# 5 A THEOLOGY OF EMBRACE: AN ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVE FOR PASTORAL WORK BY FAITH COMMUNITIES

While faith makes things possible, it is love that makes things easy. Hopkins

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter one I referred to two main questions, namely: 1) *What are the implications of acquired mobility impairment for personal identity and collective identity? 2) How can we in Christian faith communities, through pastoral work, facilitate a sense of belonging to strengthen personal identity and collective identity for people who are mobility disadvantaged?* (1.2). The first question was addressed in chapters two to four.

It was pointed out that lack of social interaction can make it difficult for people who are mobility impaired to form both personal and collective identity. It can, therefore, result in the experience of a lack of a sense of belonging (1.2, 3.4, 3.5, 4.4.3). This is important in this study because in this chapter the focus is on the second question. To answer this question the metaphor “belonging” is a central point, as I will argue that it can facilitate collective identity and strengthen personal identity. I point out that social, religious and political interaction is vital to enable a sense of belonging for people who are different, such as people who are mobility disadvantaged. I argue that a theology of embrace must facilitate a sense of belonging for people who are mobility disadvantaged in the religious, social and political spheres of life.

In chapter one it was pointed out that narrative identity theory and theology of pastoral work can connect with each other to contribute insight in personal identity (1.2). Chapter two was clear that narrative identity

allows for the possibility to: 1) initiate change (see 2.3.3); 2) maintain a complementary stability of tradition (2.3.2, 2.3.3); 3) enable moral judgement of traditions (2.3.3, 2.3.4); 4) assess if goals promised have been kept or not (2.3.5.2); 5) enact actions of change through criticism and responsibility for ethical requirements (2.3.5.2).

This chapter explores the question of how we in Christian faith communities, through pastoral work, can facilitate a sense of belonging to strengthen personal identity and collective identity for people who are mobility disadvantaged. To answer this question I will discuss two dominant themes, namely: 1) the Christian faith community in relation to pastoral work praxis (see 5.2), and 2) a theory of pastoral work praxis for people who are mobility impaired (5.2).

Consideration is given to what the Christian faith community is in relation to the metaphors of “embrace”, “covenant” and “narrative” in section 5.2. The role of Christian spirituality and caring are discussed in sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2 respectively. The importance of this is that from a pastoral work perspective Christian spirituality is the link between understanding a relationship with God and the everyday lives of people (5.2.1). The importance of the major pastoral work practices by faith communities and the integration of these practices with the other actions of preaching, teaching, service, worship and celebrations are considered (see 5.2.3).

Section 5.3 explores a theory of pastoral work praxis for people who are mobility impaired that, considers the faith community’s responsibility in a “communion of struggle” and the importance of a structure of feedback. Section 5.3 ends with a discussion of specific needs of people who are mobility disadvantaged in relation to pastoral work praxis, narrative identity and religious identity. The chapter ends with a summary of the study in section 5.4 and a conclusion (5.5).

## 5.2 THE CHRISTIAN FAITH COMMUNITY IN RELATION TO PASTORAL WORK PRAXIS

In chapter one it was proposed that the object of the study of practical theology is the actions of faith communities and people's religious actions (1.5.1). It was also pointed out that a theology of embrace is important to help meet the contextual challenges encountered in South Africa (1.5.2). How the Christian faith community is understood in relation to pastoral work praxis is therefore relevant to the development of the theology of embrace and to pastoral work praxis.

Hence, when referring to the church or Christian faith community, in relation to pastoral work praxis, I primarily take the view of the church as a Christian-oriented institution with an emphasis on the internal and external activities of its members. Gerkin (1997:121) considers faith communities in relation to pastoral care, which is one of the kinds or types of care that this study considers for pastoral work praxis. The point about the types of pastoral work will be discussed later in this chapter.

The point to be made here is that Gerkin (1997:121-122) considers the church as a community that expresses loyalty to the Christian tradition. The above author considers the congregational members as a community of language, memory, inquiry, mutual care and of mission. Accordingly, the Bible is central to Christian communication and is the basis for meanings adhered to by Christian faith communities. The interpretation of biblical themes, however, is held in relation to the stories of the daily lived experiences of people. The memory of the event of Christ dying on the cross, the resurrection and ascension into heaven, is the foundation on which Christianity is built (Gerkin 1997:123-124). This means that in a sense faith communities experience a continuity between their present-day lives and the lives of Christians in the past Bible and faith tradition.

As a community of enquiry and mutual care Christians practise caring for one another in the community of faith. Lastly, as a community of mission the faith community is called as a community in faithfulness to God, to have an influence on the world (Gerkin 1997:127-128). Gerkin centres the pastor as playing the dominant role in all the perspectives of the Christian faith community. I have not focussed on the role of the pastor because my interest is the whole Christian faith community in relation to pastoral work that includes the laity in dominant roles of leadership. The church conceptualised in the way Gerkin (1997:121-129) describes it is noteworthy. Christian faith communities communicate the message of salvation because it consists of people who remember Christ's self-giving on the cross and, thus, in faithfulness to God they care for one another internally in the faith community and for the community external to the faith community.

Van der Ven (1996:42) discusses the church in relation to it being an association and a community of believers. In sociological terms the church as an association is considered as consisting of an autonomous group which has formalised socially in cooperation with one another, with common specific goals and the freedom to join out of one's own choice (Van der Ven 1996:33-36). The emphasis is on autonomy and free-will in belonging. Thus, Van der Ven (1996:38) compares the church to the functional structures and aims of an association. The idea of the church as an association is, however, not separate from the church as a community of believers.

For Van der Ven (1996:43) the church as a community of believers is a "social formation rooted in the belief in God". It is this belief that gives the Christian church its religious identity. The idea therefore of the church as a community of believers makes us more aware of the infrequent, marginal and dormant members as belonging to the church. Thus, for Van der Ven (1996:44), the church as a community of believers suggests an

interpersonal involvement in the internal affairs of the church.

Van der Ven (1996:45), however, points out that the church as a community of believers is at risk of shutting the world out. But if the church is also seen as an association it allows for the giving of internal attention to the members, as well as the goal to attend to the people outside the church. Both Gerkin (1997) and Van der Ven (1996), therefore, understand the church or Christian faith community as having an action of caring for the members who belong in the church and for the community external to the faith community.

Faith communities, therefore, can be considered to exist within socio-cultural communities to which they have a responsibility that is spiritual and social. Secondly, faith communities serve people who attend church functions for various reasons without becoming regular members of the faith community. Thirdly, the faith community serves its own regular and participating members within the body. In all three functions faith communities are not separate from the communal Christian living in the church and the contextual lives of the members and the community around them.

It means that faith communities identify with the Triune God and embody the image of God. This means that the faith community praxis of caring is specifically to its members and the public in relation to the context of ordinary daily lived situations (Gerkin 1997:123-129; Van der Ven 1996:38-45). It therefore requires a theology of caring that is inclusive of all life situations of human living, in short a pastoral work theology of embrace.

In chapter one in subsection 1.5.3 I referred to the notion of the metaphor “embrace’ suggested by Volf (1996:101-112, 127). The metaphor “embrace” expresses that faith communities take on the same compassion and love that God showed to all humankind when he gave his son Jesus to

die for the sins of all the world. It was and still remains an act of ultimate self-giving in that God made space-in-himself so as to make a way for the sins of all humankind to be forgiven. Also, “covenant” as a metaphor takes on the meaning of a deep commitment of “self” to “another”.

Furthermore, Gerkin (1991:58-60) points out that the metaphor of “narrative” is important, because pastoral practices should be about transformation of life through helping people reinterpret their stories of past and present through imagination for the future. For Gerkin (1991:58) it means that Christian faith communities should be grounded in reciprocal interaction with Bible images, themes and the Christian tradition of the story of God as creator of humanity; in other words, how God relates to his people he created and to the community of the people who serve God.

It must be noted that some people who are mobility disadvantaged are involved internally with faith communities as members, while some do not become involved; they instead remain external to faith communities. The metaphors “embrace” and “covenant” mentioned above, however, suggest that God’s involvement of giving himself was for all humanity. Faith communities following God’s example should therefore become involved with all the people who are mobility disadvantaged, whether internal or external to the church.

God created humankind with the intention to enjoy fellowship with them and they with him, as well as with one another (Heitink 1984:110-111). God cares for humans and because of the human relationship with God they in turn should care for their fellow humans. To explore the relationship between public human actions, the Christian living of faith communities and God, a turn is made to the notion of Christian spirituality.

### 5.2.1 The role of Christian spirituality

What is meant by spirituality? This section will give greater insight into the influence of spirituality on pastoral work and vice versa. I am not concerned with giving a detailed account of the history of spirituality, but refer to De Jongh van Arkel (1989), Hudson (1999), Morgan (1989), Sheldrake (1998) and Schneiders (1995) concepts of Christian spirituality in the contemporary era. Spirituality has a long history of being attached to theology, during various phases of history became detached and is now again in this contemporary era once again becoming attached to theology. With the introduction of postmodern thinking spirituality shifted to a more secular meaning, which created problems for theology.

Furthermore, recent times have ushered in pluralism and secularisation, resulting in the dissociation of spirituality from well-defined belief systems. Spirituality has taken on a variety of meanings and Sheldrake (1998:197) writes, “Spirituality has become a buzzword.” Sheldrake (1998:198) points out that there is great confusion about the exact definition of spirituality and the implications for the relationship between human nature and God. Contemporary Western versions of spirituality offer self-absorbed practices to satisfy inner hunger and personal self-growth.

However, the role of spirituality has taken a new turn in theology and at present there is an upsurge in spirituality and searching. Hudson (1999:25) points out that careful discernment is required because among Christian views of spirituality many secular versions of spirituality are mushrooming. The church has also been filled with various spiritualities concerning inner church matters, with little compassion reflected in oppressive situations and for those who suffer.

This means that spirituality is often devoid of practices that facilitate communion between people and communion with God. Generally it has been confined to the arena of the individual and does not offer much to increase

public values of society. Sheldrake (1998:199) states:

> It seems to lack a capacity to address the major building blocks of human existence, beyond personal experience, and thus to reshape worlds. In a sense this kind of spirituality shares in the most unconstructive aspects of postmodern fragmentation.

Hence, the consideration is whether Christian spirituality is capable of finding a voice within the movement of spiritual renewal in society. Sheldrake (1998:199) replies that there is no doubt that the Christian belief has every potential to offer the language of the human spirit, which is so often neglected in contemporary thinking about spirituality. Because the Christian community cannot assume that it has dominance in the face of pluralism in society, it needs to find a new language to address the idea of Christian spirituality. It has to address an understanding of God within the experiential context of human beings.

Accordingly, Oliver Morgan (1989:99), who firmly puts spirituality within a Christian perspective, refers to pastoral identity and practice as needing to be rooted in spirituality. Morgan (1989:99) writes: "'Spirituality', as I use it here, is a way of living in explicit relation to God and neighbor". Consequently, Morgan (1989:101) turns to the use of metaphors as the means for articulating deep expressions of experiences of life and their meanings in relation to "self", "others" and God. Metaphors, therefore, make it possible to re-interpret our actions in the world and those of "others" . It thus links "self" and "other" to who we are, what we do and why and how we do it. In chapter two the metaphor "narrative" was referred to as the mediation between psychological and cosmological time (2.2). The metaphor "narrative" therefore allows for self-discovery and reveals human action (Venema 2000:92). Spirituality linked to the notion of narrative could therefore give expression to narratives of life, narratives of the Bible and narratives of faith communities' actions of embrace in

relation to a pastoral work praxis for people who are mobility disadvantaged. In this sense spirituality can be linked to human experience of life and God and with Christian faith communities' pastoral work practices. Consequently, spirituality and theology are closely related.

Although separate, spirituality and theology are closely related and continually have an effect upon each another. Sheldrake (1998:200-201) suggests theology needs to respond critically to any spirituality preoccupied with self-improvement that retreats from the collective role to one that is individualistic. Sheldrake (1998:202) writes:

> The challenge to Christian spirituality is to show how its vision of God may contribute powerfully to the desire to find communion with others, express compassion for others and transform the world.

The sense of the world we hold is gained by the framework of our beliefs. These beliefs affect people's experiences and how they interpret life (Sheldrake 1998:4-5). Sheldrake (1998:61) suggests that:

> Spirituality in Christian terms, concerns not some other life but simply human life at depth. Yet, our understanding of what this means arises from what Christian regulation and tradition suggest about God, human nature and the relationship between the two.

For Christian spirituality, knowing God and knowing our soul are two sides of the same coin (Sheldrake 1998:11). Sheldrake suggests that balance be introduced to spirituality that considers the secular context as essential to the Christian faith because human identities are formed by being in relationship with others (Sheldrake 1998:12-13).

For De Jongh van Arkel (1989:18-19), in defining spirituality it is difficult to find a central theme that can be identified as describing the meaning of

spirituality. He points out that spirituality has been considered as an exercise of inner spiritual life, something mystical or exercising a personal relationship with God. Spirituality, however, may be understood as normative for the process of life, that is the personal and community life. Consequently, De Jongh van Arkel (1989:19) points out that from a pastoral work perspective interest in spirituality is about understanding the link between an inner relationship with God and the everyday ordinary lives of people. In this sense spirituality as an orientation of life or "story about life" is responsible for personal identity.

In addition it can mean, in relation to Ricoeur's (1992:117-118) notion of narrative identity and continuity of life or "self", that spirituality as a normative process of life may express the continuity of life and in this sense be associated with the shaping of identity. Hence, the stories lived out personally and in relation to community tell of actions and characters attached to the actions that have reciprocal reflection and consequences for people. Despite changes that occur in life the person remains the "same in personhood". Also, personhood is more than a body. It has physical, psychological and spiritual dimensions of being in interaction with life that shapes identity. In this study, from a Christian perspective, spirituality is linked or related to daily ordinary life and daily living as a Christian in relationship with God. Therefore, different daily interactions with ordinary daily life and with God are part of shaping identity.

It is as Sheldrake (1998:14), De Jongh van Arkel (1989:20-21) and Morgan (1989:100) suggest that, from a Christian point of view, relatedness is not external to divine reality and it offers significant connections between human identity and the doctrine of the Trinity. The relationship between God and people is lived out within a community of believers committed to Christ and nurtured by the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, in this study Christian spirituality is approached from a

Trinitarian perspective and within a framework that is a theological anthropology taken from a perspective that is theocratic, Christological and pneumatological. By this I mean, for this study, that a Trinitarian God means a perspective that is theocratic because God the Father has chosen to redeem humankind and reconcile them to himself; Christological because God the Son in obedience "suffered the cross" to redeem the world from sin and is the centre of reconciliation to God; pneumatological because the Holy Spirit enables the redeemed to engage in gifts and obedience by his power. It is the Holy Spirit who holds and helps Christians responsible for practising God's kingdom coming to people. According to De Jongh van Arkel (1989:20-21) from a pastoral work perspective the Triune God is translated into a pastoral trialogue when caring for another person who has specific needs.

