COMMUNITIES FACING DISRUPTION: A PASTORAL APPROACH TO ISSUES OF TRAUMA AND RESTORATION

By

DAWID PETRUS MOUTON

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
(PhD)

in the

DEPARTMENT OF PRACTICAL AND MISSIONAL THEOLOGY

FACULTY OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGION

UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

BLOEMFONTEIN

NOVEMBER 2022

STUDY LEADER: Prof. J-A van den Berg

DECLARATION

I, Dawid Petrus Mouton declare that the thesis that I herewith submit for the doctoral degree Doctor of Philosophy in Theology at the University of the Free State, is my independent work and that I have not previously submitted it for qualification at another institution of higher education.

_____ **30 November 2022**

Dawid Petrus Mouton **Date**

I, Dawid Petrus Mouton declare that I am aware that the copyright is vested in the University of the Free State.

_____ **30 November 2022**

Dawid Petrus Mouton **Date**

I, Dawid Petrus Mouton declare that all royalties as regards to intellectual property that was developed during the course of and/or in connection with the study at the University of the Free State, will accrue to the University.

_____ **30 November 2022**

Dawid Petrus Mouton **Date**

I, Dawid Petrus Mouton declare that I am aware that the research may only be published with the Dean's approval.

_____ **30 November 2022**

Dawid Petrus Mouton **Date**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"Yours, O Lord, are the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours; yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all." – 1 Chronicle 19:11

My sincere thanks to the following:

- My supervisor, Prof. Jan-Albert van den Berg, for his friendship, guidance, and encouragement.
- Prof. Ruard Ganzevoort for valuable inputs into this journey.
- The communities of Dingleton and Krönlein, Keetmanshoop for allowing me into their spaces, their lives, and most importantly into their life stories.
- The Dean and colleagues at the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch University for your encouragement and support.
- Aurelia and Joshua, despite not always understanding all the choices I made on this journey, you stuck around and continued to encourage and support me.
- A special word of thanks to my wife, Saretta, for always believing in me, for inspiring me, and for encouraging me along the entire journey. You have made huge sacrifices along this road, and I will remain deeply grateful for that.

DEDICATION

This thesis is firstly dedicated to my wife, Saretta, and our children, Aurelia and Joshua, who stood by me, believing in me, and always helping clean my lenses as we face life together. Thank you for your love and support all the way.

I secondly dedicate this work to my late parents, Dawid and Anna Mouton who, despite their human flaws, somehow instilled in me the belief that there is always tomorrow … that there is always hope. Thank you for doing your best with what you had.

ABSTRACT

Trauma and disruption can turn life upside-down for individuals and communities, shaking all stability and bringing into question the core tenets of meaningful existence. As positive and transformative science, Practical Theology finds its scope and object in the lived realities of people in the concrete, local context, where it aims to bring about change and transformation, and restoration of hope and meaningful life. In contexts where life in communities has become permeated with persistent violence, disruption and trauma, the need for a collective response to issues of trauma and disruption becomes even more acute. Making use of qualitative research and a broadly narrative approach, this study on the one hand explored the potential of resistance, agency and hope in the narratives of people facing disruption, while on the other hand, it seeks to propose a framework for a congregational pastoral care ministry response to trauma and disruption. The argument presented in this thesis is that such an approach is first and foremost grounded in the confessional identity and calling of the church. Through the metaphor of "facing" the study sought to describe some of the impacts of trauma and disruption, while the metaphor also provided a guiding narrative for a conceptual response framework. Using principles from autoethnography, the study also dealt with issues of identity, positionality and the worldview of the practical theologian and minister as a significant member of the culture being studied, highlighting the need for personal transformation and ongoing professional re-orientation in service of the ministry of care to and with her/his community. The study is valuable in at least two ways. It firstly emphasises the call for the local church to an embodied and collective ministry of care in response to issues of trauma and disruption and suggests a framework for it. It also creates the space for reflection about the subjective presence of the minister/pastor in ministry and research, and how this subjective presence, through an autoethnographic and reflexive stance, can open up new possibilities for both the spiritual leader and the community. The thesis is presented as a set of five (5) interrelated articles, enfolded by an introductory and a concluding chapter. The cohesive introduction serves to clarify the broader scope and framework of the study as well as the structure of the thesis, while the conclusion summarizes the main findings of the study and reflects on the research process in the context of the research questions and aims, and my personal journey with this project.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION I

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS II

DEDICATION III

ABSTRACT IV

1. CHAPTER 1 – In the face of disruption 1

1.1. Introduction 1

1.2. "Facedown" 1

1.3. "Facing" – a precursor 4

1.4. Practical theology: a framework 8

1.4.1. "All theology is practical. Or is it?" 8

1.4.2. Practical theology – a brief definition 14

1.4.3. Pastoral care framework – a broad stroke 15

1.4.4. Framework for this study 16

1.4.5. Pastoral care as integrated congregational ministry 18

1.4.6. A confessional framework to a congregational pastoral care ministry approach 20

1.5. Framing the research 22

1.5.1. Introduction, background, and research problem 22

1.5.2. Research questions, aim and objectives 23

1.5.3. Methodological approach 24

1.5.3.1. A practical theological research framework 24

1.5.3.2. A post-foundational narrative stance 27

1.5.3.3. Autoethnography and reflexivity 28

1.5.3.4. A broad qualitative approach 30

1.5.3.5. Additional notes on methodology 31

i. Research locations 33

ii. Sample selection 34

1.6. Outline and presentation of the thesis 35

1.6.1. Chapter 1 – In the face of disruption 36

1.6.2. Chapter 2 – Communities facing disruption: the need to shift from individual to community paradigms in pastoral care 36

1.6.3. Chapter 3 – The power of stories from within: the Dingleton community relocation 36

1.6.4. Chapter 4 – Writing the self in(to) practical theological research 37

1.6.5. Chapter 5 – A promise of rain – facing encounters with trauma and disruption 37

1.6.6. Chapter 6 – Facing disruptive and traumatic experiences in communities: a congregational pastoral ministry approach 37

1.6.7. Chapter 7 – A look in the rear-view mirror 38

1.7. Conclusion 38

2. CHAPTER 2 – Communities facing disruption: the need to shift from individual to community paradigms in pastoral care' 39

2.1. Introduction 39

2.2. South Africa: a disrupted and traumatized nation? 41

2.3. Violence, disruption, and trauma 44

2.4. Healing, restoration and well-being – a (w)holistic basis for pastoral care in disrupted and traumatized contexts 47

2.5. Conclusion 51

3. CHAPTER 3 – The power of stories from within: the Dingleton community relocation' 53

3.1. Introduction 53

3.2. The backdrop to these stories 54

3.3. Why stories? 56

3.4. Whose story? What power? The stories from within 59

3.5. Do these stories mean anything? 62

3.6. Conclusion 64

4. CHAPTER 4 – Writing the self in(to) practical theological research' 65

4.1. Introduction 65

4.2. Lived experiences – the meeting "place" for practical theology and autoethnography 66

4.3. Autoethnography: definition and overview 68

4.4. Autoethnography: process, product and form 70

4.5. Positioning and reflexivity 73

4.6. Critique against Autoethnography 75

4.7. Conclusion: is there a place for autoethnography as research framework within practical theology research for me? 76

5. CHAPTER 5 – A promise of rain: facing encounters with trauma and disruption' 78

5.1. Introduction 78

5.2. Methodological approach 78

5.3. A promise of rain – the space between promise and fulfilment 81

5.4. Results and discussion 84

5.4.1. Domestic abuse 85

5.4.2. Experiences of violence, sexual harassment, sexual abuse, and rape 87

5.4.3. Experiences of loss 89

5.5. Conclusion 96

6. CHAPTER 6 – Facing disruptive and traumatic experiences in communities: a congregational pastoral ministry approach' 98

6.1. Introduction 98
6.2. "Facing" – despair, resistance ... hope? 99
6.3. "Faced with" reality – the lived experiences of people 100
6.4. "Facing" together – framing the project in the academic field of practical theology and pastoral care 101
6.5. A framework for a congregational pastoral ministry approach (to issues of trauma and healing) 104
6.5.1. Becoming aware: we see "us"… we see "you" – the faces we wear 104
6.5.2. Beyond awareness: scanning for detail – *see, hear, feel* 111
6.5.3. "Facing" the challenge – unlocking potential, actualizing resistance 113
6.5.4. "Facing" a new outlook – "being seen" as expression of the message of hope and expectancy 115
6.6. Turning the face – nurturing a new outlook 119
6.7. Lessons learned – facing the future (outlook) 120
6.8. Conclusion 123
7. Chapter 7 – A look in the rear-view mirror 125
7.1. Introduction 125
7.2. Snapshots from the rear-view mirror 126
7.2.1. From the city of roses to my dry and dusty hometown 126
7.2.2. At home, safe yet badly exposed 127
7.2.3. I am my research... my research is me... 132
7.2.4. Theology IS personal and it IS practical 137
7.3. In transit – beholding the outcome 139
7.3.1. Revisiting the research questions, aims and process 140
7.3.2. Beholding the outcome 141
7.4. Conclusion: blind spots and green shoots – looking into the future 149
7.4.1. Some green shoots 150
7.4.2. Blind spots, opportunities, and a peak ahead 152
8. Bibliography 154
Appendix – Table 1 169

1. CHAPTER 1 – In the face of disruption

1.1. Introduction

Although the title of this thesis, *Communities facing disruption: A pastoral approach to issues of trauma and restoration,* broadly refers to a "pastoral approach to issues of trauma and restoration", its scope is to be understood in the context of congregational pastoral ministry. From this develops the expectation that in the end, the study will provide some evidence of and suggestions as to how a congregational pastoral ministry approach could assist in dealing with issues of trauma and restoration on an individual and communal level.

This chapter seeks to assist the reader to understand the rationale of the study, its broad assumptions, conceptual framework, and methodological approaches. It further serves to plot the evolution of the study as an academic and a personal project and to orientate the reader regarding its layout and structure. All of these are in essence dependent on the title of this project and how it is understood, as well as the formulation and understanding of the primary research question to be presented later. The title may present some options in conceptualizing this chapter and the thesis. In this regard, the notion of "facing" seems particularly useful as a metaphor. In the following two sections I briefly reflect on my own journey with and understanding of the notion of "face" or "facing", and how its binds this study. This thesis is presented as a series of five interrelated articles, flanked by an extended introduction and conclusion that will hopefully illuminate the essence of these articles even more.

1.2. "Facedown"

> In January 2007 my family and I packed up our house in Swakopmund, Namibia, and left for Stellenbosch, South Africa, to start my theological training after years of working in the fields of environmental and oceanographic research, and environmental management in government and the mining sector. It was shortly after the start of formal lectures in my first year, in February 2007, that I experienced something that had a profound impact on how my research interest would unfold.
>
> As I was waiting early one night for our order at a local pizza restaurant in Stellenbosch, I became aware of a loud and disturbing ruction close

by. I am not sure what really happened, but the next moment a lady, in her late twenties, crashed into the shop and fell face down on the floor. She was clearly under the influence of something and all the time still swearing and shouting. People hurriedly moved out of the way, but no one said or do anything. It was clear that she must be living on the street and was pushed by someone else who also seemed to live on the street, a phenomenon not very common where I came from. This lady, violently pushed into the fall, got up and noisily responded to the act of aggression. I could sense my own awkwardness as well as that of everyone in the shop. We all pretended to not have seen anything in order to avoid being drawn into the quarrel. Something moved in me the very moment she fell to the floor. I remember questioning the idea of studying theology in a historic and fancy building whilst the streets just outside are roamed by broken lives, seemingly trapped by hopelessness and a bleak outlook. My own ideas about the piety of my decision to leave a lucrative job to become a minister of religion were shaken at that moment, disrupted by the apparent disrupted lived realities of these people I do not know, yet so intensely felt for at that moment. This and other questions would plague me for weeks to come, and in a way never really left me. Why would someone want to live on the street? What may have caused them to leave their homes and families? In the months following, I became more involved with the Stellenbosch Night Shelter which provides a temporary refuge to housing insecure individuals. I eventually started working there on a full-time basis at the beginning of my second year of theological studies. It is there that I painfully became aware of the disrupted and traumatic histories of these people. During the years at the Night Shelter I learned, through the stories of real people, how disruptive experience - even the slightest and insignificant in the view of others - can turn the lives of people up-side-down, altering their meaning-making frameworks to such an extent that life simply does not make sense anymore. It is then that many feel forced to escape that which was once familiar yet now had become unbearably strange and meaningless. Two things stuck with me from the encounters of the lived realities of the people at the night shelter, namely (1) the painful inability of people to deal with the disruptions and trauma in their lives, and (2) the fact that

> many felt that their own faith communities seemed unable to grasp the challenges of their disrupted lives, let alone assist in dealing with it.

The recollection of that evening will remain with me as a painful reminder of the violence and trauma that so many live with every day. The violence, disruption and trauma that seem to have become a "normal" everyday experience and my deep conviction that I, together with the church of Christ, was called to embody and enact the manifesto of Jesus' earthly ministry as proclaimed in Luke 4:18-19[1], to a large extent motivated this study. The image of the woman falling, facedown, to the floor of that pizza shop remained with me. It is as if I felt how her personhood, her identity, her being ... her "face" ... was shattered even more in that moment. At the time I realized that this is probably what she faces every day. And us – me and the other patrons – being disrupted by her shattering "fall to the floor" could not deny that it just happened in front of our eyes ... in our very midst. We were there with her. But not in the way that the Belhar Confession[2] calls us to be "with" the broken. We were simply bystanders in our discomfort. In a way, this became symbolic to me. It represents the challenges and disruptive experience people face, the humiliation and brokenness captured in a face pressed to the floor, the need for people to be able to assertively respond to these challenges and face them with the hope for restoration, and the "face" (in terms of identity and calling) of a broken church who not only needs to face the ethical and spiritual implications of her calling but also face these disruptive challenges together with those who fall facedown to the ground.

As it may already be evident, the notion of "face" or "facing" features strongly in my experiences of and reflection on how traumatic and disruptive experiences impact the lives of ordinary people, as well as what it means for the identity and calling of the church, particularly the local congregation. From the tone of this introductory section, it may also be apparent that this is rather personal for me. Not only is it so in relation to my understanding of my calling in ministry but also to my own experiences of trauma throughout my life. It should therefore not be unexpected that large parts of this

[1] "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD." ("Luke 4:18-19 NKJV - "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, - Bible Gateway", n.d.)

[2] "The Belhar Confession, drafted in 1982 by the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC), has its roots in the struggle against apartheid in Southern Africa". Its key articles proclaim unity, reconciliation and justice. (Plaatjies van Huffel, 2013). The Confession's proclamation that God "is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor and the wronged" ("Confession of Belhar – URCSA CAPE", n.d.), has been one of the contentious issues for other Afrikaans churches from the Dutch Reformed tradition.

introductory chapter, some of the articles and parts of the concluding chapter that constitute this thesis, are presented in a first-person and sometimes autoethnographic fashion. Perhaps now would be an opportune moment to briefly pause and reflect on the idea of "face" and "facing" as a leading metaphor for this study to help the reader understand my own positioning from here on.

1.3. "Facing" – a precursor

"Facing" may be understood in many ways, depending on the context in which and the purpose (as verb, noun, adjective, preposition) for which it is used[3]. In this project, it evolved from being understood as a mere functional word to express the idea that individuals and communities are experiencing hardships related to traumatic encounters into a metaphor with theological, practical, linguistic, and structural significance. As a noun "facing" may refer to "[a]n outer layer covering the surface of something", "facework", "someone who fits a lining to something", "cuffs, collar, and lapels of a military jacket", "counterpart" as in "opposite", or "a position or place directly in front". It is then in a sense what is presented to us ... that which we see. As the outer, visible reflection it provides the face of what may lie within or below. Considering that our faces are printed on our identity documents, the word "face" can then become a proxy for our identity. But, as intimated by the definitions above, it may also refer to the idea of calling which, I believe, is strongly connected with the notion of identity, or at least the self-understanding of one's identity. Yet, as a noun, it can also be understood as referring to being faced by or faced with as well as facing something – being looked at and looking at. When used as an adjective it can mean "[o]riented towards the viewer", "pointing or focused in a given direction", and "pertaining to, or exhibiting opposition". As a preposition or prepositional phrase, it is used to convey the idea of "[o]riented in a given direction or object", "[i]n competition with"; [i]n the direction of, or [c]onfronted with or by (something)". The uses as adjectives and prepositions align with the understanding of positionality and strengthen the idea of being faced by, faced with or facing something. Similarly, as a verb, it can be used to convey various meanings. These include being "[h]eavily occupied, or busily involved in an important activity", "experience an emotion or sensation", and as present participle meaning to "confront and deal with or accept", "be positioned with the face or front toward", "cause trouble or worry to", and "look at, especially from across an area or

[3] *What is another word for face?* | *Face Synonyms - WordHippo Thesaurus* (no date). Available at: https://www.wordhippo.com/what-is/another-word-for/face.html (Accessed: 15 September 2022).
What is another word for facing? | *Facing Synonyms - WordHippo Thesaurus* (no date). Available at: https://www.wordhippo.com/what-is/another-word-for/facing.html (Accessed: 15 September 2022).

space". In this way, it may refer to both actual experiences and the response to experiences.

The poem "Facing It" by Yusef Komunyakaa[4], a US veteran from the Viëtnam war, "describes a black veteran's visit to the Viëtnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. The unique visual properties of the memorial - the way it simultaneously absorbs and reflects light to create an illusion of depth behind the surface of the stone - provide Komunyakaa with a striking image of the troubling depths of memory and the way the past and present interact in the mind" – "past, present, and future" meeting in the space where the "living come to commune with their memories of the dead" (Marvin 2003:242-243). As Komunyakaa stares at the black granite he is at the same time faced by his reflection and the "reflection" and recollection of memories of a painful past. The opening lines of the poem ("My black face fades, / hiding inside the black granite") express something of his own experiences of being invisible, of where "the *present moment dissolves in the past"* (Marvin 2003:243). In this instance, Marvin argues, that his own "blackness threatens to render him invisible" (Marvin 2003:243). Although this may be read literally as if only relating to the darker, deeper black of the granite absorbing the black reflection of his own skin, one may also argue that it could relate to the "present" him being absorbed in the memories and pain of the past (Marvin 2003:243). Isn't that often the case when one lives with the ever-absorbing presence of trauma? When one alters the projected self in such a way that the familiar, even preferred, self is absorbed in the shadow and darkness of trauma? Similarly, the reference in line 25-27 of the poem affirms the sense of being "looked through" in a sense of not being visible even to those sharing the same space and moment. The author of the poem expresses a sense of being divided within himself, pulled between the here and now, his present being and a past always lurking around as it continually "preys on the present" (Marvin 2003:243). The paradox captured in this poem is that as the author tries to revisit the past by visiting the memorial, it is not necessarily the experience of healing or the sense of relief – even release - that pervades, but rather the memories of disruption, trauma, pain, and death (line 8). The open-endedness of the poem, Marvin argues, allows the reader to "participate in the creation of meaning", in a space of both remembering (the painful past) and acknowledging new creation, new possibilities, a renewed hope affirming that somehow life goes on. One may argue that the same open-endedness to "facing" implies the on-going act of "still facing". In the context of trauma, this then may mean that whilst

[4] https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/69414/yusef-komunyakaa-facing-it

still struggling with trauma and its aftermath (facing backwards and inward), “facing” forward, in the sense of confronting and resisting its “preying on the present”, remains a distinct possibility. “Facing” then captures something of progressing, healing, and restoring, despite the trauma that lives on in the re-evaluated meaning-world of the survivor.

What would be the relevance of engaging with a poem from someone thousands of kilometres away, speaking of something that took place even before I was born? Not only does the poem resonates with some of my own experiences of trauma, but more importantly it captures something of the multifaceted meaning of the act of “facing”, which feature as metaphor in this thesis.

For Lakoff and Johnson (1980:453) argues that “[m]etaphor is for most people a device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish – a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language”. They argue that although many people primarily view metaphors in the context of language, it is rather pervasive in everyday life, not just in language, but in “thought and action” as well (Lakoff & Johnson 1980:454) – it communicates something of our concept of life and helps us talk about life as we perceive and experience it (Landau 2018:62). This can either be strictly contextual or broader, making its application and use meaningful across contexts. Metaphors help us “understand and experience one kind of thing or experience in terms of another” (Lakoff & Johnson 1980:455; Landau 2018:62), while at the same time assisting in systematizing our world (Lakoff & Johnson 1980:465), leading to greater insight and meaning. However, it can also present some contradictions. Time and orientation are examples thereof (Lakoff & Johnson 1980:468). One can for instance at the same time express perceptions of time in a way that may be understood as referring to that which lies behind or ahead. Similarly, while “[s]ome things have inherent fronts and back” (Lakoff & Johnson 1980:468), others may not. However, these apparent contradictions may be resolved when understanding aspects of the culture and context within which it is employed. Metaphors may be expressed in words, but also in other forms like “images”, “ceremonies”, and “gestures” (Landau 2018:62). “At a process level, metaphor operates as a conceptual mapping, defined as a systematic set of associations between the target's elements (features, properties, relational information) and analogous source elements” (Landau 2018:62).

The particular use of the metaphor of “face” or “facing” in this study similarly serves to discuss and understand relationships between experiences related to trauma, and systematizing these in a way that gives meaning to the discourse presented here. At the same time, in the metaphor I found a rather useful ally in conceptualizing the research, while providing a way for engaging, in words, with the temporal aspects of dealing with experiences of trauma and disruption. The metaphor of “facing”, as it operates here, encapsulates something of the paradox of time, orientation, and purpose. Whilst reflecting on traumatic experiences (looking back at the time passed) in the present (experiencing in the now – time passing now), at the same time one looks ahead (at the time to come) in search for resolve. Similarly, one can argue that a person is faced with certain challenges or opportunities, implying an almost passive receiver status, yet on the other hand one can actively resist its hold and of exert influence on the situation. Hence, orientation, as employed in the metaphor, seems to be related to purpose in the context of the functioning of the metaphor of “facing” in this study. Yet, time is also sometimes referred to as “standing still”. Standing still in the sense of waiting for something to happen or to pass. Often this waiting may create the impression and perception that nothing is changing, with the potential to leave the one experiencing “time standing still” hopeless. Yet, “time standing still” may harbour the potentiality of integration, meaning making and restoration that can happen even on an indiscernible level, and then in fact one may argue that time is actually “moving”. To face “time standing still” can then either imply the experience of a hopeless outlook or that of an expectant outlook, turning the face in the direction of an “oncoming” resolution.

Considering the above, one may argue that facing can have physical, temporal, spatial, performative, and psycho-spiritual meanings and implications. At various junctures in this thesis, I will come back to these aspects. The metaphor of “facing” can however also be understood in a reflective sense. In this study, specifically regarding reflective processes, the metaphor assisted me in developing an understanding of practical theology and pastoral care, as well as my journey in and with this project. “Facing” in this thesis is therefore more than a position or disposition, and also more than passive on looking or a resigned acceptance of what life throws at you. Instead, it functions as a metaphor for praxis and responsive resistance and agency. It then functions both in the sense of “facing trouble” (look at it with dread and fear; a threatening prospect; posing danger to the self and the meaning field of life) and “looking it in the eye” (deliberately acknowledging it and

the fear it brings, and the threat that comes with it, yet purposefully resisting it; fighting it; overcoming it).

In this thesis, I attempt to engage with this act of "facing" in simple language – through words. Words, which have been aptly described by J O'Donohue in 1997 (in Ciccone 2022) as "the oblique mirrors which hold your thoughts. You gaze into these word mirrors and catch glimpses of meaning, belonging and shelter . . .Words are like the god Janus, they face outwards and inwards at once". In finding and employing these "word mirrors" in a way that it encapsulates my own experiences, processes, and thinking, I found the need for auxiliary, yet related, metaphors. The metaphor of "a promise of rain", referring to the empty promise of rain clouds that leave the earth waiting and dry, serve on the one hand to express something of the agonizing wait for reprieve, healing and restoration as one grapples with the reality and aftermath of traumatic experiences (Mouton 2022 *b*) On the other hand, I use it to express something of my own struggles with the promise of a research project that at one point seemed completely impossible to finish (see the concluding chapter). The concluding chapter is conceptualized and structured around the metaphor of looking into the rear-view mirror of a moving vehicle. This makes it possible to reflect on the research experience as a journey, leaving the open-endedness of promise and possibility in the idea of an ongoing journey, personally and professionally. These "auxiliary" metaphors are tied with the main metaphor of "facing" through the idea of looking, seeing, reflecting, interpreting, and responding.

1.4. Practical theology: a framework

First, I will take a walk down memory lane, looking at the development of practical theology since its inception as a way of also providing grounds for why this study should fall in the ambit of practical theology.

1.4.1. "All theology is practical. Or is it?"

When I left my previous career to pursue theological studies, I did so with the sole aim of acquiring the necessary skills and know-how to be a full-time minister in our church. I had no questions about my calling. This has not changed, but certainly expanded with regards to my understanding of calling and ministry. In this section I reflect a bit on the development of practical theology as a way of presenting the theoretical framework that guided this study. In Chapter 7 I will relate this to the development of my own understanding of the discipline.

The historical overview provided by Heyns and Pieterse (1990:88-98) still provides a good primer for this, and I will use it here, together with Henk de Roest's chapter *The scope of Practical Theology* in *Theology in Practice* (2020:90 -130), as a basis for my discussion, adding other views and voices as the discussion progresses.

Practical theology is often referred to as "*a theory of crisis"* (Heitink 1993:3), meaning that during times of major changes and shifts in society the church experiences the need to understand how to respond to these, looking at practical theology for such advice, direction and the development of new approaches and methodologies. Heitink (1993:4) opines that this "character of a crisis discipline" emerged towards the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries, with the advent of "modern autonomous humanity" and the heralding of a natural criticism of the world, humans and the church that came with it.

Although one can argue that the "idea" of practical theology was already evident in Biblical times and the early church, it was only since the Middle Ages that practical theology "arrived" on the academic scene – sort of. The notion that all theology should be regarded as practical was dominant through the Middle Ages. Gottlieb Jakob Planck, in 1794 (Du 2022), suggested that practical theology was about the application Biblical insights and was subordinate to the disciplines of exegesis, church history and systematic theology, and should not even belong to theology as it is only concerned about application (Lee 2011:297). The idea of a distinction between theoretical and practical theology was however rejected by, amongst others, Duns Scotus, Martin Luther, and John Calvin. Andreas Gerhard Hyperius (1511–1564) already held the view of practical theology as an independent subject (van der Ven 1988:8; Lee 2011:295). Gisbertus Voetius (1589-1676) however, was the first to use the name "practical theology", but still only in the context of the training and empowerment of the pastor.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, significant shifts took place regarding the place and scope of practical theology. The focus was still more on equipping the pastor for the roles of the shepherd, preacher, and teacher, and "practical theologians mostly focused on describing, analysing, evaluating and providing strategies for practices related to the ministry" (De Roest 2020:91). As a "crisis discipline or science", it was called upon to respond when changing contexts demanded new ways of thinking about and being

church in the world. Still today this notion of practical theology as “theological theory of the mediation of the Christian faith in the praxis of modern society” (Heitink 1999, in Ward 2017:75) remains. This was especially evident during the Enlightenment as the zeitgeist changed and people increasingly became more independent thinkers, critical of the world and the church. The overemphasis on the ministerial skills needed for the effective running of congregations was criticised by Edward Farley, for example, who referred to the period as the “clerical paradigm” (Ward 2017:18; De Roest 2020:92). Yet, as De Roest (2020:93) also points out, there were some voices during this period who advocated for a broader understanding of practical theology as a theological endeavour that has relevance for and impact on society. Mere spiritual piety could not adequately respond to the changes of the time and eventually the search for an appropriate response led to the birth of practical theology as a university subject in 1774 at the University of Vienna.

It is however Friederich Schleiermacher, considered the father of practical theology, who is credited for first calling this subject at university “practical theology” in his 1811/1830 book *Kurze Darstellung des theologischen Studiums* (Gräb 2005:181). He saw practical theology as important for the entire church. As positive science then, it was seen to contribute to ordinary life, promoting solutions to practical problems. Schleiermacher divided theology into historical theology, philosophical theology, and practical theology (Dingemans 1996:82; Gräb 2005:181). As science, or theory of praxis, he saw practical theology as speaking to the realities of life. Still, practical theology continued to primarily focus on the pastor and the role of the pastor. The ecumenical theologian Karl Heinrich Graf (1815 – 1869) considered practical theology to be both clerical and scientific. Anton Graf Roman Cathholic theologian, in 1841, for instance, pushed for a “church-oriented practical theology” concerned with the “self-development and self-construction of the church” by including also the “collaborative and cooperative action of the church members” (De Roest 2020:93-94). Carl-Immanuel Nitzsh, in his 1847 book, *Praktische Theologie. Erster Band. Einleitung und erstes Buch. Allgemeine Theorie des kirchlichen Lebens* (De Roest 2020:94), speaks of practical theology as a ‘general theory about “the life of the church”’ with a focus on the community of believers – the parish, her practices, and her understanding of her “unique form of existence”. Nitzsh held the view that practical theology was a science in its own right and advocated for the use of empirical data. Despite theories of theology being practical in its essence and that practical theology is to be regarded as the theory of praxis, it remained the discipline that

“implemented” what other disciplines theorised about. This was a view I also held to some extent up to my third year of theological studies.

In the 20th century, practical theology became increasingly thought of as a science, yet still mainly in relation to church praxis. People, other than just the pastor, were now recognized more. Also, the practices, results and role of behavioural sciences were increasingly valued, something Seward Hiltner was one of the proponents at the time (Ward 2017:80). In the 1960s the Second Vatican released the *Handbuch de Pastoraaltheologie* drawing a distinction between a scientific approach and practical execution, which was seen as the task of the pastor and church organs. The importance of concrete contexts in theory development remained an important aspect though. During the 1960s practical theology really started to shift from an almost exclusive focus on ministers/pastors to people in general, and not only in the church. Perhaps part of what Van der Ven (in Dingemans 1996:91) refers to as a move from “monodisciplinarity” to “multidsciplinarity”. With the increased secularization the need for contemporary and contextual considerations became even more important. At the time, calls for the inclusion of methods and results of social “scientific empirical research” became more pronounced as well, while the domain of practical theology now extended beyond the church (De Roest 2020:96-97). With this, an emphasis on the liberation of “oppressed communities” also became a focus of practical theology.

The late 1970s saw a “turn to practices**”**, spearheaded by figures such as Anton Boisen, Seward Hiltner, Howard Clinebell (Dingemans 1996:87; De Roest 2020:99). These scholars argued for practices to be the point of departure for practical theology, moving from practice to theory and return to practice. With the work of Rolf Zerfass in 1974, also recognized by Hennie Pieterse (in De Roest 2020:99) as a “turn” in relation to practical theology in South Africa, practical theology became “an academic discipline with an own object of study, theoretical base and an own methodology, in which praxis could be researched with research tools of the social sciences in mostly qualitative projects”. From here on numerous sub-disciplines started to develop. The period after the 1960s also saw Pastoral Theology developing into a science in its own right (Heitink 1993:1) and could be seen as the larger development of “practical theology as a theory of action” in response to changing contexts and changing views on what it is that the discipline seeks to address.

The move to empirical research in practical theology really took off in the 1980s through the works of “Johannes van der Venn, Hans-Günther Heimbrock, Don Browning, Hans-Georg Ziebertz, Leslie Francis and others” (De Roest 2020:100). Don Browing in 1986 argued that “Christian theology as a whole should be viewed as a practical discipline” (De Roest 2020:100). His appeal for the contextual as starting point was later also made by Rolf Zerfass. For Zerfass practical theology starts from the description of concrete praxis which is renewed through reflection making use of “instruments from the social sciences” (Heitink 1993:113). Through the work of other scholars, the empirical turn intensified, also leading to broadening the domain of practical theology (De Roest 2020:102). Amongst these is the concept of lived religion by Hans-Günter Heimbrock, linked to a phenomenological approach, and a concept revisited by Ruard Ganzevoort (2009) and expanded on by Ganzevoort and Roeland (2014).

After World War II major shifts occurred in response to a world of independent thinking where politics and liberation became prominent themes. Key themes that emerged in practical theology here in the latter part of the 20th century were (from Heyns and Pieterse 1990):

- Pragmatic premise – “knowledge from praxis for praxis”.
- Pastoral-theological premise – primarily about the training of the pastor for church ministry.
- Hermeneutic-theological premise – theology as hermeneutical and historical-critical science, with the question about norms at the centre.
- Empirical or “action science” premise – critique the dominant normative-deductive approach.

In the article, *Scientific-theoretical research approach to practical theology in South Africa: A contemporary overview*, Hennie Pieterse (2017) provides a birds-eye view of the development of practical theology in South Africa. Pieterse points out that the shift from a “scriptural service model for the ministry of the church, focussing on pastors, elders and deacons” took place around 1974 with the release of the book, *Praktische Theologie heute* by Klostermann and Zerfass. He opines that practical theology “was then introduced as an academic discipline with an own object of study, theoretical base and an own methodology, in which the praxis could be researched with research tools of the social sciences in mostly qualitative projects”, with the main problem at the time being the “relation between theory and praxis” (Pieterse 2017). In the postmodern, post-colonial

context, global and contextual relevance became key drivers for research that saw an increased convergence between theory and praxis. As practical theology expanded as science, different nuances could be identified. Pieterse highlighted a few from South Africa, namely the hermeneutical approach by Daniël Louw, Johan Cilliers' emphasis on aesthetics, Kobus Schoeman's empirical approach and the prominence of grounded theory, narrative approaches by Maake Masango and Julian Müller, with Müller specifically highlighting the importance of a post-foundational approach in practical theology. These are but a few of the movements in the development of practical theology in South Africa. All this of course happened in the context of global shifts and influences in the field of practical theology.

It is impossible to capture the entire history and development, and the various nuances and streams of practical theology here. However, I wish to mention a few recent developments, or rather nuances, that gained traction in the last decade or so, and that had an influence on my own choices regarding the domain and methodology of practical theology in this study. These are not necessarily new approaches or paradigms but have been elevated in recent times through the work of some practical theologians, and I only briefly refer to it below.

The framework Richard Osmer (2008) offer as a means of doing practical theology, and especially the hermeneutical basis for it, provided a holding space, so to speak, within which I could allow myself to reflect and also engage with less familiar ideas. Similarly, the notion of lived religion and lived reality as discussed by Ruard Ganzevoort (2009), Ganzevoort and Roeland (2014) and Birgit Weyel (2014:150-159), amongst others, ensured an inclusive understanding and groundedness. As the domain of practical theology extends to include the ordinary, and profane one might add, lived realities of people, the task of practical theology is then to move from real context and praxis to theory in service of transformation, which again leads back to the renewal of theory and praxis.

Elaine Graham, drawing on developments or movements within practical theology, eloquently states the case for practical theology as a form of action research. Action research, Graham (2013:148) opines, "is founded on the indivisibility of value and action: a conviction that knowledge, and research, cannot be dispassionate and that values are themselves iterated in the process of their implementation in practice. It insists on the

inductive and contextual nature of knowledge and assumes that knowledge comes from human experience (albeit interpreted and codified through rational enquiry and analysis), rather than proceeding deductively from revealed truth". Like the concept of lived religion, action research takes seriously the lived experiences of people, as well as the "lived apprehensions of God as the well-spring of practical discipleship" (Graham 2013:177). This is an important aspect to hold onto especially when one attempts to write autoethnographically. Walton (2002, 2014, 2019, 2022) in demonstrating the value and impact of life writing and reflexive writing in doing practical theology, and how this not only functions within the broader scope of practical theology but also how it facilitates self-critical reflection in practical theological research, enticed me to explore autoethnography and reflective writing during this project. Viewed from an autoethnographic stance, this opens up numerous doors for creativity and an honest engagement with subjectivity while honouring the narratives of the "other" with integrity in the practical theology project. Elaine Graham (2017), in her article *On becoming a practical theologian: Past, present and future tenses*, refers to the "reflexive turn" in practical theology and also highlights the importance of reflexivity in the research process. This hermeneutical approach takes seriously the relationship between theory, praxis, and the lived realities of people.

Hennie Pieterse (2017) discusses some of the dominant strands of practical theology in South Africa since its arrival. For this study, I would like to highlight the post-foundational narrative approach by Julian Müller (2003) which had an influence on my choices with regards to a research approach and philosophy at the start of this project. Again, at the centre of this approach is the concrete, local, lived reality, that becomes the focus of reflection through a non-directive narrative approach in practical theology research and praxis. The philosophical, existential, phenomenological, hope-centred, and intercultural perspectives and approaches of Daniël Louw (1999, 2008, 2012, 2015) has also been an influence on me and helped form my initial ideas on pastoral care. Emmanuel Lartey (2003), in a way that minimizes complexity, added to this and provided me with a basis for a "simple" framework that operated as backbone for understanding need for and approach to a congregational pastoral care response.

1.4.2. Practical theology – a brief definition

In my third article (Mouton 2022*a*) I describe practical theology as "... concerned with the "concrete and local" (Miller-McLemore, 2012:7), the lived experiences of people (Ganzevoort 2009; Ganzevoort & Roeland, 2014:96) in relational contexts (Osmer

2008:16; McLemore, 2018) in the ordinary (Walton, 2014:184); and it contributes to new insight and thinking, meaning, and liberating praxis that has relevance to people (Miller-McLemore 2012:7). As “hermeneutics of lived religion” (Ganzevoort 2009:3), it seeks to observe, understand, re-imagine, and re-design a transformed and transformative way of living – if one could reduce Osmer’s (2008) core tasks of Practical Theology in this way”.

The framework of Osmer (2008), discussed later in this chapter, not only serves to guide the research process but also provides insights into some key aspects of practical theology, particularly its intent and approach to studying social phenomena and communities. In the concluding chapter, I again refer to the development of practical theology in the context of reflecting on my own journey and the development of this project. Each of the articles presented as part of this thesis also reflects, to various degrees, on the essence and nature of practical theology and hence I will not go into more detail at this point.

1.4.3. Pastoral care framework – a broad stroke

Barbara McClure (2012:270) defines pastoral care as “a form of practical theology specified as an intentional enacting and embodying of a theology of presence, particularly in response to suffering or need, as a way to increase among people the love of God and of neighbor”. For Daniël Louw (1999:3) pastoral care as a “theological discipline seeks to link our understanding of God with our real human experiences, in order for us to make sense of our existence – finding meaning” and hence it deals with the lived experiences of people from a faith perspective. Louw proposes an existential approach to understanding and doing pastoral care as it engages with the three existential questions of all people, namely anxiety, guilt and guilt feelings, and fear of hopelessness and meaninglessness. In the context of lived reality, its hermeneutical character is then about reflecting on the meaning of the human condition and context in the presence of God, hoping to enlighten, give meaning, promote growth, and transform. Pastoral care, as an encounter between humans and God and humans and humans, aims to provide care that is therapeutic, facilitates change and transformation, and promotes spiritual growth, healing and maturity. Such care must always be holistic, taking the whole human being into account since “the human person as a spiritual entity endowed with ‘soul’, driven by ultimate norms, values and directed by significance and meaning” (Louw 2008:77). The nature and task of pastoral care have been discussed by many and include that of healing, sustaining, guiding, reconciliation, nurture, liberating, empowering, and

interpreting, amongst others (Lartey 2003, Louw 2008, McClure 2012, Miller-McLemore 2018:355).

Looking ahead, in terms of this study but also in general, what should be the focus of pastoral care as a collective (congregational?) ministry? For McClure (2012) it must be "care for the community by its members", taking shape as a form of "public theology", and thus require the "strategic participation" of the community. Magezi (2016, 2019*a*), argues for the following to be considered with regards to pastoral care in African communities:

- Pastoral care approaches should engage and pastorally respond to the need for holistic protection.
- It should be sensitive to and addresses the balance between the tension of individual (I) and community (us or we).
- It should empower and give voice to the marginalized.
- Pastoral care as spiritual care should integrate technical life skills.
- It must be based on sincere care for people rather than abusing or manipulating them in the name of religion.
- It should prepare African people to live in-between worlds because of the rise in migration.
- It involves an increased shift to public pastoral care.

1.4.4. Framework for this study

This study works with the framework of Emmanuel Lartey (2003) as "backdrop" for conceptualizing a congregational pastoral care ministry approach. According to this framework, pastoral care involves therapy, ministry, social action, empowerment, and personal interaction (Lartey 2003:55-59).

Therapy in this framework is not just about healing in the sense of eliminating illness, but rather about restoring the "normative functioning" of the entire being, "body, mind, or spirit" as well as relational and contextual aspects of a person or community (Lartey 2003:54-55). In the context of disruptive and traumatic experiences, this requires an appreciation of the existential issues that arise, including issues related to God and the meaning of suffering. Both Lartey and Mpofu, Peltzer and Bojuwoye (2011:4) emphasise the significance of the divine – of God – in this process.

Ministry involves “the operation or activity of particular persons, viewed as agents or intermediaries” (Lartey 2003:55-56). In the context of a congregational pastoral care ministry, this involves more than just the minister. Instead, from the perspective of the calling of all believers, this then includes lay leaders and congregants as well. As the ministry of “well-being, growth and spiritual advancement” the scope of ministry as pastoral care extends beyond traditional kerugma and the offerings of Scripture and prayer, and includes activities such as “proclamation, service, fellowship, administration and worship” (Lartey 2003:56-57). Actualizing pastoral care ministry through these five activities requires an integrated approach and forms the basis of the understanding of a congregational pastoral care ministry approach in this study.

Social action, influenced much by the rise of liberation theology (Lartey 2003:57), speaks to both the prophetic and activist calling of the church. Such an approach stands in service of societal transformation towards an equitable state of being, specifically for “the poor, the marginalized and the oppressed” (:58). Lartey (2003:114-123) points out that the reflective nature of liberation theology entails three core elements namely, social analysis, hermeneutical analysis, and the praxis orientation. He argues that when intersecting with pastoral care, these elements find expression and actualization in the concrete experiences of people. As elsewhere in this thesis, the relevance and importance of the concrete, local context as the space for the expression of a responsive pastoral care approach is emphasised. Although this (liberation theology) thinking informed my choices in this study too, I cannot claim to have followed Lartey’s framework to the letter.

Empowerment, as a pastoral care strategy, seeks to identify and unlock existing “strengths” and “resources” that may have remained dormant as people or even overlooked or neglected (Lartey, 2003:58). Ubuntu – “I am what I am because of who we all are” (Dreyer 2015:192) – is present in all communities in various expressions and often is not valued adequately, hence limiting the mobilization of community resources to care for one another.

Personal interaction is about “relational skills” (Lartey 2003:59) where the engagement with the other in a relational manner serves to enlighten, acquire perspective and insight into personal and societal contexts, and mutually journey towards a possibly hopeful and integrated space of potential and restoration.

