

# Enabling faith: Towards a Pentecostal homiletical strategy for shaping disability-friendly congregations

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Thesis submitted for the degree *Philosophiae Doctor* in  
*Homiletics* at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West  
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May 2016



**This study is dedicated to my late son, André Benoit Retief (2 October 2012 – 3 October 2012), as well as to my brother, Franko Retief. Thank you to both of you for teaching me about the resilience of people with disabilities.**

## DECLARATION

I, Marno Retief, hereby declare that:

- The work in this thesis is my own original work;
- All sources used or referred to have been documented and recognised; and
- This thesis has not previously been submitted in full or partial fulfilment of the requirements for an equivalent or higher qualification at any other recognised educational institution.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

First and foremost, I express my profound gratitude to God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – for allowing me the opportunity to complete this study. Lord, the words you spoke to the apostle Paul are words that also resound in my heart: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9).

Furthermore, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks and appreciation to the following people:

- My wife, Benita Retief, and daughters, Allegra Lizelle Retief and Monét Alexandra Retief – thank you for your constant love and support throughout this study. I love the three of you with all my heart and thank God for bringing you into my life.
- My mother, Erina, and father, Pierre – thank you for believing in me and for encouraging me to pursue my doctoral studies. Your support throughout the years is deeply appreciated.
- My late mother-in-law, Lizelle Olivier – your example of faith in Christ, despite tremendous physical and medical challenges, continues to inspire me.
- My father-in-law, André Olivier, and his wife, Judy, as well as my brother-in-law, Quentin – thank you for your support as well.
- Henri Weideman, Ewald van Schalkwyk, and Gerhard de Jager – it is a privilege working alongside the three of you as part of the preaching and pastoral team at AFM Bellville. Thank you for praying for me.
- Raymond Lombard – your anointed preaching inspired me to pursue full-time ministry. Thank you for teaching me about the importance of the Word of God for the Christian life.
- Prof. Rantsoa Letšosa – thank you for your patience, guidance and wisdom in what was, at times, a difficult journey. Thank you for believing in me and encouraging me every step of the way.
- Kathy Black – your groundbreaking work inspired me to pursue the development of a disability-friendly, Pentecostal homiletical strategy.
- Dr Jacqui Baumgardt – for language editing the thesis.

**Marno Retief**

**May 2016**

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## ABSTRACT

The central theoretical argument of the present study is that it is possible to develop a Pentecostal homiletical strategy that may contribute to shaping disability-friendly congregations in the AFM and other classical Pentecostal denominations by cultivating disability-friendly ethical and theological perspectives among the members of a congregation.

Chapter 1 discusses the fact that research shows that over a billion people worldwide are living with some form of disability (WHO, 2011), and that approximately 7,5% of the South African population are living with some form of disability (Statistics South Africa, 2014:152). Furthermore, research suggests that people living with disability are less likely to attend religious services than people without a disability (cf. Hendershot, 2006; Woolverton, 2011). Many people with disabilities – including the researcher's own brother – have experienced faith destroying prejudice and alienation in Pentecostal congregations. Accordingly, the need to construct a Pentecostal homiletical strategy that will contribute to building disability-friendly congregations in the AFM – as well as other classical Pentecostal denominations – is imperative.

This study employs Osmer's (2008:4-12) methodology for engaging in practical theological interpretation. The descriptive-empirical phase of the study (Chapter 2) seeks to identify AFM preachers' perspectives on physical disability in order to determine the extent to which ableist perspectives about disability are found among the participating preachers. The interpretive phase of the study (Chapter 3) seeks to interpret the empirical findings of the descriptive-empirical phase by entering into dialogue with the fields of disability studies and disability theology, as well as the thought of selected AFM leaders. The normative phase of the study (Chapter 4) seeks to determine what ethical and theological guidelines Scripture offers with regard to understanding disability. The normative ethical and theological perspectives will be developed by utilising the grammatical-historical method of biblical exegesis (cf. Gorman, 2001; Van Rensburg *et al.*, 2011) and a literature study. The pragmatic phase (Chapter 5) synthesises the findings from the descriptive-empirical, interpretive, and normative phases of the study. This synthesis is utilised to develop homiletical rules of art that may serve as the basis for a Pentecostal homiletical strategy that contributes to shaping disability-friendly ethical and theological perspectives among members of a congregation.

Keywords: Pentecostal; Homiletical strategy; Disability; Disability-friendly congregations; Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM).

## OPSOMMING

Die sentrale teoretiese argument van die huidige studie is dat dit moontlik is om 'n Pentekostalistiese homiletiese strategie te ontwikkel wat mag bydrae tot die vorming van gestremdheidsvriendelike gemeentes in die AGS en ander klassieke Pinkster denominasies deur die kultivering van gestremdheidsvriendelike etiese en teologiese perspektiewe onder die gemeentelede.

Hoofstuk 1 bespreek die feit dat navorsing toon dat oor 'n biljoen mense wêreldwyd lewe met 'n vorm van gestremdheid (WHO, 2011), en dat ongeveer 7,5% van die Suid-Afrikaanse bevolking tans lewe met 'n vorm van gestremdheid (Statistiek Suid-Afrika, 2014:152). Verder, navorsing suggereer dat mense wat met gestremdheid lewe is minder geneig om godsdienstige byeenkomste by te woon as mense sonder 'n gestremdheid (sien Hendershot, 2006; Woolverton, 2011). Baie mense met gestremdhede – insluitend die navorser se eie broer – het al geloof-vernietigende vooroordeel en vervreemding ervaar in Pinkster gemeentes. Gevolglik is die noodigheid vir die ontwikkeling van 'n Pentekostalistiese homiletiese strategie wat sal bydra tot die vorming van gestremdheidsvriendelike gemeentes in die AGS – asook ander klassieke Pinkster denominasies – noodsaaklik.

Hierdie studie maak gebruik van Osmer (2008:4-12) se metodologie vir praktiese teologiese ondersoek. Die beskrywend-empiriese fase van die studie (Hoofstuk 2) poog om AGS predikante se perspektiewe oor fisiese gestremdheid te identifiseer om sodoende die vlak van 'ableist' perspektiewe oor gestremdheid onder die deelnemende predikante te bepaal. Die interpretatiewe fase van die studie (Hoofstuk 3) poog om die empiriese bevindinge van die beskrywend-empiriese fase te interpreteer deur in dialoog te tree met die velde van gestremdheidstudies en gestremdheidsteologie, sowel as die denke van bepaalde AGS leiers. Die normatiewe fase van die studie (Hoofstuk 4) poog om te bepaal watter etiese en teologiese riglyne die Skrif bied t.o.v. die verstaan van gestremdheid. Die normatiewe etiese en teologiese perspektiewe sal identifiseer word deur die gebruik van die grammaties-historiese metode van eksegeese (sien Gorman, 2001; Van Rensburg *et al.*, 2011) en 'n literatuurstudie. Die pragmatiese fase (Hoofstuk 5) kombineer die resultate van die beskrywend-empiriese, interpretatiewe, en normatiewe fases van die studie. Hierdie sintese word gebruik om riglyne te ontwikkel wat kan dien as die grondslag vir 'n Pentekostalistiese homiletiese strategie wat bydra tot die vorming van gestremdheidsvriendelike etiese en teologiese perspektiewe onder gemeentelede.

Sleuteltermes: Pentekostalisties; Homiletiese strategie; Gestremdheid; Gestremd-vriendelike gemeente; Apostoliese Geloofsending (AGS).

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 ORIENTATION

##### 1.1.1 Definition of Disability Theology

When we live for God, in Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, we cannot help but give hope to others, and we cannot help but be inclusive. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a call to a new world where outsiders become insiders. The church as the body of Christ is the quintessential inclusive community, where Jesus Christ, the one who is always identified with the outsider, presides as the copious host. We are called, through our baptism, to be his co-hosts. (Block, 2002:132)

In der Gemeinde Christi sind vor Gott alle gleich. Reichtum oder Armut, Tüchtigkeit oder Behinderung bestimmen hier nicht den Wert einer Person, jede und jeder werden in ihrer Menschenwürde geachtet und brüderlich und schwesterlich begrüßt, angenommen und anerkannt. (Moltmann, 2014:140)

Critical reflection on the importance of shaping disability-friendly – or disability-inclusive – congregations has enjoyed increasing attention in the field of practical theology in recent years (cf. Anderson, 2013; Beates, 2012; Black, 1996; Block, 2002; Brock & Swinton, 2012; Calder, 2012a; Carter, 2007; Conner, 2012; Edmonds, 2011; Eiesland & Saliers, 1998; Eurich & Lob-Hüdepohl, 2011; Hubach, 2006; Kunz & Liedke, 2013; Schnor, 2012; Swinton, 2000, 2001, 2011, 2012; Swinton & Brock, 2007; Webb-Mitchell, 1993, 2009, 2010). Nevertheless, we would be mistaken to assume that practical theology has been alone in drawing attention to the needs and experiences of people with disabilities (hereafter PWDs). On the contrary, the nascent academic discipline commonly referred to as disability theology is very much a multidisciplinary affair, drawing on biblical studies, systematic theology, moral theology, church history and practical theology, as well as disciplines outside the field of theology, such as sociology, ethics, education, psychology, and philosophy (Swinton, 2011:275). Broadly defined, the term ‘disability theology’ denotes:

[The] attempt by disabled and non-disabled Christians to understand and interpret the gospel of Jesus Christ, God, and humanity against the backdrop of the historical and contemporary experiences of people with disabilities. It has come to refer to a variety of perspectives and methods designed to give voice to the rich and diverse theological meanings of the human experience of disability. (Swinton, 2011:274)

The development of disability theology is testimony to the fact that practical theologians and the wider church community have taken serious notice of the realities and experiences of PWDs in our time.

### 1.1.2 Background to the Study

The present study considers the relationship between Pentecostal preaching and the formation of disability-friendly ethical and theological perspectives in the local congregation, especially within the context of the Pentecostal faith and praxis of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa (hereafter AFM). The primary reason for my interest in the aforesaid area of study is not the fact that research shows that over a billion people – that is, approximately 15% of the global population – are living with some form of disability (WHO, 2011). Nor is it the fact that over 2,8 million South Africans – that is, approximately to 7,5% of the national population – are living with some form of disability (Statistics South Africa, 2014:152). Nor is it the fact that research suggests that people living with disability are less likely to attend religious services than people without a disability (cf. Hendershot, 2006; Woolverton, 2011). As significant and worrying as these statistics are, they are not the driving force behind my interest in exploring the connection between Pentecostal preaching and disability. Rather, my inspiration is drawn from a person, someone I grew up with: my brother, Franko Retief.

### 1.1.3 Growing up with a Brother who is Paraplegic

I offer the following reflections about my brother as a sort of autoethnographic introduction about the relationship between Pentecostal preaching and the need for shaping disability-friendly congregations. I acknowledge the subjective and personal nature of the ensuing reflection, but ask that it be understood with reference to the notion of autoethnographic writing (cf. Boylorn & Orbe, 2014; Chang, 2008; Ellis, 2004, 2009; Muncey, 2010; Reed-Danahay, 1997). Autoethnography may be defined as:

[R]esearch, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political. Autoethnographic forms feature concrete action, emotion, embodiment, self-consciousness, and introspection portrayed in dialogue, scenes, characterization, and plot. Thus, autoethnography claims the conventions of literary writing. (Ellis, 2004:xix)

One of the primary objections to autoethnography is the validity of the method as a way of attaining valid research information, especially when the self is utilised as the only research instrument and source of data (cf. Parry & Boyle, 2009:697; VanderStoep & Johnston, 2009:241). Richardson (2000:937) suggests five factors that should be considered when evaluating any form of creative analytical practice (CAP) ethnography, including autoethnography:



1. *Substantive contribution.* Does this piece contribute to our understanding of social life? Does the writer demonstrate a deeply grounded (if embedded) social-scientific perspective? How has this perspective informed the construction of the text?
2. *Aesthetic merit.* Rather than reducing standards, another standard is added. Does this piece succeed aesthetically? Does the use of creative analytical practices open up the text and invite interpretive responses? Is the text artistically shaped, satisfying, complex, and not boring?
3. *Reflexivity.* Is the author cognizant of the epistemology of postmodernism? How did the author come to write this text? How was the information gathered? Are there ethical issues? How has the author's subjectivity been both a producer and product of this text? Is there adequate self-awareness and self-exposure for the reader to make judgments about the point of view? Do authors hold themselves accountable to the standard of knowing and telling of the people they have studied?
4. *Impactfulness.* Does this affect me emotionally and/or intellectually? Does it generate new questions, move me to write, move me to try new research practices, or move me to action?
5. *Expresses a reality.* Does this text embody a fleshed out sense of lived experience? Does it seem true – a credible account of a cultural, social, individual, or communal sense of the “real”?

In offering the following reflections about my brother as an autoethnographic introduction about the relationship between Pentecostal preaching and the need for disability-friendly congregations, I am cognizant of the abovementioned five criteria and strive to fulfil them in my writing.

My brother, Franko Retief, was born in Bellville, South Africa, on the 21<sup>st</sup> of May 1981, the second child of Pierre and Erina Retief. A very active child, he loved the outdoors and would regularly explore the neighbourhood with his bicycle. I was certainly the less active brother between us two. Neither my parents nor I were surprised when, at age ten, Franko was approached by a rugby coach at school to join one of the grade 5 rugby teams. He was quite muscular and tall for a boy of his age, so his coach thought he would be an excellent choice to play in the lock position.

It was August 1992 and the school rugby season was in full swing. Excited and inspired by his passion for his newfound sport, Franko had played about four or five rugby matches with the

team before playing the game that would change his life irrevocably. I cannot recall the exact day on which the accident happened. What I do remember, though, is that it was a normal school day and one of the neighbouring primary schools' rugby teams had been invited to play a match against Franko's team. Instead of playing in the lock position, Franko was asked to play in the flank position that particular day. During one of the scrums, Franko fell to the ground and somebody stepped down hard on his spinal cord. He felt an intense pain shoot up his back. Nevertheless, keen and strong-willed sportsman that he was, he got right back up and continued playing till the end of the game. After the match, he went home, unconcerned about what had happened to him during the rugby game.

Over the course of the following two weeks, Franko began to notice that his energy levels were drastically reduced. He constantly felt tired and his legs, in particular, began to feel heavy. One afternoon his rugby team was having one of their regular practice sessions at school. As the practice session was drawing to a close, the heaviness he had begun to feel in his legs during the last two weeks, began to intensify. Still, he completed the training session and even rode home on his bicycle. By the time he reached the house, however, he was barely able to walk. He struggled into the house. Our housekeeper immediately phoned my mother, Erina, who was still at work, explaining that Franko was having great difficulty walking. My mother rushed back home.

At first, none of us realised the gravity of the situation. My parents phoned our family doctor to come and examine Franko; he diagnosed Franko with Guillain-Barre syndrome (GBS) – “a rare disorder in which your body's immune system attacks your nerves” (Mayo Clinic, 2015).

Since Franko did not immediately mention or realise the significance of what had happened to him during the rugby match two weeks earlier, the doctor was not aware of any potential spinal cord injury and thus GBS seemed a plausible diagnosis. Moreover, given that most people diagnosed with GBS usually start to recover after the fourth week from the onset of the disorder, the doctor's advice that Franko should simply stay in bed and wait for the symptoms to dissipate, did not seem ill-advised. However, everything we thought we knew about Franko's condition would change in the following 24 hours.

The next day Franko stayed in bed as the doctor ordered. As the day progressed, Franko realised that something was seriously wrong. He had not urinated since the day before and he could feel pressure building up inside his bladder. That evening my father, Pierre, rushed Franko to the emergency unit of Louis Leipoldt Medi-Clinic, where doctors performed an emergency procedure on him to relieve the excruciating pain and pressure from the urine build-up in his bladder. Franko was stabilised and doctors performed a new examination of him, which included X-rays of his entire body. The X-rays revealed that Franko had suffered severe trauma to his spinal cord. Franko was diagnosed with paralysis of the lower body: paraplegia.

The attending physician made it crystal clear to my parents: Franko would *never* be able to walk again.

Our family was devastated by the news. My parents were, and indeed still are, people of faith, both active members of a Pentecostal congregation. Yet, my parents' faith was tested to the extreme, confronted by the trauma of Franko's permanent paraplegia, as well as having to face the financial challenges associated with prolonged and ever-escalating costs of medical treatment. As Franko's brother, I too found myself deeply challenged in my understanding and experience of faith, having to cope, at the age of twelve, with the trauma of my brother's paralysis. However, the person whose faith was most intensely effected by the sports injury was, of course, my brother, Franko. What follows below are my recollections of Franko's faith experience in the years following his spinal cord injury. It may be that Franko experienced things differently than I set forth here, but I believe my memory of events reflect the reality of his experiences at the time, albeit imperfectly.

#### 1.1.4 Franko's Faith Experience

My brother and I attended the same Pentecostal congregation. The congregation forms part of a classical Pentecostal denomination that has been active in South Africa almost as long as the AFM, but out of respect I shall mention neither the name of the congregation nor the name of the denomination. Franko and I had both been attending Sunday school at the particular congregation since early childhood. The congregation's initial response to Franko's injury was very supportive; the senior pastor and other church members would regularly visit Franko in hospital to pray for him, as well as offering much needed spiritual support to my parents. The general focus of the prayers was the petition that the Lord would divinely heal Franko's physical disability, his paraplegia.

As the years went by and the congregation continued to pray for Franko's physical healing, it became apparent that some people in the congregation were not satisfied with the fact that Franko had not been physically healed yet. Franko accepted the reality of his disability and simply wanted to go on with his life, but some people from the church, as well as some other believers whom we as family knew, seemed to feel differently.

There were a few people who actually questioned the authenticity of Franko's faith, since, according to their understanding, if someone possessed true faith that God could and would heal them, such faith would *always* result in healing for that person. Some of Franko's Pentecostal Christian friends (who were in another congregation) even organised a prayer event once (without his knowledge) and condemned him for his unbelief when their prayers did not have the desired healing effect! For others, the presence of Franko and his wheelchair in the church services occasionally inspired them to approach him to pray for his healing, especially when a particular sermon had an emphasis on divine healing or the miracle-working

power of God. This happened a few times during the early years following Franko's injury. Furthermore, through the years, Franko heard a number of sermons about Jesus' healing miracles, with the emphasis generally being on the negative aspects of sickness and disability. The general message of the sermons about divine healing was that sickness and disability are from Satan, while it is always the Lord's will to heal sickness if a person has strong enough faith. During Franko's teenage years, he developed intense feelings of self-condemnation and guilt, at one point believing that it was his fault that God had not healed his physical disability. I am convinced that actions and experiences such as those described above, reinforced by preaching that either explicitly or implicitly supported such views, served to communicate a single message to my brother: 'We, as congregation, will not accept you as a full member of our community as long as you remain disabled'.

#### 1.1.5 Pentecostal Preaching and Ableism: Toxic Faith and Toxic Churches

It is my contention that the type of attitudes and beliefs concerning disability found in the praxis and preaching of the abovementioned Pentecostal congregation are quite possibly examples of toxic faith (cf. Arterburn & Felton, 2001; Coetzer, 2010; Dupont, 2004). Arterburn and Felton (2001:19) define toxic faith as "a destructive and dangerous involvement in a religion that allows the religion, not a relationship with God, to control a person's life". Most importantly in the context of the present study, toxic faith expresses "a defective faith with an incomplete or tainted view of God", where faith is used in an abusive and manipulative manner, even to the point of becoming addictive (Arterburn & Felton, 2001:19). Arterburn and Felton (2001:78) identify twenty-one toxic beliefs that negatively impact the lives of believers:

1. God's love and favour depend on my behavior.
2. When tragedy strikes, true believers should have a real peace about it.
3. If I have real faith, God will heal me or someone I am praying for.
4. All ministers are men and women of God who can be trusted.
5. Material blessings are a sign of spiritual strength.
6. The more money I give to God, the more money He will give to me.
7. I can work my way to heaven.
8. Problems in my life result from some particular sin.
9. I must not stop meeting others' needs.
10. I must always submit to authority.
11. God uses only spiritual giants.
12. True faith means waiting for God to help me and doing nothing until He does.
13. If it's not in the Bible, it isn't relevant.
14. God will find me a perfect mate.
15. Everything that happens to me is good.
16. A strong faith will protect me from problems and pain.

17. God hates sinners, is angry with me, and wants to punish me.
18. Christ was merely a great teacher.
19. God is too big to care about me.
20. More than anything else, God wants me to be happy.
21. I can become God.

Both Franko's faith experience and the general attitude of the congregation toward him manifest a number of the toxic beliefs noted above – most notably, toxic belief number one (“God’s love and favour depend on my behaviour”), toxic belief number three (“If I have real faith, God will heal me or someone I am praying for”) and toxic belief number eight (“Problems in my life result from some particular sin”). The presence of such toxic faith in the praxis and preaching of a congregation inevitably leads to the development of what may be called toxic churches – “communities where guilt, manipulation, fear, and shame reign, poisoning the spiritual atmosphere and making healing all but impossible” (Murren, 1999:5).

I am convinced that the root of the toxic faith that negatively impacted Franko's faith experience in the congregation may be traced to what Garland-Thomson (1997:8) calls a normate worldview. Garland-Thomson (1997:8) uses the term ‘normate’ to denote “the constructed identity of those who, by way of the bodily configurations and cultural capital they assume, can step into a position of authority and wield the power it grants them”.

When considered in the context of disability, the normate position takes ableism as the standard according to which the normate perspective is constructed. According to Campbell (2001:44), ableism may be defined as “a network of beliefs, processes and practices that produce a particular kind of self and body (the corporeal standard) that is projected as the perfect, species-typical and therefore essential and fully human”. Hehir (2007:9) defines ableism as “society's pervasive negative attitude about disability”, while Eisenhauer (2007:8, original emphasis) describes it as “a combination of discrimination, power, and prejudice related to the cultural privileging of *able-bodied* people”. From the ableist point of view, disability is essentially viewed as “a diminished state of being human” (Campbell, 2001:44). The ableist regards people living with disability as somehow lacking the qualities that constitute a complete human being. In a society or community where the ableist viewpoint prevails, a PWD will most certainly feel unwelcome and rejected. From the perspective of the field of homiletics, Smith (1992:16-17) argues that ableism – or ‘handicappism’ as she puts it – is present in any congregation where PWDs are confronted with architectural barriers, attitudinal barriers, and/or an absence of PWDs from leadership roles in the congregation. In light of the above explanation of ableism, I am convinced that a significant percentage of present-day Pentecostal preaching relating to disability is of an ableist nature.

It appears that a generally ableist approach to disability may be found in the preaching of many, if not most, contemporary Pentecostal preachers. The validity of the latter assumption is supported by recent research that highlights the influence of ableist attitudes among Pentecostal preachers. In a qualitative study of Pentecostal preachers' views on mental disability (specifically, clinical depression), Payne (2008:215) found that the participating preachers' sermons seemed to imply that long term depression is a weakness and that such a condition contradicts true trust in God. Clifton (2014:205-209) reports some of the devastating spiritual experiences that PWDs have suffered at the hand of Pentecostal preachers. Rather than helping PWDs, "the way Pentecostals preach and pray for healing negatively impacts people who are not healed, especially those with a disability" (Clifton, 2014:213). In Bosman and Theron's (2006:10) study of the experiences of chronically ill Pentecostal believers who have not been healed through a ministry of healing to the sick (including Pentecostal preaching about healing), they highlight the negative social experiences – such as "discouragement, pressure, and rejection" – experienced by Pentecostal believers. Yong (2007:242) aptly summarises the faith experience of many PWDs in relation to Pentecostal preachers and congregations:

Unfortunately, the Pentecostal and charismatic renewal movements have resulted in just as many if not more disappointments and negative experiences than healings for people with disabilities. . . . Many who experience the onset of disability later in life are initially drawn to Pentecostal-charismatic healing revivals, have been laid hands on and prayed for, but leave disillusioned if not crushed that God has not healed them.

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Preaching constitutes one of the most vital elements of any congregation's spiritual life. As Pagitt (2005:25) poignantly puts it, "Preaching isn't simply something a pastor does; it's a socializing force and a formative practice in a community". One of the primary ways in which preaching functions to form the faith community is by what Smith (1992:2) calls the "act of naming". The notion that preaching is an "act of naming" is crucial to the study and therefore I quote Smith's (1992:2) explanation of this important homiletical concept at length:

Preaching is an act of public theological naming. It is an act of disclosing and articulating the truths about our present human existence. It is an act of bringing new reality into being, an act of creation. It is also an act of redeeming and transforming reality, an act of shattering illusions and cracking open limited perspectives. It is nothing less than the interpretation of our present world and an invitation to build a profoundly different new world.

