

THE CARING CHURCH AS A WORSHIPPING COMMUNITY

by

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submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of

MASTER OF THEOLOGY

in the subject

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

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NOVEMBER 1996

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This is a dissertation of limited scope. Its brevity belies the amount of reading, effort and sacrifice that has gone into it. Not only personal sacrifice but that of many significant others as well. I would like to acknowledge those significant others as well as contributions from other sources, in whatever form and in no specific order of importance.

Sincere appreciation to Professor J T Van Arkel, without whose guidance, encouragement and advice I would still be busy deciding on a title. His often repeated words "You can do it Bruce", still ring in my ears. The financial aid from UNISA in the form of a grant helped to alleviate the financial burden. The United Congregational Church of Southern Africa has awarded me an annual grant for the duration of my studies. Without them I would not have been within the means to see my way through. Professor advised me to make use of a word processor if I planned on getting anywhere. When I started this research I have never managed a word processor, let alone own one. Sincere appreciation and gratitude to my brother Ben Theron and a very dear friend Dr. Trevor Terblanche for providing me with a fine system.

Writing up the research was one thing, editing it another. Phew! I am indebted to Rev Mike Kirby for analytical editing so well done. His encouragement and many hours of discussing related issues has provided the intellectual stimulation for this study.

I acknowledge also the formative role played by my parents Ben and Annie Theron. From an early age we have been taught, to love is to care and to care is to love. So important, yet so easily taken for granted. I had to write it down if only to remind myself what makes ministry meaningful.

Last but not least. And last they were always prepared to be. My family who have always been prepared to make sacrifices in so many ways. May God help me to show you my gratitude. My wife Celester who for the past few years has been both father and mother to Cal, Carlin, Shirlene and Ilse. Right at the end when I felt I had enough, you were the one who for the last six weeks put in as much as I did to see things through. Though I may receive the M.Th. degree, I receive it in recognition for all of our efforts.

Would I do it again? Suffice it to say that one should never stop reading. A degree is only a formal reward for work done. Still, the more one reads the more you discover the less you know.

Title of thesis:

THE CARING CHURCH AS A WORSHIPPING COMMUNITY

A summary of the dissertation

The dissertation starts from the premise that we are living in an increasingly individualistic and secular society. The church is seen as a worshipping community, where mutual care emanating from true Christian community could serve as a corrective to current fragmentation.

A theory is developed of the church as a caring and worshipping faith community which exists alongside other communities. The church therefore exists to enable people to embody the gospel ideals in their lives. The whole Christian community must thus be seen to be offering the love, compassion and acceptance that is needed today. This role can be enhanced by encouraging training in caring skills. The faith community exercises its nurturing support system through the fusion of horizons as members seek to give expression to their faith.

This faith community functions against the background of the myriad of relationships and different communities in which its members find themselves in.

Key terms:

Caring; worship; faith community; vocation; fusion of horizons; mutual care; individualistic and secular society; pastoral care; covenant responsibility; support system; lay involvement

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CHAPTER ONE

INDIVIDUALISTIC SOCIETY IN A FRAGMENTED WORLD

The primary focus of this study is based on the observation that in modern complex societies people seemingly do not care for each other any more. The individualistic culture in which we live has begun to influence our interaction with one another, friendship circles, quality of our inter relationships and even the level of our Christian conduct. The quality of relationships that was previously taken for granted is increasingly being seen as something that we must work towards. Consequently the inborn need for basic interaction and recognition amongst one another must be suppressed, resulting in the absence of an important element in the development of the self.

This not only poses a severe threat to the interdependence of Christians, but also act as a cancer eroding the church's foundation pillars of compassion and love.

1.1 Dichotomy

The concept 'church' conjures up images of God's presence, a sanctuary, a haven for the homeless, a place where the poor are cared for and the destitute are received. Yet sometimes the church as it is being experienced by many does not correspond with the idea of the church being a community where people are being sustained, guided, supported and nurtured. There is a real need and cry for such a community where the anxiety in individual lives and relationships can be healed and transformed (Gill-Austern 1995:237). There is a clear dichotomy between what the Church should be as a loving, compassionate, caring, community of faith against the reality of indifference, lack of concern and apathy amongst its members. People just do not care for each other any more. The secularization and individualism of this world has manifested itself in the life of the church.

1.2 The church

1.2.1 Definition of church

At the outset, when talking about 'church', we are faced with a problem of definition. The word 'church' refers to many things, e.g, the Christians in the world, the place of worship, the body of Christians meeting for worship at a particular locality or the full number of believers, both alive and dead. For our

purpose, reference to 'church' signifies the local community that meets regularly for worship and also to discern the mind of God. Yet in visualising the local congregation today, one again becomes aware of the dichotomy between care and indifference mentioned earlier. To help clarify that 'church' has undergone changes in the way it is understood and experienced. Robert Banks (1983:311) encourages us to divorce our minds from what customarily takes place on a Sunday and mentally recreate what took place in biblical times.

When comparing modernity with what happens in biblical times, such as to 'Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ' (Rom 6:2), can it be said in all honesty that the modern church is such a community, labouring in and for the betterment of society?

De Jongh van Arkel (1987:216) quotes Bateson in saying, "we abstract from relationships and from the experiences of interaction to create objects and to endow them with characteristics. Elsewhere De Jongh van Arkel (1991:70) asks, "What is the church? Can it be objectified?". He argues that one must guard against reification, by determining the 'significant system' or ecosystem. If the church is defined in any smaller units, it would be treated as an object rather than an ecosystem of meaningful relationships. To avoid objectifying the church, it must be seen in terms of relationships.

The United Congregational Church of Southern Africa holds the view of the church, that since Jesus Christ is Lord of the church, his will and presence alone constitute the church. It (the church) comes into being, not by the decision of certain people, but by the divine will of its Lord. It is because a group of people has been gathered out of the world by Christ and meets in his name that it becomes the church. And it is his presence among them in his covenant-relationship with them that makes the gathered company of believers the church (Briggs 1983:47). Within the gathered fellowship of believers the covenant into which they have entered is the binding principle.

Nel (1996:207) says the church, being the covenant community "exists next to other communities and its members are also part of other communities". Yet, being the covenant community, "the Christian community depends on this identity to differentiate itself from other human groups" (Nel 1996:210). The church is therefore in direct relation with society. The church must not be seen as existing apart from society, but finds its existence in relation to the world. The church as such, firmly remains part

of society. Hence Nel (1996:208) affirms, "a religious community is part of society and is also influenced by society".

Nel (1996:206) also argues that what is needed for an ecosystemic approach to pastoral work is an ecclesiology that takes seriously the role of the church in society. This idea of community can best be understood when recognising our origin as having been chosen by God (John 15:16). He (God) takes the initiative and like Israel we do not contribute anything to warrant God's attention.

This community of faith can only be understood in the context of God's creative redemptive activity. In responding to this call of community by God's grace, Hanson (1986:32) says we are living out our vocations, "the response we make with our total selves to the call of God and to God's partnership".

There is a dire need for the re-establishment of the church as a caring and close-knit community. This ground lost must be reclaimed by the church today.

1.2.2 Challenge to the church

1.2.2.1 Challenge of being the Church

The concern of this study is the lack of care and concern of people for one another and further the individualism that has manifested itself in the life of the church. It is to this society and with this challenge in mind that the church is called to be the church of Jesus Christ in the world.

What is needed is a vitality and passion for the task of the church in the world and for Christian witness to reflect something of the nature and example of Christ who is the head of the church. This would constitute an important ingredient to counter the individualistic culture facing the church today.

For too long has the leadership of the church conducted its ministry by merely maintaining existing structures. In addition devotional life has been detached from the existential life of the people. Banks (1983:320) says that in order to function properly the Church must promote genuine care by members for one another. This has often created a dilemma in the minds of those ministers who aspire to fashion their ministry more and more according to the model of the secular psychotherapist (Browning

1976:12) as against the role of shapers of values and maintainers of meanings. This assessment coincides with that of Robin Gill (1988:64-65), who in writing about the decline of churches in Britain, say that

Decline often appears as a sign of personal failure...the kingdom of God should not be confused with institutional churches...Decline threatens our ministry and our status as ministers...increase validates our ministry and declares us to be successful ministers.

This understanding of the success or decline of the church as being related to numbers has not only been counterproductive to the sacrificial ministry that we are called to perform, but contrary to the spirit of the great commission of being actively involved in the discipling of people.

1.2.2.2 Challenge through discipling

Discipling is essential to the caring function of the church within the society in which it finds itself not in terms of gaining new converts, but educating, nurturing and equipping the saints so that they may attain maturity to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph 4:12). Both clergy and laity are affected by this wave of individualism and detachment.

By way of encouragement, Cox (1965:18) would have one believe that "far from being something Christians should be against, secularization represents an authentic consequence of biblical faith. Rather than oppose it, the task of Christians should be to support and nourish it." Seen in this light, secularization could be embraced and not regarded as something negative. Hence the church could work towards the recovery of the wealth and depth of pastoral care as practised in the early church, even in a seemingly hostile and antagonistic world. Otto Kaiser (1984) believes that it is through its caring function of supporting sufferers and by assuring them of God's eternal presence, that the church can help transform suffering into meaningful existence.

1.2.2.3 Challenge through mutual caring

As this task of mutual care is too big to be undertaken by an individual approach, it calls for a church which has been well schooled in the art of mutual caring to work towards establishing the reign of God in the world. By mutually caring is meant the most fundamental form of care exercised since the early church. Flowing out of the exercise of mutual care the church can expand its caring activities to

encompass an approach like Gerkin's fusion of horizons. To this end, both pastor and laity need to be equipped for their role of mediating the coming of God in the world. In addition the church must reflect and radiate that same spirit of mutual care, love and concern evident in the life and ministry of Christ.

1.3 Characteristics of Modern urbanised Society

1.3.1 Individualism

Fowler (1988:74) describes the essence of individualism as "when emphasis is placed on the welfare of the individual, with the accompanying assumption that the free play of individual self interest would bring about the welfare of all". This culture of individualism within society defines the self in terms of autonomy, individual achievement and success. Gill-Austern (1995:236) describes such a society as one where the self is the main form of reality and where there is a repression of the transcendent dimension. This negates the natural human need to belong and to be part of a significant group of others in a network of relationships. For Fowler (1988:74) individualism fosters 'cut throat' competition and the only interest that the individual has is for the preservation of self. Hence no emphasis is placed on the individual's responsibility for the common good. This poses a real threat to the unity of the Body of Christ by espousing independence rather than inter-dependence.

1.3.2 Pluralism

The make up of our society is such that people are no longer offered the support, recognition, acceptance, acknowledgement and care of yesteryear. Increasingly our societies have become self-centred and inner-directed for individuals' self well-being. Gerkin (1986:12) refers to this age as the preoccupation with the self. Economic and social changes create the situation where the survival of the self weighs more heavily than the importance of the well-being of the neighbour as the significant other. Added to this, Gerkin (1986:15) argues that

Pluralism has come upon Western culture...a pluralism of values...and of languages. Pluralism has so penetrated Western social life that...individuals may be required to move from one social context to another. This makes for fragmentation of language worlds...and of day to day experiences of the individual.

The danger of this pluralism is fragmentation, referring to a breakdown of the societal morals and

a declining influence of the church on its members. Gerkin (1991:26) adds that we live in a time of fragmentation of commonly accepted boundaries and norms and a concomitant new search for norms, images and visions of the good by which day to day human relationships are to be governed. This is a picture of a society that has lost its values and sense of direction.

1.3.3 Secularization

Harvey Cox (1965:17) defines secularization as "the liberation of man from religious and metaphysical tutelage, the turning of his attention away from other worlds and towards this one. He further describes the shape of this secular city as having two characteristic components, anonymity and mobility (Cox 1965:38). And as a direct result of urbanisation, added social mobility today has led to a greater sense of freedom - freedom of choice, where to go, where to stay and what to do. There exists wider options than only having to attend worship services on a Sunday. No restrictions exist. This has inevitably led to the role of religion being severely limited (Fowler 1988:75) as well as the inability to cultivate deeper relationships.

1.3.4 Breakdown in relationships

Modern society is thus depicted as not being able or preferring not to enter into deeper relationships. This inability to enter into and forge relationships is however not conducive to creating a caring church, for sound relationships become the medium through which all caring communication and exchange of ideas occur.

This all greatly affects the quality of life. Otto Kaiser (1984:12) writing about the emancipation of the individual, says that (even) the extended family that guaranteed the individual security in all times of emergency or need and provided care in all times of illness and old age, has been dissolved in the technical world. Gone are the days when people lived in a comfortable closed society without any undue challenges to the accepted norms and standards in which they lived.

1.4 **Resultant effect on the church**

Men and women of today are often thought of as anonymous members. Hence Henri Nouwen (1972) regards the men and women of tomorrow to be the children of this lonely crowd.

He describes modern society as having the following characteristics:

It is an inward generation with an absolute priority to the personal and tends to withdraw into the self... Everybody is basically trying to find the road that leads inward...(Also) a generation without fathers, as the adult authority figure disintegrates...instead of the father, the peer becomes the standard...(and the) convulsive generation, having a deep seated unhappiness with society...and the incapacity of adults to offer any real faith in a better world.

(Nouwen 1972:28-34)

Don Browning (1976) called this a loss of moral context. Otto Kaiser (1984), Marcus Bryant (1979) and Norwyn Denny (1976) all share the concern of the negative effect of individualism on the church.

This indifference and other debilitating factors have so manifested themselves in the church that it has begun to reflect some of the characteristics and qualities of an increasingly secular and individualistic society. These words also echoes the concern of Brister (1964:87), "...studies reveal how readily a church may take upon itself the form of its secular community instead of that of a servant".

While the church cannot go back and undo the secularization and individualism, it should amidst this challenge, still be the church of Jesus Christ, bearing witness to the salvific act of God.

1.4.1 Lost functions of the church

Pattison (1977:11), in his work on the Church as a living system, uses systems theory in addressing the functions of the church. He argues that the local congregation used to be a focal point of the community system before the industrial revolution. However with the rise of the secular state, many functions of the church were taken over by other agencies. Pattison (1977:11-12) asks whether the church has lost its identity and its distinctive function, and responds by saying that

...the church seemed to have lost its *raison d'etre*...Our culture has focused attention on doing, that we tend to ignore our being...Although secular social systems have taken over many *doing* functions of the church, they cannot significantly provide *being* functions.

