyers’ and Mphahlele write that, “a belief in ancestors stands central in the African traditional thought and an essential pillar of religion practiced in Africa” (HTS Volume 65 no.1 cf Stinton 2004:133-134). Although this thesis is not about the ancestors, the researcher will briefly explain who are the ancestors, what their function is and the ritual to the ancestors.

### **3.15. What is an ancestor?**

Africa is not the only continent, “where cultures have the religious practice of venerating and worshipping of ancestors” (Beyers’ and Mphahlele HTS Vol. 65 no 1 cf. Bae 2007:1).

Keya has observed that, “Africans believe that the place of the dead in the family is not diminished by death. In fact, it is believed that they maintain more or less the same status they had in life” (2007:67). Motlhabi notes that, “the ancestors in the African Traditional Religion, for their part, are believed to influence the course of life on earth for the good or evil” (2008:36). Bae further notes that, “the concept of ancestral involvement in everyday life is more than a story or a myth” (2007:23).

In most societies, “where the belief in ancestors is common, a record of the people who have lived and died is kept in the living members of the community” (Bae 2007:23).

### 3.15.1. Natural relationship

The natural relationship between the ancestors and earthly descendants is usually that of a parent and offspring (Beyers' and Mphahlele HTS Vol. 65. No 1). Bae is of the view that, "it has to be someone who has lived, procreated and died" (2007:24 *cf.* Whitley 2002:121). The ancestors receive recognition insofar as their descendants exist and are designated as such. This view that ancestors should have an off spring, in a way, excludes those family members who did not have children before they die. The researcher has, however, seen families including those who did not have children as part of ancestors. Among the "*Pondo* people, only the deceased men, who have descendants, are considered ancestors" (a view expressed by Rev Madala at a lecture (unpublished) on the 25<sup>th</sup> October 2011). This view, according to the researcher, creates a problem of discrimination against faithful women and mothers who raised children, grandchildren and in some cases, great grandchildren in the family and community.

### 3.15.2. Ancestors are remembered by those left behind

Bae cites a recent definition of ancestors, as used by Bloch (1996:43) by stating that "the term ancestor is used in anthropology to designate those forebears who are remembered". (2007:25). Of course, "ancestors need not be invoked by their names and remembered as individuals, they may be conceived of as part of a 'collective', but the important part is that they are remembered" (Bae 2007:25). Among the Abaluyia, "children are often named after deceased relatives, ensuring that the relative is remembered and somehow survives through the child" (Keya 2007:54, *cf.* Wakala & LeMarquand 2001:355). Keya observes that, "the more important and morally upright the relatives were, the more the amount of children will be named after them. This privilege is thus not given to the outcast such as sorcerers and

witches, one who dies by suicide, a murderer or a notorious thief” (Keya 2007:54). Gehman talks about this group, saying that “women, children, unimportant men, unmarried men, those who died without children, as well as young adults less than eighteen years of age, are not likely to become ancestors” (1999:12-13).

In such cases, the living would like to forget the deceased as quickly as possible. It is believed among the Batswana people that if you name the children after these outcasts, they may imitate the way they lived and become a threat to social order. That is why the Batswana people have a saying; *‘Ina lebe seromo’*. Loosely translated it means there is power in naming. Keya says on the other hand, “the good are named after in order to preserve their memory and their good acts” (2007:54, cf. Malusu 1978:2-3; Wakala & LeMarquand 2001:355). Ancestors are considered to be good models for human behavior. According to Beyers’ & Mphahlele, “their acts of virtue are seen as good examples of proper life. By their way of living they educate social behavior” (HTS Vol. 65. No.1). Not all the living has the privilege of becoming ancestors. Beyers’ & Mphahlele mention two conditions as identified by Sarpong (1996, as cited by Stinton 2004:134-135):

- One must pass through all stages of life to attain adulthood, which is only considered to arrive once you have children and so has transmitted life.
- One must die a natural death. Death by accident, suicide, unclean disease or in child birth is not considered a good death.
- Added to this are the people who were not born properly: “Dead or still born children, miscarriages and abortions are generally conceptually distinguished from ancestors” (Bae 2007: 26 cf. Hardache 1992:264).

It would be interesting to research situations where a person in good standing dies due to an accident that is a result of road rage. Or what about a spouse who dies because of HIV/Aids

because of the infidelity of his or her partner? Would such persons still be considered as ancestors or would circumstances leading to their death disqualify them from becoming ancestors? The scope of this thesis does not make provision for such a discussion. The researcher's view is that, it should not be about how people die, what should be considered is how they lived within the community.

### **3.15.3. Functions of ancestors**

Ancestors are those from whom the living can derive some benefit and must be people of effect, means and importance or status. Bae is of the view that, "this should be linked to the function and identity of ancestors" (2007:26).

The role of ancestors is closely linked to that of their identity. As being a living part of the community and is often the head or elder, they play a role as the representatives of the social law and tradition, and are construed to be indispensable to uphold the harmony and order within their society. Mbiti refers to "the functions of ancestors as guardians of family affairs, traditions, ethics and activities" (1989:85). Bae reinforces the thought that this role allows them to be benefactors of the welfare to the obedient and the harmonious societies or wrath to those who create disharmony and imbalances. As seen in their identity, being linked to the Supreme Being, ancestors also play a role as intermediaries or mediators between God and their descendants.

### **3.15.4. Supernatural or sacred status**

After death, "a dead person gets access to the mysterious force of nature and in this respect the person is clothed with 'spiritual' power" (Mbiti 1971:137). Keya is of the view that, "as elders, the ancestors retain their high status and roles. He explains further that it is believed that their potency increases in death" (2007:67 *cf.* FAM.s.a:6). Motlhabi says that, "the

researcherity the ancestors have, is believed to have been delegated by God” (2008:38). The spirit of ancestors is “not merely impersonal powers reigning over some holy domain. Although they may use their powers for the good of the living, this power is often shown in bringing illness or the bad fortune” (Keya 2007:67). As Beyers’ and Mphahlele observe, “they are feared and adored” (HTS Vol.65 no 1).

A question that arises for the researcher is; how can an ancestor who died loving his or her family bring illness and misfortunes to his or her descendants? And also; why should the family suddenly fear their ancestors whom they did not when they were still alive? Beyers’ and Mphahlele explain that; “the same ancestors can bestow gifts of good fortune to the family” (HTS Vol. 65.No.1). The researcher’s view is that misfortunes happen in life because they do. The researcher does not believe that loving and caring ancestors can bring about punishment to the living and cause them to suffer.

### **3.16. Mediation**

From the hierarchical super position to humans, ancestors are inferior to God and act as mediators between God and human kind.

In the African belief system, “the notion of a Supreme Being exists” (Bae 2007:28; Parrinder 1976:24). African people do not believe in many Gods. Olowola has observed that, “in the past there were those of the West who categorically maintained that Africans have no concept whatsoever of God. He is also of the opinion that Africans are deeply religious has been everywhere” (1993:11). According to Olowola, many scholars now recognize that a concept of God as Supreme Being and Creator is virtually universal in traditional Africa (1993:11).

Often God is considered, “to be remote that people do not pray to God regularly. God is also often believed to be far from the actions and lives of the living” (Bae 2007:28). According to Motlhabi, “the African people believe that God may not be approached with trivial lightly or ‘bothered with trivialities’” (2008:36). This aspect of an ‘impersonal God’ “is the reason in many cases why ancestors have a high position and it is a primary reason for the identity of ancestors that of intermediaries and mediators” (Bae 2007:28).

Consequently, the common belief is held that the ancestors are “...the closest links that men have with the spirit world” (Mbiti 1969:83). In the state in which the ancestors exist as spirits, they are believed to be god-like and implicitly able to communicate with God.

The living-dead are, as Mbiti has observed, “in a sense, nearer to God than are ordinary people, since they can assemble before God or be sent by God, which is something that people do not experience” (1971:137). During the prayers, the living prays by reciting the names of all their ancestors. This list reaches as far back as the names can be remembered, and therefore, through the chain of ancestors, their prayer reaches God. Bae has noted that, “this ritual is done most by senior elders in the family. It is believed that they have direct access to the spirit world and are well associated with prayer” (2007:28). Just as a “chief is approached through intermediary, so prayer may go to God through ancestral spirits” (Parrinder 1969:69).

The researcher was raised in an African family and his grandparents and parents believe in African culture. One thing that the researcher was taught and grew up believing is that Jesus Christ is the only mediator between the living and God. The researcher still holds that view. The researcher believes that his ancestors cannot play the role of mediator; which they did not when they were still alive.

### 3.17. Guardian of Tradition

It would seem as if “ancestors are the social conscience of a community” (Beyers & Mphahlele (HTS Vol.65. No.1). Mbiti has the defining words concerning the identity of the ancestors:

They are the guardians of the family affairs, traditions, ethics and activities. Offense in these matters was ultimately an offense against the fore fathers, who in that capacity, acts as the invisible police of the family and communities (1969:83). Bae is of the view that ancestors being persons and examples of moral superiority and mediating the desire of the Supreme Being, the ancestors are the representative of law and order (2007:29). Beyer and Mphahlele explain that; the ancestors set an example by, “ensuring a harmonious community where everybody knows and understands their place and function” (HTS vol.65. No.1). Mbiti argues that, “the norms and moral values given by the ancestors assist individuals and the community to live proper life. The social structure of the extended family is maintained. In this way ancestors are guardians of tradition” (Mbiti 1989: 85). Bae also agrees that, “offenses committed against their orders result in punishment, and often occurrences of misfortune, illness or death is read as coming from the anger of the ancestors” (2007:29). Anger is brought upon by “misconduct by the person or the family, disobedience which is seen to be, questions their researcherity” (Keya 2007:29 cf. Triebel 2002:189).

It has been the researcher’s experience that African people, generally, like to have everything to stay in balance. Bae has observed that, “If something is moved the balance is upset and the whole network is affected. If the balance is disturbed at one point, everyone will be affected” (2007:29). The ancestors are incorporated into a very sensitive network of relationships comprising a family and its ancestors, another family and their ancestors, the clan and its ancestors and even other clans together with their ancestors. (Bae 2007:29).

The African people, “even if they are Christians, some of them will consult the diviners or sorcerers to find out what causes disharmony in their lives. Most of the time the sorcerers will say it is because the ancestors are not happy. These trained professionals will then consult the dead on behalf of the family to find out what is causing misfortunes. After that he or she will give instructions of what needs to be done. Traditionally, ritual sacrifice would be performed to appease the ancestors from time to time” (Keya 2010:67 & Bae 2007:29)).

The researcher’s view is that it should not be the ancestors who are the guardians of the tradition. The researcher believes that the best way to do so is by the living descendants following the examples and values set by the ancestors.

### **3.18. ‘Ancestors’ ritual in South Africa**

Beyers’ and Mphahlele, after their research, have observed that, “there are many ways in which the acknowledgement of the existence of the deceased are expressed. As a result, this phenomenon will take on different forms among ethnic group in Africa” (HTS Vol. 65 No.1). Hammond-Tooke describes, “The constitution of the Black South Africa society as consisting of four major groups based on the language and culture, namely the Nguni, Sotho, Venda and Tsonga.” Hammond-Tooke further identifies, “sub-groupings within each of these four major groups, e.g. the Zulu, Pondo and Xhosa within the Nguni group and the Northern and Southern Sotho and Tswana within the Sotho group” ( 1994:2-3). Bae is of the view that, “arriving at a general description of ancestor ritual in South Africa is fairly complex since the practices vary from cultural group, area and traditional customs” (2007: 57).

The ritual for the spirit of for the departed is called the ritual for “those who are below” (*umzebenzi wa baphantsi*).The researcher has observed that people are starting to call this

ritual with a different name and especially in the urban areas. The younger generation and elite adults prefer to call it thanksgiving, not ritual for “those who are below”. Some families have the tradition of observing this ritual every year and others maybe after the family has consulted the diviner (*isangoma*).

The ritual for the ancestor includes sacrifice and is accompanied by the slaughtering of a cow. Bae (2007: 58-59) cites the case study by Chidester, which deals with the practice of the ancestor rituals among the Xhosa speaking people of the Eastern Cape. Chidester points out that, “it is believed that bellowing of the sacrificial animals is crucial since it is believed to open up the communication with the ancestors”. For a detailed description, see Theron (1996: 97-116). Bae has also noted that, “although there are differences in terms of social organizations, which has a bearing on the belief in ancestors between groups, there is also common ground in the general function and significance of ancestors” (2007:40).

### **3.19. Summary**

The researcher is of the view that in order to understand African funeral rites and rituals, there is a need to understand the African paradigm about life. It has been the researcher’s experience that when discussing excessive funeral expenditure; there is a lack of asking the question why. This has led the researcher to conduct a research on the reason poor people would spend excessively for funerals because this leads to poverty.

#### **3.19.1 African understanding of life**

To conclude this initial understanding of African funeral rites, it is important to understand that, “Africans have a circular understanding of time” (Mbiti 1989:17). Life is the rhythmic progression through certain stages of life. Beyers and Mphahlele state that, “all humans are subject to these phases. Birth through puberty to adulthood and old age and even on to death, are all stages through which all humans pass” (HTS Vol.65 No.1). This is further accentuated by the African people’s belief that, “life is sacred and it cannot be destroyed. In this sense life is both physical and spiritual” (Keya 2010:75).

### **3.19.2. Ancestors as Companions**

It has been highlighted by the researchers (Mbiti 1971, Keya 2007, Bae 2010) that, “central to the African mindset is the belief that people who experience biological death do not automatically leave the community of the living. African people are extremely sensitive to the existence of ancestors and that they remain near the community though in the spirit”

To assist the successful completion of life, “the ancestors act as guides on this journey. There are rites to be performed to initiate one into the next phase at the onset of every stage of life” (Beyers and Mphahlele HTS Vol.65 No.1). In some families, after birth, the child will be taken to the grave to be presented and welcome in the family by the ancestors. For each rite of passage observed, Africans will mostly, if not always, slaughter an animal as a sacrifice to invite and request the blessings of the ancestors.

### **3.19.3. Rituals for meaning and healing**

It is important within the African community, “to maintain the proper burial rituals in order to maintain a good relationship between the living and the departed. In order for Africans to be able them to come to terms with the agonies, sorrows and disruptions caused by death; they perform rituals practices,” (Mbiti 1991: 122). Similarly, “in African traditional societies the

purpose of therapy is about to bring individual ritual purity” (Keya 2010:75 cf. Berinyuu 1989:63). Keya states that, “rituals are not only a source of solace and fullness, but African people find meaning and thus come to terms with the mysteries of life” (Keya 2010:77). Kirisiwa observes, “There is a belief that without a ritual performance, a person would not experience healing” (2002:30). The researcher’s view is that it is only natural that the people, whose life is marked by ritual from birth to death, should find meaning and satisfaction in life through the performance of rituals. It was also the researcher’s view that among most people, life is marked by rituals from birth to death.

Masango, during a lecture, commented that, “rituals are primarily for the bereaved”. He further remarked that, “it is important to know that rituals confirm that a person has received the necessary attention and healing”. The researcher agrees with Masango when he stated that, “rituals are good as long as they bring Glory to God and I would add, edify God’s people”. (Lecture unpublished 24<sup>th</sup> October 2011 Alexander, Johannesburg)

#### **3.19.4. Community support**

The community plays a central role in the support of the bereaved among African people. Keya has observed that, “the community mysteriously includes the living, the dead and the unborn” (2010:76). The family and extended family or community, is a crucial component in the bereavement and healing, among African people. Keya has come to the conclusion that, “the curative role of the extended family members or community has to be upheld” (2010:77).

#### **3.20. Preliminary conclusion**

In the literature review in this Chapter, it is clear that there are reasons that may lead poor people to spend excessively for funerals. Within African communities, the bereaved person's wishing to remember their beloved once, in one way or the other. The bereaved are also concerned about the future of the departed and will want to make sure that they are resting in peace.

If the bereaved follow the proper burial rites, they are assured to receive protection against threats of death, ailments, loss and misfortunes. Keya (cf. Anderson 1977:100) observes that African rituals often deal with people's fears and worries about every day challenges and including misfortunes that are caused by the living ancestors. It is the researcher's view that, from the literature review, fear of the ancestors might be the driving force for excessive expenditure.

The following Chapter will deal with interviews to get responses for reasons why poor people spend excessively for funerals; bearing mind that South Africa is exposed to serious economic challenges.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

## DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

### 4. Introduction

The purpose of Chapter Three was to review the literature that presented researcheritative scholarship on the research problem of why people in black townships spend a lot of money on funerals.

In this Chapter, the researcher presents and discusses the following;

- ❖ Scope of the research,
- ❖ Statements of limitations and de-limitations,
- ❖ Data collected, responses, reflections and
- ❖ Analysis of target population.

Before commenting further on the research design and methodology that was followed in order to investigate the problem of excessive funeral expenditure, it would be worthwhile to review the main research question and the aims, to acquire a deeper understanding. They are the following;

- ✓ Why do people spend a lot of money on funerals?
- ✓ The aim of this research is to establish and create a model for clergy

The research question is rooted in a search for a new way to remain faithful to Christian tradition and maintain respect for culture, as the African clergy, in a changing society. The Clergy require a deeper understanding of personal, social and cultural norms that influence how people in the townships observe funeral rites. The aim of the research is to establish

factors that lead people, who live in the black townships, to excessive expenditure on funerals and to create a model that will help the clergy and lay ministers to journey with families with the view to help them bury their loved ones with dignity; without being left financially burdened.

#### **4.1. The scope of the study**

In order to achieve good results within the time frame work of the study, an empirical field research was done. Johan Mouton describes field research as that part of the research process that involves going into the field. He further explains the term “fieldwork” as sometimes referring to the “doing” stages of research, presumably to signify that you have left your study or the library and entered into the field, whether it is a laboratory, natural setting, archives or whatever is dictated by the research design (2001:98). The researcher went to both rural and urban areas to discover the extent in which African culture influences families in the preparation and conducting of funerals.

The researcher tried to define the term ‘African funeral rite’ in the South African context, bearing in mind the fact that our country is exposed to a radical period of cultural, economic and political change. Most of the people who live in rural and urban areas are unemployed. It is a general trend in South Africa, as found in a research by the Human Science Research Council (*Centre for poverty and unemployment and growth*) Charles Meth 2008, [Accessed 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2011]. While there are a number of issues that were positive towards the research process, there were a number of challenges that the researcher had to deal with that made it hard to get information. As a result these limitations might have influenced the outcome of the research.

## **4.2. Statement of limitation**

### **4.2.1. Social desirability effects**

Mouton refers to “this response as subjects trying to impress the interviewer’ (2001:107). Stern has made an observation that, “people sometimes tell the interviewer what they think they should say” (1979:65). He continues to say that, “when people are asked about their values, many tend to report what are the culturally acceptable values, even when they do not hold them. People may believe the interviewer to be judging their personal inadequacy and to make them feel inferior” (Stern1979:65). At the same time, this was consistent across areas as the same interviewer conducted the same interviews. There was a time during the research process that the researcher felt that people were trying to please him by saying what they wanted the researcher to hear. The researcher thought that this was due to the unequal nature of the relationship between the researcher, who is a priest in the Anglican Church and the co-researchers.

### **4.2.2. Sensitive or threatening questions**

Death, in any society, is a sensitive issue, and within the African society, customs and procedures give expression to such emotions, in addition to marking the respect; in which the dead are held.

As mentioned in Chapter three, pre and post death activities are of vital importance because there is more that people believe is involved than a disposal of the body. (Mbiti 1991:119) The researcher became aware during the interviews that the issue of excessive expenditure was sensitive as the questions were about a private part of family life. Mouton has observed that, “threatening or sensitive questions which relate to private behavior may lead to non-

response or sometimes refusal to participate” (2001:104). As a way of encouraging them to speak openly, the researcher shared his own struggle of dealing with these issues.

The interviews took place voluntarily and without any coercion, whatsoever. The researcher did explain the background of the study to the interviewees and the importance thereof. The researcher indicated that the intention of the study was not only to find out how much people spend for funerals, but also to find out why they are spending beyond their means. This is illustrated by Kubeka that, “any instrument created for study should be used as reference point when contemplating any action in the future” (2010:80).

#### **4.2.3. A researcher or a therapist?**

While the research was proceeding, the researcher felt that the researcher’s presence was creating an opportunity for people to bring out unresolved issues relating to their families after the funerals. For some, “Being there” was the expression of caring (Grabb 2005:31). In the interviews, the prevalent issue that came out was opposing views on cremation; where the deceased expressed the desire to be cremated and the family decided to go against their will. The following story was shared by an interviewee in the group:

*Mrs. Kapatsile (not her real name) has been married with her husband for 40 years. They moved from their home town and have been living in Johannesburg for 30 years. As a couple, they agreed that they both wish to be cremated and that they wished to be buried two days after they have died. They then informed the family back home. After Mr. Kapatsile died; the wife and children followed the wishes of the deceased. Family members from his home town arrived after three days and found that he had been cremated. Until today, the families of Mr. Kapatsile believe that she had bewitched him that is why she could not wait for them because she and her children are the ones who killed him.*

Mrs. Kapatsile and the children still feel rejected and isolated by the family because they are regarded as individuals who have violated family standards and do not live out the moral standards that are set by the clan. This has caused feelings of guilt in Mrs. Kapatsile and her children. This guilt that “comes as a result of society teachings, expectations and demands”... (Coleman 1982:11) “Most of us have an inbuilt concept of right and wrong and if we trespass according to that inbuilt concept then we feel guilt” (Coleman 1982:11). If she and her children could have gone against the deceased wishes, they would not be haunted by guilt.

It would have cost the family more money for the body of the deceased to stay longer in the mortuary. The family would be expected to feed people who bring prayers and condolences; including extended family members who would normally come days before the funeral.

#### **4.2.4. Informal conversations**

Since the researcher started with the research, and because of his position in the church and personal and professional relationship, it was known that the researcher is dealing with the subject of funerals; the researcher has had a lot of informal conversation on the topic of the research. Although this was good, the researcher felt that, at times, during those conversations, he may have used leading questions. These are; “Questions where the respondent is being led or influenced to give a certain response through the wording of the question.” (Mouton 2001:103 cf. Babbie 1998:152). The challenge for the researcher is not to use the results of these informal conversations as evidence to support the hypothesis, in spite of the best intentions. The results of these conversations might unintentionally influence the findings therefore, distortion is possible, but minimized care was taken to eliminate responses to the leading question from the onset.

### **4.3. Statement Delimitation**

#### **4.3.1. Communication (Language and culture)**

The researcher is able to speak a couple of languages (Setswana, Isi Xhosa, and Sesotho) which made it possible to conduct the interviews in the languages that are spoken in the areas where they took place, without needing an interpreter. Over the time, the researcher has been exposed to different parishes with parishioners of different cultures within the diocese and other denomination. Although the questionnaire was not prepared to meet the cross cultural needs, however, the researcher was able to deal with the cross cultural issues. Mouton (cf. Retief 1988) says, “Instruments need to be developed in such a way that they become easily applicable in a particular context” (2001:102). The researcher agrees with Mouton because it would not be easy to use an instrument which was developed elsewhere in a multicultural and multi-ethnic society such as South Africa.

