




# Pentecostal preaching and Christology: An empirical study

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Preaching is an important part of congregational worship in various church traditions globally. Through the years, there has been vast literature on preaching but not much about the phenomenon as it happens specifically in the Assemblies of God (Back to God). This article sought to explore factors affecting preaching, and its Christological aspects, in Pentecostal churches of the Western Reef Region of the Assemblies of God (Back to God), South Africa. The article aimed at contributing to research in this area and suggesting improvements where necessary. This article presented a qualitative study conducted in the churches of the aforementioned region by applying the analysis of sermons and semistructured interviews with some preachers in the region. The study revealed some extent of Christ-centred preaching and a fair understanding of concepts of Pentecostalism, preaching and Christology by participants. Also, the study showed that there are various factors affecting preaching in the region, resulting in a generally unsatisfactory level of preaching and Christology not being sufficiently expressed in the preaching.

**Contribution:** This article aimed to contribute to research in the practice of preaching in Pentecostal churches. It is hoped that this article will also contribute to improvement in preaching in the Assemblies of God (Back to God) churches.

**Keywords:** Christology; church; congregation; Pentecostalism; preacher; preaching; sermon.

## Introduction

This article explores preaching and Christology in the context of Pentecostalism. While preaching is an essential part of congregational worship in various church traditions globally, Christology is one of the fundamentals of Christian belief, inclusive of the Pentecostal tradition. Therefore, preaching, Christology and Pentecostalism are key issues forming the basis of discussion in this article.

Preaching is not only a way in which God has communicated his mind to his people over many generations, but it is also a dynamic and multifaceted phenomenon. Hence, over the years, there has been vast literature regarding its nature, as well as changes in its practice. For instance, Long (2005b:11–16) explores four pertinent key elements of preaching, namely the Bible, the congregation, the preacher and the sermon. Various other authors explore this subject from different perspectives. For example, Kurewa (2000:75–173) discusses the sermon, the preacher and the role of the congregation, among other aspects of preaching. Furthermore, Long (2005a) describes the metaphors of a preacher, Pleizier (2010) discusses the changing paradigm of preaching and Brueggemann (2005:17–29) discusses preaching as reimagination.

Inasmuch as there is vast literature about preaching, so it is with Christology. For instance, while Henry (1992:91–130) discusses the identity of Jesus of Nazareth, Habets (2003:199–234) discusses Spirit Christology and Mueller (2010:276–305) lists the different imageries and designations used to describe Jesus. Furthermore, Pentecostalism is also a subject of vast literature.

Despite the vast literature on topics mentioned above, this article explores Pentecostal preaching and its pertinent Christological aspects, in the Western Reef Region of the Assemblies of God (Back to God). It is hoped that this exploration will identify areas of strength and improvement in the churches' homiletical practice.

The hypothesis of this article is that there are various factors affecting Pentecostal preaching and that a thorough consideration of these factors can lead to its improvement. Therefore, the aim of this article is to explore preaching, together with its inherent characteristic of Christology in the Pentecostal churches of the Western Reef Region. Pertinent to this is the analysis of the

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fundamental components of preaching, factors affecting preaching, as well as the exploration of the extent to which Christology is expressed in the churches of the aforementioned region.

## Research methods and design

This is a qualitative study that took place in the Pentecostal churches affiliated to the Assemblies of God (Back to God) in the Western Reef Region, Gauteng, South Africa. These are township churches in Soweto and around Vereeniging, Potchefstroom and Krugersdorp. Two research methods were adopted: firstly, by way of convenience sampling, 10 sermons were selected for analysis. Two sermons were observed live, while the others were obtained from social media platforms. Secondly, for the semistructured interviews, a random sampling was adopted to select 5 pastors from the 10 whose sermons were analysed. This methodological triangulation was premised on the fact that no single method ever solves a problem with rival explanations (Patton 2002:555).