This concern of Pattison (1977:1), about the *being* function is an important aspect in understanding the role of the church. He rightly says that we tend to think too atomistically (Pattison 1977:1). People are seen as units of existence and not as groups and organizations. Therefore with the emphasis on the *doing*, this individualistic point of view gains prominence at the expense of the church-group identity.

1.5 Problem and aim

1.5.1 Problem restated

We are facing an increasingly inner directed, self-centred, society. This has often manifested itself in the breakdown of relationships, people feeling isolated and rejected. It has also affected the general functioning of the church, where people lean more towards survival of the self. In order to redress the situation, it warrants a shift from how we ordinarily think about pastoral care from being individual and self centred towards an orientation for the 'community'. James Fowler (1987:16) refers to a congregation that functions in such a way as an "ecology of care". The individual is then regarded as an integral part of the whole.

1.5.2 Aim revisited

My aim in this study is to develop a theory of the caring Church, based on the model of the church as a community. Different models of the church exists as an attempt to illumine the mystery of the church. Avery Dulles (1976) offers five models by which the character of the Church can be understood. I, on the other hand would like to use the image of a community to convey the relationship inherent in pastoral care, as a corrective to the paradigm shift from a once mutually caring church (Furet 1986) to one where polarization, mutual incomprehension and discouragement are rife (Dulles 1976:29).

My aim is to proceed towards a caring church within a fragmented and individualistic society that is becoming increasingly secular. What I would like to do, is to develop a theory of a caring church based on the church as a worshipping community.

I would go about this task by using the methodology of practical theology. Practical theology's

concern is with faith actions in so far as they communicate the coming of God to this world. Heyns and Pieterse (1990:6) say that "practical theology must be done within the framework of communicative actions in the service of the gospel". For Heitink, the text of practical theology is the religious person (quoted by Heyns & Pieterse 1990:6). Practical theology therefore looks at communicative actions. Also for Nel (1996), communication is important for practical theology. Nel (1996:227) says, "The whole research into a practical theology ecclesiology is based on the need to communicate the actions of the church, specifically the caring action of the church to the members of the church and those outside of the church".

This research will require looking at existing theories as well as developing new theories. I will be looking at literature in this field and attempt to make creative links in order to develop a theory of the caring church as a worshipping community.

CHAPTER TWO

A COMMUNITY OF MUTUAL CARE

The aim of this research is to determine how a caring Church can be developed to become a caring entity in a secular, indifferent and fragmented world.

2.1 Literature review

The field covered by this research has not seen much research done. Literature in this field has been very limited, resulting in this study being exploratory by nature. The absence of empirical research material on pastoral related aspects, may be ascribed to the fact that research was never seen as being part of the clergy's role and contrary to the serious calling of ministry. Larry VandeCreek (1988:10) believes that research does not have to pose a threat, but is a study that can be embraced by even the most intimidated of pastors. In fact, in determining the reason for a problem or crisis in the church, people in the ministry are already conducting research unwittingly.

I will be extrapolating theories from available literature on the caring church, from which inferences will be drawn, and which will form the basis of my theory. I will use examples of some churches that have succeeded in developing caring structures.

2.2 Pastoral role fulfilment

Jacob Firet (1986) refers to preaching, catechesis and pastoral care - mediated kind of action - as 'pastoral role-fulfilment'. Firet (1986:14) defines the term as, "the official activity of one who is called to be pastor in face-to-face contact with another." And the most important element of pastoral role-fulfilment is not acting on one's own, but "in the name of the Lord of the church and with the word of God (Firet 1986:15). Only then can pastoral care be truly incarnational. Where God offered comfort in the Old Testament, "So will I comfort you" (Is.66:13), the New Testament portrays that comfort as coming through the various gifts he has given to believers (Eph.4:11; 1 Tim.4:13). His own are His ambassadors (2 Cor.5:20). Not that God needs the service of an intermediary, "but pastoral role-fulfilment finds its meaning in it" (Firet 1986:40).

True to the image of the body of Christ, this pastoral role-fulfilment finds its meaning within the corporate identity of the church. "The act of assembling together as a church is the basic form in which the body of Christ functions" (Fiet 1986:85). It is within this assembly that the encouragement (Hebr. 10:25) and the equipping and the building one another up (Eph. 4:12-13) takes place. In so doing Christians are giving expression to their vocation in life (Stone 1983:19).

2.3 Pastoral care and counselling

The debate surrounding the agenda of pastoral work has been continuing for a considerable time. The discussion on the agenda of pastoral work tended to focus more on pastoral counselling and its importance. The relevance of this debate to this study is of fourfold importance. Firstly, the desire on the part of clergy to be acknowledged and to do something 'more dramatic' than mere involvement in the pastorate has made the prospects of counselling a very welcome one (Pattison 1988:25). Secondly, the preference of clergy to embark on specialised professionalised care has led to a neglect of spontaneous mutual care. Thirdly, the nature of the relationship between mutual care and counselling must be addressed in order to develop a theory of a caring church. Finally, arguing for the declericalization of care in favour of spontaneous mutual care amongst believers.

2.3.1 Desire to do something dramatic

The emphasis in pastoral counselling tends to be too much on problem solving and success, which are the exact same standards of the secular world. Counselling has been so prevalent in the minds and agenda of clergy that the nurturing and sustaining of the community of faith has been neglected. There has been a shift in emphasis from the corporate to the individual. In fact, what can be more dramatic than exercising basic primary care to all God's people? "As you did it not to the least of these..." (Matt.25:45). Pastoral care is all about service, signifying the incarnate presence of Christ. Exercising this service is not restricted to the clerical community, but is the task of the entire Christian community and as such the lay person is not only able, but is *commissioned* to care (Stone 1983:5).

2.3.2 Neglect of mutual care

In pastoral counselling too great an emphasis has been placed on the structure of the interview,

on the correct responses and the setting. This contrasts with mutual care which is oriented towards spontaneity and mutuality and care for the whole person, as it embodies *ekklesia* and *koinonia* (De Jongh van Arkel 1988:4) Anthony Russel (1980:9) also believes the role of clergy has become increasingly professionalised because of secularisation. "...his (the clergy) role has been defined by his specific ecclesiastical role as liturgist, pastor, priest...and (he) has lost many of his civic duties". This has obviously led to clergy experiencing an identity crisis, from a public representative role to a more parochial one. The emphasis of pastoral work has become too individualistic. More attention needs to be paid to the broader context of relationships in which people find themselves.

2.3.3 Mutual care in relation to pastoral counselling

In the pastorate the emphasis should not be on the caring action of people, instead it should be on the *paraclesis* of God through intermediaries (De Jongh van Arkel 1988:10). Part of the uneasiness towards counselling arose out of its association with psychology and the psychotherapy. Divergent views were held with regard to this relationship. John Patton (1983) has been successful in professionalising care and he regards this as giving a new agenda and a new meaning to ministry. For Patton (1983:15), pastoral counselling is "a verbal interaction through relational humanness and through dialogue with the Christian story". Unfortunately Patton has failed to incorporate the faith community in his thought process and in addition has not accommodated those outside of the faith as also being within the domain of pastoral care. In his new book (Patton 1993) however, he does address this topic.

For Stone, pastoral care is the task of the whole Christian community (Stone 1983:4). Reliance on psychology has led to ministers losing their theological identity, resulting in the encouragement of lay involvement by the clergy being pushed aside in favour of the psychotherapeutic model. Hence Pattison holds that pastoral care is carried out in or on behalf of the Christian community and is always exercised by lay people (Pattison 1988:14). Pastoral care must therefore be seen as the context in which pastoral counselling takes place. Despite the uneasiness with the role of pastoral counselling, the upsurge in pastoral care associations, A.C.P.E., A.A.P.C. and others in the U.S.A, have increased the belief that the psychological approach was successful. New insights have been gained from the helping sciences. On an

interpersonal level the competence of the clergy has been enhanced, thereby strengthening the professional role of clergy.

Oden (1984) has strongly criticized the values expounded by contemporary psychotherapies, especially where the individual has become the focus of modern pastoral care. He felt particularly strong about the lack of interest in the scriptural tradition and especially the classical pastoral care. "Pastoral counselling cannot boast of its biblical grounding, historical awareness or theological clarity" (Oden 1984:40).

Nouwen (1971,1972) and Campbell (1981) on the other hand downplays the importance of 'techniques' of the secular helping sciences, the role of the pastor, as well as the pastoral counselling setting. For Campbell, the focus is not so much on the 'doing' as on the 'being'. Participating in pastoral care involves "*being* the companion on the same journey that the other is undertaking" (Campbell 1981:5).

2.3.4 Declericalization of care

It has been accepted that the clergy are not the only people who have been called to God's service (Bryant 1979; Ver Straten 1988; Pattison 1988). What is needed is an orientation towards declericalization, and a transfer of responsibility to lay people. As local parish members have begun to take increased responsibility for the ministry of the church, the idea has become firmly rooted that the caring functions of the church cannot be left to the pastor alone, but are the tasks of the whole Christian community, the unused support system in the contemporary church (Stone 1983:4). Members of the church as a whole must take responsibility for their own growth and nurture. This rediscovery (Campbell 1981) ultimately forms the basis of mutual care, with Christians exercising mutual responsibility within the body of Christ, thereby accentuating self-realisation and self-actualization.

2.4 Defining pastoral care

2.4.1 The gift of building up

For Paul, the various gifts (in the Church) are necessary for the building up of the body of Christ,

so that all may be brought to maturity before Christ (Eph. 4:12). Denny (1976:71) also considers caring to be necessary for "the building up of the Christian faith community", despite the fact that he holds the strengthening of church numbers as important. Since our primary models of pastoral care have been borrowed from the therapeutic models, pastoral work has been narrowly described as pastoral counselling. This has placed the focus on the relationship between pastor and parishioner and not on the equality of the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:9). All care must proceed from and not despite of the Church.

In the first chapter of this study it was said that society was becoming increasingly individualistic. One must guard against care also not becoming reductionistic and addressing the needs only of individuals. This can be countered by the church functioning as a church community in practising its pastoral care. Nel (1996:233) believes that "The future of Christianity is, in terms of sociology, based on the existence of a Christian community".

2.4.2 Representative activity

Pattison (1988:13), describing pastoral care as "that activity undertaken by representative Christian persons, directed towards the elimination and relief of sin and sorrow and directed towards presenting all people perfect to God in Christ", believes that care must be carried out by the whole Christian community and not only a select group. Care outside this context is not 'pastoral' care. Gill-Austern (1995) comes out in support and calls for a shift in paradigm, from a closed therapeutic relationship towards a more corporate, communal approach.

2.4.3 Helping acts aimed at troubled persons

Clebsch & Jaekle (1975:4) states that "pastoral care consists of helping acts, done by representative Christian persons...and reconciling of troubled persons...". This approach is not only individualistic and a clerical activity, but it also portrays pastoral care as being only crisis orientated, directed at troubled persons. Capps (1984:11), also emphasises pastoral action. He proposes a hermeneutic as a way to interpret and evaluate these actions. This hermeneutical approach enables one to be in a better position to make an informed interpretation and analysis of any action.

Pastoral care must not be seen to be an isolated 'activity' being performed (Capps 1984). Instead, it is activity being performed on behalf of the Christian community (Pattison 1988:14; Clebsch & Jaekle 1975:4). It is both on behalf of and by the Christian community. Furet (1986:14-15) refers to this official activity as "pastoral role-fulfilment". This pastoral role-fulfilment is not a human activity, but the action of God that mediates the coming of God. Such intermediary relationship requires fellowship with God, results in fellowship with other people and flows out of our fellowship with other Christians.

2.4.4 Definition revisited

For me, pastoral care is that spontaneous attitude and response to people emerging from a loving and compassionate orientation, directed at sharing the life story of people so that together they may be brought to wholeness before God. By placing too much emphasis on the pastoral response, one neglects to hear the word of God (Bernard Evans 1988:399). Care therefore emanates from a sound relationship, that God establishes with us, where His will is discerned within the context of a worshipping community.

2.5 Operationalising care

Babbie (1992:106) suggests that a concept must be operationalised before it can be measured. To many people it may not be important to create operational measures of the variables to measure the concept care. For them, all that counts is whether there are visible signs that would identify the church as a caring church. John Patton (1993:17) describes care as the basic constitutive phenomenon of human existence, "care is what makes human beings human. If we do not care, we lose our humanity".

2.5.1 *Mutua consolatio fratrum*

An essential form of pastoral care is *mutua consolatio fratrum* (mutual consolation of brothers), what we call mutual care and spontaneous care by believers. Care emanates from authentic community (Fenhagen 1977:71). Although it is one of the fabrics of a vibrant worshipping community, care is not a concept to be studied or necessarily spoken about, but it is an entity easily missed, once it is no longer practised or visible in one's actions. It is a natural response to people in distress or crisis situation and is reciprocal by nature. For Campbell (1985:12) the goal

of pastoral care is to assist people to experience love as something to be both given and received. Caring is part of human nature and often takes place completely voluntarily (De Jongh van Arkel 1985:81). Christian and mutual care offers visible and meaningful support to one another in times of crisis, loneliness, death or material need (Detwiler-Zapp & Dixon 1982:25; Denning 1982:66).

Unless the Christian faith results in action it becomes an ideology. The essence of pure religion is described as caring for widows and orphans (James 1:27). It is all about visiting the sick, feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked and giving drink to the thirsty (Mt 25:36-43).

2.5.2 Called to care

This caring is not restricted to ecclesial officials. The injured en route to Jericho saw a lay person providing care (Luke 10:25ff). Also, with the appointment of seventy evangelists, the Lord chose lay people and not priests as disciples. Pastoral care must therefore be performed by the whole faith community. Despite our human nature, through our divine calling we are God's own people (1 Peter 2:9). As a community characterised by inter-dependence, we are not only called to bear one another's burdens (Gal 6:2), but also to exhort, encourage, inspire, listen, show empathy and offer hospitality (Furet 1986:69-70).

2.6 Care in the early church

2.6.1 Ecclesial community

Mutual care played a fundamental part in the life of the early church. Care was regarded as the function of the whole worshipping community, for pastoral care manifests the very nature and foundation of the church as a caring community (Detwiler-Zapp & Dixon 1982:5). The congregation were not only intent on spiritual welfare, but had a concern for one another's social welfare as well as the physical needs (Acts 4:34). In the New Testament, *klesis* (calling/summons) refers to the special relationship to which all who became followers of God were called. The ecclesia is the fellowship of those who have been called out by God into reconciled relation with one another and with God through Christ (Fowler 1987:28).

