

**AN APPRAISAL OF THE SPIRITUALITY OF METHODIST WOMEN IN POST
APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA**

by

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I declare that An Appraisal of the Spirituality Of Methodist Women in Post Apartheid South Africa is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Rev. A.R. Preston

Date

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SUMMARY

This thesis will examine the issues of women's spirituality, suffering, their survival in the midst of suffering. These issues will be examined in the context of a post-apartheid South Africa within a Christian framework looking at issues of faith and spirituality. More particularly the Methodist church will be examined, looking at key aspects of its spirituality and how that might have contributed and provided for its women. Two of the Methodist Women's organisations, the Women's Manyano and the Women's Auxiliary will be looked at; their history and significant aspects of their programmes and structures that have led them to be important places for the women who are part of them. The thesis will seek to determine how the Methodist Women's organisations have impacted the spirituality of two women especially when they have gone through difficult times. The lives of these two women are examined through conversations the author has with them. In particular the author will examine particular circumstances of these women and seek to set them against a background of their spirituality and in particular whether their particular Methodist organisation played any role during this time.

Key words: Spirituality, Female Spirituality, suffering, organisations, Methodist Church, Women's Auxiliary, Women's Manyano, survival, hope.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1. INTRODUCING THE RESEARCH

It is no secret that life can be hard, and it does seem that it is harder for some than for others. There is no doubt that women in this country, especially black women, have been particularly affected by the injustices perpetrated against humankind. Theresa Hoover titles her chapter in her book *Black Theology*, Black women and the churches: Triple jeopardy. For her there was no more oppressed person than one who is female, black and part of the church (1979: 386). This book may have been written in America and written many years ago, but one can't help wondering if things are any different here today in the South African church.

For many women in South Africa life has been difficult. Women have been marginalised in this country for many years, and black women in particular have not only been discriminated against because they are female, but under the apartheid system their plight was worsened. For many women struggles included having absent husbands and fathers, lack of finances, lack of adequate family planning or any medical facilities, an often inadequate education system, unemployment, rape, incest, illness and death. But so many survive, and there are many factors that have contributed to their survival. Because they have survived, they have continued to worship, to love, to keep families together, to earn an income, to be influential in different spheres of life and to contribute to society in general. So how did they and how do they survive? What are the factors that led to their survival?

We will examine these factors within a Christian framework, looking at issues of faith and spirituality and how they have contributed to the lives of these women. More particularly, we will examine the Methodist church, looking at key aspects of its spirituality and how that might have contributed and provided for these women. Within the Methodist church itself there are powerful women's organisations that have supported their women through some difficult times. We will look at the history of these organisations as well as significant aspects of their programmes and structures that have led them to be important places for the women who are part of them.

As a minister in the Methodist Church I have been privileged to encounter women from all walks of life whose stories have had a deep and profound effect upon me. Many of these women have led challenging lives that have been difficult and yet they remain committed in their roles as daughters, wives, mothers, community leaders and church members. They continue to love God, in spite of their difficult circumstances. I felt a need not only to document their stories but to try and understand what or who it was that enabled them to continue as they do.

This led to an examination of their involvement in their women's organisations and most particularly for Methodist women, the Methodist women's organisations. As my work has been entirely in the traditional (but mostly separate) black and white settings, I have concentrated on these two particular groups.¹ For the purposes of this paper we will only look at the Manyano and Auxiliary, which loosely are the black and white women's organisations, and the interesting roles they have played in the life of their members. We have to acknowledge that these organisations have played a significant role in the lives of these women in different ways.

There are interesting cultural and political aspects in these different organisations. Three separate groups have come out of the white, coloured and black women's need and place in the country and church². In order to understand the importance of these organisations in the life of its members, we need to examine their dynamics as well as look at the reasons for their separateness.

We will then look more closely at the lives of two Methodist women and investigate the role of these Methodist women's organisations in their survival. As we journey with them, we will look at aspects of their lives that caused pain and suffering, their faith and its survival, their involvement with their particular Methodist women's organisation and the support and strength they received from it, if any. We seek to determine how the Methodist Women's organisations

¹ One of the results of a careful policy in South African history of segregation (Apartheid) is continued segregation in the church. Many attempts have been made to integrate the different women's organisations but to date have not succeeded. However for the purposes of this paper I will not be addressing this issue. In South Africa the races have been classified as white (European), Black (traditionally the African people though all South Africans are now insisting on being called as African – belonging to Africa), Coloured (traditionally a person of mixed or Malay race) and Asian (traditionally the Indian people).

² The Women's Auxiliary (White), The Women's Manyano (Black) and the Women's Fellowship (Coloured).

have impacted the spirituality of two women especially when they have gone through difficult times.

As women in South Africa face the challenges of life, they have found places that provide support, comfort and an ability to survive and survive well. The strong faith of many of these women is a profound and beautiful thing to behold, and the strength and courage it has given to these women is challenging and encouraging. This faith is lived out for many in their churches, and in the Methodist church the women's organisations have provided a place of respect, recognition and support.

Women's meeting together for friendship and support is not a new thing. It has been happening since the beginning of time. Women, certainly more than men, have a need to share and to relate with their own kind. These friendships, whilst often seemingly only social, are places where the women receive recognition and affirmation as individuals, find understanding, are listened to, supported and cared for. And so women themselves have naturally drawn together in groups. Be it in the church, a political organisation or simply a group of like minded friends, groups have happened. It has sometimes been a man who has formalised the group, but nowhere have women ever needed help to appreciate and value being together.

The two different organisations that will be considered, the Manyano and Women's Auxiliary, have met different needs in a political climate where needs were different. At present there are some questions in the Methodist Church regarding the continued relevance and need for these two particular organisations, especially in light of the dwindling and aged membership in many of them. This research will hopefully provide some insight as to the direction needed and their continued, if any, relevance.

The motivation for this line of research was inspired by the lives of women I had met personally, and I felt that the only way to do justice to them was to allow the reader into their actual lives. The qualitative method, which I will address below (cf. 1.1.2.) is the best suited to this examination of their lives.

1.1.1. The Context: Post-Apartheid South Africa

1994 was a year that South Africans will never forget. It was the year of political liberation in South Africa. However the date of May 1996 was the date that the changes started to be really felt by the average South African – this was the date that the new constitution was adopted. Thabo Mbeki’s famous speech “I am an African” (see appendix E) in May 1996 began what is referred to as the African Renaissance. The ANC and Thabo Mbeki, Vice-President at that time, started to speak of the concept of an African Renaissance officially in 1997. Mbeki, now President has continued to be the principal spokesman for an African Renaissance.

“Renaissance advocates promote a positive vision of Africa as a peaceful, democratic, and market oriented region. Their aim is to offer an African alternative to prevailing European concepts” (Theilen 2003: 95). In his speech "I am an African", Mbeki defined Africanism as being one with the African earth and Africans as a community of fate and suffering, and the Afrikaans speaking South Africans as victims of Western imperialism. One of the aims of this Renaissance was to make Africans proud of their heritage, their traditions and to make them better people. Emphasis was placed on the African value, *Ubuntu*, which is regarded as the “African answer to imported Western materialism and egoism” (Theilen 2003: 96), but it is actually a strong idea of community and the idea of being someone because you are part of something much bigger than just yourself. This concept has become particularly significant for a people whose rights were continually violated and whose circumstances were dire. Mbeki sees *ubuntu* as being the solidarity principle for any disadvantaged group: “they survive through collective consciousness and collective unity on all survival issues such as liberation, rent boycotts, strikes and mass action” (1995: 54). So women have received strength and significance in grouping themselves in various organisations.

In addition much healing has happened through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. It was not a court but an attempt at reconciliation and restoration for victims and perpetrators of Apartheid South Africa. The nation seeks through various programmes to aid previously disadvantaged people and help with necessities such as water, housing, education, welfare and health.

However, all of these changes do not mean that life has quickly and drastically become different for the average black South African or in particular the average female black South African.

It is not surprising that the concepts of African Renaissance and of *ubuntu* cause high waves of enthusiasm, especially among black South African men because it strengthens their power position. For example, the *ubuntubotho* curriculum used in schools in KwaZulu Natal, emphasized the traditional Zulu family that can only be headed by a man. Thabo Mbeki's African Renaissance and *ubuntu* sanctify the power of men, while they show little or no concern for gender issues. Women and their interests or rights are not explicitly mentioned in the two concepts. It seems that - similar to the times of the struggle of political liberation - the discourse on race is privileged over class and gender (Theilen 2003: 99).

One cannot deny that on a political, social and economic level things in South Africa have drastically changed since 1994. The new constitution emphatically places all people as equal and attempts are being made to include women in party leadership. The current deputy president is a woman and there are other women in prominent positions. But there is still a long way to go and women in many spheres still undergo much opposition and abuse.

1.1.2. The Method: Introduction to qualitative research

Qualitative research began to be used as a formal mode of research in the fields of sociology and anthropology in the 1920's and 1930's. It gradually grew into a respected and recognised form of study and was utilised in many other fields of study. The reasons for its development were "born out of concern to understand the other" (Denzin & Lincoln 2000: 2). As a result it doesn't have a fast set of rules or methods or approaches to adhere to, and often crosses between different disciplines. It involves moving into relationship with people, and attempting to gain an understanding of their belief systems, cultural identities and the actions that result from these.

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memoirs to the self. At this level qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural setting,

attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln 2000: 3).

There is the requirement, too, of entering into this research objectively, without any particular bias or ideal. Such research makes use of interviews, observations, personal experience, and visual and documentary methods (Denzin & Lincoln 2000: 15).

Within the framework of the qualitative research, the concepts of the narrative of personal experience and subjectivity are part of the beauty and challenge of this method. Ellis and Flaherty define subjectivity as “human lived experience and the physical, political, and historical context of that experience” (1992: 1). It is this defining of subjectivity as the “human lived experience” that makes the qualitative method of research so fitting in the discipline of spirituality. Some would say that narrative research is only appropriate for sociology or practical theology and not the field of spirituality. In actual fact spirituality does take place within the contexts of the physical, political and historical, and they affect a person’s beliefs and practices. “The purpose is to see how respondents in interviews impose order on the flow of experience to make sense of events and actions in their lives” (Huberman & Miles 2002: 218).

When it comes to the narration of personal experience, questions are raised as to its benefits for research as it can be regarded as being messy, difficult, ill-defined or maybe too open-ended. It is not possible to fit personal encounters into neat little boxes, and in a religious context perhaps such encounters raise more questions than answers. Whatever the reason, the discipline of spirituality, by its very nature, has to be examined and understood through the lived experiences of individuals.

Schneiders sees spirituality as the lived experience of the faithful, “the experience of conscious involvement in the project of life-integration through self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives” (2006: 210). The academic discipline of spirituality is then the study of that experience.

The next question raised is that of subjectivity, of both the researcher and the subject:

Subjectivity can be both unpleasant and dangerous: unpleasant because emotional, cognitive, and physical experiences frequently concern events that, in spite of their importance, are deemed inappropriate topics for polite society; dangerous because the workings of subjectivity seem to contradict so much of the rational-actor worldview on which mainstream sociology [or spirituality] is premised (Ellis & Flaherty 1992: 1).

It could be argued that the personal experiences and/or biases of the researcher and/or the subject could interfere with any ability to make sense of a story. Yet Kolbenschlager (1982: 160) challenges this specifically in regard to spirituality:

It seems that women have discovered the Great Lie about spirituality. It is not something objective. One cannot study the 'Great Masters' and possess it. One cannot probe the past tradition and understand it. One cannot rely on the testimony of others or the authority of experts in order to cultivate it. Women today are discovering that spirituality is authentic when it is intrinsically subjective, when it is brought forth, painfully, from the womb of their own experience. They are creating a new 'wisdom literature' out of the alchemy of their own lives.

It is interesting to note that in the field of sociology, research into issues of emotion is based on the following principles: establishing distance between the subjects' experience and their emotions; treating the emotional processes as separate from other kinds of subjectivity; isolating emotions from their social context. Due to the fact that emotions cannot be studied scientifically, emotional lived experience is treated as outside the sociological domain (Ellis & Flaherty 1992: 2-3). However in the field of spirituality because we talk about wholeness and the whole person, emotion forms a critical part of any study as it is so much a part of who a person is. You cannot separate a person's emotion from who they are. "Spirituality is quintessentially, the expression of feelings in symbols, which have the power to generate a value system and a social fabric... Spirituality, in its most fundamental sense, is the invention and communication of a language of feeling" (Kolbenschlager 1982: 160).

The act of telling a personal story is a way of giving voice to experiences that are shrouded in secrecy... By making intricate details of one's life accessible to others in public discourse, personal narratives bridge the dominions of public and private life. Telling a personal story becomes a social process for making lived experience understandable and meaningful (Ellis & Bochner 1992: 79-80).

It would be hoped that this meaning will be found for the one who lived the experience as well as for the one who reads the story! “What would happen if one woman told the truth about her life? The world would split open” (Muriel Rukeyser in Kolbenschlag 1982: 160).

One of the criticisms about qualitative research is that it is “fiction, not science and these researchers have no way of verifying their truth statements” (Denzin & Lincoln 2003: 12). However, it is rather about “routine... and moments... and meaning in individual’s lives” (Denzin & Lincoln 2003: 5), and how can that be termed less valuable than “scientific” knowledge? “We are in a new age where messy, uncertain, multi-voiced texts, cultural criticism, and new experimental works will become more common, as will more reflexive forms of fieldwork, analysis, and intertextual representation” (Denzin & Lincoln 2003: 38).

I have chosen to use this form of research as I wanted to follow the growth and transformation of women, looking at their stories and letting all who read them, benefit from them. I wanted to look at the human side of research.

1.1.3 Interviewing

Anderson and Jack see interviewing as a particularly valuable tool for obtaining women’s perspectives; “[a] women’s discussion of her life may combine two separate, often conflicting, perspectives: one framed in concepts and values that reflect men’s dominant position in the culture and one informed by the more immediate realities of a woman’s personal experience” (1991: 11). It is these differing perspectives that the interview seeks to discover. As we examine the realities of personal experience, it will be interesting to note whether dominant male positioning comes through strongly or not.

One form of interviewing is structured where a set of pre-established questions are asked of all subjects involved in the research. The interviewer controls the interview and no opportunities for response are given to the interviewee. The aim here is to get very specific information. The unstructured interview can consist of an open-ended interview or in-depth interview. The aim here is to gain understanding rather than to gather information. For the purposes of this paper I will use the unstructured open-ended interview. It will be with one person at a time using pre-

determined questions but providing opportunity for discussion. The aim of this paper is to hear the women's stories and the questions will almost serve as prompts in the story-telling.

When conducting the open-ended interview it is essential that authentic listening takes place. Accordingly listening to non-verbal communication is essential, such as body-language or tone of voice. It is essential to understand what the subject is saying, not what you think they are saying. The silences must also be listened to; often what is implied is important, or what someone may start to say but not finish (Anderson 1991: 17). Language and its meaning also need to be understood within the culture and class of the interviewee so that correct meanings of words and phrases are understood. It will also be essential to analyse the person's own interpretation of their experience, bearing in mind cultural values and expectations. Jack lists ways to aid attentiveness during the interview: He notes that it is necessary to listen to the narrator; questions need to be open-ended so the interviewee knows that their interpretation of the experience is guiding the discussion; the person being interviewed needs to feel free to decide whether or not to answer a question; they may express their feelings about the facts and events, how they understand what is happening to them, what meaning they make of events, or whether they think about it in more than one way; the interviewer can also evaluate what they are describing, what is being left out and what the absences are; then the interviewer needs to listen to themselves; it is essential that the interviewee is not cut off or interrupted and should not be lead to personal concerns; the interviewee should learn to trust their hunches, feelings and the responses that arise; areas of confusion or of too great a certainty should be noted; in addition personal discomfort should be noted as it can be a warning of a discrepancy between what is being said and what the person is feeling (1991: 24).

Although some researchers argue for neutral and objective research, there is a growing realisation that that is an unrealistic expectation. "Researchers are not invisible, neutral entities; rather they are part of the interactions they seek to study and they influence those interactions" (Fontana & Frey 2003: 90). It is therefore essential that the context of the interview as well as key components of the researcher be acknowledged in the interpretation of data.

1.1.4. Ethical considerations:

Having discussed the interview process and argued for the use of the unstructured interview, it is important to state the ethics that will be guiding this process. “Narrative research, based on the real lives of people made public, converts what is private into public; can violate privacy; and can cause mental, legal, social, and financial hurt and harm” (Bakan 1996: 3). Although the material is understood within a particular framework, Josselson warns that researchers who use narrative are like journalists who use a subject and their story for the purposes of their study. “When we listen to another’s story, our intention is to bring our own interpretation to the material” (1996: xii). It is therefore essential for the interviewer to let the content speak to them rather than deciding beforehand what the text is saying. He also issues the reminder that the telling of the story and the researchers interpretation of it could have unforeseen consequences for the subject (1996: xiii). So the interesting debate arises as to whether the subject has the right to comment or even change the researcher’s interpretation of their story.³ “The most significant truths about human beings are here in the stories of their lives. Yet they need protection for making their stories available to others” (Bakan 1996: 5).

In addition there is always the danger of the researcher becoming emotionally involved. This is a particularly challenging aspect for the minister whose task is to care. Bar-One always asks himself the following questions before an interview: Do I really feel like interfering in his or her life? Will I be able to live with the consequences of this encounter and intervention and is it justified from the interviewee’s own perspective? (1996: 9). It is essential to always remember that this is not merely a research project but something that deals with people’s lives and needs to be handled with care, dignity and respect. It is also essential for interviewers to continually ask themselves the above questions, always evaluating as to whether what they are doing has value. There is of course an affirming nature where one’s story is considered important enough to investigate and write about.

A research project can be beneficial for both the subject and the researcher, albeit in totally different ways. Self-reflection can be a liberating experience and can aid a person in making healthy decisions, feeling in control of their lives or simply being affirmed as a person. For the

³ This question is covered with regards to my research later in the document.

researcher, besides the academic value to one's research, confrontation with people's honesty and vulnerability can assist one's developing awareness. I agree with Miller's sentiment (1996: 143): "I found that I was changed by each interview, I left each interview inspired and in awe, ... [it was] humbling and enriching."

Another possible pitfall is the danger of going into an interview with preconceived assumptions and agendas. This can result in using the interview to prove something and this again is not only extremely disrespectful to the interviewee, but actually defeats the object of doing this kind of research in the first place.

A difficult consideration is whether or not the interviewee has the right to assess the evaluations of their story. Whilst the facts need to be accurate, the author's assessment of them is subjective, and there is debate as to whether the interviewee has the right to have a say in them. There is the danger that the author's interpretation leads to conclusions that are not what the interviewee meant. This brings to the fore the issue of "who should control the interpretive process and who should benefit from publication of results" (Chase 1996: 49). Chase feels that the interviewee has the right to be part of the interpretive process because this breaks down any barriers between the researcher and the researched. She also feels that this acknowledges that without their story a researcher has no research and it also acknowledges that the interviewee has good reason to be interested in the analysis of their story (1996: 49). Possible problems occur where there is disagreement regarding these interpretations. Chase emphasizes that the results and conclusions of research are the writer's (1996: 51), and that is an important fact to remember.

1.3.5 Trustworthiness

In scientific research where data can be measured and quantified it is easier to determine the accuracy and trustworthiness of the data and the conclusions reached. In qualitative research this is a little more difficult. An essential element in ensuring trustworthiness in this research paper is for the researcher to attend each interview with an open mind and not with preconceived ideas. In this paper this would especially apply to ideas about spirituality, about the Methodist church and about its organisations. "Validity in qualitative research has a great

deal to do with description and explanation, which must be credible” (Collett 2003: 20). It is also important that the interviewees review the material that the researcher writes to ensure that their lived experiences are accurately recorded. It is essential that the researcher remember that her aim is not to prove anything but rather to report the interviewee’s personal experiences. In addition it must be remembered that a person’s story cannot be analysed as being valid or invalid, and conclusions drawn from these can be relative to the researcher’s own experiences and /or philosophies (Maxwell 2002: 42).

Reissman lists four ways to deal with validation in narrative work: persuasiveness or plausibility which rests on the rhetoric of writing and reader response; correspondence where the account written about is agreed upon by the interviewee; coherence of goals of the researcher, coherence of desired effect of the narrative and coherence of the content of the narrative; and, lastly the possibilities of the research being used by future researchers (2002: 258-261). For the purposes of this paper agreement of written accounts from the interviewees will be obtained.

1.3.6 Data collection and analysis

Qualitative research by its nature means that the research that is done cannot be measured in terms of simply numbers and sequences.

Qualitative research, with its focus on ‘experience near’ language and rich descriptions of lived experiences, emphasises the properties and nature of the relationships, activities and situations in the lives of the people who formed part of the investigation (Collett 2003: 21).

Whilst quantitative research looks at measuring data through tables, graphs, etc., qualitative research seeks to answer questions of “how much” or “how well” (Hamilton & Jackson in Collett 2003: 21). “Qualitative research analysis would seek to read narratives with the purpose of analysing the narrative, temporal and dramatic structures of the text, forsaking the rigor of counting, for a close interpretive reading of the subject matter at hand” (Denzin & Lincoln 1994b: 359).

Eisenhardt gives the following pointers on building theories from case study research; look for patterns by comparing similarities or differences between groups or between pairs, or by

separating the different data sources (if you have any) like interviews, observations or questionnaires. Together with this, literature needs to be examined that has looked at similar hypotheses and studies. Agreement or disagreement with other findings would need to be carefully substantiated (2002: 18-24).

In interpreting material, Denzin (2002: 360) lists two criteria to assist him: ascertaining meaning and interpretive criteria. Ascertaining meaning “involves uncovering how a person emotionally and biographically fits an experience into his or her emerging, unfolding definitions of self”. The interpretive criteria that he uses are: does the interpretation bring alive what was being said, does it include the entire context; is the material historically and relationally grounded; is the interpreter familiar with all relevant material and does he/she have prior understanding of the area of interest; does the interpretation result in a meaningful whole; and does the interpreter have an understanding that his/her interpretation is never finished, in other words that the subject can never be fully exhausted.

For the purposes of this paper I will be interviewing two women, one from the Manyano and one from the Women’s Auxiliary. I will be obtaining their own personal histories, and looking at how participation in their particular organisation aided their own growth, and what role it played in difficult times, if any. Much of their story will be recounted verbatim and will tell itself. A comparison will also be drawn between what the two different organisations could and did offer their member especially during difficult times. I will also note what the specific needs of the two women were at particular times and how the organisation responded to those needs.

1.2. ASSUMPTIONS

In approaching the research as well as setting the tone for the paper it is essential to examine some issues around spirituality and more particularly feminine spirituality.