A qualitative content analysis was employed through the ATLAS.ti computer software. Sermon transcripts were merged into one document for development of codes and code groups. The same exercise was conducted with the interview transcripts. Data from sermon contents were analysed by applying themes such as sermon types, styles of preaching, congregational participation, as well as other emergent themes. However, data from semistructured interviews were analysed according to the thematic structure of the semistructured interview schedule.

## Key terms and issues

### Preaching

While preaching is part of homiletics, there is a distinction between the two. Preaching refers to the actual act of proclaiming the good news, while homiletics, which is from the Greek word *homilia*, means a discourse or sermon, which is more than the act of preaching (Kurewa 2000:75). There are several expressions for preaching in the New Testament, *inter alia*, *kerussein*, *euaggelizein*, *didaskein*, *marturein*, and *presbeuein*. *Kerussein* refers to a public proclamation, like that of a herald on a foreign assignment announcing something that has not been heard before. *Euaggelizein* strongly emphasises the joyful content of the message (the good news, *euaggelion*). However, *didaskein* has its function in the building up of an existing congregation by instructing it in a previously unknown doctrine. *Maturein* has a connotation of a close relationship between the proclamation and its proclaimer. That is, as one preaches, one allows oneself to be a witness of something else outside oneself (Bonhoeffer 2002:32).

### Pentecostalism

Despite the wide-ranging research and literature about Pentecostalism, Suarsana (2014:1) mentions that the challenge of defining Pentecostalism still remains. By

nature, Pentecostalism is multifaceted and splintered, with a variety of expressions and a range of theological positions. Therefore, it is neither homogeneous nor monolithic (cf. Ambrose 2012:72). While many Pentecostal groups are fundamentalist, some are liberal and others combine several of these theological positions (Anderson 2013:2). Therefore, it can be said that Pentecostalism is an overarching generic term that embraces a plethora of doctrinal and organisational positions. Another notable feature is that the Pentecostal movement is not led by any centralised structure (like, for example, the Roman Catholic Church). Most Pentecostals view themselves as part of larger Christian formations (Chetty 2009:4). However, despite their differences, Pentecostals see themselves as part of a special and sacred community whose identity and unity are aggressively promoted to those who are outside (Mbe 2002:362).

### Pentecostal preaching

According to Nel (2017:288–296), while the concepts, structures and methodologies of other confessions that are not Pentecostal provide a great deal of material utilised in Pentecostal homiletics, there are distinctive characteristics of Pentecostal homiletics, some of which are, firstly, that Pentecostals emphasise that the goal of preaching is not to stimulate listeners intellectually or entertain them but to transform their affections, leading to a new lifestyle. Secondly, the Pentecostal message focuses on the meaning of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. This culminates in the manifestation of the Spirit, such that believers live from Jesus' daily presence. Thirdly, critical to Pentecostal preaching is the correct biblical theology driven by the power of the Holy Spirit so that, as Paul asserts in 1 Corinthians 2:1–5, the listeners' faith will not rest in the wisdom of men but the power of God. In addition, Nel (2017:288–289) explains further that for Pentecostals, the sermon invites the listener to experience the immediacy, power and truth of the word of God being proclaimed. For instance, a message about healing in a Pentecostal church invites listeners to experience the present healing power of Christ who still heals today.

### Christology

Christology can be referred to as a critical reflection on the religious significance of Jesus or the Christian doctrine of the person of Christ. The classical Christian account of the significance of Jesus of Nazareth is framed in terms of the concept of the 'incarnation' and the doctrine of the 'two natures' of Christ—divine and human (McMahon 2013:13–14). There are two approaches used to study Christology. The first starts from the creedal formulations confessing Christ as the 'true God' and 'true man', as embodied in the Nicene and Chalcedon creeds. This methodology, termed Christology 'from above', then works backwards to the Christology of the early church and the New Testament. The second approach is Christology 'from below'. It begins with the factual historical records and theological data as entailed in the New Testament and then traces the developments of the church's understanding of Jesus Christ before the creeds (Robinson 2004:284–288).