2.6.2 Caring in community

Tracing the concept 'community' from its earliest biblical origin, Hanson (1986:13), states that "God has created persons for community, and only within this sustaining community is his creation of authentic humanity complete". It is God who orders people into community and it was the devotion to the "one true God" (1986:69) that acted as the unifying factor in community. The lesson learnt here is that without an object of devotion that transcends human self-interests, the foundation of Israel's being a community is destroyed. This notion of community that arises from our biblical heritage has a decisive contribution to make to a threatened world in need of direction (Hanson 1986:5).

2.6.3 Decentralized care

We have a lot to learn from the early church. The decentralization of care is long overdue and for lay people to be both empowered and equipped for primary pastoral care. In addition, meetings in the early church were centred around smaller gatherings and larger meetings flowed out of this (Robert Banks 1983:321; De Jongh van Arkel 1985:101).

In our contemporary religious gatherings, we have allowed structures to develop that stifle spontaneous care. Within the local parish, activities are developed around a large central structure which normally assumes a very formal character. Most of the organizations have been centred around age, sex, race and interest. Very little initiative is allowed for inter-generational and inter-cultural participation. As a result a very closed and narrow ecclesiology has emerged, which has led to a contraction in the church's vision of community life and responsibility for one another.

2.7 Role of the pastor and laity

2.7.1 Laity as unused support system

As local parish members have begun to take responsibility for the ministry of the church, the idea has become firmly rooted that the caring functions of the church cannot be left to the pastor alone. The task of ministering to one another is incumbent upon the whole Christian community, to take responsibility for their own growth and nurture. The realization is slowly dawning that

"lay people are an unused support system in the contemporary church" (Stone 1983:4). In many ways lay people are already involved in churches (Detwiler-Zapp & Dixon 1982:6), taking responsibility for Sunday school, confirmation class and other duties in the life of the church (Stone 1983:4).

Despite this being the case, more must be done to recognise and put into effect that clergy and laity have an equihuman relationship (Firet 1986:156-170). Assigning 'subservient' roles and menial tasks to laity is a retrogressive step. Russel (1980:9) believes that secularisation has caused the ministry to be professionalised, whereby "the clergy's role has been defined specifically by his ecclesiastical role as liturgist, pastor and priest and has lost many of his civic duties". This has effectively reduced the clerical role from a public figure to a more parochial one. Rather than interpreting this as an affront to the church, it affords clergy the opportunity to focus on the development and growth of the church.

Pastors must be re-orientated, towards thinking in terms of a corporate identity and not jealously protect 'their domain'. Negative congregational perceptions must also be addressed, where the opinion is held that pastoral care is the task of clergy (Stone 1983:7). Members may also feel that they do not need any specific training in how to care, since they have been caring for many years.

2.7.2 Regional-technological emphasis

The debate surrounding the position between laity and pastor calls for a shift in emphasis, from what Don Browning (1983:36-37) described as a technological approach when the various parts of a field are unified to the degree that they help to qualify a person for a certain function), to a regional approach (the studies are unified by the fact that they are required for the understanding of an entity, process or region). Browning refers to the technological approach as the clerical paradigm and its relevance here is that too much emphasis and energy has placed on whether, to what level and what the specific demarcation of roles are between clergy and laity. The regional approach, being the common understanding and acceptance of the equality of all believers (1 Peter 2:9), both in function and in status before God must be restored. The different offices and positions should differ only in function, as they are not different orders.

2.7.3 Vocatio

Referring to Martin Luther, Howard Stone (1983:19-23) regards all Christians as having two vocations or callings, to one's position in life and secondly to the universal priesthood of all believers. In the tradition of *vocatio*, the conviction is that our place or office is not merely a destiny to which God calls us as Christians, but a place of creative partnership to which God calls us (Fowler 1987:31). In our vocation as Christians we are called to embody the love and compassion to the world. In emphasising our corporate responsibility in living out our calling as Christians, Fowler (1985:12) considers the worshipping congregation as "an ecology of care and an ecology of vocation".

2.7.4 Church in *missio diakonia*

Writing also about the church being there for others, Hendrik Kraemer (1958:162) emphasizes that the reason for the church's existence is "**missio diakonia**", mission and service to the world. The equality of all in the church need not be at issue. While all share in the ministry of diakonia, the clergy performs the liturgical and sacramental role (Stott 1968:12). In addition the clergy assumes the responsibility to initiate the training of laity for their *diakonia* and *marturia*.

2.7.5 Training for caring

As mentioned earlier, too much of the intervention is aimed at alleviating the crisis of the problem, therefore being problem orientated. Although pastoral counselling does not fall within the ambit of mutual care, it has succeeded in highlighting the actual duties being performed in caring. This has led to an important aspect related to being equipped for these duties. Lindgren & Shawchuck (1980) regard training as vital for the ongoing involvement of laity. Training has formed an extensive part of the preparation of the laity for ministry, being centred around teaching caregiving skills, the art of listening, 'in-betweening' and referral (Verstraten 1988; Gruebmeier 1984; Stone 1983; Detwiler-Zapp & Dixon 1982).

2.7.5.1 Training minimizes risks

Training is especially important to "minimize the risks of harming people and to maximize the potential for helping people" Detwiler-Zapp & Dixon (1982:39). Allowance must also be made for the learning experience to be mutually enriching for both the care-receiver and the care-giver.

This is a break from the medical model, where trained practitioners deal with patients in a top-down symptom and cure mode. Care cannot simply be dispensed in a solution to every case situation. Each situation, through an incarnational awareness of the other person, gives rise to its own solution.

Despite being theologically trained, pastors are not necessarily equipped to be trainers of others. However they could assume the role of facilitators and enablers and further empower the laity to utilize their own skills such as medical, social work, communication and community resources insights in self-training. In addition care must not be seen to be an end in itself, but allow the person to be built up into the body of Christ (Eph.4:12) and be allowed to fit into the community again.

2.7.5.2 Validation service

Since the church validates the ministry of service, just as a minister is ordained and set apart for his service, it is necessary to officially sanction the involvement of laity by way of a commissioning service, to set apart laity for specified roles (Stott 1968:61; De Jongh Van Arkel 1992:70; Stone 1983:107).

2.8 Caring in community

2.8.1 Community as the context of caring

A community comes into being when people stand in a loving, living reciprocal relationship to one another. John Patton defines community "as a Christian group within a congregation" (1993:7). The assumption of his book is that it is the caring community, inclusive of both clergy and laity, that provides pastoral care. However, with the advent of secularization, the church has lost a lot of ground. It is not the only agency that can boast a spirit of community. Despite Patton's definition, a community does not have to be Christian to be a caring community. Robert Banks (1983:312) draws his description of community from that of a family, to describe the nature of the relationship between the early Christians. Nel (1996:233) also believes that the understanding of community is essential for the church. The understanding of the community

approach is important to help the western world rediscover a sense of community (Nel 1996:240).

2.8.2 Community through worship

Community is therefore not simply a group, but a group gathering for a specific purpose e.g. for worship, "where two or three are gathered in My name, I am in their midst" (Matt.18:20). Luke (24:13-29) shares the story of the incident on the road to Emmaus. That was also a community spirit developing. Community was formed through sharing, conversing and just visiting together, resulting in "did not our hearts burn within us" (Luke 24:32). Supporting this spirit of companionship in building community, Campbell also mentions the needs of people as they journey together through life. For him, companionship also is the best means to describe the caring relationship open to people on the road to faith. He suggests three modes of such companionship; "Sharing bread on the road to faith, sharing repose (rest) in the midst of the journey and sharing danger at journey's end" (Campbell 1981:91).

2.8.3 Community within secular society

Accepting that a community offers support, one must accept also that the workplace, sport clubs and cultural organizations can also be support systems. Eugene Peterson (1980:192) says, "Considering all these clubs and associations, the associative impulses in people are strong". There will therefore be a wider support group other than the church. The church cannot become complacent knowing there are other groups that care. Their existence is often owing to the church's inability to provide meaningful care. What distinguishes the church as a support system from others, is that we owe our existence and corporate distinctness to the call of God. This community however does not divorce itself from the world. To the contrary, the Christian community finds its identity in relation to the secular world and not apart from it (Pattison 1988:31). The task of Christians is to be the visible Christ in the secular world and thus live out the mission of being sent out (Matt 28:19).

2.8.4 Community as a corrective to individualism

Within our secular and competitive society we are led to believe that love and self-worth are commodities that we must earn. This competitive spirit alienates us from others, from God and

from ourselves. Gill-Austern (1995:237) believes that these are all cries for community.

The individualistic culture in which we live creates forms of anxiety that can only be addressed by the development of and participation in appropriate forms of community that pulls us out of isolation and into communion.

Within our communities of faith we have unmined treasures of care. There is an urgency to identify, recognize and celebrate these gifts, to act as a corrective to the individualism, high crime rate and violence.

For Fenhagen (1977), care emanates from authentic community, which transcends hierarchy. Pastors would however have the unique role to form and maintain congregations as ecologies of care and vocation (Fowler 1987:22). This still does not detract from the fact that clergy and laity only differ with regard to functional roles.

2.8.5 Community through relational medium

In the Genesis story Adam was not complete without Eve. No individual can therefore be complete in him/herself. The biblical view of man and woman therefore is, "person-in-community, a people of God" (Petersen 1980:195). For Stone, it is not enough merely to have a community that cares, but all that care must proceed through the medium of relationships. "Relationship is the foundation upon which all pastoral care is built and is the basis of all care offered" (Stone 1983:42). Relational aspects are also mentioned in John Patton's (1983:14) description of pastoral counselling. He uses the term "relational humanness" as a normative concept to describe what pastoral counselling should offer and for determining whether counselling can be understood as pastoral.

The theoretical basis of community must not be understood as simply 'being'. Instead it is a 'being with'. The relationship is primary. With Martin Buber, there is no 'I' in itself, but only the 'I' of the primary word 'I-thou'. And Buber's definition of community cannot be achieved without God (Patton 1993:23).

2.8.6 Characteristics of community

A Christian community that becomes loving, open and caring, is an agent acting on behalf of

God in the world. For Dennis Denning (1982:88), *koinonia* action that mediates the presence of God, is the manifestation of God's love and presence in and through that community. Both James Fowler (1987) and Gill-Austern (1995) have described congregations as ecologies of care. Gill-Austern uses the image of a web to signify the interconnectedness of life, how it is formed and sustained by tension, as well as holding the complexity of congregational life as it relates to the care of human persons (Gill-Austern 1995:239). For her, there can be no web, no Christian community, without the foundation thread that interconnects all others. Quoting Paul Hanson, she believes that worship of God is the only dependable basis for a foundation of human community.

Community that is built around worship receives its clear identity from God, "the pioneer and perfecter of our faith" (Hebr. 12:2).

2.9 Pastoral care and worship

It is the premise of this study that a caring church can be brought about by re-establishing loving compassionate communities, being sustained through worship. Paul, in his frustration over the factionalism and disunity in the church at Corinth, reminded them that all their liturgical eating and drinking and preaching had one goal - upbuilding (1 Cor 14:26; 1:2). If worship does not sustain and 'upbuild' the community, then it cannot be worship. Gill-Austern (1995:240) also regards worship as satisfying our deepest hungers and thirsts, when it (worship) "provides the framework of meanings and values that connect my story to a larger story of meaning". She also regards the practice of prayer and meditation as under utilized resources of the Christian community.

2.9.1 Modernity and spirituality

Daniel Bell (1980) echoes the sentiments of Brita Gill-Austern, and suggests that a spiritual crisis is at the root of the modern crisis. Having come of age, modern age thinks that it can simply dispense with the authority of sacred tradition.

Religion restores our sense of purpose by reminding us of our connections with the past. Through recapturing our religious roots, we recapture those moments that taught our ancestors those lessons in humility and caring without which a humane society is impossible.

(Bell 1980:54)

Only once we have learnt about our roots, can we discover ourselves. For this reason our devotional lives must form an integral part of a wider whole. Charles Gerkin (1986:20) calls for a widening of our horizons, away from the psychological concern and the relational well-being that has formerly been the only focus. The widening of the horizons of pastoral concerns must include "the often unspoken and even unrecognized concerns of ordinary folks as they go about the business of their lives in a social situation that has become fragmented and no longer supports them in their efforts to live as the people of God" (Gerkin 1986:20).

2.9.2 Congruency in worship and life

How Christians conduct themselves must reflect the vicarious love of Christ. There must be a link between our liturgies and our involvement in building a more just and caring society. If we neglect to do this, then Paul reminds us that "It is not the Lord's supper that you are eating, but your own meal" (1 Cor 11:20-21).

Worship must not be a holy huddle, destined only to benefit those worshipping. Larson, Anderson and Self (1990:37-42), also emphasizes the importance of worship, translating it into prayer support and witnessing in church. Without a clear link between liturgy and life, in a more superficial social involvement results.

Doug Self also records an incident that occurred during a coal mine strike. At the height of a picket amidst a tense atmosphere the workers and pastor knelt down and prayed. Larson, Anderson and Self (1990:56) described this as "an unusual situation calling for an unusual opportunity". Prayer in this instance may have been necessary, but addressing the merits or demerits of the strike would have drawn a closer link between his liturgy and life.

Worship must not be an escapism from the challenges of daily life. For it to be a meaningful experience, worship has to be both a liberating and a renewing event as a release from sin (Campbell 1981:72). There has to be congruency between what we believe and what we re-enact in our day to day living. Worship can only become that liberating, renewing and unifying experience when God becomes the centre of our praise and adoration. For Pattison (1988:17) also, the goals of pastoral care and worship overlap. Worship, which is primarily oriented

towards giving God glory, builds people up as a community and helps to form Christian identity.

2.10 Successful caring churches.

The following churches have purportedly developed a caring program, which they regard as successful. This was based on discipleship, cell groups, nurturing and teaching.

2.10.1 Ichthus fellowship

Roger Forster and Ray Mayhew (1985:25) with their 'Ichthus Fellowship', organized their fellowship into a caring community. Their success was based on ten biblical principles, which formed the basis of their church as 'an outgoing evangelising church. Their principles included "leadership, growth, discipleship, servanthood, administration, community, kingdom driven, shepherding, housegroups and contextualization".