The point that I want to make at this stage is that spirituality and theology can meet, but their horizons must fuse in a way that allows for the contextual experiences of people to meet with communicative caring actions in a way that provides for shaping collective identity, thus strengthening personal identity.

I argue that people need help to rediscover their spirituality and the meaning it gives to their lives, which is one of the tasks of pastoral work. Hudson (1999:26) writes:

> Indeed, our times cry out for a gospel-shaped spirituality that is both intensely personal and deeply aware of our suffering neighbour. Significantly, this desperate need for a more balanced spirituality coincides with the overall goal of the authentic Christ-following life.

### 5.2.2 Christian caring

Can faith communities meet the challenges of the contextual experiences of people through their caring actions? Webb-Mitchell (1996:96) points out that caring is an issue that has been debated by psychologists, educators, philosophers and theologians. For example, some psychologists have described care as the activity that involves relationships when responding to needs of others with the aim of sustaining the web of connections of those cared for. Educators maintain that care is when a person moves from his/her own frame of reference into that of another that gives attention to that person. Some philosophers are also of the opinion that care is given within a relationship where the caregiver intends to meet the needs of others (Patton 1993:18-19).

However, because the study is about Christian community caring I will give attention only to care that is extended by the church, Christians in general, ordained pastor, pastoral counsellors and pastoral therapists. In this regard Webb-Mitchell (1996:97-110) uses words and phrases to describe care, such as it involves a "self" and "another", interaction, is healing, a bridge between people and makes people aware of prejudices in life.

Patton (1993:18) addresses the idea that care always involves responsibility: "Furthermore, a care ethic also presupposes 'an agent who has a realistic sense of her own competencies and a sense of that which she can reasonably take responsibility for so that she can separate from situations in which caring is not effective'". He proposes that developing sensitivity to relationships, identified by feminists, is a quality essential for becoming a good pastor for either gender. Patton (1993:19) writes: "To care is central to being human, from the perspective of theology, philosophy, or ethics". He describes the meaning of care as the concern for needs of the "other" that is based on the objective perception of the other's needs.

Hence, for this study I draw on the description from Patton (1993) and

Webb-Mitchell (1996). This means that for this study care is understood as concern for the needs of the "other", which involves the interaction and relationship of "self" with the "other". This study, however, specifically refers to care related to the pastoral work praxis of Christian faith communities.

### 5.2.3 The major types of pastoral work praxis in faith communities

Experiences of disempowerment and being disadvantaged influence the lives of people. It changes their life-styles, it changes their identity, it changes their values, it changes their beliefs, and it changes their meaning of life. How people who are marginal and disempowered grapple with identity and meaning has a direct impact on how they understand God and the people in their communities. Therefore, pastoral work is more than personal growth. It is about care from a practical theological perspective to troubled, hurting, oppressed and disadvantaged people, that is concerned with forgiveness, renewal, healing and discovering the presence of grace in people's lives.

When considering a pastoral work praxis for people who are mobility impaired an understanding needs to be grasped of the different types of care that are part of pastoral work. It will be appropriate to clarify what has been the recent accepted perspective of pastoral work in South Africa. It has relevance for this study in that it will give understanding into the need to give attention to the importance of the integration and interdependence of the caring actions of faith communities that is needed for a pastoral work praxis to be inclusive of all people.

Because a central aim of the thesis is concerned specifically with pastoral work praxis for people who are mobility impaired I will give considerable attention to the different types of pastoral work praxis. An explanation

will also be given of the interdependent interaction that needs to occur between the types of care and interaction between pastoral work praxis and the other internal praxis of faith communities (see 5.2.4).

Four forms of pastoral work are usually accepted and are referred to as classical caring praxis, namely mutual care, pastoral care, pastoral counselling and pastoral therapy. Each form of caring praxis by faith communities has subtle differences.

Because De Jongh van Arkel (2000:160-161) refers to the four forms or types of pastoral work in relation to the South African religious scene I will consider his point of view about pastoral work praxis. The above-mentioned author refers to the types of pastoral work as levels of care. He seems to make the point that each level of care gives different types of care and that each requires different qualifications and different skills and knowledge.

I, however, prefer to use the term "types" of pastoral work instead of levels of pastoral work because levels may be understood as a hierarchical structure of importance. However, De Jongh van Arkel (2000:161) does indicate avoidance of a hierarchy when he writes:

> Not every believer can (or should) work at the levels of pastoral counselling and pastoral therapy. However, no work can be done at these levels unless it is based on the efforts made at the pastoral level and in particular the mutual care level.

It is probably to overcome the problems that have dogged pastoral theology over the years that the above author refers to levels. The tension between pastoral therapy, or pastoral psychotherapy in America, and the importance and priority given to it over pastoral care and mutual care have suggested elitism. Care being provided when the providers of care are not equipped

to do so has also created problems. These tensions have dogged the theology of caring, will probably continue to do so and make it difficult to obliterate the notion of a hierarchy of power within pastoral work praxis.

The point I want to make, however, is that although I acknowledge the idea that each type demands different skills and knowledge to operate in caring, this does not have any hierarchical relevance. The second point is that each form of care needs to operate in an interdependent and integrated manner to bring holistic care to people with specific needs. The third point to be made is that the four types of pastoral work praxis need to be integrated with the other practices of the faith community, such as preaching, instruction, service and celebration and worship.

In chapter one in section 1.5 I mentioned that overlapping occurred of the different practices of faith communities and that there was a reciprocal interaction between them. In this chapter I argue that integration between these practices needs to be even more closely knit in interdependent interaction. Further, the concern is not about arguments of the history of pastoral care and pastoral counselling, rather about what each type of caring contributes to the practices of faith communities.

#### *5.2.3.1 Mutual care*

Mutual care is the basis for every other form of pastoral work, according to De Jongh van Arkel (2000:160). It occurs when believers commit one to another and show expressions and actions of care toward one another.
De Jongh van Arkel points out that some mutual care is planned, but usually it is a caring that is spontaneous. He proposes that mutual care should consist of a network of friends, small prayer groups, telephone conversations and general supportive actions. Galations 6 and Romans 15 seem to be the theological justification for supportive or sustaining action.

I add to this understanding of mutual care that it includes the notion of empowerment and compassionate resistance. De Jongh van Arkel does refer to the idea that sustaining must also include empowering and provision of compassionate resistance (De Jongh van Arkel 2000:161). De Jongh van Arkel does not make it clear if mutual care is also an external action of caring to those outside the faith community.

Is mutual care, therefore, only an inward action of the church? In this regard I agree that mutual care is about the Christian faith community members expressing support in different ways for one another, but I also propose that more attention must be given to the point that mutual care is support that must be provided to the community surrounding the Christian faith community.

The teachings of Jesus are filled with the constant reminder that compassion and living for God are never separate and are expressed to all humankind. In the beatitude found in Matthew 5:7 the notion of mercy as a broad ongoing action of disciples of Christ is given. I propose that mercy and compassion are relevant elements that are contained in the symbol of the "basileia" that expresses the coming of the kingdom of God in love to all humanity. Volf (1996:21) suggests that, "*what kind of selves we need to be* in order to live in harmony with others" needs to be explored and in her exploration she introduces the theme of embrace and self-giving in the compassion of God's love evident in Christ's crucifixion on the cross.

This I propose is a way that expresses the outward practices of mutual caring. It means that the indwelling presence of Christ's compassion and love is communicated through Christian faith communities' members in a way that is committed. Thus, although mutual care is often unplanned and spontaneous it also needs to be committed to purposeful planned praxis of care. It is how the Christian faith community is "salt" and "light" to the world that glorifies God in word and actions of caring.

### *5.2.3.2 Pastoral care*

The second type of pastoral work considered is pastoral care. According to De Jongh van Arkel (2000:162) pastoral care functions by officially supporting and strengthening people of the congregation to growth and to build up the church by mainly dialogical interaction. It appears that it is mainly a type of care that is given by the ordained clergy, although De Jongh van Arkel does point out that in contemporary society there is a movement to expand pastoral work to include laity who have been approved by the church to take some responsibility for pastoral care.

Hence, pastoral care requires greater expertise, specific training and qualifications, as well as selectivity, than mutual care. Pastoral care is dialogical in action and attends to the contextual living problems of people. It assists in seeking solutions to coping with everyday living, and by dialogical interaction helps people in the congregation to grow spiritually in marriage, family life and individually.

> Its primary focus is on caring for all God's people through the ups and downs of everyday life, and creating caring environments in which all people can grow and develop to their fullest potential. (De Jongh van Arkel 2000:162).

This description of the function of pastoral care emphasises the role of the ordained clergy as sole guardian of pastoral care or as a tight selectivity of elders or special leaders. To my mind, any believer who is committed to living the Christian message, undergoes specific training, obtains the required qualification and is committed to pastoral care-giving, is entitled to practise the role of pastoral care-giver. The point I am making is that eldership and leadership may not necessarily prepare one for a committed role of pastoral care-giver. Furthermore, it appears to be a practice targeted at the Christian faith community with the aim to motivate growth.

My personal view is that pastoral care should extend to the community around it.

Patton (1993:27) refers to a communal-contextual paradigm of pastoral care that emphasises that the Christian community and its members are messengers of care. He defines pastoral care as an action of the community that is possibly nurtured by the ordained pastor as leader, but ultimately is the responsibility of the faith community. Patton, however, does not make it clear whether he is referring to care within the Christian community only, or whether it is exclusive or inclusive of the community around it.

The point I would like to make is that people who are disadvantaged, disempowered and marginalised are frequently unable physically to get to church. Frequently, over time they become non-members of a specific church and it means that no care is given that encourages healing, gives growth and dialogical interaction about the general problems of everyday living. An example is when an elderly frail person may be secluded in a room, flat or nursing home and because of frailty never get to church. The person may or may not have been a member of a church previously, but is in need of pastoral care and mutual care by the Christian community. It needs to be made clear that pastoral care is a function carried out by the members of faith communities, but also refers to the practices of this type of care as being internal and external to a faith community.

#### *5.2.3.3 Pastoral counselling*

The next type of pastoral work referred to is pastoral counselling. It is generally considered a structured form of care and a less spontaneous form of care than the two previous types. A contract or agreement on a fixed time, place of meeting and terms of agreement is usually part of the functions of pastoral counselling (De Jongh van Arkel 2000:162-163).

> It functions on the entry level where other helping professions function, and uses some healing methods to help people handle their problems and problem situations more constructively.
> (De Jongh van Arkel 2000:162).

Pastoral counselling may consist of congregational pastoral counselling or specialised pastoral counselling.

This is usually a form of counselling that is short-term and solution-focussed. Forms of narrative counselling are prominent in this form of pastoral work (De Jongh van Arkel 2000:163). Once again strong arguments are put forward to make this form of pastoral counselling accessible to the laity who undergo a certain amount of formal theological training as pastoral counsellors. It has become family-and-group-oriented and not only individualistic in approach.

#### *5.2.3.4 Pastoral therapy*

The fourth form of pastoral work is pastoral therapy, which is considered to be long-term and uses constructed therapeutic methods to heal deep problems that may have become chronic. Problems are dealt with in greater depth and specialised therapeutic methods and skills are used.

Accordingly, training of pastoral therapists include theological methods, the human sciences and in-depth methods and skills in therapy with stipulated accepted hours of supervised clinical training. Efforts are at present being made in South Africa to establish accountability to the congregation, although the pastoral therapist may be in private practice (De Jongh van Arkel 2000:164). Furthermore, discussions are taking place to establish understanding between ordained pastoral therapists and the work of Christian counsellors/therapists from a faith community perspective with accountability to another professional organisation

(Patton 1993:216).

An important point is, however, made by Gerkin (1997:89), who warns that pastoral counselling and therapy are fast becoming available only to those who can afford it and that pastoral counsellors need to return to their earlier sense of mission to make this form of care available to all people. Gerkin (1997:90) writes:

> We must find new ways to make care available to all people in need and not simply to those who are affluent and sufficiently psychologically sophisticated to show up at the pastoral counselor's office.

In terms of the point Gerkin (1997) makes the question that rises in my mind is: In what way can these "potholes" caused by exclusive practices of specialised caring be avoided? I am inclined to heed Gerkin's warning because of the way South Africa is moving in the direction of pastoral counselling and pastoral therapy. It provides for implementing pastoral therapy separate from the church congregation and there is a realistic danger that pastoral therapy practices may take on elitist status and that the element of "mission" may be lost.

Christian faith communities, therefore, need to be prepared to be critical and open to self-critique, as proposed by feminist theologians. Attention needs to be given to closing loop-holes that may turn pastoral therapy away from its intended purpose of bringing healing and the kingdom of God to people. The question is: Can this be done? In what way can the so-called specialised forms of pastoral work be incorporated into caring through Christian faith communities instead of a separate privatised enterprise? This question will be addressed in the next section on integrating the different actions of faith communities with pastoral work actions.

### 5.2.4 An integrated pastoral work praxis

At this point it must be pointed out that my prime concern is not with addressing one particular type of pastoral work praxis, neither is it about suggesting that the types of pastoral work praxis referred to above are merely swallowed up into the general congregational caring. The prime concern is to discuss a pastoral work praxis that integrates with the other practices of a faith community and results in including people who are mobility disadvantaged in all the practices of the faith community. The aim is to facilitate a sense of belonging to the body of Christ.

In chapter one (1.1) and (5.2.3) I referred to pastoral work considered as the major practice of care in the faith community that consists of four types of care, mutual care, pastoral care, pastoral counselling and pastoral therapy. I reiterate that the interest of this study is not to take one type of pastoral work as a focus, but to centre rather on how they should work together with one another in actions of caring; also how these types of pastoral work practices should work together with the other practices of the faith community to create a greater awareness of specific care needs.

By this I mean that there needs to be interwoven interaction between the different types of pastoral work actions with one another, as well as with the other actions of faith communities. In chapter one the connection between the different actions of practical theology, such as preaching, teaching, service and celebrations of worship and caring, was mentioned. It was also mentioned that the demarcation between the different actions was for theoretical contemplation of making a distinction between the different actions. In practise these faith community actions often overlap (1.5). The point I want to make here is that this overlapping between the actions of faith communities can be very blurred and sometimes left to chance, assuming that it will happen in the praxis of the members of a faith community.

I, therefore, am suggesting a more organised and active integration of pastoral work with the other actions of faith communities with the intention to achieve holistic caring for people who are living with mobility impairments. It means emphasing the pastoral dimensions of the praxis of preaching, teaching, service, celebration of worship and how each should interact with the other and with the specific types of pastoral work. Jacobs (1996:181) points out the interconnectedness of the different Christian faith community practices when she writes:

> ...paraklesis function is concerned with communicating caring action as its major purpose, whereas preaching would probably communicate caring actions with a purpose of informing...The function of didache may become a little more involved in instruction with various courses and training facilities in providing skills of various kinds of care. Its major action in the perspective of care given by the body of Christ would be to inform, bring an awareness, and to equip with caring skills.