According to O'Collins (2013:412), to study Christology, one has to find its background in the New Testament (NT), the patristic period, the medieval period and through the Reformation and beyond. In this regard, two aspects are important: firstly, the union of divinity and humanity in Christ (ontological Christology), and secondly, his saving significance for human life and destiny, as well as for the world (functional Christology or soteriology).

## Results

### Sermons

#### Styles of preaching

The sermonic styles in the study presented in this article could not be categorically classified because sometimes, in one sermon, there was a combination of styles. Preachers were more inclined to one style than another in their preaching. This is because the variety of genres of biblical material calls for different approaches to preaching. The rationale behind this belief is that the Bible as the word of God shows that God saw it necessary to communicate with people in a multiplicity of ways such as narrative, poetry, prophecy, the law, wisdom and hymns (Stevenson 2005:101).

Three preaching styles were discernible, namely rhetorical, prophetic and narrative. Two of the 10 sermons seemed more rhetorical than others, namely the sermon on prayer ('Men ought always to pray and not faint') and the one about the resurrection of Jesus. The evidence of this rhetoric was shown when the preachers passionately repeated certain phrases during the sermon, to persuade the congregation to believe what they said. For instance, in the sermon about prayer, Preacher H, a male of about fifty years, referred to the story in the Bible where the Apostle Peter was imprisoned, and the church prayed for him. Subsequently, the chains around him were miraculously loosed and he was released from prison. The preacher used this as an illustration that when believers pray, people are released from their bondage. He said:

'And because of the prayer of the church in Mary's house [...] the chains around Peter were broken off [...] Thank God who can make sure the chains in your life, in your spouse, in your family, in your health are broken down [...] If the chains broke off the life of Peter, chains are breaking off you now, in the name of Jesus! Breaking off [...]. Oh! chains are breaking off! Chains are breaking off! [... Repeats].'

Two other sermons could be said to be prophetic: the sermon about the agenda of the church was prophetic in the sense that it aimed at making the audience see their responsibility of making disciples, just as Jesus commanded in the Great Commission. Furthermore, the sermon about the resurrection of Jesus was not only evangelistic and rhetorical, but the preacher also approached the events of Easter Sunday as a narrative.

#### Congregational participation

Ma and Ma (2010:155–156) mention that the most noticeable feature of Pentecostal preaching is the active participation of

the audience during preaching. In the sermons, there were various forms of congregational participation. For example, in Sermon A, titled 'Christ our righteousness', the congregation was lively and responded to the preacher with shouts of 'Amen!' and 'Hallelujah!' The sermon titled 'A call to abide in Jesus' was characterised by the loudest responses to the preacher, as he punctuated the sermon with some worship songs. This resulted in some congregants also praying during the sermon. In Sermon H, congregants participated in the form of individuals praying one after another for specific prayer items that the preacher identified. As this was a virtual platform, the preacher requested the congregants to type their prayer requests or type certain numerals such as 1, 2 or 3 to show that they agreed with what he was saying. For instance, he would say 'Chains are breaking! ... Please type that now if you are in agreement, type that now, [that] "chains are breaking in my life"'. Again, he would say:

'And if there is anyone who has any prayer request, please type it right here [...] Please if you can, type your prayer request so that we can labour and pray for you [...] in the name of Jesus Christ.'

#### Reference to Jesus in the sermons

Five of the 10 sermons had themes that had direct reference to Jesus Christ, namely 'Christ our righteousness'; 'The resurrection of Jesus Christ'; 'A call to abide (in Jesus)'; 'Looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith'; and 'Jesus is the Good Shepherd'.