The following remarks by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (1998) powerfully encapsulates the nature of the “act of naming” to which preachers and their churches are called vis-à-vis PWDs:

[A]ll human beings, including those among us with disabilities, are entitled to rights in church and society. A life of dignity and respect includes such rights as access to education, health care, useful work, recreation, as well as the right to friendship, spiritual nurture, freedom and self-expression. The rights of each person, including people with disabilities, are equal to and balanced by the rights of others.

We believe the human community in all its forms is accountable to God to protect these civil and human rights. God requires the church to give spiritual and moral leadership to society in protecting these rights. The church must exercise its leadership by its public preaching and teaching but even more by its example as an inclusive community of faith, using the gifts of all its members.

However, given the ableist bias that seems to be inherent to a great deal of contemporary Pentecostal preaching about disability (cf. Clifton, 2014; Yong, 2007), while at the same time bearing in mind the responsibility of the preacher to “[crack] open limited perspectives” (Smith, 1992:2) such as ableism, the present study seeks to address the following primary research question:

- How can disability-friendly ethical and theological beliefs be instilled and cultivated in a congregation through Pentecostal preaching?

In order to answer the above primary research problem, the following sub-problems are identified:

- What is going on?

To what extent do AFM preachers’ perspectives concerning physical disability reflect an ableist mindset?

- Why is this going on?

What insights do the fields of disability studies and disability theology, as well as the theological teachings of selected AFM leaders, offer with regard to explaining any possible ableist perspectives among the participating preachers?

- What ought to be going on?

What ethical and theological perspectives do Scripture offer about disability?

- How might we respond?

How may the findings from the descriptive-empirical, interpretive, and normative phases of the study be utilised to develop rules of art that may serve as the basis of a Pentecostal homiletical strategy for advancing disability-friendly ethical and theological perspectives congregations in the AFM and other classical Pentecostal denominations?

### **1.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The aim of this study is to develop a Pentecostal homiletical strategy that can contribute to shaping disability-friendly congregations in the AFM and other classical Pentecostal denominations. In order to achieve this research aim, the study has the following objectives:

- To identify AFM preachers' perspectives on disability in order to determine the extent to which ableist perspectives about disability are found among the participating preachers.
- To determine what insights the fields of disability studies and disability theology, as well as the theological teachings of selected AFM leaders, may offer in relation to interpreting any ableist perspectives held by the participating AFM preachers.
- To determine what ethical and theological perspectives Scripture offers that may contribute to the development of a disability-friendly Pentecostal homiletical strategy.
- To develop a Pentecostal homiletical strategy that may contribute to the formation of disability-friendly congregations in the AFM and other classical Pentecostal denominations by cultivating disability-friendly ethical and theological perspectives among preachers and their congregations.

### **1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

An April 2013 keyword search of the Proquest Dissertations and Theses database, using the search string “(preaching OR homiletics) AND (disability OR disabilities OR disabled OR disability-friendly OR disability theology OR disability-inclusive)”, revealed no entries. An April 2013 keyword search of the Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations database, using the same search string as above, also revealed no entries. Furthermore, an April 2013 keyword search of the National Research Foundation’s NEXUS database, using the same search string as noted above, similarly revealed no entries. Young’s (2000) dissertation focused on how to bring about more multicultural congregations by transforming congregational attitudes regarding prejudice, racism, classism, ageism, and ableism through preaching and leadership, but did not offer a homiletical strategy specifically for shaping disability-friendly congregations. Black’s (1991) dissertation, which outlined an incarnational model of preaching based on linguistic and cultural facets of the deaf community, is the only dissertation that the researcher



was able to trace that came close to exploring the relationship between preaching and disability-friendly ethical and theological perspectives in a systematic way. Accordingly, as far as the researcher has been able to determine, there have been no doctoral or master's level studies focusing on the relationship between preaching – whether Pentecostal or otherwise – and advancing disability-friendly ethical and theological perspectives in the local congregation.

Black (1996:180) highlights the fundamental role of preaching in shaping disability-friendly congregations, noting that preachers “can contribute to an attitude of welcoming acceptance of persons with disabilities both in our churches and in society”. Smith (1992:21) emphasises the responsibilities of the preacher and the congregation vis-à-vis PWDs, especially the responsibility of educating themselves regarding the life experiences of PWDs. Such self-education may include – but is certainly not limited to – deepening one's understanding of the nature of different forms of disability, as well as cultivating an awareness of the different forms of oppression that PWDs may sometimes encounter.

Given the fact that – as noted above – research shows that over a billion people worldwide are living with some form of disability (WHO, 2011), and that approximately 7,5% of the South African population are living with some form of disability (Statistics South Africa, 2014:152), the need to construct a Pentecostal homiletical strategy that will contribute to building disability-friendly congregations in the AFM – as well as other classical Pentecostal denominations – is imperative.

## **1.5 CENTRAL THEORETICAL ARGUMENT**

This study contends that it is possible to develop a Pentecostal homiletical strategy that may contribute to shaping disability-friendly congregations in the AFM and other classical Pentecostal denominations by cultivating disability-friendly ethical and theological perspectives among the members of a congregation.

## **1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study employs Osmer's (2008:4-12) methodology for engaging in practical theological interpretation. The researcher's primary reason for selecting Osmer's approach is rooted in Osmer's keen awareness of the postmodern context in which practical theological research takes place in our day and age. With regard to the latter, Osmer (2011:1) stresses the importance of “coming to terms with intellectual pluralism, the reality of multiple and, often, competing paradigms within a single field”. He identifies two paradigms that play an especially important role in contemporary practical theology: the paradigm of reflective practice and the paradigm of metatheoretical reflection. At the level of reflective practice, “pastors and academics carry out the descriptive-empirical, interpretive, normative and pragmatic tasks of practical theological reflection on particular contexts” (Osmer, 2011:1). The aforesaid four tasks

represent a reflective equilibrium in the field of practical theology, in the sense that they represent “tasks or elements that are held in common, even as they are carried out in very different ways by different practical theologians” (Osmer, 2011:3). At the level of metatheoretical reflection, “practical theologians make decisions about how they view the theory-praxis relationship, interdisciplinary work, the relative weight of Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience and the theological rationale that justifies their approach” (Osmer, 2011:1). Accordingly, the researcher has attempted to conduct the present study in a reflexive manner, bearing the above practical theological paradigms in mind.

As noted above, Osmer (2008:4) identifies four “core tasks” which constitute the fundamental structure of practical theology: the descriptive-empirical task, the interpretive task, the normative task, and the pragmatic task. These four tasks endeavour to answer four central questions relevant to practical theological research. Each of the tasks shall now be briefly defined and discussed.

## **1.7 THE FOUR PRACTICAL THEOLOGICAL TASKS OF THE STUDY**

### **1.7.1 The Descriptive-Empirical Task**

The descriptive-empirical task asks the basic question, “What is going on in this situation?” (Osmer, 2008:4). This task has as its primary focus the current religious praxis of the person(s) and/or community(ies) being studied by the practical theologian. Descriptive-empirical understanding is accomplished by observation and gathering relevant information, aiming to uncover “patterns and dynamics in particular episodes, situations, or contexts” (Osmer, 2008:4). Osmer defines the latter three terms in a very specific way. The term ‘episode’ refers to “an incident or event that emerges from the flow of everyday life and evokes explicit attention and reflection. It occurs in a single setting over a short period of time” while the term ‘situation’ references “the broader and longer pattern of events, relationships, and circumstances in which an episode occurs” (Osmer, 2008:12). The term ‘context’ denotes that which is “composed of the social and natural systems in which a situation unfolds. A system is a network of interacting and interconnected parts that give rise to properties belonging to the whole, not to the parts. The congregation is an organizational system” (Osmer, 2008:12).

In order to effectively engage in the descriptive-empirical task, an attitude of attentiveness is important (Osmer, 2008:33). Such attentiveness finds expression in two primary ways. Firstly, the practical theologian should practice a spirituality of presence, “attending to others in their particularity and otherness within the presence of God” (Osmer, 2008:33-34). Secondly, the practical theological researcher should exercise priestly listening, which, in the context of practical theological research, denotes “investigating particular episodes, situations, and contexts through empirical research” (Osmer, 2008:38).

Empirical research in the field of practical theology may be undertaken from a quantitative or qualitative perspective, employing a diverse range of research methods (Osmer, 2008:49-53). However, importantly, the descriptive-empirical task helps to clarify the purpose of the research and – consequently – the selection of the most appropriate strategy of inquiry for the particular research project (Osmer, 2008:49).

#### 1.7.2 The Interpretive Task

The interpretive task asks the basic question, “Why is this going on?” (Osmer, 2008:4). This task requires the practical theologian to cultivate an attitude of sagely wisdom, aimed at helping people to “make sense of the circumstances of their lives and world” (Osmer, 2008:82). In order to accomplish the latter, the practical theologian must have the ability to undertake theoretical interpretation, which entails “[drawing] on theories of the arts and sciences to understand and respond to particular episodes, situations, or contexts” (Osmer, 2008:83).

#### 1.7.3 The Normative Task

The normative task asks the basic question, “What ought to be going on?” (Osmer, 2008:4). In order to answer the aforesaid question, the practical theologian may employ three possible styles of normative interpretation. The first style of normative interpretation is theological interpretation: “the use of theological concepts to interpret episodes, situations, and contexts, including those in which we are actors” (Osmer, 2008:131). The second style of normative interpretation is ethical reflection: “the use of ethical norms to reflect on and guide practice” (Osmer, 2008:131). The third style of normative interpretation is examining good practice: “deriving norms from good practice, by exploring models of such practice in the present and past or by engaging reflexively in transforming practice in the present” (Osmer, 2008:161). The normative task requires that the practical theologian exercise prophetic discernment, which means listening to Jesus Christ as the most authoritative Word of God and interpreting this Word “in ways that address particular social conditions, events, and decisions before congregations today” (Osmer, 2008:135).

#### 1.7.4 The Pragmatic Task

The pragmatic task asks the basic question, “How might we respond?” (Osmer, 2008:4). This task calls on the practical theologian to “[determine] strategies of action that will influence situations in ways that are desirable and entering into a reflective conversation with the ‘talk back’ emerging when they are enacted” (Osmer, 2008:4). Such strategies of action may be divided into models of practice and rules of art. Models of practice provide a general overview of the particular field of study, highlighting the ways in which leaders might fashion the field towards certain longed for objectives (Osmer, 2008:176). Rules of art offer more precise strategies regarding how to perform specific actions or practices (Osmer, 2008:176). The

pragmatic task calls on practical theologians to anchor their research in an attitude of servant leadership (Osmer, 2008:176).

In order to conceptualise these four tasks more cogently, it is useful to consider them with reference to the image of a “hermeneutical circle, which portrays interpretation as composed of distinct but interrelated moments” (Osmer, 2008:10). This hermeneutical circle is like a spiral, in that “[it] constantly circles back to tasks that have already been explored” (Osmer, 2008:11). The interconnected nature of the four tasks of practical theology can be illustrated by way of a diagram (Figure 1.1).

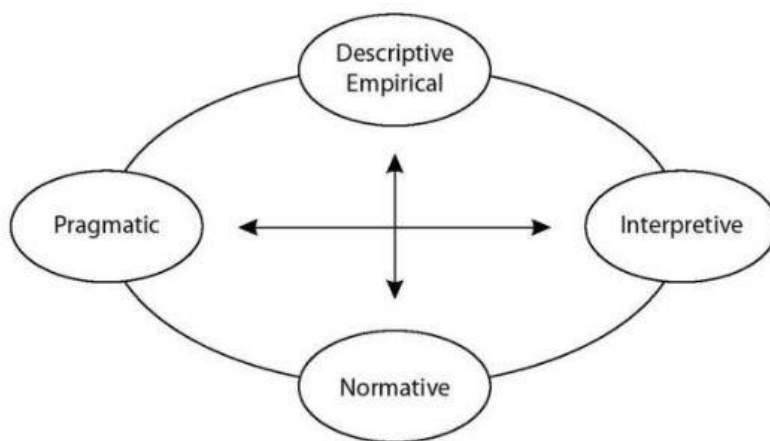


Figure 1.1: Osmer's four tasks of practical theological interpretation

Source: (Osmer, 2008:11)

## 1.8 APPLICATION OF THE FOUR TASKS IN THE PRESENT STUDY

In light of the aim and objectives of the study, Osmer's four core practical theological tasks will be applied in the following manner:

### 1.8.1 Empirical Study (Descriptive-Empirical Phase)

The descriptive-empirical phase of the study seeks to identify AFM preachers' perspectives on disability in order to determine the extent to which ableist perspectives about disability are found among the participating preachers. The consideration of this question is important, since a preacher's perspectives about disability influence the way they preach about disability (cf. Black, 1996; Smith, 1992). Moreover, the nature of a preacher's preaching about disability influences the formation of their congregation's perspectives on disability (Wells, 2006:167-168). Accordingly, an empirical study is undertaken among a limited number of AFM preachers in the Western Cape. The empirical study is conducted from a qualitative perspective, utilising semi-structured interviews conducted with the aid of set questionnaires (cf. Heitink, 1999:224-226). Grounded theory analysis is employed in order to identify the participating AFM preachers'

primary perspectives on physical disability (cf. Patka, 2014:87). During the discussion of the findings of the grounded theory analysis, literature control will be conducted as a way of verifying the results (cf. Maree & Di Fabio, 2012:33-34).

#### 1.8.2 Metatheoretical Literature Study (Interpretive Phase)

The interpretive phase of the study seeks to interpret the empirical findings of the descriptive-empirical phase by entering into dialogue with the fields of disability studies and disability theology, as well as the thought of selected AFM leaders. The aforesaid analysis is conducted by way of a literature study.

#### 1.8.3 Grammatical-Historical Exegesis (Normative Phase)

The normative phase of the study seeks to determine what ethical and theological guidelines Scripture offers with regard to understanding disability. The normative ethical and theological perspectives will be developed by utilising the grammatical-historical method of biblical exegesis (cf. Gorman, 2001; Van Rensburg *et al.*, 2011) and a literature study. The grammatical-historical method will be applied to selected Scripture passages in order to identify normative ethical and theological perspectives about disability.

#### 1.8.4 Synthesis (Pragmatic Phase)

The pragmatic phase synthesises the findings from the descriptive-empirical, interpretive, and normative phases of the study. This synthesis is utilised to develop homiletical rules of art that may serve as the basis for a Pentecostal homiletical strategy that contributes to shaping disability-friendly ethical and theological perspectives among members of a congregation.

### **1.9 CHAPTER DIVISION**

The chapter division of the study is as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: AFM preachers' perspectives concerning physical disability

Chapter 3: Models of disability as interpretive lense for understanding AFM preachers' perspectives on physical disability

Chapter 4: Normative perspectives on disability

Chapter 5: A Pentecostal homiletical strategy for shaping disability-friendly congregations

Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations

## 1.10 SCHEMATIC REPRESENTATION

| Research question  | Aim and objectives  | Research method   |
|--|---|---|
| <p>To what extent do ableist perspectives about disability influence the preaching of pastors of the AFM?</p>  | <p>To identify AFM preachers' perspectives on disability in order to determine the extent to which ableist perspectives about disability are found among the participating preachers.</p>   | <p>Employing the qualitative research method of grounded theory analysis, interviews will be conducted with a selected number of AFM preachers in the Western Cape region of South Africa. The interview data will be analysed in order to determine the extent to which ableist perspectives about disability are found among the participating preachers.</p> |
| <p>What insights do the fields of disability studies and disability theology, as well as the theological teachings of selected AFM leaders, offer with regard to explaining any possible ableist perspectives among the participating preachers?</p> | <p>To determine what insights the fields of disability studies and disability theology, as well as the theological teachings of selected AFM leaders, may offer in relation to interpreting any ableist perspectives held by the participating AFM preachers.</p> | <p>A metatheoretical literature study of some of the most relevant scholarly work in the fields of disability studies and disability theology, as well as the theological teachings of selected AFM leaders.</p>  |
| <p>What ethical and theological perspectives do Scripture offer about disability?</p>  | <p>To examine the biblical view of disability in order to develop normative ethical and theological perspectives on disability.</p>   | <p>A historical-grammatical method exegesis of selected disability-related passages, utilising the exegetical method of Van Rensburg <i>et al.</i> (2011).</p>  |

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| Accordingly, what homiletical strategy may be constructed that will contribute to shaping disability-friendly congregations in the AFM and other classical Pentecostal denominations? | To construct a homiletical strategy that will contribute to shaping disability-friendly congregations in the AFM and other classical Pentecostal denominations. | A synthesis of the findings from the descriptive-empirical, interpretive, and normative phases of the study. This synthesis is utilised to develop homiletical rules of art that may serve as the basis for a Pentecostal homiletical strategy that contributes to shaping disability-friendly ethical and theological perspectives among members of a congregation. |
|---|---|--|

### 1.11 THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study is undertaken from a Pentecostal perspective where the divine person and work of God the Holy Spirit is viewed as fundamental to theological reflection. However, while acknowledging the centrality of the Holy Spirit for theological reflection, the researcher takes equally seriously the Reformation emphasis that Holy Scripture should always be the *norma normans* for the work of theology. The study of Holy Scripture provides us with knowledge of God (theology) and knowledge of ourselves (anthropology). Accordingly, Holy Scripture is regarded as foundational for every phase of the study, always serving as the primary point of reference and orientation.

Regarding the question of divine healing, or, more specifically, the question, “Can and does God still heal people physically in our time?” I firmly believe that God can and does indeed still heal people physically in our day. However, along with Bach (cited in Caspar *et al.*, 2011:40), I believe that physical healing is ultimately God’s decision, wholly dependent on His will for the particular person:

I believe in a God who still has the ability to heal if he thinks it is right. However, I point out that I also believe in a God who allows people to remain ill or disabled if he thinks it is right. While successful healing can comply with God’s will, non-healing can comply with God’s will, just as well.

## 1.12 GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

### 1.12.1 Version of Scripture employed in the Study

When Bible references are quoted, the text of the English Standard Version (ESV) is utilised, except if otherwise indicated. Also, the ESV's abbreviations for the books of the Bible are employed when specific Bible references are noted. The ESV was selected because of the source text oriented nature of its translation approach (Rhodes, 2009:163).

### 1.12.2 Definition of Key Terms

The following are brief definitions of certain key terms employed in the present study.

- **Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa**

The Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa (AFM) is “a classical Pentecostal denomination established in 1908 in Johannesburg, South Africa, during the missionary visit of Americans John G. Lake (1870-1935) and Thomas Hezmalhalch, who had arrived from the Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles” (Clark, 2010:161). The AFM is currently the largest and oldest classical Pentecostal denomination in South Africa (Paul, 2009:52).

- **Disability**

The present study will utilise the definition of disability proposed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:

Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. (UN, 2006)

I use the above, quite broad, definition of disability to be as inclusive as possible regarding the possible health conditions that may be included under the rubric of disability. Moreover, the above definition highlights an important truth about disability – one also emphasised in the present study – namely, that disability has both a health dimension and a social dimension. Another reason I have adopted the above definition is that it is considered as one of the primary definitions of disability by Ramp Up (2011a:1), arguably the most influential disability awareness ministry in South Africa.

I am cognisant of the fact that the language people employ about disability inevitably reflects the attitudes people have about disability. Accordingly, the present study aims to keep in mind the disability-sensitive language guidelines recommended by Ramp Up (2011a:23).



Firstly, disability-sensitive language is personal in approach – for example, 'person with a disability' should be preferred to 'disabled person'. Secondly, disability-sensitive language is positive in approach – for example, a person 'has a disability' rather than being 'afflicted with a disability'. Thirdly, disability-sensitive language should be precise – for example, it is better to speak of a 'wheelchair user' than 'confined to a wheelchair' or 'wheelchair bound'.

In the context of the present study, McClure's (2007:22) definition of disability, formulated specifically with reference to preaching, is also important to keep in mind: "A physical, emotional, or cognitive loss of ability in human functioning that either hinders one's access to preaching, hearing, understanding, or seeing sermons, or excludes one from messages preached".

- **Disability-friendly congregation**

When referring to a disability-friendly congregation, I mean more than architectural modifications that enable accessibility, as well-intentioned and important as such modifications may be and indeed are. I believe that the concept of 'disability-friendly' should be approached in a more holistic fashion. Adapting Lengnick-Hall's (2007:99) definition of a disability-friendly culture to the congregational context, I define a disability-friendly congregation as *a congregation that emphasises the ability and not the disability of a believer living with disability, ensuring that such a believer enjoys equal opportunity in every dimension of congregational life and is not discriminated against in any way.*

- **Congregation**

For the purpose of the present study, the term 'congregation' refers to a local church community. More specifically, a congregation is understood as: "[A] group that gathers to worship God in Jesus' name and holds its conduct, outlook, and story accountable as to its faithfulness to biblical stories of Jesus' mission and God's mission in Jesus" (Kelsey, 1992:139).

- **Pentecostal**

By the term 'Pentecostal' I mean to refer to classical Pentecostals. Jacobsen (2011:57, original emphasis) offers a concise description of the term 'classical Pentecostals':

*Classical Pentecostals* represent the oldest layer of the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement. Begun in the early twentieth century, classical Pentecostalism is a form of Pentecostal denominationalism. . . . Most classical Pentecostals believe that for the experience of baptism in the Spirit to be validated the recipient has to speak in tongues. . . . Structurally, classical Pentecostal denominations are well-organized institutions with

easily recognizable lines of authority at both the congregational level and denomination-wide.

- **Pentecostal preaching**

While acknowledging the fact that uncovering a generally agreed upon definition of Pentecostal preaching remains an elusive endeavour (cf. Eaton, 2012; Gordy, 2001), this study understands the term 'Pentecostal preaching' with reference to the threefold definition proposed by Hughes (2012:117-118): "(1) True Pentecostal preaching always centers in the Word; (2) Pentecostal preaching always exalts Jesus Christ; and (3) Pentecostal preaching is always directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit". Moreover, this study regards the Pentecostal homiletical characteristics outlined by Eutsler (2013, 2014) as the basis for understanding the shape of Pentecostal homiletical hermeneutics: Pentecostal preaching is biblical; Pentecostal preaching aims to please God; Pentecostal preaching seeks to communicate clearly; Pentecostal preaching is bold; Pentecostal preaching is spiritual; Pentecostal preaching is practical. Each of these characteristics of Pentecostal preaching is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

- **Strategy**

The study employs the term 'strategy' in order to denote the pragmatic task of practical theological interpretation as defined by Osmer (2008:4): "Determining strategies of action that will influence situations in ways that are desirable and entering into a reflective conversation with the 'talk back' emerging when they are enacted".

## CHAPTER 2

### AFM PREACHERS' PERSPECTIVES CONCERNING PHYSICAL DISABILITY

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of the present chapter is to engage in the descriptive-empirical task of practical theological investigation (Osmer, 2008:4) in order to identify the perspectives concerning physical disability held by Pentecostal preachers. More specifically, this chapter seeks to answer the question, "To what extent do ableist perspectives about disability influence AFM preachers?" For Osmer (2008:58), this descriptive-empirical phase of practical theological research is, in a certain sense, a form of 'priestly listening': "It involves attending to others in their particularity and otherness in a systematic and disciplined way". Another way of defining this 'priestly listening', which takes seriously the importance of exercising a ministry of presence, is: "[A]tending to others in their particularity within the presence of God" (Osmer, 2008:28). Such attending may occur at the individual, family, or community level (Osmer, 2008:34).

Osmer distinguishes between three forms of attending: informal attending, semiformal attending, and formal attending. Informal attending refers to the quality of attending exercised in everyday life, including "active listening and attentiveness in interpersonal communication", as well as "openness to the beauty and tragedy we encounter day by day" (Osmer, 2008:37). Semiformal attending denotes "the use of specific methods and activities that provide structure and regularity to our attending", such as journaling and participation in small groups and/or pastoral groups (Osmer, 2008:38). Formal attending – of which the present chapter is an example – refers to "investigating particular episodes, situations, and contexts through empirical research" (Osmer, 2008:38).

#### 2.2 RESEARCH APPROACHES

Broadly speaking, two general approaches to research are usually distinguished, namely, quantitative research and qualitative research. VanderStoep and Johnson (2009:7) offer a useful comparative overview of the research characteristics associated with quantitative and qualitative research methods, specifically as related to the type of data, analysis, scope of inquiry, primary advantage, and primary disadvantage (Table 2.1). I have opted to employ a qualitative research approach, since qualitative research seeks "to understand or explain behaviour and beliefs, identify processes and understand the context of people's experiences" (Hennink, *et al.*, 2011:17). As researcher, I take seriously the lived experiences of the research participants (Lichtman, 2014:114). Moreover, since the orientation of the empirical research to be conducted is exploratory in nature, a qualitative research approach is especially appropriate (Chang, 2014:23).