1.4.5. Pastoral care as integrated congregational ministry

When talking about pastoral care related to congregations and communities, it must at least consider the identification and enablement of resources, such as relationships, social and economic capital, as well as faith resources, within and around these congregations and communities (Mee 2012:51). As these are all related it then requires a holistic approach to care and enablement (Nel 1996). In this, it is necessary to include an element of public teaching related to issues of trauma and disruption in the liturgy and other communal ministry engagements as improved understanding can lead to preventative behaviours and this may reduce negative outcomes of disruptive events and experiences causing pressure (Levine & Perkins 1997:86-90). Support systems in the community play an important role in this. When experiences of trauma and disruption cannot be prevented, Levine and Perkins (1997:252-254) suggest that one should then look for ways to transform such experiences into opportunities for growth.

In the end on of the aims of a congregational pastoral care ministry approach would be to build both individual and collective resilience, which is described by Nstangate, Duncan and Roos (2007:253) as the “capacity ... to recover from difficulties and setbacks or even thrive when confronted with adversity”.

Empowerment enables greater control while at the same time improving the likelihood for sustainability (Frank, Tshemes and Manyekiso 2007:236-238) of pastoral ministry intervention and initiatives. This inevitably should give rise to an increasingly hopeful outlook despite dealing with the effects of trauma and disruption in the liminal space between promise and fulfilment, particularly since it affirms and activate that which is already present in the community – their own potentiality.

In the context of this project, empowerment remains only partial as it is not the ambit of the project to facilitate a process of discover and enactment on all levels, for example that of economic empowerment. At best factors that may lead to a sense of empowerment related to being cared for, affirmed dignity, exposure to practical ways of care, spiritual and faith related. One can however hope that improvements in these respects may help to actualize the potential and resilience on other levels of being.

These are nurtured in fellowship with each other. Magezi (2006:507) argues that “*Koinonia* (the acts of believers’ fellowship the character of the faith community implies a

healing community". This implies that the "fundamental context for exercising pastoral care" rests in the "communal life of the body of Christ, the church" and for these reasons Magezi argues for a "pastoral care approach through *koinonia* that provides a system of support" (2006:506). After all, the "faith community is a healing community" who engages in the acts of healing and restoration to enable "us to be fully human in relation to our society and environment and ourselves" (2006:508). It is intended for the whole person (Louw 2008) and hence for the relationships within which the person is, and thus also for community.

Johan Janse van Rensburg (2010) calls for a more "inclusive holistic approach" that does not make a distinction between pastoral care and Christian charity, and that goes beyond merely the reading of Scripture, the offering of prayers, and providing counselling and advice. This should not be understood as excluding these comforting and encouraging Christian practices. After all pastoral care is understood to be about healing, sustaining and guiding (Hiltner 1954:69), in the context of relationship and people's authentic lived realities. This connects with the idea of life being experienced and practical theology being practiced in the context of the **"**living human web" (Miller-McLemore 2008). Heitink explicitly broadened the understanding of pastoral care to also include that which lies outside of the ecclesial context – both in terms of needs and resources, one could argue – as "theology is always embodied and has a place in the life of the community" (Ward 2017:81). Howard Clinebell, already in 1984 argued that the realm of pastoral care includes every aspect of human life and existence. This, Daniël Louw (2008:79) refers to as "the totality of life in the presence of God", and therefor argues fervently for a systems approach to pastoral care. In such a systems approach, congregants become "extensions of the pastoral process" which extends "across the boundaries of the different activities in a congregation" (Janse van Rensburg 2010:4). Breaking down such divides strengthen continuity and enhance transformation also from within the caring community, affirming the notion that the whole congregation is in fact "part of the general office of believers" (Janse van Rensburg 2010).

Networking and referrals are vital components of a holistic approach to pastoral care and should be part of a congregational pastoral approach to issues of trauma and healing, as Louw (2008) argues. In addition, existing practices of care should be strengthened. Following Patton (1993) the key concepts for the community then are those of care and responsibility.

1.4.6. A confessional framework to a congregational pastoral care ministry approach

For the church, the core of its pastoral care ministry should be seated in discerning the identity, nature and calling of the confessional community. I argue that while this is important for the confessing congregation to "see" itself, it cannot truly happen without also "seeing" the other. The "face" of the confessing church becomes real only in the affirmation of the "face" of the other. To "see" the self is to "see" the other, and vice versa.

I deliberately chose to use a "confessional approach" or perhaps more appropriately a "*Belharian* approach" with due cognisance also of the potential value of the confessional tradition of the Uniting Reformed Church in SA (URCSA), firstly, as it is through our confessions that we learn about and declare our beliefs about God, ourselves, and our calling in this world. Secondly, most members of the church grow up learning the core aspects of our confessions and traditions, through both ritualistic practices and catechism, and as such the content (or at least the language) of the confessions are not necessarily unfamiliar to them. Using known language, imagery, and confessional "content" to understand identity and calling is an important aspect of the framework for a congregational pastoral care ministry as explored as part of this project.

The framework is based on an understanding of the Three Formulas of Unity, namely the Belgic Confession of Faith, the Canons of Dort, and the Heidelberg Catechism of the Dutch Reformed family of churches, as well as the Confession of Belhar[5] which is the fourth confession of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA). Specific emphasis is placed on the Confession of Belhar as the "unique" confession of the URCSA to which the congregation belongs. Three key statements from these confessions form the basis for my argument, together with and appreciation of the African identity of the URCSA in particular, will only be briefly introduced here, but will be discussed more fully in the fifth article, presented as Chapter 6 in this thesis. These are taken for a recent publication for the annual Week of Prayer published by the Christian Literature Fund (Mouton 2020), in which I reflected on the identity and calling of the church.

[5] HC – Heidelberg Catechism; CD – Canons of Dordt; BC – Belgic Confession; CB – Confession of Belhar

- “The church belongs to God and he rules his church through Jesus Christ, the Head of the church”: “HC – Question 50 and Question 54; CD – Chapter 1, point 9; BC – Article 27; CB – Article 1 and 5”; Ephesians 1:10–13; 20–23; 4:15–16; Colossians 1:15–18
- The church is “Gathered together in the body of Christ – one, with many members”: HC – Question 54 and Question 55; CD – Chapter 2, point 9; BC – Article 28; CB – Article 2; 1 Corinthians 12:4–31; Philippians 2:5–8; Ephesians 4:11–13
- “The church, called to the ministry of justice”: CB – Article 4; Isaiah 1:16–17; Matthew 5:34–37; Luke 4:16–19; Luke 6:20–26; Romans 6:13–18

Read in the context of the Confession of Belhar, the argument is that under the authority of Christ, the collective church, i.e. the community of believers, is called in service to each other and the world to the glory of God. This is most profoundly manifested when the church visibly stands with God at the side of the marginalized, the hopeless, the poor, and generally for those in need, and defiantly against injustice, oppression, exploitation, division and impoverishment (Boesak 2008; Koopman 2008; Beukes 2017; Koopman 2017). Leepo Modise (2020) argues that the imperative of the Confession of Belhar is underscored even more through the understanding and embracing of our African rootedness and identity. Concepts such as “community, *Ubuntu*, and *Ujamaa”* express the relational and caring aspects of true Africanism (Oduyoye 1979; O’Donovan 1996; Mbiti & Masango 2018; Modise 2022).

Following Thesnaar (2022), I argue that a *Belharian* (*confessional*) approach to pastoral care – standing with the other – demands that the other be seen as fully dignified and worthy being, and this forms the core of the framework. Seeing the “other”, is the first step in caring for that “other”, as the “[e]mbodied recognition of the mutual others will therefore actively seek to repair the brokenness of the “other”, as it has also become my own brokenness” (Thesnaar 2022). Standing with the “other” is to make choice for the inclusion of the “other” in the grace and care of God and His people (Conradie 2017).

Our confessions help us “see God”, see ourselves as He intended us to be, and very importantly it helps us see the “other”. It is only in seeing the other that we truly see ourselves and vice versa. Thesnaar (2022), with reference to the Zulu word Sawubona, which “literally means ‘I see you’ or ‘Until you see me, I actually do not exist’, underscores this very important aspect of true care and compassion for the “other”.

I argue that, drawing on the confessional character of the church gives content and meaning to our identity as well as clarity of our calling, which in turn provide the rationale, motivation and imperative for a congregational pastoral care approach to issues of trauma and healing. In my opinion, this is the most important aspect of such an approach. This will be discussed more in the fifth article of the thesis.

1.5. Framing the research

In the act of "facing" or "seeing", the matter of lenses become important, just as it is when one takes a photograph. When taking a photograph, the photographer wants to capture a particular image in a way that it enhances certain features of the object in the photograph. To achieve that, certain lenses may be used, and settings tuned accordingly. This implies that certain choices had to be made to try and obtain a result that is as close as possible to the desired one. The same is true for research. We look through lenses of our theories, methodologies, and worldviews. The next two sections are intended to provide some clarity with regards to the lenses used to 'produce' the 'picture' presented in this thesis.

1.5.1. Introduction, background, and research problem

The research proposal, titled *"Communities facing disruption: A pastoral approach to issues of trauma and restoration"* was initially developed from the perspective that violent occurrences are frequent, regular – endemic – in South Africa and that the experiences thereof are often disruptive and traumatic. The study was initially conceptualized for the South African context as I was living and working in South Africa at that time but was expanded to include a community in the south of Namibia after I accepted a call to the local congregation there. The proposal contended that our understanding of violent, disruptive, and traumatic experiences needs to stretch way beyond only mere physical harm and should also include structural and systemic manifestations. What could be included in a description of violence becomes very broad and although this may pose some challenges, at the same time it needs to be seen in such a broad sense to adequately explore its impacts and possible pastoral care responses. My article, *Communities Facing Disruption: The Need to Shift from Individual to Community Paradigms in Pastoral Care* (Mouton 2014) and presented here as chapter 2 of the thesis, provides background to this as it contextualizes the research problem, whilst also dealing with key concepts of this project, such as trauma, healing, restoration, and well-being and how these relate to the fields of practical theology and pastoral care.

The thesis is presented as a series of five (5) interrelated articles. The second and fourth articles (Chapters 2 and 5) will deal with two communities in relation to the study of disruptive and traumatic experiences. Context-specific challenges and responses are presented therein. In the face of on-going disruptive and traumatic experiences within communities, there seems to be an inability with local congregations to deal with these through an integrated congregational pastoral care ministry approach, which is the underlying concern for this research project and could be regarded as the primary research problem. Through this study, I wanted to explore ways through which an integrated congregational pastoral care ministry approach could serve as a framework for a collective response to issues of disruption and trauma in pursuit of healing, restoration, and improved well-being, addressed the fifth article (Chapter 6). Shifts in my own positioning and methodological choices during the process are put in context in the third article (Chapter 4).

The article developed over an extended period since 2014 when I first registered for this qualification and the reader may be puzzled as to why such a long period lapsed between 2014 and the finalization of this thesis. As discussed elsewhere, my journey with the project went through a number of disruptive moments, including moving to another country and dealing with issues of identity and positioning that significantly affected the progress of the project when I was based in the congregation where I grew up. Although this was not ideal, it was managed through the processes of the University of the Free State. This partly contributed to the choice to complete this thesis in article format. On the one hand the disruptions created the impression of a disjointedness creeping in, and the article format allowed for this while maintaining a meaningful coherence in terms of the main themes of the study.

1.5.2. Research questions, aim and objectives

The primary research question that directed this research projected is stated as follows: *How can congregations be empowered, through a congregational pastoral ministry approach, to face issues of trauma and disruption?* This was supported by five (5) secondary questions, designed to help answer the primary question while also serving as reflection on it. The five interrelated articles address at least one of the secondary research questions each, but more than one may also be addressed in some.

The secondary research questions that provided the framework for this study are:

i. What do we understand by a community-oriented approach to pastoral care?
ii. Can the narratives/stories of people strengthen their ability to face experiences of trauma and disruption and provide a hopeful outlook on the future?
iii. How can the role, position, and influence of the practical theologian as a practitioner (minister) and researcher be understood with regard to research and praxis in a congregational pastoral approach to issues of trauma and disruption?
iv. What are some of the traumatic and disruptive experiences people and communities are faced with?
v. What could a possible congregational pastoral ministry approach to issues of trauma and healing look like?

The overall aim of this research was to develop a deeper understanding of the impacts of trauma and disruption on the lives of people in communities and to develop a proposal for a possible congregational pastoral ministry response to issues of trauma and disruption in service of improved well-being. The specific objectives were to:

i. Provide a rationale/argument for a deliberate shift towards a community approach to issues of trauma, disruption, and well-being.
ii. Explore, through a narrative approach, the potential for resistance, agency, and hopefulness in the stories of people affected by traumatic and disruptive experiences.
iii. Explore the role of, and framework for, the practical theologian and practitioner (the local pastor) in researching and responding to issues of trauma and disruption through a congregational pastoral ministry approach.
iv. Identify and discuss some of the traumatic and disruptive experiences people and communities are faced with, how they are affected by and how people generally respond to these, as well as the challenges this present to congregational pastoral ministry.
v. Develop a framework for a possible congregational pastoral ministry approach to issues of trauma and healing.

1.5.3. Methodological approach

1.5.3.1. A practical theological research framework

Since this study falls within the discipline of practical theology, I will draw on the framework that R. R. Osmer (2008) proposes by which he describes practical theology in

terms of four major tasks that the discipline endeavours to accomplish, namely the empirical/descriptive task, the interpretive task, the normative task, and the pragmatic task. This framework provides space for various “strategies of enquiry” (Osmer 2008:48).

Osmer’s first task (empirical/descriptive), deals with the question “What is going on?” The purpose of addressing this question, in the context of the study, would be to ascertain the presence and extent of trauma due to disruptive events and/or processes affecting individuals and communities, the effects of these, and how people respond to it. The first and fourth secondary research questions and its associated objectives of providing a rationale for the study while at the same time discussing some of the traumatic and disruptive experiences of people, can be linked to this task. This task includes a literature review, conceptualization of the main problem and constructs of the research, as well as the use of relevant surveys in the target communities. This look at “what is going on” happened on two levels. On the one hand, it was necessary to contextualize the phenomena of disruptive and traumatic experiences, both individual and collective, on a broader scale. This was done through the first article in this thesis (Chapter 2). In line with the original design of the project, the article focused only on the South African context. Although this cannot be translated directly to a Namibian context, I found that the Namibian community experiences similar levels of trauma and disruptions due to various forms of violence. This will be referred to in the fourth article (Chapter 5). On a second level, the question of “What is going on” deals with the contexts in the specific communities where research was conducted, as is discussed in the second and fourth articles (Chapters 3 and 5). Sources here included both information in the public domain and data gathered through the research interactions with community members. Describing a context and its various relationships requires some form of observation and interpretation which can only truly take place through attentive “attending” (Osmer 2008:37) to such context. This “attending” (attentively observing) should reveal what communities are “faced with” in relation to disruptive and traumatic experiences.

The second (interpretive) task is defined by the question “Why is this going on?” This involves exploring the dynamics of what is going on in a defined context**,** and issues such as cultural context, family systems, and psychological considerations may be considered here (Osmer 2008:6-8). A hermeneutical interpretive approach was deemed appropriate for this. Literature review and “empirical work” proved to be important. As a task that requires “sagely wisdom”, emphasis is placed on the reflexive process of “thoughtfulness,

theoretical interpretation, and wise judgement" (Osmer 2008:69), including reflecting on my own personal experiences and frameworks. Addressing these questions helps explain why people may report certain traumatic experiences or associate the sense of trauma and disruption with particular experiences, providing. In that sense the elements of this task will be found in all of the articles presented here, although to a lesser extent in the fifth article (Chapter 6).

In addressing the question associated with the third (normative) task, i.e. "What should go on?" the reflexive process becomes even more important, as not only experiences but also social constructs and their interplay is considered. Imagining the normative – that which is desired – requires that consideration be given to "theological interpretation", "ethical norms", and "examples of good practice" (Osmer 2008:106-7). Unstructured and semi-structured conversations and interviews, both individually and in groups, contributed to this part of the research process. Both literature reviews and engagements with members of the congregation assisted in developing ideas in terms of what it is that we are striving for in a community when we talk of restorative congregational pastoral care practices or approaches. This task features strongest in the fifth article (Chapter 6), and to some extent in the second article (Chapter 3), addressing the fifth and second secondary research questions respectively.

Osmer's final task deals with praxis (the pragmatic task), and the question associated with this task is "How might we respond?". This task involves the conceptualization and implementation of "strategies" to positively change the situation from what is considered less desirable to that which is more desirable (Osmer 2008:139). In the study done in the Dingleton community, reported on in the second article (Chapter 3), perceptions of power in the narratives of individuals were explored. The Keetmanshoop study focused more on conceptualizing a collective congregational pastoral care approach in response to traumatic experiences (Chapter 6). In dealing with this task of the framework in this study, the second and fifth research questions are addressed.

The third article (Chapter 4) developed because of my own reflective processes in reaction to experiences related to conflicting ideas about my identity, role, relationships in the context of the community and the network of relationships that was assumed between us. One may argue that it relates to all four tasks of Osmer's framework, but specifically addresses the third secondary research question.

A range of designs and methods fall under the broad classification of qualitative research, such as conceptual studies, historical research, case study research, ethnography, and grounded theory (Nieuwenhuis 2007:70-77). The research was done from a hermeneutical perspective and specific methodologies employed included literature review, narrative-inclined conversations, unstructured interviews and engagements, interviews, questionnaires, focus group discussions, autoethnography incorporated at a later stage and specifically for the work done in the congregation and community in Keetmanshoop.

1.5.3.2. A post-foundational narrative stance

According to Julian Müller (2005:2), the principles of a post-foundationalist practical theology allow for a shift beyond modernistic boundaries yet assist in avoiding many of the pitfalls of relativism associated with an anti-foundationalist approach. Müller contends that its appeal to the contextual implies that it is "always guided by the moment of praxis (always local, embodied, and situated", and by nature, it forces the researcher to "rediscover" the basic forms and nature of practical theology as an endeavour that involves "a reflection on practice, from the perspective of the experience of the presence of God". In fact, Miller and Brewer (2003:208) contend that "[u]nderstanding the individual's unique and changing perspective as it is mediated by context takes precedence over questions of fact. In the narrative perspective, `context' includes both positioning in social structure and time and, just as important, the social context of the interview itself". They argue that in this open-ended and situational approach, insight about the social reality of the moment is constructed in conversation. This reality that is both "chaotic and in flux". Hence the specific and concrete contexts ("moments of praxis") are important grounds for practical theological research. Yet it also always points beyond the local (Müller 2011:3). Whilst building on the science of hermeneutics, it actually moves beyond it (Müller 2005:2; Müller 2011:3). In other words, meaning is not developed from a quasi-position of objectivity, but rather implies a new way of understanding, i.e. from within. This fits well with the implied ideas of social constructionism and narrative approaches to research. However, a post-foundational practical theology reaches beyond the local through interdisciplinary discourse and engagement, transversality, and an integrated acknowledgement of the role of tradition in shaping epistemology (Müller 2005:5; Müller 2011:3), something that was also later highlighted out by Macallan and Hendriks (2013).

Already in 2001 Müller, Van Deventer and Human, in their article *Fiction writing as metaphor for research: a narrative approach*, provided perspectives on a narrative approach, grounded in a social-constructionist paradigm, to research. In such an integrated process, theoretical considerations, methodological choices, as well as the process of research are all considered part of the epistemological framework for doing research. Their proposed model/framework for research – *Action, Background, Development, Climax* en *Ending* or the ABDCE model (Müller *et al.* 2001:90) – gives prominence, relevance and legitimation to the "now", starting not only with the "*action (A)*" of the "now", but with the story of the action itself. Due emphasis is placed on reading and conversing on this "action" in light of contextual factors, current and historical, as *background (B)* for this story/research. In this, the research is not only allowed to develop, but the very meaning of the story/research for the co-researcher starts *developing (D)***,** leading to an eventual *climax (C)* where integration has taken place to an extent and where meaning has been developed. In the *end (E)***,** its open-endedness highlights the idea that in narrative research it is not so much about providing easy answers but leading to an openness where new questions may be asked, and new possibilities develop so that this "story" may lead to new and liberating other related stories. "The main aim of research within this paradigm is not in the first place to effect immediate change, but to listen to the stories of people (Müller *et al*. 2001:76). Through this "new meaning may emerge and hope may be found" (Mouton 2016). This new meaning arises from attentive listening to the transformative nuances that lead to new meaning and new possibilities and can give clues to broader "social processes and structure" (Miller & Brewer 2003:209).

1.5.3.3. Autoethnography and reflexivity

Instead of presenting an all-new discussion here, I argue that it may be sufficient to only include some sections from the more detailed discussion presented in the third article (Mouton 2022), presented as Chapter 4 in this thesis, as orientation.

> "Autoethnography in its most simplified definition is the study of the self" (Hughes & Pennington 2017), where "the self and field become one" (Coffey 2002:320), and the researcher themselves becomes the "subject of the study" (Ellis *et al*. 2011:273) in a social context of interest (Reed-Danahay 1997:9; Holt, 2003; Hamilton *et al.* 2008:22; Scriven, 2019:540). Its emphasis on human connectedness (Ellis and Bochner 2000:739; Doty 2010) resonates with our understanding of Practical

> Theology. In perhaps a more nuanced way, Ellis et al. (2011:273) define it as “an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)” and involve critical self-study (Méndez 2013:281; Hughes & Pennington, 2017). … As qualitative research approach, autoethnography is similar to ethnography, narrative inquiry, self-study, and hermeneutics, in the sense that each of these attempts to study and describe the nature of the “relationships between humans and their sociocultural contexts” (Hughes & Pennington, 2017). Being grounded in postmodern thinking (Holt 2003:18; Wall 2006:146), it develops from the assumption “that reality is construed and shaped through the interaction between people and the environment in which they live” (Méndez 2013:280).

Not only does this correlate with the post-foundational narrative approach to research, discussed elsewhere in this section, but its inherent reflective nature also correlates with what we now associate with the so-called “reflexive turn” in practical theology (Graham 2017) which embraces values of subjectivity and contextuality (Walton 2014). The interplay between practice and theory creates a space for a hermeneutical process culminating in new meaning and a potentially hopeful re-imagination of reality.

As a qualitative and reflexive approach, autoethnography can thus be regarded as a hermeneutic-phenomenological approach (Nieuwenhuis 2007:119; Van Manen 2007:11-30), defined by Louw (2011:155) as “understanding wherein one assesses meaning within a systemic network of dynamic relationships” in order to make sense of ”texts or phenomena, including people, within contexts”. According to Van Manen (1984:39) phenomenological research involves “… turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world; … investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it; … reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon; … describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting”. Reflexive praxis with regards to research and general observations, as well as personal experiences and responses, during the ethnographic process forms an invaluable part of the autoethnographic and hermeneutical research process and includes the practice of reflective journaling (Walton 2014:51).

1.5.3.4. A broad qualitative approach

Overall, the study mainly followed a qualitative approach. According to Nieuwenhuis (2007:47) qualitative research as a "research methodological paradigm" developed as "an alternative to the positivist thinking that dominated the 20th century", which believed, amongst others, that objective truth, the existence of laws that could explain all phenomena if only those laws could be identified or figured or, and a linear approach of cause and effect to explain observations, to be the only legitimate approach to research. In essence, then it is open to a wide range of perspectives (Swinton and Mowat 2016:28). Nieuwenhuis defines a "paradigm" as "a set of assumptions or beliefs about fundamental aspects of reality which gives rise to a particular worldview - it addresses fundamental assumptions taken on faith, such as beliefs about the nature of reality (ontology), the relationship between the knower and the known (epistemology) and assumptions about methodologies". In qualitative research "social and cultural contexts" is of interest with questions about the impact of such contexts on "behavioural patterns" (Maree 2019:51). In qualitative research, understanding processes in socio-cultural contexts, and their meaning and interpretation in relationships is important. In typical constructivist style, qualitative research sees "the uniqueness of each particular situation" and seeks to describe and understand "phenomena within their naturally occurring context (called naturalistic context) with the intention of developing an understanding of the meaning(s) imparted by the respondents" (Nieuwenhuis 2007:51). He further stresses the fact that research is philosophically grounded and not merely about the methods or the best fit of methods in relation to the objectives of the research. Questions about "what is reality (ontology)", "[w]hat is the nature of phenomena (objects)", "[h]ow can we know (epistemology)" and "[w]hat is the relationship between the knower and the known", becomes more important in our decision about what valid research is (Nieuwenhuis 2007:52). Key to the constructivist approach in qualitative research is that knowledge is socially constructed and hence one cannot truly understand human life from an outside and objective stance – human life is known from within (Nieuwenhuis 2007:54). In such a perspective the researcher can than not truly detach from a community she/he researches. The underpinnings of the notion that reality, knowledge and truth are co-constructed, and that objective knowledge is not really possible, lie within the postmodern, and interpretivist paradigms that inform qualitative research (Nieuwenhuis 2007:62-65).

Four main perspectives are held, namely the “interpretivist”, “critical theory” “postmodern”, and “post-positivist” perspectives (Maree 2019:60-65). Creswell and Poth (2018:35) puts emphasis on the interpretive aspect of qualitative research, and this, I argue, point to a discerning and hermeneutical approach. In this study, the “interpretivist perspective”, rooted in the subjectivity of reality, its suspicion of the so-called objective reality, and research aim to understand the multiple realities of human existence (Maree 2019:58-60), is regarded as being applicable. I argue for this based on an understanding of, amongst others, the idea of lived religion (and reality) being the domain of practical theology (Ganzevoort & Roeland 2014) and Osmer’s (2008:18) understanding of interpretation and discernment being at the heart of what we do in practical theology. In the end, qualitative research, like practical theology, is interested in real situations and practices of people and the development of insights, understanding, and meaning through a continuous process of interpretation (Swinton & Mowat 2016:28).

Within this broader qualitative framework, two approaches are of specific importance within this study, namely a post-foundational narrative approach and an autoethnographic approach, and these will be discussed next. Since the third article (Chapter 4 in this thesis) deals extensively with autoethnography as a research approach, only a few comments will be included in this chapter.

1.5.3.5. Additional notes on methodology

Literature surveys formed a key component of this study and included scholarly material as well as information in the public domain such as that from the media and institutions. Not only did it help to develop the background to this study and its theoretical underpinnings, but it also served as an important resource for interpretation and theory formation. According to Bhattacherjee (2012:21) the “purpose of a literature review is three-fold: (1) to survey the current state of knowledge in the area of inquiry, (2) to identify key authors, articles, theories, and findings in that area, and (3) to identify gaps in knowledge in that research area”.

Taking a qualitative empirical approach (Dillen and Mager 2014:306) allows for methods such as semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, narrative conversations, journaling, personal observations, and focus groups. Some of the advantages of doing semi-structured interviews is that it allows for broad, yet related topics, to feature during the engagement that could be varied as this method allows for a fair amount of flexibility. As

questions are generally more open-ended (Given 2008:810), “richer information” could be extracted, particularly as the more discursive nature of the method allows for participants to express experiences and perceptions in their own words (Miller and Brewer 2003:167). Questionnaires are instruments that are completed in writing by respondents, while interviews are completed by the interviewer based on verbal responses provided by respondents (Bhattacherjee 2012:74). Questionnaires allow for standardization, are often more time efficient than some other methods, and are good for getting specific answers that may be used for statistical analysis. Problems associated with questionnaires involve issues of clarity, assumed prior knowledge for answering questions, and uncertainty related to the accuracy and relevance of answers (Bechhofer and Paterson 2012:74-77). Focus groups on the other hand are discussions that involve “bringing a group of people together and conducting a very lightly structured interview with them around some particular focused topic” (Bechhofer and Paterson 2012:67).

Personal observations and journaling can be of great value during a qualitative research study. In contrast to diaries that contain information on daily activities, journals “capture writing that includes emotion, introspection, and self-reflection” (Given 2008:213). In this study, it was not the participants’ journals that served as a data source, but rather my own reflective journals which served to capture my “lived experiences” during the process (Given 2008:214), the value of which has been argued for before (Walton 2014:51). The reality that researchers, as was the case in one of the study sites for this project, are often part of the community being studied makes reflective journaling as a way of honestly engaging with the researcher’s own worldviews and preconceived ideas, indispensable for the research process. Bhattacherjee (2012:106), taking into account the researcher’s own influence in the research and the interpretations of information, speaks of the researcher as instrument, and explains it in the following way:

> Researchers are often embedded within the social context that they are studying, and are considered part of the data collection instrument in that they must use their observational skills, their trust with the participants, and their ability to extract the correct information. Further, their personal insights, knowledge, and experiences of the social context is critical to accurately interpreting the phenomenon of interest. At the same time, researchers must be fully aware of their personal biases and preconceptions, and not let such biases interfere with their ability to present a fair and accurate portrayal of the phenomenon.

Articles two (2) and four (4) – Chapter 3 and 5 - deal with context-specific projects, and each includes a discussion on the methods used for those. The reader is therefore referred to these contributions, as the intention of the preceding discussion was to provide an overview of the general methodological approach followed in the study.

i. Research locations

In the initial proposal, three communities, from the Northern Cape and the Free State in South Africa, were identified as case studies for this project. Of these only the study in the small mining village of Dingleton was conducted before I moved to Keetmanshoop, Namibia, after being called to the local Krönlein congregation of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA). This move made it impossible to continue with the other intended communities, and a choice was made to include the Krönlein congregation in the study without adding a third community. The research in these communities is discussed in articles 2, 4 and 5. Some comments on them follow below.

The first case selected was that of the Dingleton community, in the Northern Cape, where a process of relocating the entire village to the nearby town of Kathu had started already at the time of the study in 2014. The relocation was necessitated by already existing environmental and health risks associated with the mining activities close-by. However, due to an imminent expansion of the then existing mining activities, the need to facilitate the relocation of the community of Dingleton became even more acute. Using a narrative research approach, the study set out to gain insight into the perspectives of residents regarding the move, as well as their internalization and handling of the imminent disruption and its impacts. However, more importantly and in line with the objective of exploring ways through which communities may be assisted in dealing with disruption, the study wanted to place the stories of those affected at the centre with the expectation that these stories may hold unrecognized elements of agency, resistance and hope, that may become indispensable when dealing with disruption and trauma. This is discussed in some more detail in the second article.

The second study was conducted in Keetmanshoop is situated in the south of Namibia. Although it is the largest town in the region, it still has a very rural character to it despite being an economic and administrative hub for the region. I grew up in the town since the age of 12 and was a member of the URCSA congregation in the suburb of Krönlein where

I now was the minister. As in much of Namibia the town experiences a number of social challenges including high unemployment, alcohol and drug abuse, crime, and violence. Disruptive and traumatic experiences are not uncommon, as both my memory and ministry engagements confirmed. The study here had two main foci namely, to identify and describe some of the disruptive and traumatic experiences people are dealing with, and secondly to explore and implement a congregational pastoral ministry approach to dealing with these. A mixed method approach was followed, including the use of questionnaires, semi-structured and open-ended interviews, narrative conversations, and congregational engagements that could almost be seen as focus group activities. In addition, it was during this part of the overall project that journaling and reflective notes and other written pieces became a key method for data collection and analysis.

ii. Sample selection

In both cases, a non-probability sampling technique was followed, specifically the convenience sample approach. In non-probability sampling, the researcher selects a sample based on their own judgement and pre-established criteria (Bhattacherjee 2012:69; Given 2012:562). As a non-randomized approach is followed, the information generated cannot be transposed to the general population (Bhattacherjee 2012:69). In this study, the focus was not on prevalence but rather on the presence of disruptive and traumatic experiences and the exploration of possibly appropriate responses to these. Convenience sampling can be described as “a technique in which a sample is drawn from that part of the population that is close to hand, readily available, or convenient” (Bhattacherjee 2012). In both cases (Dingelton and Keetmanshoop) participants were invited to participate in the research voluntarily. Hence, in both instances, a deliberate attempt was made to involve those who were more easily accessible, which resulted for instance in Keetmanshoop in the sample consisting mostly of my congregants. This introduces the challenges that come with relationships of power hierarchies, which did prove a problem at times also as people from the congregation experience some confusion in relation to my dual roles as pastor and researcher. However, this was not limited to congregants, as some others also related to me in the context of past relationships and experiences. To some extent, the study also made use of purposive sampling which is described by Given (2012:562) as a "process where participants are selected because they meet criteria that have been predetermined by the researcher as relevant to addressing the research question”, which in this case was that they were

affected by the relocation from Dingleton or, as in the case of Keetmanshoop, that they experienced some form of a disruptive and traumatic event that impacted their lives.

According to Given (2012:562) issues of transferability and bias are common concerns regarding non-probability sampling, which will have to be “considered and addressed at the data collection, analysis, and writing stages of the research process”.

Focus group discussions were held with clergy in Keetmanshoop - accommodated during some of the meetings of the Pastor’s Forum - where clergy’s experiences with dealing with disruptive experiences were discussed, and general experiences and ideas were shared. This research technique aims to collect data through a group discussion on a defined area of interest (Greeff 2005:300). The main focus for this was to gain insights into the clergy’s own perception of the impacts of disruptive and traumatic experiences they encounter in ministry as well as their own evaluation of their ability to deal with it.

Ethical clearance for the questionnaires, informal discussions and focus group discussions were obtained from the UFS in September 2018. Unfortunately, the research conducted in Dingleton preceded this, but this was declared as part of the overall ethical clearance application. Care was taken to avoid revealing information that might suggest the identity of the people involved.

1.6. Outline and presentation of the thesis

The metaphor of “facing” also guided the structure of this thesis, which will be presented as a series of five related articles, flanked by an extended introduction and conclusion that will hopefully illuminate the essence of these articles even more. As indicated before, each of the five articles attempt to address at least one of the secondary research questions and its associated aims. At the same time, it was written with the Osmer’s (2008) framework for practical theology in mind. The choice to complete the thesis through a series of articles have been touched on in section 1.5.1 and will not be repeated here. However, it is important to note that following the article format introduced limitations in terms of the total word count of the thesis as academic journals are normally rather strict on the maximum word count allowed per article. The first three articles presented here have bene published already, while the last two will be submitted for possible publication after completion of the thesis. The published articles are presented here as it

was published in terms of its content. However, minor editorial changes were made for the sake of consistency and uniformity of the thesis.

1.6.1. Chapter 1 – In the face of disruption

The introductory chapter provides a broad overview of the research project and approach followed in producing the thesis. It further presents the theoretical and methodological framework for the study.

1.6.2. Chapter 2 – Communities facing disruption: the need to shift from individual to community paradigms in pastoral care

This chapter sets out to provide the background, context, and rationale to the study as it introduces the disruptive and traumatic experiences of communities within South Africa. In presenting that which communities are faced with and relating it to a broad understanding of pastoral care, I introduced the research problem to the broader study while making a case for the relevance of the study for practical theology and pastoral care. This article was written with the original idea and geo-political scope in mind. It was intended to provide the (1) conceptualization of the key concepts that feature in the project – trauma, disruption, pain, healing, restoration, wholeness – as well as (2) to argue for a shift towards a more collective pastoral care response in dealing with trauma and disruption.

1.6.3. Chapter 3 – The power of stories from within: the Dingleton community relocation

In this chapter the disruptive and traumatic impacts of a forced relocation due to mining expansion and its associated risks are highlighted. However, already in this case study, I set out to develop an understanding of how people in communities are “facing” the disruptive challenges they are “faced” with. The power of people’s stories, explored through a narrative research approach, emerged as a powerful instrument of resistance and a source of agency for people facing disruption. It further explores, through a narrative approach, the impact of the Dingleton community relocation necessitated by mining expansion. The focus of the article is on the role of perceived power in the narratives of people and how it can be discerned that perception of where the power resides, impacts the internalized response of people to disruptive experiences.

1.6.4. Chapter 4 – Writing the self in(to) practical theological research

The article presented here developed from a series of disruptions in my own life and its impact on this research project. Whereas the other chapters are about the communities and that which they are faced with, this chapter represents something of a journey to the inside – me facing myself in the context of personal life, ministry and this research project. With the unexpected inclusion of autoethnography into my approach for the Keetmanshoop research and its relatively limited use in practical theology, I thought it apt to discuss this genre in detail, providing also a rationale for why I regarded it appropriate. The purpose would be two-fold: (1) it would help me clarify my own position and methodological choices, and (2) I believe that describing the framework in detail and making a bit clearer the linkages with practical theological research, could be of value for practical theology in our context.

1.6.5. Chapter 5 – A promise of rain – facing encounters with trauma and disruption

In this chapter the focus again shifts to the disruptive and traumatic experiences communities are faced with. It deals with these from the perspective of a pastoral congregational ministry concerned with both the local congregation and the broader community and discusses traumatic and disruptive experiences as it emerged from the results of a survey among local people from Keetmanshoop, a town in Southern Namibia. This article deals with and describes the impact of disruptive and traumatic experiences in the Keetmanshoop community. Data for this discussion was derived from public sources, congregational documents, questionnaires, unstructured interviews and conversations, group discussions, and a reflexive praxis involving analysis of my own experiences and emotions to that. How disruptive experiences are present, how people deal with them, how clergy deal with it, and the challenges that it presents for a congregational pastoral care approach, are discussed.

1.6.6. Chapter 6 – Facing disruptive and traumatic experiences in communities: a congregational pastoral ministry approach

This chapter explores aspects of a possible congregational pastoral ministry response to issues of trauma and disruption and seeks to provide a framework for such an approach. This article builds on the previous one and deals with the question “how might we respond” in terms of a congregational pastoral care ministry. During the course of my ministry, yet related to the research project, a number of approaches and projects were identified in conjunction with congregational leadership and interested members that

specifically aimed at responding to some of the disruptive experiences identified in the community.

1.6.7. Chapter 7 – A look in the rear-view mirror

This concluding chapter discuss the research project in relation to the main research question and aims of the project. It sets out to show that it is indeed possible to have a collective congregational pastoral approach to dealing with traumatic and disruptive experiences in the community. Shortcomings of the project as well as possibilities for the future are also discussed.

1.7. Conclusion

The introductory chapter started off with a bit of my own journey towards pastoral care before providing direction into the reading of the thesis through the discussion on the leading metaphor of “facing” from the title of the study. The research framework and methodological overview contextualized the study, before the discussion on practical theology and pastoral care provided the overall theoretical framework that affirmed that the study indeed belongs in the discipline of practical theology, and that the study of traumatic experiences falls within the ambit of practical theology and pastoral care. The discussion on frameworks considered in the conceptualization of a congregational pastoral care ministry approach concludes this chapter.

2. CHAPTER 2 – Communities facing disruption: the need to shift from individual to community paradigms in pastoral care[6,7]

2.1. Introduction

The spate of traumatizing and disruptive events and processes South African communities face everyday begs the question whether our current pastoral care paradigms are adequately aligned with the collective pastoral care needs of our communities. In a context of inequality, violence, crime, poverty, HIV/AIDS, and other societal challenges (Lockhat & Van Niekerk 2000:291-302; Jewkes & Abrahams 2002:1231-1244; Dinan, McCall & Gibson 2004:727-741; Kaminer *et al.* 2008:1589-1590; Simkins 2011:105-109) it becomes important to consider issues of healing, prevention, restoration and well-being from a more systemic and communal perspective (Mouton 2012:1). This would then mean that a deliberate shift be made from an individual to a community-directed approach in pastoral care and counselling. For the purpose of the discussion here I will make reference to the impact of the apparently well-established cycle of violence in South African communities.

South Africa has become known to be one of the most violent nations in the world, while at the same time its status as one of the countries with the biggest gap between rich and poor serves to intensify the divide between communities (Lockhat & van Niekerk 2000:299; Lefko-Everett, Nyoka & Tiscornia 2012:12). The seemingly well-established cycle of violence, already reported on in the past (e.g. Hamber 1999:113-128), is evident in the labour sector, civil protests and in much of the crime experienced and/or witnessed in the country[8]. However, this violence

---

[6] Mouton, D.P., 2014. Communities facing disruption: the need to shift from individual to community paradigms in pastoral care. *Acta theologica*, *34*(1), pp.91-107.

[7] **Primary Research Question:** How can congregations be empowered to face issues of trauma and disruption? **Article 1: Secondary Research Question 1** - What do we understand by a community-oriented approach to pastoral care? **Article 2: Secondary Research Question 2** - Can the narratives/stories of people strengthen their ability to face experiences of trauma and disruption and provide a hopeful outlook on the future? **Article 3: Secondary Research Question 3** – How can the role, position, and influence of the practical theologian as practitioner (minister) and researcher be understood with regard to research and praxis in a congregational pastoral approach to issues of trauma and disruption? **Article 4: Secondary Research Question 4** - What are some of the traumatic and disruptive experiences people and communities are faced with? **Article 5: Secondary Research Question 5** - What could a possible congregational pastoral ministry approach to issues of trauma and healing look like?

[8] The violent element of crime and protest actions in South Africa is reported on extensively in local and international media.
A few examples of these reports (electronic media) over the last years are:
- http://mg.co.za/article/2013-10-11-00-strike-linked-damages-at-all-time-high;
- http://socs.civicus.org/?p=3875; http://ewn.co.za/Topic/Bekkersdal-protests;
- http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2013-10-30-bekkersdal-protests-dirty-votes-and-the-anc-in- the-eye-of-the-storm/#.U2svG1eia2c;

is much more than just physical violence. Instead, it is often entrenched in many structures of society and is frequently expressed most profoundly in the experiences of poverty, inequality, poor service delivery and the skewed power relations marking the South African political and socioeconomic landscapes (Lockhat & Van Niekerk 2000:291-302). In fact, the president of the country in 2012 highlighted unemployment, poverty and inequality as the prominent issues faced by South Africans (Janzen 2012:15). While this seems to continue unabatedly, it leaves behind countless corpses, wounded people, traumatized individuals and communities, and perhaps even an aura of hopelessness in broader society. Although a multitude of complex factors contribute to the violence, abuse, and structural inequality, South Africa's violent political past not only retains significant influence over this culture of violence, but also still contributes to the apparent inability of society to deal with trauma (unresolved trauma), both historically and recently (Lockhat & Van Niekerk 2000:291-302; Kaminer *et al.* 2008:1589-1590; Simkins 2011:105-109). This unresolved trauma impacts on all levels of society and may present significant threats to individual and community restoration, reconciliation in the broader society, as well as social cohesion.

In this article I would like to argue that current disruptive phenomena and psycho-social challenges communities are faced with necessitate a more concerted effort in the pastoral care and counselling domain to shift towards a systemic and community-directed approach. This is particularly necessary as both individual and community well-being seems to be under pressure. In order to do this, brief attention will be given to the effects of disruptiveness and trauma due to violence, as a case in point. Links will be made to issues of inequality and unresolved trauma, although these aspects are a secondary focus of this article. However, it is necessary that we consider the intricate link between an understanding of pastoral care and concepts of healing, restoration and well-being in a context of violence and trauma. In this review I will show that a holistic view on these concepts should

- http://www.itinews.co.za/companyview.aspx?companyid=22416&itemid=60E FE349-02FA-401B-80BB-5468DA67BCB5
- http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Gruesome-details-of-Griekwastad-murders-emerge-20120824
- http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Man-admits-to-raping-his-mother-20121003
- http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Cape-Town-girl-13-wounded-in-crossfire-20121001
- http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Boys-raped-in-N-West-20120926
- http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/3-held-for-elderly-couples-murder-on-farm-20120911

influence the choice for a stronger emphasis in the paradigmatic shift from individual to community pastoral care in the South African context.