Though Forster and Mayhew have attempted to move away from a hierarchical (dictatorial) model, they have not been completely successful. "The most helpful model in developing pastoral care is that of shepherding" (Forster & Mayhew 1985:34). Caring is along parochial lines and the mutuality within the fellowship is lacking, since the shepherd is not seen as part of the flock. In addition, no concern has been expressed for the wider community.

2.10.2 American Baptist growth by caring

Concern was expressed in the 1970's regarding the decline in numbers of the Baptist church in America. A task force was appointed in 1980 to explore the possibility of church growth for the Baptists. A program was adopted in 1983, with a strong emphasis on local church planning and creative programming. What started off as goals drawn up by the task force was formally accepted as Nine Marks of a Growing Caring Church: "Personal witness, social witness, discipleship, leadership, congregational growth, stewardship, co-operation and American Baptist identity" (Jones 1989:165).

Their programme was specifically aimed at church growth. However, goal setting was limited to attendance at Sunday school, worship services, and church membership. Material for church growth was restricted to the various race groups, Hispanic, Black, Asian, Native American as

well as Caucasian congregations (Cober 1989:167).

This fundamental approach appears very patronising. The racial divide amongst the churches was perpetuated in their programme for church growth. Their goals were to create new congregations and all else was moulded along those lines. In order to further the aims of pastoral care, one should realise that the church is universal and should not be contracted along parochial lines. Both these churches have started off with very sound theories. Unfortunately their goals and eventually their success was very contained. Their thinking and approach was very pragmatic and resultantly their emphasis was on what should be done to enhance their positions.

2.10.3 Critique

In challenging this parochial thinking, Kraemer (1958:126) believes that "the Holy Spirit has generated the church, the church did not enter the world as an institution, but as a community expecting the kingdom of God". This local church centred approach, though it may have the desired effect for the congregation concerned, does negatively affect the goals of the kingdom. Care should be for all God's people by all God's people. Echoing this concern, Marcus Bryant (1979:23) holds that "within the context of Christian caring, those in this continuing new relationship must reach out to those beyond the fellowship. Christian caring is a response we make to God's love and forgiveness". Though the emphases of Jones (1989) and Cober (1989) have been on the local church, its life and its growth, what was lacking was the vitality, the spontaneity and the reciprocal nature of care, what De Jongh van Arkel describes as "communion of interdependence" (1985:92).

Since God's concern and compassion has universal significance, the lives, love and compassion of Christians are meant to embody the incarnate God to the whole world.

CHAPTER THREE

THE WORSHIPPING COMMUNITY

I would like to develop a theory of the church as community, but more specifically a worshipping community; and as members of this caring community to find ways of expressing our caring, moulded on the caring of God and in relation to one another.

3.1 Paradox of worship

The fabled Icarus of Greek mythology is said to have flown so high, so close to the sun, that his artificial wings melted and he plunged to his death in the Aegean Sea. The power of Icarus's wings gave rise to the abandon that so doomed him. The paradox is that his greatest asset led to his demise. That same paradox could be said to apply to the church today. The priesthood of all believers (1 Pet.2:9), that aspect of worship so central to the church and the autonomy of denominations and congregations, has been distorted to narrowly suit their own ends, resulting in a church ill equipped to minister effectively to a divided world. Also, the sense of community that previously prevailed, became narrowly defined to refer only to an ethnic or culturally based church grouping. In South Africa the confessing church has focused all of its energies and resources in the fight against the beast of apartheid, neglecting the jackals and hyenas which are the breakdown of relationships and morals in society and personal lives.

3.1.1 Faith-community as corrective to the paradox

It is the premise of this chapter that it is only a worshipping community of faith that can form the context and the backdrop of a caring church. This requires both clergy and laity working together as a faith-community in building up the body of Christ working in the world. And as James White (1971:84) rightly affirms, "the building (up of the body) will always win". The New Testament term *oikodomeiv* (1 Cor.14:3) means to edify (Paul Hoon 1971:27). Having said that, the existing status quo must be addressed. From the construction of the sermon, to the selection of hymns, to the composition of the prayers, must begin to instill the impression that what we are doing is of great importance and immense significance. The hitherto sloppiness of how much

of our liturgy, worship and celebration of the sacraments are conducted, does not go unnoticed by lay people.

3.2 Worship in theory and praxis

It is an undeniable fact that the world and the church have changed. There is a repeated call for the past age when the church reigned in glory. Of course no thought then was spent on the challenges of approaching secularism or any other influence that may negatively affect the church. That which was accepted practise in early times like confession, restitution for sin and exorcism, was undeniably considered as having therapeutic value (Clebsch & Jaekle 1975). The habit developed of preaching at, rather than confronting problems as well as moralizing (inductive approach), also did not help to solve the dilemma any bit. A transformation of worship is necessary. From an orientation of passivity, to a lively reciprocal experience of sharing, belonging as well as being challenging.

In our South African context, worship has for too long been divorced from our everyday life. Too long has the practice been perfected where a Christian orientation has not heeded the suffering, exploitation and hunger of the masses. What is required is a mode of worship that involves a critical reflection within a community context on lived experience. This is what Thomas Groome (1980:152) also says when he states that "instead of theory leading to practice, theory becomes or is seen as the reflective moment in praxis, and articulated theory arises from that praxis to yield further praxis". Worship must therefore become a reflective engagement within society. It includes those twin moments that Groome (1980:154) refers to; "*praxis* always includes 'twin moments' - action (i.e. engagement) and reflection, but not separated from each other; it is action done reflectively, and reflection on what is done". A community of faith grounded in God's word and in constant dialogue with each other, with society and with nature is brought into being.

3.3 Counselling: A Task of the church

Seward Hiltner (1969:58) diagnosed the crisis in ministry, as a need for more skills in performing its "functional responsibility". For Hiltner these functions were interpreted as pastoral care and counselling skills. Hiltner has always regarded pastoral care and counselling

as a form of ministry and was vehemently opposed to the independent functioning thereof. Though this quest for a more clerical professionalism sounded appealing, it is short sighted and only serves to enhance a self justified and pragmatic approach. This dilemma has caused pastors to look beyond the pastoral scope for recognition and a professional standing in society. James Glasse (1978:13) argued that a minister deserves the right to rank alongside other professionals, by virtue of being professionally educated and possessing a certain skill. The skill however is that of a minister and "the professionalism is ministerial, not medical or psychological" (Glasse 1968:66).

The clergy who over emphasizes counselling, tends to lose sight of the redemptive task of the church fellowship and focuses the relationship of the parishioner to himself rather than to the fellowship. Gibson Winter (1957:16) holds that "pastoral counselling like clinical psychology is based on the doctor-patient relationship. By applying the techniques of clinical psychology, *this special form of pastoral care* has tended to become *the* pastoral care of the church". Clergy trained in this pastoral counselling pattern, have also revealed that counselling took up a great deal of their time, whilst leaving the parishes neglected (Winter 1957:17).

Though Hiltner (1977:204) favours the independent functioning of pastoral counsellors, he favours the church to be the licensing body rather than the state. There would appear to be some ambiguity in this regard. The church is not a body of pastoral counsellors, nor would many pastors be trained as such. The church could therefore not be expected to be the validating body for this ministry. Those embarking on this specialized ministry as a full time occupation would have to sacrifice the church as both a power base as well as a group of readily available prospective candidates.

Counselling has created more insightful clergy, in terms of pastoral psychological and pastoral counselling methods, but these turned out to be pastors who have neglected the day to day running of the pastorate. Was the shepherd-flock model not criticized by the very clergy as justification to desert the care of souls in favour of the cure of souls? There is a place for pastoral counselling, but not as the sole form of ministry, or at the expense of the building up of the body. From a cultural point of view, it must be appreciated that counselling in the black culture does not fit. There is an understanding of the mutual responsibility of the wider community. The

support structure is so much better and the sheer numbers would render pastoral counselling and impossible task. Within the white community on the other hand, the individualism that is prevalent, warrants the need for pastoral counselling.

3.3.1 The pastor in pastoral counselling

The pastor's role within the worshipping community must not be misjudged or undermined. Paul Pruyser (1976:43) asks, "Why, in this age of widespread mental health services and available psychiatrists and professional counsellors, would a person seek out a Christian pastor for counselling and guidance? Despite the myriad of people with better training and experience". Pruyser offers a solution. "I believe that problem-laden persons who seek help from a pastor do so for very deep reasons (stemming) from the desire to look at themselves in a theological perspective" (Pruyser 1976:43). Pruyser's argument is that people come to work out their problems in the one context, to set their needs within the framework of the one community that the secular therapist or counsellor may not be able to give them. This may appear rather simplistic and naïve, for there certainly are other reasons why a pastor would be selected from amongst others. However, Pruyser correctly urges pastors to take both themselves and their unique context more seriously. There is no need for pastors to be apologetic about what they have to offer and the unique contribution they have to make. Pruyser (1976:48) queries the situation where a person comes to the pastor, asking theological questions, "how disappointing then when his pastor quickly translates his quest into psychological or social terms, and fails to give a theological answer, or forgoes the opportunity for some religious re-education". Ministers need to again learn to distinguish the faith issues behind the psychological distress.

Don Browning (1976:20) also adds his voice to criticise the neglect of pastoral resources in the practice of modern pastoral care. He criticizes pastors for adopting the Rogerian myth of "value free, non-directive" counselling techniques with their one sided emphasis on acceptance, forgiveness and freedom, without giving adequate attention to the underlying philosophy and the moral context of pastoral care. The appeal of Roger's "client centred therapy", was partly due to the fact that it fulfilled a need for pastoral identity. Browning acknowledges that there is a place

in the church for pastoral counselling of all kinds, as long as it is placed within the context of the Christian community of faith and moral inquiry.

The minister has a clear duty to counsel the ill and the dying, but he should first have helped to create a community with a religio-cultural view of the meaning of illness and death. Certainly the minister should counsel persons with marriage problems, divorce problems, sexual problems, but he should first have helped to create among his people a positive vision of the normative meaning of marriage, sexuality and even divorce. The difficulty with much of pastoral counselling today is that more time is spent discussing the tools of counselling than in the more challenging process of developing the structure of meanings that should constitute the context for counseling.

(Browning 1976:108-9)

Pastoral counselling was never intended to be done in isolation. As it comprises one function of the church, it must be understood to be part of the ministry of the wider church and as such requires the nurture and support of the whole church.

3.4 Support system

Caplan's (1974,1976) work on support systems has focused attentions on the importance of support in the development and maintenance of mental health. Caplan and his colleagues have explored the impact of support, delivered through formal and informal support systems, on the level of personal effectiveness manifested by individuals. In his discussion of support systems Caplan has provided a delineation of support that is more specific than either those offered by counselling theorists or those that can be inferred from general use of the term.

Both enduring and short-term supports are likely to consist of three elements; the significant others help the individual mobilize his psychological resources and master his emotional burdens; they share his tasks; and provide him with extra supplies of money, materials, tools, skills and cognitive guidance to improve his handling of the situation.

(Caplan 1974:6)

Given the centrality of support to conceptualizations of formal and informal helping procedures and considering the widespread interest in support and support delivery that the work of Caplan and others have kindled among mental health professionals, I believe that systematic exploration of the concept would be useful in providing a basis for a clearer understanding of the dimensions

of support in individuals' daily lives and would ultimately yield perspectives that could serve to clarify and guide the use of support in counselling relationships. This kind of support can be offered by the fellowship of the faith community.

E. Mansell Pattison (1977:1) regards our thinking as being too atomistic due to the individualistic culture in which we live. There is thus also "value in considering the church under those (systemic) rubrics. Pastoral care can benefit from the insights of systems theory properly applied" (Pattison 1977:8). The support offered by such a system has as its focus, more an emphasis on *being* than on *doing*. Secular social systems on the other hand would place greater emphasis on the *doing* function. The church therefore has a responsibility in terms of *human-being*.

Although it can be said that mutual care entails offering support, De Jongh van Arkel (1985:97,98) goes beyond such a glib statement and explains the substance of such support and how it could be translated in real terms. One of the functions of the system is to create a sense of identity. The pastor as part of the system, is in the same position. By virtue of his role and position, the pastor "is the living symbol of that system" (Pattison 1977:58), and has a particular role to perform.

3.5 Faith-community as the shepherd

Campbell (1981) reminds us of what it means to be a pastor. For him the biblical images and concepts have begun to fade in modern understanding. Campbell (1981:12) portrays pastoral care as integrity, describing it as honesty and steadfastness. However, the term pastor or shepherd has not been sufficiently analysed, and was regarded as not facilitating mutual responsibility towards pastoral care on the part of pastor and congregation. For Campbell (1981:26,27) the shepherd personified courage, tenderness, skill, self-sacrifice and leadership. In this way, Jesus entered the world as the good shepherd. Scripture frequently alludes to the role and function of the shepherd:

Psalm 23 - mentions the Lord as our shepherd

Ezekiel 34:23 - prophesied the coming of a shepherd sent from God.

Isaiah 40:11 - says God will feed his flock like a shepherd.

John 10:11 - mentions the good shepherd.

Hebrews 13:20 - mentions the great shepherd of the sheep.

1 Peter 2:25 - talks about the shepherd and guardian of souls.

The concept shepherd, was narrowly regarded as referring only to the position and function of pastor. It is important to remember that it is the church as the community of faith that is the bearer of the shepherd's ministry of Christ in the world. The church acts vicariously on behalf of Christ. As the flock of Christ by virtue of the church's existence, it exists for service. "By grace it is the representation of the Good Shepherd for the reconciliation of all mankind to God. One can speak of the fellowship of the Holy Spirit as the bearer of pastoral care" (Winter 1957:18). Any ministry of care flowing from this fellowship in the spirit finds its completion in relation to others, and in relating others to this body.

When one considers the community of faith as the representation of the Good Shepherd the emphasis of pastoral care is shifted away from the clergy, for the clergy is self part of the fellowship. Any reference to the shepherd, is in effect reference to the body corporate. The individual counselling orientation obscures this reality of the pastoral function of the church as fellowship community. The implication is therefore threefold (Winter 1957:19).

- 1) To much concentration on the role of clergy being performed, losing sight of the corporate responsibility.
- 2) The clergy-patient orientation tends to let the person relate to him/herself, instead of to one another and thereby facilitating fellowship.
- 3) One's task as counsellor is seen as resolving individual tensions, losing sight of the redemptive task of this fellowship in society.