It was also so very interesting to note that all the interviews that the researcher conducted with the young people were done in English and not in one of the spoken African languages.

#### **4.3.2. Readiness and openness**

The involvement of the researcher within the church and community, as a priest, helped to encourage interaction and another contributing factor was that, letters of request for interview were sent long in advance. The researcher believes that advance notification made people relax and to be ready to share information. In other interviews, it became clear that people were keen to share their stories within a space where they felt accepted and safe. Co-researchers have been yearning to meet someone they could share their stories. Rakuba has made an observation that in interviews, people need someone they could trust to off load their frustration. (2012: accessed on the 23 02 2012). The researcher agrees with John Kubeka that

stories are both an inevitable, as well as, an inseparable part of an African people. (2010:111). On the contrary, in terms of the researcher's experience through working in a parish which predominantly consists of parishioners of western culture, the practice of sharing stories is not prevalent.

#### **4.4. The analysis of the target population and the questionnaire**

##### **4.4.1. The target population**

There were four families interviewed in the North West (Ramatlabama). The researcher used his family that is based there to organize the interviews. The researcher sent the questionnaires through a contact family member and a letter of consent through post, to be read and signed (in the presence of the researcher), to explain the purpose of the survey and assurance of anonymity and confidentiality. The researcher interviewed a widow, whose husband died recently. The husband was the researcher's cousin. Seven families were interviewed in Soweto. The researcher telephoned each family to make an appointment. A questionnaire and a letter of consent were sent to families that had access to email. Other families received these documents through the post.

After interviewing twelve families, the study was expanded to include groups within the churches. Three mothers' union groups and one men's group were targeted in Anglican parishes of Alexandra and Soweto. The researcher spoke, personally, to the priests in charge and once they agreed; a formal letter followed, including a letter of consent and a questionnaire. The priests were cooperative and had prepared these groups, well in advance. The researcher interviewed a mixed group of workers in Mafikeng; including the main organizer of the burial society and social club in the Department of Tourism.

In Soweto and Alexandra, two groups of young people, ranging between the ages of 16-25, were interviewed to get a sense of their thoughts concerning the issue of excessive funeral expenditure. Another reason was that, during the interviews, parents were critical due to lack of the youth's understanding of African funeral rites. The young people spoke freely and even gave the researcher more time, than required, to tell their stories. The seven clergy that were interviewed were willing and were able to offer an average of one hour of their busy schedule. Five interviews were conducted face to face at an agreed restaurant, coffee shop or at the interviewee's church office.

The researcher explained over the telephone when making an appointment, the purpose of the interview and each respondent was assured confidentiality. Each telephone conversation was followed by an email with an attachment of the consent letter and questionnaire. The two telephone interviews were done with the other priests. The researcher emailed them a questionnaire and consent letter before and requested for the convenient time for the interview. It was not the researcher's original plan to do telephone interviews. The reality with the two priests was that, it was difficult to get them because of work commitments.

The researcher's aim was to at least interview two bishops. The reason for it was to get a sense of what the Church thinks of excessive funeral expenditure in black townships. The researcher met with Bishop Brian Germond of the Diocese of Johannesburg who also provided the researcher with a Diocesan pastoral response to the problem of excessive funeral expenditure (See Appendix H). The researcher also wrote a letter to the Bishop of Bloemfontein, requesting a Diocesan response to the problem, which he kindly provided. (See Appendix K)

#### **4.4.2. The questionnaires**

The questionnaire had been developed and ministered in such a way that it addressed the major topics of the research. This was intended to test the literature research results against personal views of those interviewed. Hence, the researcher preferred to use the questionnaire as a measuring instrument. As the project proceeded, it became apparent that a qualitative approach rather than quantitative is more appropriate to the type of research that was being conducted. The researcher was able to facilitate narrative telling and not interfere with the participants responses and also allow the respondents to make sense of their experiences.

#### **4.4.3. Interviews**

In each interview, the researcher started by explaining, again, the purpose of the interview and also assured anonymity in the recording of their responses. The researcher felt that it was important to read the content of the consent letter in order to comply with the research ethical requirement. Once they had signed it, the researcher then started the interview (See Appendix Consent letter). In each case, the researcher started by sharing his own story on how he had to deal with three deaths in his family; within a space of two months. This allowed the interviewees to unpack their own stories.

Different approaches were used in interviews as the environment dictated. For the priests, the researcher used semi-structured interview and was allowed to make notes. The researcher used the unstructured interview format for families and groups. This method helped the researcher, in other instances, for co-researchers to raise novel issues. This is illustrated by Bernard, “in explaining unstructured interviews that they are based on a clear plan to get people to open up and let them express themselves in their own terms” (1995:209). The researcher did not take notes during the interview so as to let the conversation flow. The researcher did the recording immediately thereafter and made notes. Mouton agrees that, “this

discipline will help the researcher to keep track of his or her field of work as a form of quality control” (2001:107).

#### **4.5. Questions and response to the survey**

Unless otherwise stated, all observations given here refer to the researcher’s study with the groups.

##### **4.5.1. Questionnaire for families**

###### **4.5.1.1. How many are there in the family?**

- 12 families 57
- 31 Adults
- 26 school going children
- 5 Average per family
- 3 Average adult per family
- 5 Average children per family

###### **4.5.1.2. How many are employed?**

- Twelve Adults employed (average 2.5 employed per family)
- 9 Adults receive government social grants (average of 3 per family receive a state social Grant)
- 4 out of 9 out of the whole family live only on a state Social Grant

The adult population in these families is thirty one. This means nineteen had no income at all. Twenty six are all school going children. The picture presented by these figures is of families that are struggling to meet their daily needs. If this is the case, how can a family justify excessive expenditure for a funeral?

###### **4.5.1.3 When last did you have the funeral?**

During the 1980's many South Africans spent the greater part of their weekends at funerals. As we move into the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, this pattern is re-emerging, although for entirely different reasons (Ntuli 2000: vii [accessed 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2012]). Many families attend funerals every weekend; including funerals of close family members and also extended family members. This may involve travelling to attend them This is because of the fact that every South African is increasingly becoming intimate with the effects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and as with most preventable diseases, it is most vulnerable and most poor communities whose lives are mostly adversely affected ( Ntuli 2000:vii [accessed 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2012]).

#### **4.5.1.4. Did you have challenges in preparing for funeral?**

The main challenge that most of families experienced was in covering costs for the funeral. There were also, in most of the families, disagreements on what kind of funerals to have, as well as disagreements regarding costs whether to have an expensive funeral or one within the family's means.

#### **4.5.1.5. Did you manage to cover cost?**

- 2 families could afford to cover the costs.
- 8 relied on the contributions from extended family, the community or in taking a loan or money claimed from a burial society or burial insurance.
- 2 families could not pay and were helped by funerals undertakers, church and the community.

#### **4.5.1.6. What is your understanding of an African funeral?**

One word that summarizes the response of co-researchers is traditional. The tenets of an African funeral are simplicity, respect and observation of relevant rituals.

#### 4.6. Analysis of costs

Five families were prepared to share the costs of a family funeral with the researcher. The five families spend a minimum of R31, 700 on average for Funeral undertaker only. (See appendix M) Three of the five hired a catering company with a minimum labor cost of R5.000 (See appendix O) Most, if not all, African families, slaughter cattle with a minimum cost of R6, 000 for ritual purposes and feeding of mourners. It means, therefore, that five families spend more than R43, 000 on average. Here is the list of costs of the 5 families; from the lowest to the highest.

1. R23, 500 (excluding cattle, tents, food etc.)
2. R25, 000 (excluding, cattle, tents, food buses, etc.)
3. R36, 000 ( excluding catering)
4. R45, 000 (excluding three cattle, buses, etc.)
5. R60,000 ( excluding catering, marquee and decoration)

The researcher had the experience that, no funeral undertaker can offer a service for less than R6, 000. This means that all the families that were interviewed, on average, have spent more than R12, 000 excluding groceries, buses (minimum R1, 000 each) and tents with a minimum of R450, 00 for chairs and public address system, to be used at the graveside and decorations. All the figures above, exclude another expense relating to a ritual to bring the deceased back home. In most families cattle is slaughtered for this ritual.

According to Forde, between 2005 and 2006, the poorest 20% of South Africa's population lived off 1.4 % of available income. During the same period, 49% of African households were earning less than R20, 000 a year, according to Hein Marais in *South Africa Pushed to the limit* (2011:241). This is the group of people are most likely to be paying exorbitant

funerals costs, although it is clearly well beyond their means. Most of the economy is still not in the hands of blacks. That is why, as alluded to by Forde, “the government aim was to have 25% of the economy in the hands of blacks as the bulk of the economy is still skewed in favor of white ownership” (2011:241).

The question remains that: why do the families in the townships and rural areas spend excessively for funerals?

It is the researcher’s personal observation that within in African communities, orphans are usually placed under the care of extended families. Of the families that the researcher interviewed, 22 of the 57 people are children and 13 of those are orphans. The AIDS epidemic and surrounding poverty are generating a context where number of children are becoming vulnerable (HSRC 2004 *Defining Orphaned and Vulnerable Children*). In this harsh economic situation, it seems counterintuitive for families to spend excessive amount of money on funerals when they could be caring for and educating the children that are left behind. In my interviews, two children dropped out of matric studies and two others had to leave university due to lack of funds, following the death of a family member. In 2005, 70% of the families higher education leavers (drop outs) surveyed were in low category ‘low economic status’. Black families were particularly poor (with parents and guardians earning as little as R1, 600 or less a month in most cases. Poverty and dropout have also been identified as a critical factor among grade twelve learners, in another study. (HSRC 2005 *Students poverty in higher education: the impact of higher education dropouts on poverty*).

The general answer to the question of why they spend excessively was, “We have to follow the African traditional rites”. Three families said that it was the right thing to do as a way of showing love and saying farewell to the deceased, and did not see anything wrong with it.

## **4.7. Analysis of group interviews**

For group interviews, the researchers asked families to justify excessive spending on funerals. The following reasons were common among the three women's and one men's group.

### **4.7.1. Impressing neighbors**

Since the start of the study, the researcher has come to a conclusion that funerals in the townships are a platform for families to show who they are. Seeco says, "At funerals in black African communities, it is becoming common for arrangements to include liquor, and the hiring of DJ and music equipment to provide entertainment for mourners" (2010:222). Seeco speaks of an occasion that is hosted by families after the burial called '*Wie sien ons*' means "Who sees us?". (2010:222). Most families take funerals as an occasion to say "Who sees us?" Most of families will make sure that at the end of the obituary, clan praise is written and also do that just before the deceased is lowered into the grave. According to the co-researchers in the groups, there is a dominant question in the minds of families during preparations; "What will colleagues, friends, fellow church members and the community, say and think of us if we don't prepare food and bury our loved one with a cheap coffin?"

### **4.7.2. Family expectation**

When death occurs, the black African family normally waits for extended family members to arrive. It is important that the head of the family should have an input in the preparations to make sure that things are done accordingly. Most of the co-researchers have told the researcher that, most of heads of families are from rural areas and also don't understand the economics of city life and that they tend to make unnecessary demands that would cause them to spend more. The researcher had an experience where the head of the family came a

day before the funeral and manipulated family to buy a sheep to be slaughtered as it is an important ritual for his father to let him rest in peace. The researcher had to devise some means to buy it. In the case of death of a husband, the widow is often under pressure of family expectation; as if she does not provide an adequate funeral, she would be considered the killer of her husband.

#### **4.7.3. HIV/AIDS pandemic and burial society**

It has come to the attention of the researcher that people who are suffering from HIV/AIDS have become a business opportunity. The researcher had heard stories that there are family members who, once they get to know that a member is HIV positive or has AIDS, would take a burial insurance for the sick person. There is a general trend that people, who do so, don't normally spend the money for that purpose but on themselves.

Seeco refers to a burial society where a group contributes money monthly to a common pool on the basis that it provides support or insurance for the burial of a member or relative of the member (2010:223). Quite a number of elderly women in the group mentioned to the researcher said that they had joined more than three burial societies as a way to have more money when death occurs. The problem with this practice is that, those families who survive on the state social grant, end up having very little to live on. The impression that the researcher had after interviews was that most of people were worried about the day they die rather than their current quality of life.

#### **4.7.4. Food**

Preparing and providing food for mourners by families is a common practice in black African communities. The researcher has heard stories of families who had to throw away food because it got rotten. In other instances, it is because people of “the community would not eat because it is traditionally an indication to that family that they have not participated in the funerals within the community” (Mbiti1991:121).

The researcher decided to follow up on wasting of food by having a telephone interview with a caterer, to establish the reasons for it. The reason that was given by Mackenzie Caterers was that families, often, over estimate the number of people who might attend. The other reason is simply because the food might not be well cooked (*Telephone interview 29 September 2012*). There was a general consensus among the interviewed groups of women, men and young people group that it was not necessary to have excessive funeral expenditure; considering the economic climate the people find themselves in the African black townships. The parents, in the end, were also blaming their employed children as the ones who spend excessively because they say they can afford it. That is why the researcher will now share the stories of young people about their purpose for attending funerals.

#### **4.8. Youth responses**

##### **4.8.1 Fashion**

The interview that the researcher had with the young was more on listening to their stories. The researcher had established that for young people, funerals, especially of the black South Africans, are turned into social events. Manenzhe had made an observation that, “funerals have become social events dominated by displays of new cars and the latest fashion in clothing” (2007:1).When there is a funeral, “some young people will go out of their way to

pressurize parents to buy them new clothes of well-known labels. Young people in a sense dress for their peers and to a lesser extent for themselves” (Seeco 2010:341).

#### **4.8.2. Friends and networking**

For the youth, attending a funeral is not primarily to mourn with families but to meet friends and make new ones (Holderness 1997:15). It is the researcher’s observation, through the involvement in youth ministry, that most teenagers need at least one friend, to whom they can confide their concerns or problems.

As the researcher alluded to above, entertainment after funeral has become a common part of the arrangements. This includes liquor, DJ and/or music equipment to provide entertainment to the mourners. “It is a common practice for mourners (particularly the young people) to keep a change of clothing in their cars after funerals” (Seeco 2010:222). According to the youth that the researcher interviewed, this part on the day of funeral is very attractive. This occasion is commonly known as “after tears”.

#### **4.8.3. Reflection**

During the conversation, it has become apparent to the researcher that most of the young people have very little knowledge of what a traditional African funeral is. They have seen rituals being observed at home with little or no explanation from the elders. There was a plea from the youth for parents to begin a dialogue that will lead to a better understanding of some of African traditional practices, in general, but funerals, in particular. The youth, according to this group, are aware of social pressures and expectations.

#### **4.9. Funeral undertakers**

The researcher has joined the clergy who have been criticizing funeral undertakers for sensationalizing the ritual of burial. It has also been the researcher's perception that, "undertakers are making a profit out of what, in the past, used to be a neighborly act" (Nel 2002:41 cf. Cahill 1995; Thompson 1991). In order to examine the truth behind the preconception, the researcher interviewed two funeral undertakers.

According to the interview, "funeral undertakers are aware of the accusation that they are taking advantage of families who have to make difficult financial decisions during periods of great emotional distress" (Nel 2002:41). The funeral directors gave the researchers a brief history of where the industry comes from. According to them, it has become more a business of "supplying the demand". It is families that, "want funerals to be turned into a less somber affair through measures like replacement of the formal black cars with different colors and they choose colorful flower arrangements because they think it will brighten the occasion" (Nel 2002:44 cf. Pine 1975).

As a follow through of the interview, the researcher asked for permission to be at the funeral parlor for three hours to observe families as they come to arrange for a burial. After half an hour of the researcher being there, the family of the deceased arrived to report death and make arrangements for funeral. This is what the researcher observed.

*The funeral director explained to them what the procedure is and the different packages they have starting from the lowest. According to the insurance policy of the deceased they could only spend R15, 000. He showed them the first showroom with cheaper coffins. The researcher could see from the expression on their faces that they were not impressed by the quality of the coffins. They then requested to be taken to the other show room with caskets. It was the family that made a decision to spend R25, 000. The family then went to choose the kind of cars they want. They chose the white color because they believed it would brighten*

*the occasion. After the transaction was concluded, the researcher resisted the temptation to interview the family as that would have been considered disrespectful.*

Before the researcher left, there were other briefings with the funeral undertaker. The question the researcher asked was: where the balance of the costs would come from? He explained that only few families can afford but most of the families would take a loan (from service providers) or make arrangements with the undertaker to pay for the funeral over the extended time period.

The researcher's observation was that the funeral undertaker did not persuade the family to spend more; it was the family that made the choice to do so. The most desirable, in order to save for the future for the family, would have been to spend as little as possible. The researcher agrees with Nel that, "payment of funeral undertakers could be justified by the fact that he or she is a licensed professional, trained in the art and science of preparing the dead bodies for burial and responsible for all the many tasks and activities of the death ritual" (2002:42). The researcher is of the view that funeral undertakers can play an important role in maintaining the emotional well-being of the families during the time of loss and also running business, not a charity.

#### **4.10. Clergy responses**

##### **4.10.1. How many funerals do you conduct in a month?**

On average the clergy that were interviewed conduct 6 funerals every month

##### **4.10.2. How do you minister to the family pre-funeral phase?**

After a death has been reported, the clergy will go to see the family and organize different pastoral care ministries to pray with the family until burial. Most of priests do not visit families after the funeral.

**4.10.3.** In your planning, do you include talking about funeral expenses?

The response was NO because the clergy perceived this as a private family matter.

**4.10.4.** Do you think that African funeral rites need change?

The response was NO.

During the interviews, the clergy were sometimes struggling to respond to questions because they themselves are part of families that have spent excessively for funerals. They were also concerned about excessive spending on funerals and came up with recommendations which will be mentioned later.

In the black township churches, there are funeral policies that are agreed upon by members, regarding burials. This is one of the ways to raise funds. After the family has notified the church of a death, records are checked, to establish whether the deceased was a regular worshipper and financial supporter. If it is found that the deceased is behind with his or her contributions, the family will be expected to pay the balance and the funeral service will be conducted by the priest from the church. If a lapsed member dies and the family cannot afford paying the balance, the funeral service will take place from home and will be conducted by a lay person. It, therefore, means that poor families will experience more financial burden because of these policies. It is also a challenge to the pastoral care-givers to want change these policies as they are part of the fundraising strategy for the church. In the researcher's experience, the congregation leadership would threaten the priest that if he or she becomes

pastoral by changing these policies, he or she might get a salary because they will simply blame him or her if funds are not sufficient.

It is a common practice in most of black township parishes that a bereaved family should do a thanksgiving, after burial, in a form of buying a present for the church or a financial donation. The local congregation is supposed to be a pastoral care-giver during the time of bereavement but has also become a service provider to be paid.

#### **4.11. Conclusion**

Funerals continue to be the most attended events in big numbers by people in the black townships of South Africa. Chapter Four was to establish, through qualitative research method, factors that lead people in the black townships, both in urban and rural areas, to excessive funeral expenditure. “One in every four South African is living on State handouts. Of the country’s youth it is estimated that one in two are job less. More than 6 million people are living with the killer disease of HIV/AIDS. The mortality rate of children is worsening. And while school enrolment is improving, the percentage of teenagers completing Grade 12 is teetering around 25% mark.” (Forde 2011:239) The irony is that the vast majority of excessive funeral spenders are the poor.

The preliminary conclusion is that there is new phenomenon regarding the purpose of a funeral in the black townships. From the responses of the co-researchers, it seems this phenomenon put more financial burden on poor families; especially at the time of bereavement.

The underlying assumption is that cultural beliefs, rituals and ceremonies prepare individuals in the eventuality of death and in effect, bring about healing to the survivor after the actual occurrence of death. It is the researcher’s assumption, from the co-researcher’s responses,

that the new phenomenon of wanting to impress neighbors, meeting family expectations, taking advantage of those who are infected with HIV, wasting money on food and clothing, are not crucial components in the bereavement healing among African poor families.

With the above in mind, let us assess the data that is collected and view the similarities and differences with literature review. The aim is to find out whether the bereaved and the community still follow the African Traditional funeral burial rites and rituals. In the following Chapter, the researcher will look at various factors that lead to excessive funeral expenditure of poor families in the black townships.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### FACTORS AFFECTING TRADITIONAL AFRICAN FUNERALS

#### 5. Introduction

This Chapter will deal with various factors such as commercialization and politicization of funerals that affect traditional African burial rites. Some of these factors lead to excessive funeral expenditure among poor families in black townships. Attie van Niekerk in the book *‘No Quick Fix: the challenge of mission in changing South Africa’* states that during the past century or two there were, indeed, a number of powerful and complex systems that have been interacting in Africa, the three most prominent being: traditional African cultures, modern Western culture, and the environment ( van Niekerk 2002: 122). These cultures, along with a society that is greatly urbanized and industrialized, have a lasting impact on traditional African funerals. Michael Jindra and Joel Noret, the editors of *‘Funerals in Africa: exploration of a social Phenomenon’*, have made similar observations.

They noted that a series of broad changes have affected funeral rites (Jindra & Noret 2012:21). This current research shows that most of the families that were interviewed still believe in observing cultural and traditional African funerals as well as rituals. However, the researcher has established from the interviews that, “modern society is affecting the way traditional African funerals are actually conducted” (Glanville 2007:41 cf. Staudacher 1991). It is the researcher’s view that these societal expectations and family concerns for prominence directly contribute to excessive funeral expenditure; especially among residents of the black townships.

The Chapter will disclose the following topics:

- Commercialization of funerals
- Influence of religion on funerals
- Politicization of funerals
- Socialization of funerals
- Cultural importance of food
- Influence of technology and material culture of death
- New post funeral ritual
- Body of the deceased: Sacred or commodity

### **5.1. Commercialization of funerals**

When a person dies in the black township, the immediate relatives are summoned to a meeting; where they are informed of the passing. (See Chap 3). The African family was the primary stakeholder during the preparation for the funeral, especially in these meetings where cultural beliefs and practices relating to death, are discussed. Tony Walter in his article on “Mortality” states that, “in the mid-nineteenth century, the states took over to manage the rapidly expanding number of corpses” (2005:176). Which meant that, “the handling,

preservation, preparation of the corpse and burial were now in the hands of the state. This proposed model by the state led to standardization and commercialization of funerals.

As a way to control and rationalize, it was required that each death should be registered. The state also promoted large out-of-town public or private cemeteries or in some instances, the careful use of rationalization of the cycle of grave re-use as is the case in the continental Europe” (Walter 2005:176). In South Africa, “burial remains the most popular end of life choice, and is used by members of different religions and African traditional faiths. Many cultures believe that burial is the most respectable and dignified way to treat the body, and for the loved ones to find comfort in having a specific graveside to visit” (Leuta and Green, *researchspace.cisr.bitstream/1024 accessed*). Walter further says that the municipalities built and managed hygienic new cemeteries to discourage burials in family yards (Walter 2005:177). These control measures, affected the traditional African way of burial.