To give an example of the overlapping of practices that should take place in the practical life of faith communities and life of the individual who is mobility disadvantaged I attempt to give an example of a negative and a positive overlapping of the different types of pastoral work with the other practices of the faith community. The negative example shows the imbalance of overlap of pastoral work influence in the other practices of the faith community. If for example there is limited or no working together between the different types of pastoral work and the other practices, such as preaching, teaching, service and worship celebration, pastoral work praxis will be limited in the faith community. It could be possible that pastoral care, pastoral counselling and pastoral therapy will be a separate function in the faith community or only from the perspective of the pastor as dominant care-giver.

**Figure 5.1 An example of a negative overlapping in practical life**

| | Preaching | Teaching | Service | Worship and celebration |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mutual care | x | | X | |
| Pastoral care | | | | |
| Pastoral counselling | | | | |
| Pastoral therapy | | | | |

In figure 5.1 it can be seen that mutual care is the only point of integration with the other practices of the faith community. The small x is to indicate that mutual care may have limited mention in topics of preaching and X is meant to indicate that mutual care actions and actions of service may work together in giving Christian care.

The positive example shows that a more holistic care by faith communities. A small x indicates some overlap while a big X reveals considerable overlap.

**Figure 5.2 An example of a positive and preferable overlapping**

| | Preaching | Teaching | Service | Worship and celebration |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mutual care | X | X | X | X |
| Pastoral care | X | X | x | X |
| Pastoral counselling | x | X | | |
| Pastoral therapy | x | X | | |

The various types of pastoral work need to find expression in the praxis of preaching, teaching, service, worship and celebration and need to be operative in the fellowship and worship structures of the faith community. Narratives of people who are disadvantaged in mobility should be heard in collective fellowship gatherings. In other words, an integration of the

concerns of pastoral work practices must be reflected in the other practices to broaden understanding and raise awareness of kinds of pastoral work practices. It means involvement of the whole faith community's different activities.

An example of the concerns of pastoral dimension in preaching for instance is highlighted by Nichols (1987:58), who points out that although preaching has the major role of prophetic proclaiming of the Word of God, it also has a priestly role that is about nurturing and caring. Thus, an attempt is made to illustrate how the connected interdependence among the various practices operational in faith communities can be accomplished.

**Figure 5.3 An example of the interwoven actions of faith communities with pastoral work**

**A FAITH COMMUNITY IN RELATION TO THE PRACTICE OF PASTORAL WORK: mutual care, pastoral care, pastoral counselling, pastoral therapy**

| **Preaching** | **Liturgy** | | **Service** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Instruction** | | | |
| Sermons that make aware of specific needs. Includes disabled speaker, personal testimonies. Drama and topics about specific needs. | Consideration of architectural structures to enable participation in the sacramental rites and facilitate the inclusion in worship service | Actions of mercy helping where needed. | Giving information Providing courses for the types of care skills of the types of pastoral work practices. |

Figure 5.3 is an attempt to describe an idea of going about pastoral work to people living with disadvantages in mobility and is not meant to be a prescription of a model of pastoral work. The large elongated circle

illustrates a Christian faith community specifically in relation to pastoral work practices while the four inner circles illustrate the other different practices of the faith community.

The overlapping of the inner circles demonstrates the idea of the different actions being interdependent on one another to achieve a holistic pastoral work praxis. The above example attempts to give clarity in relation to interacting with the different types of pastoral work, with the goal to achieve the highest care to people with specific needs. The preaching circle, for example, suggests that it has the task to inform, make aware and create a platform for "stories" of people who are physically disadvantaged to be heard. It should include opportunities for telling about their experiences, by people who are mobility disadvantaged being incorporated into the sermon or structures of worship. The overlapping of the inner circles also suggest that what is done in the practices of preaching should have influence and run as a thread through practices of the liturgy and teaching. The circle indicating instruction or teaching action of the church has an important role to play in the task of providing ongoing updating of the different types of pastoral work skills.

Concerning the liturgy of the faith community there is the task of including all of the congregation to participate as one in the celebration of the sacraments. Environmental barriers need to be removed and changes made to give people who are disadvantaged in mobility access to the collective structures of the ordinary practice of sacrament rites. It will mean environmental changes to facilitate access and changes in structuring how the rites of the sacraments proceed.

An example of facilitating people who are physically restricted can be detected in my own participation in the research project. I attended a number of different churches to observe liturgical formation and accessibility. One of the churches was a Methodist church. On one of my

visits, it was a Holy Communion service.

I had in mind that Eiesland (1994a:112) as a disabled person felt excluded from the usual practice of the church because she was offered the sacraments apart from the congregation. Eiesland (1994a:113) writes:

> For many people with disabilities, the Eucharist is a ritual of exclusion and degradation. Access to this celebration of the body is restricted because of architectural barriers, ritual practices, demeaning body aesthetics, unreflective speech, and bodily reactions.

With this in my thoughts, I sat in my power-driven-wheelchair at the back of the church in the aisle, which was wide enough to sit comfortably with enough room for people to pass by without difficulty. Hymns and choruses were sung from words displayed on an electronic board. Although the language used was English, there were times when songs were sung in Afrikaans and African languages.

When it came to administration of the Eucharist I waited in trepidation to see if I would be treated differently to the other members. I was pleasantly surprised. Those serving the Eucharist stood on the steps in front of the pulpit. Someone showed me to go forward and the rest of those attending the service followed. Those serving the emblems moved to the flat surface below the steps and served me the emblems. The aisles were wide enough for me to turn and ride past the people queuing behind me, to return to my place.

I noted that those serving the emblems did not go back up the steps. They remained in the same place to serve the other people. How did this make me feel? It made me feel great with a sense of relief and belonging. This church's forming of the liturgy was very much in touch with its actions of

worship and celebration and also with its pastoral work praxis.

What was also notable in the same Methodist church was that they introduced the more specialised pastoral work practices, namely pastoral counselling and pastoral therapy, to be part of the faith community and made these types of care available to all members and the surrounding community. The research participant Reg, for instance, because of his contact with this church, became involved with its crisis centre as a voluntary counsellor. The crisis centre had been started by this faith community because of the need for specialised care, such as counselling therapy, to the surrounding communities. Drug addiction, life-coping counselling and many other complex specific needs were addressed by the crisis centre. Qualified counsellors and therapists helped to train and supervise other care-givers.

The result of the snowballing effect of the overlapping that takes place in the relationship of interdependence between pastoral work and the other different practices of that faith community was that empowerment was given to the people. It could be seen in the ordinary Sunday service, when the topic of preaching had to do with one of life's crisis situations, such as drug addiction. Opportunity was also given for personal testimonies to be given by drug addicts or their families on the experience of having to live with an addicted son or daughter. It seemed that pastoral work praxis was not separate or just connected to preaching, teaching, service and worship, but the different actions were obviously integrated with one another. Their caring was committed in every way possible.

It is worthwhile to note that the overlapping of practical theology is expressed theoretically, but it can be lacking in the practices of faith communities. It needs to be practised in all or at least most faith communities. Nonetheless, the idea given in figure 5.2 can allow for the strategy of integrating caring dimensions into faith community's activities,

by means of organisation and management of the structures of the collective activities of faith communities. It means that organised ongoing interaction and recursive motion of feedback and flow of information about specific needs must be entered into between the different types of actions participated in by the various members in a faith community. The idea of feedback will be given in more detail in subsection 5.3.2.2. The theory of a pastoral work praxis is considered in the next section.

## 5.3 A THEORY OF PASTORAL WORK PRAXIS FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE MOBILITY IMPAIRED

It is noteworthy that the empirical study in chapter four specifically addressed people who are quadriplegic and their stories. The theory of a pastoral work praxis discussed here includes people who are mobility impaired because of frailty and age, chronic illnesses and acquired or congenital paralysis or loss of limbs. The theory of a pastoral work praxis to people who are mobility impaired is considered in association with the drama of embrace described by Volf ( 1996:139).

I will discuss how faith communities through a theology of embrace can facilitate a sense of belonging for people who are mobility disadvantaged. First the metaphor of “embrace” is considered from the perspective of faith communities making-space-in-“themselves”-for-“another”. Repentance, forgiveness and remembering are discussed in connection with the metaphors “embrace” and “covenant”(5.3.1). Next, the faith community as a “communion of struggle” is considered (5.3.2). A discussion of faith communities’ responsibility in “embrace” (see 5.3.2.1) and commitment to an all-inclusive pastoral work praxis deals with facilitating a sense of belonging for people who live with mobility impairment. Finally, pastoral work praxis in relation to a few specific needs of the research participants in interaction with other practices of the faith community is considered.

### 5.3.1 Pastoral work praxis: a drama of embrace

In this subsection what Volf (1996:141) calls the drama of embrace is explored. Volf suggests that there are four elements of movement in embrace that symbolises and enact various concepts. These movements are the opening the arms, the waiting arms, the closing of the arms and the opening of the arms again. Each movement is symbolic of a different meaning. The importance of Volf's (1996) reference to the symbolic meaning of each movement of "embrace" is important to pastoral work to people who are mobility disadvantaged because it concerns identification with the suffering of "another" and making-space-for-the-"other".

In chapter one, section 1.2, I suggested that narrative identity and a theology of embrace can be the means to facilitate belonging in their communities for people who are mobility disadvantaged and facilitate collective and personal identity. Hence, narrative creates the space through communication between people by telling and listening to accounts of separate experiences. The importance is that through reciprocal communication a sense of belonging to one another is constructed (Brown 1997:114-115). Volf (1996;140) makes a relevant point in discussing the metaphor "embrace" as meaning that the members of Christian communities are imitators of God in offering compassion and love even as the Triune God showed compassion and love in the passion of the suffering of Christ. The relevance of narrative allowing for a sense of belonging and the notion of embrace making-space-in-self-for -another, in this study is that both make identification with social and religious groups possible. In this sense the metaphors "embrace", "narrative" and "belonging" can describe ways of facilitating collective identity and shaping personal identity.

The main argument in this subsection is: firstly, that in the first movement of "embrace" as a gesture to making-space-in-self in inviting the "other" to respond, faith communities need to identify with the suffering of

"another"; secondly, the movement of waiting arms is a gesture allowing the "other" the initiative to respond. It is not a show of power, but rather one of humility. Thirdly, the closing of the arms where the "presence" of the "self" is given and accepted by the "other", it can open the way for different "others" to tell their stories and understanding be gained of actions of oppression. Lastly, the final movement of "embrace" allowing the "other" to go again to enrich "self-identity", must allow the "different other" to be empowered, strengthened in personal and collective identity. Thus, a theology of embrace can strengthen both collective and personal identity of people who are mobility disadvantaged. The movements in the drama of embrace as described by Volf (1996:140-154) spells out the meaning of the metaphor "embrace". This is discussed below.

1) Opening the arms: which is a gesture of reaching out to the other. It is an indication of desiring to be part of the "other" by being open to "self-identity" and being part of the "other's" identity". The gesture suggests awareness of the pain of the absence of the "other" and wanting the presence of the "other". But what does this mean? It can mean that the relational dimension of the "self-and-the-other" where self-identity is in reciprocal dialogue with the identity "of others", as proposed by the notion of narrative identity, is symbolically expressed in the opening of the arms of embrace. It is the gesture that proposes the desire to make space in "self" to enter the space created by the "other" in reciprocity (Hudson 1999:22; Van Den Hengel 1994:467-468; Volf 1996:25).

Accordingly, it involves the emptying of "self-desire" to open a way for the "other" to enter in, which imitates the self-giving love of Jesus Christ when he emptied himself of the glory of heaven to come to humankind in a way that invites humans to respond and enter into reconciliation with God and fellow humankind (Hebrew 9:15,25-18). How then can Christians process the emptying of "self" for another?

The biblical drama of centring on Christ described by Paul is valuable in reflecting on the way in which Christian faith communities should respond in opening their arms to people who are mobility impaired. The way people are judged because of their difference to what is perceived as normal, which can exclude them from society, gains attention from Volf (1996:67), who remarks that a distinction between legitimate "differentiation" and illegitimate "exclusion" needs to be made to ensure valid judgements. Volf (1996:69) then asks the questions:

> But how do we make non-exclusionary judgments? What kind of a person will be capable of making them? What kind of a person will be capable of struggling against exclusion without perpetuating exclusion by the very struggle against it?

Volf (1996:69) makes a point from what the Apostle Paul writes about the Christian life in Galatians (2:19-20), "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live; but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me." Volf points out that Paul presumes a centred "self" that needs to de-centre by nailing the "self" to the cross because the "self" has been centred wrongly. However, if Christ lives within a person then the de-centred "self" must be re-centred by participating in the death and resurrection of Christ through faith (Volf 1996:70).

Volf (1996:70) reminds one that being "crucified with Christ" means the "self" receives a new centre. It is the centre of the "self" that experiences the story of Jesus as the story of the "self". The crucified resurrected Christ indwells the "selfhood" of his disciple and is the person's centre that directs every part of living. The new centre experienced in Christ-following transforms and reinforces the old "self" by allowing Christ to take the centre in life.

According to Volf (1996:71) re-centring establishes a centre that allows the "self" to stand up against corruptness. De-centring and re-centring through faith in Jesus Christ results in the "self" being re-made in the image of the Son of God who gave himself in love. This means that traditional, political and even denominational centrality is self-serving and guards anything that threatens its values, meanings and views while a re-centred "self" becomes a self-giving love.

Volf (1996:74) points out that, "...the new centre opens the "self" up, makes it capable and willing to give itself for others and to receive others in itself." From a collective perspective, therefore, the unity of faith communities and their pastoral work is located in the suffering body of the Messiah. It is the self-giving love made available to the followers of Christ by the pattern set by the suffering Messiah so as to be imitators of Christ.

It is identification with the suffering of another in the making of a new covenant following the example of Christ. It means reflection and criticism in situations of oppression. In other words, to identify "self" as "self-as-another-than-self" is to place oneself in the situation of another who is suffering as Christ suffered on the cross for the sin of all people.

2) The second movement of embrace is the waiting arms: the open arms indicate a reaching out in a way for the "other" to respond to the initiation of the "self" toward the "other". The waiting arms are actions of allowing the "other" to have the power to respond or not to respond to the invitation. The power of the waiting "self", as Volf (1996:142) writes, "... is the power of signaled desire, of created space, and opened boundary of the self, not the power that breaks the boundaries of the other and forces fulfilment of desire." Coercion, manipulation and violence cannot be part of such embrace: it is attained only through reciprocity.

An example of the act of waiting arms of embrace may be found where

Hudson (1999:19-20) describes how he pondered how to cross the politico-social chasm between Soweto and neighbouring Johannesburg. At the time he was pastor of a middle-class congregation that was shielded from the trauma of the apartheid system of the early eighties in South Africa. The thought occurred to him to take members of his congregation to others who were suffering from the consequences of apartheid. Hudson (1999:19, 20) writes:

> Forced removals, poverty and homelessness were abstractions in the experience of my congregation...Most of us had never consciously related our Christ-following to the social realities...Perhaps exposing ourselves intentionally to the suffering of others would change us and help us respond in appropriate ways.