Let us examine definitions of spirituality. Schneiders (in King and Beattie 2001: 6) defines spirituality as "that dimension of the human subject in virtue of which the person is capable of self-transcending integration in relation to the Ultimate, whatever this Ultimate is for the person in question." She is acknowledging that the discipline will mean different things for

different people depending on their own framework, and the Ultimate may be variously defined, but the task is “self-transcending integration”.

Cousins (in Brown, Farr and Hoffmann 1997: 30) speaks of the spiritual core of a person: “[i]t is here that the person is open to the transcendent dimension; it is here that the person experiences ultimate reality.” King (2001:8) includes words such as embodied existence, imagination, human creativity, resourcefulness, relationships, celebration, joy, adoration, surrender, struggle and suffering in her reflections on spirituality. She also quotes the Christian Hispanic women in the United States who speak of spirituality as “the struggle for life” (2001: 8). “Spirituality is about life; life is not merely about struggling to survive; it is also about the tremendous effort to live a fuller, more abundant and more meaningful human life” (2001:11). Farr sees spirituality as not merely something to be “given” but rather something that is “formed” (1997: 187). This would then involved process, a journey which gives room for change and growth of person and thought.

“Spirituality as we have defined it touches the core of our human existence and our relation to the Absolute” (Waaijman 2002: 1). We can speak of a broad field of spirituality and in this wider field it could be called “emanation from the One; creation by the all-good God; acceptance in Grace; being clothed with the way of Love; the way of Enlightenment; ultimate Deliverance” (2002: 1).

What then about Christian spirituality? McGrath gives separate definitions for Spirituality and Christian Spirituality. For him spirituality “concerns the quest for a fulfilled and authentic religious life, involving the bringing together of the ideas distinctive of that religion and the whole experience of living on the basis of and within the scope of that religion,” and Christian spirituality “concerns the quest for a fulfilled and authentic Christian existence, involving the bringing together of the fundamental ideas of Christianity and the whole experience of living on the basis of and within the scope of the Christian faith” (1999: 2).

Joann Wolski Conn defines Christian spirituality as

the human capacity of self-transcending knowledge, love and commitment as it is actualised through the experience of God, in Jesus the Christ by the gift

of the Spirit. Because God's Spirit comes to us only through experience and symbols inseparable from human community and history, Christian spirituality includes every dimension of human life (in Collins 1999: 14).

But whilst we can come up with some complicated definitions we also need the beauty of the simple; it is God who calls us to this, He is the one who instils in us a longing or need or whatever we call it for a connection with something or someone greater than ourselves. God is the source of being, and through Christ and the Holy Spirit unites us to Herself.⁴ Christian spirituality could be said to be the filling of one's whole life with the Presence of the Holy Spirit.

In a Christian context “spirituality has for many decades been identified with a radical world-denying, anti-materialistic, ascetic philosophy of life. This has resulted in a polarisation between the spiritual and the material” (Kourie 2000: 12). Unfortunately this kind of view appeared to isolate spirituality from the “normal” person seeking to live “well” in a secular world. Today however contemporary spirituality seeks to overcome this dualism and includes various dimensions: ecological, feminist, post-patriarchal, healthy body evaluation, holistic outlook, and value of work (2000: 13). How things have changed!

1.2.1 Why female? Why feminist? Why women?

Having discussed Christian Spirituality with reference to various authors, I now describe feminist Spirituality in particular. We are at the same time female, woman, feminine and feminist. The Oxford Dictionary has the following definitions: Female is “referring to the sex that can bear offspring or produce eggs” (2002: 300). Feminine is “having qualities associated with women” (2002: 300), and feminist is a person who is involved in feminism which is “a movement or theory supporting women’s rights on the grounds of equality of the sexes” (2002: 300). One is categorized female as opposed to being categorized male. However, it is about so much more than genitalia; it is about positioning and experience. These definitions can be rather misleading in the feminist debate, “[B]oth *spirituality* and *feminism* are terms whose meanings are in flux” (Schneiders 1995: 394). So for Schneiders (1995: 395) the meaning of the word feminism is much broader than simply about a movement.

⁴ I use both the masculine and feminine to refer to God in this dissertation in spite of its sometimes awkward appearance and the fact that both Miriam and Dudu refer to God in the masculine.

Feminism is a comprehensive ideology that is rooted in women's experience of sexual oppression, engages in critique of patriarchy seen as the root of women's oppression, embraces an alternative vision for humanity and the earth, and actively seeks to bring this vision to realisation.

In addition Schneiders sees the feminist not simply as one involved in feminism but "to become feminist, one must not only be oppressed but realise that one is oppressed and correctly identify the source of the oppression" (1995: 395). However it must also be noted that the non-oppressed, e.g., men can also be feminist. One of the key components of feminist spirituality as a discipline is that it is "rooted in women's experience" (1995: 400). For Schneiders this particularly concerns the women's experience of disempowerment and re-empowerment, an aspect which may be included in these women's stories but is not the focus of them. "Story-telling, the sharing of the experience of women, which has been largely excluded from the history of mainline religion, is central" (1995: 400). The aim for the women interviewees is not to raise consciousness in an empowerment context, it is rather hoped that the telling of their own story empowers them in the sense that they come to see their experience as significant as opposed to trivial.

The next question is why a separate section on feminine spirituality, why would it be any different from that of masculine spirituality? Feminine spirituality is about acknowledging that God has made male and female, both in his image. In a person's seeking for connection with God, one does it with one's whole being including that distinctiveness of being either male or female. "[E]ach states and calls forth in the other essential elements of response to God, ...the two experiences are complementary" (Wakefield 1983: 149). The response to God is "both conditioned and structured by one's historical situatedness and one's sexuality" (Wakefield 1983: 148). It is about acknowledging the differences, emphasising the distinctive way women may experience God.

Squires has identified three reasons why spirituality for women needs to be studied separately; the experiences of women are different, the attitudes towards women are different and the words and symbols used in the spiritual quest mean something different to women (1978: 326). Women experience phenomena such as menstruation, penile penetration, pregnancy, child-birth, being a mother and menopause. One could write a separate book on attitudes towards

women, but suffice it to say that these attitudes vary in different cultures and different settings and they affect women's spirituality in a vast way.

Conn attempts to look at the difficulties of women's spiritual development. She notes that many women are still conditioned to subordinate roles in society. She feels that this restricts the possibilities for mature humanity/spirituality. As much of Christian teaching has also historically restricted women's understanding of maturity to that of self-denial and sacrifice, Conn sees that some women now see the Christian spiritual tradition as so sexist that it is no longer usable for mature women (1986: 3-4).

The confrontation with the social status quo regarding the traditional understanding of the terms women and female, often needs to be addressed. "Feminist spirituality involves the awareness of women's own power from within, of a new empowerment which can be nurtured to effect personal, social and political changes" (King 1996: 219). Being a feminist is about equality and justice, and one can immediately see the interesting challenge for South African women, many of whom exist in a male dominated world. The challenge starts at the beginning with most women being born into a male dominant culture. Even God is given the male gender, and subordination and obedience and submission are part of being "religious". One has to get past this to find the Christ who loves equally, saves equally and calls equally. In a country where the bible has also been used to promote racial segregation, the task is even more difficult.

"Spirituality has to do with becoming a person in the fullest sense, but because I am a female person my spirituality must let me be fully woman as well as fully religious" (Squire 1978: 325). The desire for full humanity is a key factor that energises the feminist agenda. . "I conceive of my work as feminist – by which I mean, in part, that it is guided by my desire to contribute to our understanding of how women make sense of their lives in an inequitable social world and of how social change becomes possible" (Chase 1996: 49).

My choice to focus on the stories of women was simple. It is not denying men's stories, the fact of their spirituality or their ability to survive and find strength within any particular

grouping. It is the simple fact that if anyone is left holding the social responsibilities when life is tough, it is the women. Women often tend to be left with the home and the children when things disintegrate. The Methodist church is made up predominantly of women and my experience has tended to be predominantly with women. I have found their openness and honesty regarding life, its struggles and its disappointments, their ability to survive and their ingenuity in surviving deeply challenging and moving. Their stories deserve telling.

1.3. PLANNING THE RESEARCH STUDY

I feel privileged to be a minister in the Methodist church particularly because it means that I often journey alongside people at various points in their lives. As I began to do this I realised that people have amazing stories of hope and courage. Part of their story is their ability to survive in spite of sometimes difficult circumstances. I felt that I wanted to tell their survival story; to discover and relate what it was that enabled them to survive and keep going. This dissertation is as a result of that desire.

The two participants who were invited to participate in this study were women whom I already knew through my work as a Methodist Minister. I have met them both in the context of their women's organisation and I know that they actively participate in these organisations. Through initial conversations with them I became aware that these two women had stories that needed to be told and approached them to use their stories for this dissertation.

I set up an initial meeting with them where I explained in greater detail the project and gave them consent forms to sign as well as a letter of invitation and thanks regarding the project (See Appendix A-D). Our interview sessions followed.

1.4. REPORTING THE RESEARCH

Chapter two of this dissertation will be a look at Methodist Spirituality as well be an overview of the two women's organisations and chapter three will be a presentation of the data through which the two women and their stories will be introduced to the reader. The accounts have been constructed from information gathered and interpreted during the research using the second person to give the information from the position of the interviewees. The fourth and

final chapter will discuss the conclusions arrived at during the research. It will also involve reflections by the researcher on the information gathered. Below is a review of related reading and research that the researcher has gathered surrounding this study. This will aid readers in understanding what other writers have to say regarding this subject.

1.5. LITERATURE REVIEW

In Dodson and Gilkes' chapter, *Something within: Social change and collective endurance in the sacred world of Black Christian women* in Ruether and Keller's book, *Women and Religion in America* the focus is on black women in America but they make some interesting points that can be paralleled to the black women in this country. In the struggle in America for equal rights and against oppression, they note that the black women play an important role in keeping the community together. "[B]lack women are, in a profound sense, the 'something within' that shaped the 'culture of resistance' the patterns of consciousness and self-expression, and the social organisational framework of the local and national expressions of community" (1986: 81).

In their focus on black women Dodson and Gilkes have to acknowledge that in all areas of community life the women were the "movers and shakers" (1986: 81), and those who fought against racism and sexism. The authors feel that it was the women who gave the strength to the whole community to resist; they gave them hope. But even more than this they became for their people the "something that banishes pain". They were the comforters and the advocates, and it was often the suffering that they witnessed in the lives of family members that led to their own activism.

They also deal with the black church and define it as the "organisational and expressive core of black culture and community" (1986: 82). The church serves as a key place for its members and these members, particularly the women, play an important role in mobilizing religion (1986: 82).

The Methodist Church has a history of women who have taken transformation and the gospel of Christ seriously and actively. Keller's book *Spirituality and social responsibility* documents

some of their stories, inspiring tales of women who didn't back down from a challenge. These women realised that the church that they served was not fulfilling its purpose in terms of spirituality and social responsibility, but they didn't reject it, and instead worked to change it from within. These women took their spirituality and vocation seriously, and have paved the way for many women who came after them to have a voice.

In Keller's book, the closing chapter by Troxwell, Honouring one another with our stories: authority and mutual ministry among United Methodist ministry clergywomen, examines women clergy and some of the problems they now experience amongst themselves, including professional and personal jealousies and resentments. The author feels a key factor to dealing with this is to be telling and knowing each others stories without being threatened in one's own (1993: 297).

Kish Sklar's chapter in *Women in New Worlds* notes the development in religion and its organisations, and the important role that women play not only in individual's lives but in society as a whole. In this chapter she notes that different historians have realised in the last ten years that women's religious sources are an important place to look for information to help understand women's interior lives (their consciousness and attitudes towards the world), their social status relative to men and their participation in social movements. They are doing this by examining diaries, church records and the records of religious organisations. "It is clear that we cannot understand the meaning of those women's lives apart from these sources" (p 64). In this paper we will examine the interior lives of two women as well as the women's organisations they belong to and see what they tell us so as to obtain a greater awareness of their interior lives.

Brown's chapter in *Women in New Worlds* investigates the issue of Wesley and his view of women in different roles in the church. For Methodist women their first experience of public speaking was public prayer and then giving a testimony. It does seem that initially Wesley had quite conservative ideas on preaching, and felt that women shouldn't preach before a whole congregation, although he was comfortable with them preaching in bands or classes. As

women became more successful and blessed by God, Wesley relaxed his stance. However it was a while before he would call it preaching and not “only” exhortation!

It is interesting to note that a special section in Brown is written on the kind of support that these women in early Methodism needed and did in fact give each other, “It often has been suggested that women, who find themselves caught in a world to a large degree controlled by men, especially need a female support-group if they are to function well” (1981: 82). Bands and classes filled this need to a large degree where women felt free to share their fears, weaknesses and aspirations. These relationships dealt with personal issues as well as theological ones and were places of mutual care and support. In this paper we will examine how the relationships between the women in the women’s organisations impacted their lives.

In examining the rise of women in religious places Wessinger in *Religious Institutions and Women’s Leadership* asks whether women should form separate institutions of their own or is it better that they be integrated into the dominant institutions (acknowledging of course that these are male dominated)? Wessinger had to acknowledge that the different women’s organisations had provided significant places for leadership training for women, and what seemed to occur when an organisation was absorbed into say, a larger denomination, was that the women lost their voice and also control over the finances of the group. She noted that many women, across denominations and even across religions are forming groups discussing spirituality. After examining different religious groupings she concludes that “separate women’s institutions serve a valuable purpose while women are seeking equality in mainstream religious institutions” (1996: 12).

Keller, in *Creating a sphere for women in the church: How consequential an accommodation*, examines the issue of women lay preachers and clergy. In 1880, the General Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church denied women the opportunity to become lay preachers or clergy but did order that the pronouns, “he”, “his” and “him”, wherever they occur in the Discipline should not be taken to exclude women from the offices of Sunday School Superintendents, class leaders or stewards! In the meantime these Methodist women were forming their own service organisations, namely the Women’s Foreign Missionary Society and

the Women's Home Missionary Society. These organisations were among the first to send single women missionaries throughout the world and deaconesses into the inner-city slums: "[b]y the turn of the century, the leadership and service of women ... was simultaneously being constricted and expanded" (1980: 84). Women were being pushed into separate domains which removed them from sharing authority and clerical rights with the men. But the formation of these powerful organisations meant that the women became leaders in their own organisations and the church was enabled to function as a voluntary organisation. This took place not only in the Methodist Episcopal Church but in other denominations, other faiths and other areas of life. The same thing has happened in South Africa with the women's organisations, and in the development of this paper it will be interesting to note how these powerful women's organisations have impacted the lives of its members and the church as a whole.

Keller asks the interesting question, "whether the significance of a separate sphere for women was more to contain and isolate women's activity or whether its more important aim and consequence was to expand their function and even to liberate them from the constrictions of the church in the late nineteenth century" (1980: 85). Mission organisations took seriously their role of Christianizing women world wide and included education and medical care, but in addition, "[u]n consciously creating a sphere for women's work, the missionary society leaders also hoped to give women of the church, who had abilities and energy which was unrecognized and unused, an expanded purpose for their lives" (1980: 91). So it really seems, whether they intended it or not, a dual purpose was successfully achieved.

Keller in *Women creating communities* develops the above thought even further in a Protestant context looking at the order of Deaconesses, a service arm developed for lay women. These women felt a deep sense of call to Christian service and in the beginning they established, managed and served primarily in charitable institutions. The women's mission organisations that were formed as well as the Deaconess order also provided safe places of care and support for its members, communities to which they belonged. They also published women's Christian and mission journals so that women all over could be linked together. Many women were inspired to extend the meaning of their lives through these organisations, and to become part of a much bigger whole.

In *Old wine, new wineskins*, Bradley attempts to look at church organisations as needing a new metaphor: recovering the old wine and putting it in new skins. The author feels that the church has been more concerned with the wineskins than with the wine, that bureaucracy has dulled compassion and creativity. She recommends that organisational structures need to continually be evaluated against biblical metaphors.

In *Church-related organisations: mission, image and promotion* Bontrager asks some interesting questions regarding church organisations, particularly when the organisation has gained significant power: What is the relationship of the body of Christ; or the mind of Christ to the church as a social organisation, to specific programme organisations of the church, to church related organisations and to organisations that are not church-related but that nevertheless have committed followers of Jesus in them? Bontrager feels that in defining guidelines for the proper roles of church-related organisations and the need for integrity in this relationship, the following should be considered: members remain committed to being Christ-followers, the organisation acknowledges that its mission is limited, the organisation should have a clear focus and the church must decide the significance of its ministry, the organisation must stay focused in this task and not seek self-preservation, and they should evaluate this continually and remain accountable to the church.

The church has to continually monitor and evaluate its organisations to ensure that they don't move away from being servants of the church to autonomy or even control over the body of Christ. Whilst this is not a particular focus of this paper it is an important one with regards to the women's organisations in the Methodist church which have large numbers and are considered powerful.

Holness in *Women's piety and empowerment: An observer's understanding of The Methodist women's Manyano movement* takes a look at the history of the Manyano movement, exploring their culture and socio-political context. She acknowledges the impact that the South African apartheid system had on this organisation, and what it gave to its women who had so little

position in society. A sense of identity, symbolized by their uniform, as well as a sense of pride and self-confidence was something that membership of the Manyano gave to many women.

She also examined the meetings and the discipline that the women hold to and their emphasis on prayer, preaching and practical concerns. They hold an enormous amount of power in the church, one of the reasons being their ability to raise money which gives them a lot of status in the church. It is interesting to note that those women who are not interested in becoming part of the organisation are those who are highly educated professionals who don't need the recognition, power and sense of community that the organisation gives other women.

Beverley Haddad is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Religion and Theology at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. She is an ordained Anglican Priest and her areas of interest include gender, development and HIV/AIDS. In her article *The Manyano movement in South Africa: site of struggle, survival and resistance*, she determines that “indigenous African Christian women in South Africa responded to the missionary endeavour through subversive action! They formed their own movement known as the *Manyano*” (2004: 4). This movement is not only restricted to the Methodist Church, but most denominations in this country have such women's organisations. She provides history and an interesting look at the marginalization of African women and the resulting dynamics in the Manyano. She highlights three characteristics of the movement: the wearing of uniforms, prayer and preaching, and internal fundraising. The first two in particular are highlighted in this paper as they are strong emphases in the Methodist Manyano.

Hinfelaar in her book, *Respectable and Responsible Women*, traces the origin and development of the Ruwadzano of the Methodists and the Chita chaMaria of the Catholics in Zimbabwe. She looks at key figures in the organisations, the rules of the organisations and the issue of uniforms. She identifies how the values of these organisations influenced the cultures in which these women lived and acknowledges that they were “the upholders of morality in the townships” (2001: 82). She also identifies the social problems of bride price, infertility and polygamy, as well as the political problems of war, and examines the effect they had on these organisations. Hinfelaar allows women to tell their stories and this has been an interesting aid

for my work. Our cultures in this country face similar effects of these organisations, and South African women are likewise affected by the social and political changes in the country. Hinfelaar's book also highlights the sense of belonging that the organisations have given to their members.

Van Os in her article, *Ottoman Women's organisations: sources of the past, sources for the future*, notes that women's organisations were often formed by women who had been forced back into their homes. These women were often of the wealthier classes and they formed organisations as a way of getting back into public space. She defines a women's organisation as a group of women joining forces in a structured way for a period of time to work on a designated project. One of the key factors of this organisation is that they are independent. When a women's organisation is dissolved, it might be that their goal has been achieved, but it is more likely that members lost interest, had financial reasons or the authorities closed them down. Whilst she is particularly looking at the Ottoman empire and their women's organisations, it relates to the history of the formation of the Methodist women's organisations, and the slow decline of numbers in both the Women's Auxiliary and the Manyano as they struggle to get younger women to join.

Cock's article, *Gender differences: struggles around "needs" and "rights" in South Africa* (2001: 138), is an analysis of the Women's National Coalition which was established in South Africa in 1992. The success of the formation of this organisation was that women from all areas of South African life came together to fight for equal rights in a post-apartheid South Africa. The interesting observation was that as they dealt with the challenge of uniting so many different women and their organisations, the key to success was the acknowledgement of their differences and the setting out of clear aims for the Coalition. As the Methodist women's organisations struggle to find unity, they could learn from this coalition.

Robert Morrell in his article, *Men, Movements, and gender transformation in South Africa* (2002: 309), looks at how men have responded to the changes that have occurred in South Africa. It looks at some men's movements and sees how they might have aided or subverted gender equality issues. Whilst not directly related to my dissertation, it is interesting when

considering the way forward for gender issues in this country and their possible effects on women's organisations. The questions still bears asking, "How much has really changed for the average South African woman"?

Johanna Kehler (2001: 42) writes an article, *Women and Poverty: the South African experience*, looking at poverty and how it relates to women. She focuses on rural women and women on the farms. She emphasizes how the black women were limited in terms of resources and refers to the "feminization of poverty"; all areas of a women's life are affected by this poverty. Whilst not directly related to my work, it is indirectly related as it offers insight into the context of rural women and their needs, many of which have been met in the organisations.

Gillian Striker's article, *When is a woman a woman?*, presents two case studies, one in which a group of women support each other in spite of many differences, and another where they undermine each other. She shows that the issue is not their differences but rather issues of power, gender relations and knowledge. As the Methodist women struggle to find identity in the new South Africa and face challenges of age and unity, this study was interesting, serving as a reminder of what can happen when people look past their differences and focus on their similarities.

Joan Collett's thesis, *Empowering the unempowered: a narrative approach to deconstructing spirituality with women experiencing abuse*, focused on the individual spirituality of two women who have suffered personal abuse. Their spirituality has been an essential component in their physical and psychosocial well-being. "Elements of spiritual transformation, hope and empowerment surfaced as counter stories to the culture of abuse, providing the scaffolding for re-storying their lives" (2003: iii). Certain relations can be made to the two women we will be considering in this study.

Theilen, a German student, did her doctoral thesis on the Methodist Women's work in South Africa. Her thesis is entitled, *Gender, Race, Power and Religion: Women in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa in Post-apartheid Society*. She looks into the history of Methodism at large and also the different women's organisations in the Methodist Church. She then

introduces us to different Methodist women and relates their stories. Her final look is at the African traditions and the church and the Manyano's response to them. Her work was helpful in looking at the history but also in observing a non-South African's critique of the women of the Methodist Church.

In examining the history of the Methodist Church a variety of texts were used and in addition to the above, the most useful were: A. Attwell's *The Methodist Church* (1995) which he edited and P. Attwell, *Take our Hands* (1997) which she edited.

Likewise in examining issues of Spirituality the most useful texts used in addition to the above were: S. Schneiders, *Feminist Spirituality* (1995); M. Kolbenschlag, *Feminists, the Frog Princess and the New frontier of Spirituality* (1982); L. Brown, B.C. Hoffman and L. Farr, *Modern Spiritualities* (1997) which they edited; K. Waaijman, *Spirituality – forms, foundations, methods* (2002) and A.E. McGrath, *Christian Spirituality* (1999). Additional references can be found in the bibliography.