2.2. South Africa: a disrupted and traumatized nation?

It is unfortunate that the violence SA communities are exposed to cannot be referred to as isolated cases or that they are related only to current conditions. The apparently well-established cycle of violence has already been reported on for some time (Brandon Hamber 1999:113-128; Lockhat & Van Niekerk 2000:292,296; Kaminar *et al*. 2008:1589).

At least part of the reason for this current culture of violence can be related to the institutionalised violence during the previous regime that provided fertile ground for the establishment of such a culture of violence (Hamber 1999:116; Lockhat & Van Niekerk 2000:292,296; Kaminar *et al* 2008:1589), also structurally (Burnett 1998:789). However, there is a complex interplay between a whole range of factors causing this. One factor that may play a significant role, at least in part, and that should be mentioned here are the continually high levels of frustration that communities may experience due to sustained poverty and inequality[9]. This again may be linked to possible disillusionment as a result of unfulfilled political promises made during the transition from apartheid to a democratic state, one can almost appreciate the fact that these frustrations become a further justification for the violent nature of protest actions, for example. This point is illustrated in the 2011 SA Reconciliation Barometer of the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) where it is for instance showed that slightly more than half of South Africans (51%) believe that the leaders do not really care about what happen to ordinary citizens (Lefko-Everett, Nyoka & Tiscornia 2011:15).

Exacerbating the effects of continued inequalities and politicisation, according to Hamber (1999:123), is the fact that so many of the survivors of past violence may not have been able to deal with their traumatic pasts by the time of the completion of the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). In this regard Halpern and Weinstein (2004:570) points out that even when truth commissions worked well, much still needs to be done to address issues such as persistent fear of the other, mistrust, betrayal, discrimination and stereotyping – all of this still very

[9] See article by Charles Simkins (2011)

much alive in South African societies. Also, in most cases the structural conditions and marginalising contexts may not have changed, adding to the trauma and frustration that could become a contributing factor in sustaining this culture of violence. I believe that Hamber (1999:124) is correct in his assertion that inequality and structural imbalances need to be addressed as part of the strategy to curb the on-going spread of violence and to further the cause of reconciliation in the country, a view also expressed on the SA Reconciliation Barometer Blog of the IJR (No Reconciliation 2012).

As a nation we seem to have reached a deadlock with regard to reconciliation and societal restoration, and this might have contributed to the current scenario that can only be referred to as a proverbial boiling point. To illustrate, I refer to an article by Johan Cilliers and Ian Nell (2011:2-3) in which they highlight the following from the SA Reconciliation Barometer published by the IJR (2010:2):

> Racial relations remain under pressure ... Optimism about a joint future has dropped ...
>
> From 2003 to 2009, there was no significant improvement in intergroup socialisation and contact ...
>
> We still struggle to understand each other ... Inequality remains a big obstacle ...

The biggest divisive factors in South Africa (in order of significance): economic inequality, political parties, class, disease (such as HIV and aids), religion, race and language. Referring to the 2009 Transformation Audit these authors also emphasise the fact that the levels of inequality in SA “are still shockingly high” (IJR 2010:3; Simkins 2011:105-119).

Despite the positive aspects of the political compromises reached during the transition to a democratic state, the inequalities of the apartheid regime have largely been maintained due to the inability of the current government to curb and reduce these inequalities (Simkins 2011:105-119). Whereas a small percentage of Black people have benefited from Black Economic Empowerment (BEE), addressing inequality remained a challenge between 1994 and 2008 (Simkins 2011:108). Hamber (2003) as well as Chapman and van der Merwe (2008) are but two voices amongst many who have argued that despite the important role of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in guiding South Africa through a relatively peaceful

transition, many issues remain with regard to equality, restoration, reconciliation and the adequate handling of trauma from the past. Government projects aimed at large-scale restoration, such as the 1994 Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) and the 1996 Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy yielded only limited results. The impact of the newly launched 2012 National Development Plan still remains to be seen. Due to this, and the high levels of corruption associated with it, disparities remain largely along the same lines as in the past, and many have come to resent these projects (Simkins 2011:106). The latest SA Reconciliation Barometer (2012) serves to confirm that significant disparities are still reported with regard to economic and employment security as well as service delivery. Although these disparities are still largely along racial lines, class definitions amongst Black communities have also become more pronounced since 1994. The report suggests that most South Africans still feel separated from each other due to language, race and ethnicity (Lefko-Everett, Nyoka & Tiscornia 2011:29).

I argue that post-1994 South Africa is experiencing such high levels of violence that the traumatizing effect of it goes way beyond the individual. It reaches into the very fabric of the collective. Indeed, as Brandom Hamber (1999:126) states: “All of South African society has been traumatised to some degree”. More recently Fanie du Toit, in the October 2012 edition of the SA Reconciliation Barometer Report stated that “[o]ur society remains deeply wounded and fractious ...” (Du Toit 2012:4) Also Lockhat and Van Niekerk (2000:299), by referring to the mental health of black children in SA, suggested that the impact of many of the psychosocial trauma children have been exposed to during apartheid is manifested in social problems of the post-apartheid SA. Also, much of the “poverty, unemployment and inequality are structural problems that have their origins in apartheid” (Du Toit 2012:4). Not only can the source of trauma be found in the past political regime, the inequalities and violence of today, but also in the fact that this young democratic nation has been forced into a “collapse into modernity” (Cilliers & Nell 2011:3) that brings with it its own challenges in terms of uncertainty and insecurity with regard to identity formation. No simple cause-effect approach is assumed here and I am well aware of the complex nature of inter-related factors linking socio-economic inequalities, psycho-spiritual considerations, unresolved collective trauma, and many other

factors with violence in South African society, and its impact on community well-being and restoration.

Perhaps at this point it might be appropriate to say something about the phenomena of violence and its link to trauma as a result of violence's disruptive nature.

2.3. Violence, disruption, and trauma

Community violence as a source of trauma has been reported on widely, both in relation to its prevalence in South Africa and elsewhere (see e.g. Lockhat & Van Niekerk 2000; Eitle & Turner 2002; Dinan, McCall & Gibson 2004; Shields, Nadasen & Pierce 2009). Although acts of violence are often directed at individuals, the fact that it is such a common experience warrants it to be viewed as an issue of collective concern. In fact, Kaminar *et al*. (2008:1593) in a study that examines the relative risk of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) associated with various forms of violence, found that over a third of South Africans have had encounters with violence of some sort, often resulting in symptoms of post-traumatic stress. Interestingly, in a study on the exposure of South African children to violence it was found that exposure to community violence is more likely to have adverse effects on children compared to exposure to family violence for instance (Barbarin, Richter & De Wet 2001:23). Similarly, structural violence, such as the violence associated with the apartheid era and the current brutality of endemic poverty and poor socio-economic conditions appear to also have lasting adverse effects on many children who grew up under these conditions (Burnet 1998:792-793; Lockhat & Van Niekerk 2000:301). Evidence from different studies indeed suggests that trauma related to violence is more likely to lead to PTSD than other forms of trauma (Kaminar *et al*. 2008:1590). A negative spiral ensues where violence causes trauma, trauma causes violence, and so it goes on. Although this author cannot claim to have included an exhaustive survey of studies investigating the phenomena and impacts of community violence, the few referenced here already suggest that the impact of violence has both individual and collective dimension and affects physical, psychological, social, spiritual, relational and structural aspects of existence.

The phenomenon of trauma has been discussed extensively by scholars from various disciplines (e.g. Culbertson 1995; Ganzevoort 2000; Robson 2001; Alexander *et al.* 2004; Ganzevoort 2009*a*; Ganzevoort 2011). It appears that they all agree more or less

with the following: trauma relates to a radical event or experience that has to do with some form of injury and pain (from the Greek word trauma) and has the ability to shake ones world in such a way that all "normality" is turned upside-down to an extent that the person affected or confronted by the traumatizing event has no ability to cope with the reality of such an event. Hutchison and Bleiker (2008:387) puts it in the following way:

> Trauma is an encounter with an event or series of events so shocking that our understanding of how the world works is severely disrupted.

The phenomenon could also be described as "an experience that invalidates one's normal assumptions of order, predictability, safety, and identity" (Suedfeld 1997:849). Indeed, one's whole assumptive world is turned up-side-down. This "assumptive world" provides the milieu within which people live their lives and generate meaning from their lives, and rests on three fundamental assumptions: (1) a meaningful and coherence/continuity world, (2) the kind-heartedness of others, and (3) the worth of the self. When we experience trauma the certainty of these assumptions are threatened and even may not hold anymore, threatening our very existence (Ganzevoort 2009*a*:188-189; 2011:3). Responses to such traumatic challenges may vary, but is generally associated with highly contradictory and conflicting emotions and positions that require great care and wisdom when attempting to deal with it, especially in a collective context.

The concept of trauma indeed functions both on the individual and collective level (Suedfeld 1997; Ganzevoort 2000; Veerman & Ganzevoort 2001; Alexander *et al*. 2004; Audergon 2004; Lopez 2011). On a collective level it

> involves a breakdown of social and moral symbolic order based on trust and goodwill and its replacement by a malevolent order based on terror, violence, powerlessness, and silence, destroying the internalized culturally constituted webs of trust of people (Sonpar 2008, in Lopez 2011:301, 302).

This could be what South African communities experience at the moment, and It is indeed so that where communities suffer atrocity and disruption, the resultant

trauma stay in every fabric of their existence, i.e. individual, family, society, and future generations (Audergon 2004:20).

It appears that trauma is not merely an event that simply remains in the past. Instead, it is a lived reality where survivors find themselves in a space where the line between life and death are blurred and where life does not logically follows death – a space where the trauma is faced continually (cf. Rambo 2010). In a way this understanding of living with trauma almost forces me to immediately reflect on how this is the business of theology, practical theology and pastoral care, particularly when I am reminded of Ruard Ganzevoort's understanding of practical theology as lived religion, taking seriously the experience of a lived reality (Ganzevoort 2009*b*).

The issue of trauma is of significance for theology and religious study since one can argue that there is a fundamental relationship between religion and trauma, considering that religion has always had to do with life and its suffering, uncertainty, powerlessness and tragedy (Ganzevoort 2011:3). Not only has religion played an important role in dealing with suffering and tragic occurrences, but these also have led to critical views on religion, precisely because of the inexplicable nature of traumatic and tragic events. Ganzevoort (2008:12-14) argues for a number of theological issues that surface in trauma experiences that is relating trauma with theology. These are the issues of suffering and theodicy, guilt and innocence, tragedy and malice, the cross and resurrection which in itself is a story of traumatization, and which is at the roots of the Christian tradition, and the centrality of forgiveness and reconciliation. The question Ganzevoort then raises is how these are affected by the psychological effects of trauma and whether our traditional, confessional beliefs are congruent with the psychological reality and damage of the trauma survivor.

Religious traditions have always struggled with the challenges of making sense of tragic events. This does not mean that in practical theology or pastoral care we are looking to provide answers to the questions related to suffering and trauma, but rather that we hope to endeavour to find ways by which meaning can be attained amidst and despite the suffering and trauma. This quest for meaning and meaningful life stories is not restricted to the religious world however but is emphasized also in trauma theory (Janoff-Bulman 1992; Ganzevoort 2011). In the

end it is about the clarification/enlightenment of the existential and spiritual question, dealing with a disrupted assumptive world and the resultant confusion in a bid to find new meaning, and certainly not about giving exact answers (Ganzevoort 2011:4). In the search for meaning in the midst of suffering and trauma our task would be to create the space for discourse between the core notions of both psychology and religion relating to our understanding of God, others and ourselves, namely: omnipotence/coherence; love/ kind-heartedness/benevolence; and self-worth (Ganzevoort 2011:4). How we address the existential question arising from trauma depends how we understand the interaction between the event, the context, the tradition and the self, and ultimately determines the existential and spiritual meaning derived from such a traumatic experience.

Trauma, resulting from disruptive events and process, has been presented here as a life-shattering experience leading to confusion and many unanswered questions, as well as often having the effect of calling significant relations in question. It can therefore be argued that the notions of healing, restoration, well-being and wholeness, are relevant in the discourse about pastoral care in a context of disruption and trauma that reaches beyond the individual and threatens the very essence of the communities people live in.

2.4. Healing, restoration and well-being – a (w)holistic basis for pastoral care in disrupted and traumatized contexts

It is now commonly agreed that health is more than just the absence of physical infirmity (Parmer & Rogers 1997:55). In fact, it is more appropriate to view it as inclusive of the concepts of physical, social and mental well-being (Visser *et a*l. 2009:167). Even more inclusive is the understanding that it also encompasses a person's faith maturity, normative aspects and value systems, and the nature and quality of their relationships (Louw 2008:43-44). On the health-illness continuum it would then imply an increased emphasis on relationships and its dynamics, maturity and a meaningful way of relating to existential issues in life.

Restoration in this article refers to the restoration of the sense of well-being as experienced and perceived by affected individuals and communities, and includes aspects on a cognitive, physical, social, affective, occupational, and spiritual level (Poloma & Pendleton 1990:270; Parmer & Rogers 1997:55; Fiorita & Ryan

2007:341-368; Louw 2008:36; Utley & Wachholtz 2011:1). This implies a holistic and systemic approach to understanding the relationship between illness, health and life, where restoration and healing also includes the "utilization of spiritual, cultural, psychological and social resources" (Louw 2008:47). Briefly, a community-directed or holistic and systemic approach to pastoral care implies the acknowledgement that people only truly function within networks of relationships and hence within community, as Daniël Louw argues in his book *Networks of the Human Soul* (2012). It further suggests the understanding that pastoral counselling and care is never merely aimed at the empowering and wholeness of the individual, but also directed towards and for the purpose of others and the broader society (Clinebell 1995:2). This is especially relevant where pastoral care works with an understanding of anthropology which rests not only on constructs seated within an individual, but also on the dynamics and influence of the networks of relationships within community, social aspects of existence, belief systems, cultural domains and other normative factors (cf. Louw 1999:297). The idea that individual well-being is only truly possible within community, and vice versa, corresponds to Biblical perspectives (Mouton 2012:76). I further propose that a community-directed approach in pastoral care and counselling does not merely suggest ministry to people in community or to communities, but also the acknowledgement and harnessing of the abilities of communities to minister within and to other communities. Given the severity of the impact of violence and disruptions within our South African communities, a model that depends on the expertise of a pastoral caregiver, with help directed primarily on the individual, is simply not effective and appropriate anymore. Such care must be directed towards communities, not only to minster to these communities, but to empower them to identify and optimise their own pastoral care resources.

Indeed, disruptive phenomena such as poverty, poor living conditions, sustained high levels of violence, etc. cannot be addressed without taking serious the context within which these are experienced, as well as the collective/communal nature of these phenomena. Acknowledgement of the collective nature of these phenomena inevitably will create awareness that a care response to these must also be approached with a collective/ community orientation in mind.

In terms of an African perspective this cannot be different. Indeed, when viewed from an understanding of the notion of *Ubuntu*, a concept implying "that a human being is a person through other persons" (Louw 2008:41), such collective and communal approaches in both analysis and care will not be regarded as strange. Also seen form a Biblical perspective, these issues cannot be addressed differently. The idea that the biblical understanding of being human refers to the "whole of the human being", including all relational networks, is well attested for by Wilkinson (1980:1; 1998:7) amongst others. One will find that a similar understanding of healing and restoration is developed from the study of biblical concepts on the issue. Healing has to do with much more than just the body and includes all that is to be understood as constituents of being human. This would then imply that it is only in relation to and as part of communities that one can begin to speak of restoration and well-being.

In the context of the Old Testament for instance, no one definition is given for the concepts of health. However, a variety of concepts are used that appear to encapsulate something of these, and include terms such as well-being, righteousness, obedience, strength, fertility and longevity (Struys 1968:142; Wilkinson 1998:11-16; Louw 2008:47). It appears to be well expressed through the idea of *shalom* (peace), a notion that refers to complete fulfilment and is connected to moral activity, spiritual achievement, righteousness (*sedeq*), faithful fulfilment of the covenant and the torah (holiness), obedience to God and the law, blessing, fertility, and longevity as well as to "the right relationships" (Louw 2008:47). All of these in one way or the other implies relationality on one or the other level.

Similarly, the New Testament (NT) use of the concepts of health is also a much broader understanding than merely an individual, bodily state of being (Wilkinson 1998:21). A variety of Greek words are used in connection with the idea of health, well-being, healing and restoration – *hugies, eirene, zoe, bio, psuche* and *soteria* (Strong 1996; Wilkinson 1998:22-29). Despite differences in particular meaning and contexts of applications, all these terms in one way or the other, expresses an understanding of health and well-being that resonates with that expressed by the concepts an understanding associated with the term "*shalom*". In essence then it boils down to and understanding of health and well-being that extends to one's

entire human existence. This must of course have implications for how we do practical theology and provide care to those in need.

Also, when reflecting on health and well-being, we have to reflect also on the concept of therapy. The word that gives character to what we do in pastoral care is the Greek word *therapeuo*. It is explained in the *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Brown 1971:163- 164) by making use of the concept of recovery. Although used in the New Testament almost exclusively in the context of healing (Brown 1971:164), it also expresses something of a willingness to serve and give in the interest of others. *Therapeuo*, as well as other words that are used to express something about the process of healing, almost always implies restoration, healing and renewal, and then mostly in the context of relationships with others and God.

The functions of pastoral care and counselling also include the act and process of healing, in addition to sustaining, guiding, and reconciling of human beings and their relationships (Clinebell 1984:20). Clinebell (1984:29) further places emphasis on the aspect of growth as an objective of pastoral care, particularly making the point that it is growth directed not only at the self, but also are the broader society. Indeed, practical theology, and hence pastoral care and counselling as a discipline within it, always seems to be concerned with meaning generation in the contexts of relationships, and within the discourse on the place of theology in real human contexts (Pattison & Woodward 2000:5). This resonates with the understanding of other scholars (Louw 1999; Ganzevoort 2009*b*; McClure 2012). It appears to be about change, transformation, relationships, lived reality, praxis-theory interaction, reflection, interpretation, meaning- generation and care (McCann & Strain 1985; Louw 1999; Ganzevoort 2011; McClure 2012). However, in contrast to humanitarian and social caring projects, all of the above happens with a reflective awareness that we merely participate in the "*praxis of God as related to the praxis of faith within a vivid social, cultural and contextual encounter between God and human beings*" (Louw 2008:17).

We can probably think of pastoral care as being concerned with processes of enabling, healing, empowerment, sustaining, guiding, reconciliation, nurturing, liberation, interpreting and growth with and within individuals and groups, in the context of

relationships and mutuality, and real contexts (Clinebell 1984:25-26; Louw 2008: 75-77). If we reflect on these we realize that our calling to care should then strongly resonate that character of a compassionate God, as explained for instance by Louw (2011:65-76). An emphasis in pastoral care and counselling on this compassionate nature of God should bring about a move in our understanding of a theology of care: from the traditional clerical, ecclesial model and the phenomenological paradigm, to a *theopaschitic* approach – a "practical theology of intestines" (Louw 2011:65-76*a*). This can be interpreted to imply a movement in the direction of inclusive and relational care that express this compassion of God. Such a shift will enable a caring praxis to replicate something of the praxis of God, a praxis of vulnerability as a result of God identifying with the human predicament of suffering and vulnerability. Only if our care praxis is informed and directed by the *passio Dei* (compassion of the suffering God)**,** can practical theology and pastoral care, attempt to promote change and bring hope in our disrupted and traumatized communities. Due to the inclusive character of a *theopaschitic* approach and the fact that the notion of a suffering and compassionate God includes structural and comprehensive healing (the healing of life), the notion of a suffering and compassionate God can help pastoral theology to shift from a theistic God (out there) to the more passionate God (right here), and from a focus on individual ministry to a community-oriented and liberating praxis. It can therefore be argued that the pastoral care in a context of disrupted and traumatized communities is best dealt with through an integrative approach to health and wellbeing that not only sees people as spiritually integrated beings, but also takes seriously the relational, communal and social aspects of human living.

2.5. Conclusion

The preceding dsicussion demonstrated that disruptive phenomena severely impact on both individual and community well-being. In addition, it highlighted the need to approach pastoral care giving with an understanding of humanity that is embedded in a network of interrelated aspects of human existence, including that which is personal as well as the communal or collective aspects of human existence. It showed that well-being and restoration cannot be conceptualized outside an understanding of community and relationality, particularly in reference to our African context, the African concept of *Ubuntu*, and the biblical and theological undergirding of pastoral care. This should compel pastoral care givers

and theologians to position themselves along the praxis of a compassionate God who takes serious the human predicament of suffering and vulnerability. When we realize that this vulnerability has a definite communal expression, we cannot but align ourselves with a pastoral care orientation that is directly aimed at community restoration and well-being. This however calls for a deliberate shift from individually inclined pastoral care to care for and with the communities we live with.

3. CHAPTER 3 – The power of stories from within: the Dingleton community relocation[10,11]

3.1. Introduction

Change and transition can often have a disruptive impact on people's lives, and may introduce a certain degree of uncertainty and anxiety. Such disruptive experiences and the resultant impact on the lives of the affected have the ability to introduce a possible process of reflection. This reflection on the lived reality of being in a context of change and transition can then lead to a renewed evaluation of people's foundations, potentially uncovering counter-forces in their lives that may help them to deal with the forces affecting change and the change itself. These serve to recall and often review and re-author dominant narratives in people's lives, particularly with regards to the power of these narratives and the meaning thereof in the lives of people. This article (chapter) aims to demonstrate the power of, or at least parts of, narratives of a few people affected by the relocation of the Dingleton community in the Northern Cape. It is a small community in the process of being moved to the nearby town of Kathu due to the expansion of mining activities.

Broadly, a narrative approach was followed in the study allowing for, what Müller *et al.* (2001:76) call, 'research participants/co-researchers' to take centre stage in the telling of their own stories. With a 'narrative approach' the author understands that the real-live stories of people are given precedence. This social-constructionist approach takes serious the real struggle of people in real contexts and how this reflects in their stories (Müller 2004:295). However, this approach offers the opportunity to move beyond the local context, and beyond mere hermeneutics towards a more 'reflexive and situational embedded epistemology and methodology' (Müller 2011:3). The main aim of research within this paradigm is not in the first place to effect immediate change, but to listen to the stories of people (Müller, Van Deventer and Human 2001:76). Through this new meaning may emerge and hope may be found.

---

[10] Mouton, DP 2016. The power of stories from within: The Dingleton Community relocation. *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 2(1):305.

[11] **Primary Research Question:** How can congregations be empowered to face issues of trauma and disruption? **Article 1: Secondary Research Question 1** - What do we understand by a community-oriented approach to pastoral care? **Article 2: Secondary Research Question 2** - Can the narratives/stories of people strengthen their ability to face experiences of trauma and disruption and provide a hopeful outlook on the future? **Article 3: Secondary Research Question 3** – How can the role, position, and influence of the practical theologian as practitioner (minister) and researcher be understood with regard to research and praxis in a congregational pastoral approach to issues of trauma and disruption? **Article 4: Secondary Research Question 4** - What are some of the traumatic and disruptive experiences people and communities are faced with? **Article 5: Secondary Research Question 5** - What could a possible congregational pastoral ministry approach to issues of trauma and healing look like?

Conversations referred to in this article (chapter) took place during March 2014. The article (chapter) does not aim to present detailed stories or a technical discussion on the notion of power, but rather aims to highlight only those aspects of selected narratives that demonstrate the power stories have on people and how it give impetus to people's understanding of their lives within a changing environment.

3.2. The backdrop to these stories

Originally built in the 1950's by the then state-owned company ISCOR, the mining town, then called Sishen, was intended to primarily house white employees working on the mine (Anglo American 2011; Business Day Live 2014). The mine is now owned by Kumba Iron Ore (KIO), a subsidiary of the Anglo American plc group (Anglo American 2007). During the 1980's, after the original inhabitants were moved to Kathu due to operational considerations, the houses were sold to private individuals, mainly so-called Coloured people. In 2011 the mining company owned only about 20% of the property in town (Anglo American 2011). The name of the town changed to Dingleton in 1990. Due to continuous mining expansion, the town is now located very close to the mining area and is consequently increasingly exposed to a number of environmental and other hazards related to mining activities. It has been suggested that complaints by residents regarding the deteriorating infrastructure and the increasing proximity of mining activities led to an undertaking by KIO to relocate the community to the nearby town of Kathu as part of the 'mine's environmental management and social development plans' (Business Day Live 2014).

According to a senior employee[12] on the project (personal interview, March 2014), the process was designed to follow the guidelines of the World Bank which included an extensive stakeholder engagement initiative between 2007 and 2013. Resettlement would take place in a designated area in Kathu where residents would have the opportunity to still live in a 'pseudo' Dingleton community. In the March 2014 interview, the employee suggested that the vast majority of residents support the resettlement and that almost 85% of residents had already signed an agreement for compensation with KIO. In November 2013 the heritage authorities granted approval for the relocation of graves in the area and in December 2013 the board of Kumba granted approval for the approximately R4.2 billion relocation which is planned to take between 4 to 6 years,

[12] To protect the identity of the employee, no specific reference to his/her identity can be made.

making this ‘the biggest community relocation by an Anglo American unit to date’ involving around 3 131 residents from Dingleton (Business Day Live 2014). The project is expected to be completed by 2017 and in its entirety would include the building of ‘houses for previous owners, rental accommodation, schools, churches, and a police station’ (Business Day Live 2014) in addition to other community facilities. While some residents may be resisting the resettlement project for different reasons, the majority apparently view it as a welcome change in their circumstances.

Various conversations with residents and the project staff for the resettlement project revealed the following with regards to the perceived beneficial aspects of the project.
Benefits to community will include amongst others:

- Increase in property value
- Newer and more modern infrastructure
- Better facilities and easier access to social services
- • Eliminate unsafe journeys to Kathu for services needed
- Enhanced employment opportunities.
- All relocation and property transfer costs will be paid by Kumba, as well as the difference in property taxes and rates for 25 years and capital gains tax that private property owners might incur as a result of the resettlement.

Benefits to Kumba Iron Ore

- Expansion of mining activities and extension of the ‘life of mine’ (LOM)
- Social responsibility profile
- Reducing related risk profile
- CEO of Kumba Norman Mbazima, in a press release on 12 December 2013, said the following (Anglo American 2013):

  ‘Kumba is committed to operating in a way that takes into account not only the financial implications of business decisions, but also the social and environmental impact it has on the community. A hallmark of this project is the extent of participation and positive contribution by the provincial and local government and community representatives – with an extensive consultation at every step of the process.’

However, there are those residents who, despite acknowledging certain benefits expected to derive from the resettlement project, are still convinced that Kumba is unfairly advantaged in terms of perceived power hierarchies in the context of the negotiations.

Some are convinced that, based on their understanding of the future financial benefits for the mining company, residents are entitled to even more compensation than what is currently offered. Are these claims fair in the light of the fact that some R 4.2 billion will be spent on the project? It is not the intention to make a judgment on this. Instead, the author wishes to present some stories of residents here in order to highlight the impact of those stories on the perceptions and sense of agency of those residents. However, one should also not be naive with regards to the complex nature of development induced displacement and relocation (DIDR) projects, and the history of imbalanced power structures of such projects. Hence, without going into too much detail and as a brief introduction only, just a few notes will now be presented on this topic of DIDR to also show that in a broader sense the story of DIDR exhibits its own dimension of power.

DIDR has shown to significantly affect overall well-being of individuals and communities. It has been found that forced resettlement and migration can be linked to a weakening in mental well-being (Hwang, Cao & Xi 2012:1765, 1771; Cao, Hwang & Xi 2012:1130, 1137). It has also been argued that the distinction between voluntary and involuntary community resettlement for development purposes is not always as clear-cut as one would believe (Morris-Jung & Both 2010:218). Schmidt-Soltau and Brockington (2007:2184) argue that there is always an involuntary element to it, and that it remains a complex matter. Given the ambiguity in terms of voluntary and involuntary resettlement, one could assume that the same may be true even for a process that may not be regarded as a forced removal process, especially since an unequal power relationship may be assumed to exist between developer and community (Aronsson 2009:38-39). This is also a view held by some co-researchers from the community.

Although the stories to be presented here deals with the broader experiences related to this relocation, the author wishes to particular demonstrate how these stories have a certain influence on the responses of these co-researchers in the face of changing circumstances.

3.3. Why stories?

But why would one want to tell stories of other people? Why is it important to tell the stories of Dingleton's people? It is perhaps because stories reflect the lived reality of people. It reflects the search for the sacred. And is the search for the sacred in the mundane lived reality of ordinary people not the concern of theology and practical

theology in particular? Taking lead from Ruard Ganzevoort's (2009) notion of lived religion, I believe that stories are in fact of concern for practical theology and practical theological research. The dynamics of people's stories tell us not only of how they live life, but also how they are shaped by life in the presence of God.

With specific reference to the issues of power, stories reveal people's understanding of the powers influencing their lives and of the particular powers they perceive to exert on life. After all, Foucault (1978:93) suggested that power is everywhere and has the ability to exert influence from all levels and from everywhere. It is not merely a hierarchical phenomenon, but it can be exerted and experienced from all levels – power can be experienced from above as well as from below. Perhaps the great value of such an understanding is that it allows for people to identify and evaluate those powers that can possibly affect them, and then choose to focus on those powers that shape their understanding of life and the meaning thereof. Yes, it may not always be possible to limit the effects of a particular power phenomenon in one's life, but when placed in the context of a bigger and broader narrative, these powers may be re-interpreted to give new meaning in life. Here the author wants to demonstrate that even the stories that sometime reflect on power issues has a power of its own, often influencing people's choices and responses.

In the telling of the story, themes on power that may have been obscured by a dominant storyline may emerge as moments of hope in people's lives. Perhaps some may fancy it to be an act of fiction writing that provides an avenue for escapism from reality. However, as Müller *et al.* (2001:7696) demonstrated, it may very well be that this fictional nature present in people's narratives, and in a narrative research approach, opens up possibilities for previously 'hidden' stories (with the potential to influence for the better) to emerge in the narratives of people and for its influences to be re-interpreted in order to gain new understanding, meaning and hope.

The conversations referred to here took place during March 2014. At that time much of the stakeholder engagement had already taken place and the bulk of the residents had agreed to the move (this author will not explore the issue of whether this relocation is happening reluctantly or not). Civil works at the site of relocation had already started and seemed to be progressing. However, the official 'move' of people had not really started yet.

A broadly narrative approach was followed with co-researchers/narrators presenting their stories in their own way. Furthermore, the very transitional nature of the 'moment of praxis', as Müller (2004:293) refers to it, calls not only for a narrative approach, but for a post-foundational practical theology where due recognition is given to the meaning of context and diversity in the storied and lived reality of people. This moment of praxis which refers to the fact that experience is always 'local, embodied, situated' (Müller 2005:2) becomes the meeting ground between practical theology and a post-foundational approach. In the context of this dicsussion the event of the relocation of the Dingleton community and that which surrounds it can be viewed as the 'moment of praxis' that gave rise to particular embodied experiences within that context, whilst at the same it gave rise to this research project. In line with the thinking of Müller *et al.* (2001:78) the purpose of this research project and this artic is not necessarily about the facilitation of change, but rather about the reflective listening to the stories of people.

In a transitional context, such as that of the Dingleton community at the time of the conversations, the challenge is often about dealing with continuously changing fields of meaning, making it a necessity to follow an epistemological and methodological framework that enables reflection rooted firmly in situational experience. Julian Müller (2011:2) argues that such an approach can be found within a post-foundation paradigm, both in terms of epistemology and methodology. Müller (2005:2) also argues that such an approach forces a rediscovery of practical theology as an endeavour that involves 'a reflection on practice, from the perspective of the experience of the presence of God'. The big advantage of this approach is that stories are told, listened to and interpreted and re-interpreted from 'within' and not from a perspective of the so-called objective stance. It is the narrative within its particular context and the meaning for and within that context that gains prominence. In this regards the approach followed here was very much influenced/directed by that proposed by Müller *et al.* (2001:76-96), who argue for an integrated approach whereby theoretical considerations, methodological choices, as well as the process of research all be considered as part of the epistemological framework for doing research. The role of co-researchers as primary narrators and key participants in the process is emphasized. The value of this proposed approach (the 'ABDCE model') probably lies in the prominence, relevance and legitimation it gives to the 'now', starting off not only with the 'action (A) 'of the 'now', but with story of the action itself. Due emphasis is placed on reading and conversing on this 'action' in light of contextual factors,

current and historical, as background (B) for this story/research. In this the research is not only allowed to develop, but the very meaning of the story/research for the co-researcher starts developing (D), leading to an eventual climax (C) where integration can take place to an extent and where meaning has been developed. In the end (E), its open-endedness highlights the idea that in narrative research it is not so much about providing easy answers, but to lead to an openness where new questions may be asked and new possibilities develop so that this 'story' may lead to new and other related and liberating stories.

3.4. Whose story? What power? The stories from within

So, whose stories and what stories should be important to consider in this context? The stories of residents? Perhaps the story of the mining company or that of government? Should the one story be regarded as more important than the other? Or do they all have significance within a particular contextual embeddedness? Narratives from some residents were selected demonstrating a different approach to dealing with the force of disruption and change. As indicated before, these narratives will not be presented in detail. Rather, by way of referring to each and by giving brief background, each will be reflected upon specifically with regards to the narrators' ways of finding meaning, hope and a means to cope with the imminent changes. No detail that may reveal or suggest the identity of the narrators will be included in the discussion.

Two of the narratives presented here deal with the experiences of prominent and influential church leaders. Both these leaders acknowledge the fact that significant moral decay has taken place in Dingleton over the last number of years. They also agree that due to infrastructure deterioration, a lack of services and the increased exposure to mining related hazards, the relocation to Kathu could be regarded as a potentially positive development. The building of new houses, well-maintained infrastructure, closer proximity to amenities and services, less traveling and improved medical services accounted amongst the positives identified. Common concerns raised with regards to the move to Kathu included the further decline of a sense of community, perceived higher living costs, perceived skewed power relations, mistrust and inequality, as well as uncertainty with regards to personal and household sustainability, especially for pensioners and those in lower income ranges. On the issue of dignity both agreed that the perceived skewed power relations and the continuation of a 'regime' of inequality is an infringement on the dignity of the people of Dingleton. However, on another level they also agreed that the

current living conditions in the town and the moral decay also does not witness to a dignified way of living. At least the conditions in Kathu, they agreed, would be more enabling for a sense of human worth and dignity to be maintained.

Interestingly though was the fact that the narration of the story of the one church leader revealed a strong emphasis on issues of compensation and the question of uncertainty, whilst the other often highlighted the fact that God creates new opportunities during times of change and crisis, but without denying the importance of the concerns raised. In the former case there appeared to be a pre-occupation with the notion that the dominant power lies with the mining company. A sense of helplessness in the light of the 'might of a big company' seemed to be a dominant theme in the narrative of this person. Perceived well-being was also mostly evaluated and expressed in relation to material compensation and providence. In this case a relatively strong sense of powerlessness could be observed. Power seems to be something outside of the person (with the mining company) and, in the current context and circumstances, appears to be working against him and his expectations. Although an active faith in God is also proclaimed, at least at the time of the conversations, it appeared that prominence was given to the impact of other external factors. This was somewhat in contrast to the narrative of the other church leader. Although he acknowledged the challenges and the reality of skewed power relations, emphasis was placed mostly on God as the provider, sustainer and the creator of new opportunities amidst changes and challenges. He therefore does not view the planned relocation necessarily as a 'new disruption', but rather as a 'new opportunity'. For him the knowledge and experience of God's providence, both personal and with regards to his faith community, is a source of hope – a reason to believe that there could be a meaningful life in their new context. Change is seen as constant, uncovering opportunities for growth and creating the need to re-evaluate one's own understanding of purpose and discipleship. Although issues of trust, inequality and injustices are real, he finds solace in the fact that God is just and trustworthy. Thus, instead of succumbing to a feeling of being overpowered by the might of a big mining company, he acknowledges the imbalance in power, but deliberately look to God and his understanding of God as *the* driving force for both his personal and ecclesial life. Hence, although power is also to be perceived as being situated outside of the person, it is viewed as an enabling force because of the belief of the indwelling of the Spirit of God.

Another conversation held, was with a family consisting of an elderly mother, her son and his wife. Both the mother and the son owned very neat and big houses in Dingleton (for which they would be compensated), in addition to property elsewhere. This family also agreed that, for similar reasons as listed above, moving to Kathu would be an improvement. Again, the narrative of their experience related to the relocation process was dominated by issues of compensation and a sense of being overpowered by the might of a big mining company ('a giant dictating to the small person'). Their story, as they told it, revealed a strong reliance on material means for their identity, their sense of stability and dignity, and as a means of being in control of their own lives. Despite appearing to be rather well-off, much was made of uncertainty with regards to a sustainable livelihood, especially for the elderly mother. Other issues that appeared to be bothering the family, in addition to a strong conviction to be able to negotiate on an individual level, include the design of the houses, the race of neighbours, and the inconvenience of the relocation. Although the family also came out strongly against the skewed power relation between the community and the mining company with regards to the process, it appears that they draw much of their energy from a strong awareness of their individual priorities. Just as in one of the previous cases, the narrative of this family revealed a relationship with God which is lived out in a faith community. However, despite God being significant in their lives, their dominant story appears to be driven by the power of individual satisfaction and material compensation. Even though they seem to be well-off, as mentioned earlier, a strong perception of uncertainty and dissatisfaction seems to dominate their narrative.

The last narrative reflected upon here is that of a couple of elderly men who originate from Angola. These men were separated from their families when civil war broke out in Angola. They had to leave their wives and children behind when they fled the country to seek refuge in Namibia (then Southwest Africa). For some time they lived in a refugee camp before they were given the ultimatum to either return to Angola, which they could not do at that time, or join the South African Defence Force (SADF). They remained part of the SADF in Namibia until the country's independence from South Africa, at which point they had to move to South Africa. In the meantime, they re-married and started new families. After their unit was disbanded by the new democratic government, they were left to find their own way and eventually ended up in Dingleton where they bought property and settled. Even though they have integrated into the community fairly well, it has been a tough time initially, particularly as they could not really speak Afrikaans. Despite all the

pain, the difficulties, the broken promises and the challenges of integrating into a strange community, they have managed to maintain their family and 'micro' community identity and cohesion. One is immediately struck by the long list of challenges that permeate almost all phases of their narratives. Yet, even more striking is their positive outlook on life. While they were so many times faced with situations that left them no other choice but to move on and try to resettle somewhere else, their stories witness to a deep believe that all is in God's hands.

They almost casually take note of unfair deals that life often hands out, and rather choose to focus on the faithfulness and fairness of God. For them the relocation to Kathu is like a prayer answered as they do not see the current conditions in Dingleton as conducive to the strengthening of dignity or a sense of community. A profound trust and hope in God seem to be the mainstay of their ability to deal with forced changes in a positive manner. Although they know that it is not guaranteed that KIO will keep all its promises, they hold on to a history that witnesses about a God who always keeps His promises, who always provides and who always protects. For them God is not someone they will have to search for in Kathu. Instead they live with the conviction that God is everywhere and that He is in Kathu as well.

Apart from their deep faith in God, their stories further revealed a deep sense of the holding power of strong family relationships. The family is the space where God protects and provide for them. Therefore, instead of spending too much time thinking about issues of compensation, they rather continue to strengthen their family relationships as they believe that it is through maintaining healthy family units that they will be able to support each other and to survive through tough times. Yes, they do acknowledge a world full of various powers and forces that impact on their lives. They do acknowledge the fact that they often cannot stand up against these forces. However, this does not disempower them. Instead, this realization moves them to leave it all in God's hands and to rather focus on the two things that have kept them going – their faith in God and their families.

3.5. Do these stories mean anything?

Listening to these stories enabled the identification of different powers operating in the lives and perspectives of people at this particular time in their lives. It became clear that those aspects that enjoyed prominence in the stories of the co-researchers strongly influenced their experience of the pending relocation. Who and what they perceived to be

important in this process impacted on their own sense of control, hope and meaning within their changing context. Where prominence was given to the power of the mining company or the issues of stability, satisfaction, compensation and sustenance, a stronger sense of frustration and powerlessness emerged in the narratives. On the other hand, where faith in God (the search for the sacred in a lived reality) and a strong reliance on communion (family ties for instance) had prominence, the power from the 'stories form within' provided a greater sense of meaning and meaningfulness. Such is this sense of meaning and meaningfulness that it provides an alternative to a narrative dominated by forces from outside. Even if these forces may be a threat to the very sense of stability and meaningfulness. In each of the stories issues of identity, values, and faith featured. It seems that where perceived powers of change are viewed in light of the reality of God's presence and providence, there is an affirmation of identity, values and faith. Where this is not the case feelings such as discontent, uncertainty and frustration becomes stronger forces.

Helping people in a context of change to realize the various ways of authoring and re-authoring their stories to find hope again emerge as an important endeavour of this practical theological research. In this way 'closed' stories become re-opened and open-ended with a new possibility for re-authoring. The re-interpreted or re-authored story now has the power to provide impetus to a psycho-spiritual response that may offer a way of finding hope and meaning again. In turn resilience is build, faith is strengthened, and new meaning and purpose is possible even in the light of a possibly unwelcoming change. Such a task would fit perfectly within the realms of pastoral care and practical theology as praxis of care and restoration.

Unfortunately, the full stories of these narrators cannot be captured here adequately. Also, one should be careful not to read any of these narratives with a moralizing lens. Instead, the reader should bear in mind that only specific elements of each of these narratives were chosen to be presented here to illustrate how people, knowingly or unknowingly through their own narratives, make a choice as to which powers and forces to recognize in their lives and what influence and authority is afforded to it. Furthermore, these examples and excerpts serve to illustrate that it is possible to identify, through narrative means, and to isolate language of power in the stories of people when they are allowed to narrate their stories on their own terms and from within their own contexts.

3.6. Conclusion

In a way this is a rather ‘simple’ paper, something that is almost paradoxical in the light of the search for elements of power perceptions in the narratives presented here. However, this serves to highlight that through the ordinary narratives of ordinary people, using a post-foundation narrative approach, one may be able to illustrate how stories themselves generate a particular understanding of powers and forces and eventually direct people’s responses to changes and crises. As illustrated, the perceived dominant power reflected in the story and the power of the story from within plays a significant role in how people choose to deconstruct their lives, to find meaning in their circumstance and deal with change and transition. When the author’s version of these narratives were read back to the its narrators it opened up the space for reflection, re-interpretation and new meaning, as well as a new sensitivity to the powerful elements in their narratives and how it affected opinion, perception and responses. This could however be enhanced with a more thorough and nuanced discussion on the concept of power, also in relation to post-foundationalism, narrative methods, and practical theological research.