Hudson (1999:21) goes on to describe how that faith community arranged to spend time in the homes of people who were experiencing oppression by the apartheid system. Thus, the venture could be explained as by doing this they signalled their desire to create space for those less fortunate than themselves and offered the invitation for response.

It means that the alterity of the "other" enters into the very identity of "self" and the identity of human beings is formed through relations to "others". It requires a mutual "making-space-for-the-other" in the "self" and reconsidering and reorganising the "self" in relation to the presence of the "other" (Volf 1996:154). The reciprocity of response that is left open means that embrace is also unpredictable and a risk, since reciprocity depends on the "other". However, according to Volf (1996:147), although the "self" may attempt to re-configure the "other" in embrace, no outcome can be predicted or programmed and a genuine embrace cannot leave the "self" and the "other" unchanged.

3) The third movement of embrace is the closing of the arms: the closing of the arms is both a passive and an active action when the second pair of arms open to the invitation of embrace and the closing of the arms are reciprocal in embrace. It means that each person enters into the space created by the other. Presence of "self" given is accepted and welcomed. Volf (1996:143) writes:

> In an embrace the identity of the self is both preserved and transformed, and the alterity of the other is both affirmed that is alterity and partly received into the ever changing identity of the self.

Similarly, Ricoeur's explanation of narrative identity can coincide with a symbolic embrace in the closing of the arms because narrative discourse between humans is a communicative basis for connecting the human as agent with identity. The telling of stories connects the "self" as an agent and sufferer in relation to the different "other" in daily existence. Brown (1997:115) points out that narrative creates space in which individuals by telling and listening to their separate experiences construct a sense of belonging to one another.

Hence, telling "stories" and listening to each other's "stories", within the context of daily living, make space-for-one-another and create opportunity to enter into reciprocal embrace. When the people, for instance, accepted the desires of Hudson's congregation to enter their homes and to share in their suffering, it could illustrate the movement of the opening and waiting arms through inviting the "different other" to respond to their desire to identify with those invited, sufferings. It can result in the reciprocal closing of arms in embrace.

In reflecting on Ricoeur's (1992:145,159) notion of narrative identity, it must be noted that the importance of narrative mediation is that it discloses

the narrator of the "story" and any suffering caused by oppressive power systems and the role players who add to the suffering or break the cycle of suffering. Considering "stories" that are recounted about situations of oppression is important because faith communities should be the embodiment of the passion of God in the suffering of Christ on the cross. They have a responsibility to make it possible for "stories" to be told by those who are experiencing oppression, gain an understanding of the character telling the "story" and the characters of those who are participating in the story, identify actions of oppression through critical reflection and seek to facilitate change from oppression.

4) The last movement in embrace is once again opening the arms in expressing that the alterity of the "other" cannot be neutralised by incorporating the "self" into the "other" as undifferentiated "we". The arms of embrace must be opened again to allow the alterity of the "other" preservation of his/her own dynamic identity. Letting go again also enriches the "self" by taking back its own identity with the preserved influences that the presence of the "other" has left (Volf 1996:144).

The point is that the power to enter into another's suffering must never become reasons for self-gain or control. It must allow the "different other" to be empowered and strengthened in personal identity and collective identity.

Consequently, members of Christian faith communities through the movement of embrace need to be imitators of God that offer the passion of compassion and love even as they received the Triune God's passion through the suffering Christ. As imitators of God's self-giving compassion and love members of faith communities should be committed to the struggle against the evil and sin of structures of social, cultural, religious and political power systems that exclude and oppress people. In other words, faith communities become communities of struggle.

By the way, Volf (1996:140), in analysis of “self” and the “other” in relation to the term “embrace”, maintains that metaphor and concept intertwine. The above-mentioned author points out that the “embrace” located in humanity’s relationships may be problematic for some cultures and therefore “embrace” may be considered as equally relevant in gestures of warmth, acceptance and reconciling in different cultures. The relationship between “self” and “other” conveyed by what embrace symbolises and enacts is more important than the actual physical idea of embrace.

A summary of the drama of embrace brings to the surface the importance of recognising the needs of the “different others” and extending an invitation to them to tell their “stories” about living with mobility impairment. It means being willing to share in their “stories” and to enter into their suffering. However, the lure of power and controlling motives need to be addressed through the emptying of “self” as imitators of the Triune God’s compassion and love. It should result in committed active actions against exclusionary, controlling and abusive acts. This leads to consideration of a pastoral work praxis for the practical life of the faith community and people who are mobility disadvantaged. The next subsection considers the faith community’s pastoral work praxis in everyday practical life.

### 5.3.2 Faith communities’ responsibility in the drama of embrace with people who live with mobility impairment

The primary role of faith communities in the drama of embrace with people who are mobility disadvantaged is, for this study, to make-space-in “themselves”-for-the-different-others. In relation to Volf’s (1996) notion of embrace and people who are mobility disadvantaged there are four

movements or goals that were discussed, namely reaching out to people who are mobility disadvantaged, allowing them the power to respond to the invitation; being "present" with them in their suffering; and empowering ownership of their own "self" identity (5.3.1). Ricoeur's narrative identity theory is relevant for a pastoral work praxis by Christian faith communities, to accomplish these four goals.

In subsection 5.3.1 the assumption about embracing the "other's story" was identifying with the pain of their experiences. However, to enter into a "covenanted embrace" with people who are mobility disadvantaged needs to result in self-giving in the desire to initiate change of oppressive ideologies. Ricoeur's notion of narrative identity (see 2.3) and Volf's (1996) metaphor of "embrace" can contribute to make holist pastoral work operational in the practical lives of people who are mobility impaired and in faith communities. I maintain that the notion of narrative identity can allow for important practical actions that can activate the desire to initiate transformation from oppression to empowerment of people.

In my opinion the theory of narrative identity can introduce ways of practising pastoral work that can empower people living with mobility impairment who Christian faith communities should "embrace". I will briefly explain how narrative identity theory can open the way for empowering these people and in the following sections these concepts will be described in more detail. Narrative identity theory can allow for ways to enable moral judgement of tradition (2.3.4), provide for assessing if promises made were kept or not (2.3.5.2), resist oppressive tradition and take the responsibility to implement actions to transform oppression into empowerment (2.3.3). At the same time the connection of the temporal and relational dimensions of the notion of narrative identity (2.3.4) opens the way through imagination for the possibility of changing rigid tradition or maintaining complementary stable tradition that enables inclusion of all people, where required. Similarly, narratives can open the way to empower

people who are mobility disadvantaged to experience identity with collective social, political and religious institutions and can facilitate collective identity through the notion of belonging (2.3.5). The next section deals with the above concepts in relation to the faith community as a "communion of struggle".

#### *5.3.2.1 A "communion of struggle"*

I will attempt to explain the "communion of struggle" through which faith communities should become engrossed in resisting any social, religious, cultural and political forms of oppression in a society. Eiesland (1994b:116) suggests that the Christian faith community is a "communion of struggle". She equates the social reality of women's struggle for justice with the metaphor "a body in trouble" that identifies the realities of women in church, proposed by feminist theologians, as a "communion of struggle". It is a struggle for full inclusion of women in societies and a bond of struggling against oppression that attempts to erase the image of women.

Similarly, the person who is disabled depicts a metaphor of "body in trouble" and combined with feminist theology, can establish the realities of living with "the body in trouble". Hence, I suggest that faith communities and people who are disabled must have a bond of communion in the struggle against prejudice, discrimination and depersonalisation and fixed identities because it robs individuals of their collective identity, identifying with multiple roles and the rightful shaping of personal identity like all humankind.

The strategy of participating in a "communion of struggle" will be considered in the following subsections. I address the importance of critical reflection of oppressive situations, the importance of resisting oppression (5.3.2.1 a) and the effects of repentance, forgiveness and

remembering (5.3.2.1 b). The commitment to facilitate "a sense of belonging" in faith communities through a pastoral work praxis is discussed (5.3.2.1 c).

**a) Critical reflection and resistance of internal faith communities' structures of oppression**

Chapter one referred to practical theology being concerned about the way faith communities have become involved in the lives of people who are mobility impaired. Consideration was given to the argument that faith communities should embody the gospel message of Christ, which means that the members of faith communities should imitate a concrete form of love and compassion of the Triune God's love in remembrance of Jesus' self-giving on the cross (1.5). It crosses all the borderlines of human living situations and embraces all humankind.

Committed to a "communion of struggle" the embodiment of the self-giving love of the Triune God Christian faith communities need to reflect critically on their understanding of biblical narratives in relation to the "stories" of people who are living with mobility impairment. As feminist understanding of Christian faith practices is communal and contextual praxis in a common goal; faith communities need to consider their pastoral work praxis in a way that is actively communal and contextual. This understanding needs to be contemplated so that it works for full humanity for all God's children and should be the prime concern of faith communities in their pastoral work praxis (Couture 1999:180; Russell 1993:22-23).

Accordingly, theory and praxis must be given equal importance so that theology and empowering actions of care relate to both the collective religious and individual situations. The narratives that disclose the reality of historical social and individual situations of life are, therefore, at the centre of such a theory and praxis of Christian living. Critical reflection

on past practices of faith communities, revising or renewing pastoral work praxis in relation to the relevant narratives of the Bible is essential. However, putting a renewed pastoral work praxis into action goes hand in glove with critical reflection (Chopp 1996:120-121).

Critical reflection on narratives in the Bible that are upheld in the traditions of faith communities and relate to the ordinary daily lives of people who are mobility disadvantaged can contribute to a theology of embrace. An example was given in chapter one of the narrative of the good Samaritan. It was pointed out that this man chose to see the needs of the injured Jewish man. He chose to subject himself to the circumstances of the injured person and was willing to take the risk of being attacked himself. Finally he attended to the injured man's bodily and material needs of the present time. He then attended to his needs for the future by providing for his ongoing care. In other words, the criteria of a theology of embrace embodying compassion and self-giving love can be likened to the story of the good Samaritan.

Ricoeur (1992:140) makes a point that emplotment has power to make a single story out of multiple incidents, therefore, uniting of these incidents into a wholeness has the power to make the integration of diversity and instability with stability possible. Accordingly, in the narrative of the good Samaritan the above point is demonstrated by the actions of the Samaritan. The narrative is seen to unite actions of discordances and concordances through configuration and refiguration of past actions (Ricoeur 1992:141-142). In the transition of the story actions of discordance, in being attacked, in relation to the present injury discordances-concordances united and the possibility of change, innovation for the future occurred. The man was transferred from his situation of being left lying to die to one in which he was cared for and given hope for the future.

It is appropriate here to note that Jesus instructed his disciples to go and

do the same. Can faith communities go and do the same and through pastoral work facilitate a strong sense of collective identity and so strengthen personal identity of people who are mobility impaired? I will argue that they can, but it means critical reflection on the traditions of faith communities.

Critical reflection is an important tool for dissecting the narratives of people. However, to only reflect on the narratives of "others" can result in a distorted utopian practice, which is a means of escapism or a distorted ideology if it strengthens the "no change rule" and is a waste of time, unless critical reflection is undertaken with the goal to change. Critical reflection needs to be the priority with the determination and goal to replace "self", or own tradition with making-space-for-another by identifying with "another" enough to stimulate, motivate and implement changes in the "self", that is tradition, and the "other" (Kaplan 2003:94; Ricoeur 1992:159).

Gerkin (1997:118) reminds one that caring involves care to the individual and his/her family as well as care of the Christian faith community. Gerkin points out that pastoral caring reflects thoughtful re-interpretation of traditions of the church that shape Christian identity in relationship with collective society and culture. Pastoral work is collective work by the faith community and critical reflection, therefore, involves the Christian faith community making space in its traditions, values and beliefs to make meaningful changes, an ideological stance, to introduce and maintain inclusive meaningful action for people who are disadvantaged in mobility. Actions of encounter and listening must facilitate critical reflection on the narratives of faith communities' traditions, in relation to past promises made and present promises kept or not kept, to be able to implement evaluation and planning in the future (Hudson 1999:22-23; Ricoeur 1992:157-158).

Accordingly, the recounting of the "stories" of the Christian faith community in relation to the "stories" of people who are disadvantaged physically, is the means to create a vision for the future by collectively recognising unfulfilled moments in the past and present. Contrasting faith communities' "stories" with the self-giving passion of God opens the way for imaginative change for the future (Dreyer 2000:40). Dreyer (2000:41) points out that the recounting of "stories" brings power issues to the fore. Accordingly, innovations need to be assessed, planned, implemented and organised with feedback and re-evaluation of the effectiveness of the change to be made or determining whether traditions adhered to are complementary to life's situations.

Critical reflection is a responsibility of practical theologians and should result in stimulating and motivating faith communities to a responsible pastoral work praxis. Consequently, an invitation must be extended to people who are mobility impaired to voice how they experience living with mobility impairment. The purpose of encounters with people who are mobility disadvantaged is to invite them to tell their story about living with mobility impairment so as to understand their daily ordinary experiences. The point therefore is that the power of narrative to disclose human suffering and actions of oppression can provide resources for alternative action because of ethical reasoning. In keeping with Ricoeur's (1992:155-156) notion of narrative identity, identity of "self" depends on actively accepting the different "other". At the level of practical living, however, actions can be either active or passive. Accordingly, the Christian faith community's identity can be disclosed because the function of narrative is to disclose actions that either relieve suffering or expose actions of power and control that are oppressive and destructive. An example is seen in the story of Tess and her father's struggle with their faith community about the need for the Eucharist to be served in their home (4.3.6.2). Narrative, therefore, tells us what actions occur and what the results of such actions are, such as in Tess' story.

It can, as Ricoeur points out, exhibit the power of rigid tradition. Narrative operations can disclose omission of actions as well, such as the other ministers and members in Tess's faith community omitting to resist the power of a possibly past rigid tradition. In any case the point that is important to note is that the power of narrative is to allow movement from human actions, or consideration of action theory, to questions about ethical actions, thus it can allow for moral judgement of past actions to refigure revised actions for the future (Ricoeur 1992:155-156). This was not done in Tess's story of being marginalised because that faith community based its actions on precautions against offending certain officials of the church.

The example of Tess given above is a reminder of the importance of theologians reflecting in a way that is self-critical of faith communities' traditions regarding exclusionary and marginalising practices. However, it can result in actions aimed at changing oppression to empowerment through repentance. Repentance is discussed in the next subsection.

**b) Repentance by Christian faith communities**

Critically reflecting on past and present traditions may mean that members of faith communities need to repent of the sin of marginalisation in which they had participated. Christian faith communities' members, therefore, need to seek forgiveness from people who have suffered exclusionary acts perpetrated by their faith communities (Volf 1996:100, 119-121).