CHAPTER TWO – Women and the Methodist Church

The author's current church membership and pastoral work takes places within the Methodist Church and that is the focus of this paper. In this chapter the Methodist Church as a whole will be investigated as well as its spirituality and some of its history. The research focuses on two of the women's organisations; the Women's Manyano and the Women's Auxiliary, and we look at their history, their spirituality and their effect on the lives of their members.

2.1. METHODIST SPIRITUALITY

“Methodism is simply practical Christianity” (Attwell 1995: 7)

Oxford University in the early 1730's saw a group of men meeting “for the practice of their religion” (Wakefield 1983: 265). They initially called themselves the Holy Club but were given the nickname “Methodist” because of their methodical approach. The Wesley brothers, Charles and John, founded this Holy Club. Methodist Spirituality is closely bound up with their history. The intention of the Wesley brothers was not to form a new denomination but rather to emphasise the inner spiritual life. The Wesley brothers would attend the Church of England services on Sunday mornings but also have their own preaching service at 5p.m. In fact it was only after the death of John, that Methodism in England was formalised.

This Holy Club stressed “inward religion, religion of the heart” (Elwell 1984: 712). John Wesley wrote “Large Minutes” in which he lists what he regards as “Means of Grace”. These stress the importance of private prayer, family and public prayer; searching the scriptures by reading, meditating and hearing; participating in the Lord's Supper at “every opportunity”; fasting on Fridays and Christian conference, i.e., conversation with fellow Christians. There were additional prayer meetings that took place during the week. Wesley published forms for each type of prayer, though extempore prayer was a familiar mode (Wakefield 1983: 265).

Even though the Holy Club was formed in 1725, John Wesley, an Anglican priest, only received an assurance of his salvation in May 1738. He himself spoke of this experience where, “I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins” (Ellwell 1984: 712). Up until then he felt that he displayed the outward signs of holiness but not the inward. This experience was a

turning point for Wesley, and in fact it was from 1739 that his movement really started to grow.

An important part of Methodist Spirituality is the class system.⁵ Again Wesley introduced this, and to be Methodist was to belong to a class. This was a smaller group of people who gathered for prayer, learning, sharing and accountability. There was an important emphasis on confidentiality and members were asked, “Do you desire to be told all of your faults, and that plain and home?” The idea was that they would actually confess their sins to each other. Whilst one of the original purposes of the class system was to collect money for their work, they really were a means of grace, and leaders, helpers, preachers and assistants (later superintendents) treated them as such.

This structure of accountability and honesty remains to this day. Ordained ministers answer questions about their life, faith, teaching and doctrine at every synod. Local preachers answer them at their Quarterly Meetings. Conference⁶ encourages District Synods to discuss the following at their meetings: What is the judgement of the Synod on the state of the work of God in the district? And what measures can we adopt for the increase of Spiritual Religion in our congregations? (TEE No 376, 6: 85).

Another important aspect of Methodist Spirituality was and is their hymn singing. Hymns are “the mysteries of faith made friendly” (Wakefield 1983: 394). Charles Wesley was a great hymn writer and wrote approximately nine thousand of them. They enunciate the whole journey of faith and include all Wesley’s principles of faith; every person needs to be saved, every person can be saved, every person can know that they are saved, and every person can be saved to the uttermost.

⁵ Today this idea would often be referred to as a bible study or home group.

⁶ The leadership meetings of the whole Methodist Connexion

Wesley's hymns articulate personal experience, the mysteries of the faith and include the means of grace. They have been called "the most enduring of influences on private prayer and public worship", and "a little body of experimental and practical divinity" (Wakefield 1983: 266). They were provided to describe the "pleasantness of religion and the goodness of God" (Wakefield 1983: 266). Methodists sang, prayed and meditated on their doctrine from these amazing hymns.

Important to Methodist Spirituality were love feasts, which Wesley saw as meetings for testimony, covenant services where annually believers renewed their relationship with God. Strongly emphasised were watchnight services for prayer and witness, and frequent meetings for hearing, reading and the discussion of sermons (Wakefield 1983: 266). Methodism became known for not being overly emotional but rather "the settled state of a Methodist was one of cheerfulness and of simplicity of life" (Wakefield 1983: 266).

Much of what Wesley started has remained to this day, though there is sometimes the criticism that Methodism has become just another denomination. Yet if one looks to the list of Wesley's emphases, one can see from the importance of preaching, the Lord's Supper, covenant Services, singing of hymns, prayer and class meetings, that the heart of Methodism remains. The emphasis on social concern is still strong in Methodism today, and in South Africa it has a strong voice in speaking out against injustice and issues involving poverty, unemployment, HIV/AIDS, abuse in all its forms and fighting for the rights of others. Currently this can be seen in the churches attempts to engage the Zimbabwean government on its human rights abuses, and their attempts to engage the South African government on the status of refugees. This forms an important part of the spirituality of Methodists today.

The aim of the Wesley brothers was "to spread scriptural holiness through the land. Fundamentally this was a spirituality of the Great Commandments...Wesley kept a balance between emphasis on the contemplative love of God and the development of love of neighbour and personal holiness to God" (Wakefield 1983: 394). The balance of activism and mysticism was the key to Wesley's spirituality. "For Wesley – and so for Methodists – life has a clearly defined purpose and goal: as Christians we are called to become Christlike and to work in this

world for that perfect state of affairs that the Bible calls the Kingdom of God” (Attwell 1995: 7).

2.2. THE EARLY METHODISTS AND WOMEN

Having discussed several important aspects of Methodist Spirituality I now need to reflect on the issue of women and these early Methodists. Talking about Methodism usually means talking about the Wesley men, John and Charles. Not much mention is made of women in early Methodism. However this does not mean that they were absent; Richard W. Chilcote has done much work in exploring the role of women in early Methodism by studying biographies and activities of different women. “He proved that women played an important role in the early days and that John Wesley might not have gotten as far if he had lacked the vigorous and courageous support of women” (Theilen 2003: 78). The following is a summary of Chilcote’s findings (1991).

One of the most significant features of Methodism, both early and present is its emphasis on lay involvement. This has always been an attractive feature especially to those in society who were marginalised, which would include the poor and of course, the women. From the start of Methodism women were an integral part of the movement; there was a place for them and their skills. English women in the 18th century used the classes and bands (small groups formed within each society for spiritual growth and development) as training grounds for preaching, teaching, leading, praying and giving testimonies. Because early Methodism forbade the ordaining of ministers, the growth and development of lay leadership was a necessity and many in the church became lay preachers. The practice however did take time as we have to bear in mind that both the Wesley’s were committed Anglican priests and were bound by that church’s regulations. Unfortunately this included the limiting of the activities of women. Even women had to fight for a place in the Methodist revival. Gradually they became increasingly successful and also respected by Wesley's followers in their roles as pioneers, sustainers, and even as martyrs of the Methodist cause. In Methodism today, so in that of the past, and indeed of many denominations, Methodism attracted predominantly women. Therefore, early Methodists were equally criticized, as were the Quakers in the seventeenth century, because their Societies consisted predominantly, if not entirely, of women: "In a scurrilous attack upon the character of Wesley and particular developments within Bristol Methodism, an anonymous critic

estimated that three-quarters of Wesley's adherents were women" (Chilcote 1991: 81). A count of John Wesley's Society at Foundery in April 1742 confirmed that women outnumbered men by a ratio 2:1. This was the case in many other societies, and in fact if we look at Methodist congregations today the figure might well have changed to include even more women.

Women were actively involved in Wesley's ministry right from the start. They were involved in the invitation of preachers, starting prayer groups and indeed societies on their own by hosting them. Some women would use their social position to obtain admission to official church meetings or use their wealth to actually provide a building.

For many women their involvement led to persecution as Methodism was not accepted by the Church of England. Chilcote writes about an unnamed Methodist woman who stood guard over the Methodist preacher, John Healy, when he was attacked by a mob while preaching in the Irish village of Athlone. In spite of continued whippings which later led to her death, she defended Healy until help arrived (1991: 54).

The growth of Methodism led to the demand for more structure and organisation. Wesley formed the famous classes and many women were put in charge of these. This was a revolutionary move, and

[n]ot being regarded as equal to men, they had to prove to be experts in leading Bands and Classes, and in preaching. Especially since John Wesley made high demands on the spiritual and emotional maturity of a person in leadership, the women who were at the fore of Methodist Societies must have been outstanding (Theilen 2003: 91).

It is not certain whether John Wesley meant to be revolutionary with regards to his giving women positions of leadership but there is no doubt that he was.

A common charge, levelled early against Methodist women, was the neglect of domestic responsibilities. As early as 1740, the Reverend James Buller indicted Wesley for keeping the women in his Bristol society so busy with religious duties that they could not supplement their husband's incomes during a period of great economic depression (Chilcote 1991: 48).

In the 1790's the English Methodist Conference officially recognised women preachers.

The decade prior to Wesley's death in 1791 witnessed a great flowering of the activities of women preachers within Methodism. From Cornwall to the North Yorkshire moors, and in Ireland as well, women's voices were raised in proclamation of the gospel they felt called of God to preach (Chilcote 1991: 48).

For Methodist women their first experience of public speaking was public prayer and then giving public testimony. Exhortation was not seen as preaching but rather as encouraging people to respond to the gospel and so women were “allowed” to participate in this. Even Wesley relaxed his stance on women preachers when he saw their success and how blessed of God they were. It was however a while before he would call it preaching and not “only” exhortation! He would cite the examples in scripture where it seemed that even Paul “allowed” women, Priscilla for example (Acts 18), to be in a position of leadership. Eventually many women became preachers who travelled to different preaching places and some of them were even put on preaching plans for different societies.

In Mr. Wesley’s Methodism – the Methodism of the eighteenth century – women became public speakers; class and band leaders; intimate advisors to the Wesley brothers and other male leaders; school founders and teachers; visitors to the sick, the prisoner, and the backslider; minister’s wives; leaders in female support-groups; itinerants; patrons; and models of the Christian life for male and female alike (Brown 1981: 70).

In Brown’s chapter a special section is written on the kind of support that the women in early Methodism needed and did in fact give each other. “It often has been suggested that women, who find themselves caught in a world to a large degree controlled by men, especially need a female support-group if they are to function well” (1981: 82). Bands and classes filled this need to a large degree where women felt free to share their fears, weaknesses and aspirations. Brown quotes a Mrs Crosby who wrote, “[t]he greatest means of increasing Christian Affection is close conversation concerning the work of God on our own souls; speaking without reserve our trials, temptations, comforts and accordingly pleading with God for each other” (1981: 82). Wesley belonged to many of these support groups and also wrote letters of encouragement as well as holding meetings with many of the women who were preachers. These groups were not only for the women preachers but women in general who supported each other with letters. Many of these women speak of the deep bonds that bound them together: “[s]he has been to me a friend, dear as my own soul, and that from my first setting out in religion” (Frances Pawson

writing of her friendship with Sarah Crosby, quoted in Brown 1981: 83). These relationships dealt with personal issues as well as theological ones and were places of mutual care and support.

It needs to be noted that in 1813 Joseph Sutcliffe was of the opinion that “the history of Methodism is not less distinguished than the other revivals of religion by women of extraordinary piety and zeal, who have stood forth for the help of the Lord of Hosts” (quoted in Brown 1981: 87).

2.3. WOMEN IN THE CURRENT SOUTH AFRICAN METHODIST SITUATION

We have examined the past. Now we want to relate it to the current situation and see it in relation to that history. “[T]he important role of women as religious leaders in the formative years of Methodism supports the present demand of South African Methodist women for more rights and an extended influence in lay and ordained leadership” (Theilen 2003: 19).

The church in South Africa has been largely influenced by the South African culture and this is particularly evident in gender issues.

I need to point out that women – generally speaking - do not have much of a say in South African society as a whole although their support has always been welcome in the liberation movement, in the churches or in other sections of society. However, male dominance is deeply rooted in South Africa, especially in the African communities where a patriarchal lineage is the cultural base (Theilen 2003: 11).

This is a sad but true indictment on the South African culture and especially interesting in that it comes from a foreigner. Obviously the degree of disempowerment is not the same everywhere and important factors to consider are race, age, economic status, education and background.

In 1994, in the new civil constitution, gender equality was given legal status in South Africa. However discrimination against women was, and still is, an aspect of the country and of the Methodist Church. Change is slow, especially in the black communities, though some changes are happening in the church. Women are being voted in as Society Stewards and sometimes even Circuit Stewards, and offering themselves as local preachers. There are a growing number

of ordained women but many are still confronted with prejudice. “The question arises, to what degree will the MCSA⁷ change or should one say: will it be able to change” (Theilen 2003: 41).

In 2002 The Methodist church of South Africa issued the following:

The Connexional Executive,⁸ having heard reports on prejudice, discrimination and practices that continue to inflict pain and humiliation on women ministers ... and women in general within the fellowship of the MCSA, and in the context of celebrating the National Women’s Day, resolves to: ... salute the important role that women have played and continue to play in the development of our country and the transformation of our Church. ... re-affirm its commitment to the role of women in the MCSA and calls upon Bishops, Superintendents, Ministers and Circuit Stewards to promote and create a conducive atmosphere in all Church structures (MCSA homepage October 2002: 5).

This statement clearly shows that the present MCSA supports the role of women in the church. Yet Theilen (2003: 153) makes the following conclusions in her thesis:

The Methodist women’s struggle in the MCSA will continue within their own groups, between the different women’s groups and with the male membership and leadership of the MCSA. Negotiations and reconciliation will not always be easy but nevertheless are not impossible. Women in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa have made themselves heard in the Church and they will not back out. The Church can count on its female members today as it could in the past. However, the male leadership will have to accept that ‘their women’ will continue to challenge them when the situation demands it. Hopefully, it will not be as scandalising an experience to them as it was in the past, because nowadays they are more used to it.

As a church we can only hope and pray that the church will become the place where all are welcome, all find healing and freedom and all are treated with dignity and respect.

2.4. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ORGANISATIONS AND THE WOMEN’S GROUPS IN THE METHODIST CHURCH

One of the ways that women through the ages have coped with prejudice and discrimination is to gather themselves into women’s organisations. There they find not only companionship but places of support and places where they can use their own talents. Women’s organisations in the Methodist Church are strong and have played an important role in the life of the whole

⁷ Methodist Church of Southern Africa which includes South Africa, Namibia, Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana.

⁸ The elected officials who form the executive of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa.

church. For the purposes of this study we will focus on two of the women's organisations, the Manyano and Women's Auxiliary.

Many studies have been done to analyse the effectiveness of organisations but in actual fact they are not so easy to analyse, especially when it comes to the issue of effectiveness. What does it mean to be effective and who decides? It is much easier to analyse effectiveness using goal setting which is practical and measurable. It is however rather limiting. Or the organisation could be analysed seeing it as being a smaller part of a much larger system so "goal attainment is defined as a relation between the organisation and the relevant parts of the external situation in which it operates; this relationship is a primary link between the organisation and the larger social system" (Ghorpade 1970: 34). So for purposes of analysis the whole larger system is considered, including the different relationships between the organisation and the larger social system. Bennis (quoted in Ghorpade 1970:35) has proposed the following criteria to measure success in a formal organisation: adaptability (ability to solve problems and to react with flexibility to changing environmental demands); a sense of identity (knowing what the organisation is, what its goals are and what it is to do); and capacity to test reality (the ability to search out, perceive and interpret the real properties of the environment). In studying women's organisations in the Methodist Church, criteria in determining effectiveness would need to relate to the Church as a whole as well as to the individual women in the organisation.

2.5. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ORGANISATIONS IN THE LIFE OF AN INDIVIDUAL PARTICULARLY DURING DIFFICULT TIMES

In light of the above paragraphs the issue of whether a woman going through difficult times is aided in any way by membership in a women's organisation she belongs to needs to be examined. There is no doubt that there is something about people meeting together with a common cause that is empowering and life-giving. Even groups like Weight Watchers (which provide support to those wanting to lose weight) and Alcoholics Anonymous (for those trying to break the hold of alcohol on their lives) add a dynamic to a person's life that they struggle to find on their own. "Support groups provide sanctuary, a medium through which individuals can filter information from the outside world, and provide validation of one's worth" (Moss

1991: 5). Moss is particularly referring to women in Zimbabwe in the Manyano (Ruwadzano) movement, but there are similarities to South African women, not only in the movement but in the history of suffering within South Africa. It is a natural human trait to look for people who have similar struggles, and the Methodist women in both Zimbabwe and South Africa found that within their Manyano group they experienced affirmation, a voice and continual reminders of the reality of God in their lives and their situations. “Individuals who are socially subordinate actively join associations to compensate for discrimination in society, thereby fulfilling needs not readily available in the larger society such as self expression, status recognition and prestige, and leadership opportunities” (St. Clair and Cayton 1945: 7). This is a significant observation when you think of women generally, and black women in particular. Women’s organisations in this country are particularly strong; black women’s organisations even more so. The Manyano movement in the South African Methodist Church numbers about 100 000 (Attwell, P 1997: 138), and the African National Congress Women’s league numbers 450 000 (ANC website 1999). Both are powerful organisations in this country.

Studies show that it is a common trend amongst women to have a relatively large social network of people that they confide in. They share their feelings more easily than men and will turn to trusted friends and family for help much more readily than men (Merdinger 1995: 6). So it makes sense then, that women who are involved in women’s groups in the church will find friends there that they will be able to rely on in times of stress and strain. Studies have shown for example that mothers who have lost a child find comfort in their religion, and those that attended church regularly “experienced lower levels of grief related to anger, guilt and loss of control” (Bohannon in Barry 1991: 53). Mothers, as opposed to fathers, were also found to cope with their grief by sharing and talking about it. “When mothers are not afforded the opportunity to communicate their grief through conversation they may become withdrawn and the grief process extended or put on hold” (Barry 2002: 52).⁹

⁹ Merdinger (1995) shows how important she regards women’s experience in the study on death and dying by writing a separate chapter on Woman, death, and dying, and in fact it is the first chapter in the book on death and dying. She approaches this study by comparing the different roles and responses between men and women. It is interesting to note that in a study in 1992 (Teltsch quoted in Parry and Ryan 1995: 3), it was found that the role of men as caregivers is increasing. The reason given for this is that women are reaching saturation point while the need for caregivers is growing (Merdinger 1995: 3).

“Bringing private pain to public expression has both a psychological and religious effect. Removing this pain from its isolation, we find how many others carry a similar distress. We are not alone!” (Whitehead and Whitehead 1989: 300). This quote could really be referring to any pain; from issues regarding marginalisation to dealing with the loss of a child or a struggle with food addiction. However in a Christian context,

[w]hen we rescue our grief from privacy, we give it a voice. As long as it is isolated in our hearts, it remains mute. When we pronounce our pain together as Christians, we turn our distress into prayer. Our prayer becomes a public lamentation (Whitehead and Whitehead 1989: 300).

So the Christian organisation can become a place of lament, a place of prayer, a place where these prayers can be heard and respected. It is a well known fact that grief and heartache shared is a powerful form of healing. In the sharing a person is heard, respected, loved and cared for. Whitehead and Whitehead (1989: 303) speak of the healing power of prayer, and they mention examples of church communities grieving over something (say losing a minister) and finding their healing in praying together about the situation. An old but forceful example of this is the funeral rituals that each culture has as they grieve over the loss of a loved one. It is a family and/or community that use the faithful rituals as they seek healing.

2.6. THE IMPACT OF THE ORGANISATIONS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

In the difficulties of life in Apartheid South Africa, organisations provided a significant place for African women. They were fighting against the demise of their families as pass laws, migrant labour, and influx control laws took effect in the apartheid era. “It was the support network of the Manyano groups, with their emphasis on family life that increasingly played a central role in the indigenous expression of African women’s Christianity” (Haddad 2004: 7). Haddad (2004: 8) acknowledges that the formation of an organisation like the Manyano was a safe place away from the dominating forces around them. Holness (1997: 25) defines it in a particularly South African way by comparing this group dynamic with that of Ubuntu. This word describes the idea of community: “umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu (a person is a person because of people)”. So for the women of the Manyano, they were “sharing life” (Holness 1997: 25), becoming persons through other people.

What such an organisation also gives is a place where the women are cared for:

Regarding practical concern, this, as I understand the situation, flows out of the preaching, praying and sharing time of the Manyano meeting. First, people seem to experience healing simply by being able to express their problems. Second, the needs articulated among the group invite advice, in the form of the shared wisdom of the members; and third, such needs often themselves provide the cue for social action by the group. Mabel would sometimes return home and relate to me the story of a misfortune besetting one of the members. If the problem was material in nature, there would inevitably have been a spontaneous collection ('they asked us all to give some few cents') for the person in need (quoted from Holness 1997: 28).

Throughout the past and existing hardships and pain women never lost hope because on Thursdays they would go to the Women's Manyano to seek strength through prayers. I do believe that through prayer things can change. Many women drew inspiration and sought new hope for their families through the women's Manyano. ... Let women's Manyano be an avenue for us to cry together and console each other in difficult times (speaker unknown, quoted in the address at the revival service of the Methodist church on 25 March 2000).

Another interesting feature of the women's organisations is the role they play in the lives of women whose husbands will not allow them to go to church on a Sunday. This is not an uncommon problem. For these women, the opportunity of another meeting will allow them to be in a place where they find commonality which brings unity, recognition and support. Haddad (2004:9) identifies that it is the sense of physical, spiritual and mental well-being that these women get from their organisation that enables them to face the life they go back to when they leave their meeting. The weekly meetings provide not only spiritual food for these women but a "haven" (Attwell, P 1997: 17).

As we meet two Methodist women who are involved in the Manyano and Auxiliary we will see the impact of these particular organisations on their lives.

2.7. METHODIST ORGANISATIONS AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN CHALLENGE

Before we look at women's organisations in the Methodist Church in South Africa it may be helpful to consider their historical context. In the particular South African context the challenge of the Methodist Church and its organisations bears mentioning. In 1795 when British troops were sent to the Cape, there were four Methodists among them and they began to

meet to hold prayer meetings. This work continued with the arrival in 1806 of George Middlemiss, a deeply committed Methodist. Soon missionary activity was begun to evangelise the “heathen.”¹⁰ From the outset of this work racial issues plagued the organisation. There was even hesitancy on the part of the missionaries to “allow” their “heathen” converts to become preachers and missionaries in their own right rather than just interpreters (Balía 1991: 39). Unzondelelo was a missionary organisation formed by Black Methodists. Whilst its origins can be traced back to 1844, there was conflict with the white missionaries who wanted Unzondelelo to come under the umbrella of the Methodist Mission Society, basically to control it. It was not officially recognised by the White Methodists until 1878, but even then it was seen as being under their control (Balía 1991: 43). The recognition that the best missionaries and evangelists to any people are those from among that people was slow in coming.