In the past, most families, including African families had simply buried their dead on family land. Walter further claims that, “in industrialized countries the state was concerned about public health risks from dead bodies, but to whom it granted control of the dead varied from country to country. There were basically three patterns: control of the dead could be granted to the businessman i.e. funeral undertakers, to the municipality official or to a modernized religious bureaucracy” (Walter 2005:177). This inhibited South African families from handling the corpse once the person was declared dead. Instead, families had to handover the body of the deceased to the mortician for preparation of the state burial. Whatever function the funeral directors perform, has economic implication, for an example; expensive coffins, refrigeration of the body transportation from the mortuary to the home, church and then the graveyard.

Jindra and Noret assert that, “the development of mortuaries and professionalization of morticians has enabled kin to modify the time and structure of funerals, often delaying burials for weeks. The advent of the refrigeration, allows families to deposit bodies in the mortuary as well. Now families can leave bodies in the mortuary for so long as they can afford it”... Jindra and Noret suggest that, “the extra time allows them to gather resources, communicate the news to distant parties and organize a grand affair for the burial of the corpse itself” (Jindra and Noret 2011:23). This has certainly rung true in the South African context as well. Yet, these developments have become costly, especially for poor families.

The Batswana tradition did not allow a need for the preservation of the body for a sustained period of time, this cut costs tremendously. It is common practice to bury the deceased the following day after his or her death. The same is true for the Muslim families and despite modernization; they still follow the rules to bury the deceased within twenty four hours. For the Batswana, this tradition has changed as families have chosen to follow the standard practice of the state.

Registration, “therefore is the responsibility of the family, which is delegated to the funeral undertakers. In fact, most Western families rely on funerals home to take on all aspects of burial” (Walter 2005:179). In the process, “caskets have become the central ways families become involved in the burial of their beloved. The funeral directors usually supply the family with information about an appropriate casket on request, but have to be careful not to force sale” (Nel 2002:33 cf. Pine1975). These control measures have not only standardized funerals by the state, but have also led to commercialization funerals. Walter states that, “as a result funeral parlors can conduct all necessary aspects of death and burial within its own

walls from registering the death, to holding a funeral or memorial service for cremated remains” (Walter 2005:178 cf. Habenstein & Lamer, 1962, Laderman 2003).

The undertakers “have re-styled themselves from funeral undertakers to funeral directors” (Walter 2005:179 cf. Laderman, 2003). Before the advent of vehicles, mourners walked by foot to follow the pall bearers who were carrying the coffin. Today, the funeral procession is done by glamorous vehicles that are provided by funeral undertakers, but paid for by the family. Buses are also provided by the families. The hearse carrying the coffin is in front, usually followed by family cars. The hearse has stickers to show which undertaker is organizing the burial. The researcher is of the view that the undertaker uses the funeral that is paid for by the bereaved to advertise their product. The researcher had made an observation, that in the end, the bereaved pay for the services and for advertising the brand of the funeral undertaker.

### **5.1.1 Viewing of the body**

However, families in the black township still prefer to hold their memorial services a few days before the burial. Although, there are these mechanisms by the government, families in black townships have kept the practice of viewing the body before the burial. This process helped them to undergo mourning and face the struggle of dealing with death. The researcher’s experience was that parishioners of Western origin dealt with death differently. Once the body had left the house, it should not be returned. After viewing at the funeral parlor, the body will be taken straight to church for funeral service or directly to the crematorium. Walter declares that, “in the Western families once the body is removed from home or from hospital, to the undertaker’s premises, the undertaker takes full control of the body, and of course, the entire funeral” (Walter 2005:175). Most African families still prefer

the body to be brought home a day before the funeral for viewing and the performing of final rituals” (See Mbiti 1969:155; Keya 2010:45 cf. Sishaya 1996:186).

Some African families, who subscribe to certain Denominations such as the Seventh day Adventist, do not allow the corpse to come back to the house. They have different ways of dealing with death, which is influenced by their theology. Nel writes that, “It has been argued that the viewing of the body was developed out of Ancient society’s fear of the possibility that someone might be buried alive. The Greeks, for example, laid the body in state buildings for viewing to confirm that death actually occurred, but also to verify that the body had not been mistreated” (Nel 2002:33 cf. Pine 1975). The researcher’s experience is that only few of the parishioners lie in state, or in church buildings. On the day of the burial, the body would be taken home for a few hours, for prayers and observing of rituals such as viewing.

There are families in the black townships who, because of their religious belief, for example African Gospel and Church of Christ, do not believe in the viewing of the body. Viewing of the body is considered as worshipping the dead person (Interviewed Bishop Dungulu on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2012; Living Waters Bible Church). As a result, they will not allow crying at certain times because it is connected with unbelief. There are also a number of critics who, according to Nel, question the value of open-coffin viewing. Nel continues, however, “to believe the absolute contrary and recognize the psychotherapeutic effect that viewing could have as a final confirmation of the reality of death” (Nel 2002:34 cf. Pine 1975). The researcher agrees with Nel, because this way of dealing with death helps one to deal with the issue of denial; which is dealt properly by Kubler-Ross. Kubler-Ross, who is famous for her work on the grieving process, states that she, “seems convinced that the viewing should, in most cases, be a positive experience that helps the bereaved to experience the reality of death

and to confront it in a mature fashion” (Kubler-Ross 1969 :....). Nel (cf.Pine 1975) and Kubler–Ross view are in line with what the Batswana’s ascribe to in their tradition; ‘*Nako ya go itlhoboga*’ meaning ‘time to release the deceased emotionally’.

This practice has helped African bereaved families to let go of the deceased, emotionally. The reason is that in the traditional African belief, the deceased is going to meet the ancestors and is sent home to rest or sleep. In other words there is a concept of resurrection in them. The researcher has recently attended a viewing ritual, where the family spoke to the deceased as they passed the coffin from one to the other. They would name certain people who have died, and say; ‘tell so and so we are also coming’.

The control measures proposed as a model by the state has led to the standardization and commercialization of funerals. This institutional control of handling, preservation, preparing of the corpse and doing the burial, has built up substantial financial costs. This practice has affected mostly poor families which lead them to spend excessively for funerals. As a result, some of them are not able to mourn for they are busy thinking of how they are going to pay back the credit. Let us analyze how the Judea Christians came as a result of death.

## **5.2. Influence of Judeo-Christianity**

Modern bereaved families do not only have to deal with the commercialization model of the state, but they also have to engage“...religious traditions...that play a stronger role in funerals in Africa than in the West.” (Jindra and Noret 2011:5). The following section will deal with “the influence of religion and how religious rites have affected African traditional beliefs and practices surrounding death. They changed the whole way of dealing with this issue, especially in South Africa, with many blacks converted to Christianity during the

nineteenth century” (Hendriks and Erasmus 2002:27). As a result religion has informed funerals with black townships and changed the way of handling death. Christian religion has played a negative role in the sense that, “it has introduced teachings about death and burial that has influenced some African families to disregard their traditional African rituals and rites in the name of being obedient to the bible, Mbiti has argued that converting to Christianity was at the same time to embrace a new religious tradition that would play a stronger role in the traditional African funeral” (Mbiti 1969:31).

A researcher, such as Manenzhe, argues that, “this conversion westernized Africans affecting their traditional ancestral beliefs which have been the driving force behind their cultural activities” (Manenzhe 2007:6). Bae declares that, “as a reaction to westernization, some African Christian leaders founded African Independent Churches for Africans with no ties with Western mainline churches” (Bae 2007:43 cf. Oosthuizen 1999:158). Furthermore, “these independent churches retain some elements in African rituals and the original religion from which they broke away. Most of these churches have assimilated more of traditional African culture and religion” (See Bae 2007). Recently, “some Western mainline churches, such as the Roman Catholic, are seeking ways to blend Christian beliefs and traditional African culture. This process is called Enculturation” (See Dictionary of Third World Theologies 2000). Globalization also challenges the African concept of dealing with death issues. In short, the African concept of life is under tremendous pressure.

Various scholars and researches such as Hendriks and Erasmus in an article entitled ‘General statistical picture of religion in South Africa’, have given the background description of South African context (Hendriks and Erasmus 2002:14-30). According to their discussion, “on the census done in 1996, 76, 7% of the population in South Africa is Africa, herein referred to as

“Blacks”. Needless to say that this group dominates all statistics that portrays South Africa as a whole. The research has shown that Black Christian population was 23.4 million in 1996” (Hendriks and Erasmus 2002:27). The above have undergone tremendous change moving from the African way of life into Western patterns of doing things. When caught by problems they revert to African way of life.

### **5.2.1 Preparation and disposing of the body**

The researcher has not established whether any African person is part of the Jewish religion. “Jewish and Islamic adherents prepare and dispose of the corpse themselves” (Walter 2005:180). For orthodox Jews and Muslims, “it is a religious duty to care for their own dead”. Thus all orthodox Jewish corpses are dressed the same, with slight difference between male and female” (Walter 2005:180). The researcher is not aware of a Christian Church and African Independent Churches that handle their own corpses’ but delegate this responsibility to funeral undertakers. The bereaved families only help with the preparations a day before the funeral, at the funeral parlor. Where members of the family will go and dress the body.

Certain religious groups such as the Zion Christian Church “...also provide burial societies and co-operatives to enable working people to pool resources for burial.”(Walter 2005:178) These memorial or burial societies unite members of the church into a group that negotiates cheaper deals of burials with funeral directors. These burial societies are similar to those that are formed in communities. Church and society burial schemes have one purpose to financially help bereaved families (*cf* Seeco 2010:223).

### **5.2.2 Services in the Church building**

Different denominations are also responsible for ensuring the availability of the Church building with religious symbols decorated or the holding of funeral ceremonies. “Most families who adhere to the Christian religion believe that bringing the body into the church building before the burial is considered highly respectable. For these families, Church building itself is of particular importance, providing a perfect setting for a fine funeral” (de Witte 2011: 194). Most of the African Independent Churches do not have buildings. Funerals are mostly conducted from home of the deceased. In addition to their own rituals, bereaved families do not necessarily have to observe religious rites but chose to. In most churches, the funeral service follows a standard order with a sermon, prayers, hymns and psalms and the reading out of the biography that summarizes the deceased’s accomplishment and successes in life, and the presentation of tributes and eulogies that tend to praise the deceased for such attributes such as good character and exemplary deeds.

Generally speaking the deceased life is reconstructed as a great success, irrespective of his/her true accomplishments. In fact, according to de Witte “the burial service at the church is the last chance to publicly ‘create’ a person” (de Witte 2011:195). The researcher’s experience is that this is a common trend in most of the funerals in the black townships. Jindra and Noret show that it is not unique to people in the black townships. The researcher’s view is that taking time to talk about the deceased is a good part of therapy for the family and the mourner. At the same time the researcher believed that other resources such as pamphlets, taken pictures and videos during the funeral service do not contribute to the process of mourning, but instead put financial burden on the family.

“Most families in black townships in South Africa are exposed to a considerable degree of diversity in the religious practices that affect the way people were buried in the past” (Jindra

and Noret 2011:29). From the interviews conducted particularly with members of Mothers Union, they faced the challenge from other family members who were not Christians when planning for burial. There was a woman whose in-laws embraced Islam religion and some choose to belong to different Christian denomination which disapproves traditional African funeral rites and rituals from her own denominational funeral practices. This caused big problems which caused more damage due to quarrels. Access to a Christian burial service was not conducted as a final closure.

However, it became a source of tension between families and church researchers. Further problems emerged, for example, members of the Seventh Day Adventist Church do not attend family funerals if they are held on Saturdays. Furthermore, they do not take part in family pre and post burial rituals as this is against their belief system. Their brand of Christianity does not believe that you can blend Christian doctrine and theology with traditional African beliefs. The other reason for non-participation is that it is prescribed that they attend worship on Saturday and that attending funerals on the day of worship would be against the law of God.

### **5.2.3 Evangelizing instead of comforting**

In other cases some Christian groups use the funeral service as an opportunity to proselyte instead of comforting the family. For instance, after researcher's brother's funeral, the elders of his church, one of the Charismatic Churches, called the family for a post burial evaluation. After a lengthy conversation they asked if there was anyone in the family who would like to join their denomination. Rather than being concerned with our emotional well-being, they were more focused on gaining new members. No one from the family ended up joining that

denomination despite their intense pressure. In other words, the church concentrated on gaining members instead of comforting the bereaved.

De Witte has similar findings. She argues that, “Church leaders also use the church burial as a pressure mechanism, threatening people that they only are ‘good Christians’ if they regularly attend service and pay their tithes, then the church will bury them” (de Witte 2011: 194). The researcher believes the church should not take advantage of vulnerable families and mourners for their own agenda. The funeral service should not be used for converting the bereaved families or the mourners. This approach might lead some mourners to join the church out of feeling guilty. A good example is when there is a suicidal case. For instance where the deceased had committed suicide, they might be feeling guilty that they could have done something do avoid it.

Religion, particularly Christianity, which is the religion the researcher has embraced, plays an important role during the time of bereavement. If the deceased is a practicing Christian, the family will always make sure that the Church is notified. This is the family’s invitation to the pastoral care-giver to enter their space of bereavement. This will give the pastoral care-givers, if they are good, the opportunity to journey with the bereaved. Some people even if they are care-givers, would not journey with the bereaved. During death many people may not get all the care they need, such as psychological care while in the funerals service. If such a need arises the pastoral care-giver can refer the family to the relevant service provider. There may be some traditional African funeral practices that may be perceived by the pastoral care-giver as contradicting to Christian teachings. It is the researcher’s view that the religious leader should, as part of care, whenever they deal with death, consider the family’s cultural and traditional funeral practices. “This exchange can be achieved through a meaningful dialogue

between the bereaved family and pastoral care-giver. These conversations should lead to the inclusion and not exclusion of some rituals carried out by African families when disposing of the dead” (Manenzhe 2007:9).

### **5.3. Politicization of funerals**

Since the Soweto uprising of 16<sup>th</sup> of June 1976 funerals were increasing being used for political ends. Manenzhe is of the view that it was at these funerals that long political and radical speeches were delivered, based on the achievements of the deceased especially if he or she was a member of one of the liberation movements ( Manenzhe 2007:1). During anti-apartheid struggle, funerals were often used to further politicize specific communities and determine their future action. In the process, the traditional funeral customs of various South Africa communities were often sacrificed to make room for political ideals. In the process, the sufferings of the next of kin of the deceased were often not taken into consideration at all (Manenzhe 2007:3).

A funeral that is politicized usually becomes an affair that is dominated by political speeches; thus reducing the close family members and relatives to ordinary spectators rather than participants. The end result is that family members of the deceased are more often than not, marginalized. Manenzhe has observed that, “they get frustrated because they are not allowed to actively take part in the funeral(s) of their loved one(s). This new ‘culture of political funerals’ posed a problem that was increasing daily, due in part to lack of respect over laying of the dead to rest. It is Manenzhe’s view that the politicization of funerals does not afford them the necessary sympathy and comfort that they are looking for during their bereavement” (Manenzhe 2007:2).

The politicization of funerals has also, in most instances, sidelined the religious leaders or even made them pawns. In essence, they were used for political efforts or the clergy person used their position to push forward some political ideals. These political funerals were also characterized by huge crowds. The bereaved was expected to provide transport and catering. During these political funerals the bereaved were not only denied the opportunity to mourn and perform rituals, they also spend excessively. The action taken by political parties added more expenses. At times caused problems by not allowing the pastoral care through sermon and hymns. Political songs concentrated on the struggle songs which were sung. Prayers were isolated by slogans “*Amandla*” (power) and “*Angawethu*” is ours.

#### **5.4. Socialization of funeral**

Post liberation in the townships, the events surrounding death has become a key event in the life of the community. Jindra and Noret argues that in Africa “...entire neighborhoods are drawn to funerals and family members and friends who have migrated to other areas and countries are lured back” (Jindra & Noret 2011:2). African funerals are often community affairs in which the whole community grief with the bereaved. However, the researcher has observed from the interviews that, funeral events are becoming more often social events as well. As a results there are tremendous financial resources funeral events often consume, one example being some families buying new and expensive clothes. It is an opportunity for some of the bereaved to impress those who will be attending. On the other hand some mourners will attend the event to show off the latest fashion.

According to Jindra and Noret this phenomenon is not only in the black townships in South Africa. They have observed that, “in many African societies today, in particular the sub-

Saharan African, funerals and commemoration of deaths are the largest and the most expensive cultural event. On the world's most economically frail continent, development expert lament the resources channeled away from productive investments and used instead in consumption of food, imported drinks, entertainment and funeral finery. This is not an efficient allocation of resources, laments a development economist" (Jindra and Noret 2011:2-3 cf. *Economist* 2007; see also Monga 1995). Yet in many African communities these events keep getting larger, adding expenses, especially to poor families.

A widow that the researcher interviewed did not see lavish spending during the funeral as misallocation of resources but as a form showing love to the deceased. For her it was a theatre to display her affection for him. This is in line with the view expressed by Nel that, "the high cost of funeral is considered to have some sort of therapeutic value as a number of people find it comforting to spend great amounts of money on the deceased relative" (2002:42). There is also another view expressed by Nel (cf. Taylor 1979), after a mortician was interviewed that; "...the living are guilt ridden about their dead and one of our function is to ease this guilt by providing opportunities to spend money for the departed" (Nel 2002:42).

The researcher believes that excessive expenditure for funerals has neither therapeutic value nor does it ease the guilt. The researcher had made an observation similar to the one alluded by Nel that, "it is no longer the right, responsibility or privilege of family or friends to take care of the old and the dying" (Nel 2002:27). It is mostly families that have neglected their elderly that would want to spend excessively as a way of making up for the lost opportunities to care and love them while they were alive. In my view spending expensively for funerals is usually an unsuccessful attempt to avoid any confrontation with our own the failure to keep

what is central to the concept of Ubuntu which is caring for one another from birth to death and beyond. In short, when a parent dies, some of the children feel guilty and they buy a blanket to cover the coffin as a way of reconciling with the dead. They get into credit that they will pay later after the funeral.

#### **5.4.1 Funerals and Ubuntu**

In the traditional African funeral arrangement, “the whole community would show their care and respect to the bereaved family, demonstrating to them that they are not alone. It is the responsibility of the community; relatives, neighbors and friends to make sure that the bereaved are catered for in their time of bereavement” (Keya 2010: 37). However in many African societies today, “funeral and commemoration of the deaths are the largest and the most expensive cultural events, with families harnessing vast amounts of resources to host lavish events for multitudes of people” (Jindra and Noret 2011:1). The traditional African funeral, “often took the form of procession of mourners lamenting the deceased. The situation now is that funerals are now affording families an opportunity to advertise wealth, status and achievements of the deceased.

In the black townships funerals have developed into an occasion where achievements of the deceased could be lauded” (Manenzhe 2007:7). The researcher has observed that parishioners of Western cultures in most cases would prefer that their accomplishments and resources should be for the well-being of those for the living rather than on disposing the body. The researcher is of the view that, given the reality of economic challenges of unemployment, families cannot begin to justify themselves and spend excessively for funerals. It is the researcher’s view that given the economic climate, the whole affair of death should not set families spiraling into debt as they struggle to finance lavish send off to their loved one. The

researcher believes that the dead will be much happier to see those remaining behind being prosperous rather than in poverty because of wasting of resources in funerals.

The best African families can do during this time is to hold on to the good values taught by those who have died. In particular the key principle of the concept of *Ubuntu* (See article by Masango 2005:915; Broodryk 2006:21 cf. Vilakazi 1991:70) which is caring for each other. An educational process is needed in educating our people. In Black townships most of the rites of passages involve community participation are needed in order to change the mind set of people in the community. There is now a shift from big community events to private. This thesis is not about marriage. However the researcher will like to share what is happening using marriage to explain the shift that is taking place.

Recently the researcher has observed that there are families who are having private weddings. Younger couples have come to realize that they cannot afford big marriage ceremonies. They invite people they know, and people who have supported them and will continue to after the wedding to do so. The researcher is of the view that funerals in the black township should be private. Ubuntu is all about care and support. Families need to have a paradigm shift and know that a big crowd does not necessarily mean show of support. Showing Ubuntu is about participation in the pain and welfare of the family during and beyond burial. One of the practical ways will be to help the families spend less during funerals by putting unnecessary expectation on them.

## **5.5. Cultural importance of food**

It has been the researcher's observation and experience that a bigger percentage of money spent during funeral is on food (See Appendix M). The researcher looked at the cultural importance of food in African importance and the positive effects of providing food at funerals. In almost all the African rites of passage events, "from birth to death, providing food is important and part of the ceremony that allow one person to move from one passage to the other." African gatherings are centered on food. In African funerals it is believed that you provide food to the departed through the providing for the living (Mbiti 1991:129-130). It became clear from the interviews that bereaved families did not find spending and preparing food for the event, no matter the cost, a problem.

There is a Setswana saying that; '*Letsema le thata ka mong wa lona*'. That means when you have people around to assist, you must make sure you feed them. In most of African families food is a symbol of hospitality. In most African homes, of different cultures, there is a common practice to have a special drink made out of maize meal called "*mageu*". This drink is always given to visitors as a way of welcoming them. In modern funerals food has also become a symbol of social status and of lesser ritual significance.

Funerals are now becoming a whole day affair. The researcher attended a funeral that started at 8.30am. After the burial service we joined the procession to the cemetery for burial. The family decided to do the unveiling of the tombstone making sure that it was photographed and video recorded. After the 'rites at the graveside,' which in the case of the Anglican Church, included the blessing of the grave by sprinkling holy water and waving of incense, prayers, hymns, and ritual sprinkling of soil on the grave. By the time all these rituals were finished it was 4.00pm. Most of the families interviewed believe that they are justified to feed people who join them in mourning. In the present economic and poverty situation, for others,

attending the funeral is the best opportunity to get the only meal for the day. The researcher knows of some families who would make sure that they attend as many funerals and post funeral rituals as they can, because that is where they get their meals. These families won't just do it at funerals but at all other rites of passage event that take place in the neighborhood.

### **5.6. Technology and material culture of death**

Technology changes readily adapted by the entire population have played a key role in the evolution of African funerals in the continent throughout the twentieth century. To illustrate the point further Jindra and Noret emphasize; "...the announcement of deaths are also progressively transformed by developments in public media, from printed obituaries in the newspapers, to posters publicizing funerals in towns, as well as growing prevalence of obituaries on radio and even on television in the townships" (Jindra and Noret 2011:23). Nel suggests that, "death has become a fantastic subject"... She further comments that, "in the news, death is usually presented in such a casual and remote way that it becomes indistinguishable from other noteworthy events, or is exaggerated and sensationalized beyond point of any reference to real life" (Nel 2002:23).