Table 2.1 Comparison of quantitative and qualitative research characteristics

| Characteristic              | Quantitative research  | Qualitative research                                       |
|-----------------------------|--|--|
| <i>Type of data</i>         | Phenomena are described numerically                                    | Phenomena are described in a narrative fashion             |
| <i>Analysis</i>             | Descriptive and inferential statistics                                 | Identification of major schemes                            |
| <i>Scope of inquiry</i>     | Specific questions or hypotheses                                       | Broad, thematic concerns                                   |
| <i>Primary advantage</i>    | Large sample, statistical validity, accurately reflects the population | Rich, in-depth, narrative description of sample            |
| <i>Primary disadvantage</i> | Superficial understanding of participants' thoughts and feelings       | Small sample, not generalisable to the population at large |

The empirical research phase of the present study is an adapted replication of the research conducted by Patka (2014). However, whereas Patka focused on Catholic leaders' perspectives about the participation of people with intellectual disabilities in congregational life, the present study focuses on AFM preachers' perspectives about the participation of people with physical disabilities (hereafter PWPDs) in congregational life. While focusing on PWPDs, I am convinced that the insights gained from the present analysis will be relevant to the experiences of PWDs in general. Moreover, the present study's research design was guided by the research design employed by Patka (2014), albeit that I departed from Patka's design as necessitated by the specific context and challenges of my study.

### 2.2.1 Data Collection Methods

Osmer (2008:54) highlights six methods of data collection commonly utilised when conducting empirical research:

- Interviews. Gathering verbal data by asking questions to which the interviewee responds.
- Participant observation. Gathering verbal and visual data by observing practices and events while participating in the setting in which they occur. The goal is to discover patterns in the ordinary interactions of people and communities and what events, activities, and symbols mean to them.

- **Artifact analysis.** Gathering written documents (bulletins, church histories, financial and membership records) and attending to objects of symbolic importance (pictures, plaques, church logos, signs). While researchers form their own interpretations of such artifacts, they also ask "insiders" what they mean to them.
- **Spatial analysis.** Attending to the location and layout of the space in which an organization is housed. This may include the sanctuary, arrangement of offices and meeting spaces, and the exterior of the building, grounds, etc.
- **Demographic Analysis.** Gathering information about a particular population, like age, income level, gender, educational level, home ownership, ship, and employment status. This makes it possible to form a demographic graphic profile of a group and to compare it with others.
- **Focus groups.** Gathering verbal data on a topic with a group of ten or fewer people under the guidance of a discussion leader. Focus groups commonly are homogenous in certain demographics (e.g., age level, length of membership, gender), making it easier for all to share.

I utilised interviewing as my primary method of data collection. Interviewing is the most commonly employed method of data collection in qualitative research and most potential research participants would have an idea of what to expect should they decide to participate in the study through being interviewed (King & Horrocks, 2010:1). Three primary types of interviews are usually distinguished: structured interviews, unstructured interviews, and semi-structured interviews (Craig, 2005:38). Berg (2004:79) offers a helpful comparative overview of these three approaches to interviewing (Table 2.2).

Table 2.2 Comparison of structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews

| <b>Structured interviews</b>                          | <b>Semi-structured interviews</b>                | <b>Unstructured interviews</b>            |
|---|--|---|
| Most formally structured                              | More or less structured.                         | Completely unstructured.                  |
| No deviations from question order                     | Questions may be reordered during the interview. | No set order to any questions.            |
| Wording of questions asked exactly as written.        | Wording of questions flexible.                   | No set wording to any questions.          |
| No adjusting of level of language                     | Level of language may be adjusted.               | Level of language may be adjusted.        |
| No clarifications or answering of questions about the | Interviewer may answer questions and make        | Interviewer may answer questions and make |

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| interview.                                      | clarifications  | clarifications.  |
| No additional questions may be added.           | Interviewer may add or delete probes to interview between subsequent subjects | Interviewer may add or delete questions between interviews |
| Similar in format to a pencil-and-paper survey. |   |  |

Since I decided to use some preformulated questions to guide the interviews, I decided to make use of the semi-structured approach to interviewing (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011:102; cf. Patka, 2014:86).

The semi-structured interviews were used in order to collect data that would allow me to gain a comprehensive understanding of the perspectives among Pentecostal preachers concerning PWPDs in their congregations. The interview questions were formulated in such a way as to uncover the perspectives about physical disability held by the participating Pentecostal preachers. For example, the preachers' perspectives on the participation of PWPDs in congregational life; or the preachers' perspectives on the importance of keeping the situation of PWPDs in mind during sermon preparation. As Patka (2014:86) points out, the researcher has a certain measure of freedom when employing the semi-structured approach, since he or she need not ask exactly the same questions of all the research participants. The semi-structured approach allows for some flexibility on the part of the researcher to adapt the questions as the interview develops (Galletta, 2013:1-2). As interviewer, my general approach to the interviews was to ensure that certain key themes were addressed during each interview, while allowing for varying degrees of structure and standardisation from one interview to another (David & Sutton, 2011:121).

### 2.2.2 Grounded Theory

The present study utilised grounded theory analysis to uncover AFM preachers' perspectives concerning PWPDs (cf. Patka, 2014:87). Grounded theory is one of the most popular and widely used qualitative research methods of our time (Braun & Clarke, 2013:184). David and Sutton (2011:110) offer a concise definition of grounded theory research:

Grounded theory seeks to fold induction into deduction, back and forth, collecting data, formulating tentative theories and then seeking to test these theories with new data collection and analysis, which itself may lead to more than just testing (as it may lead to the generation of new concepts).

My approach to utilising grounded theory in the present study is discussed in detail in the data analysis methodology section later in this chapter.

During the course of the interviews, I sought to be especially sensitive to any toxic perspectives concerning physical disability that may eventually emerge from the data. As noted in Chapter 1, Arterburn and Felton (2001:19) define toxic faith as “a destructive and dangerous involvement in a religion that allows the religion, not a relationship with God, to control a person’s life”. I regard the following perspectives concerning disability as toxic perspectives, namely that: 1) disability is a divine punishment for sin; 2) disability is a test of faith; 3) disability is a God-ordained opportunity to inspire others; 4) disability exists to demonstrate the healing power of God; and 5) disability is a mysterious action of God’s will (cf. Black, 1996:23-33; Creamer, 2012:342). At an even more fundamental level, I sought to be sensitive to any possible ableist perspectives from the participating interviewees, ableism being understood as “a combination of discrimination, power, and prejudice related to the cultural privileging of *able-bodied* people” (Eisenhauer, 2007:8, original emphasis). In the context of the present study, my focus was on the participating preachers’ possible “privileging” of able-bodied congregation members at the expense of congregation members with physical disabilities.

### 2.2.3 Research Context

In order to gain an understanding of the perspectives concerning physical disability held by Pentecostal preachers, a number of Pentecostal preachers were asked to participate in the present study. Due to geographical and time constraints, participation in the study was limited to Pentecostal preachers who belong to the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa (AFM) and are senior pastors (visionary leaders) of congregations in the Western Cape area. I decided to focus on senior pastors, since, in the context of Pentecostalism, they are the pastors responsible for most of the preaching in the local congregation. I decided to focus on Pentecostal preachers in the AFM, primarily because I am a member and pastor of the AFM. Unfortunately, as far as I was able to determine, neither the AFM, nor any other denomination in South Africa, currently has a task team or office dedicated exclusively to advancing the inclusion of PWDs in faith communities. Nevertheless, as noted in Chapter 1, there is a small number of Christian organisations, such as Ramp Up, that aim to advance the inclusion of PWDs in South African churches. It is my sincere hope that the present study will inspire churches in South Africa to seriously consider the establishment of a denominational task team or office dedicated to advancing the inclusion of PWDs in local congregations.

## 2.2.4 Research Instruments

### 2.2.4.1 Semi-structured interviews

A semi-structured interview guide (Appendix D) was developed for use in all interviews with the participating preachers (cf. Patka, 2014:90). The interview guide was utilised as a basic point of reference to ensure that all the pertinent topics vis-à-vis the preachers' perspectives about disability were sufficiently addressed (cf. Patka, 2014:87; Weiss, 1995:48). However, I sought to remain cognisant of the fact that such an interview guide need not be utilised rigidly, since "the interviewer remains free to build a conversation within a particular subject area, to word questions spontaneously, and to establish a conversational style" (Patton, 2001:343). Furthermore, Patka's (2014:272-278) interview guide was used as a template for the construction of my interview guide, although I adapted it to focus on the situation of PWPDs, as well as adding some questions pertaining to preaching specifically.

The following four steps were followed in the creation of the interview guide (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994:93-96; Patka, 2014:90-92; Smith, 1995:13). Firstly, I considered the overall issue that would be addressed in the interview, thinking about the various relevant themes or question areas I wanted to include in my interviews with the research participants. The themes for the interview were based on the themes utilised in Patka's (2014:272-278) interview guide. The primary question area for the purposes of the present study was concerned with gaining a deeper understanding of the perspectives concerning physical disability held by Pentecostal preachers, or rather, more specifically, Pentecostal preachers who are part of the AFM. Secondly, I organised the question areas, following Patka's (2014:272-278) sequence of questioning, bearing in mind that it is generally better to leave more sensitive questions till later in the interview when the participant is feeling more comfortable. Thirdly, I thought of the most appropriate questions relevant to each question area that would serve to illuminate the overall focus of the study, once again bearing in mind the general principles regarding logical sequencing and sensitivity mentioned above. Fourthly, I considered any possible probes and prompts that might be occasioned by answers to some of the questions (cf. Patka, 2014:91-92).

As Mligo (2013:127) explains, "Probes are questions asked following the respondent's answer to the main question". The primary purpose of such probing questions is to explore the information beyond what the participant has expressed in their answer to the main question. Patton (2001:372) emphasises that such probes should be approached in a conversational and relaxed manner. Moreover, Patton (2001:372-374) distinguishes between four types of probing questions: 1) detail-oriented questions (that seek to fill in the missing information of a response); 2) elaboration questions (that seek to stimulate continued discussion of a particular subject); 3) clarification questions (that seek to clarify ambiguous statements); 4) contrast questions (that seek more clarification by encouraging the participant to compare a certain experience with



another one). These probing questions were included in the interview based on the researcher's sense of the need for such probing questions in providing more nuanced understanding of a particular question area. Nevertheless, in engaging in asking the interviewee probing questions at some point during the interview, I sought to remember the following "good practice" guidelines suggested by Roulston (2008:682): "Interviewers should avoid interrupting interviewees, should pose probes using participants' words wherever possible, and, in probing, interviewers should show that they have been actively listening to participants".

Following Patka's example (2014:92), an abbreviated version of the interview guide was created to share with the research participants (Appendix B). This abbreviated version of the interview guide comprised a brief introduction, a definition of the concept of physical disability, as well as the preformulated interview questions. Moreover, as the research process progressed, I was aware that the interview guide could possibly be adapted, depending on whether or not I discovered that certain concepts needed to be more clearly defined, communicated and/or expanded. For example, Question 6 of the interview was, "Do you think there are any congregational activities individuals with physical disabilities should not participate in?" Early on, I decided to expand the question by adding the following probe, "Would you and your church council consider calling a pastor who has a physical disability as a pastor to your congregation?"

Before and during the interview, I aimed to keep in mind Berg's (2004:110-111) "ten commandments of interviewing":

1. Never begin an interview cold.
2. Remember your purpose.
3. Present a natural front.
4. Demonstrate aware hearing.
5. Think about appearance.
6. Interview in a comfortable place.
7. Don't be satisfied with monosyllabic answers.
8. Be respectful.
9. Practice, practice, and practice some more.
10. Be cordial and appreciative.

Before commencing each interview, I sought to make the interviewee feel as comfortable as possible, especially by engaging in friendly conversation about how things were in the congregation, as well as enquiring how the interviewee was doing on a personal level. As interviewer, I attempted to engage in process feedback during the interview (cf. Patka, 2014:92), particularly by seeking to remain aware of how the interview was flowing, how the interviewee was responding to the questions, and striving to offer helpful feedback to sustain

the flow of communication during the interview (Patton, 2001:375). Support and recognition responses were especially important during the interview process, since the interviewer would hereby signal to the interviewee that the goal of the interview was being accomplished. Accordingly, I sought to keep Patton's (2001:375) remarks in mind: "Words of thanks, support and even praise will help make the interviewee feel that the interview process is worthwhile and support ongoing rapport". Moreover, as interviewer, I sought to maintain control of the interview, remembering that time is limited and focusing on the most important questions pertinent to my study (Patton, 2001:375). Upon reaching the end of the interview, I informed the interviewees that I had no further questions to ask and thanked the interviewees for making themselves available to participate in the study.

I realised that there was always the possibility that – for some reason unknown to the researcher – a research participant might decide to decline to be interviewed when I arrived to conduct the interview. Following Patton's (2001:378) advice for occasions such as the latter, I also prepared a so-called one-shot question, meaning one critically important question to ask, should the interviewee only be willing to give a few minutes of their time to the interviewer. Having such a one-shot question prepared helped me as interviewer to at least have the ability to salvage something from the interview process, should the interviewee decline participation. My one-shot question would have been, "What, if any, obstacles do you believe are currently frustrating the full inclusion of people with physical disabilities in Pentecostal congregations?" Fortunately, the use of the one-shot question was not necessary, since all the participating preachers were fully cooperative in the interview process.

Upon completion of the interview process, I emailed each research participant a resource list, as compiled by Ramp Up (2011b), of people in South Africa who are readily equipped and willing to speak at churches on disability issues. It is hoped that this resource list will empower the participating preachers in their efforts to shape increasingly disability-friendly congregations. If research participants suggested additional persons who they thought should be added to the list, I forwarded the information to Ramp Up for consideration.

#### 2.2.4.1 Field notes

Another research instrument I utilised was the practice of taking field notes (cf. Patka, 2014:94-96). As Horvat (2013:64) explains, "Field notes are, simply, the written record of your observations at your site". The main purpose of field notes is to provide "an accurate and thorough written record of field activities" (Hays & Singh, 2011:228). Field notes were recorded throughout the research process, especially as related to the recruitment process of the research participants and the interview process itself. The field notes were written as soon as possible after the completion of each research activity, since this allowed more accurate recollection of the detail associated with the particular research activity (Horvat, 2013:69). The

field notes were recorded in narrative form and in chronological order. Moreover, while writing the field notes, I strove to continually bear in mind my own positionality vis-à-vis the topic of disability, seeking to remain aware of my own biases and interests (Horvat, 2013:69).

As researcher, I sought to employ the five fundamental principles for taking field notes as set out by Burgess (2003:293). Firstly, I aimed to set aside a regular time and place for the writing of field notes. Secondly, all my field notes recorded the date, time, location, and details of the relevant research activity. Thirdly, I made sure to digitise the field notes in order to ensure its availability in the various stages of data analysis. Fourthly, I made sure that I had clarity regarding the criteria I would utilise in establishing what to include and exclude when writing the field notes. Lastly, I sought to remember that field notes can be utilised to commence data analysis alongside data collection.

### 2.2.5 Metatheoretical Presuppositions and Positionality of the Researcher

The present study proceeds from an interpretive social science approach to empirical research. I am convinced that empirical research needs to enter into social actors' worlds in order to understand them from their perspective, as well as taking into account the specific context in which their actions find meaning (Osmer, 2008:76). Moreover, I share the concern of interpretive social science that the interpretive perspective of the researcher should be taken seriously. The interpretive perspective of the researcher has a profound impact on what the researcher finds in his research, as well as the way in which they interpret their findings (Osmer, 2008:76).

With regard to my positionality as a non-disabled researcher who is writing a dissertation that seeks to develop a Pentecostal homiletical strategy for shaping disability-friendly congregations, I wish to slightly rephrase a question that Yong (2011) poses to himself: "What right do I have as a non-disabled man to write a dissertation about homiletics and disability?" I take Yong's (2011:Chapter 1, Section 3) warning very seriously: "The complexities behind the wide-ranging 'disability' label should make us wary of making generalizations about the experiences of people with disabilities apart from their own accounts". Accordingly, I declare that my work should not be seen as an attempt to represent PWDs – PWDs are willing and able to articulate their own experiences (cf. Pinsky, 2011). Moreover, along with Yong (2011), I acknowledge my need to remain aware of any possible ableist bias in my research, since, as a non-disabled man, I tend to view reality from the perspective of someone who lives in a world where non-disability is privileged.

## 2.3 RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The research participants for the present study were limited to ordained Pentecostal preachers. Since different Pentecostal denominations have different approaches to theology, doctrine and

practice, I decided to focus on the AFM specifically. Moreover, as a member of the AFM, I have a good understanding of the various aspects of Pentecostal ministry as practised in the AFM. There were no restrictions on the race, age or gender of the research participants, the only conditions being that the person had to be presently active as the senior pastor (visionary leader) of an AFM congregation, as well as preaching on a regular basis. Furthermore, the research participants were purposively selected from the Western Cape region of South Africa, due to practical considerations vis-à-vis the interview process. I planned to include between eight and twelve preachers in the study, depending on when data saturation would be achieved. I asked the research participants for information about their pastoral experience, theological training, and the basic demographics of their congregation. Ultimately, data saturation was achieved after about seven interviews; in total, eight pastors were interviewed. It should be noted that – with regard to one of the participating pastors – he was not technically the visionary leader of the congregation, but rather the acting visionary leader during a period of transition in the congregation.

## **2.4 RESEARCH PROCEDURES**

According to the AFM's online directory of churches in its various regions, there are 55 AFM congregations that form part of the Western Cape region. The online directory provides the contact telephone numbers of almost all the Western Cape congregations, except for a few. The street addresses (along with GPS coordinates) and e-mail addresses of some congregations are also provided. Unfortunately, information regarding the senior pastors (visionary leaders) leading the congregations is not provided. Nevertheless, I was able to find the contact information of most of the senior pastors (visionary leaders) who are part of the Western Cape region of the AFM by making use of the Internet.

Non-probability sampling is the sampling strategy most often employed in qualitative studies. As Gray (2009:180) explains, “[Q]ualitative research usually works with purposive non-probability samples because it seeks to obtain insights into particular practices that exist within a specific location, context and time”. Generally speaking, four types of non-probability sampling are distinguished: convenience sampling, purposive sampling, snowball sampling, and quota sampling (Babbie, 2012:73). For the purposes of the present study, I opted to employ purposive sampling, since purposive sampling allows for the selection of a sample “on the basis of knowledge of a population, its elements, and the purpose of the study” (Babbie, 2012:73). The present study approached sampling by taking seriously the goal of purposive sampling, especially as defined by Bryman (2012:418): “The goal of purposive sampling is to sample cases/participants in a strategic way, so that those sampled are relevant to the research questions that are being posed”.

As noted earlier, disability researchers emphasise that there are a number of forms of disability, including physical, mental, intellectual or sensory disabilities (UN, 2006). However, as explained earlier, I decided to delimit the scope of my empirical research to PWPDs. The Code of Good Practice on Key Aspects on the Employment of People with Disabilities (2002), defines 'physical disability' as: "A partial or total loss of a bodily function or part of the body. It includes sensory impairments such as being deaf, hearing impaired or visually impaired". Accordingly, I sought to interview senior pastors who have at least one person with a physical disability (as defined above) in their congregation and/or have had contact with PWPDs. Moreover, while the sampling method is purposive in orientation, it is also a convenience sample, in the sense that I only planned to interview senior pastors who were part of the Western Cape region of the AFM and agreed to make themselves available to participate in the research project.

The recruitment process for inviting senior pastors to participate in the present study consisted of sending a recruitment letter (Appendix A), an informed consent document (Appendix C) and an abbreviated form of the interview guide (Appendix E) via email (cf. Patka, 2014:110). Subsequently, I contacted the potential research participants by sending them a Whatsapp message, enquiring whether or not they had received my email. If necessary, a phone call was made to potential research participants to enquire about their participation. Should it have been necessary to utilise, a telephone script (Appendix B) was prepared to make certain that I properly disclosed the purpose of my study, my reason for contacting them, detail about what it would mean to participate in the study, as well as to enquire about any additional questions that the potential research participants might have had (cf. Patka, 2014:111). If a potential research participant agreed to participate in the study, I scheduled an interview with the person at a date, time and place convenient to the person. Most of the appointments were arranged via email and Whatsapp messages, while a few were arranged telephonically.

As noted above, I planned to interview between eight and twelve senior pastors. It was expected that data saturation would occur after about eight to ten interviews. With regard to data saturation, it was my understanding that data saturation would be reached when further sampling provided no new themes or patterns forthcoming from the data (Suri, 2011:72). Before a final decision was taken to cease data collection, I consulted my promoter for final approval of the termination of the data collection process.

I decided to contact an initial selection of twelve pastors for possible inclusion in the study. Using the AFM's online list of AFM congregations in the Western Cape region, I compiled a list of AFM congregations located in the Northern Suburbs of the Western Cape region. In total, 29 congregations were identified as forming part of the Northern Suburbs area of the Western Cape. In order to determine the twelve congregations whose senior pastors would be contacted for possible participation in the study, I assigned each congregation a number and then utilised the online randomising service, Research Randomizer ([www.randomizer.org](http://www.randomizer.org)), to generate a

random list of twelve numbers from between 1 to 29. Of the twelve congregations selected through randomisation, I was unable to obtain the contact information of three of the congregations. Accordingly, I sent an invitation email to the senior pastors of the nine congregations for which I had contact information. Of these nine senior pastors, six replied that they would be willing to take part in the study. However, since I believed reaching data saturation would require at least eight interviews, I utilised convenience sampling to contact a further two senior pastors who I thought might be willing to participate in the study. These two senior pastors responded positively, and thus I commenced the interview phase of my research by arranging face-to-face interviews with the eight senior pastors who had agreed to participate in the study.

I followed Patka's (2014:115-117) interview procedures. When arriving to conduct the interview, I provided the research participant with a copy of the informed consent document that I emailed them. I then asked the research participant whether or not they had an opportunity to read the informed consent document. If they had not read the document, I gave them opportunity to read it, and invited them to ask any questions they may still have had. I took the signed copy of the informed consent document with me. Once the research participant gave me their official consent to participate in the study by signing the informed consent document, I commenced the interview and proceeded to turn on a digital voice recorder. With regard to the latter, a section of the informed consent document specifically requested that the research participant grant permission for the making of an audio recording of the interview. Some of the participants were concerned about whether or not the recording would indeed be deleted after the research was completed. I assured the participants that the recordings would be permanently deleted once the research process was fully completed. Just before the interview began, each research participant was provided with an abbreviated form of the interview guide (Appendix E). Upon concluding the interview process, I emailed each research participant a copy of a disability issues resource list compiled by Ramp Up (2011b), entitled, "People who are willing to speak at your church about disability issues" (Appendix F).

Field notes were recorded as soon as possible after the end of the interview. The transcription process of the interviews began after I completed interviewing each of the eight senior pastors who were initially selected for participation. Seven of the pastors were Afrikaans speaking, while one was English speaking. I translated the Afrikaans interviews into English in order to facilitate easier data analysis later on. I transcribed the audio recordings of the interviews by carefully listening to the recording, typing the transcript while listening. When any word, phrase or sentence of the audio recording was unclear, I listened to the audio recording as many times as necessary in order to determine certainty about its content. Moreover, it was envisioned that data analysis would take place after each interview, in line with the principles of grounded theory research. However, I decided to rather begin the process of coding my data once all my

interviews were completed. Nevertheless, insights gained from the coding of each interview were taken into account for the grounded theory analysis of every subsequent interview.

## **2.5 DATA ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY**

Since little, if any, research has been conducted on Pentecostal preachers' perspectives on PWDs, I was convinced of the importance of employing an empirical research methodology that paid serious attention to the experiences of pastors engaged in full-time ministry. Accordingly, following Patka (2014:119), I decided to make use of the grounded theory approach to research, which is regarded as an especially useful methodology for fields of study in which little research has been done (Punch, 2006:104). As David and Sutton (2011:193) explain, researchers who use grounded theory "build from codes or categories to more abstract concepts and conceptual models that best account for what is going on in the data".

Birks and Mills (2011:94) offer a concise explanation of the technique of constant comparison that facilitates the emergence of conceptual models from the collected data:

From the time of their initial foray into the field, grounded theorists are analysing data. Constant comparison of incident with incident in the data leads to the initial generation of codes. Future incidents are then compared with existing codes, codes are compared with codes, groups of codes are collapsed into categories with which future codes are then compared and categories are subsequently compared with categories. . . . Ultimately it is this iterative analytical method of constantly comparing and collecting or generating data that results in high-level conceptually abstract categories rich with meaning . . .

However, in seeking to uncover particular models of disability, in the sense that such models may emerge from the data of the interviews with the research participants, I am keenly aware of the fact that any proposed model of physical disability – including the disability-friendly homiletical model that I am seeking to develop – is ultimately a human-made representation. I take note of Smart's (2004:28) critically important insight that models of disability tend to "reflect the needs and values of those who construct the models". As Smart (2004:28) pointedly remarks, "There is no value-neutral language with which to describe disability". Accordingly, while the present chapter seeks to present certain models of disability based on the reality of the experiences of the research participants, such an attempt should not be construed as reflecting the precise nature of that reality.