Another significant organisation that was formed in the Methodist church was the Black Methodist Consultation (BMC). Officially the church was unified and free from racism in post 1948 history, but leadership was white even though the majority of the membership was black. “Black Methodists were increasingly feeling the need to strive for freedom from ecclesiastical injustice... and were seeking recognition in a church that was rightfully ‘theirs’ (Balía 1991: 87). The BMC consultation was formed in 1975 to “reflect on the ministry of the church from a Black perspective and to assess the role and contribution of Black people in the leadership structures of the church” (Balía 1991: 88). The BMC regarded themselves as a consciousness movement and continually challenged the status quo of the church. One of the biggest challenges was for black people not only to be in positions of leadership but in leadership over white people. Membership gradually opened to clergy and laity, male and female, young and old. This organisation still exists in the Methodist Church as an organisation addressing particularly black needs. At the 2006 Central District Synod a request was made that it look at becoming more inclusive, i.e. open its membership to interested white people.

Fifteen years ago when Balía wrote his book he was already expressing disappointment at the lack of transformation in the leadership structures in the church. Whilst not perfect and not without problems it is exciting to note that there has been further change and integration. The

¹⁰ This is traditionally taken to mean one who is not a believer in Christ.

current and previous Presiding Bishop of the MCSA are men of colour. “The presence of the BMC within its ranks has served to sharpen the church’s prophetic witness in times of deep political turmoil and social upheaval” (Balia 1991: 93). A continual call at the same time as the racial struggle was the call for gender equality.

2.8. WOMEN’S ORGANISATIONS IN THE METHODIST CHURCH

Haddad acknowledges clearly the important role that organisations play in the life of marginalised women. Whilst some see an organisation like the Manyano as anti-feminist, she strongly disagrees, instead seeing the survival theology of marginalised women clearly expressed in an organisation like the Manyano (2004: 4).

There are various women’s organisations in the Methodist Church. These organisations are loosely attended by separate races with the black women attending the Manyano; white women the Auxiliary and the coloured women the Association. There have been attempts over the years for these organisations to become one, but to date this has still not happened though there is co-operation on certain projects. One of the latest attempts at fostering unity is The Methodist Church of Southern Africa Women’s Network (cf. 2.8.3).

2.8.1 The Women’s Manyano

The first Methodist women’s organisation that we will look at is the Women’s Manyano. There are differing opinions as to when it was started in South Africa; some say that it was started by Mrs Amos Burnett, the wife of a Methodist minister in the then Transvaal in 1910. Another opinion is that it was started in 1905 by Rev and Mrs W.G. Mthembu (Madise 1999: 23). The Manyano gained official recognition at Conference¹¹ in 1926 (Attwell 1997: 138).

Holness (1997: 23) in noting the enthusiasm the missionaries had for the formation of this organisation notes that:

Interestingly, the missionaries initially welcomed these women's or mothers' groups because of their perceived role in fostering 'devout domesticity' among the women. In time the Women's Manyano was to assume the

¹¹ The meeting of the MCSA

somewhat modified characteristic of being a contextualized channel of mutual support, both for women who had moved to urban areas and rural women whose husbands had moved to the cities for work, in the face of social, economic, political and emotional disruption.

It is generally felt that what was happening was actually formalising a movement that had loosely been in existence for many years (Hinfelaar 2001: 44).

Prior to this [the formalisation of the Manyano movement], in Natal, Transkei and the Transvaal north-west of Pietersburg, documentary evidence points to the existence of women's revivalist prayer meetings. Such meetings were characterised by informality, with singing, Bible study, prayer, recitation and conversation as major components (Holness 1997: 23).

The Manyano was an organisation for women only, giving women opportunities that for so long had been denied them (Hinfelaar 2001: 45). It was a place where black women were offered support and identity in a country where they had the “misfortune” of being born black and female! One can see this in the importance that is placed on the wearing of the uniform. With the uniform, Mary, the domestic worker, becomes Mrs E.M. Mbete, the Manyano member (Holness 1997). New members are required to undergo a trial period and may not wear the red blouse until they have been “robed” at a special service which takes place during the Easter Weekend festivities. The uniform is worn for communion services, organisation meetings and for funerals. It also gives the women a sense of identity, a uniform that rids one of any distinctions of social standing.

The Manyano (Xhosa word) are also known as Kopano. “Kopano is a Sotho word meaning a meeting or gathering. In Christian terms the same word means a gathering for prayer and worship and this word has been adopted by Women’s Manyano” (Madise 1999: 22). The aims of the Manyano are to encourage personal spiritual development which in turn fosters growth in the home and the movement. There are many important aspects that make up the “Spirituality” of the Manyano. The Manyano stands for “holiness of life, purity of speech and conduct and temperament, and service to the glory of God for the extension of His Kingdom” (Madise 1999: 22). The Manyano is made up of lay people (this has changed slightly as more women are ordained), and they send representatives and a report to the annual District Synod.

The minister or superintendent's wife is generally regarded as the President of the organisation. However in 1995 the Conference of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa made a decision that the minister's wife is no longer automatically president, and the Manyano groups were instructed to democratise. This decision has largely been ignored (Holness 1997: 29).

The Manyano have a set of rules which are strictly adhered to and disobedience of these results in expulsion. They hold dearly to their tradition of a uniform: a black skirt with black stockings and black shoes, red blouse with a white bib and a white hat. These symbolise respectively the blackness of our sin, the cleansing blood of Jesus, and the purity imparted by the washing away of sin (Holness 1997: 21).¹² It is important to note that black, red and white are important healing colours in Africa with black representing darkness, red transformation (both of which are used to get rid of evil from the body and prevent further attacks), and white medicines, identified with light and purity which make way for healing and balance (Gaitskill in Hinfelaar 2001: 217). The sight of these uniforms is a familiar one in urban and rural South Africa, especially on Thursday and Saturday afternoons, the traditional meeting times. Haddad sees the uniform as not merely a symbol but as having “a substantial quality, inherent in itself, which is conferred on the wearer... the uniform embodies supernatural powers that infuse the material world and become a resource for dealing with this reality” (2004: 9).

To become a member of the Manyano, one is on probation for six months. During this time the woman has to show that she has learnt the rules and regulations of the organisation. She needs to have a good knowledge of the bible and it needs to be known that she is leading a “moral life”. So for example she has to be a non-smoker and a non-drinker, as these are seen as hindrances to “good prayers”. A woman becomes a full-fledged member of the Manyano by the “robing-ceremony”. This is an important ceremony that takes place during Easter celebrations.

The Manyano follow strict rules and regulations and adherence to these is essential. Prayer and worship are the most important aspects of the organisation closely followed by service and discipline. Married women become members of the Manyano and unmarried women of the

¹² The choice of this uniform comes from the Queens battalion which was stationed at Pietermaritzburg during the Boer war.

Young Women's Manyano. This can prove to be quite interesting when you have older, unmarried women! Women who get divorced have to leave the Manyano but can ask for readmission by undergoing another six month trial period. In the past unmarried mothers were not accepted but this has changed in some of the societies.

The Manyano are well known for their resistance to change but

[i]t is my opinion ...that the resistance to change ... whilst it certainly has to do with a reluctance among some to relinquish power, and among all, to lose their sense of identity, has yet another facet. Is it not associated with the undeniable fact that membership of the Manyano somehow continues to meet specific needs in the lives of a great many women in this country? ... This organisation, along with its unique and somewhat peculiar character, has at times given to [countless women, their] reason for being alive (Holness 1997).

The Manyano groups are primarily prayer unions so prayer forms the large part of their programme. The traditional day for meeting is Thursday afternoons when members take turns reading scripture, have an exposition of the scripture, singing and praying. The women also alternate the leading of the meeting.

Prayer to God becomes a means through which women voice their burdens, away from sites of struggle, in their own safe space. It becomes an immediate link with the spiritual realm that enables them to see their lives from a different perspective as they unburden to God and to one another that which weights heavily on their hearts. As they do this, women reach out with mutual care to one another and so 'become' the incarnate response to this pain. That which is expressed within the spiritual realm is manifested and dealt with in their human relationships with one another (Haddad 2004: 10).

As the women lead in "preaching" they are given the platform to relate their own stories and the reality of God in their lives; they are given a voice, a first time for many of them. It is a place where they have a measure of control, also a first for many of them. "[T]he Manyano movement is a safe site of struggle for survival against death and patriarchal oppression and resistance to dominant ecclesial forces" (Haddad 2004: 11).

Even though there is no rule that excludes a white or colored woman from becoming a Manyano member, very few non-black women have done so. However, it is tradition for the Manyano to robe the wife of the Bishop or their Superintendent minister as their leader. If the

Bishop or Superintendent is male and black, his wife already is a member of the Manyano. This obviously differs depending on the couple involved. When minister, superintendents or bishops have been single, female or white an alternative woman is usually found from among other black, male ministers' wives. There does not appear to be any discussion currently if the said wife was not interested in the role!

The Manyano has given women a secure place to develop their preaching talents. But it has become so much more. “[F]or women who are faced with and who often are personally affected by extreme violence, child abuse, rape, and the disappearance of close family bonds, the Manyano offer a place where lost strength and faith can be replenished” (Theilen 2003: 52). In addition to being mothers and grandmothers, many of these women are the breadwinners and run the home, and yet they still take time to attend their local Manyano meetings and involve themselves in the acts of service linked to the organisation. “All in all the Manyano guarantee one of only a few stable and structured places in the midst of an often chaotic and frightening township life” (Theilen 2003: 52).

So in summary it could be said that the primary focus of the spirituality of this powerful movement is prayer, study of the scriptures, preaching and the discipline of each individual member.

2.8.2 The Women’s Auxiliary (W.A.)

The next organisation we will examine is the Women’s Auxiliary (W.A.). Traditionally the membership of the W.A. has been white, though there are small changes in colour occurring throughout the connexion as the demographics of the country start to change.

White women in the Methodist church had been meeting unofficially for different purposes for many years. They met to pray together, to study God’s word, and to raise money. They had sewing meetings, temperance activities and meetings to raise missionary support. Things were happening but there was no formal organisation. In 1907 Rev William M. Allcock started a women’s auxiliary group in Berea, and then, in 1908, in Sunnyside, Pretoria. He himself was

the President of this organisation! In 1909 Rev A.J. Johnston started one in Norwood, Johannesburg where again he was the President (Attwell 1997: 4).

In 1915 conversations between Mrs Esther Burnett and Rev. Henry Goodwin on the advantages of formalising the work already happening took place. This resulted in the formation of a committee of interested women in August of that year. In 1916 the Auxiliary was formed by a few Methodist women, some of them ministers' wives. Their aim was to examine and educate as to the best way to help the women of the church reach their highest and best in character and service in the task of the church (van der Klis 2000: 1). Mrs A.E. Brookes had a dream of a national united organisation, and in 1916 the first National Women's Annual conference was held in the Transvaal, and in 1917 a constitution was drawn up.

It comes as no surprise that in the spiritual and social climate of the day, church women in South Africa should dream with enlarged vision of creating something big for God; of mobilising the women-power of their Church to accomplish great undertakings in the service of Jesus Christ and His Kingdom (Attwell 1997: 3).

In 1919 Mrs Brookes, the General Secretary went as the Women's Auxiliary representative to the Conference for the first time, and was the first woman ever to be a member of Conference (Attwell 1997: 7). It is interesting to note that it was only in 1930 that white women were given the vote in South Africa whilst it was in 1924 that the first women took the pulpit in a Methodist Church. When the three branches of Methodism united in South Africa in 1931, the two women's organisations (the Transvaal Women's Association and the Women's Auxiliary) were joined.

The aim of the W.A. is to know Christ and to make Him known. The goals of the organisation include the extension of the Kingdom of God, through the power of the Holy Spirit by; building up and spiritually revitalising women in societies, engaging in and encouraging evangelical outreach, being part of the ministry and mission of the Church, keeping postal contact with women unable to attend regular Branch Meetings, and encouraging involvement in district and Connexional joint projects. The goal of spiritual growth is fostered through devotions, bible studies, W.A. services, and prayer services. A portion of their meeting is always given to a guest speaker and the women spend time in worship together.

The W.A. also has a strong outreach thrust, and fundraising forms a large part of their agenda. They support the Methodist Old Age Homes and Children's homes in particular and care for them and their staff with birthday celebrations, Christmas events and food and clothing. They also raise money for and care for Meals on Wheels, Hospice, Children's Care Centres, women in prison ministries and other community projects. Another important aspect of their ministry is funeral teas for those in the church and those who are merely having a service at the church. This is a special ministry to grieving families (Oosthuizen 1999: 2).

The members within the groups care deeply for each other and this is fostered with prayer partners, prayer chains, love boxes, hospital visitations, visits to those who are homebound, meals together and phone-calls (Oosthuizen 1999: 2)

This poem was written by a long standing member of the organisation and encompasses various aims and dimensions of the W.A.:

THE W.A.

A fellowship where old friends meet
A lot of talk and plenty to eat
But amidst the laughter and the chatter
Ears are open for things that matter

It is not just a social scene
Where there are needs we are a team
"To know Christ and to make him known"
It's through our lives that this is shown

It may be just a word of cheer
A smile perhaps or a listening ear
Sometimes our hands and feet are needed
Where the call for love has not been heeded

We hear the needs of our sisters and brothers
And think of ways for helping others
Each one of us has a part to play
For all of us there is a need to pray

Sometimes a smile is not enough
Practical things are needed to show His love
It's not just all about fun and laughter
It's how we respond to the work that comes after
(Nan Walter in the Aldersgate church bulletin)

As we look at the W.A. through the eyes of one particular member, it will become obvious that the above poem gives good expression to the aims of the W.A.

These women's groups in the traditionally white Methodist Church are often strong but do face the crisis of becoming an old womens group whose average age is often 65. They are struggling to get the younger women to join.

An interesting difference between the Manyano and Auxiliary is the emphasis or lack thereof on discipline. Nowhere in the constitution or guidelines for the auxiliary does one find anything on the behaviour of the individual member. On the other hand personal discipline in the Manyano is strict and their constitution has many references to behavioural criteria.

2.8.3 Fellowship and Network.za

Another organisation that needs to be mentioned is the Women's Fellowship. This also tends to be an organisation for black women and was founded by Nomsa Mpambo in Gugulethu in 1994. Ms Mpambo, who was suspended from the Manyano after her divorce, did not try to rejoin this organisation. For a number of years she only attended church services, but she longed to get involved in fund-raising and other activities. So she formed a group of her own that was separate from the powerful Manyano, the Women's Fellowship. "Certainly, the timing was right; apartheid had been abolished and the Church leadership was open to support independent women's organisations and groups. Thus, the opportunity arose for black women to express themselves in the framework of the Church but separately from the traditional Manyano" (Theilen 2003: 60). It started off small and has remained so, and at present it is only happening in a small number of churches. The Women's Fellowship is engaged in similar activities to those of the Manyano; fundraising, assisting members during times of bereavement, caring for the sick and helping others financially. There is some antagonism

towards them from the Manyano, but others are comfortable with the thought of another women's organisation.

Mention must also be made of the Women's Network which was established in 1990 as a resource but also as an attempt to unify women in the Methodist Church in Southern Africa. The Women's Network stresses that it is not an organisation but a group that allows "all Methodist women to come together in their diversity, to build relationships, to find spiritual support and to be exposed to the issues of the day as they interact together" (MCSA Report to Synod 1996: 45. Quoted in Theilen 2003: 61).

The Women's Network is open to all women, including the established Methodist women's organisations. However they have no authority over them, nor any formal link with them. They publish a quarterly magazine called *NetWord.za*. which is still in its early stages.

It has been our dream to have a magazine linking Methodist women in our Connexion, and putting us in touch with Christian sisters globally. The realisation that the world-wide decade of the Church in Solidarity with Women was closing without having made much impact on the women of our denomination sounded a wake-up call (Netnews.coza 1999: 1).

Whilst the present major focus of this group of visionaries is the magazine, it is a serious attempt by certain Methodist women to address the unacceptability of separate organisations. "The Network can and does provide women with opportunities to share each other's life stories, to share faith stories, to prepare cleansing and forgiving liturgies" (Logan 1999: 13-14). They aim to facilitate further transformation amongst Methodist women in the future. In addition they have set up a resource centre and plan to hold workshops throughout the Methodist connexion in the future.

What is the future of these women's organisations? In particular the future of the Fellowship and Auxiliary look bleak with dwindling and elderly memberships. Theilen (2003:63) makes an interesting observation:

I dare to say this – white women are not as desperate as black women because they usually don't have to struggle as hard to survive. Whereas the Manyano are a question of emotional and sometimes physical survival for black women, the W.A. is a question of how the individual woman prefers to spend her time. Even if she is a dedicated Christian, she does not need

the Auxiliary as much as black Methodist women need the Manyano. White Methodist women might find it sufficient to attend church services and meet with other women of their congregation on an irregular basis.

Will the organisations ever join forces? It is not a simple question and there are no simple answers. When one looks at how the different organisations meet the needs of their members, their histories and their functions, one can only wonder. And yet it is sad that in thirteen years of democracy, these organisations are still predominantly divided along racial lines. The impact on the church is huge, especially bearing in mind that the majority of the church's membership is women. The leadership of the Methodist Church is aware of the enormity of the issues: "Our task is no less than the reinvention of the Church. It may take several generations. We will not see the end of it, but we must begin now" (Ross Olivier, General Secretary of the MCSA, quoted in Theilen 2003: 154).

I will now examine the lives of two women, representative of the Women's Manyano and Women's Auxiliary, and see how it is that their spirituality was influenced by the Methodist Church and their women's organisations.

CHAPTER THREE: MEETING MIRIAM AND DUDU¹³

3.1 MEETING MIRIAM

3.1.1 Biography

Miriam is a white South African woman, outgoing, with lots of personality who is lovely to be with and who loves to talk. Whilst Miriam Ann Matthews is an English sounding name, she is very much South African and has lived her whole 67 years in the South of Johannesburg. She came from a humble, working class home in the south of Johannesburg where she and her brother went to the local schools and from where she matriculated. She was close with her brother then; they were “big pals” who shared the same circle of friends and did their sports together. Miriam remembers her mother and not her father as the prominent person in her life. Her father died of emphysema when she was 20.

In 1962 she married for the first time to someone who was from Europe. She felt that they were young and felt strongly about marrying your “own kind”. She left him after 22 years of much unhappiness and even physical abuse. They had a son Richard, who was 18 months when they divorced.

She moved back home with her mother, joined a local sports club and met Mark who was 35 and unmarried, and he became her second husband. He adopted Richard as his own. She never heard from her first husband again but this was never a problem as Richard came to regard Mark as his father. Their first nine years together were happy and Karen was born in 1969. She is the “star of my life, my everything”. They continued to live in the south of Jo’burg. They were involved in the lives of the children’s schooling as well as in the local scout movement. She feels that they received a lot of pleasure out of it because “we were family”.

In 1975 their son David was born and in 1977 he drowned in their swimming pool. This was a terrible tragedy, and life was never the same again. After David’s death Miriam decided that her life needed to take a new direction, and so in 1981 she completed a secretarial course, and from 1982 had different jobs, working mornings only while the children were at school. She had some wonderful jobs, one of which was to run a project for Lions club international called

¹³ All names have been changed to respect the privacy of those involved.

Operation Brightsight which involved recycling spectacles. She said that it was easy for her to sell the project because she is an outgoing person. The project was about accessing spectacles for poor people. All of this changed in 1994 with the ANC government when medical care was offered for free to the needy.

3.1.1.1. Miriam and her children – Miriam and her husband had difficult times with Richard who was a wilful young man but also an exuberant, friendly person. She now realises that he more than likely had an attention disorder and would probably be on medication today. Life was tough for him; people in authority didn't find him easy, and he didn't find them easy. He was however a brilliant sportsman and was part of the first teams for cross-country, rugby, rowing and swimming. Miriam defines Richard as a difficult person who always seemed to do everything wrong, and then stood back and said, "O hell, I shouldn't have done it that way." When he failed Std 9 they decided that he would go to the army. This was not an easy time and he was in Angola and Namibia for 21 months, contracted hepatitis and only came home three times. When he was away it was peaceful at home, but she was constantly worried about him, "he is your child." She didn't know how much warfare he saw but when he came home he was "bossies" (a slang term meaning slightly mad).

Karen was the middle child, the only daughter, a gentle soul, "definitely Mark's child". They all struggled with David's death and Miriam made Karen the centre of her life. She became the "pivot of my life because she is a delightful person". Miriam describes her as someone who does not get angry and never throws a tantrum.

Miriam felt guilt about the death of her son; she knows she will be guilty until the day she dies because "I didn't look after my child properly."

3.1.1.2. Miriam and Mark - Mark came from a difficult family; he was the oldest of 5 children with alcoholic parents. Miriam feels that he "turned out the best", and he has already buried three siblings. Mark was a sales representative for a bearing company. He tried four times to run his own business, but they never worked and in the process he lost a substantial amount of money.

Mark took a dreadful knock with David's death; Miriam describes him as being "off kilter" for nearly four years. Their marriage took a lot of strain and there were times when it looked as if it would end in the divorce courts. However they had counselling with FAMSA and recently celebrated their 39th anniversary.

In the last months Mark has become ill and it has changed the dynamics of their relationship. Since March 2007 he is no longer the healthy strong man of 75, and the changes required of Miriam are causing deep resentment. She is having to care for him and feels that this is restricting her as she would rather be actively pursuing her own interests. She acknowledges that the marriage hasn't been great for a long time and actually started deteriorating many years previously; she estimates that it was probably by 1994 that she stopped loving him. However Miriam is committed to her wedding vows and to caring for him and "being the dutiful wife". When I asked why she didn't leave, she replied that she knew the country was in for some big changes and she didn't want to be single, and, in addition, she needs the financial security. I then asked her why she thought he didn't he leave her; she felt that he was comfortable with the way things are.

3.1.2 The formative influences of her faith

3.1.2.1. Miriam's church life – Miriam identifies church as playing an important role in her life, "for me it was and is a second home". She grew up in the church and her mom used to take her to the Anglican Church. She was baptized, confirmed and attended Sunday school there. She was also married there, but when when she was divorced the priest came to see her and told her he could never perform another marriage ceremony for her. As a result when she wanted to marry Mark, they went to the Methodist Church and married there. After this they remained in the Methodist church. Over the years Miriam has been involved in many different aspects of church life including, teaching Sunday School, singing in the choir and being part of the Women's Auxiliary for thirty years. She joined the Methodist church as a result of a deaconess, who facilitated their involvement by requesting that they take the cerebral palsy children home from church. "Since then I have been a hard working Methodist." She later moved to another Methodist church where she has been involved for 36 years.

Whilst her mom took her to church, Miriam doesn't remember her mom actually teaching her about God or church. What she does clearly remember is her mom's strong emphasis on honesty. Miriam does not recall having a specific conversion experience but grew up knowing and loving God: "I never had an empty space." She had two significant experiences of an "infilling of the Holy Spirit". One when she was at Luderitz in SWA and again in the Okavango in Botswana. She describes them as emotional experiences where she was aware of God in her life and overwhelmed with a wonderful sense of His joy.