Four other sermons had indirect references to Jesus. For example, the Christmas Day sermon was about the love of God as shown in Jesus. The sermon with the theme 'Men ought always to pray and not faint' was from the parable that Jesus gave in Luke 18:1–8 to show the importance of persistence in prayer. The sermon with the theme 'The river of God' dealt with the importance of the Holy Spirit in worship and had reference to the words of Jesus as stated in Luke 4:18–19. Preacher A, a male in the late fifties, used Malachi 4:2 to explain that Jesus is the sun of righteousness with healing on his wings. The preacher then used the metaphor of the sun to show that just as the sun appears and darkness flees, so will Jesus appear in difficult situations of the lives of believers. He retorted:

'You know brethren, Christ is the Sun of Righteousness [...] You see, brethren, Jesus is likened to the sun because the sun is faithful. It rises [...] Sometimes you think you are in darkness, nothing will come right. But Jesus is the sun for the soul. He is the Sun of Righteousness. Even if it seems dark, even if it seems there is no hope, but just as the sun appears, Jesus is the sun [...] he appears.'

In Sermon J, 'Jesus is the Good Shepherd', a male of about fifty years, also used the metaphor of a shepherd as 'someone who understands seasons' to show that Jesus takes care of the believers in their various episodes of life.

#### The 'emic' perspectives of the participants

The analysis of empirical data can be performed in various ways and from different perspectives. This article adopts the

'emic' point of view by the participants and compares it with the scholarly anthropological, sociological and theological outside perspectives ('etic' points of view) of scholars in theology, homiletics and liturgical studies (cf. Barnard, Cilliers & Wepener 2014:53). This article explored how the following factors affected preaching in the Western Reef Region.

### Understanding of the notion of preaching

Various notions of preaching were expressed. For example, Preacher E, a male of about sixty years, regarded preaching as

'[...] Communicating to people that which has been communicated to you by the Lord himself through his word [...] ensuring that things like how to properly arrange a sermon, your exegesis, ensuring that you are hermeneutically correct.'

Preacher F, a male in the early forties said:

'Preaching [...] is conveying or putting across a message of the gospel [...] to a particular audience. And obviously the preaching should be centralised or should be guided by the Scripture itself.'

### Understanding the fundamental components of preaching

Regarding the main components of preaching, interviewees had various views. Among other views, Preacher E, a male of about sixty years, stated:

'Firstly, the preacher must be there, secondly the audience must be there, and of course in the first instance the preacher must first prepare himself for preaching before he can even prepare the sermon [...] there is no preaching without the Holy Spirit.'

Preacher F, a male in the early forties emphasised the centrality of the Scripture, saying that preaching '[...] needs to be centralised on, or it should be extracted from the Bible'.

Preacher H a male of about fifty years, was more extensive in his list of the components of preaching when he said:

'[...] But really when we say preaching has taken place, we are actually talking about the actual message that is broadcasted [...] the Scriptures, the word of God, the Bible [...] the cultures, the people you are speaking to, the relevance, and all that.'

### The role of the preacher in effectively engaging the congregation

Preacher J, a male of about fifty years explained the importance of asking questions during preaching by saying:

'But one of the things is that the preacher, in one way or the other, must be able to engage the audience as necessity arises. And one of the things really, is to ask questions [...] to pose something that will then necessitate a response back, a feedback of some sort [...] I would say of Pentecostals, you would find us more especially using the word "Halleluyah!", "Amen!" And then they respond back [with] "Amen! Halleluyah!"'

However, Preacher G, a male of about sixty-five years, mentioned that while interaction is necessary in preaching, traditionally preachers did not ask questions to their audiences because they (preachers) were the only people who had the

Bible, and 'It was not easy for the general membership to have a meaningful discussion with the person speaking information which he got from the book which they don't have'.

### Understanding Pentecostalism and Pentecostal preaching

Preacher E, a male of about sixty years, described Pentecostalism as 'an activity of the Holy Spirit, [...] him empowering the saints, him providing gifts to the saints'. He also explained that Pentecostal preaching derives from Pentecostalism, in that it depends more on the work of the Holy Spirit. He said:

'Pentecostal preaching will have a trend of relying more on the Holy Spirit, but at the same time having Christ at the centre and also understanding that Christ himself is the [incarnate] Word.'