4. CHAPTER 4 – Writing the self in(to) practical theological research[13,14]

4.1. Introduction

Liminality[1] – a state of transitioning between stages or spaces, with the uncertainty and potentiality that comes with it – may very well be a word that describes my current positioning within practical theology as profession, calling and research endeavour. At the same time, it could be used in reference to autoethnography which, as research framework, is still developing in both application and recognition within practical theology.

While in the congregation as full-time minster in Keetmanshoop, Namibia, I endeavoured to conduct research on disruptive and traumatic experiences that affect individuals and the community. My congregation served as primary "study population". As someone who grew up in this community and congregation, I found myself having to negotiate between multiple identities and roles right from the start. Old and familiar relationships were rekindled, old roles assumed again, and experiences from the past (positive and negative) found their way back into our collective memories. The role of researcher often conflicted with that of pastor and so-called insider. Knowing many of the people and sharing a history with them, inevitably created empathy on the one hand, yet also led to the resurfacing of old frustrations, prejudices, and default responses on the other hand. Congregants often found the overlap in roles and identities – between researcher, pastor, and old friend – a bit confusing and/or intimidating. For instance, one congregant, an old classmate of mine, one day in a conversation about dealing with an experience related to domestic abuse suddenly interrupted our conversation and said, *Nee man dominee, ek wil tog nie nou met 'n akademikus praat nie. Ek wil met Dawid, my predikant praat.* (Loosely translated: No, reverend, I don't want to talk to an academic now. I want to talk to, Dawid, my minister). Being involved in the "personal" lives of congregants, by virtue of being their pastor, while at the same time attempting to conduct research amongst the same people, certainly raised questions in terms of objectivity in the research process.

---

[13] Mouton, D. P. 2022*a*. Writing the self in(to) Practical Theological research. In: Cilliers, J. ed. *Moving methodologies: doing Practical and Missional Theology in an African context*. Wellington: Bybel Media, pp.79-98.

[14] **Primary Research Question:** How can congregations be empowered to face issues of trauma and disruption? **Article 1: Secondary Research Question 1** - What do we understand by a community-oriented approach to pastoral care? **Article 2: Secondary Research Question 2** - Can the narratives/stories of people strengthen their ability to face experiences of trauma and disruption and provide a hopeful outlook on the future? **Article 3: Secondary Research Question 3** – How can the role, position, and influence of the practical theologian as practitioner (minister) and researcher be understood with regard to research and praxis in a congregational pastoral approach to issues of trauma and disruption? **Article 4: Secondary Research Question 4** - What are some of the traumatic and disruptive experiences people and communities are faced with? **Article 5: Secondary Research Question 5** - What could a possible congregational pastoral ministry approach to issues of trauma and healing look like?

Distinguishing between what is meant for the “pastor” and what is meant to be considered for the research process, even during intentional encounters with the research aims in mind, was not always entirely clear. At times there were also deliberate attempts to “sanitise” the re-counting of experiences as a result of my own discomfort when faced with sensitive and sometimes disturbing information. Even though I may have been aware of this, I realised that I had no right to choose to expand or augment whatever narrative it was that the person wished for me to hear. The question arose: What does one do with the personal connections and often privileged information in the context of researching one’s own? Dealing with this and the multiple identities that I assumed in this community complicated the process at times. I could not pretend that there was no shared history, or that those emotional responses were not real or of significance in terms of the research process. The challenge then is to find ways to embrace these and still be able to conduct research that would meet generally accepted standards, such as that of objectivity and reliability, demanded by dominant social research frameworks. The reality still is, as Elaine Graham concluded in reference to Eric Stoddart’s apologetic introduction to his autobiographical account, that “perhaps, [...] the weight of academic convention is still inclined to discount personal experience and to suspect those who refuse to ‘leave themselves off the page’” (Graham 2013:9).

This chapter explores autoethnography as research framework that can potentially help to negotiate the tensions briefly referred to above. It does not seek to discuss methodological details, as autoethnography is much more than that, but rather aims at highlighting similar positionalities in terms of a broader research framework.

4.2. Lived experiences – the meeting “place” for practical theology and autoethnography

Practical theology is very much concerned with the “concrete and local” (Miller-McLemore 2012:7), the lived experiences of people (Ganzevoort 2009; Ganzevoort & Roeland 2014:96) in relational contexts (Osmer 2008:16; Miller-McLemore 2018) in the ordinary (Walton 2014:184); and it contributes to new insight and thinking, meaning, and liberating praxis that has relevance to people (Miller-McLemore 2012:7). As “hermeneutics of lived religion” (Ganzevoort 2009:3), it seeks to observe, understand, re-imagine, and re-design a transformed and transformative way of living – if one could reduce Osmer’s (2008) core tasks of practical theology in this way.

In the context of disrupted and disruptive experiences and phenomena, “moment[s] of praxis” (see Müller 2004:293) emerge that relate to embodied experiences in particular contexts. This experience of lived reality provides the space for a lived religion that seeks to makes sense, to instil hope, to serve. In these encounters and the reflexive processes that ensue, you find yourself in the realm of lived religion (Ganzevoort 2009; Ganzevoort & Roeland 2014:96) where you engage with the ordinary while grappling with and experiencing the sacred – the ordinary becoming the hermeneutical lense through which the world – and God – is understood and responded to. In this space possibilities beckon and potential and hope often emerge. My own experience as referred to earlier, of conflicting roles, identities, and emotions in the research process, and the subsequent realisation that an objective stance in the project is not possible, provided a space of promise where unfamiliar praxis could be encountered. After all, the “contextuality and complexity” of practical theology as field of study demand that we should be open to different methodologies and interpretative frameworks (Graham 2017:4).

Although concerned about subjectivity and emotional connectedness, similar to the scepticism of dominant positivistic research frameworks (Tomaselli 2016), the metaphor of the living human web (see Miller-McLemore 2018) used to describe practical theology provides a rationale for continued research in the intersectional space of ordinary human relations and personal experiences, ministry objectives and a research agenda that has a transformative praxis as an objective. In this embodied presence, described by Sari Hokkanen (2017:26) as inclusive of both emotion and cognition, and manifested in how one knows, reasons, and reflects in relation to the culture one finds oneself in, becomes a meaningful vantage point for the research. This, of course, can only come about through an intentional reflective praxis. Reflective praxis is, of course, much more than just “remembering” things, thinking about them, and recording them. Instead, it is about the meaning-making process that emanates from it and eventually informs and guides practice. According to Walton (2014:xii), “reflective processes are characterized by acute observation and analysis of roles and context. Reflexivity takes the critical work a step further and also interrogates the position of the ‘self’ who observes”. Encounters with the real-life experiences of people in a research process demand a “reflexive and situational embedded epistemology and methodology” (Müller 2011:3). This brings me to autoethnography as research framework.

4.3. Autoethnography: definition and overview

"Autoethnography in its most simplified definition is the study of the self" (Hughes & Pennington 2017), where "the self and field become one" (Coffey 2002:320), and the researcher themselves becomes the "subject of the study" (Ellis *et al.* 2011:273) in a social context of interest (Reed-Danahay 1997:9; Holt 2003; Hamilton *et al.* 2008:22; Scriven 2019:540). Its emphasis on human connectedness (Ellis and Bochner 2000:739; Doty 2010) resonates with our understanding of practical theology. In perhaps a more nuanced way, Ellis *et al.* (2011:273) define it as "an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)" and involve critical self-study (Méndez 2013:281; Hughes & Pennington 2017). It is thus not merely a way of writing about the self but entails a reflexive process that moves between experience and examining the self in context, whilst maintaining a "commitment to the actual" (Russel in Hamilton *et al.* 2008:22). As qualitative research approach, autoethnography is similar to ethnography, narrative inquiry, self-study, and hermeneutics, in the sense that each of these attempts to study and describe the nature of the "relationships between humans and their sociocultural contexts" (Hughes & Pennington 2017). Being grounded in postmodern thinking (Holt 2003:18; Wall 2006:146), it develops from the assumption "that reality is construed and shaped through the interaction between people and the environment in which they live" (Méndez 2013:280).

The term *autoethnography* was first coined by Raymond Firth in 1956 (Anderson 2006; Hughes & Pennington 2017) in his reflection on arguments between Jomo Kenyatta and Louise Leaky that centred around the claim to "insider" knowledge of Kikuyu customs, something both had reported on – Kenyata as an indigenous Kenyan person and Leaky as a person who grew up in Kenya but as a European. It was Kenyata's book *Facing Mount Kenya* (1938/1965) that was later recognised by David Hayano (1979) to be the first published autoethnography, a contribution credited as pivotal in "moving autoethnography beyond the debate" between Kenyata and Firth. In a way, this situates the development of autoethnography firmly in the African context.

Autoethnography, like practical theology (see Osmer 2011; Miller-McLemore 2012, 2018; Graham 2017; Pieterse 2017; Ganzevoort & Roeland 2018) underwent significant shifts since it first appeared on the social sciences research scene, and its development gained considerable momentum with the so-called "crisis of confidence" that marked the 1980s

as scholars sought “opportunities to transform social science” (Hayano 1979; Holt 2003:19; Butz & Besio 2009:1661-1664; Ellis *et al.* 2011:273, Hughes & Pennington 2017). Proponents of autoethnography “… wanted to concentrate on ways of producing meaningful, accessible, and evocative research grounded in personal experience, research that would sensitize readers to issues of identity politics, to experiences shrouded in silences, and to forms of representation that deepen our capacity to empathize with people who are different from us”, putting emphasis on the many ways in which “personal experience influences the research process” (Ellis *et al.* 2011:274). In contrast to conventional research approaches, autoethnography increasingly questions the assumption that the objective study of others is possible and argues for the acknowledgement that reality is socially constructed in the context of relationships, that knowledge and insight can be known in different ways, and that truth is less than absolute and objective. Its roots lie specifically with ethnography and more broadly within anthropology from which it developed just over 60 years ago. Several scholars documented the historical development of autoethnography (see Holt 2003; Anderson 2006; Butz & Besio 2009; Ellis *et al.* 2011), and the reader is referred to these works for detailed discussions on it.

Practical theology as discipline “... is [also] growing in confidence to state its own implicit values – such as by adopting forms of action research in which the location and subjectivity of the researcher and a commitment to broadly transformative, collaborative and egalitarian ends are clearly stated. This turn to reflexivity thus represents an attention to the contextual and autobiographical nature of practical theological knowledge. Yet it also signals an emerging emphasis on the everyday narratives and practices of faith, as they are read inductively for what they reveal as enactments of theological worlds of truth-claims ... This shift to practical theology as the ‘hermeneutics of lived religion’ ... may therefore, presage a further, long-term, relocation of practical theology moving beyond creedal, organized Christianity into the terrain of wider cultural practices” (Graham 2017:6).

The potential for autoethnography to critique conventional research approaches where objectivity is still viewed as the aim, and to provide a framework for the decolonising of practical theological research, seems encouraging (Ward 2017; Chawla & Atay 2018). Its ability to allow for the influence of personal experience on the research process, its way of sensitising readers to “issues of identity politics”, and the way it generates empathy

for people through various “forms of representation”, still serve as motivation for many scholars to pursue this kind of research and to advocate for its recognition (Ellis *et al.* 2011:274).

As suspicion continues to grow around the notion that “neutral, impersonal, and objective” research is possible, autoethnography embraces the “subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher’s influence on research”, creating the space for a different kind of interpretation and representation of people and their interactions within their contexts, as derived from critical analysis of the researcher’s own experiences within the community being researched (Ellis *et al.* 2011). The question on representation in research products is as much a concern for practical theology as it is for autoethnography, and current theological research must deal with this as we grapple with the “project” of decolonising research. With sustained western theological paradigms permeating theological research also in South Africa, ethical and moral questions remain about the “so-called facts and truths” (Hughes & Pennington 2017) that are presented about the “other” in research products. Autoethnography instead promotes a position whereby subjectivity through critical reflection, as well as the influence and emotions of the researcher, are allowed in both process and product of the research endeavour, representing a shift away from the so-called objective view on the researched other.

4.4. Autoethnography: process, product and form

Hayano (1979:99) suggested that autoethnography is not a “specific technique, method, or theory”, but rather “colour all these” during fieldwork. Ellis *et al.* (2011) and Hughes and Pennington (2017) describe it as both methodology and method, process and product, and as a distinct framework for research. This does not imply an indiscriminate eclectic research approach. The choice of methodology is after all a result of certain choices that the researcher makes based on her/his own position in terms of ontological epistemological considerations revealed in an already reflexive engagement (Butz & Besio 2009; Barton 2011; Ellis *et al.* 2011; Wall 2016; Pitard 2017). The different approaches to autoethnography and the “products” emanating from these are varied (Muncey 2005); and the “application” of autoethnography is found in various disciplines (see Wall 2006; Hamilton *et al.* 2008; Müller 2011; Barnard 2014; Deventer 2015; Strachan 2015; Eliastam 2016; Buys & Nogueira 2019; van den Berg 2020).

The product of autoethnographies appears to be intended as a "'thick description' of culture", similar to what is claimed in narrative work in practical theological research, with the purpose of helping "to facilitate understanding of a culture" (Ellis *et al.* 2011:277) and may take on various forms. These descriptions come because of a process of "discerning patterns of cultural experience" which are described with the aim of making the "personal experience meaningful and the cultural experience engaging" while at the same time trying to reach a larger, more diverse audience that might otherwise be missed by traditional research (Ellis *et al.* 2011:277). In generating such thick descriptions, it is not uncommon to include observations and information derived from more traditional research methods, such as interviews or questionnaires, something proponent of analytic autoethnography argue for fervently (for example, Anderson 2006). These "products" may take on the form of literary work, visual and performance arts, academic articles, personal reflections, memoirs, and autobiographies, fiction stories, and so on.

When speaking of autoethnography as a process, it can be described as a "retrospective" and "selective" writing endeavour where the experiences of the researcher and the community (the other in ethnography) provide material for analysis (Ellis *et al.* 2011:274). This is only possible due to the "insider" status of the researcher. Autoethnography may be presented in different forms, for example, narrative ethnographies, reflexive, dyadic interviews, reflexive ethnographies, layered accounts, interactive interviews, community autoethnographies, co-constructed narratives, and personal narratives (Ellis *et al.* 2011:278-9).

Hughes and Pennington (2017), in agreement with numerous scholars, succeed in showing autoethnographic research's alignment with various research paradigms, such as ethnography, narrative inquiry, self-study, hermeneutics, social critical theory and research, phenomenology, grounded theory, symbolic interactionism and action research. One aspect that all of these seem to have in common is for autoethnography to be a transformative research framework, as has also been argued by Dwayne Custer (2014), which it shares with practical theology in general. All these "types of research" are fully acknowledged and "employed" in practical theology (Osmer 2011; Graham 2013 2017; Pieterse 2017; Louw 2018). Practical theological research over the years has also embraced the interpretive and postmodern stance of qualitative research, with an increased awareness and inclusion of postfoundational paradigms.

Two main strands of autoethnography are distinguished, namely evocative and analytic autoethnography. The debate is ongoing for a choice between a more "narrative, emotional, therapeutic, and self-focussed as opposed to [a] theoretical, analytical, and scholarly" form of autoethnography (Wall 2016:2). Proponents of the former (evocative autoethnography) argue their preference is based on autoethnography being more attuned with the postmodern paradigm, including the notion that there are multiple ways of knowing, and they hence "advocate for an evocative, narrative form of autoethnography" (Wall 2016:2). Others, such as Anderson (2006) advocate for an approach focused on writing *and* analysis (analytic autoethnography) rather than the more "emotionally-tuned" process of introspectively relating the researcher's feeling and experiences. Still others, for example Foley (2002), argue for "reflexive epistemological and narrative practice" in autoethnography to address some of the tension in the genre, whereas Wall (2016) argues for a moderate approach to autoethnography somewhere on the spectrum between the opposite extremes of evocative and analytic autoethnography.

Leon Anderson (2006:373-395) argues for a more analytical approach to autoethnography. His concerns stem from the fact that the "[d]ominance of evocative autoethnography has obscured recognition of the compatibility of autoethnographic research with more traditional ethnographic practices" (Anderson 2006:273). He proposes a framework for analytic autoethnography which, in his view, might provide some correction to this. The key features of this are (Anderson 2006:378-390):

- Complete member researcher (CMR) status – where the "researcher is a complete member in the social world under study".
- Analytic reflexivity with an awareness of the reciprocal influence between researcher and the social context under study.
- Narrative visibility of the researcher's self where "enhanced textual visibility" accounts for the researcher's dual role of both "insider" and researcher.
- Dialogue with informants beyond the self where this conversation with "data" and "others" mitigates the potential for "self-absorption".
- Commitment to theoretical analysis which allows to empirical information to lead to greater insight, understanding and "theoretical development, refinement, and extension".

Sarah Wall (2016:2) argues for a more moderate approach to evaluating autoethnography where "innovation, imagination, and the representation of a range of

voices in qualitative inquiry" is allowed, "while also sustaining confidence in the quality, rigor, and usefulness of academic research", a position somewhere in the "middle" of evocative and analytic autoethnography. Such position, she argues would have clarity in purpose, make room for analysis, and attend to relevant ethical concerns (Wall 2016:5).

4.5. Positioning and reflexivity

A key feature of autoethnography has to do with the ability of the researcher to identify with the so-called study population and hence some prior "knowledge of the people their culture and language, as well as the ability to be accepted to some degree" as part of this group, is assumed (Hayano 1979; Holt 2003; Butz & Besio 2009; Doty 2010; Ellis *et al.* 2011; Scriven 2018). How this identification is assumed, varies between researchers.

Numerous authors (see Osmer 2008; Ganzevoort 2011; Osmer 2011; Cahalan & Mikoski 2014; Root 2014; Graham 2017; Ganzevoort & Roeland 2018; Louw 2018) in their reflections on practical theology, affirm the embodied presence of the practical theologian in ministry, research, and ordinary communal life. Elaine Graham (2017:1) speaks of "the convergence of 'life' and 'work'" in her autobiographical reflection on the development of practical theology. It is especially her references to the "turn to the self" in practical theology, and to practical theology as "practical wisdom" that acknowledges the legitimacy of "theologically significant" knowledge arising from the "realms of practice and experience" as well as the reflexive, critical self, that resonates with my understanding of an autoethnographic approach in practical theology research. On the latter, Graham (2017:5) speaks of the "reflexive turn" as the greater turn in practical theological research and involves a "rigorous and self-critical" approach to research with a "greater degree of transparency on the part of the researcher".

Autoethnography shares with narrative approaches in practical theology the leaning towards a "reflexive and situational embedded epistemology and methodology" (Müller 2011:3) as well as the potential for the recounting of our storied lived experiences to provide an outlet for previously untold narratives and the space for familiar ones to be re-interpreted (Mouton 2016:310). After all, one cannot ignore the "'storied' and hermeneutical nature of human culture" (Graham 2017:5).

When considering autoethnography as viable research framework for practical theology, "[i]t is not about reducing practical theology to autobiography but seeing how our own standpoints and concerns have informed our intellectual and academic interest, and *vice versa*. In the interest of integrity and transparency, the self as researcher, as one who brings particular presuppositions, questions and interests, must be prepared to 'write themselves in' to the text of their research" (Graham 2017:5). This, Graham (2017:5) contends, "involves being aware of one's own pre-commitments, and how the practice of research may in themselves be challenging or reshaping one's own relationships to the field. It entails more than simply 'reflecting' in the sense of thinking deeply about something, but identifying how we are simultaneously both the subjects and the objects of our own experience", and through it "the practice of opening that out to scrutiny – journaling, autoethnography, spiritual life writing – become part and parcel of the researcher's tool-kit" (Walton 2014:xxxi-xxxiii).

Hayano (1979:102-103) refers to the concept of "ethnographic reflexivity" as being inherently part of autoethnography and considers it an important contribution in the sense that both insider knowledge and specialised knowledge merge to offer deeper insight into a community, but also to have the advantage to enhances theory creation. This aspect also proved to be valuable in ministry. On the one hand, the outcome of reflexivity from the insider position enhances empathy and consequently dialogue and interaction, but on the other hand, it can also lead to reciprocal resistance.

Issues of embodiment, positioning and reflexivity form core elements of an autoethnographic approach and are emphasised by various authors. Hokkanen (2017) extensively discusses the influence of the "embodied, emotional experiences" of the researcher in the research process and outcomes. Unlike traditional ethnography, Hokkannen (2017:26) argues, embodiment and reflexivity are about identity and not merely as a type of reflection that serves as a control feature. Instead, they deal with the multiple, and often conflicting, identities of the researcher in the process as well as how the researcher's experiences as member of the social world being studied affect the research design, process and outcomes. These arguments are also advanced by others (see Wall 2006; Butz & Besio 2009; Barton 2011; Ellis *et al.* 2011; Pitard 2017). Both Hokkanen (2017) and Pitard (2017) argue the need for the researcher to have clarity regarding their own positioning, in terms of the multiplicity of identities and their own philosophical stance in terms of ontology and epistemology and how these are shaped

by their own life experiences. Ultimately, they propose, this has significant impact on the choice of study and the methodological framework selected. Tone Kaufman (2015) raises similar issues as being important to practical theological research as “our underlying normative values impact the entire research process” (Kaufman 2015:91), demanding a reflexivity in the process to moderate potential negative or “unhelpful” impacts on the research process and its results.

In my own way, I experienced a somewhat “personal reflexive turn” as I dealt with the frustrations of a research project that became muddled in personal relations and historical connections, and which at some point was going nowhere. In questioning my own position, role, and preconceived ideas in this process, such a “reflexive turn” slowly started to happen.

4.6. Critique against Autoethnography

As research framework and methodology, autoethnography is still facing an uphill battle in terms of its legitimacy amongst the more traditional research frameworks. The insistence of autoethnography on the centrality of the “self” in the research process has in the past led to it being “criticized for being self-indulgent, narcissistic, introspective, and individualized” (Wall 2016:1). This is especially directed to the more evocative nature of autoethnography, where critics warn about the dominant presence of the researcher in the autoethnographic process and product. Because of how data is gathered – from the subjective experiences of the researcher – and presented as artistically augmented narratives, concerns are raised concerning the rigour of the research. Several scholars also raise ethical concerns that have to do with the representation of both the self and the other and the associated risks (Hayano 1979:102; Ellis *et al.* 2001:281; Anderson 2006; Atkinson 2006; Vryan 2006; Shim 2018). The researcher can hardly write themselves into autoethnographic research without also implicating significant others; and this raises the issue of relational ethics. This can be dealt with by getting informed consent, writing collaborative autoethnographies, providing an opportunity to those implicated in the autoethnographic accounts to review the research product and to provide inputs that are incorporated in the final product, or by augmenting details of narratives sufficiently to be able to mask the identities of those featuring in those narratives.

In addition to the above, issues of reliability, generalisation and validity are also raised as concerns for autoethnographic research (e.g., Ellis *et al.* 2011:282 and Le Roux

2017:195-207). This is because narrative truth is often valued based on the effects of a story. In autoethnography however, Ellis *et al.* (2011:282) argue, the credibility of the researcher/narrator/writer serves as proxy for reliability and that it is rather "verisimilitude" that is aimed for, instead of objective truth. In terms of generalisability there is a sense that what is important is whether the product of autoethnography speaks to the "reader" and illuminates cultural processes that was previously unknown or perhaps obscured.

Often, critique about autoethnography is based on criteria applied either to ethnography or to autobiographies, and some argue that these are not entirely applicable to autoethnography (see Ellis *et al.* 2011). On the criticism regarding a perceived lack of rigour and an emphasis on the aesthetic, emotional and therapeutic, Ellis *et al.* (2011:283) point out that pitting these against expected standards from traditional research misses the point that "autoethnography as method, attempts to disrupt the binary of science and art", and may lead to missing key questions such as "who is the reader; how are they affected by what they read, and how can the conversation continue?" (Ellis *et al.* 2011:284). In the end, autoethnography is more concerned about the social-justice nature of what they do than with accuracy as "the goal is to produce analytical, accessible texts, that change us and the world we live in for the better" (Ellis *et al.* 2011:285).

4.7. Conclusion: is there a place for autoethnography as research framework within practical theology research for me?

I am only a novice trying to figure out how autoethnography may enrich my own research within practical theology; hoping that other scholars may benefit from this process. However, this is a framework that adequately intersects with practical theological research on ontological and epistemological grounds, whilst its possibilities as methodical framework similarly places a high premium on reflexivity, embodiment, lived reality and, in practical theological terms, lived religion. Autoethnography, although relying heavily on the subjective and emotional connection and involvement of the researcher, provides space for the voices of the community – the usual "other" – to feature in both process and product. Driven by a postmodern paradigm and a strong social justice ethic, the framework correlates well with key drivers in practical theological research processes and products.

Despite criticism, the subjective and personal involvement to a community can lead to a deeper understanding and justice imperative. It remains necessary however, at least for

the researcher, that there is clarity in roles and purpose in the research process in order to strive for some sense of neutrality. When considering the objective/subjective polarity in a combined ministry and research scenario, the reality is that pastors (practical theologians) often find themselves as the drivers of the process to develop a sense of need for a transformation agenda and to facilitate the actualisation of such agenda. As part of the broader ethnographic approach, more empirical and analytic work is not excluded when an autoethnographic approach is followed. My own background in the natural sciences makes me more inclined to align with an analytic approach. However, issues of identity, justice and transformation being experienced in the ordinary – the realms of practical theology – are often served better through a subjective and emotive representation of social contexts. The reflexive nature and emphasis on social transformation of autoethnography aligns well with practical theology's own commitment to a theory-praxis relationship that builds towards understanding and positively impacting the real lived experiences of people.

Although this chapter takes a more generalised and theoretical approach, I believe it demonstrates, to some extent, the alignment and relevance of autoethnography with practical theology research. Numerous examples already exist of its application in practical theology, and its potential to question dominant western research paradigms may make it especially valuable as we attempt to decolonise and "Africanise" our own theological research.

5. CHAPTER 5 – A promise of rain: facing encounters with trauma and disruption[15,16]

5.1. Introduction

The use the term “disruptive” here is not intended to be in opposition to the concept of trauma, but to capture the net effect of those experiences, small or big, that disrupt the experience and understanding of people’s lived realities. It includes those experiences that have the potential to challenge people’s worldview, and ability to make sense of life in the context of these experiences, which may affect their normal functioning.

The research was done primarily in the Krönlein congregation of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA). Krönlein is a predominantly Afrikaans-speaking neighbourhood in Keetmanshoop, southern Namibia. The research covers the period between 2018 and 2019 primarily. The objectives of this study were directed by those of the research questions for this project[17]. This article focuses on the fourth research question, which relates to understanding the type of traumatic or disruptive experiences people had and how it affects them. The focus was not on the prevalence of traumatic experiences, but rather to reflect on the types of experiences reported and how people respond to them.

5.2. Methodological approach

The study falls within the field of practical theology and as such focuses on describing life in terms of the “local”, “concrete” and “embodied” existence constituting our lived realities and providing context for our lived religious experiences (Cahalan & Mikoski 2014; Ganzevoort 2009; Ganzevoort and Roeland 2014; Graham 2013 2017; Miller-McLemore 2011 2018; Osmer 2008, 2011; v d Berg 2020). The so-called “reflexive turn” in practical theology (Graham 2017) presupposes the recognition and validation of values such as subjectivity and contextuality (Graham 2017; Walton 2014), which this study

[15] Mouton, D. P. 2022b. *A promise of rain – facing encounters with trauma and disruption.* Unpublished manuscript

[16] **Primary Research Question:** How can congregations be empowered to face issues of trauma and disruption? **Article 1: Secondary Research Question 1** - What do we understand by a community-oriented approach to pastoral care? **Article 2: Secondary Research Question 2** - Can the narratives/stories of people strengthen their ability to face experiences of trauma and disruption and provide a hopeful outlook on the future? **Article 3: Secondary Research Question 3** – How can the role, position, and influence of the practical theologian as practitioner (minister) and researcher be understood with regard to research and praxis in a congregational pastoral approach to issues of trauma and disruption? **Article 4: Secondary Research Question 4** - What are some of the traumatic and disruptive experiences people and communities are faced with? **Article 5: Secondary Research Question 5** - What could a possible congregational pastoral ministry approach to issues of trauma and healing look like?

[17] **Article 4: Secondary Research Question 4** - What are some of the traumatic and disruptive experiences people and communities are faced with?

aimed to embody. The reflexive process holds in creative tension the interplay between practice and theory, facilitating a hermeneutical process of meaning-making with (hopefully) a resultant emergence of new theory and practices, through a hopeful re-imagination of reality. Underpinning the research project is the four-fold tasks of practical theology used by Richard R Osmer (2008), as a framework that "seeks to observe, understand, re-imagine, and re-design a transformed and transformative way of living".

Following a hermeneutic-phenomenological approach (Nieuwenhuis 2007:119; Van Manen 2007:11-30), the study falls within qualitative research, and particularly within a social constructionist and interpretive paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln 1994; Terre Blanch & Durrheim 2006:6, 277-278; Nieuwenhuis 2007; Kratochwil 2008). Key to the social constructionist approach in qualitative research is that knowledge is socially constructed and hence one cannot truly understand human life from an "outside" and objective stance – human life is known from within (Nieuwenhuis 2007:54). In such a perspective the researcher can then not truly detach from a community she/he researches. "A *hermeneutical understanding* is an understanding wherein one assesses meaning within a systemic network of dynamic relationships" and "is an attempt to understand texts or phenomena, including people, within contexts" (Louw 2011*b*:155). Van Manen (1984:39) argues that the process of '"[d]oing" [p]henomenological [r]esearch and [w]riting' include at least the following:"… turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world; … investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it; … reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon; … describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting".

The analysis is based on data collected during 2018 and 2019 through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and narrative discussions, as well as counselling interventions. Ethical clearance for these was obtained from the University of the Free State. However, reflective notes collected during the entire period of my ministry in the congregation, i.e., 2015 to 2022, were also used in the analysis here. These developed from both the research process and ministry engagements and contain rich information on people's experiences of and responses to disruptive events. The data were evaluated for specific themes in terms of impacts from and responses to disruptive experiences, and some of those will be discussed in this article (chapter). Although research participants/collaborators were primarily from the congregation, some were from outside the congregation, including the local clergy who participated. Collaboration was on a

voluntary basis in response to a general invitation to the congregation and local clergy. Individuals who sought pastoral counselling from me, as a minister and researcher, were also invited to participate in the research. Unfortunately, very few people eventually completed the questionnaires or participated in semi-structured interviews. Data discussed here included that from questionnaires and semi-structured interviews and narrative engagements, pastoral counselling engagements as well as field and reflective notes compiled during the entire period of ministry in the congregation. Every effort is made to protect the identity of the people in this article (chapter).

Reflections on my own responses and positionality[18] during the research and ministry encounters formed an integral part of the research process. Understanding these in terms of my own positionality and how that affected my understanding of the culture of the community, provided further insight into people's experiences and responses to disruption and trauma, while at the same time allowing for my own story to intersect with that of the community. Heather Walton (2014:51) argues that reflective journaling is an integral part of the ethnographic research process. Important aspects of such journaling include reflecting on certain experiences, making sense of these to improve understanding and helping evaluate pastoral responses with the hope that it would inform future responses (Walton 2014:45). This also seems to align well with Van Manen's understanding of phenomenological research and writing (Van Manen 1984:39). For this project, reflections were recorded in journal entries and other reflective notes and included correspondence addressed to the congregation (my "letters to the congregation") which was not intended for dissemination. Instead, it served the purpose of me penning down my own emotions in the face of struggles related to pastoral challenges and ministry in the congregation. On the one hand, it served as a tool to "release" these emotions in a safe space, but on the other hand, it provided a space for finding language for what I observed and for my own responses to it, leading to greater insight in the end. Hence the importance for me to include these as "data sources" for this article (chapter). Being part of the community and its history made it challenging to separate the research process from that of normal ministry interactions and

[18] In the understanding of S Hokannen (2017), positionality (and embodiment) in the research process has to do with the researcher's multiple and often conflicting identities and how that affect the research process becomes an important consideration throughout (Pitard 2017). This emanates not only from her/his current role in and relationship with the community being studied, but also past experiences that informs her/his epistemological and ontological departure point. Understanding about what informs underlying philosophies, choices, norms, and values in the research process is an important outcome of reflexivity then (Kaufman 2015). See also Mouton (2022) for a slightly more expanded discussion on this in relation to my overall research project. In the context of this study, it also holds some of the understanding derived from autoethnography, namely that of being an insider of the culture being studied, as I grew up in the community referred to in this paper.

engagements, as my relationship with this community increasingly infringed on the idea of objective research, making an intentional reflective process even more important for the project. Reflective practices also assisted in dealing with my own encounters with traumatic and disruptive experiences from the past, creating a deeper understanding and empathy for my own responses as well as that of congregants and research collaborators.

The reflexive process emanating from this often brought my own past experiences of trauma and disruption to the fore and helped me identify and understand some of my own biases and responses in ministry and during the research process. It further facilitated a shift to a more empathetic disposition in pastoral engagements. Through this project, I came to realize that meaningful analysis requires that I embrace the fact that the hermeneutical process is by nature seated within me – as a subjective being – and takes place within the confines of my own experiences, positionality, and worldview. Acknowledging this allows for "opening-up" to various interpretative and pastoral response possibilities. Furthermore, I learned that I could not discuss disruptive experiences and trauma as something removed from myself. In fact, – I was reminded through this project – these are not some phenomena "out there", but rather something within which I am embedded in myself – to an extent framed and formed by it.

5.3. A promise of rain – the space between promise and fulfilment

In the south of Namibia, it is not uncommon to frequently experience an apparently intense build-up of clouds that seems to hold a real promise of rain. The dark cumulonimbus clouds, sweltering heat, and sense of humidity in the air, could convince any visitor of the almost certainty of an imminent shower. Those who live here however, know better. Too often these clouds, sometimes complete with thunder and lighting, are swiftly pushed away by strong winds in the upper air, sometimes accompanied by surface winds that may cause suffocating dust storms. Just as quickly as these clouds initially appear, it can disappear. This pattern can go on intermittently for weeks before any drop reaches the dry and dusty earth. Those familiar with the deceptive summer skies of southern Namibia, will understand this metaphor.

In a way - for me at least - this metaphor communicates something of the sense of disappointment and dissatisfaction, stemming from a lingering promise that appears unable to deliver, and extends to summarize something of my appraisal of people's (and my own) journey with recovering from traumatic and disruptive experiences. It symbolizes

the unfulfilled yearning for refreshment, for a “cooling down” that rehydrates body and soul. Yet, living with such sense of unfulfilled promise, is somehow made bearable by the “hopeful waiting” for recourse even if only through the illusion of an imminent “downpour”. This “space between promise and fulfilment” can be an agonizing one where uncertainty around the timing and expression of fulfilment really wears the spirit down. In this in-betweenness meaning is not concrete or well-defined, hope remains tentative, expectancy somewhat suppressed, and yet one keeps looking up … hoping against hope. It reminds of the yearning people have for reprieve amidst the often disruptive and chaotic rhythms of life, in the dry and inhospitable space between promise and fulfilment where the call to God is but expressed in the silence of a tentative and pleading – yet sceptical – gaze to the skies. In this space the contradiction of disclosure (to talk about it) and concealment or suppression (to hide or deny it) of the disruptive and traumatic experience is in constant battle (Van der Merwe & Gobodo-Madikizela 2007:viii) as people search for ways to integrate their experiences and to make sense of the new reality that they call life. “Trauma has been described as the ’undoing of the self‘, and as loss: loss of control, loss of one’s identity, loss of the ability to remember, and loss of language to describe the horrific events” (Van der Merwe & Gobodo-Madikizela 2007:vii), and this is probably most profoundly felt in this in-between space of nothingness. Han van den Blink (2008:31) describes trauma as a “an extremely distressing and harrowing personal or communal experience that exceeds our normal abilities to cope”, leaving “us feeling overwhelmed, emotionally flooded, disoriented, unsure of ourselves, no longer able to trust others or our ability to perceive reality correctly”.

As one deals with the pain and incomprehensibility of traumatic and disruptive experiences, and the outright inability to respond to these, a search for relief, help… any help… deliverance culminates. Often there would be hopeful signs... yet resolve can remain distant. This can leave a person with a greater sense of disillusionment, disappointment, hopelessness and helplessness, frustration, and anger against and because of our own seemingly powerlessness to respond. This is what it feels like to live with trauma and the aftermath of disruptive experiences. It leaves your life disrupted and turned up-side-down, strips your ability to make sense, shake your foundations, mock, and shatter your assumptions about life, dilute that which gives meaning to your existence, leaving you with little sense of agency … only hopelessness, helplessness and deeply frustrated. The sense of disempowerment remains part of the life with trauma

unless such experiences are adequately internalized and resolved (Van der Merwe & Gobodo-Madikizela 2007:viii).

The dynamics of trauma have been discussed my numerous scholars (Kleber, Figley & Gersons 1995; Freedy & Donkervoet 1997; Suedfeld 1997; Figley 1999; Ganzevoort 2000, 2009 & 2011; Veerman & Ganzevoort 2001; Alexander *et al*. 2004; Audergon 2004; Hutchison & Bleiker 2008 and Lopez 2011). Trauma (and disruption) is not limited to the individual (Kleber, Figley & Gersons 1995:1; Suedfeld 1997; Ganzevoort 2000; Veerman & Ganzevoort 2001; Alexander et al. 2004; Audergon 2004; Lopez 2011). It also does not occur in a vacuum but has definite "societal and cultural dimensions" and the "circumstances determine the intensity and severity of the consequences of extreme life events" (Kleber, Figley & Gersons 1995:1-4). Perceptions about how it is perceived or appraised, its impact on people, and what an appropriate response or coping strategy to it should look like is very much framed and defined by the cultural context within which it is experienced and dealt with (Kleber, Figley & Gersons 1995:4). Motsi and Masango (2012) argue that this is especially true for African people and communities, where "a person is part of the bigger whole". They use the term *psychosocial crises* to define and describe trauma in the "African socio-centric perspective using the African worldview" and lived experiences. Traumatic and disruptive experiences are then never merely an individual experience and crisis, but rather a communal one that affects the network of relations within which a person experiences life. The process then of making sense of and responding adequately to such experiences takes place in the context of relationships and community. This is however not always that straight forward. Issues of cultural taboos, stigmatisation, judging and exclusion can be often playing a role based on the collective appraisal of such crises. Perhaps the two-tier effect of traumatic and disruptive events, i.e. the event itself and the subsequent "destruction of community life and loss of social contacts" (Kleber, Figley & Gersons 1995:4) that often occurs, makes "a community-based and culturally sensitive approach" (Motsi & Masango 2012) when dealing with the effects of traumatic and disruptive experiences even more crucial (see also Kleber, Figley & Gersons 1995:6). Because of their sensitivity to the specific contextualities of African communities, Motsi and Masango (2012) argue for an expansion of the aspects of traumatisation as postulated by Carlton *et al* (In Motsi & Masango 2012). In addition to "(1) the perception of the event as having a highly negative valence, (2) the suddenness of the experience, (3) the inability of the individual or group to control the event and (4) the subsequent threat to the individual's physical safety and psychic

integrity", they argue for the inclusion of "[(5)] the unavoidability of the event and [(6)] the threat to life or destruction of property or possessions" as aspects of traumatisation that relate to specific African experiences. Considering the importance of community in African cultures, as well as in African pastoral care, one must also add the risk to community well-being to this.

Just as in the case of the "promise of rain" in southern Namibia, the journey with trauma and disruption often is one of hoping against hope... living with the promise of restoration, yet never knowing if or when it will indeed materialize… living in the often-agonizing in-between space between promise and fulfilment.

5.4. Results and discussion

In this section, the results of the study into experiences of disruption and trauma are presented. Data used for the discussion were derived from questionnaires, field notes, narrative engagements, and reflective notes. These were scrutinized for recurring themes in terms of traumatic and disruptive experiences. See Table 1 for an overview of the experiences that were prominent during engagements.

The understanding of traumatic and disruptive experiences used in this article, emphasises the ability of such experiences to shake the foundations of people's lives and that which gives meaning to their lives. When the meaning of life is challenged, necessitating the revisiting of the tenets of people's belief systems and that which give meaning to their life, the issue becomes a spiritual one. For this reason, McCall (2004:xiii), for instance, refers to grief work as being spiritual. Park, Currier, Harris, and Slattery (2017:3) share this view in relation to trauma and highlight the role of spirituality in both the experience of and the process of dealing with trauma. Han van den Bink (2008:31) argues for a "healthy spirituality" that is not compartmentalized but draws on both the insights from human sciences and "a coherent theology or philosophy", which I argue is necessary to make sense of traumatic experience in the context of lived realities of people. Similar ideas about the relationship between spirituality and coping with trauma are advanced by Mary Patricia van Hook (2016:7-25). When looking for overarching themes in the data, this understanding was used to scrutinize the data for experiences that appear to have presented significant spiritual and existential crises.

Several broad experiences emerged as having had significant impacts on the lives of participants. These are listed in Table 1 which also contains some condensed notes on it. For this article the following will be attended to: experiences related to domestic abuse, experiences of a sexual nature, experiences related to crime and violence, the experience of excommunication, experiences of loss. These featured strongly in pastoral counselling sessions during my time in the congregation, either as the primary reason for requesting counselling or as an emergent theme during counselling, and other pastoral engagements. These are largely in line with my own experiences of and observations in this community over the years. However, they did not emerge primarily because it is so common – being mindful that the sample size was small – but mainly because of the significantly negative and debilitating effects of it and the daily struggle of participants to deal with it in a meaningful way.

A detailed discussion on the challenges of loss and bereavement will receive preference here, mainly as it also featured strongly in my own reflective processes during the study due to my own journey with it. On the other hand, some of the themes emerging are so thick and laden that one would hardly be able to do justice to it in "pretending" to provide a thorough discussion on it. The other themes will be discussed in brief, including a relatively short description of the experience, how it affected the person(s) and how they responded to these. A discussion on emerging themes and "lessons" will conclude this section.

5.4.1. Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse was reported by female participants only and included experiences of physical, emotional, verbal, and financial abuse, which were often associated with alcohol abuse, with the male partner or husband as the primary perpetrator. In at least one case a male participant connected his abusive habit to his own childhood experience of domestic abuse, which is in line with arguments forwarded by Moylan, Herrenkohl, Sousa, Tajima, Herrenkohl and Russo (2010:59-61); Abramsky, Watts, Garcia-Moreno, Devries, Kiss, Ellsberg, Jansen, and Heise (2011:14-16) relating higher risk outcomes in children, including violent behaviour, to exposure to violence and abuse, which is often perpetuated later in life. For many, this is not a once-off experience, but an on-going trauma as they often do not know when the next "outburst" would be.