Bearing in mind the above, I sought to follow the steps for grounded theory data analysis as set out by Hays and Singh (2011:350,445) and the coding approach suggested by Kolb (2012: 84) which consists of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Open coding involves comparing data and continually asking questions about what is and is not understood, axial

coding involves finding the links between the codes identified during the open coding process, and selective coding then involves finding the core themes that run throughout the data, from which the grounded theory emerges.

First, I read through the research participants' interview transcripts a number of times. Since grounded theory method requires a recursive approach to data analysis, the first data analysis that I undertook consisted of looking at one research participant transcript. Using this initial data, I then engaged in open coding in order to identifying the preliminary large codes that would comprise the codebook. Next, I analysed subsequent data based on this initial codebook. The codebook was refined between each phase of data analysis, as I engaged in the process of constant comparison. As the research proceeded, I attempted to identify relationships among codes (axial coding), as well as aiming to identify causal conditions, intervening conditions, and consequences. Through the process of selective coding, I further refined any emerging theoretical models. As the data analysis drew to a close, I looked for central ideas, variation, and, ultimately, the saturation of data. In order to aid my analysis of each interview, I also wrote memos concerning anything noteworthy I encountered during my coding of each transcript. I utilised the qualitative data analysis software program, Dedoose ([www.dedoose.com](http://www.dedoose.com)), both for coding the transcripts of my interviews, as well as the process of conducting grounded theory analysis (cf. Patka, 2014:124). With regard to grounded theory analysis, Dedoose was especially helpful in aiding the process of constant comparison through its innovative Dedoose Code Tree feature.

## **2.6 CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING THE TRUSTWORTHINESS OF GROUNDED THEORY RESEARCH**

I strove to continually evaluate the trustworthiness of my empirical research by referring to the criteria for evaluating the quality of grounded theory studies, with specific reference to the four essential criteria suggested by Charmaz (2006:182-183), namely, credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness. With regard to the criterion of credibility, I sought to ask myself questions such as the following:

- Has my research attained an intimate familiarity with the primary topic of the study?
- Are my findings warranted by the data collected in the study?
- Do the proposed categories cover a wide range of empirical observations?

As far as the criterion of originality is concerned, I asked myself questions such as the following:

- Are my categories fresh?
- Does my analysis furnish a new conceptual rendering of the data?
- Does my grounded theory challenge, advance, and/or refine current ideas, concepts, and practices in the relevant field of studies?



Considering the criterion of resonance, I sought to ask myself questions such as the following:

- Do the categories I have identified reflect the fullness of the studied experience?
- Has my research drawn links between larger entities and individual lives?
- Does my grounded theory make sense to the research participants or people who share their circumstances?

With regard to the criterion of usefulness, I asked myself questions such as the following:

- Does my analysis offer people interpretations that will be useful to their everyday lives?
- Is there a possibility that my analysis will stimulate further research in other substantive areas?
- Does my analysis contribute to advancing knowledge in the relevant field of study?

In addition to the above criteria, the study also employed triangulation. Burnett (2009:115) offers the following concise definition of triangulation: "Triangulation is a technique where the researcher uses more than one method, object or subject in order to check the robustness of the original data sets". Patton (2015:661) distinguishes four kinds of triangulation:

1. *Triangulation of qualitative sources*: Checking out the consistency of different data sources within the same method (consistency across interviewees);
2. *Mixed qualitative-quantitative methods triangulation*: Checking out the consistency of findings generated by different data collection methods;
3. *Analyst triangulation*: Using multiple analysts to review findings;
4. *Theory/perspective triangulation*: Using multiple perspectives or theories to interpret data.

The present study sought to utilise analyst triangulation and theory/perspective triangulation in order to bolster the trustworthiness of the research results. With regard to analyst triangulation, I sought the perspective of my promoter, as well as the insight of selected people involved in disability ministry, concerning my findings. With regard to theory/perspective triangulation, which forms the theoretical basis for the interpretive task in the next chapter, I endeavoured to draw on insights from the fields of disability studies and disability theology, as well as the theological teachings of selected AFM leaders, to interpret the research findings of the present chapter. Moreover, throughout the discussion of my research findings, I engaged in literature control, as recommended by a number of contemporary qualitative research methodologists (cf. Creswell, 1994; De Vos, 2002; Kretzing, 1991).

The purpose of engaging in literature control is to compare the research results with existing literature in a particular field in order to "identify commonalities and differences to the research results, as measure of verification" (Poggenpoel & Myburgh, 2005:305). Accordingly, such

literature control also serves to bolster the level of theory/perspective triangulation found in the present study, thus “[allowing] the researcher to make comparisons between different theoretical perspectives, and therefore add to broader debates about theories that are more or less useful to the research community as a whole” (Tummons & Duckworth, 2012:102). Furthermore, I used two data collection methods, namely, interviews and field notes, thus adding a further level of triangulation to the study.

In order to make sure that the core categories and sub-categories that emerged from my grounded theory data analysis were indeed reflective of the perspectives that may be found in the actual, current preaching of the participating preachers, I also analysed any available audio recordings of sermons by each preacher, specifically sermons that either directly or indirectly addressed the topic of disability. With regard to the latter, most of the pertinent sermons I was able to source dealt with PVPDs in the context of New Testament healing narratives (for example, Mark 10:46-52 and Matthew 20:29-34). The six models of PVPDs that emerged from the grounded theory analysis were also reflected in the sermons I was able to listen to, albeit that some of the models were only encountered implicitly.

## **2.7 RESEARCH ETHICS**

I submitted an application to the North-West University Research Ethics Committee to receive approval for data collection, since the research involved human participants. Data collection only commenced once approval was received from the Research Ethics Committee.

I made sure that all research participants were fully informed regarding the nature of the research project and its implications (cf. Patka, 2014:133-134). Moreover, it was emphasised that participation in the research project was completely voluntary. At no point during the recruitment process was any potential research participant intimidated or in any way bribed into taking part in the research project. Furthermore, it was clearly communicated to research participants that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time, without having to state any specific reason for deciding to withdraw. Very importantly, informed consent was obtained from each person who agreed to take part in the study, including permission to publish the research results.

With regard to any possible risk(s) for the research participants, the potential participants were informed that the level of risk involved was minimal, essentially equal to the level of risk involved in the research participants’ daily life (cf. Patka, 2014:133-134). Most research participants would have already had some encounters with PVPDs, including some degree of reflection on what it means to act in disability-friendly ways. With regard to any possible benefit(s) for the research participants, it was hoped that some insight into the situation of people living with disabilities would be obtained, serving to empower the research participants in their daily

interactions with PWDs, as well as inspiring preachers to approach their pastoral work and preaching in ways that advance the full inclusion of PWPDs in their respective congregations.

Where applicable, pseudonyms were used when referring to specific research participants, or when referring to people mentioned by the research participants, in order to respect their privacy and protect their identity. In such cases, I referred to the research participants by way of assumed first names. Moreover, any background information I may have provided concerning the research participants was sketched in as general terms as possible, so as to avoid possible identification of any person who participated in the study.

## **2.8 RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The grounded theory analysis of the interview data generated six core categories, reflecting particular conceptual models regarding PWPDs. These conceptual categories were derived from utilising the method of constant comparison during the process of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, as discussed in the section on data analysis methodology. These models should be regarded as conceptual frameworks that may contribute to deepening our understanding of the faith needs and experiences of PWPDs, as well as serving to reveal whether or not some degree of ableist thinking is found among the AFM preachers who partook in the present study. It should be noted that some of the participating preachers held to more than one of the models that will be discussed below. The six models of PWPDs that emerged from the data are: 1) Everyone has a disability; 2) PWPDs are a challenge; 3) PWPDs are like able-bodied people; 4) PWPDs are not disabled; 5) PWPDs are gifted; and 6) PWPDs need physical healing. The following discussion of the various models will not only highlight the basic characteristics of each approach, but will also seek to note some of the similarities and differences between the different models. I also briefly compare my research findings to Patka's (2014) findings, highlighting some of the most pertinent similarities and differences.

### **2.8.1 Everyone has a Disability**

Three of the participating preachers' interviews displayed characteristics of the 'Everyone has a disability' model. According to this understanding of the faith needs and experiences of PWPDs, disability – understood in the broader sense of challenges or “things that are holding us back” – is experienced by everyone, to a greater or lesser extent. As one of the participating preachers put it, “Any person . . . we all sit with disabilities . . . Things that are holding us back”. One of the preachers specifically connected the notion of disability to the skills a person possesses, arguing that if a person does not have a certain skill, such a person is in fact disabled vis-à-vis that specific skill.

Such an understanding of disability, albeit at a metaphorical level, may be detected in the following remarks by McGrath (2012:170, original emphasis): “[I]f you have a broken leg, you

*need* a crutch. If you're ill, you *need* medicine. That's just the way things are. The Christian understanding of human nature is that we are damaged, wounded, and disabled by sin". Spears (2014:146, original emphasis) argues, "Everyone – all human beings – have a *default spiritual learning disability* and need to be educated in God's Word". For me, Crosby (2010:105) best captures the essence of this approach, especially in the way he applies it pastorally to people's lives: "We are all disabled in some way. But the secret to victory is never staying down. Jesus is there beside us, helping us up, leading us onward and forward to victory".

The preachers who held to this understanding of PWPDs were generally in favour of keeping the situation of PWPDs in mind during sermon preparation and delivery. However, one of the preachers, who himself has a certain physical disability, was very much against the idea of specifically keeping PWPDs in mind during sermon preparation and delivery, since he felt that PWPDs would feel like they are being singled out as "special", which, according to him, would reinforce certain negative stereotypes concerning PWPDs.

### 2.8.2 PWPDs are a Challenge

Five of the participating preachers' interviews displayed characteristics of the 'PWPDs are a challenge' model. According to this understanding of the faith needs and experiences of PWPDs, while it would be commendable for congregations to become disability-friendly, there are various challenges to accommodating PWPDs, challenges that are regarded as too difficult to address in the context of a predominantly able-bodied congregation. Representative of the type of thinking associated with this model are the following remarks by one of the participating preachers regarding the challenges of accommodating people who are hearing impaired:

What we have considered is to help the people who are hearing impaired, but it is too complicated. So one does not want to do that too much. I think if the need increases, we will pay more attention to it. But it is as if the people are comfortable in the audience – they are satisfied and they do not expect something extra of it.

Another preacher highlighted the difficulty of accommodating PWPDs in terms of worship planning and preaching, stressing that, from his perspective, the needs of the able-bodied majority should be regarded as a greater priority than the needs of PWPDs:

We equip our service that it will look as lovely as possible, with projectors and lights and stuff. A blind person cannot appreciate that at all. Also with a physically disabled person, who physically cannot walk, for example, that is confined to a wheelchair, when there is singing and he sits in such a position that he cannot see and everyone stands up, and it is pitch dark, and suddenly there is a disconnect from his side. He cannot connect as the rest can connect. So we absolutely cater our services for people who are not disabled and also later – as far as the preaching is concerned – there is not someone who can

interpret sign language for John who is deaf, there is not someone who translates notes into Braille for a blind person, so . . . No, definitely . . . I think we definitely . . . We focus on the people who we think we should minister to and who we think we want to reach. And we do not think we want to be a congregation who reaches the deaf. So, it sounds terrible.

The above remarks by one of the participating preachers may be best understood with reference to Webb-Mitchell's (2009:81-82) explanation of the anthropological notion of a "scarcity paradigm" as it is found in some congregations:

Many parishes and congregations have been operating out of a scarcity paradigm that suggests that we live in a world of scarce and finite resources. With this model in place, our work with people who are disabled has been largely that of isolating those with a condition away from the rest of us, sequestering them into programs with specialists who alone can deal with their "problems".

One of the preachers noted that his congregation has no PWPDs as members, and therefore his congregation does not need to accommodate PWPDs. Anderson (2013:76) explains the background to the type of thinking associated with the latter perspective, arguing that the reality of the situation might be quite different than what the preacher thinks:

Sometimes a church leader will say that they have no people with disabilities in their church or community and question the need for engaging in disability ministry. But many persons with disabilities are kept out of sight as long as possible because of fear that the entire family may be rejected. It is not uncommon for church and community leaders to be unaware of the existence of persons with disabilities in their village or community.

A number of sub-categories were associated with the 'PWPDs are a challenge' core category, most notably, the notion that the church cannot accommodate PWPDs beyond a certain point, the notion that it is financially challenging to accommodate PWPDs, as well as the notion that the church should focus on its able-bodied majority. Regarding the first of these sub-categories, the notion that the church cannot accommodate PWPDs beyond a certain point, some of the participating preachers felt that fully accommodating PWPDs is too complex. As for the second sub-category, the notion that accommodating PWPDs is costly, one of preachers noted that he is convinced that finances are the main reason some churches cannot become more disability-friendly. Webb-Mitchell (2009:81) explains the influence of finances in some congregations' struggle to accommodate PWPDs with regard to both architectural accessibility and worship accessibility (including preaching):

In many cases, only the larger, financially well-endowed parishes and congregations can afford to have wheelchair ramps or to hire someone to sign the sermon for people with hearing impairments. Many churches cannot afford to build a ramp onto a building, or to pay a person to work with someone who is hearing impaired, or to type the sermon into Braille, or to help a young person in youth group participate in an outing.

As for the last of the above sub-categories, the notion that congregations should focus on the able-bodied majority, one of the preachers put it this way: “You can think, if there are 800 people sitting here and there is one person with disability – on who will I focus? The 799, not that one person, because he will take all my attention”.

### 2.8.3 PWPDs are like Able-Bodied People

Five of the participating preachers’ interviews displayed characteristics of the ‘PWPDs are like able-bodied people’ model. According to this understanding of the faith needs and experiences of PWPDs, there is no fundamental difference between PWPDs and able-bodied people, since both PWPDs and able-bodied people share a common humanity, form part of the same society, and face the same struggles in life. The following comments by one of the participating preachers succinctly captures the essence of this approach:

People who are physically disabled are just as much part of society as anybody else, so why is there an issue as to whether they are part of a congregation or not. They are part of a congregation and that’s it. Because they are part of society. . . .

They are part of the community . . . part of the congregation. I don’t think I’m going to launch a search . . . And say we are now looking for people in wheelchairs as congregation members. It is unnatural. You’re also not going to search for people who are blonde or people who have blue eyes. . . We are now looking for members with blue eyes? We are now looking for members who are white or black? . . . I don’t think so. People are welcome. In the first place, it is that person’s choice if he wants to join the congregation. That is applicable to all people. Disabled, not disabled . . . If he feels he is at home here, he is welcome.

One of the preachers expressed this same approach slightly differently, emphasising the importance of recognising the normality of PWPDs in terms of their common existential experiences with able-bodied people: “It is just a normal person, just as I am, but he just cannot hear so well, or he cannot see, or he is in a wheelchair, but he is just like I am. He has the same issues and same questions in his life”.

Hubach (2006:37) emphasises the fact that all people share a “common story”, yet acknowledges that the details of our common experiences are different at an experiential level.

Beates (2012:132) also gives voice to the 'PWPDs are like able-bodied people model', connecting it to "the transforming power of the gospel":

[P]eople with disabilities are not "other." They are far more like us than they are unlike us. In fact, they are us! A major step toward appropriating the transforming power of the gospel and toward ministry among the disability community is seeing one's commonality with those who live more visibly broken lives than we do.

Reynolds (2008:250) connects people's "sameness" to their common experience of the Holy Spirit as members of the same body of Christ: "We are all part of one and the same body, each one of us, in his/her own way, breathing the same breath of the Spirit of God".

#### 2.8.4 PWPDs are not Disabled

Six of the participating preachers' interviews displayed characteristics of the 'PWPDs are not disabled' model. Central to this understanding of the faith needs and experiences of PWPDs is the notion that PWPDs are not disabled in the sense of being unable to do anything, but rather have a physical impairment that merely limits their ability to do certain things. The PWPDs are not disabled approach is well encapsulated in the following remarks by one of the participating preachers:

Firstly, let me just say the disability is really only a disability while you've not had experience, because when you've engaged people with disabilities you actually come to find out, for a lack of a better word, of the normality of the role that they could play in serving. For example we had a beautiful girl who was in a wheelchair, but still played a role actively as worship leader. Now that might look awkward. But just because her legs weren't working doesn't mean her voice wasn't working. So I think that lesson there taught me when encountering disabled people – what is the disability? So, for example, if someone's blind, we can say they can't do parking. We get that. But if someone's blind it doesn't necessarily mean they can't fulfil another role of ministry. I think that's possibly my experience and what I deem from those experiences that when I meet someone now with a disability I'm not referring to them as disabled. I'm asking myself what is the disability because I think, and it's just my view and I hate to insult anyone else as if I know much. I'm growing as well. But the moment you see someone without a leg, you classify them as disabled. And that's not true. They have a disability. They could probably . . . I have seen on hunting trips some guys who can't walk, but if you strap them in, they could sit there and they could shoot, just like anybody else you know. That's why I think that's been my experience and the growth period that I'm on right now.

Accordingly, preachers who held to this understanding emphasised that PWPDs are only disabled in terms of the specific physical impairment they have. Besides the limits imposed by their specific physical impairment, PWPDs are as capable as anyone else. The same preacher quoted above made the following illuminating remarks regarding the issue of the abilities of PWPDs, specifically in reference to some of his congregation's staff who have a certain form of intellectual disability:

We have staff working for us at present that have disability regarding their mental state. And I think they're doing an incredible job, but they're doing the job that they're capable of doing. Ok, ok. So when you ask a question that it says for me to think about the people with disabilities being included in our congregation, the answer is very simple. We welcome them like any other volunteer if they are able to fulfil a specific ministry. It will be like me telling a people I can sing. I can't. I have a disability. But that does not mean I can't preach. That doesn't mean I can't serve.

Vos (2015), a preacher with a disability, strongly advocates the 'PWPDs are not disabled' approach:

If you were preaching to me, I would not want you to refer to me as "disabled." I have a disability that has a huge impact on my life, but I am not disabled. My disability does not define who I am. I am a child of God, a husband, a father, a pastor who has a disability.

Damien (2010), another preacher with a disability, relates a personal story that illustrates how the 'PWPDs are not disabled model' may function to change people's attitudes vis-à-vis PWPDs at congregational level:

No one who is disabled is allowed to enter the sanctuary of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Casper, Wyo. As the new pastor of the church, I make sure the rule is strictly enforced.

Our ELCA church, begun nearly 30 years ago, is one of a few in the nation that is a full-fledged congregation on the campus of a major long-term care facility. We have a passageway that connects our sanctuary with Shepherd of the Valley Care Center, a facility of the ELCA, so residents can join us Sunday mornings with their wheelchairs and walkers.

After three months as their pastor, I told our members and guests in a sermon that we don't allow anyone who is disabled into our worship. As the congregation quieted, I said no one in the sanctuary is disabled. Instead, we are human, although some of us have disabilities. One of our frequent guests from the care center, Bill Webster, a Roman



Catholic who has one hand, said from his wheelchair, "I'm not disabled. I'm a person. I have a handicap, but I'm not disabled". The congregation erupted in applause.

The 'PWPDs are not disabled' model bears some similarity to the 'PWPDs are like able-bodied people' model, in the sense that both models underline the fact that PWPDs are capable of functioning just as well as able-bodied people in a variety of contexts, including as active members of a community of faith. Nevertheless, the 'PWPDs are not disabled' model goes further than the 'PWPDs are like able-bodied people' model in rejecting the stereotyping and labels that have often been applied to PWPDs. The 'PWPDs are not disabled' model recognises the important role that language plays in shaping people's perceptions regarding disability, insisting that the term 'disabled' should not be used when referring to PWPDs.

#### 2.8.5 PWPDs are Gifted

Five of the participating preachers' interviews displayed characteristics of the 'PWPDs are gifted' model. Preachers who held to this model argued that PWPDs have specific gifts or contributions they can bring to a congregation in order to be a blessing to other members of the congregation. One of the preachers put it this way: "[E]very person, if he can still communicate and can, can be part, has a contribution to make, he has a story to tell, he has a gift that he can give, he has a ministry that he can bring to the fore, for sure". Another preacher also noted the importance of recognising that everyone has a ministry to exercise in the congregation: "Everyone has a ministry, you know. Then we will look at how we can facilitate you".

Yet another preacher highlighted the importance of guiding PWPDs and the congregation as a whole into understanding the gifts that PWPDs can bring to congregational life:

Firstly, I want to say, what's crucial for the person with the disability is to have gained their confidence that they are able to serve with their disability. Often you'll find people that have disabilities will . . . hide behind those disabilities. And almost make it impossible to access their gift. . . . It allows the church to grow, the people in it to understand: hey, that person's got a disability but look how their gift's blessing me. But it also gives people with disability the confidence to say: "Oh, I'm not the only one here with a disability." Again I use the example of the girl with the wheelchair. I used her on many occasions . . . because she sings beautifully. And I tell you what – people were just moved by that. Now you can say were they moved because she was disabled? No, they were moved by the gift.

One of the participating preachers shared a personal testimony about the profound impact a young lady with a physical disability had on his life and ministry, emphasising the way her specific gifting was a blessing to him and the congregation:

I come from Worcester where all of us were very involved with the disabled. And there I saw how it can happen. And have many disabled people have a powerful ministry. I was . . . at the PPK, there was a girl who was also disabled, who powerfully ministered with me. On the contrary, she was the starting point from where the anointing of the Holy Spirit started to work. . . . And the inspiration that happens there . . . And that was amazing. And then I myself walked a road in the Dutch Reformed church where I was involved, as we saw how they ministered to us. And that was amazing.

Moltmann (1998:120) gives theological voice to the experiences of the above preacher, explaining how every disability may ultimately be experienced as a gift:

[I]f we were to free ourselves for a moment from the value standards of our own lives, then we would be able to understand the peculiar worth of the other life and its importance to us. Everyone affected might ask herself: What importance does the person with disabilities have for me and my life? In so doing, she would quickly discover the giftedness of that person with disabilities.

Preachers who held to the 'PWPDs are gifted' model were adamant about the importance of making PWPDs feel welcome in the congregation, as well as including PWPDs in every dimension of congregational life and ministry. As one of the preachers remarked, "I want to remind myself that we do have people with disabilities in our congregation and that they feel welcome. . . . That they want to be part, feel part, is, on the one hand, to me a sign that we do embrace such people, do make them part, and that they feel welcome".

The 'PWPDs are gifted' model shares the emphasis on the ability of PWPDs to be involved in various congregational activities and ministries as found in the 'PWPDs are like able-bodied people' model and the 'PWPDs are not disabled' model. Nevertheless, the 'PWPDs are gifted' model goes further than the latter two models in underlining the importance of contributions from PWPDs in enriching congregational life.

The essence of the 'PWPDs are gifted model', especially in terms of its implications for the life of the church, is well articulated by Anderson (2013:68):

We must seek to fully incorporate persons with disabilities into the life and fellowship of the church. This includes recognizing the gift they can be to us by their presence and love, and acknowledging that they also have spiritual gifts to be nurtured and providing opportunities for them to exercise these gifts within the Body of Christ – even allowing them to lead and teach the temporarily able-bodied as God enables and gifts them.

Similarly, the World Council of Churches' (2003:10) interim statement on PWDs, "A church of all and for all", also highlights some of the gifts that PWDs bring to the church:

Besides the innate gifts of relationship that are inherent in each person, most people with disabilities have other gifts to contribute to the life of the community and church. These are as varied as the many different parts of the human body, but all are necessary to the whole. They include natural abilities in perception and movement; talents and skills developed through education and training in areas such as academic disciplines, religion, science, business, athletics, technology, medicine, and the arts.

For Duck (2013:33), there are especially two gifts PWPDs can bring to the church. Firstly, PWPDs remind the church of the liberating truth that God is present in the lives of believers, despite and amidst the difficulties and challenges that life may bring. Such a realisation stands in contrast to any notion that the lives of believers should generally be marked by prosperity and problem-free living (Duck, 2013:33). Secondly, the lives of PWPDs may also serve to teach the church about "the wisdom of lament", underlining the importance of crying out to God "in [our] need and [protesting] the injustice [we] experience" (Duck, 2013:33). Duck's insights are shared by one of the participating preachers who pointed out that, in his experience, the faith and example of PWPDs can have a greater impact than that of able-bodied people: "I want to tell you, and one can go and look, many guys who are in wheelchairs, a lot of the time, have a much greater testimony".