Today, printing facilities, mass media, mobile phones, and internet announcement enable funerals to announce far and wide. The youth are able to ascertain where there is a likelihood of better post burial party because of the person's social standing. "In recent decades, the development of printing capacities and technologies also actively stimulated a new material culture of death, one that involved the distribution to funeral or post ceremony attendees t-shirts printed with images of the important dead" ( Jindra and Noret 2011:23). When a member of a liberation movement, political party, church or burial society group is buried,

members of that organization wear t-shirts or uniform during the funeral which offers a novel way of marking group affiliations as well as a new material way to evoke the memories of the dead. These uniforms are sometimes more for the promotion of the organization's identity rather than for the emotional support of the family. Photographs are now an essential element of the mortuary cycle. They are displayed at prominent places during church services and at funerals and on graves, and during procession.

“The video taping of the burial and death celebration is a more recent phenomenon, but has taken its place alongside the photograph as an important part of planning for the funeral for those who have the equipment or can afford to hire some to film. Interviews with relatives are usually part of filming, with reminiscences about the deceased or action taken to help the deceased before death” (Jindra 2011:117). On the way media portrays death and technology is used in funerals, seem to be eating at the heart of the value of human life as well as distancing us from traditional African funeral practices and lose respect for their significance. These new technics are helpful in informing people who are far but also add on to the cost of the funeral.

### **5.7. New post funeral ritual**

It is normal that feasting follows the funeral rites. Mbiti has observed that, “this is partly an opportunity to comfort the bereaved and to bring life back to normal, and to thank the mourners and those who officiated at the funeral” (Mbiti 1991:121). After feasting; the mourners will leave the family to mourn by themselves. Traditionally, the post burial rituals would remain a family affair. There is as mentioned in Chapter Four, of a new mechanism to help the family mourn called ‘After tears’. The modern trend is to arrive in the most

expensive cars, wear designer clothing, expensive jewelry, and the brightest colors. It is the researcher's observation that in black townships funerals are used as platforms reveal latest clothing fashions.

Seeco says that, "this is particularly at a funeral of a well-known and well-off member in the community" (Seeco 2010:338-341). In the black townships clothes have become a symbol of respect especially when wearing a certain label in order to regain their status. This is because most of black people are laborers and wore uniforms for the whole week. Therefore community event such as funerals will be an opportunity to wear beautiful and expensive clothes so that they can re-claim respected in the community. Seeco refers, "to these clothes as representing struggle of the oppressed and marginalized" (Seeco 2010:338 cf. Holderness 1997:13). These rituals that helped Africans to mourn are now replaced by expensive acts of competition.

Gone are the days of quiet, somber affairs where everyone was dressed in black and all the mourners maintained silent respect, even after burial. The traditional Africa funeral practice is that mourners should be silent during the procession. After burial there were no rituals that were noisy and celebratory.

Most of young adult mourners will come prepared to be part of 'after tears' ritual after the burial. 'After tear' is a name given to a new way of mourning after the funeral in the black townships. This new phenomenon is characterized by excessive drinking of alcohol. According to Botha, "there is a high consumption of alcohol that takes place in parties that are known as sit-ins, *stokvel* or street bash" (Botha 2006:86 cf. Kuzwayo 2000). Manenzhe suggests that these occurrences are worse when a young person dies as a result of

confrontation with law enforcement for committing crime because some of them are drunk when they commit these crimes. These kinds of funerals are normally characterized by activities such as spinning of cars and gun shots in the air.

Manenzhe emphasizes the point that, “When dubious character are killed in criminal act and fall victim to the police force, their friends would steal the show by acting in accordance with the ritual of South Africa gangster culture” (Manenzhe 2007: 1 cf. *the Sunday times*.2001-05-06 (*insight page 13*)). The researcher is of the view that mourners who get involved in this practice, are seeking for a way to deconstruct the deceased for themselves. They try to create a hero out of a criminal. In black township communities people who die from committing crime won’t be considered as good ancestors. It was the researcher’s view that the ‘after tears’ phenomenon has become a way to coping with too many deaths in the community.

The researcher had observed that people in the township spend most of their weekends at funerals than any other rites of passage in the community. The after tears ritual is not helpful because people need to learn to deal with their loss rather than avoiding it. Kubler-Ross called it denial. According to Nyanjaya, “suppression of grief is the reaction that denies the expression of the true feeling of the impact of loss. The grieving person in this case people who attend the ‘After tears’, keep their feelings under tight control” (Nyanjaya 2006:6 cf. Bowman 111 1998). Glanville elaborates that societal expectation to the bereaved are: ‘they should not cry, be courageous, and not express your emotions openly.’ According to him, “these stereotypes often cause grieving people to conform to the expectations of others at the expense of their own grief” (Granville 2007:41). The researcher believes this social expectation not to grief this lead to avoiding opportunity to mourn.

In the interview young people mentioned that they view the ‘After tears’ ritual as a way to dealing with their loss, to make friends and to socialize. There is an idea among the young people that contentment comes only with a life that is always happy. Nel argue that, “people want to avoid the idea of death, because it would prevent us from living out this ideal happiness” (Nel 2002:25). The culture is growing among the youth to avoid excessive display of grief. This, maybe, is caused by the fact that black township communities are in a constant state of grief because of attending funerals.

The researcher has observed that the culture of mourning is being shortened by the phenomenon of after tears. The researcher agrees with Moran and Harris that, “it is assumed that within a very short time after funeral you should get over it, ‘put it behind you’ and ‘pull yourself together” (1998:96-97). The researcher believed that both the young and old should learn to mourn for someone they love and to comfort the bereaved. Moran and Harris argues that, “if we fail to learn how to mourn, we will be unsuccessful to deal with other important things in life” (Moran and Harris 1998:98). This new phenomenon of after tears has led to some poor families to spend excessively to buy alcohol, extra food and new clothes.

### **5.8. Body of the Deceased: sacred or a commodity**

Across cultures and time, “the corpse has been a source of fascination for the living. The human corpse, its social meaning and how it is valued, discussed, disposed of, imaged and used, is a critical subject, generating public debate, enormous media attention, and cooperate interest” (Foltyn 2008 Volume 13, No2). Preparing of the corpse before the funeral has been the practice of the African traditional funeral and this tradition continues even today (Mbiti 1969:155 and Keya 2010:45).

Letsosa in his article on liturgical aspects of funeral services in the Reformed Churches of African origin writes Scriptures only give elements on how the body is prepared for burial. He cites scriptural verses to show how the deceased were prepared immediately after death as a way to indicate that getting the body ready for burial was also a common practice in the biblical times” (Letsosa 2010 *Verbum et Ecclisia* 31 (1) article #361).

There are, however, new ways of preparing the body. De Witte shared the experience during the research in Ghana, that people will go to the extent of beautify the body and fix the damaged skin of the deceased. She emphasizes that in other parts of Ghana there are now commercial “body decorators’ who will even decorate the room where the deceased will lay in state” (2011:177). Most funeral directors, “are expressively concerned about the appearance of the body as they consider it as an essential part of their role in helping the family finally realize and accept the fact of death” (Nel 2002:34 cf.Cahill 1995, Corr 1979b).

The researcher believes preparing of the body is important. This is in line according to the African burial processes as mentioned above. However the researcher’s view is that decorating the body, is a slow movement away from seeing the deceased body as sacred (See Masango article on Cremation HTS 61 (4) 2005). Rather, it makes the body a commercial commodity. The researcher has had first-hand experience where families fought over the body of the deceased because of financial benefits. The researcher also knows from personal experience of funeral undertakers fighting over the body of his brother.

They saw a commodity but for us he was still was our brother who happened to have died. Foltyn adds to the point by saying that; “Modern communication and biomedical

technologies and larger historical trends such as liberal secularism, individualism, consumerism and transforming the corpse into a commodity” (Foltyn 2008. Volume13, No2). The following quotation will summarize the point; “Relic, museum exhibit, dissection spectacle, “other,” site of ethnic and religious identities, organ tissue donor, monster, sex object, porn star, funeral icon, data trash, clone precursor, simulation or real, dead bodies are maps of power and identity. In the twenty first century, the corpse in the contemporary culture is all of those things and more.

We are left with our ambivalence” (Foltyn 2008: Vol. 13. No. 2).The researcher’s is of the view that the body of the deceased should be granted privacy and respects it deserves. In this Chapter researcher has dealt with factors such as commercialization, socialization and technology and material culture of death. These factors are posing a challenge to the modern African families in the black townships of South Africa. The following Chapter will review the aims and objectives of the research and explore the shepherding model by Gerkin and Pollards theory of positive deconstruction which will help the researcher create appropriate pastoral care model for clergy to help families who spend excessively for funerals in black townships.

## CHAPTER SIX

### REVIEW OF AIMS AND OBJECTIVES: EXPLORING THE SHEPHERDING MODEL AND THEORY OF POSITIVE DECONSTRUCTION AND WORKING TOWARDS A NEW PRAXIS

#### 6. Introduction

In this Chapter the researcher will review the aims and objectives and in the process come up with a model for the clergy and lay ministers to address this problem.

The foremost objective of the study was to explore the phenomenon of excessive funeral expenditure in the black townships in South Africa. The main questions that have been addressed are why do African people spend a lot of money when burying their beloved? What role can ministers play in helping them?

In order to address this practice that is making the poor more vulnerable, the researcher chose to explore the shepherding model by Gerkin and Pollard's on the theory of positive deconstruction. The research has revealed the danger that is faced by already poor people of spending beyond their means in order to bury the dead.

#### 6.1. Review of aims and objectives

This section will look at the context globally changing and in particular South Africa after the new democratic dispensation. The purpose of the research was to understand what is meant by traditional African funeral in the present environment. Funeral is still a very vital event and important in the black township. In the literature review the researcher found that funeral was very simple and the focus was on making sure that all funeral rituals were observed to give dignity to the burial of the deceased. However, from the interviews, the co-researchers found themselves between practice in the past and practice in the new. They are stuck between old traditional African funeral rites and rituals and the new rituals that are introduced as way to deal with the modern and evolving way of mixing in black townships. For instance the new phenomenon of “After Tears” referred to in Chapter Four, is one of how to deal with grief.

In urban areas like Soweto we cannot speak of a traditional African funeral because of mixture of identity problem African people have. Morris helps us to understand the division in Soweto (Morris 1992:2). In terms of the Apartheid ideology, Soweto was divided into different groupings:

- ✓ Naledi, Mapetla, Tladi, Moletsane and Phiri were set aside for Sesotho and Setswana groups
- ✓ Chiawelo and Meadowlands for the Shangaans, Vendas, and Tsonga groups
- ✓ Dlamini, Senaoane, Zola, Jabulani, Emndeni, and white City were set aside for the Zulu and Xhosa groups

The above caused division, which led to an identity problem. (See Appendix E Soweto Map)

Since 1994, with the dawn of the new South Africa there has been a development of new townships which has not been based on the ethnic groupings. Each ethnic grouping has its own funeral practices, rites and rituals even if we they are all of African origin. There are some factors like people marrying across groupings and re-settling, which has to let changes

as described by Morris. One of the main contributors of this identity problem is complicated by foreign people who have come from other countries outside of South Africa of whom some have some sort of assimilation. They live in backyards and some without homes end up being residents and marrying South Africans. They also brought different rituals which are challenging funeral customs of burying the deceased. With the factors mentioned, the pastoral care-givers need to be aware that we cannot speak of a traditional African funeral. Some families are battling at the moment to understand what are the right traditional African funeral rites and rituals as they are exposed to many.

The research has also revealed the traditional African funeral rites and rituals are slowly being either adjusted or new ways introduced in the rural areas of South Africa such as in the North West province. The families who work or grow up in the urban areas, because of their exposure in a mixed urban cultural environment, are introducing new rituals such 'after tears', and do not observe the post funeral rituals when attending funerals in urban areas. The other factor is that those who work in urban areas have financial resources which influence on what is done or not and sometimes disrespect what is a common traditional African funeral practice in the family and community in the rural areas.

The other added problem is brought by Christianity and its different theological understandings. Belonging to different denominations in one family affects the traditional African funeral practices. There are families who belong to the Pentecostal Charismatic African denominations. These churches hold the view that some of the pre and post traditional African funeral rituals such as viewing the body, veneration of ancestors and cleansing as unscriptural and barbaric and uncultured. This view has therefore made some families abandon their traditional African funeral beliefs. On the other hand there are other members who belong to Churches that believe that traditional African beliefs should be

incorporated in the life, practices and its worship. The problem with the above depends on who leads a particular traditional church. For instance there is a traditional African church called Shembe. It is founded by the Zulu ethnic group. Therefore the funeral will include more of the Zulu rituals and rites and will not incorporate other ethnic grouping practices. The above continues to cause confusion among Africans.

The researcher is of the view that we cannot talk about the traditional African funeral rites and rituals. There are diverse cultures in an urban area like Soweto. Even with funeral rituals bereaved families copy others and cannot explain why they are doing it. There is not only radical change in the processes of cultural, economic and political changes but also religious factors that affect traditional African funeral rites and rituals.

This situation is also affecting the clergy themselves as they are part of the families in this changing global and local context. Clergy are also cultural beings and are expected in most instances to take part in these funeral rituals and rites in the family. Some clergy will not participate because of their theological beliefs. In the interview with the clergy, some of them indicated that they find it difficult to keep the balance between the Christian tradition and the traditional African funeral practices. The challenge is that they are caught in between. If they do not follow the family in these rituals they are then accused of being westernized Africans. On the other hand they may be labelled by some members of the church as an ‘incomplete believer’. This situation makes it difficult for the clergy and lay ministers to deal with the questions of what is meant by traditional African funeral rites in the South African context today.

The aim of the research was also to establish the factors that lead families to excessive expenditure on funerals. It was also the intention of the researcher to establish facts on how much the average family spends.

The researcher's perception before the research was that the primary reason for families to spend excessively for funerals was for fear of the ancestors, especially failure to observe all the rituals and rites. This process will deprive the bereaved getting blessings from the ancestors. It is a common belief that ancestors have specific functions they perform. If those left behind fail to do a proper funeral, it will incapacitate the ancestors to perform those functions dealt in Chapter Three. That is why, the researcher thought, families would go all out in order to make financial loans, which will help to bury their loved ones out of fear of being deprived the blessings in the future by ancestors. From the interviews, the researcher came to the conclusion that funerals internal and external factors led to unnecessary excessive expenditure for funerals. The internal factor is when bereaved families put undue pressure on themselves in order to impress and entertain the community.

There is a dominant question in the minds of families during preparations; "what will people think of us". In the interviews most of respondents believed that this motivation has very little to do with pleasing the ancestors. The emphasis has shifted from funerals rituals in order to please ancestors, but primarily to entertaining the community. In other families there are members who would take advantage in the name of culture so as to lead unnecessary excessive expenditure. For an example in some instances during the interview, a woman shared that she was forced, by her in-laws, to buy a cattle. She did so out of fear of being accused of neglect of her husband which might lead to suspicion that she killed him. The research has also shown through interviews with the youth, that they also put stress on parents to buy new clothes for funerals. For the youth, funerals are for parading the latest fashion and networking they have with their friends.

Reflecting on these internal factors, the researcher thinks that families are struggling with issues of dignity. The question is; why poor families should spend excessively for funerals in

order to raise it to a certain standard? Does this action really improve or give them dignity? The interviews revealed, although it was not the aim of the research that the excessive expenditure is a common phenomenon in other areas such as marriages, the unveiling of tombstones and the celebrations of first birth day anniversary of children. The researcher is of the view that the motivation is the desire to impress the community. The pastoral care-giver needs to be aware of this internal factor when preparing for a funeral with the family.

There are other external factors as referred to in Chapter Five. These pose a serious challenge to poor families as they try to keep up with the changing and evolving communities. The affected area is the finances of the already poor families. The research has shown that on average families in black townships (in both rural and urban) spend R31, 700 excluding catering and other things like tents and chairs. Considering that between 2005 and 2006, 20% of the poorest of South Africa population lived off 1.4 % of their available income (Hein Marais in South Africa, pushed to the limit and Forde 2011:241). This expenditure on funerals, aggravates the problem of poverty as indicated that between 2005 and 2006 49% of African household were earning less than R20,000 a year ( Forde 2011:241). This kind of excessive expenditure needs to be addressed by the pastoral care-giver as a pastoral and stewardship issue. The local church cannot, in the researcher's view, encourage Christians to give money to the work of God, without teaching how to receive and use these resources. The researcher has been a part of conferences on stewardship in his own Diocese which was seeking to address this problem in that workshop, where there had been more emphasis on stewardship with reference to giving. The local church, particularly in the black townships, need to put excessive funeral expenditure on its teaching programs with the hope to establish meaningful dialogues.

The aim of the research was also to create a model for clergy and lay ministers that will help them journey with families during the time of bereavement. In order to develop this model, the researcher has applied Gerkin's Shepherding model as a way of helping the 'sheep' that are in trouble because of the excessive funeral expenditure.

## **6.2. Meaningful dialogue- Pollard's theory**

The aim of the research was to encourage a humble dialogue between the Christian theological tradition and the traditional African cultural funeral beliefs. This meaningful dialogue will happen in an attitude of knowing that the pastoral care-giver is equal to those who need pastoral care.

In order to apply the Pollard theory of positive deconstruction, the researcher arranged to meet with five families previously interviewed together. Because of time constraints, the researcher only contacted families from the urban township of Soweto. The researcher began by reminding them of the consent they signed by reading the terms agreed upon. The purpose of a joint interview was explained and made sure that each co-researcher is in agreement with the process of interview.

At the beginning of the interview the researcher presented the findings of the research and the factors that are affecting the traditional African funeral within the changing context in South Africa. During the interview the process contained in Pollard's positive deconstruction was used.

The purpose of positive deconstruction is eluded in Chapter Two in order to help people to step outside their worldview loops and ask themselves difficult questions (Pollard 1997:41&73). The pastoral care-giver, as 'deconstructor', is to demonstrate genuine love for

the people being helped without imposing their own views. The first task of the process of positive deconstruction is to identify the underlying world view that excessive funeral expenditure is the best way to bury the deceased. The research had revealed that most black families in the townships believe that the bigger the attendance of mourners at a funeral, the more it brings fulfilment of blessings to the family. The researcher explained that from the literature review those traditional African funerals were not expensive events.

Most of the people agreed to this world view, but could not see their way back to simple funerals. They were also aware and believed of the predominant world view that says the best way to bury the deceased is through giving them the best expensive funerals. The co-researchers could not respond clearly when the researcher had asked them; ‘What would happen if you bought a cheaper coffin?’ Will there be any guilt feeling? The answer was, ‘It has to be that way so as to give the dead a good send off. The belief that the ancestors will be angry with them came up. The question posed to the researcher was “How can you expect us to bury someone we loved so much, so cheaply?” At this point the researcher realized that for these families a cheap coffin for the deceased was a symbol of cheap love. The interview at this time has shown that most of the families see nothing wrong with this world view.

In analysing this view, whether the world view makes sense or not was out of the question. What families were interested in, was to bury their loved ones at the end. Furthermore it was to show the community how they loved the deceased. Most of the families were aware and agreed with the researcher with the reality that funerals were getting expensive. Most of those interviewed still believe that spending particularly for certain things like expensive coffins, is the best way to give rest to the deceased. Nel had suggested that funeral undertakers should encourage their clients to spend up to the limit of their considered buying

power as ‘cheap’ or ‘well-below-average casket is considered by them as a ‘strange’ or ‘disrespectful’ send off to the deceased.

Although they are aware, there was no connection between their world view and reality that these factors are going to contribute to poverty.

These families still believe strongly that failure to bury as they should will lead the deceased to withhold blessings, for them it is the truth and burying deceased this way does work. They were aware that some families spend excessively, but do not experience blessings as it is believed. Instead they get more impoverished by performing rituals which also cost money. They do this as a way of trying harder to please the deceased.

The researcher had established that funerals are still very important event in black African families with great community support to the bereaved. However, in the changing environment it is becoming more difficult for poor families to cope financially. The traditional African funeral has taken different form and shape because of factors mentioned in Chapter Five.

The researcher believed that there was an error in the world view that excessive funeral expenditure was a means to please the ancestors. However, the families failed to see the error for themselves. They did not feel uncomfortable about their current view on excessive funeral expenditure. The researcher felt that there was no hope after the interview that they were seriously thinking about dealing with this phenomenon in the future.

### **6.2.1. Reflection on the practicing of Pollard’s theory**

The researcher is of the view that it is not a theory that can be used effectively with families you meet for the first time. In order for the theory to be effective, the pastoral care-giver needs to be a like a shepherd who lives among the sheep. A researcher such as the researcher is perceived as a stranger who is coming to steal (John 10:10). There was a time during the process when there was no longer a dialogue. The researcher had to deal with the temptation of advice, instead of helping them to see the problem for themselves and come up with the solution. There was also fear expressed by some people that the researcher, being a priest, might use this research to impose his views on what they believe to be good funeral. The researcher did not want to pursue the matter further with these families as the researcher felt they were not opening up. They were feeling bad about the excessive funeral expenditure and not about inadequacies of their world view and reality. The main question that remains in the researcher's mind is, whether the issue of the curse from the ancestors is still the problem.

The researcher believes that the pastoral care-giver should not rush to replace the held world view with his or her own even if it needs to be replaced. A held world view is not like replacing a broken part of the engine in a car easily. Pollard states; "For we are asking them to rethink some fundamental, underlying beliefs and assumptions upon which they have based their lives on until now" (1997:73). Pollard suggests that, "people must be given the time they need, being too fast can be traumatic" (1997:73). A world view is what people believe in and would need perseverance on the part of the pastoral care-giver until families see excessive funeral expenditure as an unrealistic practice. Positive deconstruction demands that a pastoral care-giver to be a patient, participating, observer in the life of those who spend excessively for funerals. The main aim is to get real facts why, and then develop a pastoral method that will help care-givers.

Pollard suggests that the pastoral care-giver should find out whether care seekers are committed to the Lord as a way of entering their space. This approach is suitable when you want to enter into the world of those who are struggling with faith issues. The researcher could not use it as it was not relevant for the purpose of the research. The researcher's purpose was to find out why they spend excessively for funerals which leads to debt and poverty. The researcher assumed that, because most of them were members of the church, there they were committed. However Pollard suggests that whatever you find as an error in using the theory of deconstruction, you do not criticize co-researchers. By not criticizing them, that is a very good and positive step to begin to help them. The aim is help them move into a positive direction.

When the researcher met them for the first time, the aim was to establish the factors that leads to excessive funeral expenditure. The main reason according to the research is to impress. It was during the second interview that the researcher realized that families were caught up in the new ways of doing funerals. On the other hand they need to try and fulfil the requirements of traditional African funeral rites within this changing social environment. The families want to feel safe in both. The first is that you need to spend a lot for the funeral in order to show the society that you respect the deceased. The other is you pretend to do it for the deceased in order that you should stay blessed by the ancestors. The researcher has become aware that there is more to spending excessively for funerals. The families were struggling to come to terms with the fact that they may try to meet the expectations, both of the deceased and mourners through excessive spending but the reality is that they are left in a worse situation than before.