In describing Pentecostal preaching, Preacher G said:

'The Pentecostal churches have taken a certain line of preaching in the Bible. Pentecostal churches [...] choose to stress the Holy Spirit, healings, deliverance, salvation being the key, and we deny the issue of training [of pastors for ministry].'

He also mentioned: '[...] while other church traditions are highly involved in social issues involving the community, Pentecostals shy away from social and political involvement.'

### Cultural contexts of the congregation

Preacher F, a male in the early forties mentioned that in some instances, the cultural context of a congregation influences people not to be receptive to the preacher's sermon. He said:

'You would find that because of their cultural background, people would then not want to be receptive of what is being preached, unless obviously when the Holy Spirit has then affected or captured their hearts.'

Preacher H a male of about fifty years, said that a preacher has to take into consideration the culture of his or her audience in preaching; otherwise, that could be a barrier to the preaching. He said:

'When we minister to people, we minister to them having to understand that they are in a particular cultural setting and therefore, that culture is there to be understood. What type of people are they [...] how they understand things, and that includes simple things like the dress [code].'

### Understanding the concept of Christology

Among the other views about Christology, Preacher G defined Christology as:

'Christ incarnated, which means it's Christ made flesh [...] That means Christology should affect all spheres of life [...] So, this means there is nothing in this world which God cannot be involved in. Hence Christology should affect all spheres of life.'

Preacher H a male of about fifty years, said: 'I think Christology is that branch of Christian theology relating to the person, nature and role of Christ. In other words, whatever that Christ was, whatever that Christ did'. This view was repeated by Preacher J, a male of about fifty years.

## Importance of Christology and its expression in preaching

Preacher E regarded Christology to be a very important in Pentecostalism. He said:

'[...] Because Christ is the head of the church. Christ is the baptizer in the Holy Spirit. He has to be at the centre [...] So, I think it's quite critical that we have Christ taking the major role, you know, in preaching and in everything.'

Regarding the expression of Christology in the Western Reef Region, Preacher E was frank to say he did not think it finds sufficient expression. He said:

'I don't think so, honestly speaking. In [...] Western Reef, I don't think Christology actually got attention. What you would find would be emphasis on the Holy Spirit, emphasis on the Old Testament, more than the New [Testament]. You would find us [...] instead being driven by what the audience pushes you to say, instead of what is it that you want to say.'

However, Preacher F responded that there are instances when Christology finds expression in Pentecostal preaching, while in some instances, its expression is lacking. He said: 'Ok, yes and no. Yes, when one is solely dependent on the Holy Spirit ... Yes, when the motive of the preacher is right'. He, however, continued to state the negative side:

'Obviously, we live in times when people have ulterior motives [...] You would find that they would then suffocate Christology from their preaching, and they start pointing people towards either themselves or towards whatever that they would expect the people to do.'

## Key findings: Factors affecting preaching in the Western Reef Region Pentecostalism and Pentecostal preaching

The pervasive idea from the participants was that Pentecostalism is a religious tradition that emphasises the working of the Holy Spirit, including salvation, prophecy, healing and deliverance. This agrees with Kgatle (2017:4) that the major doctrinal characteristics of Pentecostalism are justification by faith, sanctification by grace, the baptism in the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, divine healing and the personal premillennial rapture of the saints (Ma & Ma 2010:154; Mashau 2013:5).

Furthermore, the idea that Pentecostal churches do not involve themselves in community issues was also mentioned in the interviews. That is, spiritual aspects of people take pre-eminence over social and political aspects of life. This assertion seems to agree with the dualistic ontology of the Pentecostal worldview, which makes a sharp dichotomy between the present reality and the spiritual reality. This results in Pentecostals being averse to most forms of involvement in social activities, except when it is motivated by an underlying desire to convert unbelievers to Pentecostalism (Kaunda 2015:119–120).