#### 2.8.6 PWPDs need Physical Healing

Three of the participating preachers' interviews displayed characteristics of the 'PWPDs need physical healing' model. According to this understanding of the faith needs and experiences of PWPDs, divine healing for PWPDs should be understood in the sense of physical healing. Representative of this approach are the following remarks: "[T]he Lord did great things . . . miracles with disabled people. I will never forget it . . . There was a lady whom I turned like this and prayed for her and that arm turned, turned right one hundred percent".

The influence of the 'PWPDs need physical healing' model is evident in the thinking of Winterhalter (2010:74):

Original Christianity, at its core, was a ministry of healing and deliverance, and it still is where validly practiced. Nevertheless, over the centuries doctrines have developed that tend not to wholeness, but to mental and physical illness and decline. . . . In fact, countless people have gone like sheep to the slaughter, facing disability and premature death rather than correcting their views on how the spiritual universe works.

An emphasis on the necessity of physical healing for PWPDs is also found in the Assemblies of God USA's (2000) official position paper on PWPDs, entitled, "Ministry to people with disabilities: A biblical perspective":

Ultimately, every Christian will experience a permanent release from all sickness, pain, and disability (1 Corinthians 15:43,54). Because of this certainty of ultimate healing, every Christian who suffers can live with hope. We know God does heal today. We serve a God who does things "in the fullness of times" (Exodus 2:23-25; Galatians 4:4) and in perfect season (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8; Psalm 30:5). The timing of an individual's healing and the means of that healing are subject to God.

Colbert (2006:xx) seems to emphasise the need for present healing in the lives of PWPDs, arguing that God can and will restore people's health by removing any sickness or disability they may have. Harris (2011:5) insists that believers are not supposed to live with disability, since God desires to heal all believers.

The preachers who held to the 'PWPDs need physical healing' model seemed to understand the notion of divine healing in almost exclusively physical terms, paying little to attention to any possible emotional or spiritual component of divine healing. For preachers who subscribe to this model, divine healing is physical healing. Furthermore, the preachers who held to this view tended to regard able-bodiedness as the standard for defining what should be regarded as "normal" human experience. Closely related to the latter perspective, preachers who held to the 'PWPDs need physical healing' model also regarded being able-bodied as a privilege that has many advantages. As one preacher put it, "And then there are so many needs that [people with physical disabilities] actually have. And here am I, who has everything".

## **2.9 COMPARISON WITH PATKA'S RESEARCH FINDINGS**

Before comparing Patka's research findings with my research findings, it is important to note some of the fundamental differences vis-à-vis the context of the two studies. Firstly, whereas Patka's (2014) empirical research focused on the situation of people with intellectual disabilities, my empirical research focused on the situation of PWPDs. Secondly, whereas Patka interviewed Catholic priests, parochial vicars, and deacons, I interviewed Pentecostal (AFM) senior pastors. Thirdly, Patka's research was conducted in the United States of America, while my research was conducted in South Africa. Nevertheless, being cognisant of the aforementioned differences, I shall briefly discuss some of the most salient similarities and differences between Patka's findings and mine.

Patka's (2014:137) grounded theory analysis yielded the following five models of people with intellectual disabilities: 1) 'Close to God'; 2) 'Conformity'; 3) 'Unfortunate Innocent Children'; 4) 'Deficient'; and 5) 'Human Diversity'. My grounded theory analysis yielded the following six

models of PWPDs: 1) 'Everyone has a disability'; 2) 'PWPDs are a challenge'; 3) 'PWPDs are like able-bodied people'; 4) 'PWPDs are not disabled'; 5) 'PWPDs are gifted'; and 6) 'PWPDs need physical healing'.

Patka's deficiency model bears some similarity to the 'PWPDs need physical healing' model. Patka (2014:165) notes the following regarding participants in her study who adhered to the deficiency model, emphasising their belief that PWDs should seek physical healing from God:

[I]t is believed that individuals with disabilities should seek to fix their disability. One participating religious leader believed that people seek God to fix them and make them better. Although two participating religious leaders believed in the possibility of intellectual disabilities being healed, they also stated that the spiritual aspect of one's life is more important than a person's body or mind.

Accordingly, the basic outline of Patka's deficiency model agrees with that of the 'PWPDs need physical healing' model, albeit that Patka's participants more readily admitted the importance of the spiritual dimension of a person's life than the participants in my study.

Patka's conformity model has a certain degree of similarity to the 'PWPDs are a challenge' model. Patka (2014:159) explains the conformity model in the following way:

[P]articipating religious leaders adhering to the *Conformity* model believe that people with intellectual disabilities should only participate within the life of the parish if they can within the existing context of the parish. Additionally, the *Conformity* model also expresses a preference for certain groups of individuals perceived as more desirable. The *Conformity* model does not view disability issues to be important within parish life and therefore, accommodations are not considered for implementation to include people with disabilities.

The above approach agrees with the basic approach of the participating preachers in my empirical research who held to the 'PWPDs are a challenge' model, especially in the sense that the needs of the able-bodied majority in the congregation are regarded as a greater priority than the needs of the disabled minority. As noted earlier, one of the participants in my study made the following remarks, expressing his conviction that the needs of the able-bodied majority should be a congregation's focus: "You can think, if there are 800 people sitting here and there is one person with disability – on who will I focus? The 799, not that one person, because he will take all my attention".

Lastly, Patka's human diversity model bears some similarity to the 'PWPDs are like able-bodied people' model. According to Patka (2014:171), a person who adheres to the human diversity model "[views] disabilities to be a natural part of human diversity, which is similar to differences

one would see among a group of people without disabilities”. Such an understanding accords with some of the sentiments expressed by participants in my study who adhered to the ‘PWPDs are like able-bodied people’ model. One of my interviewees who held to the ‘PWPDs are like able-bodied people’ model insisted that disability is as natural a part of human diversity as eye colour and race:

I don’t think I’m going to launch a search . . . And say we are now looking for people in wheelchairs as congregation members. It is unnatural. You’re also not going to search for people who are blonde or people who have blue eyes. . . We are now looking for members with blue eyes? We are now looking for members who are white or black? . . . I don’t think so. People are welcome.

There were also distinct differences between Patka’s research findings and mine. My grounded theory analysis yielded six core categories, whereas Patka’s grounded theory analysis yielded five. Moreover, my grounded theory analysis did not uncover anything similar to Patka’s ‘Close to God’ model or Patka’s ‘Unfortunate Innocent Children’ model. Similarly, Patka’s grounded theory analysis did not uncover something similar to my ‘Everyone is disabled’ model, ‘PWPDs are not disabled’ model or ‘PWPDs are gifted’ model.

## **2.10 ABLEIST PERSPECTIVES OF DISABILITY AMONG AFM PREACHERS**

As noted in Chapter 1, Campbell (2001:44) defines ableism as “a network of beliefs, processes and practices that produce a particular kind of self and body (the corporeal standard) that is projected as the perfect, species-typical and therefore essential and fully human”. As Jun (2009:202) points out, the phenomenon of ableism refers to more than prejudice against PWDs, but includes “systematic advantages” for people without disabilities over PWDs, especially as reflected in “governmental and institutional policies, laws, rules, and structural designs of environment favor individuals without impairments/disabilities”.

Given the aforementioned understanding of ableism, it is clear that three of the models that emerged from my grounded theory analysis show definite characteristics of an ableist mindset, namely, ‘PWPDs are a challenge’, ‘PWPDs are like able-bodied people’, and ‘PWPDs need physical healing’. With regard to the ‘PWPDs are a challenge’ model, the ableism of the preachers who adhered to this model is located in the fact that they regard the experiences and needs of the able-bodied majority as being of greater importance than the experiences and needs of PWPDs (Albrecht, 2006; Marshak *et al.*, 2009; Thompson, 2015). As for the ‘PWPDs are like able-bodied people’ model, the ableism of the preachers is found in the fact that they define ‘normal’ as being able-bodied (cf. Mallett & Runswick-Cole, 2014; Rocco, 2011; Steinberg, 2009). Finally, with regard to the ‘PWPDs need physical healing’ model, the ableism

of the preachers who held to this model is inherent in their implicit assumption that PWPDs would prefer to be physically healed of their impairment.

## **2.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter set out to answer the following basic question, “To what extent do ableist perspectives about disability influence AFM preachers?” Given that three of the models of PWPDs that emerged from my grounded theory analysis assume that being able-bodied is the standard by which basic human needs and experiences should be judged – albeit in the context of congregational faith and praxis – I think it is reasonable to infer that a significant degree of ableist thinking is found among the AFM preachers who participated in the present study. The next chapter of the study, Chapter 3, will seek to uncover why these ableist perspectives on PWPDs are found among some AFM preachers.

## CHAPTER 3

### MODELS OF DISABILITY AS AN INTERPRETIVE LENS FOR UNDERSTANDING AFM PREACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON PHYSICAL DISABILITY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The objective of the present chapter is to engage in the *interpretive task* of practical theological investigation. The previous chapter noted that six conceptual models regarding PWPDS emerged from the grounded theory analysis of the interviews with the participating AFM preachers. The six models of PWPDS that emerged from the data are: 1) 'Everyone has a disability'; 2) 'PWPDS are a challenge'; 3) 'PWPDS are like able-bodied people'; 4) 'PWPDS are not disabled'; 5) 'PWPDS are gifted'; and 6) 'PWPDS need physical healing'. With reference to the aforesaid results of the descriptive-empirical phase of the study, the interpretive phase of the study seeks to answer the question, "Why is this going on?" (Osmer, 2008:4). More specifically, the present chapter seeks to answer the question, "What insights do the fields of disability studies, disability theology and the theological teachings of selected AFM leaders offer with regard to interpreting AFM preachers' perspectives on physical disability?"

This interpretive phase of practical theological investigation, which is marked by the application of "sagely wisdom" (Osmer, 2008:81), draws on insights from the arts and sciences in an effort to better understand and explain the specific episodes, situations, and contexts that were identified in the descriptive-empirical phase (Osmer, 2008:162). Nevertheless, as Osmer (2008:162) makes clear, the interpretive task should always be firmly grounded in and guided by the gospel of Jesus Christ:

While the sagely wisdom of interpretation is open to the world and reflects on the meaning of the discernible patterns of nature and human life, it also draws on the redemptive wisdom of Jesus Christ, the embodiment of God's royal rule. This also requires cross-disciplinary dialogue. How is the worldly wisdom of the arts and sciences appropriately related to the Wisdom of God?

The interpretive task exposes the researcher to a number of theories that may, or may not, elucidate the results of the descriptive-empirical phase of the research. Accordingly, it is of paramount importance that some reliable means of analysis and evaluation be employed to ascertain which of the theories could be regarded as most useful for explaining the descriptive-empirical results. Osmer (2008:114-121) relates three forms of analysis and evaluation that the researcher may employ with regard to considering the utility of certain theories:

- Identify and assess the model, or root metaphor, of a theory and the conceptual field built on this model.



- Identify the disciplinary perspective a theory uses and the level of life this discipline addresses.
- Identify and evaluate the central argument(s) of a theory.

### **3.2 AIM**

Guided by the principles of the interpretive task of practical theological investigation, the present chapter seeks to outline a number of models of disability for understanding the participating AFM preachers' perspectives on physical disability. The primary aim of the present chapter is to understand how different models of disability – including any models of disability that may be associated with the theological teachings of selected AFM leaders and the field of disability theology – may help to explain the ableism that was identified in the participating AFM preachers' perspectives on PWPDs. Drawing inspiration from Niebuhr's *Christ and culture* (1956) and Dulles' *Models of the church* (1974), I shall utilise the typological approach to theoretical analysis in order to discuss a number of models of disability that may help to bring clarity to the preachers' perspectives. Barbour (1974:6) offers the following helpful definition of the notion of "model": "[A] symbolic representation of selected aspects of the behaviour of a complex system for particular purposes. It is an imaginative tool for ordering experiences, rather than a description of the world". Osmer's (2008:114-121) three criteria for identifying the most useful theories – noted above – will be employed to discern which model(s) best explain the various perspectives of the preachers. Special attention will be paid to how the models of disability discussed in the present chapter may help the researcher to interpret the ableist perspectives associated with three of the core categories uncovered by the grounded theory analysis, namely, 'PWPDs are a challenge', 'PWPDs are like able-bodied people', and 'PWPDs need physical healing'.

Drawing on the fields of disability studies, disability theology, as well as an analysis of the theological teachings of selected AFM leaders, I have identified eight models of disability that may contribute to deepening our understanding of how AFM preachers' perspectives on PWPDs have been shaped. While there are certainly more models of disability that could have been discussed, I believe the following models offer the most useful insights for the purposes of the present study.

### **3.3 MODELS OF DISABILITY**

#### **3.3.1 The Moral/Religious Model: Disability as an Act of God**

The moral/religious model of disability is the oldest model of disability and is found in a number of religious traditions, including the Judeo-Christian tradition (Pardeck & Murphy, 2005:xvii). According to one of the primary forms of the moral/religious model of disability, disability should be regarded as a punishment from God for a particular sin or sins that may have been

committed by the person with disability. Henderson and Bryan (2011:7) offer a thorough explanation of the moral/religious model of disability:

[S]ome people, if not many, believe that some disabilities are the result of lack of adherence to social morality and religious proclamations that warn against engaging in certain behavior. To further explain this model, some beliefs are based upon the assumption that some disabilities are the result of punishment from an all-powerful entity. Furthermore, the belief is that the punishment is for an act or acts of transgression against prevailing moral and/or religious edicts.

The following personal story from Hull (2013:88), a blind theologian, well captures the essence of the moral/religious model of disability, especially how the model tends to equate disability with the presence of sin in a person's life:

Mr Cresswell waxed rather eloquent at this, and told me roundly that God was telling me the simple thing that I should now do in order to have my sight back and if I were not prepared to obey him then I should not be surprised if my sight were not restored. Sin was the cause of blindness, as of all illness, and sin lay in the resistance and pride of humankind in refusing to obey the word of God, and to do the simple things God said.

McClure (2007:23) laments the devastating influence the thinking characteristic of the moral/religious model of disability has had on preaching, highlighting the "exclusionary hermeneutical and theological practices in which 'blindness', 'lameness', 'deafness', 'uncleanness' (chronic illness), mental illness (demonic possession), and other forms of disability continue to be tacitly or explicitly associated with human sin, evil, or spiritual ineptitude". Similarly, Black (1996:54-55) notes the danger of preachers utilising 'blindness', 'deafness', 'paralysis', 'muteness', or any other form of disability as spiritual metaphors, since such metaphors are always employed in a way that equates disability with sin and/or disobedience to God.

Sometimes it is not only the individual's sin that is regarded as a possible cause of their disability, but also any sin that may have been committed by their parents and/or ancestors (Henderson & Bryan, 2011:7). Elaborating on the negative impact of this model on the individual with disability and his or her family, Rimmerman (2013:24) emphasises the potentially destructive consequences of such a view: "In some cases, the curse of negative expression of evil might stigmatise the whole family and exclude all members from social and civic participation". Olkin (1999:25) agrees that, in cultures that underline the importance of the family and group over individuals, shame extends to the group.

Another prominent form of the moral/religious model of disability is the idea that disabilities are essentially a test of faith or even salvific in nature. Niemann (2005:106) offers a concise description of the conception of disability as a test of faith, whereby “individuals and families are specially selected by God to receive a disability and are given the opportunity to redeem themselves through their endurance, resilience, and piety”.

Black (1996:26) points out that some people conceive of passing the test of faith as receiving physical healing. If the person does not experience the physical healing of their disability, he or she is regarded as having a lack of faith in God. The notion of disability as a test of faith is frequently found in churches that practice faith healing. From this point of view, “Disabilities are primarily the result of a lack of faith, and if the person would repent and believe ‘harder’ or believe ‘more’ or believe ‘deeper’, he or she would be cured” (Black, 1996:26). Sometimes it is not only the faith of the individual but also the faith of his or her family that is regarded as part of such a test of faith (Olkin, 1999:25).

Black (1996:27) discusses an additional form of the moral/religious model of disability, whereby the challenges associated with disability are viewed as a God-given opportunity for character development. Such an understanding regards the development and deepening of particular character traits (such as patience, courage, and perseverance) as the primary focus of God’s plan for PWDs. Consequently, PWDs may be regarded as “blessed”, since they have the opportunity to learn some important life lessons that able-bodied people do not necessarily have the opportunity to learn.

The following remarks by Kendall (2006:243) are reflective of the understanding of disability as a means used by God for developing the character of a Christian believer: “Whatever your handicap or disability is, if you accept it as being from God, it is only a matter of time until you see a purpose for good in it”. Accordingly, PWDs come to be regarded as inspiring examples of faith in action (Stiker, 1999:34).

Sometimes the moral/religious model of disability perpetuates the myth of disability as mysticism or as some kind of metaphysical blessing. According to the disability as mysticism perspective, the fact that one of a person’s senses is impaired inevitably heightens the functioning of one of the person’s other senses, as well as granting the person “special abilities to perceive, reflect, transcend, be spiritual” (Olkin, 1999:25-26). From this perspective, “[I]ndividuals are selected by God or a higher power to receive a disability not as a curse or punishment but to demonstrate a special purpose or calling” (Niemann, 2005:106). Olkin (1999:25) notes a classic example of such thinking in popular culture, namely, the Greek blind seer who utters oracles.

A final form of the moral/religious model of disability is the notion of disability as a God-willed occasion for undergoing redemptive suffering. Black (1996:30) outlines the basic reasoning

undergirding this perspective: “Persons with disabilities who suffer through life because of physical, emotional, or mental illnesses and limitations are closer spiritually to the divine will because of their situation. They are redeemed through their suffering”. The following remarks by Tada (2011:17-18) are representative of this form of the moral/religious model of disability:

God redeems suffering. The God of life is the only one who can conquer death by embracing it. And so death no longer has the victory, and neither does suffering. Christ has given it meaning, not only for salvation but also for sanctification, and that is the best part. It tells us we are no longer alone in our hardships, our disabilities. . . . People with disabilities, unlike others, are driven to the cross by the overwhelming conviction that they have nowhere else to go.

Although the moral/religious model of disability is no longer as prevalent as in pre-modern times, the basic philosophy underlying the model is still frequently encountered in the way people reason when confronted with illness or disability (cf. Henderson & Bryan, 2011:7; Rimmerman, 2013:24). Moreover, there are certain cultures where the moral/religious model of disability is still the predominant view (Dunn, 2015:10), especially “societies dominated by religious or magical ways of thinking” (Karna, 1999:13). In such societies, PWDs are often severely marginalised, even facing the prospect of abandonment or infanticide (Anderson, 2013:11). One of the most recent examples of how such cultural beliefs may contribute to discrimination against PWDs is found in the Tanzanian context. Lum (2011:449) notes how, in some cultures in Tanzania, a number of albinos have been murdered in recent years because of the belief that their body parts may grant people special powers that will lead to financial prosperity and good fortune.

Niemann (2005:106) highlights the influence the moral/religious model of disability has had on theological reflection: “Whether congenital or acquired, many theologies have historically constructed disabilities to be a curse, one often associated with the attribution of shame onto an individual or family”. In the case of the AFM, the notion that the cause of sickness – and, by extension, disability – is usually traceable to some sinful act or inclination on the part of the individual was quite prominent during the early years of the AFM (Nel, 1993, 2014). One of the founders of the AFM, John G. Lake, firmly believed that there was a direct correlation between a person’s spiritual state and their level of physical health. Lake (2009:87) explains his position in the following way, distinguishing between three kinds of sickness:

There are three kinds of sickness: sickness in the body, sickness in the soul, and sickness in the spirit. The basic sickness is spirit sickness. I venture this: If you could be healed in your spirit, every last one of you would be well in your bodies. But the whole problem is cleaning a man up in his spirit. . . . Basically, the person who is sick in body

has likely been sick in spirit quite a little while, and after a while it has gotten down into the soul and passed through that into the body.

For Lake (2009:210), the atonement of Jesus Christ includes both the forgiveness of sin and the healing of the body: “[T]he healing of the body is definitely, certainly included in the atonement of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and is part and parcel of the common salvation”. Lake (2009:11) contends that true faith in the healing power of God utterly excludes the possibility of seeking medical help from a doctor: “[I]t is just as much a sin to commit your body to the Lord Jesus Christ and then to turn to the doctor as it is to go and commit adultery or any other sin. It is a violation of your consecration to God”.

From the 1930s onwards, the AFM gradually softened its position, admitting that believers sometimes experience sickness and do not always receive physical healing after prayer (Nel, 2014). Moreover, from the 1950s onwards, the AFM began to view medical science in an increasingly positive light (Nel, 2014). A recent example of the AFM’s acknowledgement of the positive role of medical science may be found in the pronouncement, “AIDS and the church” (AFM, 2015), which affirms that, even in cases where HIV-positive people believe they have received divine healing, medical confirmation of such healing should be sought. Moreover, the contemporary position of the AFM departs from Lake’s insistence on a direct correlation between sickness and personal sin, preferring to contextualise the experience of sickness in relation to the Fall narrative of Genesis 3. Nel (2014) poignantly summarises this approach, noting that sickness cannot be traced to individual sin:

The implication is that provision is made that God may allow sickness because He has a purpose for it. Sickness is still one of the fruits of the fall, but it cannot be connected to a specific sin, because it has to do with the general brokenness and fallenness of humanity and not with the particular fallenness of the individual.

Accordingly, in terms of the moral/religious model of disability, the contemporary approach of the AFM no longer regards personal sin as a cause of sickness or disability (cf. Nel, 1993, 2014). Nevertheless, as is clear from Nel’s remarks above, a certain form of the moral/religious model of disability is still found in the AFM, in the sense that sickness – and, by extension, disability – is viewed as sometimes serving a particular divine purpose in the life of a person.

Most contemporary biblical scholars and theologians reject the moral/religious model of disability (cf. Black, 1996; Creamer, 2009; Monteith, 2005; Morris, 2008; Reynolds, 2008; Yong, 2007, 2011), although it is still found – in some form or another – in some theological circles (cf. Evans & Martin, 2013; Morgan & Woolmer, 2008; Phillips, 2004; Swartley, 2012).

### 3.3.2 The Medical Model: Disability as a Disease

From the mid-1800s onwards, the medical (or biomedical) model of disability began to gradually replace the moral/religious model, in lieu of significant advances in the field of medical science. Olkin (1999:26) outlines the basic characteristics of the medical model of disability:

Disability is seen as a medical problem that resides in the individual. It is a defect in or failure of a bodily system and as such is inherently abnormal and pathological. The goals of intervention are cure, amelioration of the physical condition to the greatest extent possible, and rehabilitation (i.e., the adjustment of the person with the disability to the condition and to the environment). Persons with disabilities are expected to avail themselves of the variety of services offered to them and to spend time in the role of patient or learner being helped by trained professionals.

The medical model of disability is sometimes also referred to as the “personal tragedy” model (Thomas & Woods, 2003:15), since it defines disability in a fundamentally negative way. Disability is regarded as objectively bad, as a pitiable condition, “a personal tragedy for both the individual and her family, something to be prevented and, if possible, cured” (Carlson, 2010:5). As Carlson (2010:5) points out, this negative conception of disability has contributed to some of the questionable medical treatments performed on PWDs:

That notion that disability constitutes a blemish on the rosy face of medical science and societal well-being explains many of the practices associated with it, ranging from involuntary sterilization, institutionalization, and forced rehabilitation to social marginalization, euthanasia, and “mercy killing”.

According to the medical model, PWDs deviate from what is normal. As Federici *et al.* (2012:27) emphasise, “In the medical model, disability is a negative characteristic belonging to an individual that defines the gap between them and normal standard health”. Terms such as ‘invalid’, ‘cripple’, ‘spastic’, ‘handicapped’, and ‘retarded’ are all derived from the medical model (Creamer, 2009:22). This approach to disability reinforces the notion that PWDs do not measure up to their able-bodied counterparts. As Johnstone (2012:16) notes, “The medical model of interpretation of disability projects a dualism which tends to categorise the able-bodied as somehow ‘better’ or superior to people with disabilities”.

Medical professionals who subscribe to the medical model tend to treat people as problems to be solved, often failing to take into account the various aspects related to the person’s life as a whole (Thomas & Woods, 2003:15). Kasser and Lytle (2005:11) highlight the medical model’s exclusive focus on the limitation(s) associated with a person’s disability, which essentially “[disregards] environments that might intensify or adversely affect a person’s functional

abilities". Accordingly, the medical model tends to regard the person with disability as the one who needs to change or be fixed, not the conditions that might be contributing to the person's disability (Kasser & Lytle, 2005:11). The medical model's influence has been pervasive in this regard. For example, Thomas and Woods (2003:15) relate how, beginning in the 1970s, the World Health Organisation (WHO) began differentiating the notions of impairment, disability, and handicap:

- impairment: the loss of physiological or anatomical function. The functions of the body or its structure.
- disability: the impact of the impairment on everyday life.
- handicap: the social disadvantage that the disability caused.