### 6.3. Awareness

The pastoral care needs to be aware of the new and developing phenomenon in the black townships in particular funerals. The research has revealed that the local church is no longer the only stake holder as far as funeral arrangements are concerned. There are more service providers needed during the time of bereavement such as funeral undertakers, caterers, organizations, burial societies and community. The family, the “sheep” during this time of bereavement is always surrounded by many shepherds (from within and from outside) who will like to show care. It is therefore important for the local church not disregard these care providers because they are equally important in journeying with the family at the time of bereavement. The pastoral care-giver does not have all the resources needed by the family at this time. It is therefore the researcher’s view that the pastoral care-giver should look for ways of how to partner with other care-givers in order to make sure that the ‘sheep’ is not left with debt because of excessive funeral expenditure. In short, a lot of messages are given to the family.

At the time when the researcher met these families for the first interview, they were much open to answering the questions and were involved in the conversation. But during the second interview there was less participation. The researcher can only assume the fact that the researcher was now elected Bishop within the church and that had an impact. The researcher thought they were thinking that the researcher might be having a particular motive and may also use this in the denomination to criticize excessively funeral expenditure. At this point the researcher realized that the barrier has been created by the new role. The mistake the researcher did was that there was no warning at the first interview that there might be a possibility of a second interview. It was during the research that the researcher saw a need for calling the co-researchers as way of trying to come up with a pastoral response to this

phenomenon of excessive funeral expenditure. The researcher could see that they were really struggling to come to terms with the fact that their world view was being challenged by the findings. The researcher was also struggling at this point because the position that the researcher assume seems to have become an obstruction.

The researcher would like to encourage the pastoral care-givers to have the theology of awareness.

#### **6.4. Pastoral Attitude**

In Chapter Two the researcher mentioned that pastoral care-giver should reflect on the life and demeanour of Christ. The attitude to pastoral ministry should follow the example of our Lord Jesus Christ who proclaimed himself as the Good Shepherd.

During the interviews the researcher realized that he had to deal, not only with his own assumptions, perceptions and excessive funeral expenditure. This led the researcher to examine his interior attitudes that cropped up from time to time. The researcher was confronted with the fact that at the beginning of the research he had a judgmental attitude and saw poor families as “money wasters” not as sheep needing help. Anger was becoming part of the interview. Labelling them this way is not a blessing to the families and does not bring abundant life (John 10:10). This attitude is not good for a caring leader who has to play the role of a pastoral care giving by guiding, healing, reconciling and bringing hope to poor families. As shepherds of the flock, pastoral care-givers are to care for the sheep at the cost of themselves. Gerkin encourages, “pastoral care-givers to walk with the oppressed and hurting people among enemies, even into the valley of the shadow of death.” Like Jesus, the pastoral care-giver should risk his or her life to seek and save the one straying sheep (Gerkin

1997:27). The researcher believes that the pastoral care-giver needs to lay down his or her negative interior attitudes.

In order to improve the situation of the poor, the pastoral care-giver needs to avoid exploiting the sheep, as do thieves. Rather, the pastor must come to bless the sheep with abundant life (John 10:10&14). The researcher believes that the pastoral care using the process of caring needs to know that poor families are sheep with minds. In other words they are able to make decisions. Although they need a shepherd, it does not necessarily mean they are weak. Being traumatized during bereavements, grieving, feeling lonely and pain is not a sign of weakness, but an opportunity for the pastoral caregiver to show mercy, compassion and love. So therefore the researcher will like to propose that the pastoral caregiver should not come with the attitude of “I am strong” and you are “weak”. I know – you don’t know. This attitude can also be exploitive and manipulative and may finally block the process of caring. The pastor should have the humility and use his researchery to heal, not to hurt; to build up, not to destroy the sheep. This attitude is called by the researcher as ‘knowledge imperialism’.

The other attitude that the pastoral caregiver has to be aware of is what the researcher calls the “spiritual or doctrinal imperialism”. This is when the caregiver comes with the attitude to impose what she or he believes. In this case it would be the pastoral caregiver coming with certain beliefs about the bible and what it says about funerals. This approach in the researcher’s experience has led to families becoming defensive and argumentative.

In the informal conversations the researcher had about this thesis, wrong cultural perception emerged. Most of these informal conversations have taken place in a parish where the researcher was a priest in charge with parishioners of mostly western decent. They did not have the knowledge of traditional African funeral practices, which led them to the perception that excessive funeral expenditure is linked to superstition and the worshiping of ancestors.

This insight has not and will not help the pastoral care-giver to enter the world of the poor families that are facing the problem of poverty due to excessive funeral expenditure.

The researcher's opinion that pastoral caregivers are expected to fulfil his or her calling by promoting interior attitudes that will reflect the attitudes of the Great Shepherd of the sheep-Jesus Christ. In order to give care to others, the pastoral caregivers need to give careful attention to negative interior attitudes in themselves. If we want to communicate God's love, grace and care and liberation to the poor families who spend excessively we would do so by treating them with every respect they deserve and avoid any form of imposition of knowledge, culture, church doctrine and spirituality. These are some of the attitude that emerged in the interview.

### **6.5. Working towards a new praxis**

Before considering suggestions for new praxis in black township funerals, the researcher dealt with Practical Theology and its objects; the mission of the church and the importance of the pastoral care-giver.

### **6.6. Practical Theology**

This discussion of the issue that Practical theology raises, are intended to build a theoretical base for the main question of this research. The question is why poor families in Black Township spend excessive amounts of money on funerals despite living in poverty.

### 6.6.1. Object of Practical Theology

The question that needs to be answered is what is the object of practical theology and its objectives?

Practical theology is a ‘theory of action’ and is not limited to the action of the institutional church only, but has “society as its horizon” (Heitink 1999:9). The question may be asked whether the object of practical theology is the action of God, or of human beings. The answer is more subtle than ‘either-or’ for, God works through human beings. Divine action does not do away with human action, but makes it possible (Heitink 1999:194). In other words although God is the main actor, it does not mean an invitation to human beings for passivity and non-participation. To bring about transformation in the community is God’s action but also human participation. The researcher believes that as he engages in listening to the stories of poor families, will begin to deepen the understanding of what the kingdom of God is all about, and what does it mean for the poor to be called people of God.

What kind of action is contemplated here? Furet (1987:260) speaks of “the communicative actions that both serve the kingdom of God that has come and is ‘yet to come’ in the modern society. In other words, this means communicating of the gospel is not only for member of the church gathered for worship but also meeting their needs as they re-enter a world that is constantly changing. Heitink (1999:147) prefers the term “*meditative action of the Christian tradition within the context of modern society*”

It is therefore important to understand that all ministries (preaching, worship, service, pastoral care, management and administration, teaching, fellowship of believers, deeds of mercy, justice and ecumenism) are communicative acts in the name of God (Nel 2005:369-372). Thus believer’s actions should communicate God’s will. Practical theologians are to encourage believers to act to intentionally intervene, under the control of God who acts. They

do so by determining strategies of action that will influence situation in ways that are desirable.... (Osmer 2008:4). In this research the researcher's desired result is to help poor families to spend within their means as they bury their family members.

### **6.6.2. Summary of practical theology**

In summary practical theology is a 'theory of action' that seeks to pay attention to people's various life situations and contexts. That helps believers to participate in God's action to bring about joy and hope, especially of those who are poor and afflicted in any way. "In order to understand people's situations and context practical theologians gather information, draw on theories of art and science, use theological concepts to interpret particular situations and determining strategic actions to bring about change" (Osmer 2008:4).

Practical theology encourages the Church to be involved in holistic mission. The authentic mission is a comprehensive activity which embraces evangelism and social action, and refuses to let them be treated as separate entities. However John Stott says that, "during the last thirty years, there has been considerable disagreement about these two responsibilities. There have been those who have tended to focus exclusively on evangelism to the neglect of the social need, whether food for the hungry or freedom and justice for the poor and the oppressed. Thus, the evangelical stereotype has been to spiritualize the gospel, and deny its social implication. He further refers to others who hold a different view who tended to neglect evangelism, or have tried to reinterpret in terms of socio-political action such as the humanization of communities or liberation of the downtrodden" (1992:338)

The researcher believes that the mission of the Church is to be holistic. Which would mean to overcome the divided between the social (caring for the poor and seeking justice) and the

gospel and salvation (saving soul). The researcher is of the opinion that the Church should reach out with the gospel in both word (proclamation) and action (deed). This approach will follow the example of Jesus who came to do the work of his Father (John 17:4), “to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and to the blind new sight, to set the down trodden free. And proclaim the years of the Lords favour” (Luke 4:18). The challenge therefore is to avoid over emphasizing one part of the mission over the other that is evangelism over social action and vice versa.

The aim of this research is to help the clergy to be involved not only in the spiritual needs of families, but also to be part of the conversation about their practical needs of saving money for the living. The purpose is to help clergy to think constructively about the reality of their situation and not to make decisions for them.

### **6.7. The mission of the Church**

The mission of the Church is to be holistic in approach. Sider *et al* (2002: 45-47) suggests that;” the Church should be involved in the holistic ministry to overcome the divide between the social (caring for the poor and seeking justice), and the gospel and salvation (saving of the soul). The Church should reach out with gospel in both word (proclamation) and deed (demonstration)” Louw (2009:127). Pieterse suggests that, “the church should move towards ‘functional’ ecclesiology i.e. relevant to the most existential issues in the life (being functions). These functions should express real life: *cura vitae*, meaning ‘the healing of life’. These acts are intentionally aimed at intervening in a situation with the view to transforming the individual, in the congregation and in society” (Pieterse 2004:9).

In this way, “the traditional African burial rites or funeral, where the deceased was laid to rest inexpensively and with dignity, is now replaced by a new culture of spending a lot of money.” The discipline is often referred to as a theology of crises and a practically oriented science (Heitink 1993:3,104). This is because it deals with the practical realities of excessive funeral expenditure that leads to poverty because families are financially indebted to an institution or a person. “The crises they face dominate their lives so much that it seems impossible to escape from debt. These families feel helpless and have accepted and subscribe to the philosophy of excessive credit as a way of life. Each time these families enter into a transaction on credit, they give away power. They lose control and freedom, to some institution or person called the creditor, who has control over, and entitlement to, the fruits of their labour” (Voster 1996: IX). Some of these families live in absolute poverty, “a situation where the poor are so poor that their next meal means the difference between life and death” (Swanepoel (co-editor de Beer F) 2003:3).

“The prolonged poverty as a result of excessive expenditure for funerals affects family’s desire for security and comfort. What is happening, however, is that the great majority of these poor families are experiencing the opposite- less security and comfort? In fact, in many instances they face hunger, disease and starvation” (Mbeki 2009:13).

In this context, the holistic ministry of the Church would mean, ministering to those who take advantage of the vulnerable poor and bereaved families be it undertakers or financial institutions. The current situation in South Africa is the main issue of liberation of previously disadvantaged from financial oppression and poverty. The Church should aim at liberating the poor families from all forces that hinders them from living fully as human beings.

#### **6.7.1. The importance of the Church and pastoral care-giver**

The local church is God's gift to us. "Therefore the Church is God's gift to the community. The purpose of the existence of the church is of significance" (Nel 2005:15). According to Hendriks (2004:21) "the ecclesiology should focus on the congregation or, as we often prefer to call them "faith communities" which are the basic building blocks of the Church" Poor families that spend excessively in funerals are part of these faith communities. Therefore the pastoral care give cannot ignore the plight of faith community. The local church is of utmost importance as it has through its pastoral care-givers potential of achieving God's purpose in its context. Pieterse is of the view that, "the local congregation in a given context must be the expression of the humanity in Christ" (2009:7). Families in the black township need to be helped in order to fully experience their humanity in Christ by being guided in spending reasonably for funerals that won't lead them to poverty. The local church is a place for training and nurturing disciples who are good stewards of the resources God has given. Therefore pastoral care-givers provide new praxis for poor and rich families who spend excessively, will make them disciples who serve. These disciples will then serve, being rooted in Christ and undertaken in the name of Christ, by providing for members of the family who are left behind after the burial. The pastoral care-giver within the local church is to create an environment for God's renewal to happen. According to the researcher renewal in this context liberating and equipping families who spend excessively for funerals to be good stewards of their financial.

The common view is that pastoral care is about bringing hope to the people of God. However there needs to be an understanding that; God is the main caregiver: the pastoral care-givers are his partners and poor families that spend excessively are objects of that care. Therefore the pastoral care-giver in his or her action, do all things as a result of obedience to the command of the Great Shepherd to care for the sheep. "The idea that God is the main care-giver can be misleading. For others it might mean an invitation to pastoral care-givers for

passivity or non-participation in caring for bereaved families who spend excessively for funerals.” Pastoral care cannot happen for these families if the care-givers do not work and take their responsibilities (Nel 2005:16 cf. Hendriks 1992, Gemeente vertel, page8). Veling defines practical theology, “as it names suggests, is less a thing to be defined than it is an activity to be done” (2005:4). Pastoral care is a matter of doing and not thinking (Rakuba 2011: 215 Cf. Pattison 1988). The researcher’s is of the opinion that new praxis cannot be achieved by prayer, researches and strategic planning but by practice.

The concept of caring is articulated clearly by the Canon and Constitution of the Anglican Church. For an example in the ordination of priests and Bishop of the Anglican Church, those ordained are charged to take care of members. In the installation of the rector he or she is encouraged cure and care for the souls of parishioners. Caring of souls seems to have been a feature of the life of the Christian Community from the earliest times (Rakuba 2011: 215cf Pattison 1988). Care of the souls does not only mean proclamation of the word but also to guide them in dealing with issues that may cause them hurt and destroy their souls (Anglican Prayer Book 1989).

God calls pastoral care-giver to enter into a partnership as they are key strategic partners (all though not equal) for the pastoral care ministry to happen. The pastoral care-giver needs to understand that God is caring for His people, bringing His kingdom by means of pastoral care-giver, led by the Spirit, in their participation to become what they are already.

### **6.7.2. Identity and self-knowledge**

There are questions which humanity has been asking as they wrestle with self-knowledge, questions like; “who am I”, “What does it mean to be human?”

The research has made the researcher realize that there is more to excessive funeral expenditure. The research problem question is “Why do people spend a lot of money when burying their beloved”? The findings have shown that apart from external factors there is a superseding factor which is to impress. These findings have raised the question of identity and self-worth for the researcher. It is more than observing the traditional African funeral rites and rituals. The researcher believes that the poor are trying very hard to define who they are in an evolving and changing social and economic context in South Africa. Poverty in the present social context of South Africa is seen as; “As being less human” by the poor themselves. The researcher observed that there was a serious challenge even for the rich who spend excessively for funerals or any other event. Who in the researcher’s view, surmise that they are “better humans”? The question which still remains for the researcher, “how can the poor use funerals with resources they don’t have to prove the point that they are somebody. Does the funeral demonstrate their importance? This has made the researcher to conclude that excessive funeral expenditure is a symptom of the real problem which is loss of self-worth and identity. This has led the researcher to re-look at the topic for this research. The research has led the researcher to consider changing the topic from “Excessive funeral expenditure in the black township: as a pastoral challenge” to “Defining identity and self-worth in the black townships: a pastoral challenge”.

In most of African cultures and communities, when it comes to identity, the main emphasis is on knowing who you are first, particularly in relation to your community. There is a practice in most of African communities which is called ‘*go ipoka*’ (meaning self-praise) where individuals express who they are and where they originate from. In the community where the

researcher grew up, it is common knowledge that people normally call each other by the name that identifies their clan. For an example the former president of the republic of South Africa, Mr Nelson Mandela, is common called “Madiba” as a way of explaining to which clan he belongs. In the black communities, if someone does not know who they are, in terms of family background, they are considered, in many circles, to be a disgrace.

Suggit suggests that identity finding is not a phenomenon of a certain nation but that; “From their earliest human beings have been interested in the world in which they live and the meaning of their existence. We start with ourselves and our context as human beings, so that we are led to consider who we really are and the values which we claim to share”. (2007:20) Ratzinger is of the view that the key obstacle to Jesus ministry was the question about his provenance, as an inquiry after his deeper origin and hence his true identity (2012:2). The Synoptic gospels tell of similar disputes about his identity that arose in the synagogue at the Nazareth, Jesus’s hometown (Luke 4:21). The researcher wants to suggest that pastoral care-giver needs to be aware of families that spend excessively for funerals might rise quietly or loudly the question of the pastoral care-givers origin. This might be out of genuine concern to facilitate the conversation or it can be an obstacle for giving care as they did to Jesus ( Mark 6:3). The questioning might be a form of denial of the errors in the practice of excessive funeral expenditure.

The pastoral care-giver should not only encourage these families about their true identity in Christ, but to also listen to who they are and share who is he or she is. The researcher is of the view that if the pastoral care share his or her origin and identity (which would also include cultural), will be useful tool to enter the world of those they want help. It was also the researcher’s observation that the pastoral care-givers should allow those he or she cares for to enter pastoral care-giver’s own world. The researcher is aware that it is not a common

practice for the doctor to allow the patient in his or her world. The researcher argues that this might be a way to let the sheep know the Shepherd and the visa versa.

The shepherd who does not open up to the sheep will be treated with suspicion by the sheep. That is why the church needs to continue growing interest in the field of understanding by studying people's cultural background within the practical theology. This will lead to a growing realization that individuals have identity. We also need to know that over time communities develops new cultures as a way of becoming community in the new changing context. They would define their identity of being a community as the persistence of a set of beliefs, values, symbols, patterns, stories and styles that makes community distinctive. For Hendriks 'identity' describes the personality that compromises a number of characteristics, which distinguish one individual from another. Hendriks suggests that, "the church needs to take time to talk to its members about their cultures and identity" (2005:105). Pastoral care-giver will interact with other cultures which are not the same in the various contexts in which they minister. In short, to pastorally care for the poor, one need the two worlds (that is; of the care-giver and care receiver) to develop and work towards healing.

### **6.7.3. Restoration of dignity and self-worth**

While the researcher has concentrated on finding the reason why poor families spend excessively for the funerals, obviously the majority of them being in the black townships of South Africa, however the phenomenon is also among the rich. In the townships the people with more financial resources tend to also display how much money they have by having lavish funerals for their loved ones. This is also the trend among leaders within the most of the spheres of our community life include the clergy. The Anglican Diocese of Johannesburg has given certain guidelines with regard to clergy funerals. It has been suggested that

simplicity should be the mark of the day- a simple coffin, simple clothing, and simple meal, all of which will be in within the means of the family.

The clergy and bishops ought to also stipulate in their will, or some other written instruction, precisely what sort of funeral arrangement they desire. This will protect the spouse from the pressure of society or family. The researcher has observed that recently that clergy and bishop's funeral are among the most expensive. The researcher has not been able to establish the reasons for this but would think that it is also the question of wanting to show the people which in the researcher's opinion are the symptom of real issue which is struggling with identity and self-worth to humanity.

Edward Wimberly, in his two books, *Claiming God Reclaiming Dignity* 2003 and, *Moving from Shame to Self-Worth* 1999, deals with issues of losing dignity and self-worth because of the unexpected change in life. The pastoral care-giver needs to be aware of the number of challenges facing the care seekers. There are global issues that are common to all world communities. Hendriks gives, "the examples of religious pluralism and reality of diversity, globalization, technology, human sexuality, global climate change and most importantly global economic meltdown. He further suggests that there are specific issues that ravage Africa. These are political turmoil, HIV/AIDS, poverty, suffering corruption, economic injustice, lack of integrity in the leadership and unemployment"

(2004:15; See Cloete 2009:87-91). There are also issues of education, reconciliation after apartheid, lack of skills, low wages, the gap between the poor and the rich. Most recently in South Africa, there have experience people crossing borders from other countries looking for greener pastures. The perception that foreigners are coming to take away the jobs of South Africa has led to 'xenophobic attack'. These are the challenges the pastoral care-giver are facing today in South Africa, however after the research the researcher was convinced that

one of the major challenges, without taking others likely, is restoration of dignity and self-worth.

Dealing with insights from the book of Job, Wimberly discusses how Job, a once prosperous and highly esteemed member of his of his community suddenly find himself poor and a “*no body*”. The respect he commanded from his family and community evaporated over a short space of time and found him in a very compromising position. This situation is very rife in the sudden loss of employment and dignity by many people. The major problem here is that people internalize the values of social class to which they belong and once that status is lost, it becomes difficult to face the community. The challenge for the pastoral care-givers is how we help people to externalize the values of social class.

Some people commit financial blunders by making loans to bury their loved ones for the fear of being considered less important in the community. The pastoral care-giver is to help the care seeker that excessive funeral expenditure cannot restore their dignity and self-worth. Poverty caused by excessive funeral expenditure might get people depressed and no longer feel God’s presence in their lives. They become empty and the reason for living is no longer there. They feel degraded and worthless. The issue needs to be tackled pastorally through educating the clergy. It is therefore important for clergy to understand the context in which they are operating.

## **6.8. Methods to be used to achieve new praxis**

### **6.8.1. Preaching and Teaching**

The local church is invited by God as His creation, to communicate the gospel by word and deed. Nel makes a point that, “each local church consists of communicative acts that serves

the communication of the gospel” ((2005:2005). God continues to come to his people through His word. The communication actions of believers are harnessed by God through the work of the Holy Spirit. For First this theory suggests that each activity of the local church has its meaning, foundation, and goal in the action of God (1986:134). God commands every believer to “Go and make disciple...” (Matthew 28:19). So God expect the local church, and every member of it, to be the agent of salvation in the world. The researcher believes that helping poor families to bury family members is making good disciples who look after financial resources.

The local church as a ‘communication center’ has been given the means to fulfil its pastoral role as an intermediary of God’s coming in the form of ministries. Preaching (*kerugma*) and teaching (*didache*) are modes of ministry that to can be used to communicate salvation (First 1986:60). Salvation for poor families that spend excessively for the funerals will mean to help them realize the negative consequences of their practice. Preaching and teaching are means that are to be of service to the Triune God, service to one another, and service to the world ( Nel 2005:30).

In dealing with the subject of preaching on the context of the poverty, HJC Pieterse identifies very important steps that preachers should consider when applying the text in the context of the listeners (2004:81-92). These steps are discussed in the following paragraphs.

### **6.8.2. To approach the bible in the perspective of the marginalized**

The preacher should convince listeners that indeed God is nearer and is able to help them out of misery and that he is on the side of the poor. The Old Testament teaches us that God has always been on the side of the poor, and that he showed no particular biasness towards them.

God was touched by the cries of the oppressed Israelites in Egypt and remembered his covenant He had made with Jacob (Exodus 2: 23-25). According to the researcher, the preacher in this context would need to influence families to partners with God who wants to help them out of misery. The preacher needs to persuade poor families who spend excessively not to put themselves back into misery by spending excessively for funerals or any other rites of passage in their life. The researcher believes that by continuing with this practice, they are making their marginalized position worse. The preacher, as a pastoral care-giver, should help poor families believe that their poor background can be changed by acknowledging their life's reality and spend within their means when burying their beloved.