It can only help when failures are approached with optimism and increased determination to bring change to the immense task and calling that faith communities have, in their praxis of pastoral work, to the many disadvantaged people in South Africa. Encouragement can be gained through tracing Tess's story (4.4). It was noted that the later actions of

the new minister in charge in serving the Eucharist rite in the home, irrespective of what went on before, began to restore her father's faith. He began going to church again. Although that particular faith community made no private or public repentance, it was assumed by the family and paved the way for the process of forgiveness to begin.

Moreover, the responsibility of "self" to the "other" emphasises the relationship and the complex history of differentiation in which the "self" and the "other" negotiate in interaction with each other's identities. The connectedness between "self" and the "other" is, therefore, of importance because narratives reveal whether promises are kept or left unfulfilled. Through reciprocal interaction between the narratives of people who are "disadvantaged", "disempowered" and excluded by society and the faith communities' traditions, in relation to the gospel message, self-criticism can occur. However, as pointed out above, it needs to end in confession that an injustice had occurred or justice has been omitted or ignored and that this needs to be repented. Repentance means turning back from the wrong doing and revising actions that demonstrate such repentance (Eiesland 1994a:109-110; Volf 1996:113)

For faith communities to show the biblical compassionate love of God, they need to recognise their mistakes and confess their mistakes as sin. If, for example, they have not resisted, or they have not stood in support, or they have not been passionate about showing the compassionate love of God to people who are physically disabled, Christian faith communities need to repent. The act of repentance can be a powerful way of beginning to facilitate belonging to a collective body and so strengthen personal identity. It is part of the action of "embrace" through de-centring (or emptying "self" and re-centring "self" in Christ, in other words, being imitators of the Triune God's self-giving through making space in"self" for "another" (Volf 1996:123).

I take a moment to pause and ask: Can critical reflection, confession and repentance work? In answer to this question I consider one of the faith communities that became involved with the participants from the self-help centre, in which two of the research participants lived. This Methodist church had connected with the residents of the self-help centre with the plan to become consistently involved with them in whatever way they could. Consequently, contact was made because one Christian person, who voluntarily gave a professional service to the residents, brought awareness to the leadership of the church. This particular church rose to the occasion by organising encounters with the residents, listening to the stories. Organisation of caring facilities and actions were put into gear with satisfying results for the residents. Contact with this occupational therapist was maintained by personal contact, e-mail and telephone conversations in order to obtain feedback. She wrote in her last e-mail:

> **E-mail:** Just wanted you to know that when I was at --------- Methodist church recently, I saw three of the quads there from --------*(Self-help centre)*. Apparently they regularly go to church there now, and it seems some of the church members visit them a lot. I was also surprised to find that W----- has become involved with the Alpha course and is now doing the Alpha Leadership course. This amazed me because of his speech impediment, which makes him very difficult to understand and difficult to communicate with. He mentioned to me that the Alpha course has meant a huge amount to him recently, and that introducing him to .....*(church)* was one of the best things I have done for him. He has also joined one of their home groups.

This feedback speaks for itself. When a congregation reflects in self-criticism and finds itself lacking, as was this faith community's testimony, then its members are able to commit to changing the lacks into transformative support and assistance, socially and spiritually. This feedback is a witness to identifying with the "other" to change and to find an identity relevant to the gospel message. The example of the above faith community prompts the consideration of how faith communities can make-

space-in-“themselves”-for-“another” in everyday practical life.

I discussed the importance of critical reflection and repentance in embracing people who are mobility disadvantaged. Reflection on past traditions and present practical lives and the anticipation of action for the future was considered as ways of desiring to initiate transforming situations of oppression to situations of empowerment. How can transition of the desire for action of change be transferred to actively implement change to situations of oppression for people who live with mobility impairment? To answer this question will require exploring the commitment and passion to facilitate a sense of belonging for all people.

**c) Commitment to facilitate a sense of belonging**

When considering what the meaning of experiencing a sense of belonging in a faith community is, Patton (1993:20) recalls the personal experiences of the Christian community of three members of different churches. Firstly, there is the experience described by Daniel Day Williams who said, “What was most important was the experience itself...the sense of being in an unfriendly world, a world full of all kinds of threats - the struggle to adjust to the group, of being alone - and then discovering that there is a group in which there is real love. In the church there is a community which truly cares about you”. Secondly, he quotes the experience of an elderly German lady, a member of a small church who answered Patton’s question on why she happened to be a Methodist instead of a Lutheran, by saying simply, “The Methodists called me ‘little sister Mabel’.” Patton reflects that the community named her as belonging to them. Thirdly, he tells of the experience of a Presbyterian lady who said, “I grew up in this Church. A lot of these people were here when I lost my father, and they gave me something I didn’t even know I needed. I guess you could call it a sense of being part of a group that cared” (Patton 1993:20)

These people telling of their experiences agree that a caring community is more than a mere collection of people, but that it is a community of people who make the "other" experience a sense of belonging. In other words, they experienced all-inclusive caring from these faith communities. Thus, accountability and committed responsibility to empower the "different other" to respond to the invitation of "belonging" is part of the meaning of "embrace".

***i) Faith communities "being present" for "another"***

Reference is made by Patton (1993:22-23) to the theologian Douglas Hall who suggests that the basis for the understanding of community is that the basic ontological category is not "being" but *"being with"*. The theological basis is then that of being-in-relationship from the Being of all creation to the smallest creation. Hence, the community is the mutual/personal elements that dialectically express and meet needs of the community and the individual. Patton (1993:24) writes:

> God is the author of community, creating it as an expression of human relationality. This relationality, however, is not a passive condition. It is brought into being through human action, empowered through relationship to God.

Patton (1993:25) comes to the conclusion that, "The church exists to facilitate care of the earth and human beings that inhabit it, through offering genuine relationship and enabling persons to discover meaning in life and the world".

Consequently, the metaphor "present" that takes on the meaning of "being with" as imitators of the Triune God who is always "present" with us as his creation is relevant in describing a committed relationship of the faith community to people who are mobility disadvantaged. "Being present" can

also be seen as part of the meaning of the metaphor "covenant" referred to by Volf (1996:147-150). Covenant expresses an unbreakable covenant incorporated in the Triune God that is imitated by faith communities in embracing people who experience social, political, economic and religious structures of oppression.

***ii) Remembering "stories" with the "different others"***

Remembering narratives of contextual experiences in a faith community predisposes one to celebrating God who remembers humankind. Patton (1993:27-28) points out that care and community are brought together in a relationship because of memory. The act of listening and remembering the "stories" of the "different other" in relation to the Christ-story enables caring by hearing and remembering their "stories" with them.

As previously mentioned the power of narrative is that the human agents in the story are identified, as well as contributory actions that result in human suffering, such as acts that are an abuse of power (Ricoeur 1992:159). It is important in relation to the metaphor of "covenant" as meaning committed responsible caring and a relationship bound up in hearing and remembering "stories" of people who are mobility impaired. Identifying with a person and entering into their suffering by faith communities can facilitate collective identity because it is an action that invites "belonging". Consequently, facilitating a sense of belonging to the collective identity of faith communities can strengthen the religious identity of the person.

It means that the need for responsibility and commitment equal to God's covenant with his creation is required of faith communities by making space to listen to the "stories" of people who are mobility impaired with love and compassion can and enable compassionate remembering together with them, the joys and pain of their experiences. It can thus make

allowance for the hermeneutical process, which begins with prefiguration and ends with refiguration of experience (Venema 2000:92-94). It is the intensity and passion of being committed to listen that can end in finding ways to effect transforming actions of empowerment instead of actions of oppression.

The Old Testament reveals strong evidence of God's hearing and remembering the covenant made with Abraham (Genesis. 19:29RSV), which was fulfilled when Jesus died on the cross, arose again and ascended into heaven. The renewal of faith of the Christian community is in the remembering of God's promise through Jesus Christ re-told in the sacraments. Human beings remember the promises of God fulfilled through Christ, which binds the past, present and future together.

Volf (1996:235) also refers to the Christian faith as something based on memory when celebrating the Lord's Supper; "There can be no Christian faith without *that* memory; *everything* in Christian faith depends on it". Remembering Christ's suffering reminds his followers to remember the suffering of "others" for whom Christ died. Remembering Christ's suffering when practising the Eucharist rite is a proclamation of the death of sin through Christ's death. Thus, in the same way the suffering of the "other" must be listened to, remembered and proclaimed. Proclamation suggests something to be told aloud.

To change a wrong act without remembering and telling it aloud is in a sense a denial of the wrong-doing. Eiesland (1994b:81-82) points out that telling of past oppressive religious and social structures in remembrance of peoples' suffering is empowering to both faith community and people who are marginalised. These thoughts on remembering make one aware of the importance of the meaning of the ritual of celebrating the Lord's Supper that is essential to members' sense of belonging to a collective body when they remember their own salvation. They remember too the promises

of the “Suffering Christ” that have become their own promise and to people around them. It is also the ritual that enables the members in the moments of collective remembering to deal with sin. Thus, partaking in the ritual of the Eucharist, for the Christian community, is in remembrance of receiving Christ’s passion for humankind and with the desire to express the same passion of Christ for all whom Christ suffered.

Accordingly, to be robbed of participating in such a vital togetherness in Christ is therefore being robbed of a sense of belonging to the collective Christian faith in many ways. It takes away the opportunity of communicating a deep repentance of wrong-doing in fellowship with other Christians. Thus, it removes the person to an individual Christian identity, instead of being able to identify in fellowship and celebration with the collective identity of all members of the faith community.

Kel, one of the participants in the empirical research, disclosed the separation she felt between her personal faith and her collective faith through being unable to identify with her faith community. Kel said when asked how she felt about not belonging to a church: “I know I belong to Jesus”. Kel, however, was robbed of celebrating and remembering one of the most valued Christian celebrations that represents “belonging” to God and the Christian faith community simply because her church was no longer “present” for her. Once they moved away and because of the distance Kel could no longer get there, in a sense her “story” was no longer remembered by the members. She was even excluded from that faith community being “present” for her as none of the members came to celebrate the Eucharist in her home, possibly because she was forgotten or the members did not think of it.

Volf (1996:129) reminds one that the Eucharist is the ritual in which the Christian faith celebrates the Triune God for “…making-space-for-us-and-inviting-us-in” and being enveloped in the loving embrace of compassion

and passion that is expressed in remembering God's love and grace through the Eucharist. Those of the Christian faith, by celebrating the Eucharist, are reminded that they are not only recipients, but also agents and ambassadors of God's grace. It means that the embrace they experienced from God must embrace the "other" in humankind.

Furthermore, the Eucharist celebration is symbolic, from the perspective of the collective church; the Church is symbolic of the embodied suffering Christ, where believers are baptised by the Holy Spirit into one body that should portray the new creation always with the anticipation of the hope of the final eschatological new creation. Volf (1996:130) writes:

> In the Eucharist, then, we celebrate the giving up the self to the other and receiving the other into the self that the triune God has undertaken in the passion of Christ and that we are called and empowered to live such giving and receiving out in a conflict-ridden world.

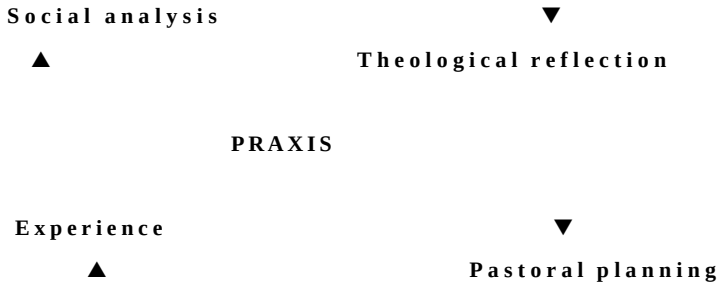
How then can faith communities' members through their pastoral work praxis "live out" the intentions of what the ritual of the Eucharist symbolises? That is to give of "self" for "another" in a way that facilitates a sense of belonging for people to faith communities and empowers them. I am convinced that it is only through the notion of an integrated interaction between the types of pastoral work with one another and between pastoral work and the other practices of the faith community that was discussed in section (5.2, 5.2.4). Feedback is a vital activity that must combine with an integrated pastoral work praxis to achieve the goal of facilitating a sense of belonging to faith communities that result in a strengthened religious and personal identity discussed in section 5.2 and sub-section (5.2.4). Feedback is therefore discussed next.

***iii) Feedback of specific actions in faith communities***

The lack of feedback can often create gaps in holistic caring to people with specific needs. Miller-McLemore (1999:93) points out that there is much criticisms from feminist theology about the problems of the clerical paradigms, which became far removed from human suffering and spiritual experiences which hampered practices of transformation. A strong consistent system of feedback between all the different practices of the faith community can bring greater awareness and contact with human suffering and spiritual experiences. At the same time personal and collective identity are strengthened through the facilitation of a sense of belonging.

Feedback, therefore, that is organised and consistent should be part of the integrative process of pastoral work and the other practices of faith communities. Holland and Henriot (1983:8) refer to a social analysis as a tool for pastoral action, which I take as a framework for an example of a method of a feedback system in faith communities. They refer to four movements in the pastoral circle of praxis. It starts with experiences of individual's and communities' lives and moves to analysis of the experiences with other social interrelationships. In the third movement experiences are analysed through theological reflection in light of Scripture and the Christian church's traditions, which lead to pastoral planning in response to the former three movements. In figure 5.4 the circle indicates continuous movement.

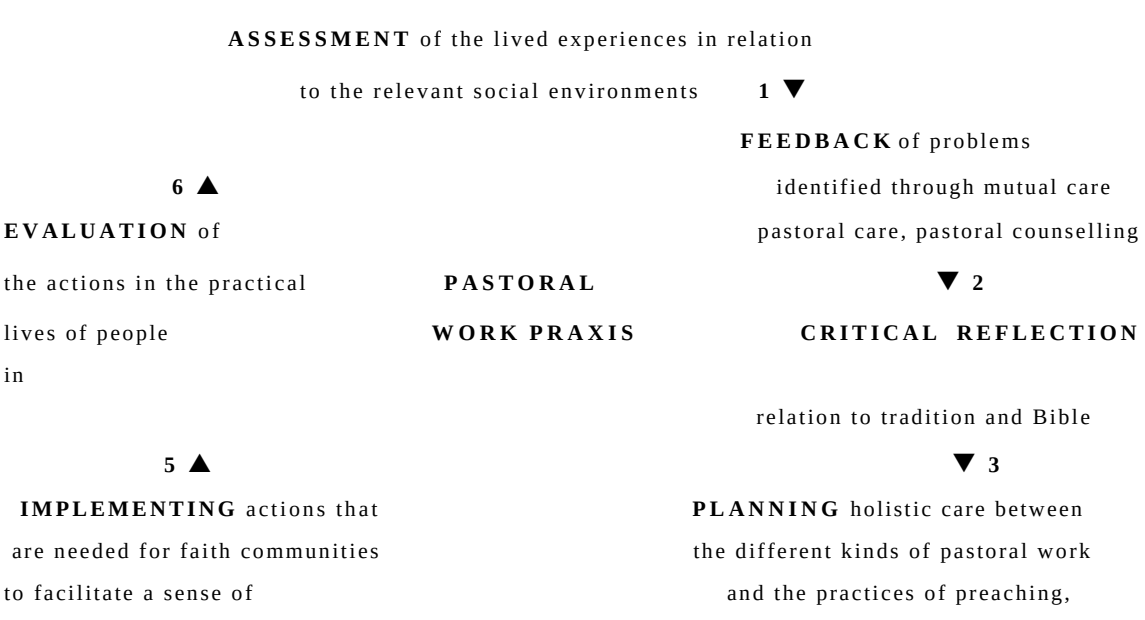
**Figure 5.4 Pastoral circle of praxis**



In a similar way a pastoral work praxis can indicate a continuous cycle of theory and praxis through a continuous cycle of feedback because the assessing people's experiences and critical reflection take place in a cycle of theory and praxis. Figure 5.5 gives an example of a cycle of feedback showing consistent and continuous motion of six organised phases involved in the system of feedback.