Such a classification gives primacy to the functioning of the body, essentially excluding consideration of any non-medical factors that may play a role in a person's experience of disability. Fortunately the above definitions are no longer utilised by the WHO, although the attitudes associated with these definitions still reflect the attitudes that many people have toward PWDs, especially the notion that disability and its consequences are the sole responsibility of the PWDs (Morris, 2008:5).

The medical model of disability assigns tremendous power to the people who diagnose people using criteria such as noted above, since the very criteria being used for diagnosis have been developed from the perspective of what is considered "normal" in society (Thomas & Woods, 2003:15). Indeed, as Garland-Thomson (1997:79) observes, "The medical model that governs today's interpretation of disability assumes that any somatic trait that falls short of the idealized norm must be corrected or eliminated". Nevertheless, since many PWDs will never experience a cure that eliminates their disability, it is often the case that medical professionals who adhere to the medical model will regard PWDs as failures and an embarrassment (Pfeiffer, 2003:100).

A number of professional and academic disciplines have developed based on the medical model's understanding of disability – a few examples of such disciplines are medicine, rehabilitation, special education, sociology, and psychology (Creamer, 2009:23). Furthermore, Creamer (2009:23) notes that the existence of these disciplines is, in a sense, dependent on the medical model of disability:

[A]lthough these professions and disciplines do not focus entirely on disability, their primary emphasis is on restoring function and ability, and they aspire to move individuals toward health and nondisability. From these professions, we are shown that disability is a lack or deficit that must be restored by medical or surgical means wherever possible. . . . When such restoration is not possible, social workers and other service professionals have the job of creating that "state of normality" through help such as

personal aids and assistive devices (mainstreaming) or by removing the individual from the normal world altogether (institutionalization).

In his seminal sociological study of illness and the role of the physician, Parsons (1951:455-456) insightfully described the basic characteristics of the 'sick role' people are expected to play in any social context where the medical model prevails:

The first of these is the exemption of the sick person from the performance of certain of his normal social obligations. . . . Secondly, the sick person is, in a very specific sense, also exempted from a certain type of responsibility for his own state. . . . The third aspect of the sick role is the partial character of its legitimation, hence the deprivation of a claim to full legitimacy. To be sick, that is, is to be in a state which is socially defined as undesirable, to be gotten out of as expeditiously as possible. . . . Finally, fourth, being sick is also defined, except for the mildest cases, as being "in need of help".

For medical professionals who adhere to the medical model of disability, PWDs should play the 'sick role' properly if they desire to receive continued help and support. However, Llewellyn *et al.* (2008:256) highlight the shortcomings of the medical model's 'sick role' approach, especially in relation to the fact that many chronically ill or disabled people do not consider themselves as sick. Furthermore, the 'sick role' approach fails to take account of the vital distinction between impairment and sickness. As Llewellyn *et al.* (2008:256) note, "Many disabled people are not sick, but have ongoing impairments that do not present as daily health problems". Indeed, the general perception of people in the disability community is that the activities of health care professionals and medical researchers may often serve to oppress and ostracise PWDs (Drum *et al.*, 2009:29). Such a perception is understandable, given the fact that medical professionals often have the right to impose certain "penalties" on the person with disability, should he or she fail to comply with the medical professional's prescribed treatment. Such consequences may include the doctor ordering the cancellation of financial and medical assistance to the person, or the medical opinion that the person has not "accepted" the reality of their disability (Pfeiffer, 2007:7).

Pfeiffer (2007:7) gives voice to the frustration many PWDs experience vis-à-vis the medical model's approach, especially with regard to exactly what "acceptance" should entail from the medical model's point of view:

As a person with a disability, I never quite knew how I was to "accept" my disability. Celebrate it in song? Drink toasts to it in the bar? Talk endlessly about tragedy? Decry a poor quality of life? Limp bravely into the sunset giving inspiration to all other people? I never did any of these things. Instead, when I had polio at the age of 9, I acknowledged the disability and went on with my life.



Furthermore, Pfeiffer (2007:7) succinctly summarises the sentiments of many in the disability community when he declares the following concerning the adequacy of the medical model of disability: “The medical model of disability is woefully inadequate for policy formation and for understanding what disability is all about”.

It is worthwhile to note that, in light of the various criticisms that have been voiced against the medical model, some of the more recent classifications of disability – such as Nagi’s (1965) model, Verbrugge and Jette’s (1994) model, and the WHO’s (2001) *International classification of functioning, disability and health* – have attempted to include consideration of contextual and environmental factors in their overall approach to disability.

### 3.3.3 The Social Model: Disability as a Socially Constructed Phenomenon

Inspired by the activism of the British disability movement in the 1960s and 1970s, the social model of disability developed in reaction to the limitations of the medical model of disability (D’Alessio, 2011:44). According to the social model (sometimes also referred to as the minority model), it is society “which disables people with impairments, and therefore any meaningful solution must be directed at societal change rather than individual adjustment and rehabilitation” (Barnes *et al.*, 2010:163). For the social model, even the idea that PWDs are more dependent on help than able-bodied people is a social problem, since “institutional discrimination against disabled people operates and creates dependency” (Oliver & Barnes, 2012:126). One of the most important documents in the development of this approach is the Union of the Physically Impaired against Segregation’s (UPIAS) manifesto document, *Fundamental principles of disability* (1976). Fundamental to the social model of disability is the notion that disability is ultimately a socially constructed phenomenon. UPIAS (1976) emphasises the importance of this social dimension in their definition of disability:

[D]isability is a situation, caused by social conditions, which requires for its elimination, (a) that no one aspect such as incomes, mobility or institutions is treated in isolation, (b) that disabled people should, with the advice and help of others, assume control over their own lives, and (c) that professionals, experts and others who seek to help must be committed to promoting such control by disabled people.

Oliver (1981:28), a disabled activist and lecturer, who also coined the phrase ‘social model of disability’, defines the social model in the following way, stressing the need to focus on the social aspects of disability: “This new paradigm involves nothing more or less fundamental than a switch away from focusing on the physical limitations of particular individuals to the way the physical and social environment impose limitations upon certain categories of people”.

UPIAS (1976) draws an important conceptual distinction between the terms impairment and disability. Impairment is defined as “lacking part of or all of a limb, or having a defective limb, organ or mechanism of the body”, while disability is defined as “the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organisation which takes no or little account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from participation in the mainstream of social activities” (UPIAS, 1976). From this point of view, disability is a socially constructed disadvantage, which is, in a very real sense, imposed on PWDs, constituting “a particular form of social oppression” (UPIAS, 1976). Schipper (2006:17) explains the critical importance of the distinction between impairment and disability in the development of the social model, especially in terms of its relevance to different cultures:

These definitions provided a theoretical underpinning for the social model by making a clear distinction between social disability and physical impairment. While an impairment is universally constant (e.g. the inability to conceive children), the extent to which this impairment has social/political consequences shifts from culture to culture (i.e. the inability to conceive children may be more “disabling” in ancient Near Eastern cultures than in industrialized Western ones).

UPIAS’ approach has subsequently been slightly amended by those working in the disability community, so that the term ‘impairment’ is utilised in preference to the term ‘physical impairment’, which could be construed as excluding sensory and intellectual disabilities (Barnes *et al.*, 2010:163). While some may regard the social model’s critique of linguistic differences as pedantic, proponents of the social model rightly point out, “[Linguistic differences] have concrete impacts on policy and practice” (Sin, 2015:195).

Social model theorists argue that the term ‘people with disabilities’ is directly linked to the philosophy underlying the medical model and therefore insist that the term ‘disabled people’ better reflects the societal oppression that people with impairments are faced with every day. As Purtell (2013:26) observes, “[D]isabled people are people who are ‘disabled’ by the society they live in and by the impact of society’s structures and attitudes”. Purtell (2013:26) illustrates the social model’s argument about the utility of the term ‘disabled people’ by reference to people with learning difficulties: “People with learning difficulties are ‘disabled people’ whose impairment is their learning difficulty: they are disabled by the social reactions to it”. Moreover, as Hedlund (2009:11) notes regarding this approach, “[T]he social model does not define what a disability is, but directs attention to the consequences of disability”.

The social model is especially concerned with addressing the “barriers to participation” experienced by PWDs as a result of various ableist social and environmental factors in society (O’Connell *et al.*, 2008:15). In the context of disability ministry, some of the most pertinent barriers are architectural and communication barriers, attitudinal barriers, theological barriers,

and aspirational barriers (Anderson, 2013:15). Anderson (2013:15-17, original emphasis) defines each of the aforementioned barriers in the following way:

- *Architectural and communication barriers* are those which affect the individual's ability to access services or programs within the community or to enter buildings (including churches).
- *Attitudinal barriers* are those which persons who are temporarily able-bodied erect between themselves and disabled persons. It is not the presence or absence of disability that separates people from one another (nor racial, ethnic, political, cultural, linguistic differences). Rather, the barriers that separate originate within persons who judge themselves to be superior to others in some way.
- *[Theological barriers]* come as a result of the lack of accurate information about actual causes of disability and from not having a proper biblical understanding of disability. Few Christians have persons with disabilities included in their circle of friends, and few Christians, not faced directly with disability, spend time looking at Scripture from a disability perspective.
- *[A]spirational barriers . . .* stem from how individuals who have a disability view themselves, and the impact of that self-assessment on their personal goals, desires, and feelings of self-worth. To a great extent, the individual's self-concept and aspirations are derived from the attitudes of and treatment by others who are not disabled.

Oliver (1990:7-8) strikingly demonstrates the fundamental differences between the medical model and social model in his reformulation of the questions utilised by the United Kingdom's Office of Population Census and Surveys (OPCS) for the measurement of disability (Oliver's reformulation is given below OPCS's original question):

OPCS: Can you tell me what is wrong with you?

Oliver: Can you tell me what is wrong with society?

OPCS: What complaint causes your difficulty in holding, gripping or turning things?

Oliver: What defects in the design of everyday equipment like jars, bottles and tins causes you difficulty in holding, gripping or turning them?

OPCS: Are your difficulties in understanding people mainly due to a hearing problem?

Oliver: Are your difficulties in understanding people mainly due to their inability to communicate with you?

- OPCS: Do you have a scar, blemish or deformity which limits your daily activities?
- Oliver: Do other people's reactions to any scar, blemish or deformity you may have, limit your daily activities?
- OPCS: Have you attended a special school because of a long-term health problem or disability?
- Oliver: Have you attended a special school because of your education authority's policy of sending people with your health problem or disability to such places?
- OPCS: Does your health problem/disability mean that you need to live with relatives or someone else who can help look after you?
- Oliver: Are community services so poor that you need to rely on relatives or someone else to provide you with the right level of personal assistance?
- OPCS: Did you move here because of your health problem/disability?
- Oliver: What inadequacies in your housing caused you to move here?
- OPCS: How difficult is it for you to get about your immediate neighbourhood on your own?
- Oliver: What are the environmental constraints which make it difficult for you to get about in your immediate neighbourhood?
- OPCS: Does your health problem/disability prevent you from going out as often or as far as you would like?
- Oliver: Are there any transport or financial problems which prevent you from going out as often or as far as you would like?
- OPCS: Does your health problem/disability make it difficult for you to travel by bus?
- Oliver: Do poorly-designed buses make it difficult for someone with your health problem/disability to use them?
- OPCS: Does your health problem/disability affect your work in any way at present?
- Oliver: Do you have problems at work because of the physical environment or the attitudes of others?

As may be seen from Oliver's reformulation of OPCS's questions, the social model seeks to focus on the various obstacles imposed on PWDs, which restrict their opportunities to participate in society (Barnes *et al.*, 2010:164). Accordingly, policy efforts based on the social model stress assistance by means of support services and an accessible environment (Scales & Schneider, 2012:302).

A number of social model theorists, especially those influenced by Marxism, trace the social, cultural, and historical barriers against PWDs to the Industrial Revolution in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. People who were not able to keep up with the new pace of production, such as PWDs, were eventually excluded from the workforce (cf. D'Alessio, 2011:47). As Parr *et al.*

(2003:130) observe, “These new working conditions made people with impairments appear slow, and they started to be classed as ‘unfit’, ‘unable’ and ‘disabled’”. Consequently, PWDs were increasingly regarded as a social problem and institutionalised (Parr *et al.*, 2003:130).

The social model of disability has had a profound influence on how disability is understood in our time (Giddens, 2006:282). The social model has played a crucial role in shaping social policy vis-à-vis PWDs, not only on a national level, but international level as well. Nepveux (2015:23) highlights some of the influential organisational and legislative successes that may be credited to the impact of the social model: the United Kingdom’s Chronically Sick and Disabled Person’s Act (1970), France’s declaration of the Rights of Handicapped Persons (1975), the formation of Disabled Peoples International (1981), the formation of American Disabled for Accessible Public Transit (1983), the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990), and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2008).

In the South African context, the social model is reflected in the *Integrated National Disability Strategy* (1997), which highlights four areas of socio-political importance for addressing the concerns of PWDs:

- the facilitation of the integration of disability issues into government developmental strategies, planning and programmes;
- the development of an integrated management system for the co-ordination of disability planning, implementation and monitoring in the various line functions at all spheres of government;
- the development of capacity building strategies that will enhance Government’s ability at all levels to implement recommendations contained in the “Integrated National Disability Strategy”.
- a programme of public education and awareness raising aimed at changing fundamental prejudices in South African society.

Furthermore, the Department of Labour’s *Code of Good Practice: Key Aspects on the Employment of People with Disabilities* (2002) highlights the social dimension of disability when it states, “The scope of protection for people with disabilities in employment focuses on the effect of a disability on the person in relation to the working environment, and not on the diagnosis or the impairment”.

The social model is also fully embraced by Disabled People South Africa (hereafter DPSA), one of the most influential disability awareness organisations in South Africa. The DPSA’s espousal of the social model is apparent from the way it defines disability as “a social construct (and not a description of a medical condition in the individual), that represents the outcome of the interaction between impairments and the negative environmental impacts on the individual”

(DPSA, 2013). The DPSA (2001) is convinced that the social model calls for the active promotion of the following basic principles:

- To recognize that disability is not the major barrier for people with disabilities to living fulfilling lives.
- That the external or environmental barriers, including negative attitudes towards disability, are where disabled people's oppression lies.
- That people with disabilities too are "experts" in the field of disability, and that what is needed, is a democratisation of knowledge.
- That people with disabilities can identify needs, make decisions and evaluate services.
- That people with disabilities no longer accept the inferior, passive role of the recipient.
- That if they are to work in the field of disability the only relationship acceptable to disabled people is that of equal partners.

In its official report on the current situation of PWDs in South Africa, based on Census 2011, Statistics South Africa (2014:xxiv) defines disability in an overtly social manner, stressing the importance of equal opportunities for PWDs in "mainstream society":

The loss or elimination of opportunities to take part in the life of the community, equitably with others that is encountered by persons having physical, sensory, psychological, developmental, learning, neurological or other impairments, which may be permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, thereby causing activity limitations and participation restriction with the mainstream society.

Within the field of disability theology, the theological models of Block (2002) and Eiesland (1994) may be regarded as variants of the social model of disability (Creamer, 2006). Block (2002:11) argues for a "theology of access" and calls on the church to challenge oppressive social and ecclesial structures, ensuring "that people with disabilities take their rightful place within the Christian community". Block's (2002:122) reliance on the social model is evident when she emphasises the church's need to "search our community with truth and face the serious reality that some of the people of God have been systematically denied access to the community". Reynolds (2008:13-14) further elucidates the social critique inherent to Block's call for a "theology of access":

Jennie Weiss Block suggests that, of all places, the church should be a model of the accessible community, a point of entry in God's love that is reflected both in thinking and in acting. For, as she puts it, "the body of Christ presumes a place for everyone". But place is difficult for persons with disabilities. Far too often such people encounter a symbolic, if not palpably concrete, sign that reads, "access denied". This is tragic for

both persons with disabilities and non-disabled persons. Certain people are excluded from participation, and thus their humanity is diminished. The result also diminishes church communities themselves, as disabling principalities and powers constrict the redemptive work of God.

Eiesland (2002:10) is also in agreement with the central argument of the social model when she declares, "Sadly, rather than offering empowerment, the church has more often supported societal structures and attitudes that have treated people with disabilities as objects of pity and paternalism". Eiesland's (2002:10) emphasis on the serious need for social change is cogently articulated in her remarks about "disabling theology":

The problem is a disabling theology that functionally denies inclusion and justice for many of God's children. Much of church theology and practice – including the Bible itself – has often been dangerous for persons with disabilities, who encounter prejudice, hostility, and suspicion that cannot be dismissed simply as relics of an unenlightened past. Christians today continue to interpret and spin theologies in ways that reinforce negative stereotypes, support social and environmental segregation, and mask the lived realities of people with disabilities.

In order to develop a "liberating theology of disability", Eiesland (2002:10-12) insists on the need to critically examine the Biblical foundation of disabling theology, and subsequently the production of "a theology of disability, emerging from the lives and even the bodies of those with disabilities".

Eiesland (2002:13) relates the story of how she came to think differently about God and his relationship to PWDs, while leading a Bible study at an Atlanta rehabilitation hospital for persons with spinal cord injuries:

My return to intimacy with God began at an Atlanta rehabilitation hospital for persons with spinal cord injuries. A chaplain asked me to lead a Bible study with several residents. One afternoon after a long and frustrating day, I shared with the group my own doubts about God's care for me. I asked them how they would know if God was with them and understood their experience. After a long silence, a young African-American man said, "If God was in a sip-puff, maybe He would understand".

I was overwhelmed by this image: God in a sip-puff wheelchair, the kind used by many quadriplegics that enables them to maneuver the chair by blowing and sucking on a straw-like device. Not an omnipotent, self-sufficient God, but neither a pitiable, suffering servant. This was an image of God as a survivor, as one of those whom society would label "not feasible", "unemployable", with "questionable quality of life".

After the above experience at the hospital, Eiesland (2002:14) began to understand its implications for Christian theology, especially as it relates to the resurrected Christ “whose hands, feet, and side bear the marks of profound physical impairment”. Accordingly, Eiesland (2002:14) came to the conclusion that the resurrected Christ reveals a God who is in solidarity with PWDs: “[A] disabled God – one who understood the experience of the others in my Bible study in the rehab center, as well as my own”.

Both Block and Eiesland’s approaches to the social model of disability have been criticised (cf. Adam, 2014; Creamer, 2009; Reinders, 2008). Creamer (2009:88-89) questions the utility of Block’s approach once social and ecclesial injustices against PWDs have been remedied, noting three points of concern. Firstly, while the notion of an Accessible God imbues PWDs with a sense of God’s solidarity with them, it fails to offer “clear direction in terms of action, devotion, or even imagination” (Creamer, 2009:88). Secondly, Block’s image of an Accessible God does not provide churches and able-bodied people with a holistic approach: “This image demands justice and inclusion but proposes little else about God or about human life”. Thirdly, even in terms of its utility for developing an inclusive community, Block’s approach “offers little that would aid in the construction of an inclusive community” (Creamer, 2009:89). As for Eiesland’s notion of the Disabled God, Adam (2014:185-186) questions to what extent such a metaphor may offer a sense of eschatological hope for Christians with disabilities: “[T]he eternal condition of the disabled God has yet to be narrated. Humans and God could share disabilities eternally, but that scenario does not relieve resurrected people of their disabilities”.

While a number of people in the disability community regard the insights of the social model as liberating, Giddens (2006:283) notes several points of critique that have been noted against the social approach. Firstly, some argue that the social model seemingly ignores the often painful realities of impairment. As Shakespeare and Watson (in Giddens, 2006:283) remark, “We are not just disabled people, we are also people with impairments, and to pretend otherwise is to ignore a major part of our biographies”. Secondly, while many people accept the fact that they have impairments, they prefer not to be referred to as ‘disabled’. Giddens (2006:284) notes a recent survey of people claiming government benefits that found fewer than half the people opted to describe themselves as disabled. Lastly, medical sociologists are very skeptical of the model, since they reject the social model’s distinction between impairment and disability as artificial. While acknowledging that the differentiation seems valid at the surface, such a simplistic division collapses once one asks the following question: “Where does impairment end and disability start?” Giddens (2006:285) explains the reasoning that informs the latter critique:

Medical sociologists critical of the social model might argue that to be impaired by constant pain or by significant intellectual limitations, for example, disabled the individual from full participation in society in a way that cannot be removed by social change.



These critics would argue that a full account of disability must also take into account disability caused by impairments and not just those caused by society.

Social model theorists have responded to critique such as the above by pointing out that they do not deny the fact that some forms of illness may have disabling consequences, neither do they deny the role that medical professionals have to play in treating various illnesses. For social model theorists, the problem is that medical professionals fail to distinguish between a person's illness and their disability. Oliver (2009:23) emphasises the importance of this distinction: "The problem arises when doctors try to use their knowledge and skills to treat disability rather than illness. Disability as a long-term social state is not treatable medically and is certainly not curable".

### 3.3.4 The Identity Model: Disability as an Identity

Closely related to the social model of disability – yet with a fundamental difference in emphasis – is the identity model (or affirmation model) of disability. The identity model shares the social model's understanding that the experience of disability is socially constructed, but differs to the extent that it "claims disability as a positive identity" (Brewer *et al.*, 2012:5). Brewer *et al.* (2012:5) offer the following illuminating definition, which also explains how the identity model departs from the social model's approach:

Under the identity model, disability is a marker of membership in a minority identity, much like gender or race. . . . Under an identity model, disability is primarily defined by a certain type of experience in the world – a social and political experience of the effects of a social system not designed with disabled people in mind. This experience is individual but more often than not has some resonance with others who may be or become part of one's identity group. . . . [A] way to describe oneself and to be part of a community. . . . [W]hile the identity model owes much to the social model, it is less interested in the ways environments, policies, and institutions disable people, and more interested in forging a positive definition of disability identity based on experiences and circumstances that have created a recognizable minority group called 'people with disabilities'.

Swain and French (2000:577-578) discuss a number of ways in which the identity model of disability, which they term 'the affirmation model', shapes the identity of PWDs:

- An acknowledgement of the socially constructed dimension of disability, especially as articulated by the social model.
- Motivating PWDs to belong to a campaigning group, which aids in the development of a collective identity.
- The collective expression of "frustration and anger".

- A realisation that there is nothing wrong with PWDs embracing an identity as “outsiders”, but PWDs should have the right to be “insiders” if they prefer.
- Group identity has inspired many PWDs to endeavour for revolutionary “visions of change, often under the flags of ‘civil rights’ and ‘equal opportunities’”.

The identity model has influenced many in the disability community, inspiring PWDs to adopt a positive self-image that celebrates “disability pride” (Darling & Heckert, 2010:207). The following remarks by Phillipe (in Shakespeare *et al.*, 1996:184) unequivocally express the sense of pride that the identity model seeks to foster:

I just can't imagine becoming hearing, I'd need a psychiatrist, I'd need a speech therapist, I'd need some new friends, I'd lose all my old friends, I'd lose my job. I wouldn't be here lecturing. It really hits hearing people that a deaf person doesn't want to become hearing. I am what I am!

As with the social model, the identity model is not without its critics. One of the major points of critique against the approach is that it seems to compel individuals to identify with a specific group culture (Fraser, 2003:26). Ultimately, as Fraser (2003:26) observes, “The overall effect is to impose a single, drastically simplified group identity, which denies the complexity of people's lives, the multiplicity of their identifications, and the cross-pulls of their various affiliations”. A further point of critique is that the identity model negates the struggle for redistribution, failing to pay sufficient attention to the reality of economic inequality faced by PWDs (Fraser, 2003:24).

### 3.3.5 The Cultural Model: Disability as Culture

The cultural model of disability developed in the North American context, where disability studies has been approached in an interdisciplinary manner by a number of scholars working in the social sciences and humanities (cf. Davis, 1995, 1997, 2002; Garland-Thomson, 1996, 1997, 2002, 2009; Goodley, 2011; Michalko, 2002; Mitchell & Snyder, 1997, 2001; Titchkosky, 2003, 2007; Tremain, 2005; Waldschmidt & Schneider, 2007). Junior and Schipper (2013:23) outline the primary characteristics of the cultural model, specifically in terms of how it differs from the medical model and social model. Whereas the medical model and the social model each focus on only one factor in their approach to disability, the cultural model focuses on a range of cultural factors. Such factors may include medical and social factors, but are by no means limited to these factors. Accordingly, the cultural approach does not seek to define disability in any specific way, but rather focuses on how different notions of disability and nondisability operate in the context of a specific culture.