On a psychological and emotional level, these experiences appear to lead to feelings of shame, fear and anxiety, increased lack of agency and self-esteem, depression, sadness. Some have reported being torn between their anger and desire to leave, and their love for their partners and children, forever hoping that it will one day change. This leaves them feeling trapped and helpless. Anger and bitterness, often also towards family and friends who seem not to intervene, also appear to be common. Despite this, two participants expressed that they feel sad and sorry for their partners, partly because they see them wither away as a result of their substance abuse and associated abusive behaviour, and even want to protect them from being judged by others. For some of the participants, there appears to be no way out and they learn to live with this. The sense of learned helplessness, muddied with the notion by some that this is “their cross to bear”, prevents them to leave these relationships. Sometimes feelings of anger towards themselves have been expressed because of this. One woman expressed resentment towards her children, despite truly living with them, as she narrated that she only stays in her marriage for their sake as they would not be able to survive financially. Yet another stated that her children resent her for remaining in the marriage. Feelings of guilt and regret often surface, coupled with constant self-doubt as some of the women feel, or are made to feel, that they may be doing something to trigger the abuse. Children also experience a range of psycho-spiritual effects, manifested most often in deviant behaviours, poor performance at school and troubled relationships. These are consistent with experiences reported in other studies (Brade and Bent-Goodley 2009:430-448; Davies and Dreyer 2014 :1-8; LaMothe 2014:1-17). In addition to also highlighting the above, Crawford, Liebling-Kalifani and Hill (2009:69-78), through a study on women’s experiences of domestic abuse, found that their identity and sense of self is strongly correlated with cultural and societal perspective, which may intensify negative emotions of guilt and shame for instance. Similar to what these authors found (:77), participants also shared stories of how having a purpose, whether it be looking after the children, having a job or other meaningful commitments, contribute to their sense of self and their resilience within the situation.

On a religious-spiritual level, many questions and issues arise. Perceptions that God may be punishing them, or that He may have turned his back on them keep nagging. Also, where such abuse is publicly known or in some ways reported to church leaders and they do not respond, questions about the caring nature and the witness of the church arise, and victims then find it increasingly difficult to maintain their relationships with God and

the faith community. The use of Scripture to put pressure on victims to forgive and to abandon any plans for a divorce, leave victims feeling hard done, trapped and angry. Patriarchal and conservative readings of the Bible contribute to some of the women remaining silent about the abuse they experience, something that has also been reported by PonTell (2011:19, 61). Psychospiritual challenges reported are not uncommon. Brade and Bent-Goodley (2009:439-442), in a study amongst African American clergy, found that assistance in dealing with such psycho-spiritual effects may often not be offered due to perceptions that domestic abuse is a private matter or even due to the denial of such experiences. Despite this, all still hold on to the idea that somehow God will carry them through, and they try to maintain the practices of prayer and Bible reading to garner strength and encouragement. Where hope is lost the outlook on life is generally bleak and the person then simply "exists", mechanically going on with daily routines. Personally, I found it very challenging to understand why a person would choose to remain in an abusive relationship, but realize that, as the literature suggest, the complex interplay between individual needs and challenges and that of the family, coupled with certain religious beliefs, all work together to convince people to maintain the status quo (Zust, Housley and Klatke 2017). Positive perceptions about the caring nature of faith communities and the maintaining of spiritual practices seem to improve coping skills and resilience for women experiencing domestic abuse (Hunt 2001:71-85; Rotunda, Williamson and Penfold 2004:353-365; Brade and Bent-Goodley 2009:430-448; PonTell 2011).

5.4.2. Experiences of violence, sexual harassment, sexual abuse, and rape

Sexual abuse reported during the study includes partner sexual, sexual harassment under various conditions, sexual abuse by family members and acquaintances, and rape, both by known and unknown persons. The impact of sexual abuse was generally reported as intense and shattering. Feelings of hurt, shame, humiliation, fear and anxiety, resulting from this, were reported. Worries about being impregnated or infected with HIV persisted, despite negative test results for those who did get tested. Participants who were victims of sexual abuse and violence recalled being extremely confused and numb as the initial reality of their ordeal sank in. Depression, sadness, withdrawal, anger, bitterness and even hate are some of the emotional responses reported. These appear to be consistent with experiences and responses reported for instance by Burgess (1983:97-113), Motsi and Masango (2012:1-8), Glanville and Dreyer (2013:1-12), Tannura (2014:247-256) and Rudolfsson and Tidefors (2015:453-467).

Victims seem to struggle with the question of their own role in their ordeal. They often wonder whether they could have prevented the incident or even whether they may have done something that could have led to the perpetrator feeling entitled to violate them. Sometimes they hold on to a version of the narrative about the incident that leaves them blaming themselves, and even experiencing self-hate, a phenomenon also discussed by Moor and Farchi (2011:447-460), amongst others (Dawtry, Cozzolino and Callan 2019. One participant referred to herself as “used goods” which is not good enough for a decent man, leading to intermittent urges to “give herself to all men”. She had become ugly, dirty, and worthless to herself. As she had lost her virginity, she felt that she was not a woman anymore. These are just some of the symptomatic behaviours of a complicated psychological condition referred to by some as rape trauma syndrome (Burgess and Holmstrom 1974:981-986; Burgess 1983:97-113; Tanura 2014; Glanville and Dreyer 2013:1-12 and Burgess 2018:239-245). Comments and questions such as “you should have or shouldn’t have”, “what were you doing there?”, “why did you go there and stay out so late?”, “why did you take that route?”, “why did you go with him/they?”, “did you try to fight him off”, “did you perhaps give him the wrong impression”, “maybe it is because of your attitude/clothing/mannerisms/over-friendliness”, “I told you not to go/stay away from those people or places”, makes the experiences of guilt, judgement, and blame unbearably real for victims and complicate the resultant trauma even more.

Rape victims and/or survivors are often faced with spiritual struggles, questioning God or asking why it had to happen to them (Washburn 2003:236-241). Questions about God’s love, care, protection, and God’s apparent inability or unwillingness to prevent such violations are often at the forefront and victims struggle, amongst many other questions, sometimes give rise to anger towards God. This in turn brings its own set of guilt and shame. One person even believed that the whole ordeal was God punishing her and hence all this was her fault. Due to issues of mistrust and fear of judgement, victims rarely feel that they can approach the faith community for assistance. Guilt feelings about the inability to forgive also complicate the process of dealing with the impacts of rape and other sexual violations. A sense of helplessness also creeps in when legal processes become drawn out and insensitive in such a way that the victim feel violated and vulnerable even more. Table 1 include more of the effects of trauma from sexual abuse and violence.

Counselling victims of sexual violence is very challenging. Two things especially confronted me: One being a male trying to assist female victims. The other being the apparent fixation on details of the event or events, to the extent that it sometimes made me feel uncomfortable. Although these are not discussed at length here, I have learned that (1) I must own up to my male identity and what it represents in a society plagued with gender-based violence, and (2) the apparent fixation on the details of the event served on the one hand as a reminder that it actually happened. Forgetting any detail may introduce further doubt, especially when comments and questions from others can already make a person questioning the validity and reliability of the memories of such an experience. The reality is that memory is mostly fragmented after traumatic experiences (Crespo and Fernández-Lansac 2016), and as this is continuously questioned there might be a heightened sense to repeat the ordeal in order to verify the details each time.

Experiences of crime and general violence reported include both actual violence and threats of violence, and were experienced in home, family, workplace, community, and church. Incidents reported on related to random attacks, arguments that became violent, and when a crime was committed. Fear and anxiety after such experiences were reported. Depression, compulsive safety habits, a sense of one's privacy being violated, and feeling unsafe were reported by at least one participant who were harmed during a house burglary. Those who reported having had traumatic experiences related to a criminal activity or violence mentioned changed and disturbed sleeping patterns and nightmares after the incidents. Anger, bitterness and the inability to forgive seem to complicate the recovery process in some cases.

5.4.3. Experiences of loss

Different kinds of losses were reported, mostly in relation to having lost someone to death. This included close family, friends, colleagues and even acquaintances and ex-partners.

This includes losing a loved one, loss of employment, loss through the disintegration of significant relationships including divorce, as well as the loss of possessions, valuable both in monetary terms and for sentimental reasons. Other losses that were mentioned include that of health, trust, dignity, safety and security, self-worth, and in the case of sexual violence also the loss of purity and virginity. On a spiritual and existential level, people have reported losing trust in God, the church and hope in the future, while for some the loss of opportunity also featured. Some years before I started my ministry in the

congregation, the congregation went through an excommunication ordeal which left some people traumatized, still trying to deal with the anger and loss stemming from the exclusion, the severing of familiar ties with the faith community as well as the loss of their religious identity and practices.

Although the death of a loved one, especially that of a child or spouse, can be regarded as the worst and most painful type of loss, other types may be equally impactful and disruptive (Abi-Hashem 1999:311). Abi-Hashem (1993:311-312) states that “losing a cherished place, a romantic relationship, a treasured personal item, a house, a favourite pet, a rewarding career, a talent or a mental faculty, a precious object, a part of health … family conflicts that result in separation and divorce, moving and uprootedness due to old age, job placement, civil wars, natural disasters, the empty nest phenomenon, broken life-long dreams, loss of identity or dignity or integrity, loss of childhood innocence (as being subjected to deprivation, neglect, or abuse), missing a golden opportunity, retirement from a meaningful work, and giving up a social role or status can also generate significant bereavement responses and substantial mourning”. He further expands (:312): “Losses can be personal or material, tangible or symbolic, sudden or gradual, specific or general, minor or major, real or imaginary, partial or total, personal or corporate, expected or unexpected, single or multiple, private or public, individual or communal, local or global. Existentially speaking, a loss can also be classified as historical—happened in the past, contemporary—is taking place in the present, or anticipatory—is expected in the near or far future. Each one of these time-related losses can be powerful and generate intense or prolonged bereavement reactions”. This view is supported by Gitterman and Knight (2019:147-155).

Physical and psycho-social effects reported ranged from physical ailments, and disruptions in daily living and rhythms, to deep psychological and spiritual pain and struggles. Experiences identified in relation to the loss of a loved one include physical and emotional pain, sadness, loneliness and depression, loss of hope and the will to live, as well as anger and frustrations sometimes directed at God, but also at the person who passed on and towards others for “not understanding enough. Daily rhythms such as sleeping and eating patterns may be affected while feelings of guilt and regret may become pervasive at some point. When other relationships become strained because of the loss or the grieving process, people may experience a heightened sense of isolation,

loneliness, helplessness, depression, and hopelessness while other emotional responses may also become more intense at some point. The impact of loss appeared to be especially significant when it relates to the loss of a child or spouse. Other types of loss may evoke similar reactions in people, even if not as intense as that associated with the loss of a loved one. However, for some, the effects of a divorce may be as intense as losing a loved one. When these losses are due to perceived injustices and crime, the experiences of anger and confusion appear to be particularly strong.

How people deal with their grief and bereavement is influenced by several factors. These include, but are not limited to, the type of loss, spirituality, the nature and quality of their relationships with the departed, with God and with others, the circumstances surrounding a loss, the time they had to “prepare” for the death of a loved one, their ability to “remember” significant aspects of the departed and of the relationship with the departed, family, and social support networks. Experiencing multiple losses at the same time seems to stretch people’s coping mechanisms significantly. Other losses such as those experienced because of a divorce, job losses, significant relationships, property and memorabilia, loss of dignity and many others, may not necessarily be as intense but still constitute a loss.

“Human life is a series of attachments and detachments, gains, and losses. Grief emotions are a natural response to any separation or loss” (Abi-Hashem 1999:309). Hence, “where there is a deep and meaningful attachment, there will be a deep sense of loss” (Abi-Hashem 1999:311), necessitating a process of grief and bereavement. And even though grief is natural, universal, and a normal response to loss (McCall 2004:4,7) it is never experienced the same by two people. The experience of grief and bereavement is also not limited to the loss of a loved one through death (Gitterman and Knight 2019:147-155). In fact, bereavement, according to Burnell and Burnell (in Abi-Hashem 1999:310) “has roots in the old English language and means “to rob,” “to plunder,” or “to dispossess”, and relates to the experience of having something taken away forcefully, can be the result of various types of losses.

Death, and what comes with it, is no stranger to most people. The same is true for the community of Keetmanshoop. Like everywhere else it brings with it a deep sense of loss, pain, hurt and emptiness. For some confusion and a lack of direction develop because of their inability to imagine a life without their loved one. Yet for others, the confusion lies

deeper and has to do with their inability to understand God's role in – or rather His lack of will or power to prevent – the death of the loved one. Questions such as "why did God allow this?", "why did God not heal my mother/father/brother/sister?", "we all prayed and believed, why did God not answer our prayer?" were some of the questions people voiced in pastoral encounters. Where death came suddenly through an accident or because of crime, questions arose about God's ability to protect, or "His choice of method". At best most people express some form of disappointment in God for not saving their loved one. In some cases, anger, frustration and even bitterness towards God remained close to the surface, sometimes for a short period and other times for quite a while. In households where the main breadwinner passes on, whether it be a partner, parent or child, the realization of the loss of material stability can lead to acute anxiety and overpowering desperation. In such cases, I found that it is not uncommon that this worry and anxiety significantly interfere with a person's ability to grieve their loss properly and intentionally. As if their minds tell them that there is no time to be sad. Feelings of guilt and regret about incidents, sometimes insignificant at the time of their occurrence, plague people for months and even years, I found. Regrets about "wasted time and opportunities" appear to deepen the sadness as people realize the finality of death which means that there is just no way to make up for it. These reactions can also be present when people experience other types of losses.

Kübler-Ross and Kessler (2005), building on the earlier work of Kübler-Ross, argue that grief generally is experienced through five stages. These stages are identified as denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. These authors emphasise that "grief is as individual as our lives" (2005), and hence one needs to be careful not to want to apply this framework indiscriminately to everybody and every loss as if it is a one size fits all. Not everyone goes through them, it also does not necessarily occur sequentially, and while some people may only experience some of these stages, other may experience more than one of them at the same time. Peña-Vargas, Armaiz-Peña, and Castro-Figueroa (2021), who argue for a biopsychosocial approach to understanding and treating grief, criticize this five-stage framework for "poor consistency and validity concerning the linearity of these stages. Junietta Baker McCall (2004:46-53) describes six stages of grief, namely shock and numbness, denial, feelings, depression, reorganization, and recovery. I found McCall's work in her book *Bereavement Counselling (2004),* rather insightful even though more recent scholarship succeeded in unpacking the complexities of grief and bereavement even more as well as providing us with rather helpful theories and language

for both academia and practice. Her emphasis on a holistic approach to viewing and dealing with loss and grief, including the significance of the spiritual nature of grief and the spiritual aspects of the healing process, proved valuable in helping to understand and guide those people whom I encountered while journeying with loss and grief.

As mentioned before, these stages are not neatly packed in sequence and with clear timeframes. It would be wise then to look at loss and bereavement in a more holistic way than just the markers of particular stages. Instead, it should be seen as both journey and process (McCall 2004:43-45) where the roadmap is not always clear, the process not static and the outcomes not always guaranteed. What is helpful about this perspective on the healing process is that it implies space for agency, imagination, movement, and subsequent hope. Despite the deep persistent sense of loss after a loved one died, at this stage one is letting go of anger, bitterness or regrets, and the bond with the loved one is maintained through memories and recollections. Now a reimagining and reorganization of one's life in a meaningful way become possible. McCall (2004:214) refers to this process of integration and reorganization, through the intentional act of remembering, "continuity of being". This is such an affirming term as it boldly implies life, living and contentment despite the experience of loss.

The data suggests that people indeed move through various processes while dealing with loss. In these, faith and spirituality, as well as significant relationships play an important role in finding the space where "continuity of being" may be possible – where life again has purpose and meaning. Most people seem to be able to journey in a way where anger, sadness and depression are gradually "replaced" with a sense of acceptance. Questions and negative emotions may remain, and the longing remains, but the process of reimagining and reconstruction leads to an eventual meaningful life. Where significant responsibilities exist, such as the care of minors or responsibilities related to professional life, people may feel pressured to accelerate their grieving process, but may also find meaning and strength in having those responsibilities. When the latter applies, people seem to be more intentional in wanting to get better and allowing for the process of grief to take a healthy course.

Through my ministry and research engagements, it became clear that dealing with the loss of a loved one varied among people. However, the process is always challenging for all. Initial feelings of utter loss would often be pushed to the back by the immediacy of the

funeral and other arrangements. This is especially true of those in a family who tend to accept the responsibility – often reluctantly – for holding the centre amid it all, which sometimes may lead to resentment, augmenting the grieving process for some as they are literally left with no time or energy to truly mourn their own loss. Family feuds, old and new, can be another contributor to distorted grieving processes. Where the death of a loved one was caused by another person, intentional or not (by accident), people generally experienced an increased sense of confusion, at the same time dealing with their loss while also coming to terms with the circumstances of the death and the urge to blame, be angry and having a desire for justice and retribution – even revenge. The latter adds a good dose of guilt to all this, in the light of the imperative of Scripture to forgive.

It was not uncommon to find that people are questioning God in the face of their own pain. The goodness and omnipotence of God is then under scrutiny and under suspicion. Most people have reported that this gets better with time, and acknowledge that even when doubting God, they always knew that God is with them. Finding peace with God seemed to be related somehow to both a person's relationship with God and the extent to which they perceived to be supported by "church people" (people of faith). Where people, or families, perceived that the church or people of faith remained aloof during their time of grief, they tend to take longer to find peace within themselves, with God and with people whom they "blame" for not being there for them. However, almost all people would in some way or the other express the desire, the hope (even trust) that God would carry them through this difficult time despite feeling that they will not get through it. Dealing with the sudden passing of a loved one can be life-altering. It can reshape the life stories of entire families – and not always for the better.

Grief does not always follow a "normal" trajectory and recovery from loss and trauma is never just simple. In many cases, as I also observed during this project, grieving processes can be augmented and even become complicated. For instance, regret about unresolved issues after a loved one passed on may affect the grieving process rather negatively. The sadness born from the reality that whatever it was that caused the friction and discord now seem so irrelevant – so insignificant - can be overwhelming and paralysing for some. Knowing that there is no way now to ask for forgiveness or give forgiveness can be unbearable for some. It could be the circumstances around the death, societal views and expectation with regard to the loss and even issues of faith and with God. Even when dealing with other losses such as that associated with divorce, job

losses, loss of property, abuse, sexual violence and significant relationships, the process may become complicated for several reasons. When significant relationships become severed, the resultant grieving process may be severely impaired and negatively affected by feelings of guilt, regret, and anger, amongst others.

Complicated grief is defined by McCall (2004:70) as “a holistic grief response that is more intense than would be otherwise indicated; longer lasting than typical; and at the same time, pervasively affects the grieving person’s daily life (and behaviours) in significant and negative ways”. Shear (2015:154) also highlights increased severity and a prolonged and debilitating grieving process as characteristics of complicated grief. According to Shear (:154) the “intense grief […] lasts longer than would be expected according to social norms and that causes impairment in daily functioning”. Caused by a multiplicity of factors, complicated grief may especially present in cases where parents lose a child or when a death is “sudden or violent” and may cause a range of health challenges (Shear 2015:154-155). Complicated grief may be categorized as “chronic, delayed and inhibited grief” (Stroebe & Schut 2005:66). Such complicated grief presents significant challenges in the pastoral counselling process and require a position of empathy, patience and affirmation, as well as a holistic approach to healing, reconstruction, and restoration.

Whereas bereavement is experienced on the inside, the act of mourning is the external and public expression of grief and bereavement and is most often influenced by social and cultural norms and expectations (Abi-Hashem 199:312). When the social and cultural norms and expectations, or other factors, inhibits or even prohibit bereavement and mourning, the healing process may be significantly augmented and even stunted. When social norms and views for instance fail to give legitimacy to a loss (grief is not recognized) or how that loss is mourned, this may lead to a person being denied the right to mourn publicly (Corr 2002:39-60). This phenomenon, termed by some scholars as disenfranchised grief, is defined by Kenneth Doka as “the grief that persons experience when they incur a loss that is not or cannot be openly acknowledged, publicly mourned, or socially supported” (Doka 1989:4). Disenfranchised grief may be due to perceptions about the kind of death, such as suicide, or the circumstances around the loss. It may also present where the relationship between the deceased and the griever is not sanctioned or approved by society and the griever is not expected to or feel not allowed to mourn publicly for the loss (Thatcher 2018:23).

During this project, I came across at least one such case where the person, at a group session of loss and grief, for the first time after more than 20 years acknowledged her grief publicly, tragically triggered by the loss of a very close relative shortly before the session. In another instance a person only managed to acknowledge and mourn the loss of her virginity, self-worth, and agency after being raped more than ten years before by a prominent person in her community, having felt at the time that no one will believe her and that she will end being stigmatized and rejected. Patricia Robsen and Tony Walter (2013:97-119) warn of a simplistic binary approach assumed when the concept of disenfranchised grief is used. They further argue that the idea of being disenfranchised in the grieving process is always negative and can be misleading as it depends on various factors, including the fact that not all losses experienced kick-start a particular grieving process. Instead, they argue (:99) that the social legitimization of which relationship is worth mourning more often relates to a hierarchical understanding of loss, which may be seen differently by different sub-cultures within a community. Disenfranchised grief may also occur when a person denies themselves the right to mourn, for whatever reason (Kauffman 2002:61-78, 2010; Robsen & Walter 2013:97-119).

Detailed discussions on case studies and a deeper engagement with bereavement theories and frameworks in further work may be necessary in follow up work. What the project did confirm though was that the loss of a loved one or the loss of anything of value with which a person has a significant and meaningful relationship, leads to trauma and disruption. The road to dealing with such trauma and disruption is never easy, but it is possible to journey with grief to a point where re-imagining, re-construction, and meaningful life – continuity of being is possible. However, complications may arise along this journey. In pastoral care and counselling, it is important to be able to recognize such complications, understand them as best as possible and use appropriate theories and knowledge to positively impact the journey to recovery.

5.5. Conclusion

Participants reported that their traumatic experiences have, to various extents, led to the loss of faith and trust in God, people and society or societal systems and structures, and relationships, as well as a general loss of hopefulness and belief in the goodness of life. The opposite is however also true for some, as they experience a deeper sense of God's closeness and care, also through the closeness and care of others. In some cases, this was only temporary, while in others it persisted for longer periods and seemed to have

complicated their recovery processes. On the other hand, responses from participants seem to suggest that there is a higher likelihood for recovery where the following are present: healthy and stable relationships, a reliable repertoire of spiritual and faith resources, a sense of safety in the faith community, dependable family structures and relations, insight and knowledge, and defined relationship with God and the maturity and depth of a person's faith, contribute to positively dealing with traumatic and disruptive experiences. While some may feel further removed from God and people, others may have the opposite experience.

6. CHAPTER 6 – Facing disruptive and traumatic experiences in communities: a congregational pastoral ministry approach[19,20]

6.1. Introduction

This article (chapter) builds on the previous one and deals with the question "how might we respond" (Osmer 2008:4) in terms of a congregational pastoral care ministry response to experiences of trauma and disruption in community contexts. It is guided by the last secondary research question of the study, namely *What could a possible congregational pastoral ministry approach to issues of trauma and healing look like?*, undergirded by the primary research question, "*How can congregations be empowered to face issues of trauma?".* Having addressed the other secondary research questions in previous articles (chapters), the shift here is now towards conceptualizing and implementing a possible congregational pastoral care ministry approach or framework to traumatic and disruptive experiences. On the one hand, it deals with the normative task of practical theology that deals with the question "what should be going on" (Osmer 2008:4) and reflects on an alternative reality to that of being trapped in experiences of trauma and disruption through transforming practice (153-161). At the same time, it focuses on the pragmatic task of practical theology – "how might we respond" (Osmer 2008:4) in the sense that it aims to present a framework for a congregational pastoral ministry response to the challenges of traumatic and disruptive experiences in the community. The article reports on the part of the research done in the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) congregation in Krönlein, Keetmanshoop in the south of Namibia[21]. As discussed in the previous article (Chapter 5), disruptive and traumatic events and phenomena affect both individuals and communities here, and the objective of this part of the project was to conceptualize and implement a possible congregational pastoral care response to these.

[19] Mouton, D. P. 2022*c*. Facing disruptive and traumatic experiences in communities: A congregational pastoral ministry approach. Unpublished manuscript

[20] **Primary Research Question:** How can congregations be empowered to face issues of trauma and disruption? **Article 1: Secondary Research Question 1** - What do we understand by a community-oriented approach to pastoral care? **Article 2: Secondary Research Question 2** - Can the narratives/stories of people strengthen their ability to face experiences of trauma and disruption and provide a hopeful outlook on the future? **Article 3: Secondary Research Question 3** – How can the role, position, and influence of the practical theologian as practitioner (minister) and researcher be understood with regard to research and praxis in a congregational pastoral approach to issues of trauma and disruption? **Article 4: Secondary Research Question 4** - What are some of the traumatic and disruptive experiences people and communities are faced with? **Article 5: Secondary Research Question 5** - What could a possible congregational pastoral ministry approach to issues of trauma and healing look like?

[21] See the previous article for a discussion on some of the disruptive and traumatic experiences encountered in the congregation and community of Krönlein, Keetmanshoop.

6.2. “Facing” – despair, resistance ... hope?

The idea of “face” or “facing”, from the title and primary research question of this project, serves as a metaphor in different ways in the context of this study. On the one hand, it implies being faced with the challenges emanating from the hardships of life in general and from traumatic and disruptive experiences more specifically. It points to the idea of being faced with risks, threats, and possible harm. In the context of traumatic experiences, this may include both the threat and reality of a total breakdown of meaning-making frameworks and the fibre that makes a meaningful life possible. But it also symbolizes the prospect of a long and difficult road to restoration and meaning-making that often lies ahead when dealing with experiences of trauma and disruption. On the other hand, the metaphor also implies the attempt to face challenges – looking them in the eye, acknowledging their presence, impacts and threats, yet opting to resist and fight them. In this way, it serves as a metaphor for resistance, ownership, agency, hope, and the courage to call its power and hold not question.

This metaphor could perhaps also be interpreted as the pleading gaze to a God who promised to be present in times of trouble... a God to whom Hagar refers to as the One who has seen her – *El roi* (Genesis 11). A God, moved so deeply by what Daniël Louw calls a love from the intestines (Louw 2011*a*), who responds to the plight of His people with compassion ... also through the hearts and hands of His church. For the pastoral practitioner and her/his congregation then, this metaphor demands the pleading face to be seen, acknowledged, affirmed, and engaged. In the end, it demands entering the field of view of the pleading gaze, stepping into the pain expressed in the distortions of the seeking face, and in solidarity holding that pleading gaze to the face of God. Yet, so much more is implied. It is not enough to merely hold the space in empathy and solidarity but to respond by facing the pain together, cultivating resistance and hope as the challenges are faced. This “facing of the threat” is in response to the pain expressed and seen, but also in acute awareness of the reality that those with pleading eyes are always at risk of becoming faceless in their struggle for survival. “Facing” then is at the same time looking the threat in the eye, turning a pleading face to God and to each other, seeing each other’s face in the presence of the “seeing” God, and responding to the reality of threats and pain caused by trauma and disruption with courage, hope, resilience, and a collective agency.

Using the nuances in the metaphor of “facing”, this article (chapter) will at first provide a brief recap of the previous article (Chapter 5) for the sake of continuity, while at the same

time contextualizing the proposed framework presented here. This is followed by a theoretical reflection dealing with the concept of a congregational pastoral ministry approach to issues of trauma and disruption in communities. The rationale for an integrated approach is presented and engaged with in relation to the understanding of practical theology and pastoral care that is assumed in this project, which will be followed by a discussion on the approach followed in the URCSA Krönlein congregation. An evaluative discussion will conclude the article (chapter).

6.3. "Faced with" reality – the lived experiences of people

The previous article (Chapter 5) in the series, *A promise of rain – encounters with trauma and disruption* (Mouton 2022*b*)*,* highlighted key traumatic experiences and exposures as they emerged during this PhD project and through ministry engagements in the URCSA congregation and community of Krönlein, Keetmanshoop. These are briefly summarized here to help orientate the reader and to provide context for the remainder of the article. As discussed, these experiences may lead to psycho-social, psycho-spiritual, and mental health challenges or harm, and physical harm. Other possible outcomes include the risks to security – physical, mental, spiritual, safety, food, relationships, etc., impediments for dignity and self-worth and many other undesirable outcomes, and these manifests in different aspects of people's existence, similar to what has been reported by Brade and Bent-Goodley (2009:430-448), Crawford, Liebling-Kalifani and Hill (2009:69-78), Davies and Dreyer (2014) and LaMothe (2014:1-17). In essence, then we ask: what are communities, congregations and pastoral care ministry endeavours faced with related to experiences of trauma and disruption?

Experiences of trauma and disruption found in the congregation and community cover a wide range. These include experiences of loss and the associated processes of grief and bereavement. Losses reported are mostly related to illness and the associated loss of autonomy or full bodily use, death and dying. However, other losses identified as part of the project include the loss of significant relationships, the loss of trust, the loss of possessions due to crime, employment, and the loss of opportunity. When loss and grief is not recognized or the process of dealing with it is impeded this may lead to complications such as complicated grief or disenfranchised grief (Thatcher 2018:23; Kauffman 2002:61-78, 2010; Robsen & Walter 2013:97-119.

Experiences of abuse – physical, emotional, verbal, and financial – in family contexts are not uncommon. These include both direct violations, as well as threats of harm, and are

often associated with excessive alcohol abuse. In all cases encountered during the project and ministry engagements, the perpetrator appeared to be a male. A number of cases appeared to be related to historical (intergenerational) trauma and abuse (e.g., childhood), either directly or witnessed, and ongoing struggles with traumatic experiences and their impact on issues of identity, self-worth, and behavioural choices. Other experiences of abuse and violence were reported as being of a sexual nature. This includes partner sexual abuse, sexual abuse in family contexts, rape, and different forms of sexual harassment. Traumatic experiences also stemmed from experiences of and exposure to crime, which includes threatening behaviour, physical assault and harm, verbal and emotional abuse, burglaries, robberies, witnessing violent criminal activities, and living with someone who has been a victim of crimes that either caused harm or posed a significantly perceived threat of causing harm. Findings of the study, with regards to the impacts of abuse and violence, are in line with what has been reported by Moylan, Herrenkohl, Sousa, Tajima, Herrenkohl and Russo (2010:59-61), Davies and Dreyer (2014:1-8) and LaMothe (2014:1-17).

An experience that affected the local congregation directly and that had happened some 10 years prior to this study was that of a process of excommunication of some members of the congregation. This appeared to be particularly traumatic due to the implications of the perception that people were not only “cut off” from the congregational community, services, and sacraments, but also from the grace of God. Furthermore, the whole process resulted in significant relationships becoming strained or even lost, even amongst members of close and extended families. On a more hidden level are structural elements that give rise to insecurities on several levels such as food security, affirmation of dignity and self-worth, and past and present experiences that impact the mental health and spiritual well-being of people. Some of these have also been reported on by Kubeka and Masango (2010:1-13), who highlight amongst others the deep and extensive hurt that remains as well as the struggle to heal and forgive.

6.4. “Facing” together – framing the project in the academic field of practical theology and pastoral care

As a hermeneutical endeavour, practical theology seeks to engage with contextually relevant information in service of discernment that culminates in improved insights, and the realization of norms in ministry and academics that ultimately evolve into appropriate

actions for change and transformation (Osmer 2008:16; Ganzevoort 2009:3; Miller-McLemore 2012:7).

According to Ganzevoort and Roeland (2014), practical theology always involves three audiences, namely church, academy, and society. This idea has been developed and articulated by David Tracy in 1981*a*[22]. Tracy (1981*a*:3) argues that all theology is in fact public theology. In his view public theology specifically deals with three domains, namely society, academy and church (Tracy 1981a:5). As such theology engages with society in its broader sense and presupposes, one could perhaps say, an emphasis on social justice. On the other hand, it also deals with that which relates to knowledge and the rational domain of life, whilst also having a concern for the church and its traditions. This entails a "drive from and to those three publics" (Tracy 1981*b*). These are at the same time the domains where practical theology may be practised, the "contexts" from which transformative action emerges, and the spaces where transformation takes shape and is experienced. As "engaged scholarship" it is concerned with the realities of the "lived religion" and experiences of people (also in the community), requires a "concerned and engaged scholar" (and practitioner), and an inherently critical reflective process of meaning-making aimed at change and transformation and not just seeking to describe phenomena (Louw 1999; Ganzevoort and Roeland 2014). Yet it is also more than just about human beings and their contextual and contemporary issues, or the study thereof (Louw 2005). In fact, it "reflects on and deals with the *praxis of God as related to the praxis of faith within a vivid social, cultural and contextual encounter between God and human beings*" (Louw 2005:17). Said differently, it is about the praxis of God's people in relation to God's praxis "within cultural contexts and communities of faith" (Louw 2005:18), and hence have both a hermeneutic and ecclesial nature associated with it.

Pastoral care can be defined as "a form of practical theology specified as an intentional *enacting* and *embodying* of a theology of presence, particularly in response to suffering or need, as a way to increase among people the love of God and of neighbor" (McClure 2012:270). For Daniël Louw (1999:1) it relates to "[h]ow the good news of the Kingdom of God and salvation should be interpreted in terms of human experience/reality and social context so that the substance of our Christian faith may contribute to a life of meaning and quality". As a theological discipline, it seeks to link our understanding of God with our real human experiences, for us to make sense of our existence – finding

[22] *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*

meaning (Louw 1999:3), and become part of God's transformative and redemptive praxis in the ordinary. This praxis, which also informs the nature of pastoral care, involves amongst others meaning-making, healing, sustaining, guiding, reconciliation, nurturing, liberation, and empowerment. Barbara MacClure (2012:276) argues for pastoral care to be practised as a "public theology" that endeavours to minister care for the "community by the community" through the "strategic participation" of the community.

The project worked with the pastoral care framework advanced by Emmanuel Lartey (2003) in which he describes pastoral care as therapy, ministry, social action, empowerment, and personal interaction. The idea that such a perspective on a congregational pastoral ministry response should be integrated and community-directed has been offered by many, including amongst others Patton (1993), Nel (1996), Magezi (2006), Janse van Rensburg (2010) and Mee (2012).

Trauma, as well as other disruptive experiences, "has the ability to shake one's world in such a way that all "normality" is turned upside-down to an extent that the person affected or confronted by the traumatizing event has no ability to cope with the reality of such an event (Mouton 2012:97). According to Han van den Blink (in Mouton 2022*b*) trauma is "an extremely distressing and harrowing personal or communal experience that exceeds our normal abilities to cope", leaving "us feeling overwhelmed, emotionally flooded, disoriented, unsure of ourselves, no longer able to trust others or our ability to perceive reality correctly". Its relationship with religion on the one hand has to do with people's search for meaning and hope amidst experiences of confusion, suffering, and perhaps hopelessness, but on the other hand, it finds expression in people's critical view of religion as a result of experiences that strip all sense of meaning and purpose.

Traumatic experiences often leave the person or community in an in-between, and paradoxical, space between "promise and fulfilment" whilst "hoping against hope" (Mouton 2022, not yet published). Trauma, which affects both individuals and communities, is experienced, perceived, and responded to through cultural and societal views, norms, and legitimization (Mouton 2022*b*). Hence, it must be approached and handled with this awareness in mind and, as in the case of community trauma, should be approached from a community perspective (Motsi & Masango 2012). This is particularly necessary in light of an understanding of a two-tier effect (Kleber, Figley & Gersons

1995:4), namely the effects of the traumatic experience itself an the additional breakdown of community life and associated disintegration of relationships.

From the brief discussion above it is evident that both practical theology and pastoral care assume some form of collective and communal praxis that (1) speaks to and are immersed in the lived realities (also religion) of people in communities, (2) aimed at the active participation in the transformative praxis of God, and (3) involves the very community it sets out to transform. Furthermore, as lived reality, traumatic experiences fall within the ambit of practical theology and pastoral care.

6.5. A framework for a congregational pastoral ministry approach (to issues of trauma and healing)

The next section explores a framework for a congregational pastoral care ministry response with a confessional understanding of the identity and calling of the church, particularly the local congregation. The framework evolved from engagements with the local congregation in Keetmanshoop and hence expresses something of the relationship between theory and praxis. The metaphor of "facing" functions prominently and expresses the indispensable place and value of a collective discerning effort. The collective and participatory approach is in line with what Klaasen (2018:108), Janse van Rensburg and Breed (2011:1-11) and Magezi (2019:1-11*b*) promote as they also engage with the issues of collective and church-driven approaches to poverty and trauma.

6.5.1. Becoming aware: we see "us"… we see "you" – the faces we wear

The core of this important first move in the framework is about discerning the identity, nature and calling of the local congregation as a confessional community. I argue that while this is important for the confessing congregation to "see" itself, it cannot truly happen without also "seeing" the other. The "face" of the confessing church becomes real only in the affirmation of the "face" of the other. To "see" the self is to "see" the other, and vice versa.

I deliberately chose a "confessional approach" or perhaps more appropriately a "*Belharian* approach" with due cognisance also of the potential value of the confessional tradition of the Uniting Reformed Church in SA (URCSA), firstly, as it is through our confessions that we learn about and declare our beliefs about God, ourselves, and our

calling in this world. Secondly, most members of the church grow up learning the core aspects of our confessions and traditions, through both ritualistic practices and catechism, and as such the content (or at least the language) of the confessions are not necessarily unfamiliar to them. Although no explicit mention is made of concepts such as missionality and a missional church, the very core of our identity and calling, as will be discussed in this section, points to the missional nature of both God and the church. Using known language, imagery, and confessional "content" to understand identity and calling is an important aspect of the framework for a congregational pastoral care ministry as proposed here.

Eugene Baron (2017:185-6), citing Dirkie Smit, contends that, amongst others, the purposes of Confessions are to:

- "provide the church with a language to proclaim God's praise, both in liturgy and ordinary life".
- "become hermeneutical lenses by which to read the Scriptures".
- "express identity and thereby contribute to the sense of belonging".
- "assist in instructing and forming new believers".
- "help the church to distinguish truth from falsehood".
- "serve as forms of public witness to Jesus Christ the Lord as the gospel".

It is in light of these that I contend that a "confessional approach" to a congregational pastoral ministry approach may be relevant.

In a recent publication for the annual *Week of Prayer* published by the Christian Literature Fund (Mouton 2020), I reflected on the identity and calling of the church (specifically the Dutch Reformed family of churches in Southern Africa). The piece came naturally as it encapsulated my own approach to guiding the congregation in the scriptural and confessional basis of our self-understanding and that of our calling in the community we exist. The reflections were based on some exegetical analysis of relevant Biblical texts and the Three Formulas of Unity, namely the Belgic Confession of Faith, the Canons of Dort, and the Heidelberg Catechism, as well as the Confession of Belhar[23] which is the fourth confession of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA). Specific emphasis is placed on the Confession of Belhar as the "unique" confession of the URCSA to which the congregation belongs. For this article (chapter), I focus on three key

[23] HC – Heidelberg Catechism; CD – Canons of Dordt; BC – Belgic Confession; CB – Confession of Belhar

assertions from our confessional basis relating to our understanding of the identity and calling of the church and will build on the essence of these a little bit further in relation to our African rootedness.

6.5.1.1. “The church belongs to God and he rules his church through Jesus Christ, the Head of the church”: “HC – Question 50 and Question 54; CD – Chapter 1, point 9; BC – Article 27; CB – Article 1 and 5”; Ephesians 1:10–13; 20–23; 4:15–16; Colossians 1:15–18

At the core of the identity of the church lies the grace and authority of God, but also the affirmation that the church exists in and through God’s love through Jesus Christ. This has implications for the calling of the church as well as her relationship with and response to the structures governing life in our communities and is particularly so in the view of God’s stance on issues of justice, healing, and restoration in this world, which will be discussed in a bit more detail later.

6.5.1.2. The church is “Gathered together in the body of Christ – one, with many members”: HC – Question 54 and Question 55; CD – Chapter 2, point 9; BC – Article 28; CB – Article 2; 1 Corinthians 12:4–31; Philippians 2:5–8; Ephesians 4:11–13

As “the gathering together of believers, all together and each individually, … members of the one body of Christ; blessed with particular gifts, [we are] willing to serve each other in love and peace, to the benefit and salvation of one another and to the glory of God”. The “composition” of and gifts endowed upon the church is thus in service of the well-being and unity of the faith community, yet it cannot be removed from who God is and hence must also be in service, in word and concrete action, of the gospel of redemption to those finding themselves outside of the faith community. “This places a considerable responsibility on the church to care for one another [and others] pastorally, to admonish one another [and others] and to lift one another [and others] up to the glory of God”.

6.5.1.3. “The church, called to the ministry of justice”: CB – Article 4; Isaiah 1:16–17; Matthew 5:34–37; Luke 4:16–19; Luke 6:20–26; Romans 6:13–18

“We believe **…** [t]hat God wants to bring about justice and true peace to all people. The church stands steadfastly where God stands, namely against injustice and with the wronged”.

The Confession of Belhar asserts “[t]hat God has always stood, and still stands, against injustice, exploitation and oppression, as preached throughout the whole Bible. He is the God who reveals Himself as the One who wants to bring about justice and peace among all people. In a world full of injustice, oppression, exploitation, division and impoverishment, God stands indisputably with those who are suffering” (Mouton 2020). This is evident in both the Old and New Testaments. The New Testament Jesus, whom the church follows in obedience (Confession of Belhar 1986), give testimony to his preferential option and compassion for the marginalized, the hopeless, the poor, and generally for those in need (cf. Luke 18–19, Matthew 5:20–26).

All three aspects listed above, I argue, reach its true meaning and impact in the petition of the Confession of Belhar that the church is to stand with God as He stands with the poor, the hurt, the destitute, the marginalized, the traumatized and the broken. This we do in accepting the true authority of Christ as the Head of the church which has been brought into existence by God, and in embracing our joined diversity both in embodied existence and gifts in service of others to the glory of God, as we join God in obedience as He takes a stand for those who are wronged and a stand against that which maintains the structures and practices that continue to marginalize and traumatize the ones in need (Beukes 2017). This call to stand where God stands is an echo of a similar call from John Calvin, in his *Institutes* (3.8.7) (cf. Britz 2008:1-24). Indeed, “the God of justice who identifies in a special way with the suffering, the poor, and the wronged” (Koopman 2008:30, see also Boesak 2008:17; Koopman 2017) calls us to do the same.