The empirical work showed that preaching can be said to consist of four fundamental components operating in a given

cultural context, namely the preacher, the Scripture, the sermon and the congregation. These components are inter-related in the sense that the preacher preaches a sermon (that is based on the Scripture) to the congregation. Concerning the preacher, what he or she preaches is as important as his or her personality, as Kurewa (2000:173) mentions that a sermon is a truth strained through human personality.

The general view of participants was that Pentecostal preaching is inspired by the Holy Spirit. Interviewees explained that the Holy Spirit inspires and guides the preacher and manifests in the operation of gifts such as prophecy and healing. This showed that the working of the Holy Spirit is regarded as an important characteristic of Pentecostal worship in general and Pentecostal preaching in particular. This form of worship is said to emanate from the baptism in the Spirit. This baptism in the Holy Spirit is frequently reflected in their preaching, in the sense that at the end of many sermons, congregants are admonished to seek this experience (Ma & Ma 2010:154).

It can be said that from the empirical work of this research, the characteristics of Pentecostal preaching derive from the belief of Pentecostalism in the work of the Holy Spirit and the centrality of the Scripture. Nel (2017:286) alludes to this idea when mentioning that Pentecostal preaching emphasises two important elements, namely the value of the written word and the active involvement of God through the Spirit in the preacher and in the midst of the congregation. The interplay and balance of these two elements distinguish the preaching from mere speech. In addition, interviewees mentioned that, unlike other religious traditions, Pentecostal preachers want to see results by having an altar call after their preaching. This was also evident in some sermons. This altar service is performed to ensure that people respond to the message from God through the sermon. Ma and Ma (2010:155–156) allude to this that an essential part of Pentecostal preaching is the altar service, which provides an opportunity for the audience to respond to the message. The congregation is invited to the altar area for, among other things, salvation, healing, commitment or dedication, the baptism of the Holy Spirit and marriage life.

## The cultural context of the congregation

Concerning the effect of cultural contexts on preaching, the interviews showed that the church's cultural context affects preaching in one way or another. The preacher's language, the dress code and respect for the congregation's norms and values were said to have a bearing on how the congregation receives the message from the pulpit. This article notes that as Malan Nel mentions, church praxis takes place in a continuing dynamic relationship with society and culture (cf. Nel 2004:2). It seems that the participants in this study agree with Kim (2017:3–4) that dealing with people of different cultures necessitates the need for cultural intelligence on the part of the preacher. Cultural intelligence is the capability to deal effectively with people of other

cultural backgrounds. In addition, it acts as a bridge-building exercise between the world of the Bible and the world of the 21st century.

### Theological training for ministers

One of the weaknesses of Pentecostal preaching was said to be over-dependence on the Holy Spirit at the expense of theological training. A concern raised by some participants was that an untrained pastor who came into the ministry from being an elder or deacon in the church would not be able to deal with exegetical and hermeneutical issues of preaching, as well as the related Christological aspects. These views echo the sentiments of Kgatle and Mofokeng (2019:2) that Pentecostals believe that the Holy Spirit can draw to their attention relevant scriptural passages that will help them deal with contextual challenges in their lives and ministry, hence the perception by some of them that theological training is not necessary.

All interviewees agreed that to turn the situation around, there should be deliberate efforts to train pastors before they start their ministry. This should not only come as a requirement by the church, but it should also start from individual pastors' desire to learn. Furthermore, for those pastors who are already in the ministry, there should be workshops and in-service training. According to Long (2008:5–6), becoming a preacher involves costly personal involvement, over and above self-development or cultivated seeds of homiletical gifts. Becoming a preacher involves being instructed and trained for the practice of a church that has its own canon and norms that are older and larger than any person's capacities. Although prospective preachers have their own personalities and backgrounds, they have to learn and be initiated into the rhythms and excellencies of this historic practice of preaching.