The work of Snyder and Mitchell (2006) has played a critically important role in shaping the theoretical contours of the cultural approach to understanding disability. Snyder and Mitchell

(2006:3) argue that particular “cultural locations of disability” have been created on behalf of PWDs, locations where PWDs “find themselves deposited, often against their will”. Some of these “cultural locations” include: “nineteenth century charity systems; institutions for the feeble-minded during the eugenics period; the international disability research industry; sheltered workshops for the ‘multi-handicapped’; medically based and documentary film representations of disability; and current academic research trends on disability” (Snyder & Mitchell, 2006:3). The primary problem with these manufactured locations is the modernist assumptions which underpin them, specifically the strategy “to classify and pathologize human differences (known today as disabilities) and then manage them through various institutional locations” (Snyder & Mitchell, 2006:4-5). Nevertheless, such artificial or manufactured locations of disability knowledge should be distinguished from “more authenticating cultural modes of disability knowledge”, which are necessary and important ways of understanding disability, for example, “the disability rights movement, disability culture, the independent living movement, and other experientially based organizations of disabled people” (Snyder & Mitchell, 2006:4).

The cultural model of disability is gaining increasing acceptance in the disability community, especially through its adoption by a number of deaf culture theorists (cf. Glickman & Harvey, 1996; Holcomb, 2013; Lewis, 2007; Morris, 2013). Lewis (2007:37) emphasises the immense contribution of the cultural model to further the positive self-understanding of people in the deaf community:

As far as the cultural model goes, I would go as far as to say that learning to see self as part of a wider Deaf community, as in the cultural model, rather than as an individual with a medical problem, can be described as an experience of liberation and ‘healing’. It has been of incalculable value over the years in providing for Deaf people a basis for a sense of self-esteem, a positive Deaf identity and a focus of resistance against the oppressive worldview of the medical model.

### 3.3.6 The Charity Model: Disability as Victimhood

According to the charity model, PWDs are victims of circumstance who should be pitied. As Duyan (2007:71) explains, “The Charity Model sees people with disabilities as victims of their impairment. Their situation is tragic, and they are suffering”. Able-bodied people should therefore assist PWDs in whatever way possible, since “they need special services, special institutions, etc., because they are different” (Duyan, 2007:71). In contrast with the moral/religious model of disability, which has a largely negative view of PWDs, the charity model seeks to act to the benefit of PWDs, encouraging “humane treatment of persons with disabilities” (Henderson & Bryan, 2011:7-8).

Many people in the disability community regard the charity model in a very negative light. The model is often seen as depicting PWDs as helpless, depressed and dependent on other people for care and protection, contributing to the preservation of harmful stereotypes and misconceptions about PWDs (Seale, 2006:10). The following remarks by Malinga (in Coleridge, 1993:53-54) powerfully expresses the frustration that many feel with the charity model of disability:

Charity has not really solved the problems of disabled people. What it has done is that it has entrenched the negative attitudes; it has made the position of disabled people worse. Disabled people have not benefited from charity, because charity is not part of the development process. It is not part of national socio-economic development. Disabled people want to be treated as normal citizens, with rights.

### 3.3.7 The Economic Model: Disability as a Challenge to Productivity

The economic model of disability approaches disability from the viewpoint of economic analysis, focusing on “the various *disabling effects* of an impairment on a person’s capabilities, and in particular on labour and employment capabilities” (Armstrong *et al.*, 2006:151, original emphasis). Put differently, “A person is disabled to the extent that he or she is unable to work, and the challenge for social policy is to provide income” (Barusch, 2015:252). While the economic model insists on the importance of “respect, accommodations, and civil rights to people with disabilities”, such concerns are subservient to the economic model’s estimation of a disabled person’s “potential to work and to provide economic resources” (Smart, 2004:37). As Smart (2004:37) puts it, “In the economic model, social assimilation for anyone is based on their (perceived) cost-effectiveness”. The economic model may be regarded as sharing the basic emphasis of the medical model, in the sense that both “concentrate on the behavioral or vocational restrictions that stem from bodily impairments as the primary issue to be studied and as the principal problem to be solved” (Hahn, 1996:45).

The economic model is often utilised by governments as a basic point of reference for formulating disability policy (Jordan, 2008:193). For example, in the American context, Baynton (2000:392) notes how the economic model has inspired “a long succession of government benefit programs, from Revolutionary War pensions for disabled soldiers to Social Security Disability Income today, based on the notion that disability is practically synonymous with inability to work”. In South Africa, the influence of the economic model may be seen in the definition of disability adopted by the Department of Labour’s *Code of Good Practice: Key Aspects on the Employment of People with Disabilities* (2002): “People are considered as persons with disabilities who satisfy all the criteria in the definition: (i) having a physical or mental impairment; (ii) which is long term or recurring; and (iii) which substantially limits their prospects of entry into or advancement in employment”.

The economic model of disability has been criticised for framing disability almost exclusively in terms of a cost-benefit analysis, neglecting to take other important factors into account (cf. Aylward *et al.*, 2013; Smart, 2004). As Aylward *et al.* (2013:75) emphasise, “[T]he economic model fails to recognize that some of the main drivers of sickness and disability are not financial but health-related and psychological”. Such an economic focus may contribute to the dehumanisation of the person with disability: “Human performance is divided into percentiles, so that disability is conceived in terms of missing parts” (Stone cited by Smart, 2004:40). Furthermore, the economic model’s conception of work has been criticised for being too narrow, concerned only with “earning capacity”, and not paying sufficient attention to “activities such as leisure and community services” (Smart, 2004:40).

### 3.3.8 The Limits Model: Disability as Embodied Experience

According to the limits model of disability – a distinctly theological model of disability developed by Creamer (2009) – disability is best understood with reference to the notions of embodiment and “limitness”. Firstly, with regard to understanding the concept of embodiment, Creamer (2009:57), along with embodiment theologians such as McFague (1993), argues that the reality of the human body should be taken seriously when engaging in theology: “Through our particular bodies, each of us knows the world in particular and unique ways, and this knowledge influences our theological reflections”. From this point of view, the reality of embodied experience must be regarded as an important source for engaging in theology (Creamer, 2009:57). Creamer (2005:57) emphasises that such theological reflection focuses on “all that is written on, of, or by the body, going far beyond sensory experiences to include science, politics, economics, media, and many other concerns of postmodern life”. Moreover, such an approach has particular significance for how the issue of disability is approached, especially when considered in the context of what Creamer (2009:96) calls ‘limit-ness’.

According to the limits model, it is important that people accept the fact that all human beings experience some level of limitation in their everyday lives (Creamer, 2009:109). Moreover, such limits are experienced to varying degrees during all the phases of our life (Creamer, 2009:118). Rather than being something foreign to human experience, limits are as a matter of fact “a common, indeed quite unsurprising, aspect of being human” (Creamer, 2009:31). Indeed, Creamer (2009:96,116) prefers to utilise the neologism ‘limit-ness’ – as opposed to the terms ‘limitation’ or ‘limitedness’ – in order to emphasise that “human limits need not (and perhaps ought not) be seen as negative or as something that is not or that cannot be done”, but rather as “an important part of being human”. Furthermore, since people experience “various formations” of embodiment, “disabled embodiment” is one of those formations of embodiment (Creamer, 2009:32). As Haslam (2012:12) observes regarding this dimension of the limits model, “[D]isability is understood in all its diversity as a category that applies to all of us, at one time or another”.

The limits model of disability has profound implications for how disability is understood. Firstly, it seeks to avoid categorisation such as ‘disabled’, ‘able-bodied’, ‘abnormal body’ or ‘normal body’, preferring to focus on “a web of related experiences (suggesting, for example, that a legally blind person may in some ways be more similar to a person who wears glasses than to a person who uses a wheelchair)” (Creamer, 2009:31). Mawson (2013:410) offers an insightful explanation of this aspect of the limits model, especially its implications for disability discourse:

Creamer is interested in overcoming the ways in which disability studies and its attendant theological discourses rely upon and perpetuate a certain binary logic – namely, the concept or term ‘disability’ as defined negatively by what it means to be able-bodied. For Creamer, the term ‘disability’ fails to capture the complexities of that to which it refers. For example, she explores the case study of the Deaf community, and notes that this community might better be understood as a linguistic minority than ‘disabled’ in a more standard sense. The language of ‘disability’ connects this community to other ‘disabled’ groups in ways that may be neither obvious nor especially helpful. Creamer thus proposes a limits model, or the language of embodied limits, to allow for a more situated and nuanced discourse.

Secondly, since the limits model emphasises that “limits are an unsurprising aspect of being human” (Creamer, 2009:93), it guards against over-determining the situation of PWDs vis-à-vis the wider population (Mawson, 2013:410). As Creamer (2009:96) points out, “This model also highlights that limits go far beyond those labelled as part of the province of disability, and shows that some limits are viewed as more normal (I cannot fly) than others (I cannot run)”.

Thirdly, while acknowledging the social model’s key insight that disability is primarily social in nature, the limits model departs from the social model by allowing for the viewpoint that not “all limits are necessarily ‘normal’ or even ‘good’” (Creamer, 2009:109). Mawson (2013:411) further explains this aspect of the limits model, noting how embodied experience puts things in different perspective: “Attending to our embodied limits allows for recognizing that some of us may wish to strive to overcome certain limits, that is, without suggesting that limitedness itself is simply something that should be overcome”.

Finally, Burns (2012:46-47) teases out the implications of the limits model for the church’s response to disability in the context of planning worship, underlining the fact that the church should honestly face the limits of what it can and cannot do in relation to accommodating PWDs:

While we should make every effort to accommodate as much as we can, we will never reach the place where every part of the service is equally accessible. We sing hymns and hear anthems, even though they cannot be fully appreciated by all (even with ASL

interpretation). We speak sermons, although some are not auditory learners. We perform rituals, despite the fact that not everyone has a spiritual type that finds them meaningful. The very elements that one group finds difficult to respond to may be especially meaningful to other people, and vice versa.

### **3.4 ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF THE VARIOUS MODELS OF DISABILITY**

Drawing on Osmer's (2008:114-121) three guidelines for the analysis and evaluation of the utility of particular theories for understanding research results, I consider each of the abovementioned models of disability by asking the following three questions with regard to each model:

- What is the root metaphor proposed by this model and to what extent does this root metaphor offer insight into the ableist thinking found in some of the perspectives on PWPDs held by participating AFM preachers?
- What is the disciplinary perspective employed by this model and to what extent does the level of life addressed by the model help to explain the ableism found in some of the perspectives on PWPDs held by participating AFM preachers?
- What are the central arguments of this model and to what extent do these arguments help to explain the ableism found in some of the perspectives on PWPDs held by participating AFM preachers?

#### **3.4.1 Analysis and Evaluation of the Moral/Religious Model of Disability**

The root metaphor of the moral/religious model of disability is the notion that, for people living with a disability, having such a disability is somehow God's will. What exactly is meant by the notion of 'God's will' varies. Black (1996:23) identifies six ways in which the metaphor of God's will has been construed in connection with PWDs:

- it is punishment for their sin or for the sin of their parents;
- it is a test of their faith and character;
- it is an opportunity for personal development or for the development of those in relationship to persons with disabilities;
- it presents an opportunity for the power of God to be made manifest;
- suffering is redemptive; and
- the mysterious omnipotence of God simply makes it impossible to know why it is God's will.

The metaphor of disability as God's will helps to account for the ableism in the perspectives of AFM preachers who hold to the 'PWPDs are a challenge' model and the 'PWPDs need physical healing' model. With regard to the former, ableism is reinforced by the fact that some AFM preachers seemed to regard physical disability as a test of a person's faith and character. From this perspective, physical disability is something to be endured with faith and patience, without being too vocal or demanding about the person with disability's specific congregational needs. With regard to the notion that 'PWPDs need physical healing', some of the participating preachers regarded physical disability as an opportunity for God's miraculous power to be made manifest.

With regard to the disciplinary perspective of the moral/religious model of disability, the model is rooted in the fields of Bible interpretation, pastoral theology, as well as systematic theology. Bearing in mind the overtly theological nature of the disciplinary perspective associated with the moral/religious model of disability, it highlights the fact that the origin of the participating pastors' ableist thinking may ultimately be traced to the kind of hermeneutical training they received. Such an insight makes sense in the light of the fact all the participating preachers – except for one – noted that disability issues had not been addressed at all during their theological studies.

As already hinted above, the central arguments of the moral/religious model of disability are all concerned with the fact that disability is somehow caused by or, at least, allowed by God for a specific reason. These arguments have played a key role in shaping the AFM's approach to sin and sickness. The contemporary approach of the AFM no longer regards personal sin as a cause of sickness or disability. Nevertheless, a certain form of the moral/religious model of disability is still found in the AFM, in the sense that sickness – and, by extension, disability – is viewed as sometimes serving a particular divine purpose in the life of a person. Such thinking certainly helps to account for some of the ableist thinking encountered among some of the AFM preachers in this study.

Accordingly, the root metaphor of the moral/religious model of disability – namely, the notion that disability is God's will – helps to explain some of the ableist tendencies associated with the 'PWPDs are a challenge' model and the 'PWPDs need physical healing' model. Moreover, an awareness of the overtly theological nature of the disciplinary perspective from which the moral/religious model of disability operates, serves to highlight the importance of creating awareness about ableism at the level of theological formation, especially with reference to training in pastoral care and homiletics. Finally, the ableist arguments inherent to the moral/religious model of disability, which are still found in some of the theological thinking of the contemporary AFM, further emphasise the need for critical reflection on any ableist tendencies in official church teaching.



### 3.4.2 Analysis and Evaluation of the Medical Model of Disability

From the perspective of the medical model of disability, the root metaphor for disability is that of disability as a disease. According to Oxford's *Concise Colour Medical Dictionary* (2015), the term 'disease' is defined as follows:

[A] disorder with a specific cause (which may or may not be known) and recognizable signs and symptoms; any bodily abnormality or failure to function properly, except that resulting directly from physical injury (the latter, however, may open the way for disease). It is often contrasted with illness, where the abnormal symptoms, thoughts, or feelings may be subjective and difficult to assess objectively.

When applied to disability, the metaphor of disease frames disability as something abnormal, as indicative of a failure to function properly. It is easy to see how such a metaphor may directly contribute to the formation of ableist perspectives among those who adhere to the medical model of disability. The disease metaphor helps to explain the ableism inherent to the 'PWPDs are a challenge' model and the 'PWPDs need physical healing' model. The AFM preachers who adhered to these two models seemed to regard physical disability as something undesirable and abnormal, something to be healed, managed or overcome. Such thinking connects to the medical model's disease metaphor vis-à-vis disability.

With regard to the disciplinary perspective of the medical model of disability, its theoretical foundation is rooted in the field of medical science. As noted earlier, the AFM, at least in its early years, was very skeptical of medical science, recommending that believers refrain from medical treatment and trust in God for the divine healing of any sickness in their bodies. However, later on the AFM softened its opposition to medical science, acknowledging the role of medicine in effecting bodily healing. None of the AFM preachers I interviewed were against medical treatment. To the contrary, the pastors seemed to be convinced of the importance of modern medicine in treating sickness. Yet, therein lies the danger as well: the root metaphor of disability as a disease seemed to be firmly embedded in the thinking of all the participating AFM preachers.

With regard to the central arguments of the medical model, it is worthwhile to again make mention of Olkin's (1999:26) outline of the medical model of disability, especially the idea that disability is a "medical problem that resides in the individual" and the related idea that PWDs "are expected to avail themselves of the variety of services offered to them and to spend time in the role of patient or learner being helped by trained professionals". The latter part of Olkin's explanation deserves particular attention, namely, the notion that PWDs should take on the role of a patient being helped by trained professionals, or, in short, the so-called 'sick role' (Parsons, 1951:455-456). Such thinking seems to be at the heart of the ableist orientation inherent to the

'PWPDs are a challenge' model, in the sense that the preachers who subscribed to this view seemed to regard PWPDs as people who are in need of ministry from the trained professionals (the pastors), and not as people who are willing and able to minister to other people in the congregation.

In summary, the disease metaphor helps to explain the ableism inherent to the perspectives of the AFM preachers who adhered to the 'PWPDs are a challenge' model and the 'PWPDs need physical healing' model. The medical model also helps to explain why the participating preachers viewed disability as something largely undesirable and abnormal. Finally, the medical model partly explains why a number of the participating preachers seemed to regard PWPDs as people in need of ministry, instead of people who are willing and able to contribute their gifts and talents to building up the local church.

### 3.4.3 Analysis and Evaluation of the Social Model of Disability

The root metaphor of the social model of disability is the notion that disability is some kind of social phenomenon. A conceptual distinction is made between disability (regarded as a social construct) and impairment (regarded as a particular physical constraint). One of the participating preachers emphasised that he did not regard PWPDs as disabled, but as people who have a disability. The preacher thus made a conceptual distinction that is also found in the social model, albeit that the social model prefers to speak of 'disabled people' and not 'people with disabilities'. By speaking of 'disabled people', the social model wishes to highlight the fact that oppressive societal structures serve to 'disable' persons who have an impairment.

With regard to the disciplinary perspective, the social model is closely linked to the activism of the British disability movement in the 1960s and 1970s, and developed in reaction to the limitations of the medical model of disability (D'Alessio, 2011:44). The social model highlights the importance of addressing issues related to ableism not only at the individual level, but at the structural level. None of the AFM visionary leaders who participated in the study were aware of any denominational resources regarding PWPDs. For example, according to all the participating preachers, there is no AFM policy document on the inclusion of PWPDs in congregations. The lack of clear guidance regarding the inclusion of PWPDs in congregations may have inadvertently contributed to the formation of ableist tendencies in the thinking of some of the preachers.

As Barnes *et al.* (2010:163) argue, it is society "which disables people with impairments, and therefore any meaningful solution must be directed at societal change rather than individual adjustment and rehabilitation". The implications of the latter insight for the congregation are profound, in the sense that it calls on preachers to actively seek to change the congregational culture that presently allows ableism to exist. Since preaching is one of the primary ways in which preachers may shape congregational culture (Ramsey, 2000:69), I believe that AFM

preachers have a responsibility to expose ableism in their congregations, thus contributing to the formation of disability-friendly congregations. In light of the above, the social model of disability may be considered useful in terms of its root metaphor, its disciplinary perspective, as well as its central arguments.

#### 3.4.4 Analysis and Evaluation of the Identity Model of Disability

The root metaphor of the identity model is encapsulated in the name of the model itself, namely, identity. The *Dictionary of Psychology* (2002:468) offers the following basic definitions of the term 'identity':

- A person's social role and his or her perception of it.
- In cognitive development, refers to the awareness that an object remains the same even though it may undergo a transformation; for example, a piece of clay may be made to assume various forms, but is still the same piece of clay.
- A feeling of being the same person as yesterday and last year; a sense of continuity derived from body sensations (coenaesthesia), body image, and the conviction that memories, purposes, values, and experiences belong to a person; a sense of uniqueness and independence ("I am my own person"). Also known as personal identity.

In the context of the present study, it is especially the first of the above definitions that is most relevant, namely, the notion of identity as "a person's social role and his or her perception of it". As such, the metaphor of identity does not serve to elucidate any of the conceptual models uncovered by my grounded theory analysis, except, to a certain extent, with reference to the 'PWPDs are not disabled' model. As discussed earlier, the 'PWPDs are not disabled' model recognises the way in which negative stereotyping and labeling may contribute to the marginalisation of PWPDs. From this perspective, the 'PWPDs are not disabled' model may be said to recognise, albeit implicitly, the importance of language in shaping the personal identity of PWPDs. However, some clarifying remarks regarding the use of the term disabled – as well as the use of other language related to disability – may be instructive at this point.

Referring to someone as 'disabled' may be regarded as an instance of 'disabling language' (Pate & Hardin, 2013:360). According to Patterson and Witten (1987:245), 'disabling language' refers to language that:

- perpetuates myths and stereotypes about persons with disabilities;
- uses nouns instead of adjectives to describe persons with disabilities;
- uses a demeaning or outdated word or phrase in reference to persons with disabilities.

Nevertheless, some people in the field of disability studies regard the use of a term such as 'disabled people' as something positive, in the sense that they believe such a term brings necessary attention to the oppressive social forces that influence the daily lives of PWDs (Purtell, 2013:26). Accordingly, some may consider the 'PWDs are not disabled' model as underestimating the positive role that the term 'disabled people' can play in creating societal awareness pertaining to disability issues. But at an even deeper level, the identity model regards disabled identity as something to be celebrated. AFM preachers may learn something from this perspective, especially in terms of the opportunity preaching presents for celebrating biblical characters who were disabled. The biblical hermeneutics of Prouser (2011) and Black (1996) are especially helpful for preachers seeking guidance on ways to celebrate the faith and lives of disabled biblical characters. If anything, the debate concerning the advantages and disadvantages of using the term 'disabled' as a descriptive term, should remind us that identifying ableism can be a very complex issue.

#### 3.4.5 Analysis and Evaluation of the Cultural Model of Disability

The root metaphor for the cultural approach to disability is the term 'culture'. The notion of culture is defined in various ways, but a widely accepted definition of culture is that of Geertz (1973:89): "[Culture] denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and their attitudes toward life". From a disability perspective, such an understanding usefully highlights the fact that some PWDs choose to regard themselves as forming part of a particular culture rooted in the shared experiences vis-à-vis their particular disability (for example, deaf culture). Moreover, such an understanding challenges preachers to creatively engage with the specific symbolic forms associated with a particular cultural model of disability. For example, for a preacher ministering in a context where deaf culture features prominently, it would be regarded as a necessity for such a preacher to learn sign language in order to preach their sermons using sign language.

The disciplinary perspective of the cultural model of disability is social anthropology. Social anthropology may be defined as "the study of human cultural variation, including aspects of social organisation, subsistence practices, economics, politics, conflict, technology, and religion, among others". As such, the social anthropological context of the cultural model allows it to bring into focus the various socio-cultural aspects of disability. The cultural approach is especially useful in reflecting on the ableism associated with the 'PWDs are a challenge model' and the 'PWDs are like able-bodied people' model. Both aforementioned models tend to approach society from the perspective of able-bodied people, thus neglecting to note the discrimination against PWDs at various levels of society, such as the economic, technological, and religious levels.

According to the cultural model of disability, “[D]isability is made up of a complex variety of cultural factors, which might include medical issues and social discrimination, but it is not limited to these factors” (Junior & Schipper, 2013:23). Accordingly, the cultural model invites preachers to not only consider the cultural aspects of disability, important as it may be, but to critically engage with any salient aspects of congregational culture that may be explicitly or implicitly contributing to ableist thinking in the congregation.

#### 3.4.6 Analysis and Evaluation of the Charity Model of Disability

The root metaphor of the charity model of disability is victimhood. According to Cronje and Zietsman (2009:102), the term ‘victim’ may be defined in the following three ways:

- Someone who has suffered harm, loss or injury because someone else inflicted it on them.
- Someone who suffers because of abuse by someone else who has power over the victim.
- Someone who has suffered because of natural disasters.

If anything, the victim metaphor seems to contribute to the ableist assumptions found in some of the preachers’ perspectives on PWPDs, especially in the sense of portraying PWPDs as helpless victims of circumstance.

The disciplinary perspective of the charity model is rooted in social work, as well as, to some extent, in practical theology. While not illuminating ableism as such, the social work and practical theological dimensions of the charity model do help to highlight the genuine needs and concerns of PWPDs, albeit in a way that fails to recognise the proactive role PWPDs can and do play in addressing the challenges of their own situation.

As discussed earlier, the charity model tends to regard PWPDs “as victims of their impairment. Their situation is tragic, and they are suffering” (Duyan, 2007:71). Taylor (2013) explains how such an understanding of the situation of PWPDs implicitly fosters ableism:

Ableism creates limited notions of what it means to be independent, productive, autonomous, and valuable. For example, disabled individuals are often represented as a drain on . . . resources. Instead of recognizing how interdependent we all are on each other, on our communities, and on social services, disabled people are marginalized and presented as helpless and dependent on charity.

At the least, AFM preachers would do well to take Smith’s (2011:68) observation to heart: “[D]iscourses of pity and nurture are not necessarily innocent of ableist and discriminatory sentiment”. Moreover, Griffin *et al.* (2007:336) underline an even greater danger inherent in the

charity model, namely, the danger of inaction: “[Temporarily able-bodied people] often channel feelings of sympathy and pity by giving to charities rather than working to eliminate social and environmental barriers that limit access for people with disabilities”.

#### 3.4.7 Analysis and Evaluation of the Economic Model of Disability

The root metaphor of the economic model of disability is that of productivity. According to Arora (2008:327), productivity may be defined as “the relationship between output and input, the output being goods and services, the input the factors of production (resources such as land, labour, capital) used to produce those goods and services”. The concept of productivity is especially susceptible to ableist interpretation. As Griffin *et al.* (2007:342) rightly remark, “Societal expectations about economic productivity and self-sufficiency devalue persons who are not able to work, regardless of other contributions they may make to family and community life”. Accordingly, such an understanding of productivity helps to explain why some AFM preachers regarded PWPDs as a significant financial challenge to their congregation. These preachers quite possibly – yet unwittingly – viewed PWPDs through the lens of economic productivity, regarding PWPDs as unable to contribute “goods and services” in the context of the community of faith.