With the neglect of the wider fellowship in, for example, bereavement and social crisis, the pastoral ministry is incomplete. The role of the community of faith is essential, so that the person

may be received back into the community and eventually into society. For example, when alcoholism is treated in isolation, it offers little 'success', but "alcoholics need fulfilment in the fellowship of the spirit" (Winter 1957:19).

3.5.1 Pastoral role

Much has been written about the role of the pastor in the function of the church in modern times (Ballard 1986:10), especially with regard to the role to be played to avoid clerical domination - hence the repeated calls for the declericalization in the church. There is a real need for the clerical role in realising a caring church. De Gruchy (1986:26) believes that a focus on the clerical role does not necessarily indicate support for clericalism. It must be understood that the church does require strong pastoral and theological leadership.

3.5.1.1 Pastor as living symbol

According to John 21, the main task of the pastor is the guidance and nurture of the flock that they may be together in Christ. One must guard against the skill and gifts of the pastor being 'siphoned' off towards individual care. As *shepherd* of the flock, the pastor is there to lead, guide, nurture and to celebrate the sacraments. Only sheep can give birth to sheep (figuratively speaking); thus by the circumstances of their lives ordinary men and women are better placed to minister to people in their *sitz in leben*.

Despite the contribution of pastoral training to the insight and life of the church, there is a danger of it becoming a substitute for the pastoral care of the community of faith. In our position a great deal of one's training has centred around individual care, with very little time being spent in acquiring the same level of skill for developing bible study and prayer fellowship. This has not been conducive to the social construct of our society. The American culture and its parish life on the other hand, is individualistic in the extreme. The interpretation of the church's pastoral role along the individualistic lines of the chaplain-patient framework has been more congenial to American parish life.

The minister is a *pastoral* counsellor. While serving in that capacity, he/she is fulfilling only a part of the wider function of pastoral care. The one must not be pitted against the other. Rather

than being seen as mutually exclusive, the two functions must be seen as part of a greater whole. The traditional significance of a priesthood which always implies a corporate life in which that priesthood operates seems to have been ignored in large measure by the textbook writers in clinical pastoral work. Ainslie Green (1986:117) affirms that "pastoral studies is indeed for the whole People of God and not just for those professionally engaged in ministry".

The main function of the pastor is to facilitate togetherness within the body of Christ, because it is the church and not the individual who is the bearer of pastoral care.

3.5.1.2 Pastor an equal amongst equals

As Protestants we affirm "the priesthood of all believers" (1 Pet.2:9). This however, must not be seen to eliminate the need for an ordained ministerial office. Any emphasis on the role of the laity, while the role of clergy is downplayed, is an imbalance and renders the body of Christ incomplete. The priesthood of all believers is an expression of ministry and service, not some slogan supporting self-centred independence, on the part of an individual believer. Any minister or pastor by virtue of his/her position acts on behalf of the community and is a representative of that community. The theology of the priesthood has at the heart "the simple fact that priests (pope, bishops) are, and function as officials in the Christian community" (McCauley 1975:84). God acts and is involved in the ministry of all Christians. The only distinction drawn between the involvement of lay and ordained, is more a functional than a hierarchical distinction. In this ministry all the people of the covenant are commissioned to share to the full (Briggs 1986:81). In fact there is no difference between "what happens when a priest baptizes and when a non-priest does, save in the officialness of the former action" (McCauley 1975:85). The important matter is that it is in the officialness of the ordained minister's activities that the differentiation is drawn. And this officialness must be seen in the context of community, in the pursuit of communal goals.

There has been much talk about declericalization, the motives of which may not be all that clear. However, if declericalization is interpreted to be anti-clericalization, then it will not be acceptable, since the role of clergy cannot be made redundant. Paul Ballard (1986:10) emphasises the important role of the clergy as vital for teaching, leading worship and enabling

the People of God to live out their mission in the world. The problem relating to pastoral leadership will therefore have to be addressed. Is it a question of ministerial identity or role confusion? Ronald Sleeth (1977:11), in looking at the possible reasons why clergy begin to devalue preaching, suspects that the preacher's self-doubts may be the source of doubts surrounding preaching.

The preaching office is questioned under the guise of it being an ineffective communicative medium, or its authoritarian theological claims when the real problem is the preaching office in relation to their own being. Preaching reveals their (the pastors') own internality and this can be a terrible threat. They are not sure of their own being...and do not want to preach for fear of revealing their innermost self.

3.5.1.3 Pastor ordained into community

A pastor who neglects his/her community function, leaving it for someone else to perform, loses the identity as priest. Gibson Winter (1957:16-22) notes how pastoral counselling's fondness for individual caring relationships often obscures the pastoral function of the church as a fellowship and turns clergy away from their community building function. Admittedly the presence of the priest or the pastor does not ensure community, but the presence of the priest is an invitation to community. By virtue of ordination, the priest is a community person (Winter 1957:89). The Ordination Service (United Congregational Church of Southern Africa 1992) emphasizes that it is that rite of the church that sets people apart within a community. The promise and declaration of the ordinand, contained in the order of service, encompasses in the following order commitment to: the Word of God, worship and prayer, the sacraments, Jesus Christ, one another and finally, the wider church. In this rite the pastor is equipped by the community and for the community, to help form the people into the Lord's body.

3.5.2. Role of the faith community

3.5.2.1 The Meaning of community

The importance of community is essential as a basis for ministry. 'Community' refers to a Christian congregation, or an interest group within that congregation. It may also refer to a community existing in other situations for ministry e.g, hospital or social service agency. The church differs from other caring communities because of its responsibility for remembering and

celebrating a particular history and experience in Christ.

3.5.2.2 *Characteristics of community*

William Willimon (1987:105) has identified five characteristics that are applicable to most of the caring communities. These include, "common identity, common authority, common memory, common vision, common shared life together and common shared life in the world". All caring communities may not exhibit all five of these characteristics in equal measure. There will however be some of these characteristics present.

Parker Palmer (1981:119) on the other hand mentions that community is an inward fact long before it can be an outward reality.

Community which we normally think of as a sociological phenomenon, is in fact a contemplative act. It is a reaching for a deep, inner insight about our connectedness with another world, with God's reality. It is a given. It is a knowledge in our backbone. There is no external ethic which can teach community.

Palmer (1981:120) is concerned in that whenever there is a call for 'Christian community', it is often a cry for something other than what is seen reflected in society. The church should for example offer comfort instead of conflict, intimacy instead of distancing and affirmation instead of criticism. Palmer further questions the image of an ideal family as an image of community. Rather than allow people to belong and feel accepted, people will be forced to live in a make believe world and hide their conflicts. He argues that this idealized family intimacy must be abandoned. Palmer's (1981:125) image of community is that of a "company of strangers...and still know that they are members one of another". This idea is supported by the African concept of humanity and also provides a focus for understanding community. "*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* - a person is a person through persons" (Schutte 1991:188). To experience community is therefore not an end in itself, since the church as a community is not constituted merely to be together, but in addition for something specific, such as engaging in ministry.

3.5.2.3 *Community that cares*

God is the author of community, creating it as an expression of relationality. To be in community

is not to be like-minded and to speak with only one voice. Nor is it something passive, but that which is brought about through human action. Through our vocations in life, we are challenged and also learn to care, which develops into an orientation. This orientation manifests itself in our caring for others, nature and the earth (Schutte 1991:189). This is how we give expression to what Christ referred to in saying, "I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me... as you did it to one of the least of these, you did it to me" (Matt. 25:35-41). The challenge before us is to move beyond our comfort zones. Thus our *being with that significant other* and *being for* others is more important than the satisfaction of simply being together. Peter was also challenged in this respect on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-13). He was tempted to stay with Jesus, Moses and Elijah, instead going down to minister to the needs of the people below.

3.5.2.4 *Community's stratified outreach*

Earl Babbie (1992:215) in discussing the various sampling methods, elaborates on the advantages of stratified sampling. "Stratified sampling is a method for obtaining a greater degree of representativeness - decreasing the probable sampling error". Although a stratified sample is likely to be more representative on a number of variables, I would like to use this concept to qualify the involvement of Christians in their mission outreach.

The role of the church as the institution that feeds and leads to growth into maturity in Christ is important not to encourage a 'holy huddle'. The church is the one institution that exists for people that may not necessarily belong to its number. All this should lead to a *stratified outreach*. Christians are called to act subversively (not in the negative sense, but like salt, unseen but ever present everywhere) in acting out their faith. Hendrik Kraemer (1958:128) confirms this in saying, "this all pervading concern for the world is basic to the true meaning of the church. As the salt pervades all the waters of the ocean, so this eager, interested concern for the world should pervade the church in all its manifestations". Mission, love and caring is the mark of the church, under the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8).

3.5.2.5 *Community of ministries*

The role of the pastor is to direct, encourage, teach and feed. The function is 'supervisory' by

nature. The guiding assumption of John Patton's (1993) new book is that it is the caring community, inclusive of both laity and clergy who provide pastoral care. In quoting Fenhagen, Patton (1993:3) says "the church is not a community gathered around a minister, but a community of many ministries". The gap between clergy and laity must be addressed, where lay care is considered adjunct or second best to that offered by clergy.

Patton (1993:4-6) identifies three major paradigms for the ministry of pastoral care to show the interconnectedness of both clergy and laity in the participation of caring in a community: viz. the classical, the clinical pastoral and the communal contextual.

- * The **classical paradigm** - is the message of a God who caringly creates human beings for relationship and who continues to care by hearing and remembering them.

- * The **clinical pastoral paradigm** - assumes that (1) the one who cares for others is inescapably related to the one who cares for oneself; (2) pastoral caring always involves *being* someone as well as *doing* something; and (3) one can best learn about oneself and how to care for others through experiential and reflective participation in caring relationships.

- * The **communal contextual paradigm** - is understood to be a ministry of a faith community which reminds members of God's scattered people that they are remembered.

The communal contextual paradigm for pastoral care broadens the clinical pastoral focus beyond the clergy to include the caring community of clergy and laity. Patton looks at pastoral care in terms of its message, person and context and calls for carers to remember God's action for them, to remember who they are as God's people and to hear and remember those to whom they minister.

The central theological thread in these paradigms is that human beings were created for relationship with God and with one another. God continues in relationship with creation by hearing us, remembering us and bringing us into relationship with one another. Human care and community are possible because of our being held in God's memory. Therefore as members of

caring communities we express our caring analogically with the caring of God, by also hearing and remembering. The communal contextual paradigm views pastoral care as a ministry of the Christian community that takes place through remembering God's action for us, remembering who we are as God's people and hearing and remembering those to whom we minister.

It is caring that makes human beings human. In not caring, you lose your humanity. In caring, one affirms the humanity of the significant other. It is more than what one says or does. Not to care is to deny the humanity of others and counters everything that was wrought through the crucifixion.

3.6 A worshipping community

What is it that comes natural and is central to the church? Is it not worship? However inadequate or in need of an overhaul that worship may be.

Gill-Austern (1995:233) relates the story of the lost treasure that a rabbi looked for elsewhere but was found under his kitchen floor. In similar vein we need to (re)discover worship as that treasure that has been neglected. For worship to be true to its divine ordination, it must be grounded in as well as give expression to a faith community. Only a community that worships is a true Christian community and out of this faith community, believers must find ways to give expression to their faith.

Our worship reflects our culture of individualism (Gill-Austern 1995:234). It is no longer God's will for our lives that is central, but rather to follow the dictates of our own mind. Within the Congregational family, our meetings of worship as well as member's business meetings is defined as having the purpose of discerning the mind of God. In reality we have deviated, for it is all but the mind of God that is being discerned. The wills and wishes of the people takes precedence.

3.6.1 Pastor of the worshipping community

The general tardiness and lack of commitment in worship must be traced back to the lack of investment in and the devaluing of worship. The role of the cleric in church life must not be

undermined. The equality of laity and clergy has been confirmed and accepted. Ordination has at its heart "the simple fact that priests (pope, bishops) are and function as officials of the Christian community" (George McCauley 1975:84). An ordained minister is an official of the community. The difference between laity and an ordained minister is a functional rather than a hierarchical one. Relating to hierarchy, Leonardo Boff (1986:26) says the "hierarchy has the sacramental function of organizing and serving a reality that it has not created but discovered, and within which it finds itself". By virtue of his or her position the minister is a representative of the community. The hierarchical function, being essential in the church, does not subsist in and for itself (Boff 1986:24).

The desire for more skill and competence, as was earlier stated, has led to a pragmatic, utilitarian, self-serving position. This professionalism, characterised by a supply and demand mentality, has also been the cause of two professions, medicine and law being removed from the community. This must be avoided by clergy. It is not professional expertise that is required, nor a supply and demand, nor a "scientific" solution to a problem. The aim is to serve and not to solve. It calls for a complete re-orientation to participation in community. A leader as an official of a group serves the pursuit of communal goals. Jesus as an example preached, healed, taught, cured and formed community (McCauley 1975:86).

3.6.2 Norms for Christian worship

Worship in its every dimension is the foundation of a caring church. The particular experience of being present in worship can be a breakthrough for many people, a contact with the intangible, a sense of being touched by the presence of God. On many occasions, the weary, the hopeless and the despairing have an encounter with God that is as life changing for them as was Saul's encounter with God on the road to Damascus (Durran 1987:53).

How is good Christian worship defined? James White (1971:32ff) elaborates on three norms that he regards as a means to evaluate good Christian worship: theological, historical and pastoral. Firstly, to ask the **theological norm** question is to simply ask, what does God say of our worship. To be theologically concerned is to be concerned with the practical implications of our worship. The superficial level of many of our worship services and attempts at celebrating the sacraments

speaks more of the elevation of self and the furthering of our own desires. It was in this respect that Paul admonished the church at Corinth: "When you get together you don't eat the Lord's supper, you are selfishly eating your own supper and you are eating it to your own destruction" (1 Cor.11:2-29). The theological norm emphasizes that it is not so important *how* we worship as *whom* we worship.

Secondly the **historical norm** reminds us that the manner in which our forebears related to God is relevant today. Just as the prophets constantly called the Israelites to return when they wandered into faithlessness, we are being called to remember the acts of God. The historical norm reminds us that one of the best ways to arrive where we want to be today in worship is first to know where the church's worship has been before.