“Standing with” encompasses a compassionate way of being that affirms the dignity of the other (Koopman 2017:163). Modise (2017:211) highlights that “the Confession urges the members of the confessing church to show compassionate care to the human race irrespective of race, colour, creed and class. This compassionate care should be demonstrated towards everybody, especially the poor, orphans, widows, wronged, oppressed, prisoners, downtrodden and strangers”. Yet, standing with God here is not a stationary act, as God is always on the move, bringing hope, renewal, change and transformation to those He sides with. Similarly, the church does not merely “stand with”

but rather actively strives to care for those in need through its prophetic and priestly acts of resistance and care, whether directly or through the transformation of that which maintains the status quo (cf. Boesak 2008).

For the URCSA, our confessional identity and calling is further accentuated through our inherently African character. We are both African and "*Belhar-ian*". I only want to briefly refer to the article written by Leepo Modise (2020), titled *Reading the URCSA Church Order with African Lenses: A Belhar Confession Perspective*, where he explores the African identity of URCSA as an imperative for her embodiment. Modise, uses the concepts of "community, *Ubuntu*, and *Ujamaa"* to describe on the one hand the African identity of the URCSA while at the same time highlighting the ethical imperatives of this in terms of relationships both inside URCSA as well as to the outside world. Like Oduyoye (1979), O'Donovan (1996), Mbiti and Masango (2018), Modise highlights the communality and relationality that structures African life and relate that to the call of Belhar for unity, justice and reconciliation. The concepts ("community, *Ubuntu*, and *Ujamaa")* encapsulates togetherness, connectedness, family, and community. At the same time it implies a structuring of life that is built on care and compassion. This, Modise argues, is the type of community URCSA, through the lens of the Confession of Belhar and an African reading of the church order, confess. This is then the type of community the URCSA should embody, especially on local congregational level.

With regards to the call of Belhar, standing with the "other", requires that the "other" be seen. This "recognition of humanness and dignity has strong African roots" (Thesnaar 2022). According to Thesnaar, this is beautifully illustrated in the Zulu word *Sawubona,* which "literally means 'I see you' or 'Until you see me, I actually do not exist'". Similarly, the concept of *Ubuntu* affirms the relationality and connectedness of our embodied existence in community, where one can only truly exist through others (Modise 2017; Thesnaar 2022). Such "[e]mbodied recognition of the mutual others will therefore actively seek to repair the brokenness of the other, as it has also become my own brokenness" (Thesnaar 2022). These sentiments and convictions are echoed in the Confession of Belhar.

Ernest Conradie (2017) argues for inclusivity that requires an acute awareness of the reality that one's own inclusion is but through the grace of God and hence one does not have an option of excluding others. This "radial inclusivity" of God's grace (Conradie

2017:158) clearly demands for the “other” to be seen ... be included ... be cared for. Modise (2017:208-9) argues that the interrelationship, wholeness, and connectedness of all people is at the heart of the Confession of Belhar. The absence of a “loving” and, one might add, a seeing “connection to another being and God” (Modise 2017:209) can only lead to the disregard for the other. Unfortunately, this inevitably results in an inability to see and respond to the needs of this very other, leaving them excluded from the workings of the grace of God through the church. This type of disconnect is overcome when we live from the “agape” love (Wright 2005:7) that we see in God through Christ Jesus.

Being African and “*Belhar-ian*” is not simply a theological, philosophical, or ideological position. Instead, it confesses the reality of God being (active and transformative) with those in need and calls the church – URCSA – to do the same. In this we need to see the other but that can only happen if we consciously and authentically “see” ourselves. On the other hand, we cannot “see” ourselves without “seeing” the other. In this sense, I argue, drawing on the confessional character of the church gives content and meaning to our identity as well as clarity of our calling, which in turn provide the rationale, motivation and imperative for a congregational pastoral care approach to issues of trauma and healing. In my opinion, this is the most important aspect of such an approach.

Looking inside and looking around does not happen in linear stages, but most often at the same time. We are in most cases already aware of what goes on in our communities. However, until we deliberately and systematically appraise our realities and the impact it has on the well-being of our communities these realities may remain at arm’s length and at best just unwelcome realities that we wish never existed.

The situatedness of the pastor/theologian/practitioner in the congregation - being part of the congregation and community (an insider) – is significant to congregational pastoral care approach. Her/his own identification, critical reflective praxis, positionality and embodiment, and sense of agency, as well as the reality of perceived frameworks of power, have implications. In a previous article (Mouton 2022*a*) – Chapter 4 - I discussed this issue in relation to autoethnography as a research framework, not only having a legitimate place within practical theological research but also as it helped traverse some of the challenges encountered in this research project with regard to these issues.

Looking “inward” not only helps to illuminate the identity and calling of the faith community but also proves to be essential in identifying the resources, potential, and images of agency already present within and amongst the faith community. How these are intricately linked to the broader community within which the congregation exists appears to flow from this process of self-understanding. In the role of “interpretive guide” (Osmer 2008), the pastor/theologian/practitioner looks to the congregation for a collective and participative reading of both scripture and context to discern the appropriate expression of ministry that will speak to the contextualities of their environment. As active and “experiencing” citizens of their communities, members of the faith communities do not have to be taught about the challenges faced in their contexts. They mostly know it already as they are at the same time sitting in the front row of the community drama unfolding while also being drawn into this drama in a similar way as it happens in immersive theatre[24].

The process of self-understanding however also involves identifying and describing markers of the congregation’s lived realities, including its corporal, psycho-social and spiritual dimensions. This will be the focus of the next section. In essence, this part of the process has to do with the face we wear in conversation with the face worn by the other. It is thus in the first place about identity, our own as well as that of the other, as viewed and experienced through the heart and eyes of God. How we understand this has bearing on the ethical weight we “assign” to our calling and its expression with and towards the “other”.

Guiding the congregation in discovering, re-discovering, and affirming its identity, as well as fostering an awareness of the plight of those challenged by traumatic and disruptive experiences was attempted through several deliberate processes and activities. Regarding the theological foundations of identity and calling, emphasis was placed on Scripture and tradition, including the confessional basis of the denomination, the sacraments, and the liturgical elements of worship services. Specific activities included worship services focussing on the above themes, Bible studies, focussed series, faith formation process, and regular informal engagements. Results from a congregational assessment study done shortly before my arrival in the congregation served as input to articulate markers of the embodiment of the identity and culture of, as well as the

[24] Cambridge English Dictionary – “seeming to surround the audience, player, etc. so that they feel completely involved in something”

resources and needs of the congregation. Strategic sessions, involving members from different genders and generations, aimed at collectively articulating the congregation's self-understanding of its identity and calling in the context of the "needs" of the congregation and the community. This understanding was based on the congregation's understanding of the community needs as it transpired from their own experiences and information gathered as part of this project. It also involved charting a strategy for addressing these. The vision, mission, strategy, and evaluation of its implementation was done annually with the congregation's leadership team and the congregation. Collaboration of and input from the congregation was aimed for during these processes.

6.5.2. Beyond awareness: scanning for detail – *see, hear, feel*

Contextual and congregational "mapping" through collective engagements and ethnographic studies forms an important part of "seeing ourselves" and "seeing the other" in this process (Hendriks 2004; Osmer 2008; Nell 2020). This "seeing" is inherent to practical theology and our broader confessional understanding of the church, and the practical guidelines offered by these scholars have been integrated in this approach.

Ian Nell (2020:17) defines practical theology as:

> … the critical and theological reflection on the practices of individuals and faith communities in their interaction with the public practices of the world, with the view to prophetic (transforming) participation in God's salvation practices in, to and for the world, through the faithful performance of the gospel drama.

For Jurgens Hendriks (2004:24) theology is about God, the faith community (church) in a specific time and place (context), which is collectively interpreted by the faith community (local analysis), who, through the interpretation of Scripture and tradition discern the will of God for the here and now, leading to a vision of a transformed future, actualized through appropriate strategy, implemented and evaluated in service of the transformative mission of God. The above is in many ways similar to Richard Osmer's (2008) broad framework for practical theology defined by four distinct tasks, namely the descriptive-empirical task, the interpretive task, the normative task, and the pragmatic task, which also echoes above.

Key to the above definitions for practical theology or for doing theology in the world is their insistence on collective interpretative discernment which refers to both God's will and to understanding and describing the contexts within which theology is done in, by and through the faith community. This aspect of the framework for a congregational pastoral approach to trauma and healing specifically deals with understanding the context – the community – within which these are manifested and experienced, whilst also working towards a better understanding of the congregation's role, ability, and resources to respond to these. Various approaches can be followed in gathering and analysing information of the context.

The key objective of this process is not merely about the gathering of information, but more importantly the collective interpretation of such information to understand both the need and the particularities of the calling of the congregation. Additionally, presenting such information in a way that it creates empathy in ways that it leads to a conviction to stand where God stands in relation to those needing assistance and moving people into action is vital. In the end the plight of people needs to be real and meaningful also to those who intend to reach out with support. It is not simply about observing, or about listening to the stories, but also about "feeling" and being moved by the realities of people in need through their stories and embodied realities.

Overall, the project subscribed to a qualitative research framework, involving some empirical work, narrative research and autoethnography, all falling under the broader concept of ethnography. Information was gathered in several ways. These included:

- Observations during normal congregational and community engagements, captured in congregational ministry logs and reflective notes.
- Identification of and engagements with community leaders and actors – such as local councillors, government institutions, social workers, teachers, other faith leaders and actors from non-governmental entities (NGOs).
- Questionnaires and interviews with members from the congregation and community.
- Leadership and congregational engagements during leadership meetings and workshops.
- Focused discussions and engagements with members of the congregation and leadership.

As with the rest of the process, maintaining a constructive, respectful, engaging, and reflective community presence through appropriate relationships proved to be key here.

Information gathering was aimed at:

- Gaining insights into specific needs as it relates to this project, but also in relation to broader needs.
- An improved understanding of internal perceptions about the role of the church in the local community.
- Experiences of traumatic and disruptive phenomena, how it affects people, and how it is generally dealt with.
- Congregational and community resources, networks and existing initiatives that may be available, and that may already be directed towards addressing some of the needs.
- Common practices, particularly in the congregation, that either provide some form of community and personal care or that may offer spaces for providing care.
- Identifying training needs in relation to the objectives of the study and that of the vision, mission, and strategy of the congregation.

This provided inputs for collaborative discernment with regard to the congregation's responses to some of the issues affecting the community.

6.5.3. "Facing" the challenge – unlocking potential, actualizing resistance

In the end all the information one gathers remain just that – information about some phenomena and its impacts – if there is no deliberate attempt to conceptualize and actualize ways to help realizing a vision that affect change and transformation. Attempting to "go it alone" is not an option in this. Without the involvement of people – both from within and outside of the congregation – this approach would not even be remotely possible. In fact, referring to this as a congregational approach presupposes the involvement of people other than just the pastor/researcher/practitioner or the congregational leaders. Overly relying on the design of a "programme" would also be futile. After all, "God does not use programmes, but people" (Buys & Nogueira 2019:10). The challenge would thus be, in the first place, to mobilize the congregation or at least part of the congregation to not only develop empathy but to also become involved in the ministry of hope and transformation. A key focus of projects was to promote dignity and the notion of dignified living.

On a practical level, the approach followed to help the congregation and its leadership to identify opportunities, resources and impediments that may hamper a congregational pastoral care response, involved several activities.

6.5.3.1. Strategic visioning exercises, leadership meetings and congregational seminars, focused discussions, worship services, Bible studies and prayer meetings, themed sessions on issues such as trauma, loss and bereavement, agency and resilience, forgiveness, dignity and restoration, healing, and the contextualization of Scripture, amongst others, aimed to:

i. Sensitize the congregation and its leadership to issues of trauma and disruption, structural injustices and how it could be regarded as experiences of violence and trauma, how these are present in the community, and reflecting on these in light of Scripture and our confessional basis and faith tradition.

ii. Guide the leadership and congregation to better understand the confessional call to engage with issues of trauma and disruption.

iii. Discern the needs, in terms of what might be needed to respond.

iv. Identify the resources needed to offer help that has a chance of positive impacts. These include material and financial resources, spiritual resources, social resources, professional help and importantly the human capital needed to make it all work. Although funding was a key concern and the congregation started some of the projects without adequate funding, the experience was that as projects show relevance and impact, it generated interest in the community, leading to increased awareness and involvement.

v. Empower the leadership to play an important role in discernment, strategizing, sourcing and availing resources, oversight, mobilizing congregants, establish and avail infrastructure, and providing spiritual and administrative support and direction.

6.5.3.2. A gift analysis drive in the congregation intended to:

vi. Help people discover and understand their own gifts and calling, and how those may relate to specific ministry expressions, proved to be useful.

vii. Identify people with concern and calling for pastoral ministry.

viii. The focus was on both spiritual gifts and other skills and expertise.

6.5.3.3. Information about and alignment with the URCSA's *Integrated Ministries Model* served to put the congregational efforts in a broader denominational understanding of our pastoral calling and aimed at involving the different ministries

of the congregation, across multiple generations, genders, and ministries. This resulted, amongst others, in some people taking responsibility for sourcing aid, offering expertise, doing tasks such as cooking for projects and delivering aid to needy people collections for projects, and taking a keener interest in getting involved with individuals going through tough times.

6.5.3.4. Training and awareness opportunities through “normal” ministry and worship activities, practices, and focused initiatives (in-house) and from outside was intended further develop insights and build internal capacity. As a broader service these were often open to the larger community. This for instance led to the involvement of the Trauma Healing Network of Namibia who facilitated a trauma healing and training workshop, local social workers, teachers and health professionals. Involvement of the Ecumenical Social Services Namibia (ECSOS) was aimed at building project conceptualization implementation and management awareness and skills, with a view on the sustainability of projects.

6.5.4. “Facing” a new outlook – “being seen” as expression of the message of hope and expectancy

In one of the projects, families were invited to voluntarily take responsibility for providing non-perishable food items to a needy family. Each month five or more needy families could be assisted. Mostly the contributing families rotated monthly and every month different families would be served mostly. Elderly members from the congregation were assisted almost every month, in addition to the other five or more families. Often, we would not know the families and only became aware of their needs through other networks such as local social workers, teachers, community workers or local community leaders. A key characteristic of this project was not so much the food provided, but the message and attitude with which these food items were delivered. Those responsible for delivering the food items were requested not to go and deliver sermons or impose their own religious views, but to simply deliver the items with the message: *God has seen you, and now we see you*. The thinking behind that was to remind people that despite what they experience and the resultant difficulty to see God’s provision, He has not forgotten them. In this way, we wanted to instil hope and encourage those who may already have given up hope or were close to giving up. But we also wanted to remind ourselves to not become arrogant about our ministry – we are merely joining God as He stands with those in need.

An intentional congregational pastoral ministry approach acknowledges and value existing practices of care and support and try to strengthen these. For instance, the congregation has a history of taking responsibility for providing food to families in the congregation who are in mourning during the week leading up to a funeral. As part of the pastoral approach of the congregation, which came as a result of this project, the congregation would also make a fixed financial contribution to grieving families to assist with incidental expenses. Facilitating a “day-off” for the family in the week leading up to a funeral was another way of helping families to retreat to privately reflect, take a break from funeral arrangements and reduce the emotional toll of constantly engaging with well-meaning community members who come to share condolences. It also became standard during the project to facilitate a family intervention a day or two before the funeral to allow the family, through a guided conversation, to reflect on the life of the deceased, their own grief and to deal with tensions that often arise due to the intense emotional experiences of those involved. Families always expressed immense gratitude for this, and some would even refer to these forms of support as crucial moments when they were strengthened to deal with their losses at the time. There are of course those people and families who prefer to go through their processes in private, with minimal involvement from the faith community, but these were very few.

Faith practices, like in all faith communities, create important moments for reflection, teaching, and encouragement (Osmer 1992:21-38; Dykstra 2005:35-46). This may be especially helpful during times of trouble. Relating confessional statements, worship and liturgical moments, sermons, and the partaking in the sacraments to the pain of people and eventually to the hope in Jesus Christ, goes a long way in encouraging people in need. However, the theology entrenched in these practices when sensitively unpacked also serve to nurture empathy, strengthen the call to serve and care, and instil such a sense of gratitude in some that they are moved to get involved in the caring practices of the congregation. Encouraging testimonies and “praise reports” during worship services can really become engaging moments for the congregation. Not only does it lead to reflection but being witnesses to the impact of the congregation’s pastoral care ministry through this, has shown to affirm people’s sense of calling and purpose and often energize others to get involved. Ultimately it testifies about the compassion of God, and this gives hope even to those who are not yet ready to allow people to journey with them as they deal with their own trauma and pain.

New, or rejuvenated, projects that were implemented included the following.

6.5.4.1. A feeding programme for primary and secondary school-going children – *The scholar feeding project*. The project started in 2016 and provided, on a daily basis, a small meal to anything from 150 to 300 children. It ran primarily on gifts and donations from outside of the congregation, with businesspeople and politicians also being involved. The congregation provided support in terms of infrastructure and personnel. The project started off after a survey with local schools and revealed that hundreds of children going to school often only have one meal a day, at most. Some even must go without food on some days. The project involved children form all local government schools during the Namibian school terms. Taking an average of 170 learners being fed on a day, the project provided about 33, 000 meals per year prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the themes of dignity and a dignified living permeated the congregation's projects, the leadership felt strongly that a hygienic and dignified facility needed to be put in place for preparing meals and for eating. To do this they implemented projects to raise funds and then build a suitable kitchen as well as a shielded space next to each where children could eat their meals.

Initially the project had to solely rely on volunteers who were willing to work for free, but later managed to raise enough funds – through local benefactors – to pay a honorarium to volunteers. The beauty of this was that those involved dealt with their own fair share of trauma and through the project found ways of re-appraising their own lives, values, and purpose. In the appreciative faces of the children, they experienced loved and affirmation. In the small honorarium they could bring smiles to the faces of their own families.

Due to the impact of the pandemic and the fact that the congregation is without a minster since June 2020 (at the peak of the first COVID-19 wave), this project is struggling to regain momentum. The congregation's leadership hopes to revitalize it soon.

6.5.4.2. The non-perishable food assistance to families was mentioned before and details will not be repeated – *The buckets of hope project*. To ensure that families in dire need are not missed, the project worked closely with social workers from the Ministry of Health and Social Service to help identify those families whose needs may be the greatest. Families with young babies are also assisted with basic hygiene products such as nappies, soap, and petroleum jelly (*Vaseline*). This

project is still going strongly. These items are either donated or sourced at discounted prices from local suppliers.

It is called the *Buckets of hope project* because every month 5 or more empty buckets are placed in the liturgical space during the worship service. This was to serve as reminder of our own blessedness in being provided for, but also of those who are not that fortunate. At the end of the service families would volunteer to take a bucket and fill it (usually beyond capacity) with predetermined food items during the next month. A dedicated moment is created during the worship service to bless these families and to pray for those anticipating God's provision. The same is done when the full buckets are brought back at the end of the month. The entire family present in the worship service would come to the front for this moment. This would also be the time to share experiences and testimonies of encounters with needy families.

One of the spin-offs of this project was the awareness, empathy, and enthusiasm it developed amongst the children of the congregation. They were often the ones to first get up when it was time for new families to take buckets for the next month, leaving their parents little choice but to oblige.

6.5.4.3. Through the *Dignity for Girls* project ladies from the congregation set out to assist young female learners with basic sanitary products. Apart from providing sanitary products, the ladies also arranged regular sessions to speak to the learners about issues that may be of relevance to them. A core focus was to affirm them as dignified beings and to encourage them to dream. This project had a type of stop-start character to it, but still managed to reach close to 100 young girls every year. Again, due to COVID-19 it lost momentum.

6.5.4.4. Through the *Trauma counselling project**,*** myself and a retired social worker provided counselling to people dealing with traumatic experiences as well as other psycho-social and religious/faith issues. Both narrative and psychodynamic approaches were followed in counselling. The congregation's leadership availed space in a multi-purpose facility we initially erected for youth and children's ministry. Training was also provided to volunteers for lay counselling. Debriefing sessions were regularly held with those involved.

6.5.4.5. Direct bereavement support to families were referred to earlier. In addition, I held group discussions on a regular basis to engage with interested parties on issues of loss, grief, trauma, forgiveness, and other mental health issues. As it happed on Sunday evenings, I refer to these as "my Sunday night talks".

6.5.4.6. Other interventions or auxiliary support included:

i. Linking people in need with service providers and negotiating favourable rates for things such as eye care or dental assistance. These were mostly done as part of a broader counselling intervention to specific people.
ii. Arranging for information sessions and services for things like the drawing up of wills, as this in particular was referred to as a factor in complicating grieving processes.
iii. Sharing of information on training and employment opportunities. To this end local professionals were involved to assist also with regards to writing CV's and preparing for interviews.

Funding and donations for projects that required those came mostly from the local community, especially since the congregation contributed through the *Buckets of hope project* as well as in the provision of oversight, project management, infrastructure, intellectual capital, and volunteers.

As indicated before, the collective and participatory approach followed here resonates with what Klaasen (2018:108), Janse van Rensburg and Breed (2011:1-11) and Magezi (2019:1-11*b*) also advocates.

6.6. Turning the face – nurturing a new outlook

Looking back on the possible appropriateness and impact of the project involves both my own perceptions, that of members of the congregation and its leadership, and feedback from the community, including benefactors and beneficiaries. These were obtained on a regular basis through both formal (focused) and informal engagements. In short, each of the projects in its own way touched and transformed the lives of both the caregivers and those receiving care and support. For some, it related only to certain aspects of their lives whereas for others it led to a significant transformation.

Within the congregation, there were a number of signs that suggested a positive impact of our involvement with these projects. The stable and growing attendance together with discernible improvement in reconciliatory gestures could possibly be related to a sense of purpose, expressed in the caring ministries, for the congregation, something people generally feel drawn to. As congregants became more open to informal and collaborative approaches, there seemed to be a corresponding willingness from their side to make

congregational infrastructure available to serve the community. The sprouting of other community projects by congregants in collaboration with other community members was very encouraging and may attest to an increased interest in community matters. Greater family involvement and testimonies also created a space for people to share their personal journeys and how their involvement impacted them positively. Something that may not necessarily seem to be directly linked to the projects is that of congregational finances. However, the fact that the congregation's finances seemed to have grown consistently despite "giving away" on a consistent basis, must mean something.

Feedback from community members and institutions often served to energize those directly involved with projects. The congregation was increasingly acknowledged as a place of hope by community leaders, and the feeding programme was credited for the improved school attendance and performance of some learners, which provided affirmation and encouragement. Similarly, our therapeutic interventions, together with a retired social worker and other caring professionals, often yielded positive results, with most therapeutic relationships terminated on the grounds of growth and transformation, while cases of suicidal tendencies improved through timely and dedicated interventions. Some volunteers reported that their own involvement was a way to deal with their own disruptive experiences and pain, and the impact of their service to others became symbols of hope to themselves.

As it is with much of congregational ministry expressions, the impact of this project will in some cases probably only be felt sometime in the future, and perhaps even only be a next generation.

6.7. Lessons learned – facing the future (outlook)

Reflection on the approach followed and the projects implemented highlighted the following.

i. Nurturing and maintaining an awareness of the confessional identity and calling of the church in relation to a collective and congregational pastoral care ministry approach provides theological rootedness to such an approach. It further defines the assumed relationship with people in need in the context of God's preference to stand with those in need.
ii. Scripture, worship, faith practices and relationships play a central role. Sacraments strengthen unit and resolve.

iii. Affirmation of dignity and respectfulness must define the way in which care is offered. This influences how we engage with the other, how we prepare facilities, and how we deal with information and inputs from others. It is important to promote the notion of dignified living as consideration in how people are engaged, and projects implemented.

iv. The church never provides care as perfect beings but needs to understand and embrace its own brokenness – its humanity – in the light of God's grace. This nurtures humility, empathy, and respect. We don't have all the answers.

v. A collective approach demands inclusion, continuous communication, relationality. This is the only way to foster a communal approach to congregational pastoral care.

vi. Spend time dreaming, visioning, reflecting, researching needs as well as resources, and identify opportunities - together.

vii. Build capacity – skills, insight, personal and contextual awareness. Training, awareness, skills building, and continuous encouragement is needed to make projects a success.

viii. Maintain a reflective position – listen, reflect, convers and discern.

ix. Leadership and congregational buy-in and involvement is essential.

x. Every story count and every bit of transformation and change inspires. Stories need to be told, restoration and change need to be witnessed about. Space and opportunity must be created for this in communal settings within the congregation. Practices such as "praise reports" during a worship service has proven to encourage, entice and affirm. Pay attention to stories of hope and be careful not to allow challenging stories to dominate the discourse. Stories of healing and restoration needs to be elevated sometimes for the benefit of all.

xi. We are all vulnerable and may even be dealing with our own traumatic experiences even as we provide care. These need to be acknowledged and allowed to surface. It can lead to a type of "clash of vulnerabilities" where the presence of more than one in the same space at the same time makes empathy and understanding more difficult or complex.

xii. Remind each other that disruptive experience also creates opportunities for growth and restoration. Be open to be surprised by the healing ministry of the God.

xiii. Professionalism and sound management, as much as possible, is not in opposition to spirituality. In fact, it forms part of the spirituality of some and is in service of the ministry of care.

xiv. It is important to define, as best as possible, the scope of ministries without being.

xv. Those who care also need care. The leadership must pay attention to this and try to put some mechanisms in place that can facilitate such processes.

xvi. Hope - as trust in God and in His provision - is a key component always. Resources are not always available or guaranteed, but congregations must still embark upon caring ministries in obedience to Christ Jesus.

xvii. Training, awareness, skills building, and continuous encouragement is needed to make projects a success.

xviii. Networking is vital in enhancing the impact of such a collective ministry approach.

Some of the challenges that may be worth mentioning here include:

The centrality of and heavy reliance on the minister is not only a risk to the sustainability of projects, but leads to frustrations, fatigue, conflict, and tension, and ultimately to the possibility of ineffectiveness and doubt during the process. Engagements with congregants about inconsistent participation and commitment at times revealed a lack of understanding regarding the imperatives of discipleship and care that is placed on the faith community, in part due to limited engagement with Scriptures. However, people also often had their own struggles to deal with. Their own narratives of disruption and brokenness can sometimes impede their ability to see the need of others. It may also convince them that they need to put so much effort and resources into their own needs that there is hardly anything left to offer others. All these contribute to making collective reflective processes difficult to sustain. When people do not understand the Scriptural and confessional basis for a collective congregational pastoral care response, projects like this are approached in the same way as charity work and no real transformation can take place. Janse van Rensburg (2010:10) and Mathews (2014:112-124) also caution against charity-type projects, such as soup kitchens for example, that often serve to perpetuate poverty and does not really lead to transformation and sustained improvements of livelihoods. However, one can also not underestimate the value of an immediate need being addressed in to help foster hope. In the end, the “work of transformation” must become transformative to the pastor/researcher/practitioner and the congregation. Dealing with these require both personal and communal disciplines and practices that facilitate reflection and reorientation. In the context of broader ministry responsibilities this is not always possible.

The future

Integrated communal ministry is an appropriate response to disruptive and traumatic experiences in communities. However, the centrality of the minsters puts a project like this at risk of falling flat when she/he leaves. Even though some of the projects are still ongoing after having left the congregation three years ago, the congregation struggle to maintain them in the absence of a full-time minister. Coupled with this is the fact that a project like this always has the potential to become just another charity project. Grounding this in a confessional understanding of congregational identity and calling has the potential improve congregational commitment. The framework offers a starting point to reproduce similar studies and projects in other congregations and communities which is something that I consider doing. Improving the reproducibility of the study can benefit congregations, and has the potential to deepen the ongoing relationship between theory and praxis as well as the development of best practice approaches in congregational pastoral care ministry.

6.8. Conclusion

The article (chapter) set out to discuss a framework for a congregational pastoral ministry approach in dealing with issues of trauma, disruption, and healing. In presenting a framework for such an approach, it succeeded in addressing the last secondary research question, namely "*What could a possible congregational pastoral ministry approach to issues of trauma and healing look like?".* In doing so it also illustrated how congregations can be empowered to face issues of trauma and disruption, which is the essence of the primary research question of the overall project. Not only did it deal with issues of empowerment in the context of the theme of the overall study, but it also presented information on the impact of the study in the URCSA congregation in Krönlein, Keetmanshoop. Underlying to what has been reported here are aspects also of the other secondary questions that have been addressed in other articles (chapters). In the way a rationale was presented here for a congregational pastoral care ministry approach that supports the notion of a community-oriented approach to pastoral care as argued in the first article of the Ph.D. project (secondary research question 1), whilst also prioritizing the important role and power of the stories and lived realities of people (secondary question 2). Although not explicitly discussed, the approach takes due cognisance of the positionality, worldview, and reflective identity of the pastor/researcher/practitioner (secondary research question 3). Understanding contextual realities and accounting for those not only serve as information input into the project to be considered in the design

and implementation of projects but also provide the milieu for such projects to be implemented.

7. Chapter 7 – A look in the rear-view mirror

7.1. Introduction

In this concluding chapter the metaphor of “facing” remains active, albeit expressed slightly different in the image of the rear-view mirror. Looking back on this project, in a way, is like looking in the rear-view mirror of a moving car. You peek to that which may be behind you, yet remaining aware of the road behind... the road just travelled. Even though you can’t see the full road in view, you have the memory of it ... the climbs, the descents, the curves, the obstacles, and the easy straights. Yet it is only a glance, for the road ahead needs your full attention. You want to keep the focus on the route, making sure you stay on course, observe the variations and possible obstacles, and importantly also identify those places where you rest, recuperate, and draw new energy to continue with the journey... the pitstops. I’d like to approach this concluding chapter as if I am journeying, fully aware of the road travelled, yet staying in the moment of the on-going journey. Although it may be argued that one person can only have one journey - after all you cannot go in different directions at the same time – it is also true that we journey in different aspects and on different levels at the same or different times. Often a time these journeys intersect, sometimes disrupting each other and forcing a new course overall, and other times they merge to give deepened meaning and purpose to a more pertinent route.

In this chapter, I will reflect on my own journey as I arrive at the pitstop of completing this PhD. This I do by focusing on two broadly intersected journeys. The reflections in the following sections are intended to articulate something of the growth of my own understanding of the discipline, as I moved from an understanding of ‘everything in the church must be practical’ to one that is more nuanced, open, and meaningfully inclusive. Inevitably this also links with my journey with this PhD study, as it frequently experienced shifts and course adjustments necessitated over the span of the project. These journeys are intertwined and part of my fuller, personal journey through life. This third, personal, journey permeates all others and provides the context and insights that will help articulate the research focus, process, and outcomes. Although this last chapter is about summarizing the work done during this project and as presented in the interrelated articles, it is also about my personal journey throughout this. It will therefore take a personal tone more often and I hope that it helps the reader understand something of my own positioning as a practical theologian and human being.

7.2. Snapshots from the rear-view mirror

The word “snapshot” is used here to express the intention to only look at certain moments during this journey. This does not imply disjointed moments that have nothing to do with each other. Instead, these moments, when connected, helps creating a picture of the road travelled.

7.2.1. From the city of roses to my dry and dusty hometown

The heading of this section creates the impression of two distinct and opposing experiences. On the one hand the reference to a “city of roses” gives the idea of beauty, tranquillity, and something aesthetically pleasing. The image of colour and the sweet smell of roses can make you relax, comfortable and at peace. It gives the impression that everything is enjoyable and good. On the other hand, the image of dusty roads evokes a sense of dryness and dustiness and seems less aesthetically pleasing to both body and soul. For those living with an illness like asthma, such an image evokes experiences of congested airways and a struggle to breathe. Not necessarily something beautiful or pleasant, or at least not in terms of what is imagined in relation to the beauty and fragrance of a rose garden.

The denouement of the paradox however lies in the word “hometown” – in this context it represents something of a return to anchorage – being anchored here may imply the return to a place of safety and stability, belonging and connectedness. Connectedness because of the link between the past and the present through people, experiences, and memories. Yet, it is this connectedness with the present and past in this “anchoredness” that is being challenged. Through memory (remembering), I was “re-membered” (made part again). Yet, the memories of the less pleasant experiences, are called to the fore, demanding that the remains of past experiences – often painful – be faced with honesty and an inescapable vulnerability, inevitably changing person and process. Sometimes this leads to a “dis-membering”, a breaking away from relationships, from long-held beliefs and views, from fixed positions and methods, and mercifully also from relationships with trauma and pain. Inevitably, this demands a type of reflexivity that questions one’s own positionality philosophy, and assumptions (cf. Graham 2003, Walton 2012).

My journey with this research project officially started in 2014 when I registered for a PhD at the University of the Free State (UFS) in Bloemfontein, traditionally referred to as the “city of roses” due to the many rose gardens one used to find all over. At the time I was a full-time lecturer in the Department of Practical and Missional Theology (as it is now known) at the UFS. My original proposal was developed from the awareness of the prevalence of violence and other traumatic experiences that became commonplace in democratic South Africa. I sought to make a case for the collective nature of these traumatic experiences, and their equally collective impacts and therefore had as an objective to explore for possible ways a collective approach to pastoral care could mitigate some of these impacts and support a process of personal and collective restoration. After the approval of the project, my first research assignment focussed on the impacts of the “forced” relocation of the Dingleton community, in the Northern Cape, due to the expansion of mining activities (Chapter 3).

At the end of 2014, I received a call from the Krönlein congregation, in Keetmanshoop, of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA), of which I am an ordained minister, and officially started ministering in the congregation at the start of February 2015. This proved to have significant impacts on my life and being, my ministry and this research project.

7.2.2. At home, safe yet badly exposed

Keetmanshoop is situated in the south of Namibia. Although it is the largest town in the region, it still has a very rural character to it despite being an economic and administrative hub for the region. My own history with the town goes way back to my childhood. When I was 12 years old, we moved to Keetmanshoop from a smaller town about 240 km north, called Mariental. I matriculated in Keetmanshoop, was confirmed at the local congregation, and fostered meaningful relationships of which many remained intact in various forms over the years. I moved away after school to study towards a B.Sc. degree at the University of Namibia (UNAM) but remained connected to the community as my mother continued to live there for quite some years still, and even after I had finished my studies I would regularly go back while my mother was still living there. After her move to come and live closer to us and her eventual passing on, I did not go to Keetmanshoop much. However, some of the relationships continued in various degrees and forms, and

upon my return to the community, those were rekindled. Very soon after I started ministering to the congregation, I realized that much of the community dynamics and challenges had remained the same over the years. It was astonishing to see how many of the people I knew from before – be it schoolmates, acquaintances, or those from the older generation – had retained their persona, mannerisms, outlook on life, roles, and behaviours. In the congregation this was really challenging as it brought back feelings of frustration, sometimes anger, that I suddenly recalled so vividly from the past.

Taking up the position of full-time minister at the congregation in Keetmanshoop disrupted the project on many levels. Firstly, I had to change my geographical and contextual focus since I was no longer in South Africa and did not have the means to visit the originally intended research areas. Although Keetmanshoop is in a different country, it was soon evident that the concerns of the research project, namely the impact of disruptive and traumatic experiences on individuals and communities, and the possible role of contextual congregational pastoral care to deal with these, were still relevant[25]. Secondly, my whole position now changed from an outsider (someone coming from the outside to research a selected community) to an insider – I am from here, know these people, share a history with them, and had emotional connections with many. Thirdly, the demands of ministry meant that it was immensely difficult to devote the necessary time to my research as I was no longer in an academic institution where research is a top priority. Fourthly, my multiple roles and identities in the community – child of the congregation and community, son of Dawid and Anna Mouton, old school pal, friend, old colleague, researcher, pastor, community worker and also a lecturer to some in the congregation and community at the local campus of UNAM, inevitably changed my whole position in terms of my intended research. In the fifth place, at some point I was forced, through both ministry and research activities and engagements, to deal with my own history of trauma and disruption, some of which was linked to this community. Many of these painful experiences I had long shelved with the intention to keep them locked up so that I could “simply move on”.

[25] https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-02-04-namibian-government-to-tighten-laws-on-gender-based-violence/
https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/676896#metadata_info_tab_contents
moz-extension://25df408f-7063-446f-be07-5a7ce9238b57/enhanced-reader.html?openApp&pdf=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.hotpeachpages.net%2Fafrica%2FNamibian%2520Directory%2FBackground.pdf
https://theowp.org/rise-in-sexual-gender-based-violence-in-namibia-sparks-anti-femicide-protests/
https://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/en/countries/africa/namibia?formofviolence=b51b5bac425b470883736a3245b7cbe6
https://www.namibian.com.na/6213335/archive-read/Activist-slams-police-SGBV-statistics
https://investigations.namibian.com.na/stricter-laws-on-gender-violence/

A significant change that emanated from this had to do with my methodological approach to the research project. At the start of my project, I set out to conduct the research through a literature survey, and some empirical work that would include questionnaires, surveys, and focus group discussions. I intended to use a narrative approach to this. As part of my own practices as well as the research process, I wrote reflective notes. Although this was part of the process, I never really valued it as a "primary" process or data source for the project. I knew that it was good for my well-being to reflect often enough on such experiences, and I knew that it is a valuable practice in ethnographic research. However, I did not realize the legitimacy of reflective journaling as a research methodology and data source until I encountered autoethnography. In the third article (Chapter 4 of this thesis), I discuss the relevance of autoethnography as a research framework for practical theological research in the context of my own experiences during this project in Keetmanshoop.

When revisiting my journal entries and other reflective notes made during this PhD research project, I am reminded of the often-disruptive nature of ordinary life. In the third article of this thesis, I wrote:

> Not only my own but also that of those I served and encountered in the congregation and community I ministered to and researched. This disrupted (and often disruptive) lived reality provides the space for a lived religion that seeks to make sense, instil hope, and to serve. In these encounters and the reflexive processes that ensue, you find yourself in the realm of lived religion – my understanding of Ganzevoort (2009) and Ganzevoort and Roeland (2014:96) – where you engage with the "ordinary" while grappling with and experiencing the sacred. In this space possibilities beckons, and potential and hope often emerge, but it is at the same time the space where we sometimes experience hope as "hope deferred". The intricacies of both personal and collective life provided the space for a pastoral care ministry that sought to address at least some of the impacts of disruptive and often traumatic experiences people experience. In this space, my connectedness to the community, as a "child of the community" who grew up here, made it difficult to simply create a so-called objective distance between my research and the people that I sought to further understand. I came to realize that I am my research, in the same way, I am my ministry and in the same way, I am an embodied presence in my relationships. Although concerned about this subjectivity and emotional connectedness, similar to the scepticism of dominant

positivistic research frameworks (Tomaselli 2016), the metaphor of the living human web (cf. Miller-McLemore 2018) encouraged me to continue with the research endeavour in the intersectional space of ordinary human relations and experiences, ministry objectives and a research agenda that has a transformative praxis as an objective. Perhaps this is where I reckon that practical theological research and autoethnography intersect best – not in terms of methodology, but rather in terms of its embodied presence. This issue of "embodiment" is highlighted by Sari Hokkanen (2017), amongst others, who argue that embodiment is not merely an emotional presence, but also includes "our cognitive processes" (2017:26). It is thus manifested in both how we know, reason, and reflect, and how this relates to the culture one finds oneself in (Mouton 2022*a*).

My own journey with autoethnography started one night in my study while reflecting on the experiences of a particular day in 2019, which I recount below (from my reflection journal, and originally written in Afrikaans).

> "How did this day start? How is it that I am again sitting here… tired, frustrated and with a deep sense of dissatisfaction? As I sat back in my chair, trying to rid myself of the feelings of discontent, dissatisfaction, and disheartenment, not having the energy to pray, my thoughts started wandering through the day that has passed... almost as messy as the papers lying in front me on the desk.
>
> It was just another day like any other. It started off with the normal routine stuff that marked every working day. It must have been around 07:15 when I realized how hot it was. I was already sweating and knew that soon I would have to retreat to the coldest place at home … our living room - if I wanted to get anything done today. It has been like this for days now. I remember thinking… quietly praying… "Lord, we need some relief… a bit of rain… just something to cool the day". As I sat myself out to work, the air conditioner blowing cool, refreshing air, I noticed through the windows that some clouds were building in the northeast. "Now that's a welcome sight", I thought. For more than an hour I submerged myself into the reading I had set out to do for my PhD, making notes and feeling an energy brewing as the ideas started to flow and I could, for once in quite a bit of time, start to see some new possibilities for my research that seems to have remained on the back burner for far too long now. I peeked

> through the window again and saw that the clouds have now really grown… became darker… a real promise of rain. Just as I looked down to continue with my work, I noticed a text message had just arrived. Reluctantly I decided to read it: “Reverend, are you at home or at the office? I desperately need to talk to you”, was all that the message said. For a moment I thought of not responding. Perhaps I shouldn’t have. But I did… and… after all, I seem to be a sucker for the pain of others. Fifteen minutes later I sat at the office and found myself drawn into the recounting of yet another experience of hurt, loss, disappointment and deep disorientation as my congregant recounted a disturbing and painful experience that basically shattered all sense of stability and meaning at that moment. As my mind went back to the conversation, I tried to push the memory back… I did not really have the energy to deal with that now. But then other recollections of the day surfaced, and I realized that I had not eaten for the day. God, I’m so tired. Tired of the pain. Tired of trying and trying… trying to try… struggling to help people make sense of their lives… struggling to help them see and embrace their agency. I’m so tired of the promise of change… change that seems so evasive. And the rain… o, it did not come. I noticed that already earlier in the day when the south-westerly started to pick up again. The bloody south-westerly …and the dust it brings … destroyer of the promise. The promise of rain… only a promise. An empty one… God, I’m so tired… so overwhelmed…”.

It is not uncommon for the area where I lived, in the south of Namibia, to frequently experience an apparently intense build-up of clouds that seems to hold a real promise of rain. The dark cumulonimbus clouds, sweltering heat and sense of heavy humidity in the air, could convince any visitor that the probability of rain is almost certain. However, those who have lived long enough here most often would take on a wait-and-see attitude. Too often these clouds, sometimes complete with thunder and lightning, are swiftly pushed away by strong winds in the upper air, many times accompanied by suffocating dust storms. Just as quickly as these clouds initially appear, they can disappear. This pattern can go on intermittently for weeks before any drop reaches the dry and dusty earth. Those familiar with these deceptive summer skies will know what I am talking about.

I have used this metaphor also in relation to the experiences of trauma in the fourth article (Chapter 5 in this thesis). Here I employ it to demonstrate something of my own experience with a research project that seemed to have become stuck. In a way, it reflects something of what I felt when it came to my own PhD studies. Just when I thought I had worked it all out and will now have time to put in a significant amount of work, something would happen that could derail me for weeks and even months. Having experienced so many setbacks and disruptions in this process, I often had a sense of being cheated as this project at times simply seemed to be going nowhere. This would leave me despondent, often bringing me to the brink of giving up. On many occasions, it would simply appear to hold the empty "promise of rain". As I write this final chapter, I am still looking with reserved hope to the "skies" for the rain of a completed PhD project.