Figure 5.5 indicates that the motion of the cycle begins with assessing life experiences of people who are mobility disadvantaged through feedback from the different types of pastoral work in interaction with the other practices of faith communities; critical reflection is undertaken in relation to faith communities' traditions and scriptural truths. Planning and implementing action should be entered into by all the leaders and members involved in the different practices, such as the four types of pastoral work, preaching, teaching, service and worship celebrations. Evaluation of the actions implemented moves the cycle to begin once again.

**Figure 5.5 Pastoral work praxis in cooperation with other practices in faith communities**



belonging teaching, service and worship celebrations

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An example may be given of Reg's problem that he told of his faith community being unable to counsel him or his family. When using the feedback system referred to above, Reg's story would be heard and problems identified, such as the specific need of him and his family members to adjust to the huge changes that occurred between pre-quadriplegic and post-quadriplegic eras of life. The information is fed back to the faith community for joint critical reflection by all leaders involved in the different practices of the church. This would mean the leaders and significant members involved in the different types of pastoral work practices, preaching, service, teaching and the forming of worship and celebration structures of the faith community. The fourth phase of a holistic way of caring that facilitate a sense of belonging is planned together. It is followed by the fifth phase of implementing actions that will actively encourage a sense of belonging for people who are mobility disadvantaged, in this case Reg and his family. Where required actions of pastoral work practices, such as mutual care, pastoral, pastoral counselling and pastoral therapy, should have been implemented with the addition of channelling appropriate actions in preaching, service, teaching, worship and celebration as support. In Reg's case pastoral counselling was lacking. This underlines the importance of the interaction with the teaching practices of the faith community to provide sustained building and revision of the different care skills. The last movement is to evaluate the revised actions implemented and if the goals set have been accomplished or not, before moving back to the feedback phase and beyond.

These six movements shown in figure 5.5 should, therefore, reflect a continuous spiral effect that indicates that the actions have brought changes that reflects growth and spirituality of people who are mobility disadvantaged and the Christian faith community. In other words, the

Christian faith community facilitates a sense of belonging for people who are mobility impaired that keeps on facilitating collective identity and simultaneously shapes personal identity. It is the way in which the "stories" of people who are mobility impaired, those of faith communities and Scripture become continually entangled with each other. It is the way in which problems can be identified, flaws or strengths of tradition revealed and in which critical reflection can take place in search of revision of rigid traditions, be it religious, social and political, to create a sense of belonging for all people.

The six movements can also indicate an active tension between innovation and tradition that Dreyer (2000:41) suggests when he writes: "The main challenge in this regard is to mediate the tension between tradition and innovation, and to connect the space of experiences with the horizon of expectation". These movements are also a reflection of a covenanted self-giving by faith communities in making-space-in-faith-communities'-self-for-another referred to by Volf (1996:147) as the place where discordance and concordance can meet. The above notion of feedback speaks of a fully committed faith community to a pastoral work praxis that is accountable to the "different other".

In the above section the importance of incorporating pastoral work concerns into preaching, teaching, service and celebrations of worship of faith communities has been laboured in an attempt to give clarity to the idea of organised integration and a system of consistent feedback for critical discussion, planning and new actions. Now I want to consider the main specific needs in relation with the "problem of identity" disclosed in the stories that the research participants recounted. Doing so will reflect how the different types of pastoral work practice should interact with one another in faith communities to meet specific needs of people.

**d) Specific needs**

The main needs identified in chapter four in section 4.3 (4.2.2, 4.43, 4.4.4) can be classified into three types of need that must be addressed, namely a need for being reconciled to God, a need for social/religious interaction and needs occurring because of the experience of being homebound for periods. It should be clear that the different types of pastoral work practice will be discussed in sections where they apply. However, I reiterate that I am not concerned with one specific care action, but rather with looking at how each should work together with the other actions of faith communities to bring holistic care through facilitating "belonging" for people who are mobility impaired. Thus, the need for a relationship with God is considered in relation to the "stories" told by the research participants (4.2) and what could either take away or enriched personal, religious and collective identities. Considering the need for social and religious interaction will explain how the lack or increasing social/religious interaction effect religious, social and political identities. Lastly, being homebound for periods deny social and religious interaction that is important to forming personal and collective identity. How "embrace" and "narrative" can address the lack of social/political and religious interaction is explore

***i) The need for arelationship with God***

The experiences of the participants disclosed an interesting part of their stories because each one had grown up in a Christian family, but each had turned away from the church and God when they became young adults. However, all spoke of their experiences of turning back to God after their accidents. Reg spoke about his anger with God as he struggled to come to terms with being quadriplegic.

Many people who are mobility restricted and their family members may experience difficulties with anger and unforgiveness and although these are

normal reactive emotions the outcome can bring about wrong reactions if not dealt with in relation to God. When the individual who is disadvantaged is hurt and experiencing the pain of being excluded and pushed to the margin he/she may need help to deal with emotions and actions of unforgiveness. It means that confession, repentance and forgiveness are connected elements that are important to pastoral work in the drama of the emotional reactions and responses to the painful experiences when people are exposed to exclusionary practices.

Patton (2000:282) aptly writes:

> Forgiveness has to do with the relationship between God and humankind, and with the relationship of human beings to each other.

Assisting people who are mobility disadvantaged to deal with repentance and forgiveness will be a prominent perspective of pastoral counselling and pastoral therapy. The point to be remembered is that in practise the pastoral counsellor may experience an understanding which has been changed in relation to his/her religious tradition, because of hearing the stories of others that challenged traditional norms. Tradition, therefore, cannot be ignored, but it must be open to change. Thus, the pastoral counsellor is accountable to church tradition and theology as the dominant theory that he/she uses, although psychological theory is used electively in pastoral work. Patton (2000:282) points out that "The obligation of a pastoral counselor in using a theory from another discipline is to use it in a way that enriches and informs his or her own primary discipline."

The combination of psychology with theology is, however, important because the conflict created between forgiveness and unforgiveness is emotionally stressful for the person and religiously relevant to his/her understanding of God (Patton 2000:284). People living with mobility

impairment may struggle with how they understand what their religious tradition is saying to them. An example is the Lord's prayer where Jesus said that if we forgive others God will forgive us, but if we refuse to forgive others God will not forgive us. Thus, unforgiveness may result in feeling shame and guilt because they have failed God.

Also, the person is not only dealing with emotions that occur from personal injury, but also with emotions involving traditional beliefs and scriptural beliefs that can produce conflict for the individual. It was found that the research participants experienced feelings of anger, contempt, striving for perfection or striving for regaining control of their lives, or used humour or denial to cover up deeper emotions at different stages of their stories. Kel, for example, showed evidence of anger, which was mainly in connection with her trying to regain some sort of control in changes that were forced upon her. In the process she used methods of internal withdrawal and denial as a way of trying to regain power over her circumstances.

Reg revealed a constant striving for perfection and he used humour to cover up emotions when he felt vulnerable. It is suggested that it was a way in which he tried to maintain some sort of control over his circumstances and his emotions in dealing with the changes that were occurring at stages of his life. Tess used humour when expressing emotions relating to a difficult situation or conflict. She denied feeling hurt or being angry with her church and only referred to her father's anger and contempt for the church. When, however, it was pointed out to her in consultation about her story she nodded her head in agreement.

The pastoral counsellor or therapist needs, therefore, to assist people to transform these defensive or aggressive emotions in a process that assists them, in their own time, to a point of forgiveness or the beginning of forgiveness (Patton 2000:288). However, the pastoral therapist cannot

address the problem of unforgiveness by aggressive confrontation, rather it is dealt with in the context of an empathetic response.

Patton points out that unfortunately the religious response is often to try to fix things and hurry the process of coming to forgiveness (Patton 2000:289), hence the insistence on forgiveness as only one way of thinking, as the path to wholeness and freedom. Insistence can be abusive and re-victimise people who have been subjected to forced conformation to external versions of reality for them. It can become an abuse of structures of religious power consistent with the explanation of narrative identity in section 2.3, which may result in obstructing the forming of religious identity instead of enriching identity.

The point that Patton is making is that forgiveness cannot be forced and that the pastoral counsellor must take into consideration the person's individual situation, coping skills and understanding of his/her own beliefs, values and meanings. Forgiveness is between the person and God and may be a timely process that may be accomplished with empathy, compassion, patient endurance and "noticing" the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is to be remembered that there are many ways when counselling a person in the ways of forgiveness. Patton (2000:284) writes, "Human forgiveness is not doing something but discovering something - that I am more like those who have hurt me than different from them." He points out that forgiveness is about a larger process of dealing with an estranged "self" and the experience of self-healing, which has at its heart recognising and receiving into the community of sinners those affirmed as God's children.

***ii) The need for social and religious interaction***

The lack of social and religious interaction was apparent at various stages in the "stories" told by the research participants. Structures of oppression can cause a lack of social and religious interactions and needs to be

resisted by faith communities. These structures of oppression need to be resisted in the internal Christian faith community, the social, economic and political situations of life with mobility impairment because it can interfere with the forming of personal and collective identity (2.3.5).

- **Resisting lack of internal religious interaction**

The need for fellowship was very evident in the stories recounted as each research participant expressed very strongly the need for fellowship. Fellowship with collective believers from their churches seemed to be associated with belonging. Scripture supports the notion of fellowship and belonging and believers are reminded with the words "not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near" (Hebrews. 10:25 RSV).

However, people who experience living with mobility restrictions, physical restrictions, chronic illnesses, frailty because of aging and even those too poor to afford transport to church, have difficulties in consistently getting to collective worship gatherings. Quadriplegics, frail elderly and people who are chronically ill experience periods, at different stages of their lives, of being hospitalised, at home convalescing or rehabilitating and some experience periods of restriction to home because of weather and seasonal conditions. Fellowship with collective believers can become nonexistent for lengthy periods or become inconsistent so that nurturing and growth become fragmented and a sense of non-belonging may result. Religious interaction is something to be strived for by pastoral workers in their dealings with people experiencing these restrictions.

In chapter one it was pointed out that social interaction is important for the shaping of identity (1.2). In chapter four the research participants' "stories" disclosed problems that resulted in lack of social and religious interaction (4.3). Their faith communities did not always provide for

fellowship which resulted in a lack of being able to identify with their faith communities as belonging to them. Sometimes this was because of the unwillingness to change a traditional stance of the faith community.

Dreyer (2000:40) maintains that congregational identity in relation to stability and change is not a fixed substance. Congregations need to recount the "stories" which are drawn from memories of the past to enable actions to maintain the tension between stability and change when and where necessary. It is openness to change that builds healthy stability and traditional values. It has already been discussed that narrative as a mediating force can challenge rigid systems of power to initiate change in oppressive situations.

Dreyer (2000:41) writes:

> The concept of narrative identity stresses the dynamic nature of identities and the willingness to adopt a critical attitude towards the tradition and those who would like to control the collective memory.

The recounting of narratives by remembering past experiences of the great tradition, which are the doctrinal beliefs and confessional framework of congregations and experiences of the local tradition found in the interpretation of Christian faith and practices in specific context and history requires imagination to open new doors to interpretations of the future plans of Christian faith communities (Dreyer 2000:42). In this way Ricoeur's (1992) notion of narrative identity plays an important role in the forming of new identities for Christian communities.

Accordingly, a pastoral work praxis is about caring for people in their specific needs. It should then be about achieving mould-breaking narratives as an alternative for breaking down structures of power that

keep any person on the margins of the faith community or social community (Booth 1996:239). The recounting of narratives of oppression can provide new doors to open for change, but it requires dedicated planning and organisation of the integrated and interdependent traditional practices in the faith community.

Consequently, the notion of story-telling, remembering and critical reflection, that centres on the "collective self" and the collective "other-than-self" is vital to initiating change in oppressive situations. The identity of the Christian faith community is, therefore, not dependent only on narrative interaction within the church, but is also dependent on what the "stories" of the "different other" have told about them.

For example, what people who are disadvantaged in mobility have to say in their story-telling about the pastoral work of the faith community is important to the identity of the church. In the same way the church's collective story-telling is important to identity for people who are disadvantaged. In other words, each through telling her/his story has an impact on the "other".

How faith communities listen to people who are disadvantaged, and critically reflect upon what is recounted in association with their own "stories" of pastoral work, in relation to the traditions, will have an influence on the personal identity of these people. It will also have an influence on how they experience a sense of belonging to their faith communities.

Eiesland (1994a:81) makes an important observation, about sharing story-telling, that unity can come only by difficult truth-telling and open discussion between people who experience disabilities and are discriminated against and people who are considered able in body. Ignoring the history of the struggle against discrimination and injustice is a theology

that fails people who are marginalised and oppressed for numerous reasons. Persons who are marginalised because of disability or other reasons must become a speaking centre in the church, in discussion groups and disability rights movements, where they need to be recognised, acknowledged and listened to.

Volf (1996:234) points out that the need to know why or the truth about why something happened is important to remembering. Erasing memory of the truth makes it invisible and is something which people who are disadvantaged frequently experience.

Christian faith communities have a committed responsibility to facilitate the public recounting of stories by people who are mobility impaired. Copeland (1996:149) maintains that the requirement of authentic community is when a concerted effort is made to understand common and different experiences and to explore differences and commonalities critically with the aim to achieve judgments that sustain interdependent commitments. Difference challenges practical theology to overcome prevailing dominant ideology that persuades us to ignore differences of the "other" or treat them with contempt and judgement. It requires us to be critical about ourselves, about the "other" who is different in some way and to evaluate our inter-relations in situations of power and dominance critically.

Volf (1996:69) asks the questions: But how do we make non-exclusionary judgments? It is through the self-giving love made available to the followers of Christ by the pattern set by the suffering Messiah (Volf 1996:71). It means the faith community identifies with the broken body of Christ, which is confirmed by the practices of the Eucharist as evidence of a broken church marked by sin, exclusivity and the lack of a "perfect" body. According to Eiesland (1994a:109) the church represents essential diversity and differences that make the members of the Christian community indispensable to one another and in this sense their "stories"

are “entangled” with each other.