Finally the **pastoral norm** asserts that Christian worship should reflect the people who worship. Since the church is the body of Christ, the love of God is manifested through the church (2 Cor.5:19f). Hence when we worship, we worship a God who cares for humanity. And our pastoral care is carried out within the context of a worshipping community attempting to live out its faith in this world. Hence we are daily trying to give expression to our faith. And similarly God's word finds expression through our lives. Worship therefore becomes a way of life and is not reserved for sixty minutes on Sunday morning. There needs to be congruency between our faith and the re-enactment of that faith in our daily lives.

3.7 **Worshipping community: A context for pastoral care**

As stated earlier, the world, and one must accept that the church, has also changed. One mistake so often made is to long for some past age in which the church has had no threat from secularism and an indifferent society. The old inductive approach to pastoral care, moralizing and preaching at problems rather than confronting them, failing to listen and not taking seriously the context in which people function has not afforded pastors sufficient preparation for ministry in a changing world.

The context, Browning (1976:105) reminds us, is all important. "There is no justifiable way of speaking about the care performed by the church unless one envisions this care in the context of an inquiring and worshipping church". While Browning focuses mainly on what he calls the "moral context of pastoral care", another larger context must be emphasised, the liturgical

context of pastoral care. Worship is a major neglected aspect of pastoral care. Having said that, what must be borne in mind is that the purpose of worship is to respond to God. It is our response to God's ability, his providence and grace. Any attempt to use worship for any other purpose is manipulative. Unfortunately much of our focus during Sunday worship is on people rather than God.

It is my thesis that worship, as that renewing and liberating experience which encompasses a Christian's total existence, must become the work of the people of God both in and outside the faith community. The pastoral care that occurs as we are meeting and being met by God in worship must find a significant outflow in our daily living. In an editorial in Pastoral Psychology Charles Scott (1972:5-6) writes: "We need to be aware of the close relationship between pastoral care and worship...however skilled, the counsellor cannot in his own person reflect the caring and sharing community that epitomizes worship at its truest". For Scott the pastoral counsellor has an advantage over the secular therapist, as he works within the context of a worshipping community and that worship is a means to an end and not an end in itself.

3.8 Covenant responsibility

3.8.1 Centrality of the covenant

Within the Congregational church the covenant is central to an understanding of churchmanship. From this covenant relationship arises a dual responsibility (Briggs 1996:40), a responsibility to Christ at the centre and a mutual responsibility to each other. Briggs (1996:41) describes this covenant relationship as consisting essentially of love: "Deeply caring, supremely tender, sympathetic, sacrificial, ultimately victorious, a love without limit or end". This relationship is in the form of a circle, with Christ in the centre and includes those who share the covenant relationship responsibility.

Having said that, it is essential that the covenant responsibility be understood as looking up (to God) for reference, looking in (reflection) for spiritual development, but another dimension, looking out (manifestation of God's love in the world) also must be included. Roy Brigg's (1996) seminal work on the covenant, makes allowance for this when he says "there can be no differentiation either in the degree of mutual caring, compassionate, sacrificial, triumphant love

among those who share the covenant relationship in any of the church's dimensions". He initially only identifies these dimensions as the local Church, the Region and the Assembly. This is an essential component of *missio Dei*. The church, like Israel of old, may claim special privileges and protection as God's own, but must not "draw in their pious skirts to avoid contamination with the world and sinning humanity. This is the shame of the chosen ones who display attitudes completely contrary to the divine purpose in their being chosen" (Briggs 1996:79). God's intention in choosing Israel and later the apostles and disciples, was to form a nation which served him and carried forward his plans for the world and for all other nations. The servant nation, which eventually refused its high calling, has been succeeded by the servant church.

3.8.2 Renewal of the covenant

The covenant needs to be renewed to remind us of our calling to service. This renewal takes place in the form of the Holy Communion, in which our faith is renewed by remembering the story of Jesus, told and retold in the commemoration of the Eucharist (1 Cor. 11:23-25). Even for Paul it is not a reminiscing, but a remembering (Phil. 1:3). Caring is remembering and remembering is caring. Care and community are related to each other, but it is memory that brings them fully into relationship. Remember means to re-member, to put back. The opposite therefore would be to dis-member (Luke 23:42 & Palms 74:2). Remembering and being remembered are key elements in care and in the development of community.

An important aspect of pastoral care is assisting persons in remembering - searching for God in their memory and remembering who they are. This is what Henry Nouwen (1977) and Charles Gerkin (1984) have characterised as connecting our stories with God's story. Good pastoral care is listening for the times, places and particularities that give a person's story meaning by attempting to understand the person's inner world (Gerkin 1984:40). This would imply having our horizons opened up to that of another, ultimately leading to a merger or fusion of understanding.

The ministry of one has therefore become the ministry of the other (Briggs 1996:80).

CHAPTER FOUR

CARING THROUGH FUSION OF HORIZONS

It is the proposal of this chapter that we need to move away from merely providing care for the poor and needy. That would be akin to Donald Capps's (1990:12) more of the same first order change, where "the more things change within a given system, the more they stay the same". However, Capps mentions that very often a second order change is what is required, where there is a fundamental change in the system itself. What is needed is a complete change in perspective and approach, to where our faith in and knowledge of God is related to our historic existence. This can be accomplished by creating a community of faith grounded in God's word, steeped in worship, resulting in an ongoing constructive dialogue between worship and one's daily vocational life.

4.1 Theory and praxis

In addition it would be essential to develop an ongoing theory- praxis approach as a way of doing practical theology. "In order to understand praxis", Thomas Groome (1980:153) believes, "requires a shift in consciousness away from dichotomizing theory and practice, toward seeing them as twin moments of the same activity that are united dialectically". Rather than theory leading to practice, theory becomes that reflective moment in praxis, and articulated theory arises from that praxis to yield further praxis. The praxis way of knowing involves a critical reflection within a community context on lived experience. The reflection is informed by one's own past and future and by the Story and Vision of the Christian community (Groome 1980:154). While writing about ways to counter church decline Robin Gill (1988:11) says, "Churches must be more rigorous than at present in relating theory and practice".

I would develop this by starting with the function of the pastor or priest, as performing a vital role within the community and how this relates to the church in giving effect to their faith as a caring community.

4.2 Ministry and the community of faith

Though the heirs of the Reformation would object to the title priest, few would object to this vision of ministry. It is recorded that Dietrich Bonhoeffer was greatly attracted by the image of the Catholic priest (Eberhard Bethge 1970:130f). However, for him the focus for the 'cure of souls', was not the sacraments, but the proclamation of the Word of God (Bonhoeffer 1985:32). For him the proclamation of the Word of God takes precedence over all else. For our purpose, the question when considering the role of the church, is, what does it mean to be a minister or priest of the Word of God in South Africa today?

4.2.1 Ordained ministry

Even though my focus is on that of the ordained minister, this should not be construed as support for any form of clericalism. It is tragic that clericalism still prevails despite the emphasis that has been placed on the ministry of the laity in contemporary life (Green 1986:116). However, clericalism is not overcome by simply rejecting the ordained ministry or down-playing its significance. There is a need for strong leadership in the church. Edward Schillebeeckx (1981:166) is very critical of clericalism and remarks, "if there is no specialized concentration of what is important to everyone, in the long run the community suffers as a result". All Christians by virtue of their calling are meant to be practical theologians, but one must appreciate that not all would have the same gifts or callings. Stephen Neill and Hans-Ruedi Weber (1963:388) also remarked that "A high doctrine of the laity includes rather than excludes a high doctrine of the ordained ministry".

Within the New Testament as well as the Early Christian church tradition the ordained ministry was always understood as something which existed only within the community of faith. It was never regarded as existing independently of the church. The ordained ministry must therefore be seen against the backdrop of the total ministry of the church in the world. It was but one form of ministry within the community of faith.

Just as the ordained ministry does not exist independently of the church, so the church in turn does not exist for itself, but it has been placed to bear witness in the world to the salvific act of God. Just as the church is constantly being transformed, so the church is to bear witness to God's

transformation of societies and people so that they may reflect God's purposes of righteousness, love, reconciliation and peace. The role of the church in this *missio Dei* is primarily that of evangelism, but evangelism understood in terms of helping people to have the Gospel be made more visible in their lives.

Amidst all this, the role of the ordained minister is to equip the community of faith for its transforming task and also to provide the church with direction for that task. A World Council of Churches publication (1982:22) speaks of the chief aim of the ordained ministry as assembling and building "up the body of Christ by proclaiming and teaching the Word of God, by celebrating the sacraments and by guiding the community in its worship, its mission and its caring ministry". Leonardo Boff (1986:66) also asserts: "Being a minister basically has to do with the direction of the community".

4.2.2 Doing ministry in context

The ordained ministry should be related to the socio-political context in which it exists. For this reason its style and format may change from the one situation to the next as well as from one era to another. In South Africa only a decade ago, for example, a routine pastoral situation could be transformed into a political event. Counselling a young person suffering the effects of racial discrimination meant conscientizing that person about the reality of apartheid. In many instances, a funeral of a victim of police brutality was transformed into a political event. Churches had to relate to a struggle within the apartheid system. The context of that ministry was being transformed by the crisis. Across the spectrum, young people conscripted into military service against their will had to be counselled. The church within the black community has had to focus on the struggle for human dignity and the empowerment of people, while the church in the white community had to focus on the fears which people had as well as the confession of guilt. From amongst all this the church had to struggle to find its witness as a caring church within a divided society.

Though ministry may take on different forms, it is still essential that there be congruency within that ministry. Within the South African context, though ministry is conducted in different contexts, they should relate to each other integrally in terms of the mission of the church. The

universality of the ordained ministry as the ministry of Jesus Christ demands a common commitment, vision and sharing in the witness to the kingdom of God. As Joseph Hough and John Cobb (1985:103) said, "To minister at any place in the world without regard for how that ministry is related to God's comprehensive activity is insufficient and can work against rather than with God" This is what they meant by the "global context" of ministry. Thus, though the ordained ministry is the gift of Jesus Christ to the church as a whole, that gift is exercised in a particular time and place. The local community of faith is therefore an expression of the universal church and likewise the whole church is present in the local community.

Having said all this, it is essential that the church should rise above the position in which it has found itself, and provide the direction forward. "What the church needs now", write Hough and Cobb (1985:92), "is leadership in recovering its internal history so that its identity in the world as the church is strengthened and clarified".

4.3 The task of the church

The task of the church is to constantly remind the people of God about the tradition of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, and what this means for their lives as well as the praxis of the church today in society. And the ministries of the Word and Sacraments need to be directed toward the empowerment of the people and the building up of the church so that it constantly points to the reign of God and away from (beyond) itself.

4.3.1 Church tradition and theology

Edward Farley (1983:21f), writing about the problem and relationship between theology and practice, maintains that the reason why the term theology is so ambiguous and unclear today is because the question of *genre* is omitted as well as the alienation of theology and practice. All of theological studies have been alienated from praxis and also the clerical paradigm has dominated theological education. Thus theology, as that which has to do with a living redemptive God and theology as that integrative discipline which enables faith in God to understand itself, have been lost. For Farley (1983:30), "theology itself is a practice, a term for the experiential dimension, the shaping of the self, the pilgrimage of the human being in transcendental, decisional modes".

4.3.2 Doing theology

The study of theology must be declericalised and practical theology also must not merely be regarded as a 'know-how' subject where the pastor seeks to apply theory to the tasks and praxis of ministry. Theology must be made accessible to all, clergy and laity alike, so that all may engage in the "mutually critical correlation of the meaning and truth of an interpretation of the Christian fact and the meaning and truth of an interpretation of the contemporary situation" (David Tracy 1983:65). Gustavo Gutierrez, in his seminal work, A Theology of Liberation (1973), provides an understanding of the focal point of doing theology today as critical reflection on the social praxis of the church. For Gutiérrez theology has to do with the understanding of God in relation to one's historical context. This certainly is a challenge to how theology was done in the past.

For the purpose of the present study, theology needs to be in a critical and dialectic relationship with other disciplines, especially the social sciences. And practical theology as one of the fields of theological study, focuses on the religious actions of people. In addition, we need to be concerned with what it means to know God in relation to our existence in a specific context. Theology thus becomes a critical reflection on the church's confession of faith and social praxis in the light of the word of God in order that we might better know, love and serve God through Jesus Christ.

4.4 A religious community in context

4.4.1 Methodology of ministry

Gerkin (1979) writes about life crisis as it is experienced most commonly by contemporary persons and especially the attempt at faithful ministry in situations of crisis. For him pastoral care ministry may be understood as growing fundamentally out of the ability to understand what is going on in a given human situation with the greatest breadth and richness of perception possible and the accompanying ability to relate these perceptions to a coherent and comprehensive theological framework. Ministry thus involves a peculiar way of perceiving and reflecting on what is presented in the human situation at hand. The methodology of ministry consists in the behaviour and language of reflection that emerges as a response to what has been

perceived and understood when those perceptions and understandings have been considered in the light of a theological framework.

Gerkin (1979:35) says,

What the pastor is to represent as he or she stands with a person in the situation of crisis is perhaps further clarified by recognizing that the pastor is in the position of both seeking with the other for glimpses of God's providential care and representative of that tradition that calls persons into relationship with God.

This role should however not be limited to the pastor alone. All believers should stand in that vicarious role, acting on behalf of God.

4.4.2 Pastoral role fulfilment

"Although the action of a person is visible", Firet (1986:14) holds, "the emphasis is on the action of God that comes to people in His Word". People therefore are merely the intermediaries, as it is God who acts. Firet (1986:14) refers to this activity as "pastoral role-fulfilment. In addition, pastoral care should not be seen as only a crisis oriented ministry. Christ should rather be considered as being in the centre of life. Through the lives and witnesses of Christians the present incarnate God must become real if our living is to have any real purpose and meaning. For this reason the challenge for Christians is not merely *to do*, thereby facilitating first order change, but to reframe the situation by *being*. In similar vein Firet (1986:111) says, "Real nurture is not *doing*, but rather *being*. It is not aimed at something, but rather someone".

4.4.3 Relationship of trust

On the personal level, the challenge posed to all Christians is to facilitate situations of trust. There should therefore be congruency between one's words and actions. And more broadly, the role played by the church during the apartheid era has negatively impacted upon the congruency of the church. There has been division along theological and confessional lines as well as by race and culture (De Gruchy 1979:51). Also the Christian symbols of God's epiphany have become so obscured by the closed and reductionistic view posed by the divided church, that its voice cannot be expected to evoke the response of trust and faith. De Gruchy believes that these divisions must

be transcended in the church so that its identity as the reconciled and reconciling community can be demonstrated (1979:52).