Reflecting on the experience of that day, not only ushered in a new direction for this project, but it also resembled something of the disruption and unsatisfying journey up to that point. A journey that took several turns. At many junctures during the years that I tried to finish a PhD while at the same time giving my all to the congregation and community, I thought that I might eventually have to choose between finishing a PhD and focusing on ministry. That was one of those days. As I grappled with the tension of ministry demands – congregation, presbytery, regional and general synod, community engagements and my research project, it was through reflective practice that I found some hope to continue. When speaking of reflective practices or praxis, it is to be understood as much more than just "remembering" things, thinking about it, and recording it. Instead, it is about the meaning-making process that emanates from it and eventually informs and guides practice (Müller 2011, Walton 2014, Kaufman 2015, Graham 2017). In the third article (Chapter 4), I discuss this in more detail as part of the overall discussion on autoethnography, including my own doubts and uncertainties with the framework.

However, this was not a mere methodological change or merely a scenic detour on the journey, The "turn" to autoethnography left me exposed – at least to myself. This was when I realised that this research was deeply personal.

7.2.3. I am my research... my research is me...

Perhaps one should not become too personally entangled during a research project or too personal in the writing of the thesis. I don't know. What I do know is that the disruptions and the shifts I experienced had in many cases more to do with my personal history,

experiences, and connectedness to the community in Keetmanshoop than with anything else. Changes in insights, theory and methods sometimes flowed from this. I will try to reflect on some of these only briefly. In doing so I hope to provide at least some context to this difficult and extended journey to get to where I am currently with this project.

As a first juncture, I would like to go back to the “turn to autoethnography”. As I have discussed this already in Chapter 4, I will not dwell on it much. However, I want to draw attention to the fact that part of the reason autoethnography became a vital and necessary framework for this project was the network of relations I found myself in – historically and current. Due to multiple roles and identities – as perceived and experienced by myself and others – an objective stance in the project became untenable. Dealing with this caused great frustration and left me thinking that I will not be able to continue with the project in a credible way. Making the transition “into” autoethnography was challenging from a technical point of view, but even more so from a personal stance. Not only did I have to deal with my own ideas about what credible research methodologies entail, but I also had to contend with autoethnography’s ability to leave you exposed, even only to yourself. Its essence demands personal involvement and scrutiny, in service of telling the story of the other with integrity. Critique about the evocative nature of autoethnography (Anderson 2006; Shim 2018) did not help my struggle. However, through voices like that of Doty (201) and Wall (2016), amongst others, I found some sense of balance in my positional and methodological choices towards the end.

It is exactly because of the demand for personal scrutiny and reflection that revealed just how personal this project was to me. The project deals with experiences of disruption and trauma and reflects on whether a possible congregational pastoral care ministry could help in dealing with these. Issues of loss, death, grief, abuse, and unsettled identities, amongst others, surfaced during the project. In this, my own experiences with trauma surfaced. Experiences that I thought I had dealt with or even forgotten about would just suddenly appear. I remember sitting in my study one evening after having visited a family who had just lost a loved one and thinking about how dealing with the sudden passing of a loved one can be life-altering. It can reshape the life stories of entire families – and not always for the better. I know… As I thought about this, the following made its way into my journal.

> I still vividly remember waking up, at first with some excitement which was quickly replaced by a deep sense of emptiness… sadness and

disappointment. I was ten when my sister drowned. She was fifteen. Not only did she die that day on 13 March 1982, but I was made to witness the whole ordeal as she, together with our eldest sister's husband and a family friend, disappeared – one by one – under the waters of the Fish River, just downstream from the Hardap dam outside the small southern Namibian town of Mariental. There was simply nothing we could do. At first, we thought that they were playing some prank on us but soon realized that the waters had taken them. Strangely, we could not see any struggle from any one of them… they just disappeared. I remember that day … the day that broke us all…

For months I would have these wonderful dreams of Koekie, my 15-year-old sister who drowned, just showing up for a visit. Every time I would express my desire that she would stay… she would not respond to that. We would have such a wonderful time… laughing, talking, playing, and embracing. Mostly it was only the two of us. I felt so happy and content. Then, without warning, she would announce that her lift had arrived, but that she would come back soon again. I don't know for how long this kept happening. Every time I would wake up with a range of emotions… mostly ending with a sad emptiness… pleading with God to raise her from her grave just as He had raised Jesus. I truly believed that He could do it and that He would indeed do it if I just pleaded (maybe nagged) enough. Although painful, these nightly visits to the world of my dreams would keep me going somehow. Until one morning when I realized that it has been a while since she had visited me. Intuitively I knew that she would not come again… that God would not raise her from her grave… that God is not as powerful as I thought. That maybe He does not love us as much as I thought. That day I finally lost her… she finally died. The sense of loss, disappointment, confusion, and anchorless existence I could never forget. I almost lost my mind… literally. Not being able to talk about it made it worse. How could I? Who would understand? Seeing, even at the tender age of 10, how my parents withered as they tried to go on with life, further prevented me from sharing my struggle. Hearing our neighbour saying to my mother "Anna, julle moet sterk wees en aanvaar my suster. Die Here het vir Koekie kom haal en na 'n beter plek gevat" ("*Anna you must be strong and accept my sister. The Lord took Koekie*

to a beter place.") would confuse and infuriate me. "How is this better for us?". "What do you know of this big hole in my chest?" "Why would God take her to a better place and leave us so much worse off?" These were some of the questions brewing in my mind. I know… she only wanted to make it better, and this was the only way she could think of. Decades later, and much older, I had enough wisdom to realize that the disintegration that followed was not to be blamed on anyone of my parents or us siblings. Only decades later I got to know the name of the monster that paralysed us … "traumatic loss". Only now I know it comes in many ways, yet almost always leaves the same legacy. Death … loss … guilt … blame and… and…. and ... If only someone had the sense of it then. If only they did not pretend that everything will eventually be good again. If only the people in this "new town" (Keetmanshoop) we moved to knew our story… had the awareness, the willingness and the "muscle" to help us wrestle this monster… If only I knew what I know now, I could have helped them… us.

How did I survive? Even in such a blinding loss, God opens a mother's eye. She could see, despite an even deeper pain and struggle, and somehow got me to consider the possibility of another day. Eventually, this became a real hope. I don't know what went through her mind while sitting on her knees next to me, praying together with me that the voices in my head and the "footsteps outside my window" would become silent. Somehow, she kept praying every night when I woke her up with fear and angst. This was the time when I started praying. O, I had prayed since I can remember, but now it could not be the recited children's prayers through carefully rhymed words of another. They could not do it anymore. I had to speak to God… I had to meet Him. I still wish things were different. I still pray and hope that the impact of what followed can be undone and true and full restoration can become reality for those of us still on this side. I still hope… still holding on to the possibility of another day.

On that fateful day, I think, my journey started with trauma and disruption. Writing this without being coerced or forced was therefore quite meaningful. However, recounting this experience related to the loss of my sister was also the starting point of a pending descent

on the route of a years-long recovery journey. The more I engaged with people, both as a minister and practical theological researcher, on their disruptive and traumatic experiences, the more these types of reflections seemed to force their way into my thoughts and onto my papers. This would sometimes hold me ransom for extended periods as I grappled with deeply hidden unresolved issues related to traumatic experiences. On the one hand, this evoked memories that became personally unsettling and challenging whilst also “clouding” the research process. Yet, it was through facing these, often unresolved remnants of a past with trauma, that I was able to enter a new level in the process of healing, becoming an empathetic sojourner with those I encountered in the context of my ministry and this research project, able to share some of their struggles from trauma and historic pain. In accepting these personal experiences, through recollections at various points, my own vulnerability and woundedness were not only exposed but eventually gave me strength and motivation for the project and ministry. There was no way for me to step back from this. In trying to help others to re-write their stories, I had to face my own stories of trauma and disruption, of loss, grief and emptiness, the stories of witnessing abuse and violence... the stories of strife and destruction. But... hindsight is a blessing. In hindsight, you also re-discover the gold nuggets of resilience, hopefulness, humanity and beauty of family and friends, previously buried under the ashes of the shared stories of lives that seemed to have gone up in flames. In these “stories” I realized that I am my research... my research is me... it is personal! I had to accept this. This is the reason why I do what I do. It is because of this that the manifesto of the ministry of Jesus Christ in Luke 4:18-19 speaks so loud to me and has become so important in defining my own ministry and research agenda.

But my story with trauma is a story that intersects with my relationship with the church. While I remember the role of the church in helping for instance at times of death, I also remember “church” as a community that often does not know how to help. Instead, I have recollections of the church deliberately maintaining a distance between itself and the domestic issues of others. I remember a church that kind of gave the impression that the death of a father who desperately succumbed to the pain of trauma, expressed through a series of unfortunate choices, somehow is not as bad as the death of one who is seen as a pillar of society. It can be a community of judgement and restoration, and of inclusion and exclusion, at the same time. Only during this project, I discovered the concepts of hierarchies of loss and disenfranchised grief. Only now I had found the language and concepts helping me understand what I had experienced years ago. Yet, through this, I

realized the importance of engaging with societal perspectives on issues of trauma. Through this, I am reminded that somehow, God is and has always been, present in this imperfect church. How else would I have found the conviction to spend most of my life actively involved with the church... with the faith community. Despite the imperfections, I have always somehow found some caring and comforting expression of God through someone or something in the faith community. In a way, someone, without knowing or understanding, was always there through a ministry of presence to keep alive the hope of a new dawn. Realizing this left me even more convinced that the faith community can be a healing community and through this project, I hope that I have contributed even just a little to help people understand this as the call and identity of the church. Knowing what it feels like to anxiously wait for someone... something... to show up, to notice, to offer help... to do something, helped me see how this now unfolds in the lives of others and left me with no choice but to respond.

I am my research... my research is me... it is personal! My story is that of every other person dealing with trauma – current or historical. I can therefore not leave myself off the pages of what I write here (cf. Graham 2017). In an autoethnographic sense, including my story then in a way amplifies the stories of others, making its inclusion a legitimate choice in this study.

7.2.4. Theology IS personal and it IS practical

As I reflect on the changes experienced, I realized that it also extended to my views on practical theology. When I left my previous career to pursue theological studies, I did so with the sole aim of acquiring the necessary skills and know-how to be a full-time minister in our church. I had no questions about my calling.

Practical theology is often referred to as "*a theory of crisis"* (Heitink 1993:3), and in a way, I experienced this on a personal level during this project. As I navigated around obstacles, I frequently had to question my own understanding of practical theology, looking for ways to do this from within practical theology itself. Much like the church at various junctures through history, I would look for "advice, direction and the development of new approaches and methodologies" to continue with this study. The notion that all theology should be practical was dominant for me from the start but, much like Planck in 1794 (Du Plessis 2022), it was primarily about applying Biblical truths when I started my theological studies. I had the idea that practical theology was about the application of what I was to

learn about the Bible during my studies when I started my theological training. In a way, I kind of started off very much in the “Dark Ages” as practical theology only really had relevance to me in the context of the training and empowerment of the pastor. As my training progressed my understanding of the field expanded. Even though I started to see the task of practical theology as “describing, analysing, evaluating and providing strategies for practices related to the ministry” (De Roest 2020:91), it was still very much centred around the role of the pastor in the congregation, and making practical that which I learn from other disciplines of theology.

Encountering the thinking of Friederich Schleiermacher (Gräb 2005) introduced a more pronounced shift and I became more nuanced in my expectations of practical theology. Although still concerned with the role of the pastor, I began to understand that the role and influence of the field extended beyond the traditional boundaries and traditions, and church, and that it has a greater concern for ordinary life as was admitted before or recognized by myself. Reading about Schleiermacher’s views that practical theology, as a science, or theory of praxis, must speak to the realities of life, made me realize that perhaps my initial views were not necessarily from the “Dark Ages”, but that it was rather a matter of not knowing how to express these or see them embodied in reality, which may speak to my own experiences of church in the community. Coming from a natural sciences background (my previous career was in environmental management), the insistence of Graf and Nitzsh regarding the status of practical theology as legitimate science really appealed to me, and during my third and fourth years of undergraduate studies in theology the unique contributions of practical theology and its sub-disciplines only truly became “real” for me. Similarly, the emphasis on the empirical (cf. De Roest 2020), resonated with this background. My training and exposure provided me with language and frameworks to start engaging in a way with practical theology that revealed that I indeed may have had a broader, albeit masked, understanding of practical theology to begin with.

The concern for the ordinary and the affinity for broad scientific collaboration that grew in the 20th century had been “with me” and only needed to be “unlocked”. After all, it was my concern for the local and concrete context (Müller, Van Deventer & Human 2001), that provided the additional motivation for leaving my career as an environmental scientist to pursue one in theology. In addition, practical theology’s emphasis on the liberation and restoration of communities, as has been growing in the last decades, speaks to my own

confessional frameworks and beliefs. In the same vein, looking back now, I realized that the awareness of the meaningful connections between the practices of the church and the ordinary experiences of people became an important aspect of my engagement with the congregation during this study. My own challenges and that of the community further underscored the importance and relevance of the concept of lived reality as the object of practical theology. The legitimacy of such lived experiences and the embracing of the scientific study thereof provided a sense of freedom and affirmation to choose practical theology as my field of specialization. Again, it was especially the emphasis on the concrete local contexts and the understanding of practical theology as a liberating praxis that continue to appeal to me.

Richard Osmer's book *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (2008) really brought things together for me. In the four-pillared framework I did not only find a theological and methodological rationale for what I am and do in practical theology but it also brought together what I had learned from other voices I encountered throughout my journey. Voices such as that of Daniël Louw – a theology of hope and intestines, his existential views of humans and pastoral care, his phenological and hermeneutical approach, Julian Müller, and his views on a post-foundational narrative approach to pastoral care, Emmanuel Lartey and his perspectives on intercultural pastoral care, Maikee Masango with his narrative approaches and African perspectives, are just a few that I found resonated with my understanding of Osmer's framework.

At the end of this project I am more convince that: (1) Theology, including practical theology, is personal as much as it is communal, it is about the church yet not without an equal concern for the ordinary in the lives of people; (2) Theology, and not just practical theology, is always practical as it deals with the lives of people in the presence of God even in so-called profane spaces and in the ordinary, in the context of God's involvement with people and in service of the liberatory call of the Gospel.

7.3. In transit – beholding the outcome

I am here now... supposedly "finished" with a PhD. Have I arrived at my final destination? No, this moment and space merely represent a transit point where I can reflect, look back, and look forward to possible other journeys and interim destinations. This is the point where I can look back and reflect on whether I have travelled the journey and reached the milestones that I had set out to do at the start of the process. To do this I will first

briefly re-visit the research questions and aims before reflecting on the contributions of each of the five articles that constitute this thesis.

7.3.1. Revisiting the research questions, aims and process

The overall aim of this research project was to develop a deeper understanding of the impacts of trauma and disruption on the lives of people in communities and to develop a proposal for a possible congregational pastoral ministry response to issues of trauma and disruption in service of improved well-being. This was directed by the primary research question, "*How can congregations be empowered, through a congregational pastoral ministry approach, to face issues of trauma and disruption?".* A number of secondary questions were designed to further guide the project towards addressing this primary question. These are:

i. Can the narratives/stories of people change the face of the future despite experiences of trauma and disruption? / Can the narratives/stories of people strengthen their ability to face experiences of trauma and disruption and provide a hopeful outlook on the future?
ii. How can the role, position, and influence of the practical theologian as a practitioner (minister) and researcher be understood with regard to research and praxis in a congregational pastoral approach to issues of trauma and disruption?
iii. What are some of the traumatic and disruptive experiences people and communities faced with?
iv. What could a possible congregational pastoral ministry approach to issues of trauma and healing look like?

Differently stated the overall aim of this research was to develop a deeper understanding of the impacts of trauma and disruption on the lives of people in communities and to develop a proposal for a possible congregational pastoral ministry response to issues of trauma and disruption in service of improved well-being. To achieve this, more specific objectives were formulated and these, as counterparts of the research questions, provided the foci for each of the articles that make up this thesis. These were:

i. Provide a rationale/argument for a deliberate shift towards a community approach to issues of trauma, disruption, and well-being.
ii. Explore, through a narrative approach, the potential for resistance, agency, and hopefulness in the stories of people affected by traumatic and disruptive experiences.

iii. Explore the role of the practical theologian and practitioner (the local pastor) in researching and responding to issues of trauma and disruption through a congregational pastoral ministry approach.
iv. Identify and discuss some of the traumatic and disruptive experiences people and communities are faced with, how they are affected by and how people generally respond to these, as well as the challenges this present to congregational pastoral ministry.
v. Develop and implement a framework for a possible congregational pastoral ministry approach to issues of trauma and healing.

7.3.2. Beholding the outcome

In this section, I will reflect on the outcomes of this project in relation to each of the secondary research questions to demonstrate how the primary research question and the overall aim of the study were addressed. However, before we can reflect on these, it is important to ask whether an adequate rationale was established as well as how this study relates to the understanding of practical theology followed during the project.

7.3.2.1. Secondary research question 1: What do we understand by a community-oriented approach to pastoral care?

The introductory chapter not only provided a framework and context for this project but already started to address the first task of Osmer's framework, namely the descriptive/empirical task, asking the question: "*What is going on?"*. This was taken much further in the first article (Chapter 2) presented here in that it provided a thorough discussion on the context of disruption and trauma in the South African context. At the same time, it framed these phenomena as a concern for practical theology and pastoral care, arguing for a deliberate shift towards a community approach to issues of trauma, disruption, and well-being. Due to changes in study contexts, and particularly after moving to Namibia, it was necessary to include further details on local contexts as part of the overall contextualization of the study. This was done in articles 2, 4, and to a lesser extent, article 5.

In the first article titled "*Communities facing disruption: The need to shift from individual to community paradigms in pastoral care"* (Mouton 2014) – Chapter 2, I provided some contextual background regarding the widespread violence and traumatic experiences that

have plagued South African society before the democratic dispensation and how it continues to do so. A quick peek into media reports on any day will confirm that the situation regarding violent crime, gender-based violence and many other trauma-generating experiences is not getting better. On the contrary, it seems to be getting worse. The article succeeds in presenting these as a concern for and relevant to practical theology and pastoral care. This was done by unpacking the concepts of trauma and disruption, healing, and well-being, and how it functions on both individual and communal levels. Trauma, is described in the article as “a radical event or experience that has to do with some form of injury and pain (from the Greek word trauma) and has the ability to shake ones world in such a way that all “normality” is turned upside-down to an extent that the person affected or confronted by the traumatizing event has no ability to cope with the reality of such an event” (Mouton 2014:97), clearly affects all aspects of a person's being. It has the ability to unsettle the assumptive world and bring into question those meaningful frameworks that hold our individual and collective existence in balance. Questions about “(1) a meaningful and coherence/ continuity world, (2) the kind-heartedness of others, and (3) the worth of the self” (Mouton 2014:98) are forced to the surface as one grapples with the effects of a traumatic experience and the failure to make sense of one’s world. As something that can affect both individuals and communities, trauma does not necessarily remain in the past and unless a person finds positive ways to deal with it, it will continue to affect such a person's life and well-being. Questions about God, religion and religious or spiritual meaning are not uncommon. Indeed, the relationship between trauma and religion is more often a complicated one. This may, in part, be due to the struggle to find meaning in traumatic experiences in the context of one’s religious traditions and belief systems which often seem inadequate in this regard. However, it may also be attributed to experiences of trauma that are related to religion itself. One must however not underestimate the fact that experiences of trauma may introduce new opportunities for growth, despite the disruption and pain it brings.

In contrast to what we know about trauma, Scripture speaks of healing, restoration, and well-being. In the article, I have discussed these from a biblical perspective while also highlighting the need for a local, contextual, and African approach to it. Similarly, the article presented a framework for an understanding of pastoral care as it develops from Biblical notions of care, healing and restoration. Through a cursory on the development of pastoral care, the article demonstrated how the field had developed towards an eventual emphasis on its collective and contextually grounded nature. In the end, the

article argues that “pastoral care in a context of disrupted and traumatized communities is best dealt with through an integrative approach to health and wellbeing that not only sees people as spiritually integrated beings, but also takes seriously the relational, communal and social aspects of human living” (Mouton 2014:102). In my view, this article succeeded in providing the (1) conceptualization of the key concepts that feature in the project – trauma, disruption, pain, healing, restoration, wholeness – and (2) an argument for a shift towards a more collective pastoral care response in dealing with trauma and disruption.

7.3.2.2. Secondary research question 2: Can the narratives/stories of people strengthen their ability to face experiences of trauma and disruption and provide a hopeful outlook on the future?

The second article (Chapter 3), *“The power of stories from within: The Dingleton Community relocation”* (Mouton 2016), dealt with the relocation of residents of the Dingleton community to the nearby town of Kathu due to the expansion of mining activities. It is to be expected that changes and transitions such as that brought about by a community relocation introduce a significant amount of uncertainty, particularly due to “continuously changing fields of meaning”. This necessitated “an epistemological and methodological framework that enables reflection rooted firmly in situational experience”. The study, therefore, used a narrative approach to understanding how residents experienced and dealt with the imminent relocation and wanted to explore how the narratives of participants help form their perspectives regarding the expected impacts of the relocation. More importantly, the study set out to explore elements of these narratives that may serve as “instruments” of resistance and a source of agency for people facing disruption. “[S]uch an approach forces a rediscovery of practical theology as an endeavour that involves ‘a reflection on practice, from the perspective of the experience of the presence of God’” (Mouton 2016:311).

The power of people’s stories, explored through a narrative research approach, indeed emerged as a powerful instrument of resistance and a source of agency for people facing disruption, and has the potential to “influence their response to forces of change”. Stories are important as they narrate the lived realities of people, including the expressions of and perceptions associated with their religious frameworks. As concern for practical theology, the “dynamics of people’s stories tell us not only of how they live life, but also

how they are shaped by life in the presence of God". The article briefly, and perhaps rather superficially explored how power (also that expressed through narratives) "has the ability to exert influence from all levels and from everywhere" (Mouton 2016:310). This notion, as argued in the article, "allows for people to identify and evaluate those powers that can possibly affect them, and then choose to focus on those powers that shape their understanding of life and the meaning thereof", even in the context here of a seemingly more powerful corporation affecting changes to a community perceiving itself as the "less powerful". Within "a bigger and broader narrative, these powers may be re-interpreted to give new meaning in life". In narrating their own experiences people often find those strands that were previously obscured yet now offer hope and encouragement for responding to disruption with a greater sense of agency. This part of the overall project was not so much on facilitating immediate change, but rather discovering those elements in a person's narrative that provide a new perspective, meaning and hope through the act of reflective listening and recounting.

The article concluded that:

> "through the ordinary narratives of ordinary people, using a post-foundation narrative approach, one may be able to illustrate how stories themselves generate a particular understanding of powers and forces and eventually direct people's responses to changes and crises".
>
> "the perceived dominant power reflected in the story and the power of the story from within plays a significant role in how people choose to deconstruct their lives, to find meaning in their circumstances and deal with change and transition" (Mouton 2016:317).

7.3.2.3. Secondary research question 3: How can the role, position, and influence of the practical theologian as a practitioner (minister) and researcher be understood with regard to research and praxis in a congregational pastoral approach to issues of trauma and disruption?

The third article/book chapter, "*Writing the self in(to) Practical Theological research*" (Mouton 2022*a*:79-98) – Chapter 4, emerged because of my own journey with disruptions during the course of the project. The article focuses mainly on (1) providing a description of autoethnography as a research framework, and (2) making an argument for the legitimacy of autoethnography as an appropriate research framework for practical theology. The primary arguments for this are centred around the importance of the local

and concrete context, the reflective and transformative nature of practical theology, and practical theology's own affinity for a variety of research methods as necessitated by the objectives of a particular research project. A further nexus between autoethnography and practical theology lies in their interest in societies and their associated cultures, and how these are to be understood and engaged with. I argued that it is impossible for the practical theology practitioner and researcher to assume a completely objective and distanced stance in relation to the community with whom she/he engages. This is particularly true when the practitioner or researcher is linked to the community being studied, either through historical ties or through current connections and roles. While the first article was about articulating the research problem and its relevance for practical theology and pastoral care, the second one dealt with how the stories of people may reveal strands within the broader narrative that serve to empower and encourages the narrator, providing hope and agency to face hardships and disruption.

This article however moved a bit closer to the researcher (me) and represents something of a journey to the inside – me facing myself in the context of personal life, ministry, and this research project. The article was born from a place of discomfort and "directionlessness" regarding my research project. When I accepted the call to the congregation in Keetmanshoop I believed that I would only have to adapt my research project in terms of the new study location. I did not foresee that the demands of full-time ministry, which included responsibilities on congregational, presbytery, regional synod and general synod levels, would inhibit my progress so significantly that I could hardly focus on the project for extended periods. Although I knew that it would have some effect, I grossly underestimated the extent thereof. However, what was even more challenging was the unexpected influence my history and relationship with the community would have on the actual research process. In the introduction of the article, I captured the following to point to this challenge.

> As someone who grew up in this community and congregation, I found myself having to negotiate between multiple identities and roles right from the start. Old and familiar relationships were rekindled, old roles assumed again, and experiences from the past (positive and negative) found their way back into our collective memories. The role of researcher often conflicted with that of pastor and so-called insider. Knowing many of the people and sharing a history with them, inevitably created empathy on the one hand, yet also led to the resurfacing of old frustrations, prejudices, and default responses on the

> other hand. Congregants often found the overlap in roles and identities – between researcher, pastor, and old friend – a bit confusing and/or intimidating. ...
>
> Being involved in the "personal" lives of congregants, by virtue of being their pastor, while at the same time attempting to conduct research amongst the same people, certainly raised questions in terms of objectivity in the research process. Distinguishing between what is meant for the "pastor" and what is meant to be considered for the research process, even during intentional encounters with the research aims in mind, was not always entirely clear. At times there were also deliberate attempts to "sanitise" the re-counting of experiences as a result of my own discomfort when faced with sensitive and sometimes disturbing information. Even though I may have been aware of this, I realised that I had no right to choose to expand or augment whatever narrative it was that the person wished for me to hear. The question arose: What does one do with the personal connections and often privileged information in the context of researching one's own? Dealing with this and the multiple identities that I assumed in this community complicated the process at times. I could not pretend that there was no shared history, or that those emotional responses were not real or of significance in terms of the research process (Mouton 2022*a*:79).

Written retrospectively, the article summarizes the eventual result of "internal conversation" and reflections regarding methodological considerations in the face of conflicting emotions, multiple identity experiences, and varied responses from local congregants and community members to the multiple roles as friend, acquaintance, pastor and researcher. Unfortunately, this process of "clarifying" my own positionality and framework, coupled with dealing with personal historical trauma and disruptions as well as ministry obligations, had an immense impact on the progress of the overall project, hence the huge gap between the second and third contributions. Although this is odd and not desirable, the University of the Free State provided approval for the continuation of the study.

Although the article does not extensively address the issues of the role, position, and influence of the practical theologian as a practitioner (minister) and researcher with regard to research and praxis in a congregational pastoral approach to issues of trauma and

disruption, it evolved from a process that dealt with it. Some of the reflections in Chapter 1 and Chapter 7 provide more background to that. Read in conjunction with these chapters the following can be concluded:

i. Autoethnography, through its intersection with practical theology on ontological and epistemological grounds, offers a framework that places a high premium on reflexivity, embodiment, lived reality and, in practical theological terms, lived religion.
ii. Its acceptance, and advocacy, for the personal, subjective and emotive "involvement of the researcher" makes the researcher, who is also an insider in the case of a local minister conducting research with her/his congregation, part of the research narrative, process and outcomes.
iii. Allowing the voice of both researcher and the broader community to feature strengthens the social justice imperative of practical theology.
iv. As a framework that evolved in response to a prescriptive approach to doing research, autoethnography allows for a variety of methodologies to contribute to research in practical theology.
v. Its reflexive praxis not only provides a means for "verification" but also allows for such praxis to influence the way a minister engages with her/his ministry, the congregation, the community, and her/his personal journey. In this way, it makes research possible despite ministry pressures, but also creates a space for self-care.
vi. Through the "turn" to autoethnography I was forced to face my own journey with trauma, my own philosophies, frameworks and assumptions. This brought me to the point where I accepted that research is personal – I am my research and my research is me.

The above underlines the necessity, I think, for practical theologians to acknowledge and integrate their own situated within a culture when researching such culture. It demands a critical view of one's own agenda, identity, and positionality. Despite the aversion to subjectivity from traditional research methods, this article demonstrated that such subjectivity does not have to undermine the quality of research processes and products in practical theology.

7.3.2.4. Secondary research question 4: What are some of the traumatic and disruptive experiences people and communities are faced with?

Both the second and fourth articles (Chapter 3 and 6) provide examples of some of the traumatic and disruptive experiences people are sometimes faced with. These are of course not meant to provide an exhaustive list and are merely the results of specific research activities, with different objectives, only from two different communities. The focus and content of the first article have been dealt with earlier in 3.2.2 and will not be repeated here. In the fourth article (Chapter 5), *"A promise of rain – facing encounters with trauma and disruption*" (Mouton 2022*b*), the focus again shifted to the disruptive and traumatic experiences communities are faced with.

This article deals with and describes the impact of disruptive and traumatic experiences in the Keetmanshoop community. Data for this discussion was derived from public sources, congregational documents, questionnaires, unstructured interviews and conversations, group discussions, and a reflexive praxis involving analysis of my own experiences and emotions to that. How disruptive experiences are present, how people deal with them, how clergy deal with it, and the challenges that it presents for a congregational pastoral care approach, are discussed. The article demonstrated how cultural and societal perspectives may deepen the hurt and negative effects of traumatic experiences, often leaving victims resorting to silence. As shame and guilt persist because of this, victims generally do not feel comfortable to seek help. However, in the presence of dependable relationships and a caring community and caring networks, coupled with an established faith and faith practices, victims appear to find resilience in the midst of their suffering. They appear to find coping mechanisms that help to deal with the effects of the trauma, and also seem more likely to find meaning in purpose and their significant relationships. What seems to be clear is that the effects of traumatic and disruptive experiences are best dealt with in the context of relationships and in community.

7.3.2.5. Secondary research question 5: What could a possible congregational pastoral ministry approach to issues of trauma and healing look like?

The last article (Chapter 6), titled *"Facing disruptive and traumatic experiences in communities: A congregational pastoral ministry approach"* (Mouton 2022*c*), deals with aspects of a possible congregational pastoral ministry response to issues of trauma and disruption and seeks to provide a framework for such an approach. Anchored in a confessional understanding, the identity and calling of the church leaves her at no other

place but by the side of God as He stands with those in need. In this confessional self-understanding we see ourselves, but only because it first demands that we see the other. The framework proposed here makes use of the metaphor of “facing” to highlight the important moves - towards a congregational pastoral care ministry approach - within the framework. This can be summarized as follows: (1) a reflective self-awareness in the compassionate awareness of the other, (2) the move beyond mere awareness towards the detailed scanning of the context – resources, needs and networks, and (3) affirmation of being seen through the embodied ministry of the congregation as it minsters in service of bringing hope and transformation to the lives of people. The “confessional approach” argued for here affirms then that care first and foremost about our position before God and others, before it is about doing anything.

Through the reporting of the various projects in the congregation, it was demonstrated that a collective congregational response to issues of trauma and disruption, be it personal or structural, has the potential to transform at least parts of people’s painful realities. This has been true on an individual and collective level through counselling and communal narrative engagements. Projects related to structural conditions leading to trauma and disruption, such as food insecurity, not only impacted positively on those ministered to, but also on the volunteers and congregation members who participated in the ministry of care. The value of collective discernment, visioning, and strategizing was highlighted, while aspects of training and empowerment were also raised. Integrating a congregational pastoral care response in the entire spectrum of congregational activities and worship is not only possible but seems to be crucial for people to related the plight of others to their own identity and calling as members of the Body of Christ, to teach, inspire, and mobilize the congregation, and to cultivate a culture of presence within the broader community. The article affirmed that an integrative and participatory congregational pastoral care ministry is indeed possible.

7.4. Conclusion: blind spots and green shoots – looking into the future

There are several aspects of the study that could have been better. Like any other study, it was not perfect. One aspect that I must mention is the fact that I was unprepared for starting a research project in the same congregation where I was the full-time minister. Dealing with issues of identity, roles, and the dynamics around it severely delayed the project as I sought to find a way to continue with the project. In addition, the demands of full-time ministry left little time for the research project, and this is a big part of the reason

why the study took so long. This exposed quite a number of shortcomings in my own armour. However, this led to growth as a person and professional and in the end also left me no choice but to face my own past and my history with trauma, which was liberating. In the next sections I will reflect on some of the positive aspects of the study before giving attention to those aspects offer some insights into future growth.

7.4.1. Some green shoots

I would like to start this last section, as I started the first, i.e., by briefly reflecting on the metaphor that guided the development of the thesis. To be honest, the metaphor of "facing" did not feature at the start of the study and only became apparent towards that tail-end of the process. Well, at least not overtly. As the overall picture started to take shape and I reflected more purposefully, I realized that the idea of facing, seeing, observing, making sense of things - bi-directionally as I constantly looked back and ahead – was always present. It formed and integral part of how I engaged with participants as they narrated their own stories as well as in the congregation, and it established itself in my own reflective practices as I journeyed with this project and my life-story. Through conscious reflection about the multiple sides of the prism, the metaphor would lead me to face the less comfortable truths of what goes on in our communities and the lives of our people, yet at the same time it guided a resilient look for ways to combat the pain, to transform the barren spaces and to find new meaning in less desirable experiences. In the end it served the project particularly well in conceptualizing the composition of this thesis. The power of metaphors to inspire and to provide "language" to engage with that which robs us from our ability to articulate was again underlined for me and I believe that it holds immense power not only in guiding a research journey, but also in dealing with disruption and trauma on a personal and collective level.

Making use of the article model in completing this PhD study allowed me some flexibility with regards to the necessitated geographical moves I had to undertake. Despite the risk that the articles may appear disjointed for the person who are not familiar with this project, this mode of delivery allowed for the connection of shared themes and objectives to be connected, whilst also presenting work that could stand on its own. Personally, this was very challenging, especially due to limitation in permissible word count, but the experience in academic writing this offers is invaluable. Having a metaphor that creates space for the articles to remain in conversation and connected also helped.

The most interesting, and challenging part for me personally was my encounter with and initiation into autoethnography as research framework. This was really born out of a desperate need to deal, in a responsible way, with conflicts in related to identity, positionality, worldview, and assumed community connections. Autoethnography afforded me the space to embrace my own presence in the community of Keetmanshoop, and that allowed me to embrace the risks of subjectivity in the research process. Although it led to a process by which I had to face myself, my at times misplaced assumption, and my own history with trauma, in the end it led to a liberating experience of acceptance, integration and resolve. The reflexive nature of the framework enhanced my limited self-care practices, which I turn fed back into my ministry and other engagements.

While the material presented here and the theories engaged with are not new, I believe that a significant benefit of these projects was that it allowed me to discover vocabulary and concepts that helped me understand my own trauma and experiences. Together with a sustained reflective practice, this aided in further developing empathy for those who crossed my path in ministry and during these projects. Sharing this with congregants and community members proved valuable as people now understood what they were going through and had the words to engage with it. This is something that should probably be encouraged amongst clergy and community workers.

It was really liberating and energizing to minster with people at times and not just to them. The richness in perspectives served the overall aim of providing space for restoration while the growth of people who were involved on this level was encouraging. Seeing the transformation of both receiver and giver of care must have been the most rewarding part of the project.

Grounding the pastoral care approach in a confessional framework happened naturally. By using language already familiar to the ear of congregants there was already some level of understanding. Not to say that it was easy to journey with people to the point where they realize that their identity remains incomplete without the honest “seeing” of the other. As a matter of fact, this approach alienated a few congregants. Yet I believe that its potential and relevance could be explored in other settings as well.

I believe that biggest contribution this study made was in the lives of those people who allowed themselves to be affected by the ministry of care that this project wanted to

communicate and offer. But this project also led to my own development in ways that I did not foresee. Since this has been raised at different junctures in the thesis, I will not delve into it further. The witness of the hope that a collective pastoral care ministry and an honest engagement with the narratives of people's lived realities can offer, has on more than one occasion elicited courage, encouragement and hope even for those who were not ministered to directly. The study further contributed in enriching the self-understanding of individuals and communities who were connected with it. Through knowledge, understanding and language the space is created for integration and maturity on different levels which has the potential to contribute to the healing and cohesion of local communities.

On a scholarly level the study engaged with and accentuated knowledge in the fields of practical theology and pastoral care in relation to dealing with traumatic and disruptive experiences. It further provided a nuanced case for the place and relevance of autoethnography as a viable research framework for practical theology.

7.4.2. Blind spots, opportunities, and a peak ahead

Just as with other projects, this one also had its flaws and therefore there are a number of aspects I would like to highlight and will also consider for future research and ministry work. Dealing with methodology in transit – as I did – says something of the agility of practical theology. However, it also has the potential to introduce risks related to the quality of the data, the interpretation, and the outcomes. Although I do not regret the growth that emanated from this, I would suggest that methodological choices be maintained with limited variation as it also impacts on the research process. Also, a stronger emphasis on empirical research will not only strengthen the academic stature of a project like this one, but the data will significantly enrich the discernment and implementation aspects of the project.

A challenge for the project in Keetmanshoop was the centrality I had as pastor. Even though some of the projects are still ongoing after having left the congregation in Keetmanshoop three years ago, the initial success and sustainability was very dependent on the energy I was able to put in. Coupled with this is the fact that a project like this always has the potential to become just another charity project. I believe by dealing with issues related to a confessional understanding of congregational identity and calling, coupled with inputs from other disciplines, it may be possible to guard against this. A

significant improvement of the framework would be to design it in such a way that it can be implemented with minimum inputs, especially afte the initial phases, from the pastor, drawing more on the involvement of congregants and community resource persons. The framework provided here offers a starting point to reproduce similar studies and projects in other congregations and communities which is something that I consider doing. Improving the reproducibility of the study can benefit congregations, while also deepen the ongoing relationship between theory and praxis as well as the development of best practice approaches in congregational pastoral care ministry.

An interest that developed during this process, and which I intend to pursue as part of further academic work, relates to the value of reflexive practices as self-care and research tool for pastors. In addition to that is the potential for reflexive practices to help congregations re-discover and embrace their identities and calling, and for that to be embodied in an outward and community oriented pastoral care ministry. Coupled with this could be the introduction of autoethnography as research framework for those ministers interested in congregational research while also committed to full-time ministry.

8. Bibliography

Abi-Hashem, N., 1999. Grief, loss, and bereavement: An overview. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*,*18*(4), pp.309-329

Abramsky, T., Watts, C.H., Garcia-Moreno, C., Devries, K., Kiss, L., Ellsberg, M., Jansen, H.A. and Heise, L. 2011. What factors are associated with recent intimate partner violence? Findings from the WHO multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence. *BMC public health*, *11*(1), pp.1-17

Alexander, J.C., Eyerman, R., Giesen, B., Smelser, N.J. & Sztompka, P. (eds.). 2004. *Cultural trauma and collective identity.* California: University of California Press

Anderson, L. 2006. Analytic autoethnography. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography,* 35(4), pp.373-395

Atkinson, P. 2006. Rescuing autoethnography. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography,* 35(4), pp.400-404

Anglo American. 2007. *Proposed Relocation of the Dingleton Township and Community*. [Online] Available at: http://www.kumba.co.za/news_ article.php?articleID=287. [Accessed 27 November 14]

Anglo American. 2011. *Kumba iron ore responsibility report 2010* . [Online] Available at: http://www.kumba.co.za/reports/kumba_ar2010/ responsibility/if_pi_relocation.php. [Accessed 27 November 14]

Anglo American. 2013. *Relocation of Dingleton community approved*. [Online] Available at: http://www.bdlive.co.za/national/2014/11/25/kumba-http:// www.kumba.co.za/news_article.php?articleID=2011. [Accessed 27 November 14]

Aronsson, I. 2009. The paradox of local participation in forced displacement and resettlement caused by the development process. *Revista Română de Sociologie*, xx(1-2), pp.37-59.

Audergon, A. 2004. Collective Trauma: The nightmare of history. *Psychotherapy and Politics International,* 2(1), pp.16-31

Barbarin, O. A., Richter, L. & de Wet, T. 2001. Exposure too violence, coping resources, and psychological adjustment of South African children. *American Orthopsychiatric Association, Inc.* 71(1), pp.16-25

Barnard, M. 2014. My father's tobacco-jar. Church Square Pretoria and Freedom Park: An autoethnographical exploration. *Verbum et Ecclesia,* 35(2), pp.1-7

Baron, E., 2017. Belhar as a therapeutic resource to the Dutch Reformed Church family. In *Belhar Confession: The Embracing Confession of Faith for Church and Society*, edited by Mary-Anne Plaatjies van Huffel and Leepo Modise. Stellenbosch: Sun Press. https://doi.org/10.18820/9781928357599

Barton, B 2011. My auto/ethnographic dilemma: Who owns the story? *Qualitative Sociology,* 34(3), pp.431-445

Bechhofer, F. and Paterson, L., 2012. *Principles of research design in the social sciences*. Routledge

Beukes, J.W., 2017. The Belhar confession and the establishment of a theology of development. In *Belhar Confession: The Embracing Confession of Faith for Church and Society*, edited by Mary-Anne Plaatjies van Huffel and Leepo Modise. Stellenbosch: Sun Press. https://doi.org/10.18820/9781928357599

Bhattacherjee, A. 2012. *Scholar Commons Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, and Practices*. [Online], Available: http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/oa_textbookshttp://scholarcommons.usf.edu/oa_textbooks/3 [2022, November 01]

Boesak, A., 2008. To stand where God stands: Reflections on the Confession of Belhar after 25 years. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, *34*(1), pp.1-29

Brade, K.A. & Bent-Goodley, T. 2009, "A Refuge for My Soul: Examining African American Clergy's Perceptions Related to Domestic Violence Awareness and Engagement in Faith Community Initiatives", *Social Work and Christianity,* 36(4), pp.430-448

Britz, R.M., 2008. Paupertas (Poverty) in John Calvin's Institutes. *Acta Theologica*, *28*(2), pp.1-24

Brown, C. (ed). 1971. *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*. Exeter: The Paternoster Press

Burgess, A.W. 1983. Rape trauma syndrome. *Behavioral Sciences & the Law*, *1*(3), pp.97 113

Burgess, A.W., 2018. Rape trauma syndrome. In *Rape and society.* Routledge

Burgess, A.W. and Holmstrom, L.L., 1974. Rape trauma syndrome. *American journal of Psychiatry*, *131*(9), pp.981-986

Burnett, C. 1998. School violence in an impoverished South African community. *Child Abuse & Neglect* 22(8), pp.789-795

Business Day Live. 2014. *Kumba sets bar high in building of 'new Dingleton' as mine expands*. [Online] Available at: http://www.bdlive.co.za/

national/2014/11/25/kumba-sets-bar-high-in-building-of-new-dingleton-as mineexpands. [Accessed 27 November 14]

Butz, D. & Besio, K. 2009. Autoethnography. *Geography Compass* 3(5), pp.1660-1674. DOI: 10.1111/j.1749-8198.2009.00279

Buys, P. & Nogueira, E.B. 2019. Ecclesiola in ecclesia in Brazil from a missio Dei perspective: An autoethnographic case study of four Presbyterian churches in Brazil. *In die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi,* 53(1), pp.1-10

Cahalan, K.A .& Mikoski, G.S. 2014. *Opening the field of practical theology: an introduction.* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield

Cao, Y., S. Hwang & J. Xi. 2012. Project-induced displacement, secondary stressors, and health. *Social Science & Medicine,* 74, pp.1130-1138

Chapman, A.R. & van der Merwe, H. (eds.) 2008. *Truth and reconciliation in South Africa. Did the TRC deliver?* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press

Cilliers, J. & Nell, I.A. 2011. 'Within the enclave' - Profiling South African social and religious developments since 1994. *Verbum Et Ecclessia,* 32(1), pp.1-7

Clinebell, H. 1984. *Basic types of pastoral care & counseling. Resources for the ministry of healing and growth (Revised and enlarged)*. Nashville: Abingdon Press

Clinebell, H. 1995. *Counseling for spiritually empowered wholeness. A hope centered approach*. New York: The Haworth Pastoral Press

Coffey, A. 2002. Ethnography and self: Reflections and representations, in T May (ed). *Qualitative research in action.* London: Sage, pp.313-331

Confession of Belhar – URCSA CAPE. n.d. [Online], Available: https://cape.urcsa.net/confession-of-belhar/ [2022, October 28]

Conradie, E. 2017. Conversion towards Radical Inclusivity. In *Belhar Confession: The Embracing Confession of Faith for Church and Society*, edited by Mary-Anne Plaatjies van Huffel and Leepo Modise. Stellenbosch: Sun Press. https://doi.org/10.18820/9781928357599.