3.1.2.2. Miriam and the politics of South Africa - The political changes that were happening in the country had a huge impact on her life. The period of 1948-1994 of apartheid rule were all that she knew, and she acknowledges the indoctrination that took place in the lives of the white people. She has found all the immense changes difficult and admits that sometimes people who hear her talk accuse her of being a racist.

She feels sad about the extreme diversity between rich and poor but doesn't feel that at this point she can do much about the poverty stricken because her own life has changed so much. She feels that her financial status restricts her from doing what she wants to do. She does admit to being angry that more people don't try and help themselves.

One of the obligations that white South African males had was a compulsory two year military service. She resents that her son had to do his national service and sorrows over what it did to him, but knows that there was no choice: it was law.

White people in South Africa have had some interesting challenges to face in the new dispensation and have struggled with some of the resulting problems. "I have the same passport as anyone else if I have to travel; I have to pay the same taxes as anyone else. There are certain injustices. I turned 67 last week and for all I have done for South Africa I don't get a rand from the government. But if I was 13 or 14 and a young woman and I cohabitated with someone and presented them with a child I could have R150 monthly grant. Now there is something wrong here isn't there?"

Miriam has felt some antagonism from some of the Methodist leadership towards the white organisations and the fact that they remain separate, but she acknowledges that the church has been a wonderful place where change has occurred. Meetings nowadays can be made up not only with women of different denominations but also different race groups. She does admit that “It is a challenge to live here today” but also admits that her involvement with the district W.A. has enabled her to meet some wonderful women from the Manyano and the Association. They shared much and learned much from each other. She acknowledges those experiences as being worthwhile and valuable.

However Miriam also admits that discrimination has not only been about race. She remembers an event that took place whilst she was still at school. It was in about 1951 and they removed her school friend from sitting with her; the friend was Afrikaans speaking!

3.1.2.3. Significant influences in Miriam’s faith

One of the biggest influences on her spiritual life has been a woman deacon at her Methodist Church. This lady encouraged her to become a Sunday School teacher and Miriam feels that the preparation and presentation of her lessons led to much growth in her life.

Miriam’s nurturing and other growth has come from her involvement in the Women’s Auxiliary and their meetings. The scripture reading, prayers and teachings that take place there have played an important role in her life. She loves good, intelligent speakers and feels that she has learnt and grown much through these.

When questioned further on this, she was able to define that it was due to the fact that the W.A. and its women recognized Miriam for who she was. She was a “somebody”, not merely a mother and a wife but the person Miriam. Being part of the groups is a significantly affirming experience, and when she was given a particular role, its fulfilment gave her confidence. In addition she experienced travel to new places and met wonderful people, people of all races. She loves being at all the WA functions and meetings and they make her feel really happy.

3.1.3 Dimensions of Miriam's Spirituality

Miriam identified fire as a symbol of her spirituality. It was an image that came to her quickly and one made up of diverse aspects. She feels herself being ignited by people; people give her warmth, love and motivation. A fire needs to be continually ignited; it builds up and then dies down, but a fire can be also be doused; hard times knock it. She also used the word volatile in connection with it; she is a Taurus and the bull is volatile, but she herself does cool down quickly. She admitted to struggling to forgive and feels that this has come through experiences in her marriage. She never lets anything lie and never gives up. But she must be in control. This is one of the things that has led to her recent struggle with her husband's illness; she is struggling to come to terms with these recent developments. She is struggling to accept that things are going to be different.

The only spiritual discipline that Miriam follows regularly is prayer. When Miriam wakes in the morning she spends time talking to her God. She doesn't have other times specifically set apart for reading, etc., except when she is feeling down and is needing some encouragement. She will then read her bible, and Psalm 100 is a particular favourite. Her most structured times have been when she has gone on retreats with the Women's Auxiliary, which she did when she had a Committee portfolio with them.

3.1.3.1. During the difficult times

We looked back over Miriam's life and remembered the difficult times, in particular her child's death and her mother's murder (in 1988 she was strangled during a robbery in her home). These were hugely traumatic events but she feels that she has come through them and can comfortably speak about them. When examining what it was that enabled her to survive, Miriam didn't place a strong emphasis on only the W.A. but on the whole community and their support. There was her Methodist Church as a whole but also the school and the scouts. People rallied round her and her family, prayed with and for them, brought them meals, phoned etc., all adding up to a feeling of being well supported and loved.

Miriam admitted that as you age your thinking changes; you are confronted more and more with your own immortality. Whilst she did admit that in times of uncertainty she tends to be a

realist leaning towards pessimism, she found that the faith of other people played a significant role. Their deep conviction that God is always there was something that gave her strength, and she was always aware of the fact that people were praying for her. As she reflects back she realises that it was also her faith that strengthened her, “what else would have ignited me to work through this grief, what else would I have had to stand on?” As she questioned how she survived it, she remembered something her mother had said after her father died, “You never get over it, you learn to live around a big hole.”

Miriam also admitted that you survive because you have to. Life does carry on and with a husband and two other children to care for, the routine of life pulls you on. She does remember the deep shock of both deaths, times when she was not herself, and even today she and her husband will always be the ones sitting at the pool, watching the children, ensuring that no one else experiences what they did. Miriam also believes that it was her ability to speak about herself and her life that has helped. People know the circumstances of her life and so are able to offer their care. For example, in the W.A. the women will ask her for updates and pray for her and her family. This type of support also came from her other community groups, friends from the school, scouts and her tennis friends.

Miriam does not remember any particular time when she might have doubted God, but is sure there were times in her grief when she was angry with Him. But she never stayed there and never blamed Him for any of her circumstances. She strongly affirms the grace of God in her life, a deep belief in “God being there”.

Like so many of us Miriam goes through a process when she encounters something difficult in her life. She defines it as a cycle which starts with rebellion and resentment against something, her struggle with her loss of control, and, as the Holy Spirit works in her, she comes to a quietening down of her spirit, a slow acceptance of the situation. She is experiencing it presently as she comes to terms with her new limitations of a sick husband.

3.1.3.2. Miriam defines her Spirituality and that of the Women's Auxiliary

I gave Miriam the following definitions of Spirituality and asked her to relate them to her own walk and to that of the Women's Auxiliary. These were her responses:

The Oxford Dictionary defines Spirituality as "the quality or devotion to spiritual things". (1974: 830-831). For Miriam this meant something that is always with her, something that she can always call on. Miriam sees the W.A. as filled with God's Spirit, "They don't exist without it. You know when you get there that something is going to fill you." The W.A.'s spirituality comes from the women who make up its membership; the spirit is working with each one of them. They are witnessing in devotions and prayer and working as Jesus commanded when he told us to love each other and the world. Miriam added that these women have a significant role in her life; she gives to them and receives from them.

Ursula King defines spirituality as the "universal code word for the search for direction at a time of crisis" (2001: 3). Miriam strongly agrees with this definition; in a crisis you are shouting for help, for assistance, guidance and relief from your agony. You know that during and after the crisis an infilling is going to come, a nurturing that will provide relief and nourishment. In terms of the W.A., you want to share what you receive; maybe you are lonely and you can come here for nourishment and company. They always have devotions and sing a hymn, and the women receive what is being given out. It becomes a safe haven for the lonely, hurting women but also for all its members. Most women love to work and love to give; this gives them meaning. But this would be no different from any type of support group, religious or not.

Schneiders in King's introduction defines spirituality as "that dimension of the human subject in virtue of which the person is capable of self-transcending integration in relation to the Ultimate, whatever this Ultimate is for the person in question" (2001: 6). For Miriam transcending is the ability to look above ones circumstances and say thank you. She also feels that as you get older you know that you are getting closer to the end. She was not able to say anything further in this regard.

King says "Spirituality is about life; life is not merely about struggling to survive; it is also about the tremendous effort to live a fuller, more abundant and more meaningful human life" (2001: 11). Miriam's aim is to live a life that is pleasing to her Lord, to be an example of a good Christian, a loving, caring woman. This is what gives her meaning. She acknowledges that it is by grace alone that she lives; she could not live without it. "If it wasn't there what would be there, what would guide me?" She sees the aim of the W.A. to be living examples of Christ and to do what He requires of them. She re-emphasised their aim: to know Christ and make Him known. They also strive to love one another; hopefully it is something that people see and can emulate. The W.A. is about accomplishing as women all that Christ wishes; this is also emphasised in their W.A. affirmation (cf. Appendix F).

Farr states that spirituality is not merely something to be "given" but rather something that is "formed" (1997: 187). "You have to feed it" Miriam emphasised and you do this through prayers, devotions, listening to your conscience and asking for forgiveness when you don't listen. But it is also something that has always been there; you receive it from your family, from Christian friends, ministers, bible class leaders, authors, but you also have to feed it to keep it going. She feels that the W.A. are continuously feeding each other from the President all the way to each branch member; they nourish each other.

McGrath defines Christian spirituality as that which "concerns the quest for a fulfilled and authentic Christian existence, involving the bringing together of the fundamental ideas of Christianity and the whole experience of living on the basis of and within the scope of the Christian faith" (1999: 2). Miriam feels that there is a longing within each of us for something more and in order to look for it, you have to believe that Christianity is real. There are times when you disbelieve but you come back. The authenticity comes from being able to be honest.

As she tried to decide whether you can have an authentic spirituality in the W.A., Miriam had to admit that some of it depended on personalities. There are individuals that she feels she can be honest with, but as a whole group, there is a lot of politeness, and it would not be a place where one could say something like, "I don't like God at the moment and I certainly don't

understand Him”. However she feels that such expression might be possible in individual members. There have been a couple of speakers that have run sessions where real honesty was encouraged, but those were few and far between.

3.1.3.3. Miriam and the Women’s Auxiliary

The Women’s Auxiliary has played a significant role in Miriam’s life, influencing her faith and being a significant dimension of her spirituality. She joined the local branch of the Methodist Women’s Auxiliary in 1976. She was an at home mother so a morning meeting suited her perfectly. She was attending the church with her family as a regular worshipper and was also a Sunday school teacher. Miriam saw all of these as important ways for her to serve her Lord. She has been District Secretary on two occasions and in her second term of office the Bishop formed the “Organisations” Committee. Hence they had to meet regularly with the Women’s Manyano, the Young Women’s Manyano and the Women’s Association. This was an attempt to start dialogue with the other Methodist women’s organisations with an ultimate aim of uniting them.

The W.A. have always been involved in many interesting projects and strongly emphasised fund raising. They arranged get-togethers, meals and entertainment, often encouraging the whole congregation to participate. Miriam’s particular circuit¹⁴ consisted of four branches of the W.A. and every year the women met together as a district. In addition the women also have representation at the district Synod.¹⁵

The Women’s Auxiliary Affirmation (cf Appendix F) is important to all its members and Miriam is no exception. She sees it as “one of the most powerful pieces ever written and if one upholds these principles, what a good Christian life one would be living.” The organisation places a priority on the spiritual aspect of their meetings and their times of prayer and devotion are, in Miriam’s words, “always of a high calibre and all prayers honour Christ.”

The significance of this organisation in Miriam’s life can be seen in her own words:

¹⁴ The grouping together of churches under the leadership of a superintendent

¹⁵ The Methodist Connexion is divided into 9 districts which each have annual business meetings call a synod.

It gave me a sense of belonging and I felt I could accomplish so much service for my Lord. In addition my life has been enriched by so many different Christian women. Many of these women have, over many years become firm friends of mine and whenever I needed support and prayer they were there for me. What else does one need besides prayer and Christian love?

She also acknowledges the benefit of being involved on a committee level:

What a learning curve that was and also an honour; I felt I was able to use the abilities that God had given me and I was able to make many, many friends. It also put me in the privileged position of being able to listen to the most fantastic devotions so filling my inner being with intelligent, godly teaching. This role gave me significance and even though I had to work hard, attend many meetings and leave family cares and matters behind me, what a rewarding two terms I had. At District level, I learnt so much more about the running of the Methodist Church. I can only thank God for this experience.

“Through the many and varied places that God has led me I have come to realise that I am special in His sight and I give Him thanks”. Miriam finished with a quote from Hebrews (11:1) “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see”.

3.2 MEETING DUDU

3.2.1 Biography

Dudu was born on the 20th December 1953. Purity, the woman Dudu now calls mother, used to go to the Golela border post which is close to Mozambique, South Africa and Swaziland. Here she would sell mats that she had made and make food for the construction workers. She would do this for a week at a time, usually once a month. During one such visit in 1960 she befriended another woman working there. After becoming acquainted, this woman asked Purity to please take her little girl, Dudu. The woman herself was ill and her lifestyle was not conducive to raising a child. The woman was desperate and Purity had to make an instant decision. She took this little girl and from then on raised her as her own. Dudu’s date of birth and her surname were all that Purity was given for her new daughter. She had a scar on her arm, a sign that she had spent time in Swaziland.¹⁶ She spoke Swazi and a bit of Zulu but her surname was Zulu. Other than this Dudu has no recollection of her first seven years. Purity and

¹⁶ A scar on someone’s arm indicates that they have, as a young person, spent time in Swaziland.

her husband became her “mom” and “dad” and this family treated her as their own and accepted her totally. She had no birth certificate and when it came time for her to get an ID book, Dudu used her new family’s surname as her own.

This family lived in rural Kwa-Zulu Natal and Dudu’s family lived in four huts in extreme poverty. She was eventually the fourth child of seven. Her father worked in Johannesburg on the mines and she only saw him once a year when he came home on leave. Dudu was a sickly child, always having ear or eye problems and as a result she never went to school. Her siblings attended school but she just seemed to have become her mother’s helper and was never educated. Life revolved around her family and her home. It seemed as if Dudu became Purity’s favourite; she called Dudu her feather duster, saying that when she felt full of cobwebs and dirt, Dudu was the one who brought her peace.

Dudu’s father died when she was 14 years old. He was home on leave from the mine and went out early one morning to assist with the cattle dipping. He never came home, having been murdered by a neighbour after an argument. This was the first time that Dudu really saw the depth of her mother’s faith; it was all she had to hold onto!

In 1974 when she was 21 years old Dudu made a trip to KwaMashu, Durban to stay with an aunt as she had to go for treatment at the hospital there. Whilst she was there, she was standing at a bus stop one day when a stranger walked up to her, gave her a baby and asked her to hold the child while she went to the shop. The woman never returned, and Dudu was left with a three month old baby girl. The police wanted to take the child, but instead Dudu left her details and took the child home. No-one ever came to claim the child, and Dudu eventually legally adopted Cindy and brought her up as her own. She was a happy child who did well at school and as Dudu didn’t want to disrupt this life, she never told Cindy the details of her birth until she was 18 years old.

In 1977, at the age of 24 a pregnant Dudu was persuaded by a friend to join her on a trip to Johannesburg. The friend had employment and wanted Dudu to go with her. Dudu wanted to go but knew her mother would never let her leave. So whilst the family were at church one

Sunday, she found an excuse to stay at home, and instead left for Jo'burg. The day after arriving in Jo'burg her friend sent her to the shop to buy bread. On her way she was stopped by a white woman in a car who tried to communicate with her. Dudu could barely speak English so took the woman to her friend to assist. The end result was that Dudu went to work for Mrs. Patterson as her domestic worker, a position Dudu has had ever since.

Mrs. Patterson obviously recognized the potential in Dudu and over the next years Dudu learned to speak English and Mrs. Patterson helped her learn to read and write. Dudu also joined the library and used the opportunity to read to the children and improve her own reading. She later added to this with computer skills, eventually obtaining her own computer.

When Dudu's baby arrived the Patterson's were happy for her to keep her baby, but somebody alerted the authorities, and the inspector from the pass office arrived and insisted that either the baby leave or they both leave. The laws of apartheid South Africa would not allow a black mother to keep her baby in the suburbs. Dudu had no choice but to take her little boy to her mother at home.

In 1982 Dudu married and a year later had a little boy. Again the authorities tried to intervene but this time the Patterson's were ready. They obtained a doctor's certificate stating that the baby was in bad health and if sent home would definitely die. The baby was allowed to stay! Dudu's marriage however only lasted for ten years; her husband left her for someone else and they divorced. What made it even more difficult was the fact that the woman was a close friend of theirs. Dudu found the whole process difficult, particularly the seeming contrast between her personal life and her church life. Whilst her church people were not overtly judgmental, she felt that she could sense feelings of disapproval. Dudu's memory of how her mother's faith was real during her father's death helped her deal with the crisis; she also knew without any doubt that God was with her. The biblical Elijah became real to her and God's instruction to him to, "get up and eat for the journey will be long" became particularly meaningful (1 Kings 19:7b).

The following year the Patterson's divorced and this was a difficult time for Dudu. Mrs. Patterson tried to involve Dudu in the deteriorating relationship with her husband and, as Dudu fought to stay neutral, things became strained. Mr. Patterson remarried and had custody of the children and invited Dudu to continue working for his family. This she did. The change was not easy for her and Dudu had to work hard to obtain the trust of the new Mrs. Patterson.

As her youngest son, Wesley, grew, the new challenge was to find schooling for him in a country where segregation was par for the course. The only nursery school that would accept him was the Hebrew Nursery School and the only Primary school was the nearby Catholic school. He spent two years there before the country's regulations changed and he was able to finish his schooling at government schools.

It was a challenging time for Dudu. The family she lived with treated her with kindness and respect, yet she lived in a country where she was regarded as inferior and had to have a pass book to travel anywhere. She lived with a family, looking after their children but was unable to have her own son and daughter living with her. Yet she was always aware of God's hand on her life. She acknowledges that you had to accept it in order to survive; "it was just the way it was, to fight it would be to starve your children!"

Dudu's three children are now grown with careers of their own. Her eldest is working at a hospital in KwaZulu-Natal in the Human Resources Department. Her first son is an electrician also in Natal and her youngest, who lives with her works for Vodacom. In 1990 when her daughter was in Standard nine she fell pregnant and Dudu was devastated. She felt that all her hopes and dreams for her daughter were in vain. However she soon realised that she had to accept this and she raised the little girl. Today this child is a beautiful girl in matric.

Dudu is currently writing short stories and also learning to use a printing machine that the Patterson's have bought her. They have done this in case they are in a place where they cannot employ her anymore.

3.2.2. The formative influences of her faith

Dudu's mother was a God-fearing woman who lived a life of faith. When Dudu was ten her father died and as per Zulu custom, Dudu's mother was expected to marry one of the younger brothers. She refused to do this as these same brothers had hated her husband when he was alive and she feared for her children. It was here that Dudu places the time when she realised that her mother rejected a lot of the traditional customs of her people for the sake of her Christianity. It is an interesting debate as many Zulu people include many of their customs, particularly those surrounding veneration of the ancestors, as part of their faith. Dudu sees this time as a time when her mother turned her back on the traditions and trusted God. And this was not easy as she was now a widow with seven children. She worked hard making mats and selling them to tourists on the side of the road.

Being part of the local Methodist church was a way of life for Dudu and her siblings. However she admits that it wasn't a serious thing for her. Dudu also clearly remembers her mother's faithful prayer life – every morning she would wake at 4 a.m. and pray and then before she slept in the evening she would pray again. Sometimes she prayed indoors but often would go outside under a tree and pray. She liked to communicate with God without the “clutter” of the house. It was there that she felt she could feel Him.

Dudu didn't fully grasp the impact of the mother's faith on her; it is only as she grew up and accepted this faith for herself that she realised the gift that her mother had given her. Two years before she died, her mother had a stroke and fell out of bed. She could not move and realised that something was wrong with her mouth. Her prayer was that if God wanted to take her that was fine, but if he didn't she pleaded with him to do anything with her body but not her mouth, “I want to tell what you have done!” She however made a full recovery. When she died two years later the last word on her lips was “Hallelujah!”

3.2.3. Dimensions of Dudu's Spirituality

As an adult Dudu realises that all those hours she spent at home with her mom had a strong impact on her; a strong foundation of faith was laid. Dudu has found that her prayer life has become similar to that of her mother. She has a place in the garden under a tree where at 9 p.m.

at night she goes to speak to God. She had made a special prayer mat and she lights a candle, and everyone knows that she is not to be interrupted. She likes to be alone there, and finds that she can speak honestly and openly to God. She also reads a lot, spends much time reading the bible and also reads motivational and Christian books. For Dudu the bible teaches her about faith. Hannah is a particularly strong example for her. She finds meaning in Hannah's desperate cry to God for help, and her firm commitment of faith in knowing God will answer.

Dudu acknowledges that much of her spiritual growth has come during the difficult times, and she realises that when things are going well she does not learn. Her mother's example reminds her of this; she stood up to the family and chose instead a more difficult life because she believed it was the right thing to do. Dudu also feels that she is able to withdraw from conflict or confrontational situations that would be detrimental to her. She tried to keep away from people and situations where she would not grow.

Dudu also agrees with John Wesley's belief that being a Christian is about a balance of serving God but also about knowing him. Dudu calls it "idiot compassion"; you have to make peace with God before you can work for him, "I can do all these things but if I don't know him, then what am I doing? I do it because of Him."

3.2.3.1. Dudu's spirituality of service

When Dudu arrived in Johannesburg she attended an inner city Methodist Church at the instigation of a friend (also called Dudu). Whilst she loved the music and the social aspect of belonging to the church, she didn't want to become involved, and she recalls that at that stage it had no deep spiritual meaning for her. This all changed for her during one service. She was singing a Xhosa hymn and all of a sudden God was real to her, and she feels that it was at that time that she gave her life to Christ. That hymn became for her a declaration of faith and remains a favorite to this day. One can't help but see the similarities with John Wesley's Aldersgate experience where "I felt my heart strangely warmed".¹⁷

¹⁷ see page 28

Dudu was experiencing some health problems and eventually had to go to hospital for a hysterectomy. She was ill after the operation and could not walk. She made a promise to God that if she was able to walk again, she would dedicate her life to serving him. She did walk again and was determined to fulfil her promise. She started assisting the poor and homeless with food and clothing. On a Wednesday she worked at the school swop¹⁸ shop, and through that was able to access clothing which she took to Zoo lake, and later Joubert Park, to hand out. She would also make a big pot of soup and take this to the people as well. Her theme for her work with the homeless people was “God will provide”, and she watched him do just that in amazing ways. Dudu’s endeavours appeared in the local papers and gradually more and more people from the community were involved. Some assisted with the actual work and many donated foodstuffs and clothing.

Dudu also got involved with various children’s ministries and would write, produce and act in plays as fundraisers for one home in Hillbrow to give the children a Christmas party.

Unfortunately Dudu’s husband did not appreciate the work that she was doing, and she increasingly found that she had to do these things behind his back. This resulted in lots of pressure and a life of little peace. Whilst she was sad when he left her, it also meant that she was free to live as she pleased and serve as she wanted. This helped her accept the fact of the divorce. But the divorce also meant the loss of many friends; she feels that women kept their distance because they were afraid that she would steal their husbands.