4.4.3.1 Trust incarnate

Gerkin (1979:36) believes that a relationship conceived as analogous to the incarnation in Jesus as the basis for the pastoral relationship, is one way to counter this problem of distrust and division.

In so doing, pastoral care then becomes "that relationship which seeks to open both pastor and parishioner to glimpses, signals, signs of God's presence, to engender the quality of expectancy of God's disclosure" (Gerkin 1979:37). In defining pastoral care, Carrol Wise (1989) says much of the suffering today can be ascribed to broken relationships in our personal existence. Hence for Wise (1989:142), the goal of pastoral care is to enable the individual to participate fully and spontaneously in communal and credal meanings. And the model of pastoral care than Wise proposes is found in and flows from a sense of community (1989:44-45). The nature of community serves the function of providing a context within which individual change occurs through dynamic pastoral care in dyadic relationships.

4.5 Framework of care

4.5.1 Context of pastoral care

Writing about the pastor's role in counselling, Hiltner and Colston (1961:24) attempt to clarify the distinctive context of pastoral counselling. They identify four dimensions or differentiating factors that characterise the context of pastoral counselling.

1. setting
2. expectation
3. shift in relationship
4. aims and limitations (Hiltner & Colston 1961:29)

For them this context is the church setting in its totality together with what the church

symbolizes, as well as existing relationships that have been established. The constant aim is to facilitate the "total redemption" of the "total person" (Hiltner & Colston 1961:31). People often believe that the church stands for something and represents something, albeit a kind of understanding that accepts each person initially just where she or he is.

4.5.2 Our christian vocations

Our practical interest lies in clarifying our calling as human beings - our vocations as those who are called to be in partnership with God in God's work of creation, governance, liberation and redemption. To be part of God's creative work means to be intentionally involved in the maintenance and extension of an ecology of care - an ecology of care for persons and for the environment. I propose the recovery of a profound Christian sense of life together, which involves a re-examination of the meaning of Christian presence in the world. It is an abiding sensitivity to God's presence and conformity to the purpose of divine presence.

James Fowler (1987:28) relates how the word *vocation* has changed significantly over the years. In new Testament times the term *calling* was linked to the Greek term *ecclesia* which meant 'calling out' and referred to an assembly, congregation, church or society. All those who became followers of Christ had a special calling before God.

Martin Luther took exception to the clerical domination of his time. For Luther, the call to Christian vocation was a call to a life of service to one's neighbour in whatever situation of life one may find oneself.

Confusion and fragmentation of norms and boundaries for living seem to describe the situation in which Christians find themselves.

4.5.3 Practical theology of ministry

The church's authority as definer of a normative vision of human life and boundary setter for human behaviour, has been badly eroded - along with the erosion of norms and boundaries in the pluralistic context of contemporary life (Gerkin 1991:13). Gerkin proposes a practical theological

enquiry into the practical work of ministry to persons as individuals and as members of church communities.

In his Widening the Horizons, Gerkin gives his definition of practical theology (1986:61).

Practical Theology... is the critical and constructive reflection on the life and the work of Christians in all varied contexts in which that life takes place with the intention of facilitating transformation of life in all its dimensions in accordance with the Christian gospel. Practical Theology, seen from a narrative hermeneutical perspective, involves a process of the interpretive fusion of horizons of meaning embodied in the Christian narrative with other horizons that inform and shape perceptions in the various arenas of activity in which Christians participate.

This definition makes possible a linkage with Gadamer's concepts of sound judgement and aesthetic taste (Gadamer 1985:53). The transformation of communal life in all its dimensions is here seen as dependent upon the transformative recovery of wise judgement and a certain aesthetic taste in the Gadamer's sense at every level of our communal life. In the pluralistic world in which Christians now find themselves, practical theology must take its place in the work of bringing about a fusion of horizons of the Christian source of judgement, taste and understanding of the fitting with other horizons that shape differing views of judgement, taste, and fitting in contemporary life (Browning 1976:65).

Practical theology as we have viewed it, is that critical reflection "arising out of and giving guidance to a community of faith in the *praxis* of its mission [and] leading to ongoing modification and development of the ways the church shapes its life to be in partnership with God's work in the world" (Fowler 1987:37).

It is in such ordinary everyday situations that the most important work of practical theology needs to be done. Fragmentation and individualism leads to people's meanings of existence being threatened. In this situation, the boundaries and norms that govern the common life of the people become blurred for many. It is in this fragmented situation that pastors and congregations are presented with the opportunity to engage in practical theological thinking and action. This leads one to develop further the second order change into the understanding and meaning of a person.

4.6 Hermeneutics and understanding

4.6.1 A science of interpretation

A song in the early seventies said it all, "Understanding is the best thing in the world...". This is where the second order change comes into effect. The system itself is changed. My observation of relationships of church people is that they are conducted on a very superficial level. This appears to be especially so with a new acquaintance or one with whom no frequent interaction is envisaged, but often spills over into all other relational contacts. It would appear that this mode is maintained indefinitely, when judged from the impersonal attitude that often characterizes church relationships. The mechanism is developed where people are kept at bay in order to protect one's individuality and privacy. This however only leads to an impersonal and detached basis for any relationship.

What is needed are new ways of opening up and understanding people as bases for establishing better relationships through a closer bond between people. Many authors (Gadamer 1985; Palmer 1969; Gerkin 1984 and Capps 1984) have recommended the use of hermeneutics, the science of interpretation, for evaluating and understanding (pastoral) actions. This is often assisted by the ability to reflect on one's pastoral actions. Capps (1984:10) mentions that "both a text and the human action have a meaning that goes beyond the ostensive reference (the meaning intended by the author)". Hermeneutics thus is a way of determining this meaning of a pastoral action. For Gadamer (1985), the problem of hermeneutics goes far beyond the limits that the concept of method sets to modern science. The concern and understanding of texts is not only a concern of science, but is a part of the total human experience of the world. The concern is not one of method of understanding where texts are subject to scientific investigation like all other objects of experience, nor the amassing of ratified knowledge. The concern is for knowledge and for truth.

4.6.2 Understanding - A Basis for Relationships

This phenomenon of understanding pervades all human relations in the world. If understanding is made the object of reflection, the aim is not an art or technique of understanding as traditional literary and theological hermeneutics sought to be. The hermeneutics to be developed is an

attempt to understand the event in every experience related, an attempt at understanding what connects the human sciences with the totality of our experience of the world.

Capps (1984:17) goes on to quote Ricoeur as saying, "we should focus our attention on the text itself, which is available to us and not on the mind of the author which is no longer accessible". However, I think that in any pastoral situation or conversation between people, they are in a privileged situation in that their interaction is current with regard to interpretation. The "author" of the text is present and therefore it is possible to focus on the mind of the person, unlike the mind of the author of a text which is no longer accessible. For Schleiermacher, according to Palmer (1969:86), hermeneutics as the "art of understanding" is the re-experiencing of the mental processes of a text's author. This understanding proceeds by way of a dialogical relationship which involves a speaker who constructs a sentence to express a meaning as well as a hearer, who needs to interpret that sentence. Hermeneutics therefore is the art of understanding. William Dilthey has been regarded as the father of contemporary hermeneutics. For Dilthey (Palmer 1969:104), following on Schleiermacher, understanding is the key word. Understanding another person is a reconstruction and re-experiencing of another person's inner world of experience.

Understanding is the mental process by which we comprehend living human experience, when the mind grasps the mind of another person. This is not a conscious, reflective act of comparison, but an operation of silent thought which accomplishes a pre-reflexive transposition of oneself into the other person. One therefore rediscovers oneself in the other person. (Palmer 1969:115)

The interest is not so much in the other person only, but in the social-historical world itself.

4.6.3 Circularity of understanding

4.6.3.1 *Gadamer*

Gadamer (1985:235) quotes Heidegger as proposing understanding has a circular structure, hence his (Heidegger's) hermeneutic circle. In the circle is hidden a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing. The point of Heidegger's hermeneutical thinking is not so much to prove that there is a circle as to show that this circle possesses an ontologically positive

significance. A person who is trying to understand a text is always performing an act of projecting. That person projects before himself or herself a meaning for the text as a whole as soon as some initial meaning emerges in the text. For Heidegger the meaning of this fore-project, is understanding what is there.

The process that Heidegger describes is that every revision of the fore-project is capable of projecting before itself a new project of meaning, until it becomes clearer what the unity of meaning is. This constant process of new projection is the movement of understanding and interpretation.

Meanings cannot be understood in an arbitrary way. Similarly one cannot hold blindly to one's own fore-meaning of the thing if you are intent on understanding the meaning of the other person. What is important, is to remain open to the meaning of the other person or text. In order to understand a text is to be prepared to have that the text tell something.

4.6.3.2 Schleiermacher

For Schleiermacher also (Palmer 1969:87), understanding is circular. "The true meaning of a sentence can only be understood within this circle thus it is called a hermeneutical circle. The hermeneutic circle suggests an area of shared understanding, since communication is a dialogical relation". Within the hermeneutical circle, a whole sentence must be understood as a unity. An individual word can only be understood when seen against the sentence as a whole. And by a dialectical interaction between the whole and the part, each gives the other meaning.

4.6.3.3 Dilthey

For Dilthey also, the operation of understanding takes place within the principle of the hermeneutic circle. The whole receives its definition from the parts and likewise the parts can be understood in reference to a whole. The sense of the whole determines the function and meaning of the parts.

To understand meaning involves entering into a real relationship of interaction with those around. Even though I may be emphasizing the importance of community for the ongoing

sustaining of caring, that community must be built on a relationship of sound interaction amongst the individuals comprising the community. Pastoral care ministry therefore grows out of the ability to understand what is going on in a given human situation. Ministry thus involves a peculiar way of perceiving and reflecting on what is presented in the human situation at hand. The methodology of ministry consists in the reflection that emerges as a response to what has been perceived and understood when those perceptions and understandings have been considered in the light of a theological framework.

4.7 Horizon and The fusion of Horizons

4.7.1 Awareness of horizons

The idea of horizon is important for the understanding of relationships, especially from a hermeneutical perspective. It is important to understand each person as standing within the limit of a horizon. The process of care must also be seen within that horizon and more. For Gadamer (1985:269), every situation has a limit of vision. An essential part of the concept of situation is the concept of 'horizon'. The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point. One with no horizon, is one who does not see far enough and hence over-values what is nearer. When seen in this light, caring involves opening up one's horizon to others, so that ultimately the horizons touch and overlap. Like concentric circles, as soon as the horizons touch, it makes way for a fusion of horizons and for understanding to take place.

4.7.2 Fusion of horizons

When De Jongh van Arkel (1991:107) describes pastoral work as "dialogical caring action in the service of the gospel", it corresponds with Gadamer's position that it is erroneous to consider the hermeneutical task in subject-object terms, as if the other is an object to be analysed. Gadamer (1985:269-270) says it is much more a dialogic process, in which what is hoped for is a merger or fusion of horizons. Any situation entails a sense of subjectivity, since one is not standing outside of the situation. And to be especially conscious of a historical setting or a situation, is to be conscious of the hermeneutical situation.

For Gerkin (1984:43), if one is truly to hear what the other person has to say, there must be a breaking through of the barrier that stands between the language world of the hearer and that of the speaker. In other words to know another means to enter that person's world in such a way that a merging of experienced reality can take place. Theological speaking we encounter here the primordial sense of incarnation. To know another in the incarnational sense is to enter that other's world and to have the other enter into our world. Schleiermacher, according to Gerkin (1984:41), calls for a divinatory level of interpretation. This process requires an intuition and imaginative feeling for the person who produced the text or the spoken word. That is when one tries to grasp or decipher the meaning of the spoken and unspoken communication.

To place oneself within the horizon of another leads to an understanding of that particular horizon. Not to place oneself within that horizon could lead to the misunderstanding and significance of a message or conversation. The fusion of horizons leads to the awareness of that significant other. Gadamer (1985:235) refers to Heidegger's disclosure of the fore-structure of understanding. For Heidegger understanding had a circular structure. This being the case, it gives rise to the process of distinguishing as always being reciprocal.

4.7.3 Horizons and the emerging story

Since we are standing within a society characterised by anonymity and detachment, people are not easily susceptible to any fusion of their horizons. Yet there is a need for belonging and a search for meaning which, Charles Gerkin (1984:26) believes, makes "People seek out a pastoral counsellor because they need someone to listen to their story". This search is not specifically for a pastor, as for someone who will listen to and interpret their stories. Christians, by virtue of their vocation are called to be listeners and interpreters of stories through a dialogical hermeneutical process. This is a move away from the crisis or problem centred approach to one where all Christians are expected to be more pro-active. It is the 'being' (together) that would attract.

4.8 **Sharing of one's lifestory**

Gerkin (1984:26) says, "People seek a counsellor because they need someone to listen to their story". Not the counsellor but the story is important. Each person's life is shaped by a story and each person has a lifestory to tell. One way of doing ministry, is sharing the story of our life. But

often our ministry requires that we become a listener of those stories that others have to tell. These stories may often be stories of alienation, separation, discovery or growth. Fenhagen (1977:33) believes that "Behind everyone's personal story there is a greater story, a cosmic story that takes the many incoherent elements of our personal story and shapes them into a coherent pattern". The telling of this story entails more than merely reciting words. Rather, it is a way in which these stories become the vehicle of the divine human encounter (Fenhagen 1977:33).

4.8.1 Characteristics of stories

For Fenhagen (1977:35), stories that serve as vehicles of the divine human encounter reflect four fundamental characteristics:

- a. They have an open ended quality about them that opens us up to the great question of life in a way that encourages exploration and growth.
- b. Storytelling reflects the drama of our struggle to comprehend the unknown.
- c. Story deals with the profound themes of human existence, themes of bondage and deliverance, separation and reunion, life and death.
- d. Serious storytelling has the potential for initiating us into the mystery of our own being.

Christian faith emerges when, as we listen to others, deep within us we become aware of our own story and how that story and the Gospel story are one and the same. Our openness to storytelling therefore has as its goal growth into maturity in Christ. It is the will of God that we should all grow into maturity in Christ (Eph.4:12). Our constant interaction leads to closer associations with one another and also to the fusion of our horizons and the awareness of one other's stories. The real concern of pastoral care should therefore be to draw out those stories, but not necessarily only from people seeking help, for they would more readily draw attention to their plight by seeking pastoral intervention. Christians rather need to be more pro-active and attentive in their interaction with all people.