However, the responsibility of faith communities does not stop at the doorstep of the church building, because as was noted previously a pastoral work praxis is also concerned about social practices of oppressive power structures. Gerkin (1997:105) points out that there are many voices of liberation, political theological perspectives have been taken by many churches and the voices of feminist theologians are becoming more articulate. He refers to the problem that caring is in a time of transition and controversy and suggests that to deal with the diversity within theology it must be open to change. Gerkin (1997:105) writes: “It certainly suggests that whatever paths in pastoral practice are taken toward new horizons need to be kept open-ended and flexible, able to accommodate further new developments.”

- **Resisting lack of social, political and economic interaction**

A pastoral work praxis that is orientated towards the contextual lives of people cannot omit considering pastoral work practices in relation to identities shaped by interaction of society and its politico-economic influences. Volf (1996:225) writes about identity being shaped by interaction with others being associated with belonging and justice:

> And if we, the communal selves, are called into internal communication with the triune God, then *true justice will always be on the way to embrace* - to a place where we will belong together with our personal and cultural identities both preserved and transformed, but certainly enriched by the other.

Accordingly, the Christian faith community as embodiment of the Triune God’s suffering has an ethical obligation as well in its caring, because being human and having one God as creator, means that humans are created

to belong all together. This means that love and “embrace” are also an ethical obligation of the church. What do I mean by this? If the Christian faith body is about sustaining relationships in its pastoral work then ethically it is bound to do something about how the“different other’s” identity is shaped by society and faith communities.

How then may pastoral theologies proceed down the path of resistance against social structures of oppression? Dreyer (2002:5) points out that practical theology has to include normative thinking and discusses normative thinking in tension with ideology and utopia. Ideology and utopia have to do with the character of human action that is mediated, structured and integrated by symbolic systems.

Ricoeur (1992:323) suggests that actions are influenced by tradition, which may be political, cultural, economic, social or religious and the collective narratives are enclosed in the history of such traditions. Ideology functions to pattern, conserve and provide order to the course actions take; however, if ideology becomes rigid and unchallenged it distorts.

To prevent distortion of ideology the function of utopia must present the opportunity to critique rigid systems of power and provide renewed actions to present contemporary living. However, to prevent a false utopia that presents as a flight from reality, the interplay of tension between ideology and utopia needs to be critically examined consistently to prevent distortions of either (Dreyer 2002:6-7). A critical pastoral theology necessitates reviewing and analysing political, economic, social and religious ideologies. Hence, critical reflection should result in appropriate action being implemented, regarding marginalisation of people who are disadvantaged physically.

Lyon (1995:95), refers to the caring responsibilities of faith communities in that these need to include becoming life-course ethicists and expand

their sensitivity to the interplay of moral and political economy that exists during any life-span. Thus, oppressive, exclusive and restrictive structures of society must be resisted by the Christian faith community.

Moreover, Chopp (1996:121-122) refers to a critical theory from a feminist perspective, she writes that "a critical theory takes as its departure point the reality of oppression...and attempts both to display the origin, function and relations of structures that cause such oppression and to anticipate possibilities for change". Critical feminist theologies wholeheartedly support the active participation of faith communities in the struggle against oppression. Critical feminist theologies do not reject logical thinking; instead they use logic to argue against stereotypes, warped ideology, false utopian systems that support oppressive behaviour (Karaban 1999:71-72; Miller-McLemore 1999:79-80). Copeland (1996:145) writes, "Thus, the experience, insight, understanding and judgement of poor, oppressed and marginalized women stand as normative in any critical feminist theological formulation." Hence, critical feminist theologies in search of meaning and values interpret scriptures and traditions within the different historical, cultural, social and religious situations. As a critical feminist theology supporter Eiesland (1994a:87) regards it as necessary to resist theological symbols that exclude and devalue people who are disabled. Eiesland (1994a:87) writes, "A liberatory theology of disability critically engages the fundamental theologies of the Christian tradition."

The call to repentance, therefore, is not only an individual or spiritual one, but also a social and political call. Socially dominant structures and political legislative slackness are vehicles which render certain people powerless and excluded. The condonation of social and political injustices needs to be identified as sin by the church. Eiesland (1994a:90) speaks of liberatory theology and maintains that embodied theology is the struggle of resistance and the relation of our hidden bondage and images. Firstly, she points out the fact that all human beings embody the image of God, yet the feminists note that the experience of men and women are not usually the

same socially or religiously. People who are disabled contend with the same issues of embodiment, which for them include physical and mechanical aids as part of their embodiment. Hence, when the focus is on the physical abilities of the individual, yet the importance of their embodiment including mechanical aid, such as a wheelchair, is excluded, they question the use of normal bodies for the basis for religious traditions. Secondly, religious symbols not only designate social status, but are also able to transform it. The reason for this is that religious symbols have the power to establish and maintain beliefs and values in society. In the long run symbols establish normative standards for human interaction (Eiesland 1994a:91).

Eiesland (1994a:92) emphasises the fact that empowering symbols must be upheld for marginal groups. If, however, the aim of the transformation of destructive social systems is to be ongoing then these "symbols must be linked to the major social-symbolic order." In other words the way people who are disabled perceive their experience and their relationship with God, as well as their religious practices, must change. At the same time the practices and images of people who are able-bodied must change. It is from this point of departure that Eiesland (1994a:94) suggests that change of the symbol of Christ as the suffering servant be made to that of Jesus Christ as the disabled God. What Eiesland says coincides with what Volf (1996) refers to as the "suffering Messiah" in self-giving love, which does not reflect virtuous suffering, but rather that of embrace of all humankind in the love of God. It includes people who are disabled and people who are able-bodied. It is not so much the symbolic referral of suffering Messiah or disabled God, but that the message of the cross does not reflect virtuous suffering; it is about the embrace of all humankind. Eiesland (1994a:94) suggests that theological strategy must join political action and resymbolisation when she writes:

> Political action is the work of 'acting out' and 'holding our bodies

> together' in the struggle...Political action includes increasing the visibility and authority of people with disabilities, promoting face-to-face interaction between people with disabilities and the able-bodied,...

Volf (1996:119) expresses it well when saying, "Without a 'politics of a pure heart' every politics of liberation will trip over its own feet". Within the understanding of self-giving love in response to God's self-giving love, the death of Christ opens the way for repentance, genuine confession and forgiveness and making-space-for-the-other religiously, socio-culturally and even possibly in economic politics. Nobody is the exception to the rules of "embrace" and the self-giving love as practised by Jesus Christ, but it is faith communities' responsibility to make and achieve goals of "embrace" in society. Christian faith communities have an enormous role to play in convincing public role players in the narrative of social oppression of the need to "embrace" people who they perceive as "different" or merely fitting into a category of commonality.

What has been discussed above is that these perceptions and socio-cultural, economic politics need to be resisted and will be when:

1) the interdependent interaction and relationship of the different practices of churches are achieved;

2) awareness of different structures of power that create material and socio-cultural barriers for some people is raised through preaching, and

3) stories about oppression are told by the people experiencing the oppression and facilitated through the practices of celebration and worship, as well as topical preaching, and courses to improve pastoral work skills are facilitated through the practices of instruction; then faith community will begin to strengthen the personal identity of people who are mobility

impaired.

Communion with God and isolation for those suffering in the painful realities of the world are therefore contrasting experiences. Communion with God results in recognition, compassion and love for the "other" in life's catastrophes. In the parable of the good Samaritan Jesus challenged those listening to go and do likewise.

***iii) Specific needs in homebound periods***

Previously it was pointed out that the weather and seasonal conditions influence bodily difficulties, which restrict people with quadriplegia from attending church for long periods. The complexities of being restricted to home for long periods result in loss of a sense of belonging and identity, because of being isolated and deprived of collective fellowship, for the person and often for the family who are the main care-givers. It is where "embrace" should be the most obvious because limited social and religious interaction and derogative social, political and economic institutions can be more prevalent during prolonged homebound periods. It can remove much of what helps to form collective, personal, religious identities and the multiple roles attached. Periods of being homebound should receive more effort from faith communities to encourage religious interaction for people who are mobility disadvantaged. When caring is introduced into the home, it should be obvious that the different actions of faith communities should be connected, relational, interdependent and in interaction with one another.

Ways of introducing a holistic pastoral work praxis, in co-operation with the other practices of faith communities, during prolonged or permanent periods of restriction to home is shown below.

**Figure 5.6 Pastoral work praxis in the home by faith communities**

**Local faith community**: integrated and interdependent practices of the faith community with pastoral work practices brought into the home.

▼

**Home** - individual - family
In relation to contextual daily lives

▼ ▼ ▼

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **PREACHING AND CELEBRATION**<br><br>Group visits to share the gospel.<br>Consistently forming groups to bring mini services and worship fellowship into the home.<br>Serving the sacraments with a small group attending.<br><br>(Organised after making arrangements with the individual and family).<br><br>**SERVICE: Help/mercy**<br><br>Consider financial circumstances and possibilities of assistance.<br>Give help where needed in liaison with mutual care | **Pastoral Work**<br>**Mutual care**<br>Being present as company, encouragement.<br>Help by relieving care-givers to give them a break.<br>Assist with transporting to and from destinations that are necessary, e.g. hospital, visits, outings, etc. in co- operation with service (Diakonia).<br><br>**Pastoral care**<br>Home visits, support counselling, healing, growth, support encouragement, support of family.<br>Consistent feedback for planning and organising care.<br><br>**Pastoral counselling**<br>Crisis counselling of individual and family and church members.<br><br>**Pastoral Therapy**<br>In-depth counselling. | **Instruction**<br>Group Bible study.<br>Group prayer meetings.<br>Video, tape cassette provision (in arrangement with the individual and family).<br>Providing skills for caring for mutual carers and updating the other pastoral work practices skills. |

The diagram is intended to give an example of ways pastoral work may be communicated in giving care to people who are disadvantaged in mobility, specifically in the internal ministry of the church. The diagram points out that during prolonged periods of being restricted to home, church fellowship

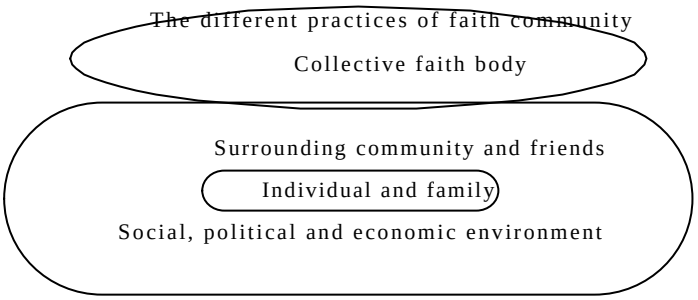
and caring need to be brought into the home. The first rectangle represents the Christian faith community and different practices that should be integrated with pastoral work practices, while the inner rectangle represents the home environment and attempts to express the connectedness of social, economic and political influences on both individual, family and faith community. These influences must be taken into consideration when providing pastoral work to the individual and family. The ▼ in the larger rectangle indicates that the response to homebound periods is one that includes all the practices of the faith community in interaction with the different types of pastoral work. It indicates that these practices of the faith community need to be brought into the home. Three ▼ indicate the way the types of pastoral work and the other practice of the faith community can work together to meet as much needs of the individual and significant others in any periods of being homebound. Besides specific pastoral work practices it should include other practices that provide fellowship and greater religious interaction. Thus, the columns represent some caring structures and actions and connectedness of the different practices. Interaction and interdependent tasks by the faith community are implemented through consistent feedback between the different pastoral work practices and other practices of the faith community and revised actions are implemented.

It is the back-and-forth motion of feedback, planning and implementing actions that can allow for shaping personal and collective religious identity. Feedback is an important action in the integration of the different practices with pastoral work, because it is what keeps the cycle of the theory and praxis relationship going. The need for planned and organised feedback of the different kinds of practices of faith communities in cooperation with the different practices is essential (see figure 5.5).The diagram merely gives an example of pastoral work and the ideas are by no means exhaustive.

It indicates that a communal-contextual approach requires a theology of

pastoral work praxis that includes socio-economic and political problems of daily life. An attempt is made to give an example of a communal-contextual pastoral work praxis for people who are disadvantaged in mobility and showing these dimensions in the diagram below.

**Figure 5.7 An example of the external action of pastoral work to reach people who are physically disadvantaged**




| **Preaching/proclaiming** | **Pastoral Work** | **Instruction** |
|---|---|---|
| House-to-house contact and evangelisation.<br>Encounter and listening.<br>Feedback to pastoral work and need for specific care.<br>Visitation.<br><br>**Service:** help/mercy in cooperation with mutual care. | Encounter.<br>Listening.<br>Noticing.<br>Feedback on specific needs for preaching, service, teaching.<br>Care to be organised in the same way as internal action of the church above interaction with the individual and family. | Same as inward action of the faith community after feedback from pastoral work and arrangement with the family. |

The oval shape refers to the faith community in its collective actions. The oblong shape represents the surrounding community and the different relevant environments which surround the inner oblong indicating the individual and family. The three squares refer to suggested ideas for actions of each faith community practice and their participation when making contact with people who are disadvantaged physically, in interaction with pastoral work as the major caring facility. Once contact encounters take place and through interaction a relationship is built up with the person

and her/his family, the organisational structures of pastoral work move to the same as the internal responsibility and actions of the faith community referred to in figure 5.6.

It is clear from the above diagrams that pastoral work is communicated by "word and action" by the congregation. The Christian faith community's calling is purposeful healing, nurturing, restoring and facilitating freedom for growth and promoting release of potentials, which are normative theological values and empowering tools, if implemented with commitment and dedication. Therefore, careful systematic organised management of communicating the caring activities of the whole body of Christ is a priority, as far as I am concerned. Haphazard organisation and lack of proper feedback will result in repercussions that affect the individual, the family and the faith community. I reiterate that recursive feedback is required and should be in a spiral motion that indicates growth to provide interaction and cohesion in the structures of the faith community to stimulate growth through communication and cooperative actions of caring.

The advantage of a pastoral work praxis being brought into the home in ways that the different actions of the faith community contribute through groups instead of individual participation is that religious interaction can be increased and consequently collective religious and personal identity is strengthened. At the same time it actively makes opportunity for the person who is mobility disadvantaged and significant others to tell their "stories" of living with mobility impairment or care-giving. Listening, reciprocal interaction and collectively identifying with the person and significant others in their specific needs can give them a sense of belonging to a faith community. It also gives the opportunity to identify specific needs, examine tradition in relation to the specific needs and in understanding of the Scripture.

Thus, as Ricoeur (1992:) points out narrative has the power to identify

promises kept or not kept. Narrative function allows for moral/ethical assessment of the actors and actions of the "story". It provides the opportunity to plan and implement action that can bring change to rigid tradition or strengthen stable tradition not supportive of ideologies that hold up situations of oppression. It is a way of making-space-in-faith communities-"selves"-for-"another" in the four movements of "embrace.