### Christology and its expression in preaching

The 'emic' point of view by interviewees showed a fair understanding of Christology as the study of the person and ministry of Jesus and, to some extent, that Christology concerns itself with the divinity and humanity of Christ. There was no mention of concepts such as Christology from above or from below, high or low Christology, as well as implicit and explicit Christology. Emphasis was on what Jesus did in his ministry and what he can do in a person's life. This view can be classified as the historical perspective of Christology, which puts more emphasis on the historicity of Jesus as well as his redemptive work (cf. Gathogo 2015:2).

Besides the description of Christology as the study of the life and ministry of Jesus as the Messiah, almost all interviewees linked Christology to the centrality of Jesus in all the affairs of the church. In this sense, they viewed Christology (used interchangeably with Christ-centeredness) as an important aspect of Pentecostal worship, which also helps preachers not to exalt themselves at the expense of Christ and end up pursuing their agendas in the church.

The general view from the interviewees was that preaching about Christ was more evident in evangelistic campaigns than in normal weekly services. In this sense, then, the interviewees felt that generally, Christology did not have sufficient expressions in their sermons. Preaching on materialism was said to be one factor that hindered sufficient expression of Christology, while the other factor was the preaching of sermons that rally congregants around the preacher instead of around Jesus himself. The interviewees also linked Christology to the Trinity in general and to pneumatology in particular. This appears to be in line with the assertion that a genuinely Pentecostal Christology has a strong pneumatic inclination that acknowledges the perichoresis of the Trinity (House 2006:44–45).

### The need for improving preaching in the Western Reef Region

The sentiment that preaching still needs much improvement in the Western Reef Region came up strongly from the participants. This is understandable because preaching is affected by many factors. In general, many factors still affect preaching, such as old modes of church absolutes that are no longer trusted because they are increasingly regarded as patriarchal, authoritarian and hierarchic. In addition, there is a factor of pluralism as a new reality in interpreting the community of local congregations. That is, as congregations are becoming increasingly heterogeneous, this pluralism can no longer be overcome by absolute assertion, either through pastoral authority or denominational dictum (cf. Brueggemann 2005:17–29). Therefore, the churches in the Western Reef have to adapt to this changing landscape if their preaching has to cater for the people of the 21st century.

### Conclusion

Preaching is not only multifaceted and dynamic, but it is also affected by various factors. The empirical work represented by this article shows that the participants had a fair understanding of the concepts of Pentecostalism, Pentecostal preaching, fundamental elements of preaching and Christology, as well the effects of the church's cultural context. This understanding seemed to have a positive effect on their approach to preaching. However, it can be said that the lack of preministerial theological training for pastors, some congregational cultures, as well as the insufficient expression of Christology have a negative effect on preaching in the region. Hence, the participants felt that preaching in their region was not at the expected level.

While the situation regarding theological training is receiving attention in Pentecostal circles, the Western Reef Region seems to be lagging behind. This article recommends that although Pentecostal preaching is known for its strong belief in the work of the Holy Spirit, preministerial theological training should be taken seriously and not as an optional luxury if preaching is to be effective. All possible avenues have to be explored to ensure that pastors receive theological training, including continuing training for pastors who are already in the ministry.

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## Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

## Authors' contributions

M.L.M. wrote and conceptualised the article, with M.N. and Y.D. acting as supervisors.

## Ethical considerations

For the study presented in this article, approval was obtained from the University of Pretoria Research Ethics Committee on 19 September 2019 (ref. no. T048/19). Furthermore, this study considered ethical issues such as voluntary participation, informed consent, as well as confidentiality and anonymity. Correspondingly, ethical issues such as avoiding harm to participants, violations of privacy and deception of participants were considered. Pseudonyms were used for participants, except for the name of the region.

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## Data availability

Written informed consent was obtained from the participants of the study, and copies thereof are available. Likewise, data used for this article, such as the transcripts of sermons and interviews, are available.

## Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors.

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