When the Patterson family moved her church became too far for Dudu to attend so she moved her membership to another Methodist church. She again worked hard in the Women’s Manyano but felt a constant reservation from the people and eventually left there to attend yet another Methodist Church in 2003.

Dudu has been involved in various ministries in the church but her primary focus has always been the Women’s Manyano where she has regularly served as the secretary. She is also a class leader and is currently the Chairperson of a fundraising committee.

¹⁸ A clothing shop at the school where second hand clothes are donated and re-sold or given away.

3.2.3.2. Dudu defines her Spirituality

I put the same definitions of Spirituality to Dudu as I did with Miriam:

The Oxford Dictionary defines Spirituality as "the quality or devotion to spiritual things". (1974: 830-831). Dudu agrees with this, "I am a spiritual person." It was interesting to see that the next thing that she said was that spirituality does not include anything to do with the ancestors. Like many other black cultures, the Zulus hold on to their veneration of the ancestors, but for Dudu this is opposite of worshipping and serving God, and following the example of her mother, she rejects all of it. Dudu's her spirituality is about talking to God, listening to him and serving him.

Ursula King feels that spirituality "has become a universal code word for the search for direction at a time of crisis" (2001: 3). Dudu strongly agrees with this definition; when things are not going well she turns to God automatically. She looks to him for forgiveness and acceptance of her circumstances. She sees everything as having come from God, including some of the bad things; she feels that there are times when she needs punishing. It is then that she needs acceptance.

Schneiders in King's introduction defines spirituality as "that dimension of the human subject in virtue of which the person is capable of self-transcending integration in relation to the Ultimate, whatever this Ultimate is for the person in question" (2001: 6). Dudu's immediate response to this quote was, "It is amazing, you can sometimes feel him." She describes God as her everything, including her reason for accepting her own death, which may occur anytime. She does admit that there was a time when her children were growing up that she prayed that she would not die until they were grown, and God has granted her prayer.

King acknowledges that "Spirituality is about life; life is not merely about struggling to survive; it is also about the tremendous effort to live a fuller, more abundant and more meaningful human life" (2001: 11). Dudu finds meaning in giving and serving. She does it because she wants to give thanks to God and as she does not feel comfortable continually

saying it, she serves Him and others. She only wants enough money to feed her children and is happy to give the rest away.

Farr further states that spirituality is not merely something to be "given" but rather something that is "formed" (1997: 187). As Dudu looks at her own life she has to admit that it has been a process, a process of making her who she is. In answering this quote and the following one I realised that Dudu has the amazing gift of living a life where who she is and what she does are intertwined. She feels that she has so much and leads such a rich life and attempts to live a life that is one of thanksgiving to God.

McGrath defines Christian spirituality as that which "concerns the quest for a fulfilled and authentic Christian existence, involving the bringing together of the fundamental ideas of Christianity and the whole experience of living on the basis of and within the scope of the Christian faith" (1999: 2). Dudu compares herself to a mushroom; it can grow anywhere and so often doesn't belong anywhere, but look what God can do with it.

3.2.3.3. Dudu and The Women's Manyano

As with Miriam, the Manyano form a significant part of Dudu's faith and her spirituality. She grows through her times with them, but they are also an avenue for her service to God.

At her church the Manyano meet on both Thursday and Saturday afternoons and Dudu attends the Saturday afternoon meetings. Both meetings follow the same format of preaching, praying and visiting the sick. They also place a huge emphasis on fund raising, and the organisation as a whole is well known for this fact. Dudu did admit that she gets bored and frustrated if the meetings focus too much on socializing. She feels that the women should rather be spending their time involved in different types of service.

It is apparent that Dudu loves the Manyano and is proud to be a member of it. She wears her uniform with pride and knows when she steps out of the house in it that she will be recognized as a Methodist. She will do nothing in that uniform to jeopardize the name of the Manyano or the Methodist Church.

Dudu acknowledges that the Manyano have played a important role in her life, both as part of her spiritual growth but also in times of difficulty in her life. She feels that the dynamic of corporate learning and praying is significant for her and feels that she has grown tremendously through this. There is a place for everyone there and when you need it, people care and support you. Much emphasis is placed on prayer and so one can go and ask for prayer and know that it happens.

So for Dudu generally the Manyano is a place of supportive relationships and care, but she did admit that when she got divorced she couldn't speak about it. The people did know and she feels that they harshly judged her, especially as she accepted the facts and didn't fight the divorce. It does also seem that Dudu is good at giving care and support but struggles to receive it. However she did feel at other times, especially with the death of her mother, that she received lots of care and support.

Dudu acknowledges that money is a huge issue for the Manyano. They pay annual subscription fees of R155 and in addition to this are expected to bring money for many other things. The women must give quite generously for the minister's wife and for the larger Methodist Church. She admits that at times it gets too inward looking, and she prefers to be out visiting and preaching to the unchurched. She also prefers to give her money to support her work with the poor. Dudu won't stand again for the post of secretary as she feels that the job clips her wings and prohibits her from flying. On one level she loves her Manyano but she is aware of her difficulties with it. We found an expression that describes how she feels about them; they are too heavenly minded to be of any earthly good! She illustrated this with a visit the Manyano did to the children's shelter. None of the women made any effort to get to know the children; all they did was preach and even used the parable of the prodigal son which she felt was inappropriate.

A important part of belonging to the Manyano is the wearing of the uniform, and Dudu is comfortable with the strict rules that govern the wearing of the uniform. When questioned as to the reason for this she replied that "our mothers wore it". The tradition and the meaning

surrounding it are important to these women. The shoes have to be lace ups (as it is becoming increasingly difficult to buy lace ups, this rule is bending), black stockings, black skirt, red tunic, white bib and white hat. Women wearing the uniform are not permitted to wear make-up, earrings and their hair may not stick out of the hat. The black symbolizes the darkness they lived in before they met Christ, the red the shedding of Christ's blood which enables them to have eternal light. The white bib which crosses over their shoulders speaks of the burden, the cross they have to bear, the cross they have chosen to carry through thick and thin. The round brim of the hat is a reminder that the character and morals of a Manyano woman should be exemplary. The six hat panels represent perseverance, forgiveness, justice, humanity, peace and love. The red tunic has four buttons and one belt button symbolizing the five wounds of Christ on the cross; the nails in his feet and hands, the spear piercing his side and the crown of thorns on his head. The Manyano pin is to lock everything in their chest, a reminder to keep secrets.

Dudu admits that in her church not many of the younger women coming into the church join the Manyano, but she does see a future for the Manyano in South Africa. However some things will have to change, such as the strict emphasis on dress codes. She admits that power struggles and abuses of power do occur, and she has made a stand on some issues but feels that she has so much to do that she doesn't want to waste time on things like that.

There is truly nothing that this woman can't do when she puts her mind to it and she is not only an asset to her church but to the family she works for and indeed the whole community. When she takes on a task there is nothing that will stop her from achieving it; she will even take on an establishment if necessary. One of her favorite scriptures is Psalms 57:2, "In the shadow of your wings I find protection."

CHAPTER FOUR – REFLECTIONS

4.1. Reflections on the life and spirituality of Miriam

4.1.1. Racism - The Group Areas Act in South Africa determined that different races live separately, so Miriam grew up in a South Africa where white people were kept isolated and attended all their activities such as church and school separately. White people were also kept very much in the dark as to the abuses happening to all people who were not white, and most white people were comfortable in their ignorance. Even in a Methodist Church context the races did not easily mix as white people were scared to go into the townships, and the indoctrination regarding black people being inferior, stupid, smelly and dangerous was hard to overcome. Fortunately the Methodist Church has been involved in the struggle in this country and so integration, whilst slow and difficult, has been encouraged in the church for many years. Ministers work cross-culturally as part of their training and most of the leadership structures are integrated.

It was through her work with the Women's Auxiliary that Miriam was finally exposed to black and coloured women, encouraged to build relationships with them, and so came to realise that she had much to learn from these women and much to give them. The women's organisations are a key place for integration to happen as women meet and discover that they all share similar worries and concerns regarding family, finance and health issues. However it is not always simple and many challenges lie ahead for the church and for people as individuals.

Miriam still holds onto certain prejudices and as a pensioner her financial worries sometimes govern her thinking, resulting in a certain negativity regarding the future of the country. However she now acknowledges that the past was an injustice and many wrongs need to be made right.

4.1.2. Patriarchy - Miriam grew up in a home with an emotionally absent father. Her mother was the dominant figure and became her primary figure of identification. She was exposed to church through her mother. She returned home to her mother at a young age with her small son when her first marriage collapsed. Whilst Miriam grew up in an era where women were

typically submissive as mothers and wives, she had a strong mother and was comfortable having opinions and her say.

However Radford Ruether (1996: 174) states that culture, particularly through religion, continues to praise and elevate as an example of the perfect wife a woman whose main work is in the home. So Miriam took it as her role to be at home with the children and involved in their activities. “What was ‘normal’ for [women] was patriarchally defined; a man’s rightful domain is in the public world where the ‘big’ decisions are made, whilst a woman’s proper place is the private world, at home, caring for the household and children” (Collett 2003: 63). It is important to note that Miriam was comfortable with this role and never felt that she was marginalized in any way. It was rather the repeated failure of Mark’s business ventures that put severe strain on their relationship; “Mark was wasting our money.” Miriam inherited some money from her mother and this has seen them through some difficult times and has also helped care for their grandson. One wonders how this turn of circumstances has affected Mark.

4.1.3. Spirituality - Miriam’s spirituality consists of many traditional forms, so she sees church attendance as important as well as abstaining from alcohol and swearing. There is no question however that her faith is real and deep and forms the backbone of her whole life. God is her fire, the one who ignites her and keeps her “burning”. So for Miriam the outworking of this is service. For as long as she can remember she has served God in her church and in her community. This has been in the traditional roles the church assigns for women and has included Sunday School, and choir, but predominantly the Women’s Auxiliary. She has poured her life and her energies into these, and used her outgoing personality and organisational skills to serve.

Her spirituality is also closely bound up with the W.A., so their devotionals and messages received were her spiritual connection as well. Miriam does not spend too much time reading her bible or other books for spiritual nourishment, but rather gets it through the devotional and study times she has with these other women. In addition the only time that she has ever done a retreat was when it was with the Auxiliary. “Spirituality comes into being as one’s commitment to relatedness – to other people, the environment, one’s God of the numinous,

one's heritage, one's body – becomes the paramount concern that organizes understanding and action” (Griffith & Griffith in Collett 2003: 67). Miriam has found her spirituality primarily through others: the Women's Auxiliary and her relationships in the organisation, as well as the identity she has found in the organisation.

Relationships are seen as the key factors in the constitution and continuation of one's identity story, suggesting that our spirituality, our relationship with God and the images we have of God are constructed by means of and in terms of the relationships we have with most of the significant others in our lives (Collett 2003: 68).

At first glance, it appears that Miriam should be encouraged to develop more of the spiritual disciplines on her own. However there is no right or wrong way to have spiritual discipline and it should never be something that is prescribed by another. God is real to her and the terrible hardships she has endured have been survived and processed, and peace has been attained. She is honest enough to admit that she does need to find a peace and acceptance with Mark and the situation that they now find themselves in. So whilst she has been able to devote hours to the Women's Auxiliary, it is now perhaps going to have to change as she needs to devote more time to her husband. But Miriam is a fighter and never takes anything lying down and will continue to strive for peace in every area of her life.

There is no doubt that the death of her child and the death of her mother had a profound impact on Miriam and, of course, whole family. Fisher (1988: 39) states that women have traditionally been led to believe that they must choose between caring for themselves and nurturing relationships. So after the death of her child and her mother she kept going, she had to, it was what was expected of her. She had other children and a husband to take care of. It is sad to note that this was probably the place where her marriage changed, and she and Mark have never been happy since then. They have managed to stay together but it does not seem to be a relationship that is life giving for either of them.

Should placing others before herself be a part of her spirituality (Collett 2003: 64) or can it be seen as a form of patriarchy? There is not really an answer to this as mothers tend to do this for their families quite easily and naturally, and in addition we have to honestly admit that if Miriam hadn't kept things together the family would have suffered.

With one son, David, having died and the other, Richard, a difficult child, Miriam poured all her hope into her daughter, Karen whom she even admits is “her life”. One might ask what type of pressure this must put on Karen. Miriam’s identity is wrapped up now in being a wife to a sick man, mother to a difficult son and a successful daughter, and a much needed grandmother. Fortunately she also has her women’s work where she finds affirmation and identity.

4.2. Reflections on the life and spirituality of Dudu

Dudu is an intelligent, confident and well spoken woman who seems aware of who she is and of her place in the world. She has overcome the disadvantage of being black, female, poor and uneducated in a country where all of those qualities counted against her. It is amazing that she never dwelt on any thing that could be termed negative but was matter-of-fact, down-to-earth with who she is and what she has achieved. I did sense an inner pride in her but it was never with a superior attitude.

4.2.1. Racism – Dudu was born into apartheid South Africa with its pass laws, education laws, status and race laws. Black people were regarded as inferior citizens, and poverty and lack of education was par for the course. No one would ever have checked as to why she wasn’t at school as a child, and even the health services available to her and her family would have been limited. The concept of one person being owned by another is clearly seen in apartheid South Africa where many white people saw themselves as the owners of their workers. There were exceptions and thankfully it seems that the family that Dudu worked for were one of them. They treated her with dignity and respect, giving Dudu many opportunities to improve herself. In fact when we did our interviews we did them at the Patterson’s home where you could see that Dudu was also “at home”. We conducted our interviews on the patio overlooking the garden where she would begin by offering me refreshments. I do think that being with this one family has aided Dudu not only in education, but also in her personal growth and very developed self-confidence. This healthy self-esteem has enabled her to move on to higher levels in so many other aspects of her life.

4.2.2. Patriarchy – Patriarchy has structured the social system into hierarchical dualisms of male over female (Radford Ruether 1996: 174). Dudu was a female in a culture where the male dominated and the female was seen as a male possession and there to do his bidding. Radford Ruether (1996: 173) defines patriarchal societies as “those in which the rule of the father is the basic principle of social organisation of the family and of society as a whole.” It does seem as if the fact of her father being away on the mines enabled her mother to operate more freely as a woman and as a mother. The fact that she made the decision on her own to bring Dudu home, without any consultation, is evidence of this.

Her mother was a significant person in her life. The fact that Dudu became her favourite child must have played an important role in affirming her. She was wanted and loved, not only by God but by a woman who took her in against all odds. Even though she was never formally educated, her mother poured her life into Dudu, and instilled in her a faith in God that has remained strong through all her life. She confided in her, loved her and kept her close, giving Dudu a sense of confidence from an early age.

Feminist writers argue that women have been socialized to suppress their own feelings and responses (Fischer 1988:8). In the early stages of her life Dudu would have illustrated this point, but from the time that she left home for Johannesburg, her life set her on a course where she would be allowed, even in apartheid South Africa, to become a person of knowledge and dignity.

4.2.3. Spirituality – Dudu has a strong, responsible, integrated spirituality which is deeply grounded in prayer and scripture. She relies heavily on scripture for teaching and encouragement.¹⁹ In addition Dudu is in a culture and a church where for many years women were excluded from many aspects of church life because of their gender. Religious language is often constructed along God-language or metaphors for God which are male and which undermines women’s equal sacredness. Dudu never wanted to do what the men were doing; her spirituality moved her to serve and so that is what she did. She never, for example, wanted to become a local preacher or a church leader. This could be because she didn’t want it or

¹⁹ It is interesting to note that many white South Africans also use scripture to justify their negative actions against black people.

because she didn't think she could have it, but in light of who Dudu is, it is more likely that she did what she wanted. Nothing will ever get in her way of doing not only what she wanted but what she thought God wanted her to do. Certainly no man or no church! Dudu loves and serves the Jesus who broke all the rules when it came to women! In the gospels Jesus talked with them, ate with them, loved them and gave them a place in His work that no-one had ever done before. He was revolutionary, and in so many ways so is Dudu!

Traditionally Dudu should have remained a quiet, submissive domestic worker, content to serve the family she worked for, confident in the fact that she was employed and able to send money home. Dudu defied this traditional status quo helped by the family she worked for and confident of being loved by a God who is above status quo and mere human rules and expectations. For surely Dudu exceeded traditional expectations and certainly wasn't restricted by any rules. Dudu never seemed to struggle to find her place – she simply took it because of who she is and how she understands who she is in God.

Spirituality emerges from relationships... as individuals we exist only in relationship; that the self is constructed through relationships; and that the interaction between self and others becomes the rhythm of life itself... who we are and what we know about ourselves, our world and God is constructed in a context, with language as the tool in the formation of such knowledge (Collett 2003: 67).

We could say that spirituality, our relationship with God and our image of God comes into being in and through our relationships with the significant people in our lives. A simple example would be that of imaging God as a loving Father which would happen easily for someone who has such a loving relationship. Our relationships with these significant people are what shape our reality. Whether these relationships were healthy affirming ones, or unhealthy oppressive ones can either liberate or stunt personal and/or spiritual growth. One would think that for Dudu the relationships with her biological mother, her new mother, father and siblings, her friends, her husband, her children and her church family would all have provided a framework for her story. Whilst this is true in some aspects, it has certainly not been a limitation for her.

Dudu's new mother seems to have provided a strong framework for her. Her own love of God and connectedness with God had a strong influence on Dudu, even down to their approach to issues to do with the ancestors. With a husband away most of the year, she brought up seven children, taking Dudu in after a decision made on the spur of the moment. She had to provide financially for them, and after the death of her husband, she had to stand up against traditional pressures to marry a brother-in-law. She modelled to Dudu an independence of spirit as well as an unconditional love for her own and those around her. This woman she now called mother loved her even to admitting that she became her favourite. It is no wonder that Dudu became such a self-confident, self possessed woman who certainly showed no grovelling servant attitude so prevalent among older black people from apartheid days.

Both Dudu and her mother loved to pray outdoors after dark. It is interesting that Dudu's image of God is an outdoor one. She sees him as a place, a place of beauty and quiet, a place where wild animals run free, trees provide shade and weather is cool and peaceful. It is a place where one goes to when one needs peace; there are stones there where you can find protection and against which the animals scratch themselves. This picture of God is one she has held on to in good times and especially the bad. She says that nothing and no-one can take this away from her; she will not allow it.

Dudu however also "does church" on her terms. She sees it as important and involves herself in it, but when the church and her Manyano do not do what she thinks they should, she does it without them. She gets involved in the things she feels called to do. This is why she has been feeding and clothing people on her own, and eventually involving the church people in it. Not even old structures can stop Dudu doing what she knows she needs to do. So she has an interesting separation of God and church. They are not, as they are for many people, the same, and serving God does not mean a blind following of all that is church.

It is interesting that Dudu has held on to the image of an affirming and life giving God. Her own abandonment by her biological mother and her husband have not led to a negative picture of God who leaves when things get tough. Dudu, who for many years seems to be somewhat on the periphery of religion and spirituality, has to admit that she was being strongly

influenced by her mother even though she didn't know it. This led to her spirituality being a connection, to being in relationship with the One who has led her, taught her, loved her and consumed her ever since. "Images of God and self are closely connected, and a change in the one brings about a change in the other" (Fischer 1988: 60).

Dudu ended up also being given a girl child whom she eventually had to fight a legal battle to keep. Her spirituality also now includes one of community where she serves where she can. Her own relationship with God came to a place where He was not just the God of her mother but "her own". It is interesting that this happened when she was in Johannesburg, becoming an independent woman who had her own job, a new baby and was receiving an education. God is no longer a removed and silent "someone"; He has now become her saviour, her friend, her companion, one who shares her life experiences and whom she can lean on in the difficult times.

4.3. Spirituality and suffering for Dudu and Miriam

Spirituality for both women has become more than just head knowledge; it is about who they are, their "being" as well as their doing. For them it is a spirituality that is deeply connected to their every day life with its struggles and even with its ordinariness. For both of the women there have been, as there are for most of us, times of deep joy but also times of deep struggle and heartache. If we refer back to the aims of this project we need to ask what impact, if any, has their spirituality had on these times of difficulty?

"For many people spirituality is a soft word, something idealistic and dreamy, even sugary, like icing on a cake" (King 1996a:152). But as we have examined the lives of these two women we can see that for them, spirituality has a deeper dimension. It is about how they know with a deep conviction that God is the one that has enabled them to cope with all that life has given them. It was evident from our discussions that it is their spirituality and their deep faith and conviction of God that gives them meaning and a sense of wholeness. Kolbenschlag (1982:60) argues that "women are discovering that spirituality is authentic when it is intrinsically subjective, when it is brought forth from the womb of their own experience" (quoted in Collett 2003:85). In particular when we looked at the definitions of spirituality and

how they related to them, it became apparent that for both of them spirituality was about connection; about God being part of their every day lives, not just something tagged on. It was this connection that they both see as the reason that they survive, and they acknowledge God's love as the foundation of their lives. There is no doubt that "adversity in the form of abuse and conflict can become a determining factor shaping embodied spiritual growth, with spirituality providing some form of security" (Collett 2003: 9). Being in relationship with a personal God helps create order out of chaos. I could see clearly that this is evident in the lives of both Dudu and Miriam.

As we explored their spirituality and they articulated both their stories and their love of God, both women were able to see hardship as opportunities for growth both as people and in their relationships with God.

Humans are not alone even if being with God is a process of resistance, contest and wound. Often it is through the wounds and scars of life that we become aware of God's presence; to be is to wrestle with God, it is in the wounds of resistance that people gain a power: to tell and even to heal (Frank in Collett 2003: 70).

Both women are different; not just with regards to background and race but in their attitudes and views on life. I could not help but compare the spirituality of Miriam and Dudu. In many ways it was similar; they both love God, acknowledge him and his strength in their suffering and have used service for God and the church to live out their spirituality. However, Dudu is a lot more conversant with her spirituality; it flows out of her from a place of wholeness and depth. Miriam on the other hand is a lot more reticent, but her spirituality is no less deep. In South Africa with its policies of racial discrimination Miriam had many more opportunities open to her than did Dudu. Simply due to the fact that she was white meant that she lived in the suburbs, received an almost free, good education and would therefore be easily able to find employment of her choosing. That was a simple fact related to the circumstances of one's birth. Dudu's life has been marked by difficulty and pain. She did not know who her biological parents were, she had no formal education, she fell pregnant without being married, and she was black and female in a racist society. Both women grew up poor but poor for Dudu was different from poor for Miriam. Dudu was beholden to a family as their domestic worker for her entire working life, while Miriam raised her own family in her own home. It is interesting

to note that Dudu never bemoaned the fact of being a domestic worker, living on her employees premises and spending her life serving them. She only spoke highly of them and feels that they have done so much for her. As indeed they have. However many would regard this lifestyle as a type of oppression.