## 5.4 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

In chapter one it was pointed out that the study is about people who are mobility impaired and the problem of being relegated a fix "disabled identity" because of public perceptions, attitudes and behaviour of some non-disabled people. This study addressed two main research questions, namely "What are the implications of acquired mobility impairment for personal identity and collective identity?" and "How can we in Christian faith communities, through pastoral work, facilitate a sense of belonging to strengthen personal identity and collective identity for people who are mobility disadvantaged?" The answer of the first question was through theoretical exploration in chapter two, three and four while the second question was discussed in chapter five.

Chapter two considered Ricoeur's notion of narrative identity in relation to personal identity in section 2.2 and how the gap between personal identity and collective identity can be bridged through the metaphor of "belonging" (2.3.5.1). It was pointed out that an important function of narrative is that when people interpret self-narratives in relation with the interpretation of "other's" narratives through interaction, it creates a sense of belonging to "another" or group. Another important point considered was that identity has two meanings, namely *ipse*-identity and *idem*-identity of permanence in time. However, a benefit of narrative is the temporal dimension of life and the understanding of how identity is shaped through prefiguration in

relation to past experience, configuration of the present and refiguration of experiences for the future (2.2). The relevance of these points is that suffering of "another" can be understood and identified with through reciprocal narrative discourse and interpretation that can disclose situations of oppression of individuals. It was shown that narrative plots and the process of imagination allow for the "narrative arc" and the "mimetic arc" to form a connection in which constancy may be maintained, as well as the ability for change through the choice to initiate action (2.3.2). Another prime interest in this study has been the function of narrative as mediation between action theory and ethical theory. It allows for assessment of ethical/moral issues in relation to "stories" that have been told and interpreted. Hence situations of oppression can be disclosed, accountability and responsibility can be taken for the suffering of "another"(2.6). The relevance of Ricoeur's (1992) notion of narrative identity is that the expressions of "character" and "keeping one's promises" in relation to "selfhood and sameness" constancy and continuity of "selfhood", and can be understood (2.3.1, 2.3.2). In relation to "self and another than self" in (2.3.3) these expression give understanding of accountability and responsibility of "self" to "another". At the same time narrative discloses the person who is suffering and the actors involved in the suffering. It was pointed out that dialectic of action theory and ethical theory allows for initiation of actions in changing the suffering of another person. The relationship of multiple identities and religious identity to the above discussion in section 2.4 is an important consideration because of its relevance to people who are mobility disadvantaged and pastoral work which was discussed in the following chapters.

Chapter three was approach through theoretical exploration of disability and mobility impairment which were discussed through two questions, namely "What is disability?" and "What is mobility impairment?" Consideration was given to explore two approaches to disability and mobility impairment, namely the biomedical and social model (3.4, 3.5). It

was noted that the strength of the biomedical model is that it provides for specialised medical and paramedical care that is vital for people who are mobility impaired, while the weakness is the failure to provide mutual cooperation between the health-care institution, the individual and significant social life structures. It was pointed out that this weakness of the biomedical model contributes considerably to a fixed "disabled identity" for people who are mobility disabled (3.4).

The relevance of the social model to this study was found in the confirmation that environmental, material, economic and socio-cultural barriers support oppression. The strength of the social model is the contribution to understanding disability as a multidimensional issue (3.5). The importance of finding a new language that all people can understand was introduced through Rolland's (1989, 1993, 1994) psychosocial typology of chronic diseases (3.6, 3.6.1) and expanded on to describe an unfolding narrative of mobility impairment that bridged the biological and psychosocial dimensions of life (3.3.3, 3.6.2).

Chapter four through qualitative empirical research I explored the experiences of people who are mobility impaired which from a narrative perspective addressed the question: What are the implications of acquired mobility impairment for personal identity and collective identity? The method of data generation and analysis was explained (4.2). Reporting on the results of the analysis of the research participants "stories" pointed out that fringe narratives emerged, such as actions that excluded, discriminated against and isolated not only the participants who were mobility impaired, but also family members and significant others who cared for them. The important point is that the empirical research disclosed the lack of social and religious interaction and the influence this had on social and religious identities of the research participants and their significant others. The relevance to this study is that religious ideologies that oppress and utopian systems that support such oppression need critical reflection. Social and

political structures of oppression, such as environmental barriers, economic exploitation and socio-cultural barriers, and personal specific needs of people who are mobility disadvantaged need to be actively addressed if Christian faith communities are to assist people living with mobility impairment in shaping religious and personal identity.

Chapter five deals with the research question, namely "How can we in Christian faith communities, through pastoral work, facilitate a sense of belonging to facilitate collective identity and strengthen personal identity for people who are mobility disadvantaged?" Two dominant themes of Christian faith communities in relation to pastoral work praxis (see 5.2) and a theory of pastoral praxis for people who are mobility impaired (see5.3) were considered to answer the question. The first theme dealt with the importance of metaphors, such as "embrace", "covenant" and "narrative" and the importance for pastoral work that these metaphors facilitate a sense of belonging and collective identity. This was relevant for developing a the concept of an integrated pastoral work praxis with the different other practices of faith communities (5.2). Thus, section 5.3 explored a theory of pastoral work praxis as the faith community's responsibility in a "communion of struggle" in resistance of oppressive religious, social and political situations for people who are mobility disadvantaged (5.3.2.1).

It was pointed out that the notion of narrative identity can provide a way of evaluating moral issues through critical reflection on narratives recounted and employing the action of emplotment; narrative as mediation between descriptive action and prescriptive action can occur. This means that by means of prefiguration and configuration actions of discordances and concordances can through refiguration unite and allow the possibility of change of the situation of oppression. The importance for pastoral work in relation to Ricoeur's (1992) narrative identity was discussed in that it allows for assessment of whether promises made by faith communities, in relation to the Word of God, have been kept or not fulfilled. In other words, the value is that it enables reflection on the successes and failures of

church traditions and their participation in exclusionary actions of society. It was discussed that faith communities can participate in maintaining the same barriers for people who are mobility impaired through failure to "passionately live" the embrace of the Triune God's compassion and love in self-giving in section (5.3).

Last, but not least, the interdependence of pastoral work with the different practices of the faith community in relation to the difficult experiences of people with mobility impairment and their care-givers during homebound periods was given attention (5.3.2). It emphasised the idea that pastoral praxis needed to absorb the other actions of preaching, teaching and service to be effective. It was noticeable that the situation of being tied to the home resulted in fellowship being a primary need. Although the types of pastoral work can cover specific needs, such as general caring through mutual care, pastoral care through visitation of church leaders, pastoral counselling and therapy through consultation, they do not usually provide *collective* fellowship and worship. The need, therefore, for *organised* interaction of practices of preaching, teaching through collective members (groups) interwoven with the major types of pastoral work, was considered vital for a pastoral work praxis (5.3). The importance for opening the door for evangelical outreach to the community outside the church where people who are mobility impaired may be living and the significance of dedicated organisation and feedback skills was emphasised (5.3.2 )

## 5.5 CONCLUSION

In the introduction in chapter one I pointed out the different narrative episodes that stimulated my interest and motivated this research project. It has been a long and sometimes painful, but fruitful journey. It was a privilege to participate in the narratives of the research participants about their living with quadriplegia. It was indeed sharing in their pain, tears,

sadness as well as achievements and joy as they recounted their experiences. The evidence of the harsh realities of dominant ideologies about disability and the influence these ideologies have were sometimes glaringly evident in their lives. Ideologies gave rise to systems of power that still have control over their living circumstances, such as economic politics of the day that still do not provide a disability pension that is viable in relation to the cost of living and the needs of mechanical and personal aids. Political ideologies about disability accomplished legislation about employment, but fell short of enforcing it in practice, especially for people who are severely mobility impaired. However, it was exciting to envisage and explore theory, such as a psychosocial model of mobility impairment, narrative identity and to tie relevant points to a theology of embrace. The end result was a theory of pastoral work praxis of embrace with people who are mobility impaired, but which can include other people experiencing the powers that enforce exclusion in their daily lives.

I am of the opinion that this study contributes to practical theology in that it provides data that reflect the subjective “character potential” of people who are mobility impaired through the participants telling their “stories”. It also shows the “character” of destructive forces in their lives because of being mobility disadvantaged. It does grant some base-line for practical theologians to reflect on. Thus, another contributory factor to practical theology and also a pastoral work praxis by faith communities is that the function of narrative allows for critical reflection on religious and social traditions and the choice to initiate change of oppressive situations. However, it needs to be noted that initiating goals for change is only accomplished when old rigid traditions have been dismantled and actions transform exclusion into inclusion. Another important contribution of this research project to practical theology is that the discussion of Rolland’s (1989, 1993, 1994) concept of the a psychosocial typology of chronic disease can in a sense remove the monopoly of the medical institution on disability. It also made way for narrative discourse and a psychosocial

perspective of mobility impairment, which removes any excuse for lack of involvement in caring because it is a medical problem.

The approach of a broader outlook of practical theology is a contribution in that pastoral work praxis is understood as not removed from the practices encountered in economic politics, social, cultural and religious communities. It means critical reflection by theologians on the different social systems and the influences imposed on the daily living situations of people who are mobility impaired. The implications are that any pastoral work, whether mutual care, pastoral care, pastoral counselling, pastoral therapy or a combination of the different types of pastoral work, needs constant readjustment to the psychosocial situation of the individual and family. It also means consistent ongoing intervention of pastoral work actions in the lives of people with mobility restrictions and their families.

Does it end here? No it does not because although the focus of the research was on people with quadriplegia and other groups were mentioned, such as the elderly frail person and those mobility disabled because of chronic disease (1.2). There are three important points that should be considered for further research. 1) The person who is living with a high cervical quadriplegia has received little recognition even by the different quadriplegic movements and these people require more recognition and further research to give awareness to their predicaments. 2) Other groups who are restricted in mobility can benefit from this research, such as the elderly frail and those experiencing mobility restriction because of chronic illness. Each group have their own specific needs. The living circumstance of people who are frail and elderly, for instance is a research project on its own. 3) Another area for further research that this thesis discloses is the attention that should be given to the relationship between academic practical theology and Christian faith communities. How to ensure theory reaches praxis level and that praxis connects to the level of theory for

critical reflection and revision of traditions needs attention.

## APPENDIX A

## CONSENT

I _____ give consent to be interviewed and the interviews to be tape-recorded. I understand that the tape recordings will be transcribed and used for material for a doctor's thesis. I agree that I do not have to answer any question that I choose not to answer. I understand that I may choose to withdraw from the research at any time if I so desire.

I understand that my name will not be used, but a code name will be given and that confidentiality will be maintained. I also agree that, after consultation with me on the interpretation of what has been said on the recordings, the transcribed recordings may be used for the thesis.

**If consent needs to be recorded:** Please answer Your Name in full and then I GIVE MY CONSENT.

## APPENDIX B

**DEMOGRAPHIC: Pre-morbid state; Post-morbid state; Profiles**

**DEMOGRAPHIC:**

**before quadriplegia:**

**CODE:_____**

**Name:_____Sex:F_____M_____Age:_____**

**(S)ingle/(M)arried/(D)ivorced/(W)idow(er) _____Educational level:_____**

**Occupation: _____**

**Type of Dwelling:_____Religion:_____ Church: _____**

**Parents: _____**

**Children: _____**

**Others: _____**

**B) PRE-MORBID STATE:**

**Activities and involvement:**

**Family: _____**

**Activities:**

**_____**

**Social:_____**

**Activities: _____**

**Church:**

**_____**

**Activities** _____

**Other activities:**

_____

**C) POST-MORBID STATE:**

**Age when disabled:** _____ **Age at present:** _____

**If children: ages:** _____

**Living at home:** _____

**(S)ingle/(M)arried/(D)ivorced/(W)idow(er)** _____

**Occupation/Income:** _____

**Education level:** _____

**Dwelling/living environment: Alone:** _____ **With parents:** _____ **With child(ren):** _____**Self-support home:** _____ **Other:** _____

**Building: flat** _____**flat on house:** ____**house:** _____**Other:** _____

**Rented:** _____ **Owner:** _____

**Religion:**_____**Present Church:**_____

**Support systems:**√ **yes** ✕ **no**

**Family** ____ **How?**_____

**Friends**____ **How?**_____

**Church** ____ **How?**_____

**Health-care:**

**Medical** ___ **How?**_____

**Nursing** __ **How?**_____

**Paramedics** _____

**Who?**_____

_

**How?**_____

**History of**

**Disability:**_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

**Rehabilitation History:**

_____

_____

_____**Disability and Limitations:**

_____

_____

_____**Aids for mobility:**

_____

_____

_____

**Present Activities:**

**Home**_____

_____

_____

_____

**Social:**

_____

___

_____

_____

**Church:**

_____

__

**Mobility in home:**

_____

_____

_____

**Outside Home:**_____

_____

**OTHER OF INTEREST:** _____

_____

**RESEARCHER'S NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS:**

_____

_____

_____**NOTES AFTER TRANSCRIPTION, ANALYSIS - REINTERPRETATION WITH RESPONDENT: (return interview).**

_____

_____

## APPENDIX C SPINAL CORD INJURIES

| Level | Muscle Function | Abilities |
|---|---|---|
| **C1-C3** | ***None to little diaphragm Neck control.*** | *Special adapted wheelchair, portable ventilating system. Use of a mouth-stick.* |
| **C4** | *Neck control. Usually able to shrug shoulders.* | *Can manipulate power wheelchair with special devices. Use of mouth-stick* |
| **C5** | *Partial shoulder & biceps control. No control of wrists or hands.* | *Able to eat with special devices . Can propel a wheelchair with assistive devices. Can swim & bowl with adaptive equipment.* |
| **C6** | *Shoulder control. Weak elbow extension. Wrist flexion & extension. No hand function.* | *Can dress independently with special equipment. Can transfer in bed or to car independently. Can drive with adaptive equipment.* |
| **C7-8** | *Shoulder control, elbow extension & some fingers flexion & extension.* | *Can dress completely with special equipment. Able to shower. Able to work in a building free from architectural barriers.* |
| **T1-5** | *Normal upper extremity muscle function, but poor trunk control.* | *Total wheelchair independence. Can move from wheelchair to floor & back. Can stand with assistance. Can compete in all wheelchair sports. Has fine motor coordination in fingers.* |
| **T6-10** | *Partial trunk stability.* | *Can walk with long braces & crutches in home.* |
| **T11-L1** | *Trunk stability.* | *Can possibly walk to do some household activities.* |
| **L2** | *Hip flexion.* | *Can walk within the confines of the house.* |
| **L3-4** | *Knee extension.* | *Can walk in the community with leg braces & crutches or cane* |
| **L5-S2** | *Leg & ankle control.* | *Can possibly walk without any special devices.* |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | Ereckson Tada et al (Joni and Friends) 1980:21<br>Combined with San Jose 1986. This only provides a guideline. |

The level of injury is helpful in predicting what parts of the body might be affected by paralysis and loss of function. Incomplete injuries will give some variations to the loss of function. Cervical injuries usually result in quadriplegia while thoracic, lumbar and sacral injuries usually result in paraplegia