### **6.8.3. The preacher's need to experience the situation of the poor existentially**

Pieterse continues to argue that a true preacher is the one who understands the situation of the people he preachers to. It is therefore important for the preacher to be part of the daily life of the people and the community in the context of their poverty stricken situation. For the pastoral care-giver who preaches through the pulpit about giving care to the bereaved, without having experienced the life of those in the pews is futile exercise. The preaching pastoral care-giver who lives outside the community will not be able to contextualize his/her message. He or she will depend on hearsay or the media. It has been the researcher's experience in most Church synods and conferences, which resolutions are taken uninformed. It is important that the preacher should first be able to have a conversation with the affected parishioners on their experience on a particular issue like excessive funeral expenditure. Experiencing the life of the bereaved would mean meaningful dialogue with them. The researcher will elaborate on this point later

### **6.9. Pastoral letter versus meaningful dialogue**

One of the aims of the research is to encourage meaningful dialogue between the Christian theological tradition and African funeral practice.

In order that the pastoral care-giver achieves the desire to help the care seeker, the process to achieve that should be participatory. This would mean entering into a meaningful dialogue with families trapped with the extravagant funeral practice. Together they should discern the will of God. Meaningful dialogue will make both the care seeker and the pastoral care-giver to discern what is wrong, or what should happen, because they are equal part of the of the solution that will benefit both.

The pastoral care-giver needs to remind them that it is natural for people to react badly to change. It is the job of the pastoral care-giver to create a vision for a better situation where they would be out of the trap of poverty. The researcher is of the opinion that it is through these meaningful dialogues that the pastoral care-givers would come to realise what is happening in the life of the parishioners. This attitude would create a best opportunity to minister to the bereaved at the same time deal with the practice with great sensitivity. Mulphur is of the view that leading this ministry of bringing about new praxis will need the pastoral care-giver to have personal assessment of him or herself. Self-assessment will have a long term effects determining whether she or he is able to give manage the new praxis (Mulphur 1993:45).

This approach will help the pastoral care-giver to be trusted by the care seekers which will make it easier to offer them the help they need. The Church needs to make efforts to understand the cultural beliefs and practices in order to engender pastoral care and the Christian living. The presence of the pastor should not only be during the funeral, but also be a continuous meaningful dialogue over issues of life including excessive funeral expenditure.

The researcher's interview with Bishop Brian Germond as indicated in Chapter Four, the researcher obtained guidelines for funerals in the Diocese of Johannesburg (See Appendix - H). In addition to these guidelines the researcher obtained a document from the Diocese of Bloemfontein on Christian approach to funerals (See Appendix - K). In the conversation with Bishop Brian the researcher realized that there was a concern in the Anglican Diocese of Johannesburg that many families are rendered penniless by funerals where huge amounts are spent. The Diocese of Bloemfontein has passed a resolution at its Synods opposing extravagant funerals. Recently at the synod of Anglican Church of Southern Africa there was a motion tabled which raised concern on excessive funeral expenditure and new phenomenon.

It was the researcher's observation that these pastoral letters offering guidelines were done without a meaningful dialogue with the affected parishioners. Although these guidelines are of significant importance they do not provide a model for the clergy to minister to the families caught in this phenomenon. The researcher believes that issuing of these guidelines will be active as far as they could be. The most and effective way would be for the Church leadership to enter into a meaningful dialogue with church members. Parishioners, especially from the black townships, will always treat these pastoral guidelines with great suspicion and especially when a Bishop is of the western descent. He or she will be accused of cultural imperialism and naivety.

The researcher was of the view that whatever guidelines is offered by the church, these should be motivated by the conviction that there are positives in the traditional African funeral practices. The funeral services provide opportunities for extending pastoral care to the bereaved as well as proclamation of the gospel. The guidelines, though well meaning, have been largely disregarded. There are different reasons, the common reason is the regard and

assumed efficacy of the local traditional beliefs and practices regarding funerals and the irrelevance of the guidelines to the local situation. Pastoral guidelines given by the church, needs to be encouraging and less condemning and encourage meaningful dialogue.

The research has also revealed that the clergy themselves are aware of this occurrence of excessive funeral expenditure. They are, however, caught up with different roles as prophets, priest, individuals, and family member part of a changing traditional African community. “They need to be prophets who speak for the Christian tradition and its concern for response to the voice of God. They need to be priests who lead the community in its cultic worship and be the wise one who offers guidance to the people in their daily affairs of individuals and family life” (Gerkin 1997:27). The clergy interviewed found themselves having to deal with tension in their different roles at the time of bereavement. It is not only about attending to the life of the community but also themselves.

### **6.9.1. Meaningful dialogue with the clergy**

The researcher would like to recommend that the clergy should have regular meetings for a “meaningful dialogue about how to deal with dialogical tension and interaction among the three nexus points of the schema” (Gerkin 1997:27). It is stipulated in the funeral guidelines of the Diocese of Johannesburg that clergy funerals are diocesan affairs (See Appendix - H). The question that the clergy interviewed wrestled with was this very point. Does it mean when they die, their funeral will be less family affair? Creating this forum will give careful attention to the needs and problems pastoral care faces when death occurs in their own or the parishioner’s.

In the interview with the clergy it emerged that the ministering to the bereaved demands more time. This is on top of the other pastoral responsibilities. According to the Canon and Constitution of the Anglican Church the clergy are supposed to play a very important role in

the parish. “Incumbents are recognized as being leaders, ordained and set apart by God and His Church for the oversight of the pastoral charge to which they are appointed and particularly in the area of preaching, teaching and liturgical worship ( Canon and Constitution of SA 2001: 59-60). At the same time he or she needs together with the leadership of the parish make sure that good administration happens (See Morea’s Master’s Thesis).

Most of the clergy in the Anglican Parishes in the township do not have extra members for administrative and pastoral support. Generally, during preparation for the funeral in the black community, families expect that the church should be seen to be caring. The lack of attention or involvement, thereof, of the clergy will be perceived as uncaring and un-supporting. The presence of the pastoral care-giver as believed by many parishioners helps them to cope with bereavement. The researcher is of the view that maybe because of the pastoral and administrative load; excessive funeral expenditure might not be a priority as a pastoral concern. In proposing a new praxis, the researcher needed to be aware of the social and ministry context that influence indirectly prioritizing functions or roles in the black township churches.

### **6.9.2. Meaningful dialogue with organisation**

In most congregations of different denominations in the black township there are groups like the Mothers Union, Anglican Women’s Fellowship and Anglican Men’s Fellowship and others. For an example, the Mothers Union is a worldwide organisation of the Anglican Communion. According to the booklet (United in Prayer 2002:25) it stated purpose for existence is to promote Christian marriage and family life. As an organisation interested in the well-being of the family, Mothers Union is directly affected by excessive funeral expenditure which is loss to families. In fact, one of the Mothers Union objectives is “to help those whose life are met with adversity” (United in Prayer 2002:25) it is a common practice

that Mothers Union members consistently visit bereaved shortly after an occurrence of death to console, listen to the bereaved person's story, offer prayers and help practically. Other groups mentioned earlier would follow the same pattern when a member of the congregation dies. It is there that the pastoral care-givers enters into a dialogue with such groups from the church and use their aims and purpose to achieve objective of their dialogue. These are important team that will, once they have understood the need for less expenditure, will easily pass it on to their members.

### **6.9.3. Meaningful dialogue with service providers**

During funerals these days, the church is not the only service provider. The church cannot provide the support that family may need during the bereavement. The help the church can offer is limited. The church needs to seek ways of how they can be partners with for instance, funeral undertakers. The researcher believes that the church needs to move from viewing funeral undertakers as enemies because this attitude will not help confront the problem of excessive funeral expenditure. Hendriks has done studies on congregations in Africa. One of the major problems he has come across is what he calls "Conspiracy of Silence" (Hendriks 2004:171). ). He elaborates by saying that it when people are being silent about an issue such as sexual misconduct; stolen funds; or misappropriation of funds and not confront the problem, it will lead to gossip and misconceptions. As much as it is important that we should confront each other, church and funeral undertakers, the dialogue should be a meaningful one. It needs to happen in such a way that it will in the end help poor families that spend excessively for funerals. The church cannot walk away because of perception it has that funeral undertakers are part of the problem. We need to see the as valuable partners and bringing about hope towards a better life for poor families by spending less on funerals. Both the church and service providers cannot respond to this phenomenon by simply walking away

from each other and continue with conspiracy of silence. Enabling effective and meaningful dialogue with all stakeholder during bereavement, will serve to help church understand the real situation parishioners face, and in the process help families in the black townships to avoid excessive funeral expenditure. Other stake holders are leaders of burial societies, caterers, and other service providers.

#### **6.9.4.. Meaningful dialogue with parishioners**

Earlier the researcher suggested preaching as one of the means that cannot be used to bring about new praxis. It is the researcher's observation that the preacher in the pulpit and the parishioner in the pews should enter in a meaningful dialogue. The pastoral care-giver cannot hope to achieve his or her mission without meeting parishioners in forums where they can discuss excessive funeral expenditure. It is important that in these conversations, there is an intention on the part of the pastoral care-giver to always include the young people.

Meaningful dialogues between the pastoral care-givers and others, challenges the church's readiness to listen. The church cannot always speak. If we can't listen we cannot be listened to. Gibbs states that, "the church's inability to listen is one of the causes of the resistance to the gospel" (Gibbs 2001:59). Pieterse elaborates on this point by saying that, "if the church wants to bring the liberating message of the gospel of Jesus to humanity that is subject to pain and suffering and other struggles, we need to choose the way we communicate"(Pieterse 2001). The task of the pastoral care-giver is not to force people to change their praxis, but persuade them towards a new one. The church cannot be silent on the issue of excessive expenditure but cannot always speak, but listen.

#### **6.10. Long-term ministry**

The research has brought the researcher to the conclusion that this topic on excessive funeral expenditure is an emotional one. In dealing with excessive funeral expenditure the understanding should be that it is going to be long-term ministry. It is not going to be a quick fix programme to achieve change overnight. These poor families exist within a society. That reality needs to be acknowledged. The process suggested by Pollard of positive Deconstruction will help the pastoral care-giver in this long-term ministry. In all the process the pastoral care-giver should constantly remind him or her-self that helping families to spend within their means is a theological task. There is a fundamental principle that pastoral care is about God's people who are being given hope in a hopeless situation. The process to want to be engaged in the lives of parishioners presupposes that Jesus is Lord of poor families inside and outside the church, and should always be guided by principle.

### **6.11. Dependence on God**

It will be a good at this point to remind ourselves of a theological principle with pastoral care ministry. It is about God's people who are being cared for so that they can be able to function in the service of others in their families and community. It is the understanding that within the pastoral care giving, that the caring is model and should be shaped by Christ. All pastoral care ministries are given by God and all actions of the pastoral care-givers are to communicate the saving love of God through word and action. During this process of helping these families who spend excessively for funerals, it is God who is agent of action.

Pastoral care ministry can only happen within the context of total dependence on God. Nel explains the secret of dependence on God that, "it is not falling asleep and folding our arms and expect God to do everything" (Nel 2005:375). There should be an understanding that,

“the pastoral care-giver is to participate in God’s work. The gift of God is never to exclude God’s people” (Nel 2005:376).

How we express and live our dependence on God is through prayer. The aim of achieving the change of paradigm with regards to excessive funeral expenditure can never take place without prayer. Peterson states that “Prayer is basic”, because it provides the primary language for everything that takes place on the way of Jesus (Peterson 2007:264). This expresses the fact that prayer is not something that is an add-on to Christian life; it also applies equally to pastoral care. The pastoral care-giver should also encourage the pastoral care seekers to develop the living relationship with God. Both the pastoral care seeker and care-giver will get to see each other and the problem, with and through, God’s eye.

Pastoral care-giver should not plan to start the process towards helping these families in isolation from prayer, and then use God to give a rubber stamp of approval. It should be the pastoral care-giver inviting God into partnership in the task but God initiating and partnering with the pastoral care-giver in his or her mission. It is the researcher’s view addressing this phenomenon will need more than just techniques of researching and new models. It is going to need prayers. This should not discourage pastoral care-givers from using their God given skills and God’s guidance.

## **6.12. Summary**

The purpose of this Chapter was to review the aims and objectives of the research. In order to enter in to the world view of the co-researchers about excessive funeral expenditure, the researcher had a second interview with co-researchers. This interview made the researcher aware of certain pastoral attitudes which the pastoral care-givers need to be dealt with as they

seek to bring about healing to care seekers. It also led the researcher to better understand where the co-researchers are in their world view about excessive funerals expenditure.

It was also important that the researcher should remind the reader of the importance of practical theology, the Church and its mission. The researcher as a practical theology student believes that the pastoral care-giver should always remind him or herself of this. When speaking about pastoral care giving and the way pastoral care giving should handle theology, a specific sub-discipline of Practical Theology, provides relevant analytical tools.

Chapter Seven proposes possible methods the researcher see as means to achieve a new praxis.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

## **EVALUATION, REFLECTIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

### **7. Introduction**

The purpose of this final Chapter is to present an overview of the study, and recommendations for further studies. This research has explored the reasons why families in the black townships spend excessively for funerals of their loved ones. The methodology was quantitative and qualitative in orientation and involved semi-structures and unstructured interviews with respondents.

#### **7.1. Evaluation of the study**

The foremost objective of the study was that of excessive funeral expenditure, in the black townships in South Africa. The main research question that has been to address is: ‘why people spend a lot of money when burying their loved ones’? It further dealt with the understanding of the African view of life, reaction to death, burial rites and issues of afterlife. The practice of excessive funeral expenditure has been explained and the reasons, thereof. The respondents in this study had their own experiences on excessive funeral spending within their families. It had appeared that the social expectations, external factors and new social environment are aspects that have led them to excessive funeral expenditure. As a result, they found themselves getting deeper into debt and poverty. This study was to help the clergy assist the families to navigate their journey of moving from poverty by spending within their means for funerals.

## 7.2. Participants

In the research proposal, the researcher stated that he aimed to interview seven families from rural and seven from urban area. However, only five from the rural area, were interviewed. On the day when the interview was to take place, the researcher received a phone call from one family that they have a death in another village. For other family it was because the father of the family had to go work as he is chaplain to the South African Police Services (SAPS). There was police person who was going through a crisis which he had to attend to. A group of workers in the Department of Tourism in Mafikeng, including the main organizer of a local burial society and social club, were interviewed. This was not in the original proposal. The researcher saw the need to get more information on what funeral expenditure in that area. The researcher's intention was to interview three funeral undertakers, but only one was interviewed. The other two funeral undertakers promised but could not be available at the time due to them citing work commitment.

One bishop was interviewed to get the official view of the Diocese; including five clergy, on this phenomenon. Instead of interviewing ten young people as proposed; two groups of young people, because the researcher realized that the first two young people interviewed were not feeling free to share their story. The researcher then approached two clergy to organize their youth ministry for a group interview. In order to hear more stories, three groups of Mothers Union organization and one men's fellowship, were targeted.

The research question explored the participants' different experiences of excessive funeral expenditure and their own views, beliefs and struggles on the phenomenon of excessive funeral expenditure. They were allowed to articulate their experiences in their own way, since

they were viewed as experts in their own journey and practices. In this regard, the aim was to allow individual participants, youth, women and men's group to share their stories, freely. The analysis and interpretations have themes and through the process of use of language and exchange of dialogue, created a new challenge for the researcher. These were recorded in Chapters Four and Five.

Participants were selected objectively, and could not be friends or acquaintances of the researcher, in order to make sure that the researcher's objectivity could be retained as possibly as it can be. Telephone calls were made, followed by the letters of request and consent letters. Letters were also sent to the leaders, for instance the Clergy, to speak to organizational leaders, outlining the study and asking permission to interview them (See Appendix Q). Following the invitation, co-researchers were invited to participate in the study and were given a verbal and a written explanation of the nature of the project.

### **7.3. Method of collection**

The study employed the qualitative and quantitative type of research where in-depth involvement of respondents was sought. The study used more of the qualitative methodologies in order to obtain a broader view of families who are experiencing new of phenomenon of excessive funeral expenditure. Interviews among families, clergy, the bishop, groups and youth, interviewed were used to collect data. For those who were interviewed in Setswana, Sesotho or IsiXhosa, their responses were translated to English.

The research questions were designed to study the respondents' experiences from their own point of view and where they engaged their opinions and worldview. During the interview,

the researcher ensured that the participants were as free as they could be by using more of the unstructured or open-ended method as a way to get people to talk (Bernard 1995:208).

#### **7.4. Brief overview of the study**

Chapter one is about the personal and pastoral motivation that has led to the research.

Chapter Two focuses on the research method and design utilized in this study, and outlined the purpose of the methodology, method, data collection, shepherding model and a theory of positive deconstruction.

Chapter Three focuses on the literature review on the African paradigm about life, death, burial rites and afterlife was dealt with. It also shown the fact that funerals have been and are still important family and community events in the black townships of South Africa. The aim was to deal with the underlying assumption that cultural beliefs, rituals and ceremonies prepare individuals in the eventuality of death and in effect bring about healing to the survivors after the actual occurrence of death.

Chapter Four deal with the scope of the research, statements of limitation and delimitation. Furthermore, the data collected, responses and reflections and the analysis of the target population, were presented. It also established, through qualitative research method, reasons why there is excessive funeral expenditure in both rural and urban areas in the black township

Chapter Five deal with various factors such as commercialization and politicization that affects traditional African burials rites. Some of these factors are posing a challenge to the modern African families in the black townships; in relation to the traditional African funeral rites and burials.

Chapter Six reviews the aims and objectives of the research with aim to explore the Shepherding Model of Gerkin and Pollards Theory of Positive deconstruction. The Chapter also deals with the researcher's pastoral awareness and attitude that might hinder the pastoral care-giver towards healing. The Chapter concludes with suggestions towards working for new praxis

### **7.5. Summary of the findings**

The traditional African funeral was a simple event to bury the dead with specific rituals to be followed. According to Mbiti, the primary aim of traditional African funeral rites “was to give the deceased a smooth transition to the next life as possible, so that the journey to the world of the dead maybe a smooth one” (Mbiti 1991:119). However, the research has shown that there is a shift in this original understanding. Although there people in the black townships who still believe that smooth transition and respecting the dead is important, the evolving society and changing social context has brought new meaning to the traditional African funeral. For an example, research has shown that the primary reason for excessive funeral expenditure is to meet the community and family expectations, taking advantage of those who are infected with HIV. These poor families and the rich impress by purchasing expensive coffins, buying food and paying huge money for caterers. The research has also shown that funeral in the black townships have become a social event for networking; particularly for the young people. The new ritual called “after tears” has become a practice in most funerals in the black townships and is characterized by excessive alcohol consumption, loud music and dancing.

In the interview with the clergy it became apparent that they, themselves, are struggling on how to deal with these new developments. It is because when death appears in their own families, they are also expected to deal with the situation; not as pastors but as Africans. If they do not, then they are labelled as betrayers of the tradition. This challenge for the clergy raises the question of ‘whether the clergy are Christian pastors first, who are African, or Africans first, who are Christians pastors. They are caught between the Christian tradition and the traditional African funeral practices.

Apart from the findings of the research, the researcher touched on other factors that affect traditional African customs, such as: commercialization, politicization, influence of Judeo-Christianity, socialization of funerals, technology and material culture of death and how the body of the deceased is perceived. These factors have posed a challenge to the traditional African funerals. As part of the findings, the researcher will mention these factors in Chapter Four.

## **7.6. Negative factors for practical application as follows:**

### **7.6.1. Lack of exposure and self-understanding**

As part of the findings, the researcher will mention factors that have negative impact of practical application by pastoral care-givers to families who are spending excessively for funerals. In Chapter four, the clergy mentioned that they were aware of the problem of excessive funeral expenditure and that the problem needs to be addressed. There was also the Diocesan expectation of the clergy making sure that parishioners and they themselves have inexpensive funerals. The research has shown that the clergy are struggling, themselves, about being Church pastoral care-givers and community care-givers in the community’s

understanding. The researcher believes that one of the fundamental in helping the clergy deal with excessive funeral expenditure is serious exposure to his or her community; that will lead to a better understanding. If this does not happen, it will create a clash of views between what the Canon and constitution of the Anglican Church expects (See Appendix I) and the Shepherding Model as suggested by Gerkin, in this research (See Chapter Two).

### **7.6.2. Lack of continuous training and acquisition of skills and support**

There was clear understanding among the clergy that funerals are the most important ceremonies in black townships. Failing to journey with families during this time will be perceived as uncaring. They were also aware that care was important during pre-phase, of the bereavement and post funeral. In the Diocese of Johannesburg, where the researcher serves, there are a lot of training programmes for the clergy. The researcher could only assume that there was lack of training and acquiring of skills on how to deal with new phenomena; through a meaningful dialogue with parishioners. The clergy recognized the importance of spiritual support by building their faith in the face of death and grief. They also felt the need to give some practical support to families. However, there was a need to help the clergy to have a new paradigm that would help them deal, not only with issues related to their spiritual trauma, but the financial trauma that might be caused by excessive funeral expenditure. The clergy needs to realise that care for families is from birth till death. Include financial management, such as an advisor, during the time of bereavement will help avoid financial grief that is caused by excessive funeral expenditure. Although the clergy realised the importance of dealing with excessive funeral expenditure, however, it was not a priority. There were no feelings at all that it will be waste of time to address the problem. It was just an issue of too many funerals that the clergy had to conduct, monthly (See Clergy responses Chapter Four).

### **7.7. Limitations of the study**

Firstly, the choice of the study is derived from qualitative and social constructive principles. Due to extensive time and labour intensive nature of the study, only twelve families, three women's and one man's groups, two youth guilds, one funeral undertaker and a burial society group, were interviewed. This small sample only represents a small proportion of families and communities that spend excessively for funerals and therefore, cannot be generalized to a larger population. Although the researcher knew that interviewing more families would bring about more information and assumptions about the research topic, the aim was only on the selected participants in the rural and urban areas.

Secondly, the researcher has however, struggled because of his position as a church leader, and could lead to an error in data collection. The most common error would be "Social desirability effects". It is when the subjects may say what they feel they 'should' believe or what they feel will please the interviewer; rather than what they actually believe (Mouton 2009:107 cf. Stern 1979 65ff). The researcher was conscious of the fact that the research topic itself, is of a very sensitive nature as it is dealing with private behaviour and income of families. It is also dealing with the very important rite of passage that needed to be treated with great sensitivity. As a result, the researcher had to be careful during the interviews that he was not accused of being "insensitive" to traditional African practices, in general.

Thirdly, the researcher acknowledges that the manner in which findings were elicited was coloured by his own inner struggle as an African pastoral care-giver. As an African he was disturbed by the fact that there was a shift in traditional African cultural practices, which the researcher observed that some of them are important and cannot be replaced. As an African

pastoral care-giver, the researcher became aware, after of his anger, after the second interview, when participants did not see the connection between the phenomenon of excessive funeral expenditure and reality that it leads to poverty. The researcher became aware also of how participants displayed anger towards the church's attempt to colonize African people. But also, the researcher was mindful that there were other African Pentecostal Charismatic Church that is exposing African families to a theology that gave the impression that ancestors are demons. And whatever funeral ritual is observed, is not Christian, therefore, it is evil and demonic. The researcher, therefore, acknowledges that his interpretation of data were to be coloured by his own perception and values as he analyzed the findings.