If the character of the world is as described earlier, it says a lot about where people are in terms of their *sitz im leben*. Many people sit with their stories, tangled, painful, heart rendering and lonely stories - stories of abuse, rejection, relating a sense of loss, inferiority and powerlessness.

There exists a desire to share your story with someone you can trust. As such, encouraging storytelling is both a ministry within the community of faith and a ministry to the world at large. This is particular true in the light that pastoral care knows no boundaries. When it takes place within the community of faith it is a ministry of renewal and when it takes place outside, it is the hand of Christ being reached out in empathy.

4.8.2 Merit of storytelling

Since as Christians we are challenged to daily put aside the old person and be reclothed in Christ, it is a challenge of Christ also in our lives to make all things new. Renewal therefore takes place in a congregation when through the work of the Holy Spirit, people are opened to one another and to the power of the Gospel story to make a difference in the quality of lives. The ministry of storytelling is a vehicle for this renewal. This opportunity of storytelling has profound implications for personal faith and commitment. Fenhagen (1977:40) identifies three aspects of importance in storytelling.

- a. Storytelling provides an opportunity for people to stay in touch with that life process that is so vital to personal and spiritual growth.
- b. It contributes to genuine trust and openness. We learn to trust persons with whom we can share our lives.
- c. Storytelling aims at creating those settings where the encounter between the Gospel story and our personal stories can take place. It is a ministry aimed at nourishment and depth.

This has far reaching implications for our pastoral caring. Caring action has been called "pastoral" because the emphasis has been on the pastoral function of believers, referring to the perspective in which the caring activity can be viewed. This caring action through dialogic means is one way of manifesting the visible presence of Christ in this world: more so when we are reminded that as the church we are the Body of Christ and therefore the visible manifestation of the Living Lord in the world. Each Christian thus foreshadows the coming of God's Kingdom through the mode of *paraklesis* (Fiet 1986:68). The wealth of meaning that is encompassed by this word embraces our hermeneutical method of storytelling.

4.9 A caring worshipping community

Parker Palmer (1981) calls on Christians to "go public", after the trend had been to "go private" in cultural and religious life for almost a generation. The church has a lot to offer to society, not only as the conscience of society or as a moral watchdog. As the church, we need to look in, in order to look out. Fowler (1987:46), reminds us that "(as members of the church) our practical interest lies in clarifying our calling as human beings - our vocations as those who are called to be in partnership with God in God's work in the world". This work of God is all encompassing. It means to be intentionally involved in the maintenance and extension of an ecology of care. A care for both persons and the environment.

4.9.1 Community revisited

Having said all this, it is incumbent upon us to redefine our thinking on community. A local congregation where Christians worship is a community in which each member supports all the others. Because denominations or local congregations have been engaged in running large institutions, "community" came to be identified with the institution it ran. The word "community" then came to have a meaning the exact opposite of what it should be. In its present form, the "community" tends to be a bureaucratic organization which by intention excludes deep, personal communication. There has been a constant call for community, but this call has tended to form in reaction to the larger society. For example when there is a call for Christian community, it is in reaction to a fragmented, disconnected, depersonalized, violent torn and indifferent society.

This quest for community is often thought of in familial terms. It is thought of as a parish family characterized by intimacy, understanding and acceptance. This idealized form of the family restricts the concept of community and must be abandoned in the light of Christian realism. All families must deal with crisis and conflicts. Even scripture does not idealize the family. Jesus had very hard words to say about the family (Luke 14:26).

4.9.2 Community and sub-groups

The question of size must realistically be faced. No meaningful and close contact can exist in a house having a large number of people. A group should be small enough to facilitate a network

of interrelations where the absence of one member is felt by all others. It may be possible to increase numbers, but it is doubtful whether any operational and effective exchange will exist. It is essential to have a sustained small group in regular contact as well as continuing sub groups, before embarking on any large gathering or grouping. Siegfried Grossman (1977:67-8), in relating practical suggestions about the ways in which individuals and churches may respond to the challenge of God to be the church in the world says, "...smaller groups which take on the pattern of the Pauline concept of the body of Christ, where an organic structure develops through the exercising of a variety of spiritual gifts, will always possess healing and direction-giving abilities". It must not naïvely be assumed that all the problems of community existence are solved once there are small groups. What the small group does is reveal the deeper problems and pose to us the question of whether we can cope with them at all. The small group will have more irritants and more personality problems. The one consolation will be that the problems are being faced instead of being hidden.

4.9.3 Mutating community sub-groups

To ensure an ongoing mutual affirmation and nourishment, it is essential that a congregation be divided along more manageable lines for sincere meaningful interaction that would facilitate more "fusions of horizons" between persons. These small divisions may be along geographical lines, interest groups or based on need, but even this cannot be legislated. The groups may mutate as the need arises and then in turn give rise to new groups. A bereavement support group may for example be formed, but as people develop their inner resources within that group, they may eventually leave that group and new members may later join for that specific purpose. The body corporate would then still exist for the purpose of corporate worship and the celebrating of festivals or the sacraments.

4.9.4 The fabric of community

Community is that place where the person you least want to live with is present. In so doing the church becomes the place where people confront the stranger in each other and conflict is welcomed as an opportunity to learn that our wholeness lies in the One who sustains us all.

For Palmer (1981:130), "the Christian community can only succeed by experiencing the living

presence of God". This is a discipline that is designed to focus attention on God rather than directly on one another. Thus, true community arises not from our own social graces, but from the mediation of God's grace among us. When we allow God to mediate our relationships, we proceed not with a sense of personal power, but with a sense of God's presence which alone can heal. Only as we learn to discern the presence of God - within us, between us, among us and beyond us can we develop an approach full of hope, love, acceptance and healing.

4.10 Community beyond church structure

4.10.1 Decisionmaking by the people of God

The spirit of community thinking entails a complete adjustment in the way that we are accustomed to. For Leonardo Boff (1986), the church in its present hierarchical form suppresses the understanding of the church as a faith community co-responsible for all its affairs. This has also lent itself to the thought that caring is the task only of the church officials. For him, "Hierarchy must be understood within the faith community and in its service" (Boff 1986:24). And in terms of the decision making Boff regards the participation of the faithful as totally mutilated. This has been because of an uncritical acceptance of the traditional linear structure of the church with the cleric standing over and against the members. Boff reiterates (All believers are) "responsible for the entire reality of the church. Collegiality is no longer the monopoly of the episcopate and clergy. Now it belongs to the whole People of God" (1986:32). He feels that the base church communities need to help in the process of declericalization, by restoring to the People of God, the faithful the rights of which they have been deprived. Part of this right includes the decision making of the local church. For us in the United Congregational Church this is nothing new. Our structure lends itself to congregational decision making, as a worshipping community.

4.10.2 Decision by consensus

The implication of this decision making requires a shift from the usual voting procedure. Palmer proposes a procedure through consensus. "Though more laborious and time consuming, consensus seeks the unity beneath the differences. It means no decision is taken until everyone is willing to go along with it" (1981:127). Although most public decisions are made by majority

vote, consensus teaches a new way of using our differences or conflicts for a creative purpose. It seeks a synthesis which brings the opposites together.

This decision making is just one aspect that is affected when the church embarks on a caring course of action. Another aspect being affected is worship, as the church discerns the mind of God, and seek new ways of giving expression to its faith in Christ.

4.11 Conclusion

God has ordained the church as his own covenant community. Hence the object of this theological study has been the church's faith in God as well as the communicative actions in the service of the gospel. Since the church has been experiencing a decreasing influence on and in society, it has also influenced the relationship between people and the church.

The challenge has been to move away from the reductionistic approach, so that pastoral care would be seen as more than just (*cura animarum*) caring for souls. The concept 'caring' demands a shift from the humanistic approach of merely providing for the physical need of people. Out of this must emerge a fellowship first with God and then with one another. This gives rise to an ecclesiology where the church is seen as a community standing in and alongside society.

South African society has for a long time forced a situation of separate development that has engendered a climate of ignorance, mistrust, dis-information, fragmentation and separation. During all that time the body of Christ has suffered division. People in our country have been purposely kept apart. Any interaction and association was prohibited and thus the fusion of horizons were effectively denied. Different racial groups have remained ignorant of the other, which in turn led to indifference.

While there is a promise of all things being made new, the church needs to rise to that divine challenge of manifesting the love and care of God in the world. The church can do this by creating a climate to provide a healthy balance between theology and practice, between the word

and the spirit, between the church tradition and present experience, between intellect and emotion. And by providing an opportunity to grow closer to God and to one another, the entire church can be transformed into a caring community.

CHAPTER FIVE

Corollary

The first chapter of this study portrays the individualistic context in which pastoral work needs to function. Chapter 2 discusses care as the *mutua consolatio fratrum*, emanating from authentic community. Chapter 3 develops worship as pastoral care, where also the faith community seek to give visible expression to their faith and devotion to the graceful community forming work of Christ among his people and thereby becoming agents of faith and formation. Finally, chapter 4 attempts to develop a mode of critical reflection within a community context, where the communicative actions of people can be interpreted and understood and thus form the basis of ongoing relationships.

By way of concluding, and by doing an informal biblical exegesis on Luke 24, I wish to portray a picture of the care that has been expounded.

The basis of this research has emphasized that caring for God's people has to do with what we believe about God. We care in his name. Taking Jesus as our model, it is from him that we learn what caring is about, its power and its vulnerability. In the caring Jesus showed we see the acceptance, the challenge and the valuing of the love we are called to offer. In him we see the Word of love made flesh and from him we hear the invitation to "Follow me". We are invited to walk *with* him so that we may learn to walk *with* others.

This also emphasizes the profound challenge of our faith. It is not so much to what extent 'I' can grow as a Christian, but to what extent 'I' can contribute to the development, growth and nurture of someone else. And within this dynamic relationship as equals, our concern is with human beings (Furet 1986:182). The story of our faith therefore is all about companionship and giving of oneself for others.

5.1 Caring through companionship

For Campbell (1981:91) the idea of companionship best describes the subtle relationship of caring which opens the way back to faith. Flowing out of this, he suggests three modes of such companionship (Campbell 1981:91-95). The first is sharing bread, referring to our being one with others in humanity, entering the other's life for a while and also denoting a communion which sustains and transcends the companionship. Secondly, companionship would refer to the sharing of repose, where the heart of friendship would be a way of being and a sharing of the joy of doing nothing. Finally, companionship involves companionship which refers to the presence of someone in the face of danger, loneliness and despair.

This companionship is beautifully illustrated in the events of Luke 24 where we are given a clear picture of Jesus - the companion on the road.

5.1.1 Luke 24: The walk to Emmaus

On that same day two of Jesus' followers were going to a village named Emmaus, about eleven kilometres from Jerusalem and they were talking to each other about all the things that had happened. As they talked and discussed, Jesus himself drew near and walked along with them. They saw him but somehow did not recognise him. Jesus said to them, "What are you talking about to each other, as you walk along?". The two found it strange that this visitor to Jerusalem did not know about the things that had happened. They then elaborately explained the occurrences that had taken place, including the empty tomb.

After they had poured out their painful story, the stranger gently but strongly pointed out what they had omitted from their story. We can take it that when Jesus used the word 'foolish' he did not do so in a harsh way when dealing with two people clearly in distress. He was helping them to bring into their loss experience the resources of their faith. Later they were able to say, "Wasn't it like a fire burning in us when he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?". They experienced such joy and enthusiasm that, late as it was, they went back the seven miles to Jerusalem to share the Good News. This narrative of Jesus, Cleopas and the third

disciple brings to the fore principles of, as well as dramatizing the caring that has been expounded thus far.

5.1.2 Principles of caring

- * Jesus cared for the two by *being with* them. He travelled the road alongside them, being where they were and entering into their sorrow and pain.
- * Jesus showed his willingness to *listen* to them. Even though he knew the answer to their question he invited them to tell him how it was for them.
- * Jesus did not rush into telling them what they should do. He *reflected back* to them what was in their minds and hearts and helped them to bring together and examine their confused thoughts and feelings.
- * Jesus enabled them to discover the resources they already had in their experiences and in their faith.
- * Jesus was *a loving presence* on the road and at their household table.

5.1.3 A caring presence

Love being at the heart of the gospel, it is for that for which people cry in their hours of deepest need and longing. In loving and caring for God's people we need to learn to be a loving presence with them as we journey and as we sit down with them.

- * A caring presence always involves ourselves, others and God.
- * A caring presence values people. It neither discounts nor rescues them.
- * A caring presence listens to people, with ears and eyes both to the words spoken and unspoken.
- * A caring presence responds appropriately to what it hears, allowing the other person to be responsible for his/her own life.
- * A caring presence reaches out to the whole of the other person in warm openness and acceptance.
- * A caring presence is open to finding a loving presence in the other person.

5.2 Conclusion

Having focused on Luke 24, Jesus portrays in his meeting with two of his followers, the principles of a worshipping community. Jesus immediately accepted these followers unreservedly. In addition, their being together in the presence of the Lord constituted them as a faith community, thereby also supplying the basic need. To belong. Hence Michael Winter (1973:21) believes that the basic requirement of Christianity is the need for community. And in order to lead a Christian life one needs to be associated closely with others who can share one's spiritual outlook as well as to sustain one's pursuit of the gospel ideals (Winter 1973:22). Jesus appeared to have gone beyond this. In the process he became a listener of their stories., allowing him to enter into their world making allowance for the fusion of their horizons of meaning. This led to a feeling of acceptance and self worth and someone willing to listen and to interpret their story. Gradually the greater story (cf paragraph 4.8) behind the story emerged. But their meeting together went further. They experienced community through worship (cf paragraph 2.8.2), where bread was broken and shared (Campbell 1981:91).

Paul also, in writing to the Corinthians said that Christian worship is primarily a corporate affair in that it expresses the forms of the Body. If worship does not strengthen the community, it is not Christian worship (1 Cor. 1:2; 14:26). Karl Barth (1958:638) also said, "It is not only in worship that the community is edified and edifies itself. But it is here first that this continuously takes place. And if it does not take place here, it does not take place anywhere". Just as Christ gathered individuals into his new body, so worship becomes an integrative act of the community. Worship becomes the centre of the community's upbuilding because that is where the community's concerns meet and coalesce.

This experience provided a feeling of fulfilment, acceptance and empowerment. After their experience they in turn went to Jerusalem to share their new found 'treasure' and to reach out to others in turn. And so do all Christians share the common task of personally living faithful Christian lives in the world.

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