In light of the above comparison it is interesting to note their different responses to the poor. Miriam spoke more of her sadness in being exposed to the poor, and mentioned that because of their own economic circumstances she was not able to do much to help. However, Dudu never uses this kind of language. She sees herself as so much better off than others, and has spent many hours serving and caring for the homeless. Most of this has been at her own initiative, and she has enlisted the help of many around her. Yet she herself would be considered by many to be “the poor”.

Both women have experienced the violent death of a parent and both struggled to articulate the pain that was involved in that. In addition Miriam also lost a child to drowning and knows that the guilt of this will be with her forever. I found it interesting that both women have made their peace with these deaths and neither of them ever uttered a word about blaming God for these. They accepted it as part of life. In pastoral work one finds people coping with the death of a loved one and the common outworking of their grief often expressed anger and indeed anger directed at God. So questions like “Why me?”, “Why did God allow this?” or “God could have stopped this, why didn’t he?” are quite common. I found it interesting that this did not form part of the dialogue with these women. I do not believe it was because they were not being honest but because for them, their spirituality instructed them and provided them with a foundation that enabled them to accept the violence as part of a sinful world where terrible things can and do happen.

4.4. A comparison between the spirituality of Dudu and Miriam

Comparisons in the area of spirituality almost seems unfair as people come from different places, are made differently and God works in different people in different ways. However for the purposes of this paper the above will be included as part of the comparison.

Dudu's spirituality is about talking to God, listening to Him and serving Him, so she takes seriously her times of prayer, reading, learning and the things she does to serve him. Miriam's spirituality is a lot more about service and being "infilled", and so she places importance on her times of prayer but also on the times of devotions and study in the meetings that she attends. Both women are grateful for their Methodist women's groups which give them avenues for service.

The two women were brought up in Apartheid South Africa where Miriam is a part of the white privileged minority and Dudu part of the black marginalised majority. They are of a similar age and have both experienced being a wife, mother and grandmother. They are both Methodists and both deeply involved and committed to their women's organisation. It is however interesting to note that both women keep to the traditional roles of women even here, so they are involved in serving tea, cooking, etc., all roles traditionally assigned to women.

It is interesting that in all conversations with Dudu she never said anything about life being hard and feeling in any way unable to cope. On the other hand Miriam often bemoaned her fate in life and the fact that so many things were wrong. But in the end both of them speak about surviving because they can hold onto God. However Miriam speaks of being ignited by God and Dudu of God being her safe place and her peace. So they arrive at the same end point, but their journeys there are different. It is very interesting to note that both Dudu and Miriam arrive at God but with quite different images and concepts of Her. One can only wonder if their own history could be formative of these images.

One would somehow expect Dudu to be the one bemoaning her fate in life as the victim of so much discrimination, but she has worked hard with what she has and is at peace with who she is and where she is. Miriam is still on a journey to achieve that same sense of peace. Another

interesting observation was that Miriam speaks easily about herself and has done so with various other people. On the other hand Dudu revealed facts about her life that few people knew, especially people in her church circles. Again it is possibly just a personality trait, but in Dudu's case she felt that she would receive judgment and condemnation from the church and especially Manyano women if they knew all these details. The issues surrounding Miriam's life were not issues she felt she would be judged for. One can't help but wonder about their responses if the circumstances were reversed.

It is obvious that much of Miriam's identity is wrapped up in being a mother, a wife and an active church member. It is possible that she would benefit greatly from a journey where she could find her identity in being a beloved child of God and a woman in her own right. Dudu does seem to have achieved this and her foundation is therefore not shaken by personal circumstances. The strength and spirituality of her mother had a lot to do with this. There is however, no doubt that Miriam has the strength of character and will to achieve this. Miriam's spirituality is also deeply connected to her work in the Women's Auxiliary.

"It has been suggested that in the telling of the story, hope is occasioned that things can be different, that change is brought about when people reflect on attitudes about themselves and their lives" (Collett 2003:87). There is no doubt that healthy reflection can be life changing and can bring about hope and a desire for things to be different, as well as the energy to go about ensuring that change does happen. It is not only in reflection but in the experience of being heard and taken seriously that "we are creating the world at the same time we think about it" (Belenky in Collett 2003:87). Both Dudu and Miriam were empowered by the sharing of their stories as they reflected on how their spirituality had enabled and empowered them. It is always difficult to talk about painful experiences but the interview times enabled them to look again at their experiences and be liberated again in their examination of them. Through the telling they were able to re-examine the impact of their faith and hope on their lives, and hope was once again ignited. The connection between the details of their lives and the reality of their spirituality was made anew. "Being healed is seen as the restoration of the right relationship between God and humanity which in turn secures a person's position in society" (Bouwes 1996:92).

4.5. A feminist critique

In the introductory chapter we asked the question; Why female? Why feminist? Why women? Obviously it is initially because the stories told and the organisations studied are women's. The focus is women. However one must not therefore automatically assume that sexual oppression²⁰ has been identified by them as an issue. Schneiders notes that the feminist is one who is oppressed but also who realises her oppression and correctly identifies its source (1995: 395). In discussions with Dudu and Miriam it is interesting to note that neither identified patriarchal oppression as an issue. However their lives identify aspects of this; they both came from homes where expectations of a woman were clear and where much of where they are today is a result of these expectations. One wonders if the Methodist women's organisations don't reinforce this patriarchal mindset. This is possibly one of the reasons change is essential if these organisations are to survive into the future. The control issues in the Manyano especially bear striking similarities to patriarchal oppression and one wonders if it isn't "patriarchy dressed in a skirt".

There is however an alternative aspect to Schneiders' view and that is the oppression cycle.²¹ In Miriam's case her oppression has been internalised, and she has actually become an agent of her own oppression. So she might feel like her suffering is her fault. Miriam has spent all of her energy caring for everyone else, and so hasn't developed enough of herself. She simply accepted the status quo. In Schneiders' words, this has become her sin. Dudu on the other hand was able to critique her culture and didn't allow the oppression to dictate to her.

Schneiders has identified feminist spirituality as a discipline "rooted in women's experience" (1995: 400), so "story-telling, the sharing of the experience of women, which has been largely excluded from the history of mainline religion, is central" (1995: 400). Dudu and Miriam both experienced an empowering not only in the telling of their story but in the request for their stories; they found it extremely affirming. The focus of the interview was their story, so time was not spent identifying issues other than those which they themselves raised. Focus was therefore not on any kind of patriarchal oppression. Both women have been raised with certain expectations regarding role definitions and have never questioned this.

²⁰ Identified by Schneiders (1995:395) as a root of feminist ideology.

²¹ An understanding that oppression of one results in that one oppressing others and the cycle keeps turning.

As women the response to God is “both conditioned and structured by one’s historical situatedness and one’s sexuality” (Wakefield 1983: 148). Language and symbols have tended throughout the ages to be masculine. It is interesting that Dudu’s picture of God is trees and Miriam’s fire; both forces of nature which are often personified as female. God was never spoken of as female by them but rather as male, but this is not surprising as it is how traditional Christians have been brought up.

Dudu was the one who was given to a new mother, had the child out of marriage and was given a child by a stranger, surely things that would not happen to a man. She was left by her husband for another woman, was left to bring up her son on her own, and became the domestic worker. So too Miriam was the one left with a child when the marriage broke up, held the family together when their child died, felt the financial pressure of using her inheritance to help the family after all her husband’s business failures, and still feels she has to hold the family together with her son and grandson. Neither of them ever bemoans the situation but just accepts it as is. But these issues have defined who they are and to a large extent their spirituality. Both have been largely influenced by strong mothers, whose spirituality was also born in difficulty and in traditional female society.

Conn (1986: 4) notes that many women are still conditioned to subordinate roles in society. She feels that this restricts the possibilities for mature humanity/spirituality. Christian teaching has also historically restricted women’s understanding of maturity to that of self-denial and sacrifice. So a strong theme in feminism is that of empowerment, and the interesting debate is from whom and where does this empowerment come. As one is confident in being female and in being woman, the confrontation with the social status quo regarding the traditional understanding of these terms often needs to be addressed. “Feminist spirituality involves the awareness of women’s own power from within, of a new empowerment which can be nurtured to effect personal, social and political changes” (King 1988: 219). Dudu never needed to be told that she must fight a status quo or fight for equality, she just lived who she was and wouldn’t allow anyone to dictate to her. It does not seem that she ever consciously “took on” the system but was simply being true to herself. “Spirituality has to do with becoming a person

in the fullest sense, but because I am a female person my spirituality must let me be fully woman as well as fully religious” (Squire 1978: 325).

A strong theme in feminist spirituality is that of belonging, community, sisterhood; the very idea of Methodist women meeting to build community strongly supports this. However, because so many of the women still fill the traditional church roles prescribed for them rather than operating in their area of gifting, something new and radical should rather be born and the current structures closed down. Even Dudu fills many traditional roles of the serving woman, and the fact that she is not interested in becoming a local preacher, a traditional male role, is interesting.

4.6. Dudu, Miriam and Methodist Spirituality

Having examined and compared the spirituality of Dudu and Miriam we now turn to look at their spirituality in light of Methodist Spirituality.

The Holy Club that the Wesleys formed stressed “inward religion, religion of the heart” (Ellwell 1984: 712). John Wesley particularly emphasised the importance of private prayer, family and public prayer; searching the scriptures by reading, meditating and hearing; participating in the Lord’s Supper at “every opportunity”; fasting on Fridays and Christian conference, i.e., conversation with fellow Christians (Wakefield 1983: 265). Both Dudu and Miriam spent time in prayer, with Dudu particularly putting time aside to speak to her God (cf. 3.2.2.). Dudu also spends time in reading and study, and both women enjoy being part of the body of Christ worshipping together.

Both Charles and John Wesley had personal experiences of salvation even though these were only after they were priests and serving God. They placed a strong emphasis on the class system and every Methodist had to belong to one. They were a small group that gathered for prayer, learning, sharing and accountability. Miriam does not speak of a particular salvation moment (cf. 3.1.2.) but grew up knowing God in her life, and her two experiences of an “infilling” of God’s Spirit were very significant for her (cf. 3.1.2.1.). Dudu speaks of a moment when she knew that God was real and refers to this as her salvation experience (cf. 3.2.3.1.).

Dudu is a class leader, and whilst Miriam does not attend any kind of small group, her time with the W.A. have been this close group for her.

Hymn singing also played an important role in Methodist Spirituality and this tradition continues today in most Methodist Churches and also in the women's organisations. Both Dudu and Miriam speak of the joy of singing in their meetings. Fighting social injustices was a strong emphasis for the first Methodists with Wesley fighting poverty, drunkenness and slavery. Dudu and Miriam have both done this albeit in different ways. Miriam's has happened through her work with the Auxiliary which is known for their good works. Dudu has done the same in the Manyano but has not been restricted by them. She has taken on personal crusades and indeed been the initiator of projects where often women from the church have joined her. She has not needed leadership structures or organisations to define her; she is a law unto herself in the best sense of the phrase. Both women feel the plight of the marginalised strongly, Miriam answers hers with the given structures and Dudu in any way she can.

Wesley kept a balance between emphasis on the contemplative love of God and the development of love of neighbour and personal holiness to God (Wakefield 1983: 394). So the balance of activism and mysticism was the key to Wesley's spirituality. "For Wesley – and so for Methodists – life has a clearly defined purpose and goal: as Christians we are called to become Christlike and to work in this world for that perfect state of affairs that the Bible calls the Kingdom of God" (Attwell 1995: 7). In Wesley's aim for balance, his devotional life was the foundation of all else he did; the more service he needed to do the more time he spent with his God. Dudu seems to have a similar *modus operandi*, her prayer and devotional life are key to everything that she is and does. Miriam's spiritual food however seems to come from the service that she does, so her times with the Auxiliary give her her sustenance. On one level this does appear to have worked for her, but again it would be interesting to see how things would change for her if she took more time out for silence and contemplation, whether her identity could be more fully found in Christ rather than her family and her role in the women's organisation.

4.7. The role of the organisations in Dudu and Miriam's lives

Both these women find that their respective organisations gives them self-respect. Miriam's lack of self confidence that comes from her struggles at home has been improved with her leadership roles within the Women's Auxiliary and the exposure it has given her nationally.

Something significant happens when a person is taken seriously (Collett, 2003, 71), or when a person is heard or allowed to participate and this participation is affirmed. It all contributes greatly to feelings of self-respect and self-worth.

Theilen's thoughts will be noted on the different needs of white and black women for the organisations (cf. pg. 93, below) and as we relate it to the lives of Miriam and Dudu, their different needs are displayed quite clearly. But Dudu has also risen above merely needing the Manyano for respect and recognition, and in fact it is probably correct to say that she gives more to the organisation than she receives from it; whereas Miriam seems to receive more than she gives. This is a small irony considering that Miriam went to the organisation supposedly needing much less.

Whilst Dudu is a committed Manyano member she is aware of their flaws. She speaks up about her concerns and feels that they regard her as a trouble maker. However she doesn't waste too much time fighting. When she sees that she is not being heard on matters of how they spend their time, she does what she feels convicted to do. So she has started the feeding schemes at Zoo Lake and in Joubert Park, and she has started the work with the children's shelter in Hillbrow. Often the Manyano get involved at a later stage. It is because of her frustration that the Manyano spend too much time preaching and praying, and not enough doing practical things, that Dudu will not get involved in the leadership of the Manyano again. It is interesting that she sees the leadership structures as clipping her wings, whereas Miriam's involvement in the leadership structures has helped her to fly.

Dudu is convinced that the Manyano have a future in this country and feels that the younger women will join, although she did admit that if they are to keep attracting younger women, some changes will need to be made. One can only hope that the leadership will listen to people

like Dudu. Whilst Miriam was aware that the Auxiliary were losing numbers and their future looked bleak, she was not able to offer any suggestions as to the future.

4.7.1. The role of the organisations in their times of difficulty - It was interesting to see the different ways that the organisations have aided Dudu and Miriam when they have needed support. Both feel cared for in their organisation but both admitted that they have to censor what they say. So much of what Dudu admitted in her interview is not known by the organisation, and this is linked to the feeling of judgement she felt when she got divorced. Whilst the women of the W.A. knew of Miriam's circumstances, she didn't feel that it would be a place to be really honest about times of doubt and anger with God and the church. However much of their support comes from individuals and friends they have made within the organisation. So, as with any large organisation, structures can be intimidating but personal relationships with its members are what saves it. The same would surely apply to feelings about the church at large!

Both Dudu and Miriam felt loved and supported during the times when they were experiencing grief and surely that is important and significant. In the white culture church women will show support by visiting, cooking, baking and helping with the funeral, especially the tea. In a black culture the church women will visit for long periods, take part in the prayer vigils, help with food for the family and help with the cooking for the funeral. In addition, if the dead person was part of the church they will attend the funeral, no matter what distance they have to travel.

When this paper was still in the planning stages I imagined that black women would need the Manyano for a sense of identity and belonging because they had been so marginalised through being both black and female. I presumed that whilst white women had been marginalised as female, they hadn't had to deal with racial marginalisation. Through my times with Miriam and Dudu I have discovered that Miriam's sense of identity is much more bound up in the Auxiliary than Dudu's with the Manyano. One gets the impression that Dudu has not really needed the Manyano at all, in fact it would seem that the Manyano have been the better off for having had Dudu as a member. Miriam on the other hand has needed the Auxiliary and found great comfort and identity from them.

4.8. Reflections from this research

4.8.1. Reflections from this research regarding the The Methodist Church

The expectation in the new South Africa is that race will no longer be a determining classification factor. The Methodist church has not needed legislation to know and implement this; it has been a process that was started long before 1994, but it is one that is by no means completed. Both The Methodist Church and its women's organisations have a long way to go to achieve integration.

The separation of Methodist women's groups along racial lines is a painful reminder of the apartheid era and of the MCSA being divided into fractions; a division that does not go along with the philosophy of a non-racial society (Theilen 2003: 145).

However, “[i]n demanding the union of its traditional women's organisations, the MCSA leadership focuses too much on the problem of racial separation and thereby tends to forget the history of the different groups that still have a say today” (Theilen 2003: 63). This is an interesting observation; the church and all its members really need God given wisdom in determining when processes should be allowed to happen, and when the issue should be consciously engaged.

However this does not mean that nothing has happened. As change has happened in the country through legislation and as some groups of people have had their dignity and self respect restored, so too have others been able to let go of their guilt. A result of this has been the increase of empowerment for women in the country and in the church. People are also more able through practical changes (like the abolition of the Group Areas act and the pass laws) to start building relationships across races. Miriam speaks about meeting with women from the Coloured and Black communities, quite a feat in light of South African history and attitudes. In some churches great strides towards integration have been made, but in others segregation is alive and well.

In Theilen's (2003) investigations for her thesis, she found some women open to women from other Methodist organisations and others not. Theilen's feeling that change can be legislated but is better happening through relationships is a significant observation. Just as racism is a state of mind and hearts, so those hearts and minds are the places where change also needs to

happen. Change can be legislated and forced but if it is to be real then it must also happen in attitudes.

However it is not quite as simple as the joining of two organisations. There are real issues that need to be considered: geographic distance, (the apartheid policy of segregated living is still a reality), the language barrier and the social status barrier. In the urban areas many of the black women are the domestic workers of the white women, and there is still a “madam/girl” dynamic that is going to take a long time to overcome. And of course segregation has not disappeared because the laws have changed, so attitudes of many are still shaped by an “I am better or worse than you” mentality.

The results of Theilen’s research show that the separation of the women’s organisations will still continue. She found that the Manyano insist on an independent women’s group because they do not want to give up their ways of worship and of handling spiritual and practical matters in Church. In addition she found that

[B]lack women still mistrust white people although they do not readily admit this because their attitude does not go along with the demands of the contemporary South African idea of the ‘rainbow nation’. ... The Church itself has no definite program that could be in the least comparable to the work of the government’s Truth and Reconciliation Committee (Theilen 2003: 145).

It is easy to become discouraged and one cannot help but wonder sometimes if it would not be easier to close down the whole church and start again!

4.8.2. Reflections from this research regarding The Methodist Church’s Women’s organisations

- So what about the future of the Women’s Manyano and the Women’s Auxiliary? “All women – black, coloured and white - were active in their respective women’s organisation because it was part of their tradition and they needed the social contacts their organisation offered to improve their self-esteem or to find help” (Theilen 2003: 152). Women today have much more freedom to do what they like when they like and so don’t need their Methodist Women’s organisations like they used to. However, for many, their church is still their home and a place where people experience a sense of belonging, a place where they meet

with friends, so these organisations are probably safe for a few years yet. In addition, because these organisations work hard serving the community in feeding schemes and strongly supporting things like old age and children's homes, it also gives its volunteers an outlet for their own longings to serve Christ by serving others. It gives people a sense of identity *and* mission.

The immediate future of the Manyano is secure, both in urban and rural areas. The black women have invested huge amounts of time and energy in building structured lives where they worked, ran their homes and families and worked for their church. "Because they invested a lot, they will lose a lot, if they are forced to give up their ways of looking at the world and acting accordingly" (Theilen 2003: 63). The strict, rigid structures have provided a safe place for them in a country where their futures were so unknown and where poverty and crime ruled. This stability and safety is to be treated with respect, and should not be tampered with without thought to the lives of the women it serves. So women, young and old do still join the Manyano. However there is no doubt that as black women are more and more empowered in society, and as they build careers and lead economically viable lives, their need for a group such as the Manyano will wane. They do not have the time to build something new and they generally take their rights as a given.

In the examination of the Manyano it is obvious that they function strictly along hierarchical lines, with structures that have not changed for years. These structures give the older women a sense of identity. They do not always like them, but they accept them as giving them a sense of guidance and importance. It is also interesting to note that those who are in leadership positions do not want to let go of their power once they have attained it.

Even Dudu holds onto the traditions of the Manyano with pride, especially her uniform which she calls "traditional" even though it is copied from the British military uniform from the Boer war and has no link to anything that is of African tradition. The black church holds the same attitude to their order of service (Umbedesho) and hymns. They consider them to be genuinely and traditionally Methodist although both come largely from Victorian England. Indeed when

questioned many of them do not know the origin of the hymns. But if they are given the truth, they still do not want to change, holding on to their traditions.

It is interesting that Dudu appears to be a “modern” woman, dictated to by no one but who adheres easily to the structures of the Manyano. She loves the uniform and submits to their rules and regulations. She feels that she does stand up to them when necessary, but it is possibly wisdom that dictates that she doesn’t do so often, and instead just goes off and does her own thing quietly.

Within both women’s organisations the attitudes of the old and younger women is different.

Older women do not want to let go of their positions and younger women seek a higher degree of equality and democratic structures in their churches; this does not only concern the gender issue but also intergenerational problems. Young women demand that a person should occupy a position because of his or her skills and not for reasons of age or gender (Theilen 2003: 149).

The Women’s Auxiliary was predominantly made up of women who did not work full-time so they had time to devote to their church work. This has changed drastically over the last few years as more and more women have careers that take much of their time. In addition and as a result of empowerment, they do not have as much need for an organisation that gives them recognition and a place where they can exercise their gifts. “Whereas the Manyano are a question of emotional and sometimes physical survival for black women, the W.A. is a question of how the individual woman prefers to spend her time” (Theilen 2003: 63).

The Women’s Network, called by Theilen, “the definite platform for women’s rights and for women’s empowerment in Church” (2003: 149), will hopefully become a uniting force in the Women’s organisations in the Methodist Church. Theilen found that The Women’s Network,

[f]ormerly attacked as a platform for radical feminism, is today highly esteemed by the Church’s leadership and by the Methodist women, who know about this group. The Women’s Network’s popularity is due to its focus on Wesleyan Christianity, on its liberal and modern outlook on life and on the fact, that it integrates women from all women’s organisations, regardless of their ethnic background. Members of the Women’s Network are self-confident and educated women who consider women’s equality a natural right (2003: 150).

Their belief is that all women want and need to be treated equally, and in order to attain that, they need to be educated and trained to reach that goal. Currently it is individual women who are taking on the battle rather than organisations, and this surely is a weakness. But if The Network succeeds in uniting the Methodist women it could become a powerful voice in the church.

In 2002 the MCSA publicly acknowledged their need for change regarding the women in its midst:

The Connexional Executive, having heard reports on prejudice, discrimination and practices that continue to inflict pain and humiliation on women ministers ... and women in general within the fellowship of the MCSA, and in the context of celebrating the National Women's Day, resolves to: ... salute the important role that women have played and continue to play in the development of our country and the transformation of our Church. ... re-affirm its commitment to the role of women in the MCSA and calls upon Bishops, Superintendents, Ministers and Circuit Stewards to promote and create a conducive atmosphere in all Church structures ... (MCSA, Homepage, October 2002, 5).

There is no doubt that many male Methodists have heeded this call and are actively working to respect and create a supportive environment for women, but there are still far too many who have not.