Corr, C. A. 2002. *Revisiting the concept of disenfranchised grief*. In K. J. Doka (Ed.), Disenfranchised grief: New directions, challenges, and strategies for practice. .Champaign, IL:Research Press

Crawford, E., Liebling-Kalifani, H. and Hill, V. 2009. Women's understanding of the effects of domestic abuse: The impact on their identity, sense of self and resilience. A grounded theory approach. *Journal of international women's studies*, *11*(2), pp.63-82

Crespo, M. and Fernández-Lansac, V., 2016. Memory and narrative of traumatic events: A literature review. *Psychological trauma: Theory, research, practice, and policy*, *8*(2)

Culbertson, R. 1995. Embodied memory, transcendence, and telling: Recounting trauma, re-establishing the self. *New Literary History,* 26(1), pp.169-195.

Custer, D 2014. Autoethnography as a Transformative Research Method. *The Qualitative Report* ,19(37), pp.1-13

Davies, P.J. and Dreyer, Y., 2014. A pastoral psychological approach to domestic violence in South Africa. *HTS: Theological Studies*, *70*(3), pp.1-8

Dawtry, R.J., Cozzolino, P.J. and Callan, M.J., 2019. I blame therefore it was: Rape myth acceptance, victim blaming, and memory reconstruction. *Personality and social psychology bulletin*, *45*(8), pp.1269-1282

Demuth, C. and Mey, G., 2015. Qualitative methodology in developmental psychology. *International encyclopedia of the social & behavioral sciences*, pp.668-675

Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). 1994. *Handbook of qualitative research.* Sage Publications, Inc

Denzin, N.K. 2003. Performing [auto]ethnography politically. *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies* 25(3), pp.257-278.

de Roest, H. 2020. *Collaborative practical theology: engaging practitioners in research on Christian practices*. Leiden: Brill

Dillen, A. and Mager, R. 2014. Research in practical theology. Methods, methodology, and normativity. In: *Invitation to Practical Theology: CatholicVoices and Visions* (ed. C.E. Wolfteich), pp.301–328. New York: Paulist Press New York

Dinan, B.A., McCall, G.J. & Gibson, D. 2004. Community Violence and PTSD in Selected South African Townships. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence,*19(6), pp.727-742

Dingemans, G.D., 1996. Practical theology in the academy: A contemporary overview. *The journal of religion*, *76*(1), pp.82-96

Doka, K. 1989. *Disenfranchised grief: Recognizing hidden sorrow*. Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books

Doty, R.L. 2010. Autoethnography – making human connections. *Source: Review of International Studies* 36(4). Available online: https://www.jstor.org/stable/40961968?seq=1&cid=pdf- (accessed: 17 February 2021]

Du Plessis, A.L. 2021, 'Contextual pastoral counselling: Paradigm shifts in practical theological development since the middle 20th century', *In die Skriflig,* 55(2), a2696. https:// doi.org/10.4102/ids.v55i2.2696

Du Toit, F. 2012. South Africa's simple choice. In: K. Lefko-Everett (ed.), *SA Reconciliation Barometer* 10(3), pp.1-16

Dykstra, D. 2005. *Growing in the life of Faith: education and Christian Practices 2nd edition*. Kentucky: John Knox Press

Eitle, D. and Turner, R.J. 2002. Exposure to community violence and young adult crime: The effects of witnessing violence, traumatic victimization, and other stressful life events. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency,* 39, pp.214 237

Eliastam, J. 2016. Interrupting separateness, disrupting comfort: An autoethnographic account of lived religion, ubuntu and spatial justice. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies,* 72(1), pp.1-8

Ellis, C., Adams, T.E. & Bochner, A.P. 2011. Autoethnography: An overview. *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung,* 36(4), pp.273-290

Ellis, C. & Bochner, A. 2000. Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity: Researcher as subject, in NK Denzin & YS Lincoln (eds). *Handbook of Qualitative Research (second edition). London:* Sage, pp.733-768

Figley C., (ed.), 1999, *Traumatology of Grieving: Conceptual theoretical and Treatment Foundations*. Florida: Brunner Mazel

Foley, DE 2002. Critical ethnography: The reflexive turn. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 15(4), pp.469-490

Foucault, M. 1978. *The History of Sexuality*, *Volume One: An Introduction*. Translated by Robert Hurley. New York: Pantheon Books

Fiorito, B. & Ryan, K. 2007. Spirituality and Psychological Well-Being: A Mediator Moderator Study. *Review of Religious Research*, 48(4), pp.341-368

Ganzevoort, R.R. 1999. Verzoening na conflicten? Een praktisch-theologische benadering. *In De Marg* 8(3), pp.12-20

Ganzevoort, R.R. 2000. Collectief trauma: Hoe verder na misbruik? Geschokte gemeente heft deskundig hulp nodig bij complex probleem. *Central Weekblad* 48(25)

Ganzevoort, R. R. 2008. Copimng with tragedy and malice. In: van Doorn-Harder,N. & Minnema, L. *Coping with evil in religion and culture*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, pp.247-260

Ganzevoort, R.R. 2009*a*. All things work together for good'? Theodicy and post traumatic spirituality, in Gräb, W. & Charbonnier, L. (eds.). *Secularization theories, religious identity, and practical theology.* Münster: LIT-Verlag.Pages pp.183-192

Ganzevoort, R.R. 2009*b*. Forks in the Road when Tracing the Sacred. Practical Theology as Hermeneutics of Lived Religion. *Presidential address to the 9th conference of the International Academy of Practical Theology.* 2009

Ganzevoort, R.R. 2011. Trauma en geestelijke verzorging. Eigen deskundigheid op het existentiële en spirituele domein. *Cogiscope* 11(3), pp.2-5

Ganzevoort, R.R. & Roeland, J. 2014. Lived religion: The praxis of practical theology. *International Journal of Practical Theology* 18(1), pp.91-101

Given, L. 2012. The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods. *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*

Gitterman, A. and Knight, C., 2019. Non-death loss: Grieving for the loss of familiar place and for precious time and associated opportunities. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, *47*(2), pp.147-155

Glanville, J.A. and Dreyer, Y., 2013. Spousal rape: A challenge for pastoral counsellors. *HTS: Theological Studies*, *69*(1), pp.1-12

Goto, T.C. 2010. *Artistic Play: Seeking the God of the Unexpected*, Ph.D. thesis, Emory University, Atlanta

Graham, E. 2013. Is practical theology a form of “action research”? *International Journal of Practical Theology* 17(1), pp.148-178

Graham, E.L. 2017. On becoming a practical theologian: Past, present and future tenses. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies,* 73(4), pp.1-9

Halpern, J. & Weinstein, H.M. 2004. Rehumanizing the other: Empathy and Reconciliation. *Human Rights Quarterly,* 26561-583

Hamber, B. 2002. Rights and reasons: Challenges for truth recovery in South Africa and Northern Ireland. *Fordham Int'l LJ*, *26*, p.1074

Hamber, B. 1999. "Have no doubt it is fear in the land". An exploration of the continuing cycles of violence in South Africa. *Zeitschrift für Politische Psychologie,* 7(1/2), pp.113-128

Hamilton, M.L., Smith, L. & Worthington, K. 2008. Fitting the methodology with the research: An exploration of narrative, self-study and auto-ethnography. *Studying Teacher Education,* 4(1), pp.17-28

Hayano, D.M. 1979. Auto-ethnography: Paradigms, problems, and prospects. *Organization,* 38(1), pp.99-104

Heitink, G. 1993, *Praktische theologie: geschiedenis, theorie, handelingsvelden,* Kok, Kampen.

Hokkanen, S. 2017. Analyzing personal embodied experiences: Autoethnography, feelings, and fieldwork. *Translation and Interpreting,* 9(1), pp.24-35

Holt, NL 2003. Representation, legitimation, and autoethnography: An autoethnographic writing story. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 2(1), pp.18-28.

Hughes, S.A. & Pennington, J.L. 2017. *Autoethnography: Process, product, and possibility for critical social research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. DOI: 10.4135/9781483398594>

Hunt, R.A., 2001. Pastoral care with marriages and domestic partnerships. *American journal of pastoral counseling*, *3*(3-4), pp.71-85

Hutchison, E. & Bleiker, B. 2008. Emotion Reconciliation. Reconstituting Identity and Community after Trauma. *European Journal of Social Science* 11(3), pp.385-403

Hwang, S.Y. Cao & J. Xi 2012. Project-induced migration and depression: A panel analysis. *Social Science & Medicine*, 70, pp.1765-1772

Janoff-Bulman, R. 1992. *Shattered assumptions: Towards a new psychology of trauma*. New York, NY: Free Press

Janse van Rensburg, J. and Breed, J., 2011. A structured approach to pastoral care and poverty. *Verbum et Ecclesia*, *32*(1), pp.1-11

Janzen, D. 2012. It's time to set politics aside. In: K. Lefko-Everett (ed.), *SA Reconciliation Barometer* ,10(3), pp.1-16

Jewkes, R. & Abrahams, N. 2002. The epidemiology of rape and sexual coercion in South Africa: an overview. *Social Science & Medicine,* 55, pp.1231–1244

Kaminer, D. Grimsrud, A., Meyer, L., Stein, D.J. & Williams, D.R. 2008. Risk for post-traumatic stress disorder associated with different forms of interpersonal violence in South Africa. *Social Science & Medicine*, 67, pp.1589-1595

Kaufman, TS 2015. Normativity as pitfall or ally? Reflexivity as an interpretive resource in ecclesiological and ethnographic research. *Ecclesial Practices* 2, pp.91-107. Available online: DOI: 10.1163/22144471-00201006 (accessed on 7 June 2021)

Kauffman, J. (2002). The psychology of disenfranchised grief: Liberation, shame, and self-disenfranchisement. In K. J. Doka (Ed.), Disenfranchised grief: New directions, challenges, and strategies for practice (pp. 61-78). Champaign, IL: Research Press

Kauffman, J. (Ed.). 2010. *The shame of death, grief, and trauma*. New York: Routledge

Klaasen, J.S. 2018. Pastoral care in communities under transition: Interplay between care and culture. *In die Skriflig*, *52*(1), pp.1-8

Kleber, R.J., Figley, C.R. and Gersons, B.P. eds., 1995. *Beyond trauma: Cultural and societal dynamics*. New York: Plenum Press

Koopman, N. 2008. The Confession of Belhar 1986: A guide for justice, reconciliation, and unity. *Journal of Reformed Theology*, *2*(1), pp.28-39

Koopman, N. 2008. On violence, the Belhar Confession and human dignity. *Dutch Reformed Theological Journal= Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif*, *49*(3_4), pp.159-166

Kubeka, M.J. and Masango, M.J., 2010. The impact and effects of trauma resulting from excommunication. *HTS Theological Studies*, *66*(1), pp.1-13

Kübler-Ross, E. and Kessler, D., 2005. *On grief and grieving: Finding the meaning of grief through the five stages of loss*. Simon and Schuster

LaMothe, R., 2014. Pastoral counseling in the 21st century: The centrality of community. *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling*, *68*(2), pp.1-17.

Lartey, E. 2003. *In living color : an intercultural approach to pastoral care and counseling*. Second edition. ed. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Lee, C.K. 2011. Practical theology as a theological discipline: origins, developments, and the future. *한국기독교신학논총*, *75*(1), pp.293-318

Lefko-Everett, K., Nyoka, A. & Tiscornia, L. 2012. *2011-SA-reconciliation barometer.pdf (application/pdf object)* [Online]. Available:http://reconciliationbarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/2011-SA_Reconciliation-Barometer.pdf [10/3/2012]

Le Roux, C.S. 2017. Exploring rigour in autoethnographic research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology,* 20(2), pp.195-207

Lockhat, R. and Van Niekerk, A. 2000. South African children: A history of adversity, violence and trauma. *Ethnicity and Health,* 5 (3/4), pp.291-302

Lopez, C. 2011. The struggle for wholeness: Addressing individual and collective trauma in violence-ridden societies. *EXPLORE,* 7(5), pp. 300-313

Louw, D.J. 1999. *Pastoraat as vertolking en ontmoeting.* Kaapstad: Lux Verbi.BM

Louw, D. J. 2008. *Cura Vitae. Illness and the healing of life*. Wellington: Lux Verbi.BM

Louw, D. J. 2011*a*. *Ta Splanchna*: A theopaschitic approach to a hermeneutic of God's praxis. From zombie categories to passion categories in theory formation for a

practical theology of the intestines. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 67(3), pp.65-77

Louw, D. J. 2011*b*. Pastoral care and counseling. In Mpofu, E. (Ed.), *Counselling people of African ancestry* (pp. 155-165). New York, NY: Cambridge

Louw, D., 2012. *Network of the human soul*. African Sun Media.

Louw, D.J. 2018. The "frail researcher" in dialogue with existential phenomenology: The threat of empiricism within the quest for sound methodology in practical theological research. *In die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi*, 52(1), pp.1-10

Luke 4:18-19 NKJV - "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, - Bible Gateway. n.d. [Online], Available: https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke 4%3A18-19&version=NKJV [2022, October 28]

Macallan, B. & Hendriks, H.J., 2013, 'Post-foundational practical theology as correlational hermeneutic', *Acta Theologica,* 33(1), pp.135-157

Magezi, V. 2016, 'Reflection on pastoral care in Africa: Towards discerning emerging pragmatic pastoral ministerial responses', *In die Skriflig*, 50(1), a2130. http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ids.v50i1.2130

Magezi, V. 2019*a*. History and developments of pastoral care in Africa: A survey and proposition for effective contextual pastoral caregiving. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, *75*(4)

Magezi, V. 2019*b*. Doing public pastoral care through church-driven development in Africa: Reflection on church and community mobilisation process approach in Lesotho. *HTS: Theological Studies*, *75*(4), pp.1-11

McCall, J.B., 2004. *Bereavement counseling: Pastoral care for complicated grieving*. Routledge

McCann, D.P. & Strain, C.R. 1985. *Polity and Praxis: A Program for American Practical Theology*. Minneapolis: Winston Press

McClure, B. 2012. Pastoral Care. In: Miller-McLemore, B.J. (ed.), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology.* Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp.269-278

Méndez, M. 2013. Autoethnography as a research method: Advantages, limitations and criticisms. *Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal*, 15, pp.279-287

Matthews, B.H. 2014. *Soup kitchens that chronically perpetuates poverty: a pastoral perspective* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria)

Miller, R.L. and Brewer, J.D. eds., 2003. *The AZ of social research: A dictionary of key social science research concepts*. Sage

Miller-McLemore, B.J. 2011. *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*. Chicester: Wiley-Blackwell

Miller-McLemore, B.J. 2018. The living human web: A twenty-five year retrospective. *Pastoral Psychology* 67(3), pp.305-321

Modise, L. 2017. Belhar confession of faith: a spirituality sensemaking confession. In *Belhar Confession: The Embracing Confession of Faith for Church and Society*, edited by Mary-Anne Plaatjies van Huffel and Leepo Modise. Stellenbosch: Sun Press. https://doi.org/10.18820/9781928357599

Modise, L. 2020. Reading the URCSA Church Order with African Lenses: A Belhar Confession Perspective. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, *46*(3), pp.1-16

Moor, A. and Farchi, M., 2011. Is rape-related self blame distinct from other post traumatic attributions of blame? A comparison of severity and implications for treatment. *Women & Therapy*, *34*(4), pp.447-460

Morris-Jung, J & R. Both. 2010. The blurred boundaries of voluntary resettlement: A case of Cate Tien National Park in Vietnam. *Journal of Sustainable Forestry*, 29, pp.202-220

Motsi, R.G. & Masango, M.J., 2012, 'Redefining trauma in an African context: A challenge to pastoral care', *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 68(1), Art. #955, 8 pages. http:// dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts. v68i1.955

Mouton. D.P. 2012. Pastoral care as community care: Towards an integrative approach to healing and well-being within the HIV & AIDS discourse. Unpublished Masters Thesis. Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch

Mouton, D.P. 2014. Communities facing disruption: the need to shift from individual to community paradigms in pastoral care. *Acta theologica*, *34*(1), pp.91-107

Mouton, D.P. 2016. The power of stories from within: The Dingleton Community relocation. *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 2(1), pp.305

Mouton, D. 2020. *Week of prayer 2020 - Christian Literature Fund - Resource Channel*. [Online], Available: https://clf.co.za/wpfd_file/week-of-prayer-2020/ [2022, September 23]

Mouton, D. P. 2022*a*. Writing the self in(to) Practical Theological research. In: Cilliers, J. ed. *Moving methodologies: doing Practical and Missional Theology in an African context*. Wellington: Bybel Media, pp.79-98

Mouton, D. P. 2022b. *A promise of rain – facing encounters with trauma and disruption.* Unpublished manuscript

Mouton, D. P. 2022*c*. Facing disruptive and traumatic experiences in communities: A congregational pastoral ministry approach. Unpublished manuscript

Moylan, C.A., Herrenkohl, T.I., Sousa, C., Tajima, E.A., Herrenkohl, R.C. and Russo, M.J., 2010. The effects of child abuse and exposure to domestic violence on adolescent internalizing and externalizing behavior problems. *Journal of family Violence*, *25*(1), pp.53-63

Mpofu, E., Peltzer, K. and Olaniyi Bojuwoye, O. 2011. Indigenous Healing Practices in Sub-Saharan Africa. In Mpofu, E. (Ed.), *Counselling people of African ancestry* (pp. 155-165). New York, NY: Cambridge

Müller, J.C. 2004. 'HIV/AIDS, narrative practical theology, and postfoundationalism: The emergence of a new story', *HTS*, 60(1&2), pp.293-306

Muller, J.C. 2005, A post-foundationalist, HIV-positive practical theology. Paper presented at the International Biennial Conference of the International Academy of Practical Theology, Brisbane, Australia, 25-29 June

Muller, J.C. 2011 2001. 'Postfoundational practical theology for a time of transition', *HTS Theological Studies*, 67(1), Art. #837, 5 pages. doi.10.4102/hts.v67i1.837

Müller, J.C. 2011. (Outo)biografie as teologie. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 67(3), pp.1-5

Muller, J.C. Van Deventer, W. & Human, L. 2001. 'Fiction writing as metaphor for research: a narrative approach', *Practical Theology in SA*, 16, 2, 76-94

Muncey, T 2004. Doing autoethnography. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 4(1), pp.69-86. DOI: 10.1177/160940690500400105.

Nieuwenhuis J. 2007. Introducing qualitative research. In: K Maree (Ed.): *First Steps in Research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik

No reconciliation 2012. [Online]. Retrieved from: http://reconciliationbarometer.org/2012/01/no-reconciliation-without material-dignity/

Osmer, R.R, 1992. *Teaching for Faith: A Guide for Teachers of adult classes*. Louisville: John Knox Press

Osmer, R.R. 2008. *Practical theology: An introduction*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans

Osmer, R.R. 2011. Practical theology: A current international perspective. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 67(2)

Oxford English Dictionary. n.d. [Online], Available: https://www.oed.com/ [2021, April 22].

Park, C.L. Currier, J.M., Harris, J.I. and Slattery, J.M., 2017. *Trauma, meaning, and spirituality: Translating research into clinical practice*. American Psychological Association

Parmer, T. & Rogers, T. 1997. Religion and Health: Holistic Wellness from the Perspective of Two African American Church Denominations. *Counseling and Values*, 42(1), pp.55-67

Pattison, S. & Woodward, J. 2000. in Woodward, J. and Pattison,S.(eds.). *The Blackwell reader in pastoral and practical theology.* Oxford:Blackwell

Pieterse, H.J.C. 2017. 'Scientific-theoretical research approach to practical theology in South Africa: A contemporary overview', HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies 73(4), a4483. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i4.4483

Pitard, J. 2017. A journey to the centre of self: Positioning the researcher in autoethnography. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung* 18(3)

Plaatjies, M.-A. & Huffel, V. 2013. The Belhar Confession: born in the struggle against apartheid in southern Africa. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*. 39(1). [Online], Available: http://www.warc.ch/dcw/bs25/11.html

Poloma, M.M. & Pendleton, B.F. 1990. Religious domains and general well-being. *Social Indicators Research*, 22(3), pp.255-276

PonTell, M.L. 2011. Sacred silence: Domestic abuse in conservative Christian communities. Theses Digitization Project. 3936. https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project/393

Rambo, S. 2010. *Spirit and Trauma. A Theology of Remaining.* Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press

Reed-Danahay, D. 1997. *Rewriting the self and the social*. Oxford: Berg, pp.1-17

Robson, K. 2001. Curative Fictions: the 'Narrative Cure' in Judith Herman's trauma and ecovery and Chantal Chawaf's Le Manteau noir*. Cultural Values* 5(1), pp.115-130

Robson, P. and Walter, T., 2013. Hierarchies of loss: A critique of disenfranchised grief. *OMEGA-Journal of Death and Dying*, *66*(2), pp.97-119

Rotunda, R.J. Williamson, G. and Penfold, M., 2004. Clergy response to domestic violence: A preliminary survey of clergy members, victims, and batterers. *Pastoral Psychology*, *52*(4), pp.353-365

Rudolfsson, L. and Tidefors, I. 2015. The struggles of victims of sexual abuse who seek pastoral care. *Pastoral Psychology*, *64*(4), pp.453-467

Shear, M.K. 2015. Complicated grief. *New England Journal of Medicine*, *372*(2),pp.153-160

Shear, K. and Shair, H. 2005. Attachment, loss, and complicated grief. *Developmental Psychobiology: The Journal of the International Society for Developmental Psychobiology*, *47*(3), pp.253-267

Schmidt-Soltau, K. & D. Brockington 2007. Protected Areas and Resettlement: What Scope for Voluntary Relocation? *World Development*, 35(12), pp.2182-2202

Scriven, R. 2019. Journeying with: Qualitative methodological engagements with pilgrimage. *Area* 51(3), pp.540-548

Shields, N, K. Nadasen and L. Pierce. 2009. A Comparison of the Effects of Witnessing Community Violence and Direct Victimization among Children in Cape Town, South Africa. Journal of interpersonal violence, 24 (7), pp.1192-1208

Shim, J.Y. 2018. Problematic autoethnographic research: Researcher's failure in positioning. *Qualitative Report* 23(1), pp.1-11

Simkins, C. 2011. South african disparities. *Journal of Democracy,* 22(3), pp.105-119.

Strachan, J.J.J. 2015. Narratives of difference and sameness. *Verbum et Ecclesia* 36(2) , pp.1-8

Stroebe, M. and Schut, H., 2006. Complicated grief: A conceptual analysis of the field. *OMEGA-Journal of Death and Dying*, *52*(1), pp.53-70

Strong, J. (1996). *The exhaustive concordance of the Bible: Showing every word of the test of the common English version of the canonical books, and every occurence of each word in regular order.* (electronic ed.) (H0). Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship

Struys, Th. 1968. *Ziekte en genezing in het Oude Testament*. Kampen: Kok

Suedfeld, P. 1997. Reactions to societal trauma: Distress and/or Eustress. *Political Psychology* 18, pp.849-861

Tannura, T.A. 2014. Rape trauma syndrome. *American Journal of Sexuality Education*, *9*(2), pp.247-256

Terre Blanche, M. Durrheim, K. and Painter, D. eds., 2006. *Research in practice: Applied methods for the social sciences*. Juta and Company Ltd

Thatcher, C. 2018. Losing Andrew: disenfranchised grief in Shelly Wagner's poetry. *Scriptum: Creative Writing Research Journal*, *5*(1)

Thesnaar, Christoffel H. 2022. Divine Discomfort: A Relational Encounter with Multi Generational and Multi-Layered Trauma. *Religions* 13, pp. 214. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13030214

The Confession of Belhar. Also available at http://urcsa.net/wp-content/ uploads/2016/02/Belhar-Confession.pdf

Tracy, D. 1981. *The analogical imagination : Christian theology and the culture of pluralism*. London: SCM Press

Tracy, D. 1981. Defending the public character of theology. *Christian Century*, *98*(1), pp.350-56

Tomaselli, K.G. 2016. Ideological contestation and disciplinary associations: An autoethnographic analysis. *Communicatio* 42(2), pp.276-292

TraumaticStressUpdateDec2011Vol2No2.pdf (application/pdf object) 2012. [Online]. Retrieved from: http://www.csvr.org.za/docs/TraumaticStressUpdateDec2011Vol2No2.pdf [10/3/2012]

Utley, J. L. & Wachholtz, A. B. 2011. Spirituality in HIV+ Patient Care. *Psychiatry Issue Briefs,* 8(3), pp.1-3

Van den Berg, J.A. 2020. Weerkaatsende woorde: 'n (Outo)biografiese refleksie van 'n (praktiese) teoloog. *Scriptura* 119(3), pp.1-11

van den Blink, H. 2008. Trauma and spirituality. *Reflective Practice: Formation and Supervision in Ministry*, *28*

van der Merwe, N. 2007. Chris, and Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela. *Narrating Our Healing: Perspectives on Working through Trauma*

Van Hook, M.P. 2016. Spirituality as a potential resource for coping with trauma. *Social Work and Christianity*, *43*(1), p.7

Van Manen, M. 1984. Practicing phenomenological writing. *Phenomenology+ pedagogy*, pp.36-69

Van Deventer, W. 2015. Vhuthu in the muta: A practical theologian's autoethnographic journey. *Verbum et Ecclesia* 36(2), pp.1-8

Veerman, A. L. & R. Ganzevoort. 2001. *Communities Coping with Collective Trauma*. Paper presented at the 2001 conference of the International Association for the Psychology of Religion, Soesterberg, The Netherlands.

Visser, M. (ed.). 2007. *Contextualising Community Psychology in South Africa.* Pretoria: Van Schaik

Vryan, K.D. 2006. Expanding analytic autoethnography and enhancing its potential. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 35(4), pp.405-409

Wall, S.S. 2016. Toward a moderate autoethnography. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 15(1), pp.1-9

Walton, H. 2002. Speaking in signs: Narrative and trauma in pastoral theology. *Scottish Journal of Healthcare Chaplaincy*, *5*(2), pp.2-5

Walton, H. 2014. *Writing methods in theological reflection.* London: SCM Press

Walton, H. 2019. A Theopoetics of Practice: Re-forming in Practical Theology. *International Journal of Practical Theology*, *23*(1), pp.3-23

Walton, H. 2022. Life Writing and Religion. *International Handbook of Practical Theology*, p.47

Ward, G. 2017. Decolonizing theology. *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 3(2), pp.561-584.

Ward, P. 2017. *Introducing practical theology: Mission, ministry, and the life of the church*. Baker Academic

Washburn, P. 2003. Why me? Addressing the spiritual and emotional trauma of sexual assault. *Advanced Emergency Nursing Journal*, *25*(3), pp.236-241

Wilkinson, J. 1980. *Health and healing: Studies in New Testament principles and practice*. Endinburgh:Handsel

Wilkinson, J. 1998. *The Bible and healing: A medical and theological commentary*. Endinburgh:Handsel Press

Wright, S. 2005. Reflections on spirituality and health. Philadelphia, PA: Whurr Publishers. https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470777923

Zust, B.L., Housley, J. and Klatke, A., 2017. Evangelical Christian pastors' lived experience of counseling victims/survivors of domestic violence. *Pastoral Psychology*, *66*(5), pp.675-687.

Appendix – Table 1

TRAUMATIC/ DISRUPTIVE EXPERIENCE	RESULTANT EXPERIENCES (Emotional and other)	RESPONSES (Coping?)	WHAT TRANSPIRED? / THEMES EMERGING
Experiences of loss - illness, death, dying, Having lost someone to death - a loved one, including close family and friends, a colleague, acquaintances, ex-partners. • Different types of death – mostly gradual through illness, but also sudden due to motor vehicle accidents, crime (murder) and other causes. • Experience with serious illness – either self or through the experiences of loved ones. In some cases, having been involved in the caring of the dying person.	• Experience of loss • Hurt – Painful • Loss of will to live • Depression • Anger – to God; deceased; people who do not understand • Acceptance – those who have been able to deal with the loss of a loved one to a large extent – happens over time • Found meaningful way to continue living -– happens over time • Felt he/she could not grieve – anger, sadness, unresolved issues • People are mostly only around till shortly after the funeral – then you are on your own • Helplessness • Constantly missing the person • Not interested in anything • Sleepless nights • Head aches	• Pray and read the Bible • Trust God that it will get better • Go to church, but it does not always help • Talk to the minister/pastor • Talk to family and friends – not always though • Rely on family and friends • Prefer to deal with it privately – in some cases • Talk to the deceased • Think about deceased and hold pictures nearby • Printed t-shirts for family and wear it in days when longing for the deceased • Can't talk about it. People don't understand; people are getting uneasy and give the impression I should talk less about the person; some leave the impression that it is time to move on • Could never talk about it – our relationship was not approved, and I felt that I	• Faith, spirituality, and faith practices pay a role in dealing with the loss • Significance of relations with God and God images – influence grieving process; guilt affects faith and grief • Dealing with guilt about blaming or questioning God- Punishment form God? • Church – safe space for some • Church - Scepticism by some ○ Trust issues ○ Confidentiality ○ Shame ○ Church people don't want to hear about problems – they only want to hear that you are doing fine • Angered and frustrated by cheap encouragement • Significance of relationship with faith community. Secure relationships or safety of relationships improve bereavement process. • Knowing something about the process helps – person get an idea of what to expect and realize the process is "normal" • Counselling, narrating the experience, having someone that listen, talking to people with similar experiences, talking about the process in open and in church, sharing – all helps with the process • "Normal" grieving process for most • Mostly people find ways to go on with life eventually

• Being present when someone died. • Living with HIV and having lost someone to HIV	• Dreams – nightly visits by deceased • Feel I have been punished by God • Strain on other relationships • God is speaking to me/us – calling us back to Him • People sometimes don't want to get involved (not their business) • Missing the person is hard	was not allowed to cry or grief • I was angry at him for what he has done and could not really grief, but now I struggle to grief • Experience/sense of loss still present but life goes on. • Angry • Feeling sick – body and mind • Re-constructing the relationship to be more positive – a way to deal with regret about negative experiences in the relationship • Focus on responsibilities, e.g. children to be cared for	• "Understanding" of grieving process appear to improve the overall process. Every process is different. • Growth and integrations do happen over time, especially when there is a form of a support structure • Having responsibilities, like children to care for, provides motivation to hold on and find ways to move on • Family – mostly the primary support structure – depending on family dynamics • Family dynamics, existing complications, financial arrangements, sharing of responsibilities, inheritance issues, absence of last will and testament – complicate the grieving process. • Relationality – complex and troublesome relations prior to death complicated the grieving process • Guilt because of things that happened between the person and the deceased • Disenfranchised grief / Hierarchies of loss and grief o Picked in individual and communal pastoral engagements • Continued bonds – coping mechanism, but can also complicate the bereavement process • Complicated grief – feelings of anger, guilt. Interrupted processes - became difficult to "resume" grieving process. Complications in relationships with deceased and/or family – a contributing factor. • Dealing with the death and loss of dreams, relation, security, intimacy. Mourn lost opportunities - secondary losses
Other losses	• Experience of loss • Hurt – Painful • Loss of will to live	• Pray and read the Bible • Trust God that it will get better	Similar experiences and responses to the above • Faith, spiritualty, and faith practices

• Job losses • Loss of opportunity • Divorce • Valuables • Personal belongings • Belongings of sentimental value	• Depression • Anger – to God; people • Live with some degree of acceptance – It happened, and I have to try to move on • Trust issues – people, self, and God • Unable to express, describe and "justify" sense of loss • "Felt as if someone died" • Insecure • Concerned about future • Guilt – own role? Choices? Own efforts? Precautions that could have been taken?	• Go to church • Talk to family and friends - Rely on support from family and friends • Talk to the minister/pastor • Try to find other means of survival – job loss • Can't talk about it.	• Church people seems not to think this is not a big deal • "Normal" grieving process for some • Other losses are also significant o Often not recognized as loss by the person and community o Not realizing that these losses can (and should) be mourned o Due to community perceptions and worldview these losses are not legitimized o Often not really dealt with – surface in other psycho-spiritual processes • Disenfranchised grief – related to society's assessment of what constitute a loss and how it should be handled • Significance of relations with what has been lost • Dealing with guilt about blaming or questioning God • Significance of relationship with faith community and others • Don't always want people to do something – just want them to be there for me/us • Public institutions not helpful
Domestic abuse • Physical, emotional, verbal, and financial abuse. • Often associated with alcohol abuse. • Mostly direct partner violence. • Abuse directed towards children	• Hurt • Shame • Poor self-esteem • Lack of agency • Fear and anxiety • Depression • Anger – him and his family • Bitterness • Sad – for myself and children	• Pray and read Bible – does not always have hope though • Learned to live with it • Try not to upset him • Sought help from the church – not always helping. Too soft on husband. • Feel guilty about thoughts of divorce	• Faith, spiritualty, and faith practices • Keeping faith in God helps • Talking about it helps • Knowing that my children depend on me makes me to stay and try my best • Emotional turmoil • Learned helplessness • Despite some women being able to care for themselves and their children financially, they don't have the confidence to leave • Enabling behaviour

mostly through verbal and emotional means. • Male perpetrators • History of childhood domestic abuse experiences for some • Ongoing trauma	• Sad – for him going to waste • Urge to protect him • Pretend people don't know • Hate – him for the abuse; children as I stay for them, despite really loving them. • Confused and torn • Trapped – can't get out • Learned to live with it • Still love hom – so angry with myself • Keep hoping that it will get better – its been like this for years now • "What did you do to make him so angry?" • Guilt • Regret • Maybe it is punishment for my choices • Helplessness • Resented by children for staying in the marriage – they don't know that we will not survive if we leave • Family resentment – they did not want me to marry him • Loss of outlook • Just exist – go on from day to day	• Sometimes call police and welfare department – most of the time it does not help. They don't always come or do anything • Plead and negotiate with him • Threaten to leave, but never leave • Dream about the day I can leave • Sometimes wish him dead • Hold on to the hope that our children will survive. If they can at least be able one day to leave and look after themselves • Can't really talk about it – ashamed, people can't really help; afraid people gossip; pretend it does not exist (too ashamed) • Support from family and friends – for some • God does not condone divorce • Trust issues – people, self, and God • Got used to it – focus on times in between • Avoid socializing – in case things go wrong – triggers keep changing	• Support form family and close friend • I keep quiet, but people know. • Issues with identity and agency • Public institutions not helpful • Not an event of disruption – rather a state of disruption • Need for family systems approach in family therapy

	• Worried about our survival • Worried about the children ○ Self-esteem, anger, negative emotions, depression, poor performance at school • My kruis (My cross) – "learned helplessness"? • Always walking on eggs – don't want to trigger an outburst – its draining • Want to protect our image in public • He so nice in front of other people – people will not believe me – I sometimes hate him for that • I don't believe he can change – he promises every time • So undignified • Why does God not interfere? • Physically and psychologically not well • Tired and sad most of the time • Sleepless nights • Startle easily • Head aches • Dreams – nightmares	• Speak to social worker and minister at church – sometimes help to get it out – sometimes good advice • Tried counselling together, but he does not want it • Try to minimize those things that lead to arguments • No support from his family – relationship is strained	

	• Strain on other relationships • Break-downs • People sometimes don't want to get involved (not their business) • Keep looking for what I do wrong – is it my fault?		
Sexual harassment, abuse, and rape • Partner sexual abuse mainly associated with alcohol abuse. • Sexual harassment – various contexts • Sexual abuse by family members and acquaintances. • Rape – known and unknown persons •	• Hurt • Shame • Humiliated • Fear and anxiety • Scared that I was pregnant • Scared that I have HIV or STD • Depression • Anger • Bitterness • Unforgiving • Helplessness • Sad • Hate myself – ugly, used goods • Pretend people don't know • Hate • Confused and torn • Trapped – can't get out • Punishment from God? – For what? • Did I cause this? • Is God punishing me? • Questions all the time	• Did I cause this? • Is God punishing me? • Questions all the time • Difficult to talk about it. Even counselling is tough • Struggle to forgive – don't even think about it now • Bitter and angry • Pretend sometimes that it did not happen • It was only sex – dissociating • Struggle to look at my body – I try to force myself • Don't really know how to deal with this. • Nothing makes sense • I can't trust people now, especially men • Nobody knows – can't ask for help • Help from social worker • Having to talk to a male (pastor/counsellor) is very challenging	• Faith spirituality, and faith practices – sometimes helpful • Process cant be forced • Challenge for male pastor to provide counselling – identity, positionality, power relations, own internalised experiences • Empathy and skill of pastor seems important • Tapping into links with other caring professions • Challenge to find ways of engaging that does not further harm victim or implicate, even in the slightest sense, the victim • Telling the story is important part of process – integration and healing • Rape Trauma Syndrome (RTS) – understanding the complexity and process helps pastor and victim/survivor • Repeat details of ordeal • Need for self-worth and dignity to be restored • Finding ways to define self and life and meaning outside of the experience of rape. • Guilt and shame need to be addressed • Not wanting to forget • Rituals and imagery • Importance of a safe, "organic" counselling space • Man will be man, they say – don't let them trip

	• Feel dirty and worthless – bath multiple times a day • Lost my dignity • Lost virginity and womanhood – I am not a woman anymore – I am used goods • People don't really believe it was not my fault • Feel pressured to move on – even my family don't understand • Can't sleep properly • Tired, loss of appetite • Withdraw from people. Don't feel like having too many people around • Physically ill, mentally not well • Fixation on what happened – especially for the first months • Want to forget – but also scared to forget • Worried people will not acknowledge the pain of what happened • Don't want more people to know • Not easy talking about this • Was worried that people will not believe me • Guilty about bodily responses	• Will consider counselling • Trying to get out a bit more • Try to forgive – that is what the Bible say	• People don't know how to help - difficult for them too • Don't always want people to do something – just want them to be there for me/us • Need to deal with issues of judgement and blame • Church – safe space for some • Church - Scepticism by some o Trust issues o Confidentiality o Shame o Exposing friends and family • Some integration, growth and resilience build as time goes on • Externalization seems helpful – defining and dealing with the relationships with the perpetrator, the experience and the effects of the experience • Learn to trust people for small things • Justice system and process – slow, inefficient, frustrating and humiliating • Where family is aware of experience, family empathy and support plays a crucial role in dealing with the effects of the experience • Mistrust in public institutions – empathy, commitment and skill

	• Confused – sometime my story does not make sense • Judged and blamed ○ "you should have or shouldn't have" responses ○ "what were you doing there?", "why dit you go there and stay out so late?", "why did you take that route?", "why did you go with him/they?", "did you try to fight", "did you perhaps give him the wrong impression", "maybe it is because of your attitude/clothing/mannerisms/over-friendliness", "I told you not to go/stay away from those people or places" ○ Will to live. ○ Relationships with others become complicated ○ Trust – people, self and God ○ Hate my family – they don't understand • Anger towards God, self, and others • Worthlessness • Violated		

	• Why did God allow it? Where was He? Why did He not protect me? • Bad/sad dreams • Keep the clothes I had on – it keeps it real • Scared • Worry other people will find out – judgement and stigma • Sleepless nights • Startle easily • Head aches • Dreams – nightmares • Strain on other relationships • People sometimes don't want to get involved (not their business) • Startle easily – compulsive habits		
Crime, Assault and Abuse • Physical bodily assault • Threat of assault • Verbal and emotional abuse • Experienced in different settings – home, family, workplace, community, church	• Fear and anxiety • Humiliated • Depression • Anger • Bitterness • Sad • Hate • Confused and torn – I know I should forgive • Lost trust • Anger towards God, self and others	• Praying and Bible reading • Bitterness and unforgiveness – tough to deal with, but trying • Family and friends – help to talk • Pastor and church – helpful • Avoid person • Try to forgive • Talk to family and friends • Try to deal with anxiety	• Faith spirituality, and faith practices – sometimes helpful • Frustration with police/public institutions • Relationships are important in the process • Counselling • Someone to listen to – process of telling the story • Talking – telling the story

• Burglaries • Robbery	• Helplessness • Compulsive habits – safety precautions • Sleepless nights • Startle easily • Head aches • Dreams – nightmares • Strain on other relationships • People sometimes don't want to get involved (not their business) • Unable to perform routine tasks or at least unable to excel at these • Feel violated • Feel unsafe		
"Afsnyding" – Excommunication • Being cut off/expelled from the local congregation and denomination	• Collective experience • Complex responses • Strain on relationships – family, friends, acquaintances – those who stayed and those who left • Anger, frustration, and bitterness • Blaming • Powerless – skewed power relations • Feel bullied and violated, disrespected • Want nothing to do with church/this congregation/God	• Little help from church • More gossip then talk to resolve • Leadership just went on • Stay at home – more peace • Give them over to God	• Stay at home – more peace • Give them over to God • Importance of acknowledging the event, experience – must allow for spectrum of experiences to take the stage at some point • Need for public engagement in congregation • Taking "symbolic" responsibility and react accordingly • Engage individuals and families • Listen to stories of experience • Create space for reconciliation and collective listening • Create space for people to become involved again • Allow those who are not ready to engage to remain at a distance – but keep door for engagement open • Must deal with trust issues

	• Alienated • Struggle to forgive or trust • Robbed of my tradition and church		• Separating God and the actions of people