Fourthly, I also acknowledge that the manner in which I produced themes from participant's responses was coloured by my lens through which I was looking at the particular point. I therefore note that, another researcher may highlight different themes. A more empirical or qualitative vice in the field of sociology or psychology research could, therefore, criticize this study, as its outcomes cannot be generalized to a larger population.

## **7.8. Final Reflections**

The researcher's observation is that funerals, in the black townships, are evolving. This is because of trying the balance between the old and the new. For an example, according to the research, there is still a desire among older members of families to want to keep to the

traditional African funerals. At the same time they are being caught up in the cultural changes that are happening around the; which leads to certain expectations when there is a funeral in the family. The elders are being tempted to give up to pressure from the younger members of the family; who have the necessary resources and would want to control the event. Sell views that, “the economics is behind the major difference between today’s and yesterday’s family” (1995:54). It is the researcher’s hope that economics should not create communication gap between the youth and their parents. Because of this, a few parents today are willing or able to confront awkward pre or post funeral rituals; which are not normative to a traditional African funeral.

The researcher has observed that there is an increasing number of young people who die and those who attend funerals. Nel proclaim that the reason for this is that; “the realities of the pre-industrial period, involving high mortality and low life expectancy, meant that people often died at a relatively young age or in the prime of life” (Nel 2002:21 cf. Corr, 1979: Fulton and Owen 1994). Hence, a need for pastoral care-givers to dialogue with the youth as well as a way to entrench them more deeply in the very traditional African values that will lead to inexpensive funeral expenditure.

The younger generation would not say they are against traditional African funeral and burial rites. They found themselves in that situation where they grew up in an environment where they see traditional African funeral rituals being performed, without any explanation. At the same time, they are exposed to technology in a changing world. As a result, they keep on trying on new ideas which in the end become a culture. De Vries has made an observation that; “...the teenagers are being carried along by the strong currents of our culture and yet cannot feel it” (De Vries 1994:146).

As African societies are being urbanized and industrialized from the late eighteenth century, the population grew rapidly but death rates do not decline (Walter 2005:1). The burial crisis is becoming a major social problem in urban cities and each has to respond by developing a more rational way to deal with the dead (Walter 2005:176 cf. Curl 1993:2006-314).

### **7.9. Investing in the future**

It is necessary that we do not take the uniqueness of a phenomenon such as excessive expenditure within black Townships for granted. If we were to be honest, we would admit that while it is common for families to have a myriad of burial societies that helps them with some money for funerals, we do not have nearly as many as black parents who can afford education for their children (See HRSC article 2005, *student poverty in higher education: the impact of drop outs*). The truth must not escape us. We should ponder at its meaning and implications too. One is not saying that multi-facets of burial societies are unimportant. Not in these days of the combined ravages of HIV-Aids and increasing poverty. The majority of families are still steeped in the extended family tradition- whether we like it or not- and so their little or new money is often inadequate to deal with the demands and needs of the extended situations. In those situations a burial society can come in very handy.

However, we must be honest about the limits of the burial society culture. A time has come for us to shift from investing in death and mishaps, to investing in the future, this side of the grave. Indeed, the researcher wants to suggest our burial society culture has often threatened to consume all creative energies and financial resources. It does seem, at times, that the sole and prime purpose of our lives is investments in death and burials. The funerals have long overtaken the weddings and graduation parties. Perhaps Zakes Mda is not far from the truth when he suggests, in his provocative and gripping novel titled, 'Ways of Dying' that such is

the culture of death and burial in our society that three most important characters in South Africa townships are: the coffin maker, the professional mourner and funeral orator. These are the most admired and most inventive characters in that imaginary urban settlement of Zakes Mda's book (2002). The also would to add that, the church is often an interested party in the business of these three characters. The distributing aspect of the burial society culture is not the fact of investing and cooperation; it is the hopeless and pessimistic philosophy that seems to guide it. It is a negative outlook and, worse still, an outlook that has elevated the funeral hour to the highest point in the lives of human beings. The township community in the researcher's view, has become a society that strive on death so that our lifestyle can be described by the likes of Zakes Mda as, 'ways of dying' rather than 'ways of living'. We are like the people of whom the prophet Isaiah said:

*You boast, we have entered into covenant with death, with grave with have made an agreement. When an overwhelming scourge weeps by, it cannot touch us, for we have made a lie our lie our refuge and falsehood our hiding place. Isaiah 28:15*

Given this scenario, dealing with excessive funeral expenditure, will show that the church is in the interest of life rather than in the interest of death. The better way for church to help poor families venture their claim in the future, stating their faith in the future even as they shape their future, through less expenditure in funerals by investing in the education. Bringing hope and healing is what pastoral care giving is all about.

#### **7.10. Recommendation for further research**

As the study is focused, entirely, on the excessive funeral expenditure, the researcher proposes that excessive expenditure on weddings, unveiling of tombstones and birthday parties be investigated in order to get more insight on reasons for these phenomena. This will

help in determining the similarities between excessive expenditure for funerals and other rituals that are observed in black townships.

As research is done from the perspective of pastoral care, it would be interesting to have a psychological approach as a way of finding out to what extent does guilt feeling, fear of being cursed by ancestors, feeling worthless and shame result in families spending excessively in rituals. This research should focus also on the rich to ascertain the reason why they spend excessively for funerals when they could spend that money to uplift the poor.

It would be interesting and valuable to undertake a similar study that compares how the parishioners of western origin view death. This would help in acquiring their understanding about death, bereavement and expenditure for funerals.

### **7.11. Conclusion**

Excessive funeral expenditure is a phenomenon in the black townships of South Africa. It therefore amounts to a major challenge in the lives of poor family structures that end up requiring all sources of help in order to bounce back. As a way of concluding the research project, excessive funeral expenditure does not only pose a pastoral challenge but societal challenge, as well. The prevalent universality of funerals seems to confirm that death is never to be denied that it exists. An investigation of excessive funeral expenditure and findings were summarised.

The findings have demonstrated that there is a link between excessive funeral expenditure and the changing and evolving society in black townships. During the interviews, discussions were from a social and ministry contexts that brought these issues to the fore.

The researcher has related variables which will help lead to a change of attitude among the poor to spend less on the funerals of their beloved. It is the hope that they will also help pastoral care-givers that is the clergy, and its implication for the Dioceses in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa and the body of Christ. The researcher proposed that by entering into a meaningful dialogue with the Clergy, families both poor and rich who spend excessively for funerals, funeral undertakers and parishioners will have a direct influence in bringing about a new praxis. Preaching dependence on God and knowing that it is a long term ministry has an indirect effect.

The researcher argues that the higher the level of meaningful dialogue, the higher level of positive pastoral care giving. Pastoral care-givers, with adequate knowledge and exposure to the life of pastoral care seekers, will have a greater advantage to help most all families that spend excessively for funerals than those who do not.

Apart from the fact that training has a direct influence in effective praxis among parishioners. It also has an indirect effect via influence on exposure, that the higher the clergy training in pastoral care giving, the better the exposure.

The formulation of this theory does not end here. Consequently, other variables e.g. theology of awareness, change of pastoral attitude, and pastoral guidance without engagement may be identified. The more the researcher succeeds in defining the relationship between the variables, the more this theory becomes. For instance, this theory maybe extended to make provision for other independent variables which came as surprise as part of the identity finding within a changing social context in the black townships of South Africa.

## **APPENDICES:**

### **APPENDIX A**

#### **THE ADMINISTRATION LOAD**

## **Weekly Tasks and Duties**

### **Service Registers:**

After every service whoever conducted the service must record in a register:

- Total Attendance.
- Communicants (if a Holy Communion service).
- Sunday school numbers.

These are totalled and presented on a monthly basis to the Parish Council, and trends are analyzed over time, as measures of growth and vitality.

On an annual basis these statistics (and trend analysis) must be forwarded to the diocesan secretary (by a date set by the diocesan office).

### **Pew Leaflets:**

The pew leaflets must be prepared before each Sunday, to be handed out as people arrive.

These contain:

- Service details – readings, duties, etc.
- Family news – births, deaths, funerals, and intercession needs (list of the sick / bereaved etc.)
- Other parish and diocesan announcements.

## **Collections:**

These must be counted – behind locked doors for security – by those on sides-person’s duties.

Usually Monday morning, collections are recounted and checked, and prepared for deposit in the bank.

Banking – deposit income, draw cash needed for Petty Cash.

Accurate records, to be passed on to a bookkeeper (the Rector or other clergy may not perform this duty).

## **Infrastructure**

- The elements of bread and wine must be prepared for Sunday services.
- Vestments for clergy, lay ministers, servers, etc., must be laid out in readiness.
- Toilets must be checked, and cleaned if necessary. Toilet paper to be replenished.
- Building cleaned and welcoming to those who attend.
- Ensure the church building is unlocked in good time, and locked after services.
- Update the parish role – recording arrivals, departures, births and deaths.

## **Monthly duties and responsibilities:**

### **Draw up duty rosters for:**

- Clergy – presiding, preaching, deacon duties for Holy Communion
- Sides-persons – two on duty at each service – to greet and seat ‘without respect for persons’ – no special seats for dignitaries.

- Church Wardens – taking oversight that things run smoothly, and intervene if necessary.
- Prepare agenda for Parish Council meetings.
- Prepare agenda for Executive meetings.
- Ensure Parish Council minutes are an accurate record, and duplicate copies for meetings.
- Get a book-keeper’s report for monthly meetings.
  
- **Shopping – check / get:**
  - Elements for Holy Communion are purchased, and stored in adequate quantities.
  - Cleaning materials, etc.
  - Coffee, tea, milk – for teas after services – plus any other extras, such as biscuits.

#### **Annual duties:**

- Prepare nomination lists for annual vestry meetings: for church wardens.
- Prepare reports to the annual vestry meeting:
  - Minutes of previous year’s vestry meeting.
  - Audited financial statements (liaise with auditors).
  - Reports on infrastructure needs (maintenance tec.) – done and needing to be done.
  - Other status reports, statistics, ministry issues, etc.
  - Rector chairs the annual vestry meeting.
  - Rector liaises with the Bishop for his visit (usually annual plus any confirmation services).
- Prepare and distribute annual pledge forms for ‘dedicated giving’.
- Arrange an annual ‘dedicated giving Sunday’.
- Analyze the pledges returned – totals presented to the Executive and Council – as input for budgeting.
- Prepare and distribute a set of envelopes for each pledge received, for their monthly donation of money.
- Participate with the wardens and others in drawing up an annual budget.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION**

1. The priest says to the penitent:

The Lord be in your heart and on your lips, that you may truly and humbly confess your sins.

2. The penitent makes confession of sin in these or similar words:

I confess to God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, before the whole company of heaven, and before you, that I have sinned in thought, word, and deed, and in what I have left undone, through my own fault. And especially (since my last confession) I have sinned in these ways...

For these and all my other sins which I cannot now remember, or of which I am not aware, I am truly sorry, firmly mean to do better, and humbly ask pardon of God, and of you penance, (advice), and absolution. Wherefore I pray God to have mercy on me, and you to pray for me to the Lord our God.

3. The priest may offer prayer on behalf of the penitent, and he may give advice if it is requested or if he judges it appropriate. He suggests some prayer or action as a token of repentance and thanksgiving. He asks the penitent whether this is acceptable.
  
4. He absolves the penitent as follows:  

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who has left power to his Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in him, of his great mercy forgive you your offences; and by his authority committed to me, I absolve you from all your sins: in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
  
5. The penitent says:  

**Amen**
  
6. The Priest dismisses the penitent with these or similar words. He may add a blessing.  

Go in peace, the Lord has put away your sins. Pray for me, also a sinner.

## APPENDIX C

### O'Donovan's summary list 2000: The basic difference between Western and African cultures.

	<u>African Culture</u>		<u>Western Culture</u>
1.	Strong community values (group participation, group decision.	1.	Strong individualistic values (individual initiative, decisions).
2.	Community identity.	2.	Individual identity.
3.	Community living style.	3.	Private living style.
4.	Extended family emphasis.	4.	Immediate family emphasis.
5.	Holistic approach to life.	5.	Categorical approach to life.
6.	Importance of the event.	6.	Importance of schedules and clock time.
7.	People-orientated priorities.	7.	Task- and goal-oriented priorities.
8.	Real-life (situational) thinking.	8.	Abstract and academic thinking.
9.	Preference for real-life learning.	9.	Preference for academic thinking.
10.	Spiritual worldview.	10.	Scientific worldview.
11.	Emphasis on spoken communication.	11.	Emphasis on written communication.
12.	Emphasis on spoke agreements based on relationships between people.	12.	Emphasis on written agreements based on policies by committees.
13.	Respect for the elderly.	13.	Respect for the educated.
14.	Traditional inherited leadership.	14.	Elected (democratic) leadership.
15.	Death is passing into the spirit world (survivors must perform rituals).	15.	Death is a practical problem (survivors need counselling, support).
16.	Resolve conflicts through mediator.	16.	Resolve conflicts face-to-face.
17.	Practical (ritual) response to spirit realities.	17.	Intellectual response to spirit realities.

18.	Practical (ritual) approach to religion.	18.	Intellectual approach to religion.
19.	Vulnerability seen as weakness.	19.	Vulnerability seen as strength.
20.	Much interest in the spirit world.	20.	Little interest in the spirit world.

From this, we can identify the following as potential points of tension in a cross-cultural context relating to the administrative process (not in any order of priority):

- Holistic vs. compartmentalised life view.
- Punctuality vs. event.
- “Personal” vs. communal or group decision-making.
- People vs. tasks.
- Situational (actual) vs. intellectual (abstract).
- Spiritual, aesthetic vs. scientific, methodical, reasoning.
- Routine vs. creativity.
- Relationships vs. discipline and conflict.
- Mediation vs. direct confrontation.
- Relationships with motivation, and achievement with teamwork.
- Oral vs. written/reading communication.
- Inherited leadership vs. elected leadership
- Ritual response vs. intellectual response to spirit realities.

## APPENDIX D

### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FAMILIES

1. How many are there in the family?

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2. How many are employed?

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3. When last did you have a funeral in the family?

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4. Did you have challenges in preparing for the funeral? If yes what were they?

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5. Did you manage to cover costs? Yes or No? Give reasons?

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6. What is your understanding of an African funeral?

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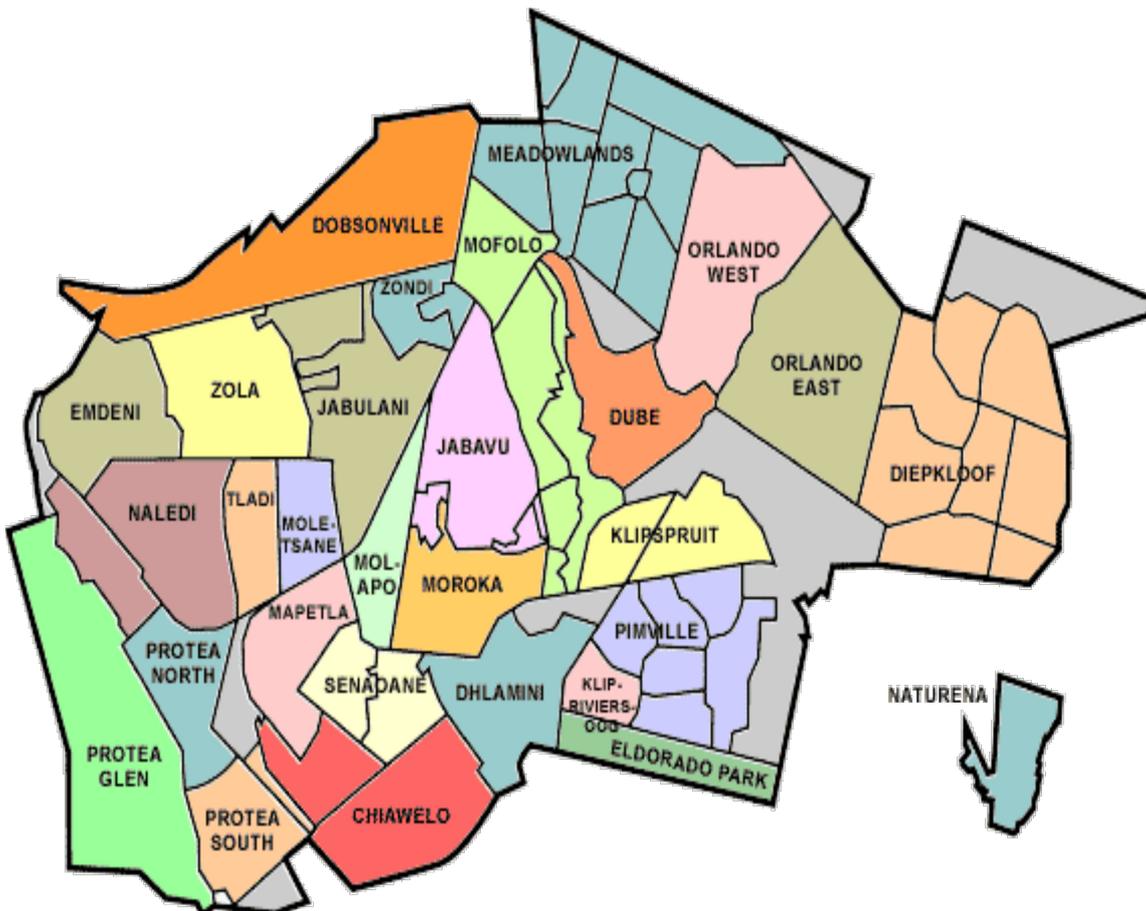
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**APPENDIX E**

**MAP OF SOWETO**



## **APPENDIX F**

### **QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE CLERGY AND LAY MINISTERS**

1. How many funerals do you conduct a month?

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2. How do you minister to the family during the pre-funeral phase?

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3. In your planning for the funeral, do you assist them on how they should spend? Yes or No? Give reasons?

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4. What is your understanding of an African funeral?

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5. Has there been change? Yes or No. If yes – what are the changes?

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6. Do you think African funeral rites need adjustment?

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## **APPENDIX G**

### **PROGRAMME**

Master of Ceremonies:

Time of service:

Hymn:

Prayer:

Procession to the Church:

History of the deceased:

Hymn:

A Nurse:

Hymn:

A neighbour:

A friend:

Hymn:

Co-worker:

Hymn:

Representative of SAFA:

Representative of the family:

Speech by:

Speech by:

Hymn:

The uncle of the deceased:

Hymn:

The uncle to the children:

Church representative:

Home cell representative:

Reading of wreaths:

Church service by Priest:

Vote of thanks:

The grace by the Priest: Robala ka kagiso mokwena oo sechele wa motswasele

## **APPENDIX H**

### **FUNERALS**

**General guidelines for:**

## **Lay Funerals**

Christian burial is both solemn and joyful, expressing Good Friday and Easter. Essentially it is an opportunity to honour God and give thanks to Him for the life of the one departed.

Many families are rendered penniless by funerals where huge amounts are spent on coffins, food and drink. None of this honours God. The simple “Jewish coffin”, a simple wood coffin with rope handles, is commended for consideration, and the use of the pall. Most reputable undertakers can supply the coffin used at Jewish funerals if requested. Local churches are urged to acquire and encourage the use of a pall, if they do not already do so.

Simplicity should be the mark of the day – s simple coffin, simple clothing (not an excuse for new outfits) and a simple meal, all of which will be within the means of the family.

There are fixed costs to a funeral, but we must be careful not to add to these unnecessarily.

A funeral is a Godly and gentle way of disposing of a dead body which has served the person in this world. It is not a time for clergy to make money. If there is a “donation” it ought, as with all other such fees and donations, to be given as a “thank offering”, either to the church or to a discretionary fund. We need to avoid any idea that the services of the Church can be bought or that the clergy are being paid for such services.

The party afterwards ought to be simple and within the means of the family. As Christians we need to be sensitive to the temptation of the poor to try and emulate the rich. A tradition of Christian family sharing might be developed, so that the family is actually supported with food and help.

## **Clergy and Episcopal Funerals**

Clergy and bishops ought to stipulate in the will, or some other written instruction, precisely what sort of funeral arrangements they desire. This will protect the spouse from the pressures of society or family.

The funerals of clergy are diocesan affairs, and the Bishop ought normally to be the chief celebrant. For this reason the Bishop should be consulted when making the arrangements for the funeral.

The funeral of a Bishop is a Provincial affair and the Archbishop, together with his brother Bishops, will be the chief celebrant. For this reason the Archbishop, or, in his absence, the Dean of the province, should be consulted, when making the arrangements for the funeral.

Again, simplicity, dignity and joyfulness will be the keys to such celebration of Christ's resurrection.

### **Bodies at Funerals**

The Diocesan instruction is that there may be no funeral without a body present. Obviously there are going to be a few exceptions. If, for example, a body is left to medical research, then the funeral service must take place without a body, and effectively become a memorial service. It is appropriate in that situation to have a commendation at the appropriate time.

If somebody dies in another part of the country, then it is up to the clergy to make sure that an adequate commendation and funeral are given there, where the body is to be either buried or cremated, and then there is no difficulty at all about having a memorial service in the local parish church which effectively takes the place of the funeral. In all other circumstances the body must be at the church, because so often what happens is that people want to avoid the fact of death, and to try to duck away from having to face the realities of the situation. That is the only reason why the body needs to be there. It is a very pastoral concern and one which must be taken seriously.

### **Clergy taking Funerals**

There have been complaints about clergy who have taken funerals of parishioners from another parish. This practice is not acceptable, and the clergy may not simply be indiscriminate in their taking of funerals. It is said that there are one or two undertakers who have their "favourite clergy" who are simply summoned to do the funeral, and then have no

further interest or concern in the family. Our concern is always the same. We have to take the family seriously. We have to take their grief and their bereavement seriously and there must be some sort of follow-up.

For a priest or a clergy person to simply go into a funeral chapel or even arrange a service in a church without consulting the Rector is unacceptable. Our concern is not to be legalistic, but a very deep pastoral concern for the people concerned. It is not business, but Christian ministry exercising an involvement in the life of the family.

These points need to be taken seriously, because anything else undermines the authority of the parish but, more important, undermines the family's pastoral involvement and its potential for real concern and growth.

### **Vigils and Portraits**

The practice of vigils in church is becoming increasingly common, and we can expect more and more requests for them.

The church has through the ages tended to allow and often encourage vigils, where the coffin is kept open and people have filed past to pay their last respects to the dead, and where through the night prayers are said for the dead.

It is much to be preferred that the current practice of all-night vigils at the home be continued with a specific form of service (which the Diocese will provide, if requested)

## **APPENDIX I**

### **CANON 24 OF INCUMBENTS AND OTHER CLERGYMEN**

#### **Duties of the Clergy**

Every clergyman shall in the absence of reasonable hindrance:

- a) Say the daily Morning and Evening Prayer or such other Offices as may be authorised by the Bishop.
- b) Devote himself, in accordance with his ordination vows, to regular study of Holy Scripture and other studies relevant to his work.

### **Incumbents**

Incumbents are recognised as being leaders, ordained and set apart by God and his Church for the oversight of the Pastoral Charges to which they are appointed, and particularly in regard to preaching, teaching and liturgical worship, under the authority of the Bishop.