4.8.3. Reflections from this research and the feminist position

I wonder what someone like Sandra Schneiders would say to Dudu and Miriam? Miriam's life does not agree with her theory of oppression and both of them are relatively content in their roles in life. Perhaps challenging Miriam would result in a new restless and discontent that could be dangerous. Perhaps Dudu would gain more confidence and achieve more. No matter how many theories we come up with and how often we critique someone else's life, we must never lose the important fact that these women are people with feelings and lives that they will want to count for something. No theorising or posturing is more important than that.

4.8.4. Reflections from this research regarding those involved in pastoral care work

One of the joys of being a Christian minister is the privilege of journeying with people and hearing their stories. There is a real feeling of privilege in being drawn into their lives through their stories. So this method of research is unique in this – hearing and writing personal stories. There is the privilege of hearing and writing the stories and also of being challenged and encouraged by them. The challenge lies in the manner in which one faces difficulties and leads an integrated spiritual life. But it is also the strength and courage of these women as they have faced death, rejection and abandonment, and the reality of God in their every day lives, that is challenging and rewarding.

It is easy when hearing stories to become overwhelmed by the difficulties that were faced and it is sometimes difficult to listen to the stories and hear the details. The challenge lies in being able to do justice to the stories and being able to treat them with the respect they deserved. The ethical dilemmas of this type of research are real as the private world of individuals is invaded, and it is difficult to remain neutral and objective as you are drawn into the lives of people you come to care about deeply. This research method is not just about end reflections and conclusions but about the whole process, including the relationship of the interviewer with the women. There is no doubt that through this process new friendships were forged and relationships built that will be maintained.

The process of interviewing these two women was an interesting one. The simple invitation to them to tell their stories for a research paper was affirming and already gave them a sense of importance and significance. This was before they even started to tell their stories. Dudu and Miriam were given opportunities to tell their stories, to journey a little into themselves and explore their spirituality, and they were encouraged to evaluate their respective organisations. The process in and of itself is empowering, and they gained an increased self-awareness as they reflected on their lives.

Once they began telling their stories, little coaxing was needed along the way. They both shared freely and honestly. Some of the aspects of their lives they had freely shared before, but some of the facts, especially for Dudu, were things that she had not spoken about for many

years. In fact she mentioned that few people knew some of the facts of her life. Whilst there were painful moments along the way, they were in no way reticent about sharing their lives.

Miriam feels grateful for the opportunity of sharing and repeatedly gave thanks for it. She was pleased that she had been chosen. It was amazing; she felt grateful that she could be so open about her life and yet at times felt ashamed that she had been so straightforward. She felt that the sharing had helped her immensely, and that it had come at a time when she needed it in her personal life as well as with the struggles she was having in her church. She also appreciated the forum to speak of what the W.A. meant to her, and welcomed the opportunity to share it with others. It has been an important part of her life and she hopes that it will mean the same for women in the future.

Dudu called the interview times like “opening up an old suitcase that I had packed away or going to corners that I haven’t been to lately.” Dudu acknowledges that she often tucks or packs issues away rather than face them, and the interviews forced her to go back to some painful places that she had tried to forget. This forced her to relook at things in her life, things that were long overdue and she feels a sense of relief. She says that it has helped her to finally face and deal with things and now she can move on. She has also been stalling with these same issues in the book she is writing about her life, and now she feels that she is ready to write about some of these painful things.

The only requirements of the interviewer are time and a listening and sometimes sympathetic ear. No degrees in counselling, psychology or medicine were needed to give these two women a sense of dignity and an affirmation of who they are and the value of their stories. People want to be heard and the sense of respect that this gives them is therapy all on its own! All carers, and in particular pastoral carers would do well to consider such a method.

CHAPTER FIVE **CONCLUSIONS**

In the first chapter the research was introduced and the chosen form of qualitative research was examined. In addition the assumptions of being female, feminist or woman was discussed and explained. The research plan was laid out as well as the research agenda. The chapter closed with the literature review where some of the key literary works were introduced.

In chapter two the Methodist denomination was introduced and its history, spirituality, the place of women, and in particular the women's organisations were explored. The study was then narrowed down to the South African context and in particular the South African challenge in relation to women. The particular organisations to be examined in the study were introduced, namely, The Women's Manyano and Women's Auxiliary.

In chapter three the two Methodist women interviewed were introduced and their particular journeys, their spirituality and formative influences were explored.

Chapter four examined the findings of Chapter three. The life and spirituality of both women was reflected on and a comparison between the two was drawn up. A deeper look at their spirituality and the suffering in their lives was examined together with a feminist critique. The question of their spirituality and the tradition Methodist model was considered and the role that the Methodist women's organisations have played in their lives explored. The chapter concluded with an examination of what the findings of this research could say to the Methodist Women's organisations, the feminists and anyone involved in different types of pastoral care work.

In conclusion it seems important to note that as we examine the lives of Dudu and Miriam there has been much heartache, sadness and difficulty. And yet their faith remains intact and they also remain active members of their respective churches. They do bear scars, often the inevitable results of pain, but these two women remain strong and committed in their roles as wives, mothers and grandmothers. Dudu earns an income and continues to expand her knowledge and Miriam continues to care for her sick husband.

It is interesting to note that even though the Women's Manyano and the Women's Auxiliary are both women's organisations in the Methodist Church, they are both so different. In essence their aims are the same however, the way that these aims are fleshed out is entirely different. I think that these differences, for the most part, come from the different needs of the women particularly in the context of South Africa. All women have been marginalised but in addition black women had to contend with the issues of apartheid.

So these women have a place where they manage their own organisation. They have a place where they can hold leadership positions, where they receive respect and have a platform for preaching, teaching, praying and serving. The organisations work hard to serve God in their communities, and this service had the added benefit of bringing great satisfaction and fulfilment. This gives many of these women a sense of control in their own lives – a first for many of them.

In addition these women are often bound by similar circumstances of life and they care for each other. Having someone who walks besides you merely knowing about your struggle is a huge support, and these women help each other in practical ways, often financially where necessary. And of course they pray for each other with a deep conviction that God hears and answers. Often they are part of the answer in each others' lives.

As South African women become more career orientated, earn their own money and are able to have control over their own lives, they will lose the same need for a safe church organisation where they are respected and recognised. However they will never lose the need for respect, recognition and support from like-minded women who walk in similar paths. Each life has different sets of problems, but they will always need prayer and love.

Both Miriam and Dudu found respect, recognition, support and love in their respective organisations. But neither could say that their organisation was the reason they survived. Both of them attribute their survival to God and She has used the organisations, their church as a whole, their families, and their friends to help them. Dudu has found her strength in her faith

and her God is so much bigger than any organisation. She finds strength in the many areas of service she is involved in, in her family, her children and in her church as a whole. Miriam has received huge amounts of support from her W.A. but also from the community activities she is involved in. People in general have cared for her and she never pointed out the W.A. above any other. In fact it was the church as a whole that received particular mention as exceptional.

So the question is whether there will always be a place in society and in the church for women's organisations? The challenge will be to continually reassess the needs of the women in the community. This is not happening in many communities as many of these organisations are only populated with the elderly. Perhaps a reassessment will mean a disbanding of the organisations as they currently stand. Perhaps new ones will emerge that move past the stereotypical women's roles in the church and that will build something that is multi-racial and multi-cultural.

The more significant aspect of the survival of Dudu and Miriam is their spirituality. Both of these women have a deep faith, and both attribute their relationship with God and Her care for them to what has sustained them through everything. Spirituality means different things to these two women, but that is of course the beauty of spirituality – there is no right or wrong way to do it – and the different ways have worked.

In many senses we could say that these two women have a similar spirituality; “God loves me, has my life in His hands, and I trust Her. She is close to me during difficult times and never gives me more than I can bear.” They in return love God and have spent their lives committed to serving Her.

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All scripture references taken from the NIV Bible.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Summary of the first meeting with the research participants

Appendix B: Information sheet for invited participation

Appendix C: Consent form for invited participation

Appendix D: Consent form for the release of information by participants

(The ideas for the format of the Appendices comes from Collett, 2003, 112-121)

APPENDIX A

SUMMARY OF THE PRELIMINARY MEETING WITH THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Dear Dudu / Miriam

Thank you for meeting with me, for giving me your time. I enjoyed being able to share my project with you and talk about the practicalities regarding our times together.

As I discussed with you, I have summarised the discussions of our first meeting and am giving you this written copy for your records and attention. When you have read it please let me know if I need to clarify anything or if there is something that I have left out. Please also let me know if there are times when we need to rearrange our schedule.

As I have explained to you, the project is undertaken in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Masters Degree in Theology (with specialisation in Christian Spirituality). So during our times together I will make extensive notes which will be used as part of my research that I will hand in as a dissertation to be examined by my supervisor, the Head of Department and an external examiner. Academic articles may also be published afterwards, with your knowledge and permission.

I will give you a copy of our discussions after each of our sessions so that you can read it and make any comments. I will also make available to you a copy of my final report to ensure that you are in agreement with the information and also that you are comfortable with my observations and findings.

I also gave you a consent form which you will need to sign giving me permission to use your information in my project.

I would like to share with you how I arrived at this point in my research. During my journey as a Methodist minister I have been privileged to meet some amazing people and in particular some amazing women. As I have got to know some of these women I have been amazed at their stories and their encounters with God and with others that have enabled them to continue on what are often difficult life paths. I knew that somehow these stories needed to be heard and examined. In addition my encounter with the women's organisations in the Methodist Church showed how in many women's lives they played a key role. I then decided to combine these two aspects of spirituality and hence my current study.

We have met through belonging to the same Methodist Church and especially through the ways that you are involved in seeking to service God through the church. From quite early on I have drawn to ask you to participate in my study. I feel privileged that you feel comfortable sharing your story with me and thank you for this. Thank you for your willingness to participate and help me! I would like to reiterate that this is not so much about the Women's Manyano / Women's auxiliary but about you, your life, your journey and the role that these women and this organisation has played in your life.

I discussed with you the use of your real name during the research and we decided that for the sake of privacy of yourself and family members you would not use your name in this project. I will protect your identity and the only other person who will be aware of you will be my supervisor.

We discussed the most suitable times for us to meet and you felt it would be easiest if we met at your home / in my office. You felt that you would feel most free to speak in that environment. We decided that we would probably meet for about 3-4 times and would judge as we went along. We set up our next meeting time for two weeks hence as you were going away for the following week / We set up our next meeting for the following week.

I advised you that no financial reward or payment will be made for participation in the project. I also advised you that you are under no obligation to participate and that you may withdraw at any time should you wish.

I hope that the above is an accurate summary of our time together. Please let me know if there is anything you wish to change or do not understand. I look forward to our next meeting.

Anne Preston

APPENDIX B

INFORMATION SHEET FOR INVITED PARTICIPATION

Thank you for your interest in this project. Please read this information again carefully before finalising your decision to participate. Should you have any questions regarding this information sheet, please do not hesitate to contact me.

THE AIM OF THIS PROJECT

As I have explained to you, this project is undertaken in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Master's degree in Christian Spirituality. In terms of what we have discussed, ideas regarding the aims of the research are:

- to identify what has characterised spirituality and spiritual growth in the life of an individual
- to acknowledge the impact that suffering has had on that individual and their spirituality
- to investigate the role that organisations, in particular the Methodist Women's organisations (Manyano and Auxiliary) played in that time period and to compare these two organisations

WHAT WILL BE REQUIRED OF YOU AS A PARTICIPANT

As I have mentioned previously no financial reward or any other form of payment will be made for participation in this study. If you agree to participate I will give you a consent form that you will need to sign agreeing that I may use the information gathered during our discussion times.

As we have agreed we will meet once a week for approximately two hours for about four weeks. Should we need additional time we will schedule it accordingly.

I will take extensive notes during each session and after each session and before the following session I will provide you with a summary of the discussion. You may then give feedback regarding these sessions. You will be free to change anything relating to you and your family.

As previously discussed you may withdraw from the research project at any time.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The information obtained during the sessions will be discussed with my supervisor and will be used in the project. Your comments, corrections and/or feedback will be included in the final report. Only my supervisor and I will have access to the notes taken during our sessions together.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The results of this project may be published. If you so require your personal details may be changed to ensure your anonymity. You may have the choice of using a pseudonym. A copy of the report will be made for yourself.

QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE PROJECT

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding the project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact me or my supervisor:

Anne Preston 0823020596

Dr. Judy Coyle (011) 782 4616

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM FOR THE RELEASE OF INFORMATION BY PARTICIPANTS

1. I have read the transcripts of my story as the research discussions progressed.
2. I have had the opportunity to make changes to each summary, including suggestions, corrections or comments pertaining to my participation.
3. I have also read the final summary of the discussions and agree that this is an accurate and satisfactory account of the research process.
4. I understand that the information obtained during the discussions may be included in an article format for publication.

I hereby give permission for information regarding myself, to be used in the written report of the project and in any publication. I agree to my own name being used in the research report and in any publication / I would prefer to use a pseudonym in the research report and in any publication. (Delete what is inappropriate).

Name to be used:

Signature of the participant:

Date:

Name of the participant:

Signature of witness:

APPENDIX E

Aims of the Manyano

The Women's Manyano ... is the Methodist Women's Prayer and Service Union and stands for holiness of life, purity of speech and conduct, temperance, and service to the glory of God and for the extension of His Kingdom.

... The Women's Manyano and its members are subject to the authority of the Church. The Manyano operates in terms of this Constitution which contains the principles of the Manyano and is subject to approval by Conference of the Connexional Executive, and in terms of the Manyano's Rules which are subject to the approval of the Triennial Convention of the Manyano.

... The aims of the Manyano are:

... To build up and manifest spiritual life, and in particular to foster diligence in private prayer and in reading and studying the Bible;

... To be faithful in attending the means of grace, including the Sacrament of Holy Communion, the Class Meeting, the Services of the Church, Family Prayer and reading of the Bible in the home;

... To guide the life of the home in accordance with Christian principles and example, with special reference to training children for the service of God in Purity of thought, word and deed, and in respect for their elders;

... To seek the conversion of our people to belief in God and to seek to be used by God for the building up of the Church of Christ;

... To encourage the missionary spirit among our people and to raise funds for Mission Work and for other authorised local and Connexional Church and community needs.

(in the MCSA, Laws and Disciplines 1997: 181).

APPENDIX F

The affirmation of the Women's Auxiliary

They affirm that, we the Members of the Methodist Women's Auxiliary accept Christ as our personal Saviour and Lord, and, guided by the Holy Spirit, dedicate ourselves afresh to His service in the Church, in our homes and in our country. We promise to support the work of our church, and to be faithful in prayer, the study of Scripture, attendance at worship, the work of reconciliation and the building up of the Body of Christ. We will endeavour to lead Christ-like lives, and, by personal example and self-discipline, to act responsibly against all social evils. With God's help we will strive to extend His Kingdom on earth by promoting love and understanding among all people, seeking for justice, truth and righteousness, so that our country may be a land where He is honoured (*Women's Auxiliary constitution and policy 2002: 1 and 11*).

APPENDIX G

Thabo Mbeki's speech on the adoption of the new constitution

“Chairperson, Esteemed President of the democratic Republic, Honourable Members of the Constitutional Assembly, Our distinguished domestic and foreign guests, Friends:

On an occasion such as this, we should, perhaps start from the beginning.

So, let me begin.

I am an African.

I owe my being to the hills and the valleys, the mountains and the glades, the rivers, the deserts, the trees, the flowers, the seas and the ever-changing seasons that define the face of our native land. My body has frozen in our frosts and in our latter-day snows. It has thawed in the warmth of our sunshine and melted in the heat of the midday sun. The crack and the rumble of the summer thunders, lashed by startling lightning, have been a cause both of trembling and of hope. The fragrances of nature have been as pleasant to us as the sight of the wild blooms of the citizens of the veld. The dramatic shapes of the Drakensberg, the soil-coloured waters of the Lekoa, iGqili noThuekla, and the sands of the Kgalagadi, have all been panels of the set on the natural stage on which we act out the foolish deeds of the theatre of our day. At times, and in fear, I have wondered whether I should concede equal citizenship of our country to the leopard and the lion, the elephant and the springbok, the hyena, the black mamba and the pestilential mosquito. A human presence among all these, a feature on the face of our native land thus defined, I know that none dare challenge me when I say – I am an African! I owe my being to the Khoi and the San whose desolate souls haunt the great expanses of the beautiful Cape. They who fell victim to the most merciless genocide our native land has ever seen, they who were the first to lose their lives in the struggle to defend our freedom and dependence and they who, as people, perished in the result.

Today, as a country, we keep an audible silence about these ancestors of the generations that live, fearful to admit the horror of a former deed, seeking to obliterate from our memories a cruel occurrence which, in its remembering, should teach us not and never to be inhuman again. I am formed of the migrants who left Europe to find a new home on our native land. Whatever their actions, they remain still, part of me. In my veins courses the blood of the Malay slaves who came from the East. Their proud dignity informs my bearing, their culture a

part of my essence. The stripes they bore on their bodies from the lash of the slave master are a reminder embossed on my consciousness of what should not be done. I am the grandchild of the warrior men and women that Hinsta and Sekhukhune led, the patriots that Cetshwayo and Mphephu took to battle, the soldiers Moshoeshe and Ngungunyane taught never to dishonour the cause of freedom. My mind and my knowledge of myself is formed by the victories that are the jewels in our African crown, the victories we earned from Isandlwana to Khartoum, as Ethiopians and as the Ashanti of Ghana, as the Berbers of the desert.

I am the grandchild who lays fresh flowers on the Boer graves at St. Helena and the Bahamas, who sees in the mind's eye and suffers the suffering of a simple peasant folk, death, concentration camps, destroyed homesteads, a dream in ruins. I am the child of Nongquase. I am he who made it possible to trade in the world markets in diamonds, in gold, in the same food for which my stomach yearns. I come of those who were transported from India and China whose being resided in the fact, solely, that they were able to provide physical labour, who taught me that we could both be at home and be foreign, who taught me that human existence itself demanded that freedom was a necessary condition for that human existence. Being part of all these people, and in the knowledge that none dare contest that assertion, I shall claim that – I am an African!

I have seen our country torn asunder as these, all of whom are my people, engaged one another in a titanic battle, are one to redress a wrong that had been caused by one to another and the other, to defend the indefensible. I know what it signifies when race and colour are used to determine who is human and who, sub-human. I have seen the destruction of all sense of self-esteem, the consequent striving to be what one is not, simply to acquire some of the benefits which those who had imposed themselves as masters had ensured that they enjoy. I have experience of the situation in which race and colour is used to enrich some and impoverish the rest. I have seen the corruption of minds and souls as a result of the pursuit of and ignoble effort to perpetrate a veritable crime against humanity. I have seen concrete expression of the denial of the dignity of a human being emanating from the conscious, system and systematic oppressive and repressive activities of other human beings. There the victims parade with no mask to hide the brutish reality – the beggars, the prostitutes, the street children, those who

seek solace in substance abuse, those who have to steal to assuage hunger, those who have to lose their sanity because to be sane is to invite pain. Perhaps the worst among these, who are my people, are those who have learnt to kill for a wage. To these the extent of death is directly proportional to their personal welfare. And so, like pawns in the service of demented souls, they kill in furtherance of the political violence in KwaZulu-Natal. They murder the innocent in the taxi wars. They kill slowly or quickly in order to make profits from the illegal trade in narcotics. They are available for hire when husband wants to murder wife and wife, husband.

Among us prowl the products of our immoral and amoral past – killers who have no sense of the worth of human life, rapists who have absolute disdain for the women of our country, animals who would seek to benefit from the vulnerability of the children, the disabled and the old, the rapacious who brook no obstacle on their quest for self-enrichment. All this I know and know to be true because I am an African! Because of that, I am also able to state this fundamental truth that I am born of a people who are heroes and heroines. I am born of a people who would not tolerate oppression. I am of a nation that would not allow that fear of death, torture, imprisonment, exile or persecution should result in the perpetuation of injustice.

The great masses who are our mother and father will not permit that the behaviour of the few result in the description of our country and people as barbaric. Patient because history is on our side, these masses do not despair because today the weather is bad. Nor do they turn triumphalist when, tomorrow the sun shines. Whatever the circumstances they have lived through and because of that experience, they are determined to define for themselves of what it means to be African. The constitution whose adoption we celebrate constitutes an unequivocal statement that we refuse to accept that our Africanness shall be defined by our race, colour, gender or historical origins. It is a firm assertion made by ourselves that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white. It gives concrete expression to the sentiment we share as Africans, and will defend to the death, that the people shall govern. It recognises the fact that the dignity of the individual is both an objective which society must pursue, and is a goal which cannot be separated from the material wellbeing of that individual. It seeks to create the situation in which all our people shall be free from fear, including the fear of the oppression of one national group by another, the fear of the disempowerment of one social echelon by

another, the fear of the use of state power to deny anybody their fundamental human rights and the fear of tyranny. It aims to open the doors so that those who were disadvantaged can assume their place in society as equals with their fellow human beings without regard to colour, race, gender, age or geographic dispersal. It provides the opportunity to enable each one and all to state their views, promote them, strive for their implementation in the process of governance without fear that a contrary view will be met with repression. It creates a law-governed society which shall be inimical to arbitrary rule. It enables the resolution of conflicts by peaceful means rather than resort to force. It rejoices in the diversity of our people and creates the space for all of us voluntarily to define ourselves as one people. As an African, this is an achievement of which I am proud, proud without reservation and proud without any feeling of conceit.

Our sense of elevation at this moment also derives from the fact that this magnificent product is unique creation of African hands and African minds. But it also constitutes a tribute to our loss of vanity that we could, despite the temptation to treat ourselves as an exceptional fragment of humanity, draw on the accumulated experience and wisdom of all humankind, to define for ourselves what we want to be. Together with the best in the world, we too are prone to pettiness, petulance, selfishness and short-sightedness. But it seems to have happened that we looked at ourselves and said the time had come that we make a super-human effort to be other than human, to respond to the call to create for ourselves a glorious future, to remind ourselves of the Latin saying: *Gloria est consequenda* – Glory must be sought after!

Today it feels good to be an African. I am born of the peoples of the continent of Africa. The pain of the violent conflict that the people of Liberia, Somalia, the Sudan, Burundi and Algeria is a pain I also bear. The dismal shame of poverty, suffering and human degradation of my continent is a blight that we share. The blight on our happiness that derives from this and from our drift to the periphery of the ordering of human affairs leaves us in a persistent shadow of despair. This is a savage road to which nobody should be condemned. This thing that we have done today, in this small corner of a great continent that has contributed so decisively to the evolution of humanity says that Africa reaffirms that she is continuing her rise from the ashes. Whatever the setbacks of the moment, nothing can stop us now! Whatever the difficulties, Africa shall be at peace! However improbable it may sound to the sceptics, Africa

will prosper! Whoever we may be, whatever our immediate interest, however much we carry baggage from our past, however much we have been caught by the fashion of cynicism and loss of faith in the capacity of the people, let us err today and say - nothing can stop us now! Thank you.”

Copy of the Mbeki speech, distributed at the campus of UCT in June 1996.