### **Incumbent and the Parish Council**

The incumbent shall work together with the Parish Council in the task of enabling the community of the people of God to exercise the ministry of the Body of Christ. Together with the Council he shall see that the educational, evangelistic and pastoral work of the charge is carried out, and he shall lead the people of the pastoral charge in its social concern.

### **Duties of Incumbent**

Every Incumbent shall in the absence of reasonable hindrance perform the following duties:

- a) He shall celebrate or cause to be celebrated the Holy Communion on Sundays, other Great Festivals and Ash Wednesday, save for the provisions of section 2 of Canon 26 *Of Residence of Clergy*.
- b) He shall administer or cause to be administered the Sacraments and other rites prescribed by the Book of Common Prayer or as may be authorised by the Bishop, as the occasion demands.
- c) He shall preach or cause to be preached a sermon expounding and applying Holy Scripture, within his pastoral charge at least once on each Sunday.
- d) He shall be responsible for the organisation and training of all who instruct children and adults in the Christian faith.
- e) He shall be available for counsel and advice.
- f) He shall administer with due pastoral concern the requirements of Canon 35.

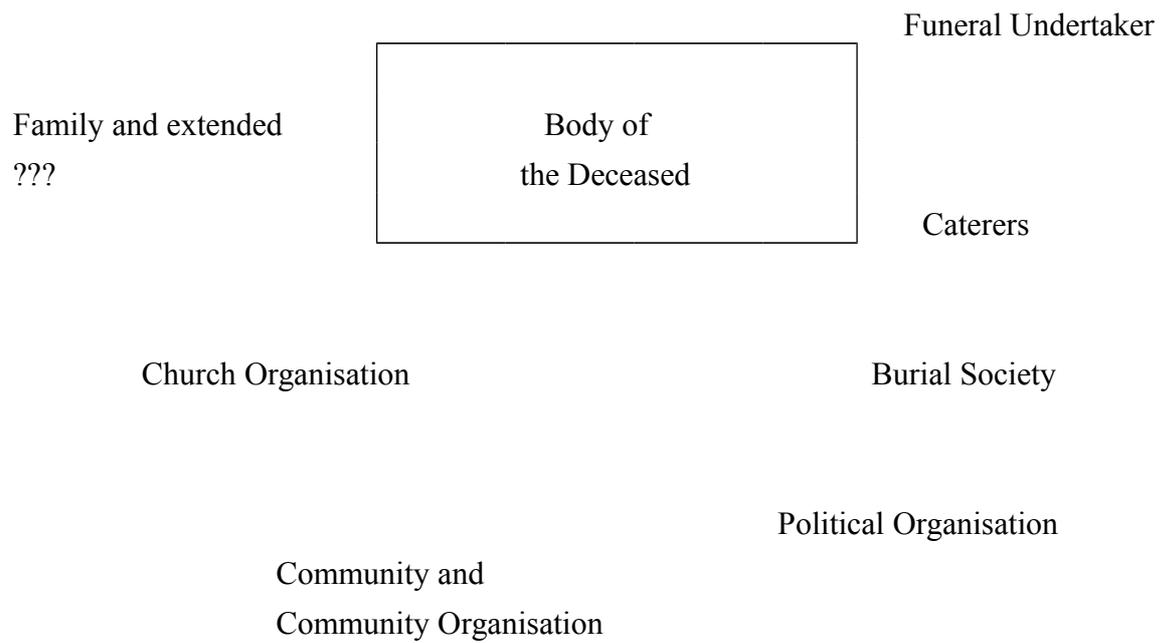
## **APPENDIX J**

### **FAMILY IS NOT THE ONLY STAKEHOLDER**

Medical Doctors

Municipality

Church



## **APPENDIX K**

### **BURY YOUR LOVED ONES WITH GREAT DIGNITY – NOT WITH GREAT DEBT**

**A Christian approach to funerals**

This pamphlet has been produced to help guide you to plan a dignified funeral with your family's financial means. We come from different cultural and family practices, so this pamphlet may seem naive or even irrelevant to some. But the Church's job is to preach the Good News. Part of this is to be involved in the ordinary aspects of people's daily lives, including funerals.

The reality is that these days people are dying younger and in great numbers. Many funerals take place each week, and often a single family can suffer repeated bereavements. So the Church's task is to offer guidelines on funeral matters. This pamphlet comes with love and good will to all the people of God in this Diocese, in the hope that you will find it helpful.

### **Preparation**

Ecclesiastes 7:2 tells us that death is the destiny of all human being. We all need to prepare for death. But how should we do that? Here are some practical ideas:

- Consider taking out a life insurance policy.
- Consider joining a funeral scheme. They are available from some banks and from most Funeral Directors/Services. Look around and compare their costs and benefits.
- Find out about local bereavement schemes (societies) in your community.

Life policies are more expensive than funeral schemes, so choose wisely. Pay-outs from life policies normally cover the funeral costs and still leave some money behind. Pay-outs from funeral and bereavement schemes normally cover funeral costs only.

### **What to do when a death has occurred**

Death is a very painful and emotional experience. People who are directly faced with death may be traumatised by the event and may not be able to think straight and make rational decisions. This is the time when much support and great understanding should be exercised by those close to the bereaved. Here is what you will need to do at this time.

- Report the death to your priest or church leadership immediately.
- Notify the insurance company of the funeral scheme about the death
- Notify the person in possession of the will (usually a lawyer or family member).

## **Planning the funeral**

It is very important to consult with your priest or church leaders to make arrangements concerning:

- The day and time of the funeral
- What form the funeral service should take
- The length and contents of the programme

It is very important to arrange these details with the church before going to the funeral directors.

Inform the funeral directors of the church arrangements.

If there is no insurance policy or funeral scheme, ask for advice from the funeral directors about cost-effective services.

If no financial help is available to you, contact the local Department of Social Welfare to see if they can help.

## **Minimising the costs**

In this Diocese, we encourage all to avoid funerals that are too expensive.

Minimising costs does not mean giving your loved one a pauper's funeral.

It does mean that the deceased was not loved. It also does not mean that the family is displaying its poverty in public. This is all about acting in a responsible manner. It is about simplicity and humility.

People often say that they want to give their deceased a great send-off. This is good – but lie it be a send-off that has dignity, and that will not leave great debt and hunger when the whole event is over. A funeral is a solemn occasion, not an extravaganza.

Here are some ways to cut the costs of funerals:

- Don't pay for things that the family can do themselves.
- Don't spend money on things the family can do without.
- Spend money on reasonable items, not expensive ones.
- Don't allow strangers to handle financial issues.
- Don't deal with unscrupulous dealers or those with a bad reputation.
- Expect value for money. Don't buy something that won't work.
- Compare the relative costs of burial and cremation. (Cremation may be more expensive than a burial, depending on where the funeral is held).
- Don't leave the deceased too long in the morgue, as this attracts storage charges.

The Church is not just paying lip service to this issue. The long-standing surplice fee for funeral was abolished at the 2002 Diocesan Synod. (This does not, of course, stop people from giving a thank-offering to the person leading the service.) So you are encouraged to do all in your power to minimise funeral costs.

## **Funerals and Culture**

The practice in African culture of slaughtering a beast for funeral ceremonies was a long-standing tradition. Nothing was wasted of that slaughtered beast. The meat was prepared for mourners, people who had travelled long distances on foot or horse cart to attend the funeral. The skin of the beast was then used as a blanket to wrap the deceased as she/he was laid to rest.

## Funerals and Christians

The Old Testament tells us that people were buried on the day they died. Some were embalmed for burial. In New Testament times the deceased were wrapped in linen for burial. The graves of those days were different from ours: they were like small compartments where the deceased were peacefully and respectfully laid to rest. There was nothing extravagant about the funeral ceremonies performed in those days. Things were still done in an orderly and dignified manner.

### **Resolution No. 5 of Diocesan Synod, June 2002**

“That this Synod agrees in the name of Christ vehemently to oppose extravagant funerals.”

## Funerals Today

We don't live in the Iron Age or Stone Age. Much in life has changed for the better. Technology makes great strides in improving the life of human beings. We have refrigerated morgues, we have wood and steel coffins, and there is also the option of cremation. Having said all this, death itself has not changed. Death is still death, people still die and need to be buried. Unfortunately in this era death seems to be coming hard and fast on our generation. Let our strengths and resources not be channelled towards burial ceremonies. Surely there is more to life than funerals.

Part of the funeral ceremony nowadays is the practice of unveiling the tombstone at the same time. This is good for the family because then they won't need to dig deep for cash to perform another ceremony. This is only encouraged as long as the family won't be left with a huge debt to service. An extravagant funeral plus an expensive tombstone does not help the dead to rest in peace. *Dying in the Lord Jesus Christ is what really gives great peace to the dead – and also to the living.*

## More suggestions for curbing funeral costs

A chipboard coffin which costs between R400 and R800 does the same work as oak or steel coffins that range from R5 000 to R8 000 or more. Some people still cover coffins with the skin of a slaughtered beast or a new blanket – so why incur extra expense for the same thing?

Whether a coffin is transported in a traditional hearse or in a limousine or an air plane, it will eventually reach its destination. Choose the cheaper option.

A huge slice of peoples' income in many homes goes to providing basic food. With no spare money for entertainment, that is how expensive food is these days. There is no need to entertain mourners with a big feast.

A follow-up party (“after tears”, as it is called) can extinguish the solemnity of a funeral and turn it into a great extravaganza.

Some people are dressed up in new clothes before being put in the coffin. What a shame this is – especially if the dead person never knew what it felt like to wear a suit or even to put on decent shoes while she/he was still alive!

### **The Church's visible protest against extravagant funerals**

Maybe we need to return to one of our church's many rich and sacred traditions: covering coffins with a **Pall** during the funeral service in the church. Some of our churches still practice this tradition, and they are commended for that. The use of a **Pall** hides any obvious disparity between poorer and wealthier families when several funerals take place at the same time, and saves embarrassment.

We are living in times of great poverty and unemployment, with the scourge of disease and many other negative things facing us. These are the challenges facing us. We must stand up against these evils and not run away from them. We have been blessed with the gift of the Holy Spirit, the mighty power of God to face up to any evil, to speak out against any malady that affects the lives of God's people.

This pamphlet is one way in which we try to show care for God's people, to intervene in situations where things seem to be causing great hardship.

**DIOCESE OF BLOEMFONTEIN (CPSA)**

This pamphlet was compiled by The Revd. Dintoe Letloenyane and edited and produced by Cyril Pink Frog DTP, Bloemfontein. Your comments and contributions will be greatly appreciated. Please send them to the Bishop's office, P O Box 411, Bloemfontein, 9300, or via email to: <bishoppatrick@global.co.za>

**APPENDIX L**

**AN ANGLICAN PRAYER BOOK 1989, page 531-532 (Harper Collins Publishers)**

*A Service for use before the Funeral*

1. This service may be used at home or other appropriate place where family and friends gather at any time before the funeral. It may also be used if the body is brought to the church some time before the funeral

The Minister at that service is a priest, deacon or lay minister. When used in the home, the service may be taken by any lay person

2. The Minister reads one or more of the sentences following:

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning. (*Lamentation 3:22-23*)

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

3. A psalm is said, either the following or one chosen from the table at General Rubric 7. More than one psalm may be said.

**Psalm 42:1-7**

1. As a deer longs for the running brooks:  
So long my soul for you O God.
  2. My soul is thirsty for God thirsty for the living God:  
When shall I come and see his face?
  3. My tears have been my food day and night:  
While they ask me all day long 'Where now is your God?'
  4. As I pour out my soul by myself I remember this:  
How I went to the house of the Mighty One into the temple of God.
  5. To the shouts and songs of thanksgiving:  
A multitude keeping high festival.
  6. Why are you so full of heaviness my soul:  
And why so unquiet within me?
  7. O put your trust in God:  
For I will praise him yet who is my deliverer and my God.
4. A lesson or lessons chosen from the table at Geneva Rubric 7 may be read.
  5. A time of prayer follows. The Minister may use prayers from sections 107-124; he and others may offer free prayer
  6. The prayers conclude with

Father, we come to you in our grief, trusting in your love for *N* and for ourselves. We know that death cannot separate us from your love in Jesus Christ our Lord.

This is our faith  
**Lord, increase our faith**

Father, your son Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus.  
We believe that you share our grief and will give us strength in our loss.

This is our faith  
**Lord, increase our faith**

Father, Jesus died that we might be forgiven. We trust in your forgiveness for *N* and  
for ourselves.

This is our faith  
**Lord, increase our faith**

Father, you gave your only Son, that all who have faith in him may not die, but have  
eternal life.

This is the faith of the Church  
**This is our faith, Amen. Alleluia**

## **APPENDIX M**

### **MACKENZIE CATERERS cc CK2002/099908/23**

**585 Gumede street  
Rockville  
Moroka  
1800**

**Phone: (011)984-5155  
Cell: 082 365 1169  
Fax: (011)984-7932  
Vat: 4130246368**

**E-mail**

**[selemackenzie@vodamail.co.za](mailto:selemackenzie@vodamail.co.za)**

**Date**

**03 September 2011**

**Contact:**

**Malesela Moshidi**

**QOUTATION: Funeral**

**ATT: Ms Khosi Moletsane  
No of people: 250**

**MENU**

**Rice (savoury)  
Samp  
Pap or Ting  
Beef Stew (plain)  
Beef curry  
Chicken  
Garlic Potato  
Hubbard Squash  
Cabbage with 3 peppers  
2 Bean Salads  
Sweet & sour Carrot salad**

**100% Magalies juice**

<b><u>SERVICES RENDERED AND OTHER</u></b>
Food
Juice

Labour

Delivery

Catering Equipment (breakable plates, foam cups plates, plastic spoons, chafing dishes)

---

**Subtotal: R19000.00**

**TOTAL: R19000.00**

**TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

1. A 50% deposit is required to be paid in advance(14 days before the event)
2. Endorsing (signing) this document binds you (the client) and the catering company (Mackenzie Caterers CC) to an agreement for the services rendered by the company.

**ACCEPTANCE:**

**Customer's signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

***LOOK NO FURTHER WE ARE THE BEST***

***MACKENZIE CATERERS CC***

## APPENDIX N

### **MACKENZIE CATERERS cc CK2002/099908/23**

**585 Gumede street  
Rockville  
Moroka  
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**Phone: (011)984-5155  
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Fax: (011)984-7932  
Vat: 4130246368  
[selemackenzie@vodamail.co.za](mailto:selemackenzie@vodamail.co.za)**

**Date  
Contact:**

**20<sup>th</sup> September, 2012  
Malesela Moshidi**

#### **MENU:**

- ✓ Rice
- ✓ Samp
- ✓ Fried Chicken or Butter Chicken
- ✓ Beef Curry/Plain
- ✓ Hubbard Squash
- ✓ Cabbage with 3 peppers
- ✓ 2 Bean Salad
- ✓ Cavattapi pasta Salad

Homemade Ginger  
100% Juice Magalies

**TOTAL**

**R6500.00**

**LOOK NO FURTHER WE ARE THE BEST  
MACKENZIE CATERERS**

## APPENDIX O

### **MACKENZIE CATERERS cc CK2002/099908/23**

**585 Gumedde street  
Rockville  
Moroka  
1800  
E-mail**

**Phone: (011)984-5155  
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Fax: (011)984-7932  
Vat: 4130246368  
[selemackenzie@vodamail.co.za](mailto:selemackenzie@vodamail.co.za)**

**Date  
Contact:**

**20<sup>th</sup> September, 2012  
Malesela Moshidi**

**QUOTE FOR: Unveiling of a tombstone  
Date of event 29<sup>th</sup> September 2012**

**ATT: Peggy**

**MENU:**

**Rice (savoury)**

**Samp**

**Beef Stew**

**Chicken**

**Spinach**

**Hubbard Squash**

**Cavattappi pasta with 3 peppers**

**2 Bean Salads**

**GROCERY LIST:**

<b>Rice</b>	<b>5kg</b>
<b>Samp</b>	<b>10kg</b>
<b>Small white beans or haricot beans</b>	<b>5kg</b>
<b>White Vinegar</b>	<b>5ltr</b>
<b>Cooking oil</b>	<b>10ltr</b>

<b>Tomato Puree</b>	<b>2 x3kg</b>
<b>Red Kidney beans (canned)</b>	<b>3 x 3kg</b>
<b>Butter Beans (canned)</b>	<b>3 x 3kg</b>
<b>Tomato Sauce</b>	<b>4 x 750ml</b>
<b>Mayonnaise</b>	<b>2 x 3kg</b>
<b>Lemon Juice (lecol)</b>	<b>2ltr</b>
<b>Cavattappi Pasta</b>	<b>2kg</b>
<b>White pepper</b>	<b>200ml</b>
<b>Aromatic</b>	<b>2kg</b>
<b>Briyani wet spice</b>	<b>500g</b>
<b>Dry parsley</b>	<b>155g</b>
<b>Chicken Spice</b>	<b>800g</b>
<b>Barbecue Spice</b>	<b>800g</b>
<b>Hot Rajah</b>	<b>1kg</b>
<b>Salt</b>	
<b>Sugar</b>	<b>5kg</b>
<b>VEGETABLES</b>	
<b>Spinach</b>	<b>60 bunches</b>
<b>Onion</b>	<b>1 Bag</b>
<b>Hubbard Squash</b>	<b>1 Bag</b>
<b>Green Pepper</b>	<b>1 Box</b>
<b>Red Pepper</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Yellow Pepper</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Crushed Garlic</b>	<b>500g</b>
<b>Crushed Garlic &amp; Ginger</b>	<b>1kg</b>

- ✓ Onions peeled & sliced into rings
- ✓ Hubbard squash peeled cut into chunks
- ✓ Spinash sliced(chiffonade)
- ✓ Green peppers sliced(Julliana)
- ✓ Red & Yellow Peppers to left undone

## **CATERING EQUIPMENT REQUIRED FOR THE EVENT**

<b><u>ITEMS</u></b>	<b><u>QUANTITY</u></b>
Plates	100 @R2.10
Pots 50 litters	2 @R80ea
Pots 36 litters	3@R60ea
Chafing Dishes	10 @R100.00ea
Salad Bowls	4 @R30ea
Table Cloths	10@ R40ea
Overlays	10 @R15.00
Fork	100 @R1.80ea
Knives	100 @R1.80ea
Spoons	100 @R1.80ea
Gas Stoves	1 @R500

### **SERVICES RENDERED AND OTHER**

Labour

Delivery

Catering Equipment

**Breakage and loss (spot fine)**

<b>Plate</b>	<b>R30.00</b>
<b>Salad bowl</b>	<b>R45.00</b>
<b>Spoon, Knife, Fork</b>	<b>R20.00</b>
<b>Glass</b>	<b>R15.00</b>
<b>Cup</b>	<b>R20.00</b>
<b>Saucer</b>	<b>R20.00</b>
<b>Table Cloth</b>	<b>R60.00</b>
<b>Dessert Bowl</b>	<b>R25.00</b>
<b>Serving Spoon</b>	<b>R25.00</b>
<b>Chafing Dish</b>	<b>R500.00</b>
<b>Urn</b>	<b>R1000.00</b>
<b>Subtotal:</b>	<b>R3260.00</b>
<b>Labour:</b>	<b><u>R2500.00</u></b>
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b><u>R5760.00</u></b>

### **TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

3. A 50% deposit is required to be paid in advance(14 days before the event)
4. Balance to be paid on the eve or if arranged on the day of event
5. All food stuffs to be bought 2 days before the event
6. All vegetables to be peeled & cut
7. Endorsing (signing) this document binds you (the client) and the catering company (Mackenzie Caterers CC) to an agreement for the services rendered by the company.

**Bank details:**

**Bank:** FNB  
**Branch name & code:** Main Street 251705  
**Account number:** 6202 3283 831

**ACCEPTANCE:**

**Customer's signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

***LOOK NO FURTHER WE ARE THE BEST***  
***MACKENZIE CATERERS CC***

**APPENDIX P**

**MACKENZIE CATERERS cc**

**CK2002/099908/23**

585 Gumede street  
Rockville  
Moroka  
1800  
E-mail

Phone: (011)984-5155  
Cell: 082 365 1169  
Fax: (011)984-7932  
Vat: 4130246368

[selemackenzie@vodamail.co.za](mailto:selemackenzie@vodamail.co.za)

Date  
Contact:

11 May 2012  
Malesela Moshidi

**QOUTATION: Funeral of the Montjane's family**  
**ATT: Mrs Granny Seape**  
**No of people: 400-500**

**MENU:**

Rice (savoury)  
Samp  
Pap or Ting  
Beef Stew (plain)  
Beef curry  
Chicken  
Garlic Potato  
Hubbard Squash  
Cabbage with 3 peppers  
Mixed veg Salad  
  
Homemade Ginger  
100% Magalies juice

<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>R6000.00</b>
--------------	-----------------

***LOOK NO FURTHER WE ARE THE BEST***

***MACKENZIE CATERERS CC***

## **APPENDIX Q**



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Pretoria, 0002  
Faculty of Theology.  
Department of Practical Theology

### **Consent Letter.**

Researcher: Stephen Mosimanegape Moreo

011 482 1606/ 0823775533

### **Title of the study:**

#### **Excessive funeral expenditure in Black Township that lead to poverty: A Pastoral Challenge**

I Stephen Moreo assure that in no certain term will you be asked to cooperate in this research that may result in a sense of self- denigration, embarrassment, or a violation of ethical or moral standards or principles.

The purpose of the study is to:

1. Is to understand what is meant by " African funeral rite' in the South African context., bearing in mind the fact that our country is exposed to the radical process of cultural, economic, and political change.
2. To establish what are the factors that lead people to excessive expenditure on funeral.
3. To help the clergy and lay ministers create a model where they will be able to journey with families with the view to help bury their loved ones with dignity without being left with financial burden.
4. To establish facts about how much people spend on funerals to draw this to the attention of Clergy, and lay ministers and congregations.
5. To encourage humble dialogue between the Christian theological tradition and African cultural funeral practices and to offer clergy and lay ministers skills to facilitate these dialogues. Also to help families to constantly reflect critically on the underlying theories and praxes.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Pretoria, 0002  
Faculty of Theology.  
Department of Practical Theology

**Consent Letter.**

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Department  
University of Pretoria  
Pretoria 0020 South Africa

Tel Number  
Fax Number

Email address  
[www.up.ac.za](http://www.up.ac.za)

You have selected to participate in the research and will be handed to fill. The questionnaire is used to gather information; the information you provide will be treated confidentially and anonymity will be assured.

Participant in this research will not be put to risks and discomfort of any kind.

In this research there will no financial gain for anyone involved.

Participation is voluntary you may withdraw from participation in the study anytime and without negative consequences.

Minors will not be used in this research.

Signature of the participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed at: \_\_\_\_\_

Department  
University of Pretoria  
Pretoria 0020 South Africa

Tel Number  
Fax Number

Email address  
[www.up.ac.za](http://www.up.ac.za)

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