The disciplinary perspective of the economic model of disability is that of economics. Shannon (2012:1) defines economics in the following way: “[T]he study of the production, distribution, consumption, and recycling (disposition) of goods and services”. As discussed earlier, the economic perspective tends to dehumanise people, viewing people almost exclusively in terms of a cost-benefit analysis. Applied to the congregational context, a pastor may be tempted to view his or her congregation members in terms of the question, “What goods and services can I get out of my congregation members?” Such ableist thinking could influence preaching as well, since a preacher may, deliberately or inadvertently, decide to shape his or her sermons to reach only those who are able to contribute “goods and services” to the local church.

At this point, it may be useful to repeat the explanation of the economic model of disability offered by Armstrong *et al.* (2006:151, original emphasis), which states that the economic model considers “the various *disabling effects* of an impairment on a person’s capabilities, and in particular on labor and employment capabilities”. If one accepts the latter definition, the economic model’s approach to disability is intrinsically ableist, and should be avoided by any pastor or preacher seeking to be disability-inclusive in their approach to ministry.

#### 3.4.8 Analysis and Evaluation of the Limits Model of Disability

The root metaphor of the limits model of disability is embodied experience. McFague (1993:86) poignantly outlines the basic meaning of embodied experience:

Embodied experience links the cries of a hungry child and a wounded animal, the exhilaration we feel at the sight of a magnificent sunset and the soothing touch of a hand on a painful sore. Through our bodies, in their agonies and ecstasies that lie behind and beyond all linguistic expression, we are bound into a network of relations with our natural environment and experience ourselves as bodies with other bodies. Whatever else experience means, it includes bodily experience as a primordial reality, uniting us in ever-widening concentric circles with the entire planet in all its diverse, rich forms of embodiment.

The metaphor of embodied experience helps to draw attention to disability as one of the “rich forms of embodiment” that may be encountered in our world. Furthermore, such a perspective may indirectly explain why some preachers held to the ‘PWPDs need physical healing’ model, since the failure to recognise disability as a “form of embodiment” may contribute to holding to the ableist viewpoint that the bodies of PWPDs are somehow unnatural or abnormal.

The limits model of disability is rooted in the fields of practical theology and disability studies. Accordingly, the limits model pays serious attention to the needs and experiences of PWPDs. Both practical theology and disability studies appreciate the importance of each person’s unique context and story, which, in turn, helps people to avoid ableist thinking.

The limits model draws attention to the universality of the experience of limits: “[I]f we temporarily set aside medical and political definitions of disability and look at everyday human experience, we see that limits are something experienced by us all” (Creamer, 2006:63). The basic approach of the limits model is closely related to the perspective of those AFM preachers who held to the ‘Everyone has a disability’ model, in the sense that these preachers emphasised how, sooner or later, both able-bodied people and PWDs experience some challenge or limitation in their lives, whether such limitation be physical, psychological or spiritual. While I celebrate the fact that the limits model guards against ableism, I am concerned that the limits model might not adequately appreciate the socially constructed nature of the marginalisation that has been experienced by so many PWDs. By locating disability within a discourse that says, “We all have limits”, the limits model may neglect fostering sufficient awareness of ableism in society at large, as well as in the context of the local congregation. In the latter regard, preaching that focuses on how everyone experiences some degree of limitation, may ultimately contribute to upholding ableism by failing to encourage awareness and change vis-à-vis ableist aspects in congregational culture.

#### 3.4.9 Summary of Analysis and Evaluation of the Different Models of Disability

In light of the above analysis and evaluation of the different models of disability discussed in the present chapter, I am convinced that five of the models are especially useful for explaining the

ableism that was identified in some of the perspectives held by the participating AFM preachers, namely, the moral/religious model of disability, the medical model of disability, the social model of disability, the charity model of disability, and the economic model of disability.

- The moral/religious model of disability's utilisation of the metaphor of disability as God's will helps to account for the ableism in the perspectives of AFM preachers who hold to the 'PWPDs are a challenge model' and the 'PWPDs need physical healing' model. With regard to the former, ableism is reinforced by the fact that some AFM preachers seemed to regard physical disability as a test of a person's faith and character. From this perspective, physical disability is something to be endured with faith and patience, without being too vocal or demanding about the person with disability's specific congregational needs. With regard to the notion that 'PWPDs need physical healing', some of the participating preachers regarded physical disability as an opportunity for God's miraculous power to be made manifest – the notion of miracle being understood in physical terms, i.e., as miraculous physical healing. Such a narrow conception of what constitutes a miracle tends to ignore the miracle of a person's inner transformation by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- With regard to the medical model of disability, the disease metaphor helps to explain the ableism inherent to the 'PWPDs are a challenge' model and the 'PWPDs need physical healing' model. The AFM preachers who adhered to these two models seemed to regard physical disability as something undesirable and abnormal, something to be healed, managed or overcome. Such thinking connects to the medical model's disease metaphor vis-à-vis disability. Moreover, the medical model's emphasis on the 'sick role' that PWDs should play seems to be at the heart of the ableist orientation inherent to the 'PWPDs are a challenge' model, in the sense that the preachers who subscribed to this view seemed to regard PWPDs as people who are in need of ministry from the trained professionals (the pastors), and not as people who are willing and able to minister to other people in the congregation.
- The social model of disability draws attention to the socially constructed nature of disability, whether that be at societal or organisational level. None of the AFM visionary leaders who participated in the study were aware of any denominational resources regarding PWPDs. For example, according to all the participating preachers, there is no AFM policy document on the inclusion of PWPDs in congregations. The lack of clear guidance regarding the inclusion of PWPDs in congregations may have inadvertently contributed to the formation of ableist tendencies in the thinking and preaching of some of the preachers.
- The charity model of disability's victim metaphor seems to contribute to the ableist assumptions found in some of the preachers' perspectives on PWPDs, especially in the



sense of portraying PWPDs as helpless victims of circumstance. Moreover, the disciplinary perspective of the charity model is rooted in social work, as well as, to some extent, in practical theology. While not illuminating ableism as such, the social work and practical theological dimensions of the charity model do help to highlight the genuine needs and concerns of PWPDs, albeit in a way that fails to recognise the proactive role PWPDs can and do play in addressing the challenges of their own situation.

- The economic model of disability's root metaphor of productivity is especially susceptible to ableist interpretation. As Griffin *et al.* (2007:342) remark, "Societal expectations about economic productivity and self-sufficiency devalue persons who are not able to work, regardless of other contributions they may make to family and community life". Accordingly, such an understanding of productivity helps to explain why some AFM preachers regarded PWPDs as a significant financial challenge to their congregation, since these preachers quite possibly, and unknowingly, viewed PWPDs through the lens of economic productivity, regarding PWPDs as unable to contribute "goods and services" in the context of the community of faith. Furthermore, such ableist thinking could influence preaching as well, since a preacher may, deliberately or inadvertently, decide to shape his or her sermons to reach only those who are regarded as able to contribute "goods and services" to the local church.

### **3.5 CONCLUSION**

The present chapter focused on accomplishing the interpretive task of practical theological investigation, "[drawing] on theories of the arts and sciences to understand and respond to particular episodes, situations, or contexts" (Osmer, 2008:83). Accordingly, my primary aim in this chapter was to determine what insights the field of disability studies and the theological teachings of selected AFM leaders may offer in relation to interpreting any ableist perspectives that were identified among the participating AFM preachers. Having considered the various ways in which the above models of disability may help to prevent and overcome the ableist perspectives identified among some of the participating AFM preachers, the next chapter will consider biblical, normative perspectives on disability. Such normative perspectives on disability will form a central part of my envisioned homiletical model for shaping disability-friendly congregations.

## CHAPTER 4

### NORMATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON DISABILITY

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

As noted in Chapter 1, the central question of the normative phase of practical theological reflection is, “What ought to be going on?” (Osmer, 2008:4). According to Osmer (2008:135), this normative phase of practical theological investigation entails a process of prophetic discernment. Osmer (2008:135) explains the notion of prophetic discernment in the following way:

It means that Christ Jesus is the full and unsurpassable revelation of God. We are not to look for other words from God alongside of or in competition with this Word. Prophetic discernment is the task of listening to this Word and interpreting it in ways that address particular social conditions, events, and decisions before congregations today.

As noted in Chapter 1, there are essentially three approaches to the normative task, namely, theological interpretation, ethical reflection, and good practice (Osmer, 2008:161). For the purposes of the present study, I have engaged in both theological interpretation and ethical reflection in order to identify “ethical principles, rules or guidelines to guide action toward moral ends” (Osmer, 2008:161). Moreover, I regard the Bible as the *norma normans* for determining any normative theological perspectives. Therefore, the present chapter seeks to listen to the Word of God, interpreting it with reference to the church and its relationship with PWDs.

In seeking to identify biblical, normative theological perspectives on disability, I am fully cognizant of the fact that the Bible has been, and often still is, interpreted in ways that stereotype and marginalise PWDs (cf. Belser & Morrison, 2011; Smith, 1992; Wynn, 2007). Reynolds (2008:34) notes several “patterns of characterizing disability” that have traditionally been drawn from the Bible by Christian exegetes, patterns which contributed to the development of fundamentally “inadequate representations of disability”. These representations may be categorised into two broad groupings, namely, “(1) denigrating views of disability and (2) trivializing views of disability” (Reynolds, 2008:36). The former grouping refers to instances in the Bible where disability is represented as “a blemish or stigma signifying a divine punishment or forsakenness” (Reynolds, 2008:36). The latter grouping refers to “views that glibly dismiss the concrete reality of impairment and its personal and social consequences by treating disability in romanticized terms”, especially by treating PWDs as objects of non-disabled persons’ charity, as spiritual object lessons, or as inspirational examples of virtuous suffering (Reynolds, 2008:38). In light of the inherent ableism of approaches such as the latter, I fully support the following plea issued by Smith (1992:34):

The Christian church, and all religious communities, desperately need the particular hermeneutical principles and insights that can only be articulated from persons with disabilities. These reflections will deepen our experiences of [biblical texts that deal with disability] and transform the preaching that seeks to illumine them.

Throughout the process of exegesis, I sought to remain sensitive to any possible ableism in my interpretation of the biblical text by employing a 'disability hermeneutic'. Yong (2011:Chapter 1, Section 4) defines a 'disability hermeneutic' as "an approach to the Bible that is informed by the experiences of disability". According to Black (1996:140), such an approach interprets the biblical text "from the perspective of persons with disabilities", thereby recognising the fact that persons with disabilities are "agents in their own right". For the purposes of the ensuing exegesis, I followed the three hermeneutical guidelines of the disability hermeneutic proposed by Yong (2011:Chapter 1, Section 4):

1. People with disabilities are created in the image of God that is measured according to the person of Christ, not by any Mr. Universe or Ms. America. As we know, God doesn't make mistakes, and people with disabilities should be appreciated as being uniquely different, even differently-abled. This is not to say that people with disabilities don't experience unique challenges in their lives; it is to say that all people are challenged differently, and that the struggles of people with disabilities shouldn't be aggravated by the biases and prejudices of non-disabled people.
2. People with disabilities are people first who shouldn't be defined solely by their disabilities. More particularly, people with disabilities are agents in their own right. Of course, some are more capable of independent dependent agency than others, but we now realize that our historical perspectives that pitied such people are misinformed. People with disabilities abilities should be allowed to define their own needs and wants, to the extent that such is possible, and should be consulted rather than cared for paternalistically as if they were completely helpless creatures.
3. Disabilities are not necessarily evil or blemishes to be eliminated. Should we avoid losing a functional arm or leg if we can? Of course. But many who have lost the functionality of an arm or a leg lead very productive and satisfying lives – they don't need to be healed. More complicated are the congenitally disabled. Still, people who were born without certain appendages or who have grown up without certain sensory capacities live quite well-adjusted and normal lives with what they have. Should we try to "fix" those who are different among us so that they can be just like us?

In addition to Yong’s disability hermeneutic, I also bear in mind Black’s (1996) practical guidelines for preachers who seek to engage in disability-friendly exegesis – an approach she calls a ‘healing homiletic’. Firstly, when preaching about any text that directly or implicitly deals with disability, preachers should be careful about interpreting such disability in metaphorical ways, especially when such metaphorical usage is somehow connected to sin (Black, 1996:183). Secondly, when preaching about texts that deal with disability, the preacher may choose to shift the focus to considering the situation of PWDs in the biblical text. Thirdly, the narratives about Jesus’ healing ministry are marked by a profound willingness to reach beyond the cultural and religious boundaries, often transgressing the ritual purity codes of his day (for example, by touching the man with leprosy, as recorded in Matthew 8:1-4, Mark 1:40-45, and Luke 5:12-16). In light of Jesus’ example, contemporary preachers need to confront their congregations with the following question: “What boundaries have our communities of faith established to protect themselves from those considered unclean today?” (Black, 1996:184). Fourthly, another way of interpreting texts that feature PWDs is to highlight the action or actions of PWDs in the biblical narrative (Black, 1996:185). The final disability-inclusive hermeneutical method suggested by Black (1996:185) is to consider the reactions of the crowds in the biblical narratives featuring PWDs.

#### 4.2 AIM

Bearing in mind the principles of the normative task, the primary objective of the present chapter is to explore biblical perspectives on disability. The following pericopes – taken from both the Old Testament and New Testament – have been selected for exegesis, based specifically on their relevance to the realities and challenges facing PWDs in the church today:

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| <u>Old Testament</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genesis 1:26-28</li> <li>• Genesis 32:22-32</li> <li>• Leviticus 19:13-14</li> <li>• 2 Samuel 9</li> </ul> |
| <u>New Testament</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mark 2:1-12</li> <li>• Luke 14:12-24</li> <li>• John 9:1-7</li> <li>• 1 Corinthians 12:12-27</li> </ul>    |

Exegesis of the above passages was conducted using the historical-grammatical method, as outlined in the exegetical approach of Van Rensburg *et al.* (2005). This exegetical method has the following basic structure:

- An explanation of the reasoning for selecting a particular pericope for exegesis;

- A discussion of the central verse and the textual context of the pericope, the place of the pericope in the particular book, and a brief consideration of the literary genre of the pericope
- A discussion of the socio-historical context of the pericope and the first audience of the pericope;
- A word study of relevant concepts in the central verse;
- A discussion of the revelation about God and salvation history that may be found in the pericope, and any particular challenges it poses;
- A Scripture with Scripture comparison pertaining to the central theme(s) of the pericope and
- A discussion of the contemporary relevance of the pericope, especially as it pertains to the specific subject under consideration (in the case of the present study, the situation of PWDs).

Following the exegesis of a particular passage, a summary of the most salient disability-related exegetical insights of the passage is provided.

### **4.3 OLD TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVES ON DISABILITY**

#### 4.3.1 Exegesis of Genesis 1:26-28

##### 4.3.1.1 Text: Genesis 1:26-28

Verse 26: Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

Verse 27: So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Verse 28: And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

##### 4.3.1.2 Choice of Genesis 1:26-28

The notion that human beings are created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26) is fundamental to developing an understanding of the Old Testament view of PWDs (cf. Anderson, 2013; Beates, 2012). Moreover, the way in which the Old Testament is interpreted vis-à-vis the concept of the image of God has profound implications for the disability-inclusive homiletical model that I am

seeking to develop. I fully concur with Reynolds (2008:177) when he remarks, “This theme is a perilous topic for people with disabilities, because Christians have often interpreted disability as a distortion of God’s purposes, a marring of the image of God. Thus we must tread with great care”.

#### 4.3.1.3 The central verse, textual context, place and literary genre of the pericope

The central verse in this pericope is verse 1:26a: “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness’”. This verse asserts the fact that human beings are created in the image of God, while not seeking to explain exactly what constitutes the image of God in human beings (Hamilton, 1990:137). The Book of Genesis is often divided into two major sections, namely, chapters 1-11 (the primeval history of the world before Abraham), and chapters 12-50 (the history of the patriarchs). Genesis 1 offers an account of the creation of the world. Genesis 1:26-28 highlights humanity as the climax of God’s work of creation. As Beale (2007:865) remarks, “Genesis 1:26-28 is a reference to Adam and Eve as the crown of creation, created in God’s image”. The first three chapters of Genesis, of which the pericope forms a part, belong to a genre of ancient literature commonly referred to as the story of origins (Ryken, 2003:130). The authorship of Genesis is anonymous, as with other books that form part of the Pentateuch. Nevertheless, traditionally, Moses was considered to be the author of the Book of Genesis. However, contemporary biblical scholarship generally regards Genesis as the product of multiple authors and editors over a long period of time (Brettler, 2005:53).

#### 4.3.1.4 The socio-historical context and the first audience of the pericope

Chapters 1-11 of the Book of Genesis, of which Genesis 1:26-28 forms a part, were most probably edited over a number of centuries, making it difficult to determine the exact historical context in which these chapters were written (Faley, 2005:64). Nevertheless, it is generally agreed that the first audience of Genesis was the post-Exodus generation of Israelites (Vogt, 2009:135), but future generations of Israelites were most likely also in view (Yoreh, 2010:86).

#### 4.3.1.5 Word study of relevant concepts in the central verse

In order to understand the notion that human beings are made in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26), it is essential to understand the meaning of the Hebrew terms *tselem* (ESV: “image”) and *demuth* (ESV: “likeness”).

Mounce (2009:352) describes *tselem* as having the following possible meanings:

- An image as a representation of a god, a man-made idol.
- Something made in the likeness of something else.

With regard to the use of *tselem* in Genesis 1:26, Mounce (2009:352) offers the following insightful remarks:

[I]t does not appear to mean a physical likeness between human beings and God; rather, it is a moral and spiritual likeness. In contrast to animals, human beings can develop a relationship with God and can worship him. Moreover, the image of God is probably linked with God's command to the first man and woman: "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (1:28). The concept may also be relational: men and women have the unique ability to image God to one another as well as to image God back up to God.

According to Mounce (2009:410-411), the term *demuth* may refer to the following:

- A simple comparison;
- An image or pattern;
- A shape or figure; or
- Audible similarities.

As for the relationship between *demuth* and *tselem*, Mounce (2009:411) argues that *demuth* quite possibly aims to relate what it means to be created in the *tselem* of God: "A particular way that this is manifested is in the function of dominion held by humankind. Just as God rules over creation, we too share in the exercise of his sovereignty".

4.3.1.6 The revelation about God and salvation history in the pericope, and the challenges it poses

From a salvation-historical perspective, Genesis 1:26 highlights the fact that human beings are created in the image of God, but also reminds human beings that the gift of being created in God's image brings the responsibility of accountability. As Pahl (2011:31) remarks, "Being God's royal representatives, God's children, those in the 'image of God,' carries a responsibility in relationship that implies accountability". Bock (2010:42) poignantly summarises the reality of this responsibility: "Why does He hold us accountable? He does so because of the way He made us".

4.3.1.7 Scripture with Scripture comparison

The notion that human beings are created in the image of God is addressed in other parts of Scripture as well, allowing for the development of a richer understanding of this fundamental biblical concept. Elsewhere in the Book of Genesis itself, the image of God is related to the sanctity of human life: "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for

God made man in his own image” (Gen. 9:6). Turning to the New Testament, one of the first references to the concept is found in 1 Corinthians 11:7: “For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man”. According to the Letter to the Ephesians, the attributes of righteousness and holiness that constitute the new self of the believer is related to the believer having “put on the new self, created after the likeness of God” (Eph. 4:24). Similarly, Colossians 3:10 records that believers “have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge, after the image of its creator”. James offers an implicit word of caution regarding the danger of using our tongue to swear at fellow human beings “who are made in the likeness of God” (Jas 3:9).

#### 4.3.1.8 A disability reading of the pericope

Fundamental to understanding the Old Testament view of disability is the Old Testament’s assertion that God created human beings in his own image or likeness (Gen. 1:26-28, 31; 2:7). Christian exegetes have long debated the precise meaning of what it constitutes to be created in the image of God (or, to use the Latin expression, *imago Dei*). Three views regarding the possible meaning of the notion of the image of God have generally been proposed by exegetes, namely, the substantive view, the functional view, and the relational view. We shall briefly consider each of these three views, since each of these views has particular implications for how the Old Testament’s view of disability is ultimately construed.

The substantive view associates the image of God with those characteristics of human beings that reflect, to some extent, the perceived characteristics of God. As Herzfeld (2002:16) explains, “Such interpretations define the *imago Dei* as ontological in the sense that it is a quality or characteristic intrinsic to our species, inherent in our human nature, shared with God alone, thus serving to distinguish us from the rest of nature, and in particular, from the other animals”. A variety of characteristics have been suggested as possible characteristics that we share with God, such as “the ability to reason, communication, imagination, and creativity” (Anderson, 2013:30). Accordingly, from a disability perspective, it is important to note that a person with limited or no ability to reason or communicate would essentially be excluded from bearing the image of God.

The functional view associates the image of God with notions of dominion and stewardship, stressing that Adam (and, by implication, humankind) was appointed to manage everything that God created (Anderson, 2013:30). Boyd and Eddy (2009:99) poignantly summarise the essence of the functional view: “As God is the loving Lord of the entire cosmos, humans are called to be the loving lords of the entire earth”. From a disability perspective, the functional view of the image of God is problematic, since it, by definition, excludes people who do not have the ability to manage or oversee God’s creation (for example, people with certain kinds of intellectual disabilities).



The relational view associates the image of God with the importance of enjoying a loving relationship with God and others (Anderson, 2013:30). Boyd and Eddy (2009:99) explain the relational view in the following way: “Humans are created in the image of the Triune God and thus are meant to find their essence and destiny in community with one another and with God”. From a disability perspective, the relational view is the most disability inclusive view, since it does not define the image of God in terms of any specific intellectual and/or physical capacity, but emphasises the importance of understanding personhood in the context of relationship.

Of the three views about the image of God discussed above, I am convinced that the relational view is most useful for understanding the Old Testament’s view of disability. More specifically, I subscribe to Reynolds’ (2008:177) predominantly relational understanding of the *imago Dei* and its implications for PWDs:

I suggest that to be created in the image of God means to be created for contributing to the world, open toward the call to love others. Three dimensions are implied: creativity with others, relation to others, and availability for others. The point to be stressed is that all people can be contributors, representing a range of both gifts and limitations. Disability is not an incomplete humanity in this regard.

Accordingly, from a disability perspective, it is of cardinal importance to emphasise the fact that *all people* are created in the image of God. As Anderson (2013:31) states, “Our value or worth derives from being part of the human family, where each person – regardless of intellectual capacity, physical mobility, sensory ability, personal attractiveness, or tribal or family lineage – *is* the image of God”.

#### 4.3.2 Exegesis of Genesis 32:22-32

##### 4.3.2.1 Text: Genesis 32:22-32

- Verse 22: The same night he arose and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok.
- Verse 23: He took them and sent them across the stream, and everything else that he had.
- Verse 24: And Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day.
- Verse 25: When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket, and Jacob’s hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him.

- Verse 26: Then he said, "Let me go, for the day has broken." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."
- Verse 27: And he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob."
- Verse 28: Then he said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed."
- Verse 29: Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him.
- Verse 30: So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered."
- Verse 31: The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip.
- Verse 32: Therefore to this day the people of Israel do not eat the sinew of the thigh that is on the hip socket, because he touched the socket of Jacob's hip on the sinew of the thigh.

#### 4.3.2.2 Choice of Genesis 32:22-32

Genesis 32:22-32 relates the narrative of Jacob's wrestling with God at the ford of the Jabbok River. During Jacob's struggle with God, he sustains an injury to his hip that puts it out of joint. Although the text does not explicitly say so, there is a widely held interpretive tradition which contends that Jacob was permanently disabled on this occasion (Beates, 2012:28). Moreover, traditional hermeneutics has often interpreted this narrative in a way that regards Jacob's injury, and subsequent disability, as being "a sign of human weakness in contrast to divine strength" (Yong, 2011:Chapter 2, Section 4). From a disability perspective, it is thus important to reconsider the pericope in order to ascertain the hermeneutical validity of such negative interpretations of Jacob's disability.

#### 4.3.2.3 The central verse, textual context, place and literary genre of the pericope

The central verse in this pericope is verse 28: "Then he said, 'Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed'". This verse provides the explanation for the change of Jacob's name to Israel, a name which means "God strives" or "he who strives with God" (Benedix, 2009:48). Reno (2010:248) elaborates on the significance of this change of name, arguing that it both "closes the wrestling match that tests Jacob's perseverance, and . . . sets the stage for Jacob's career in his homeland". The narratives which constitute Genesis 12-50 are sometimes divided into the following cycles: an Abraham cycle (Genesis 12-25); a Jacob cycle (Genesis 25-36); and a story about Joseph (Genesis 37-50). Accordingly, Genesis 32:22-32 – the pericope that relates Jacob's wrestling

with God – forms part of the Jacob cycle. The literary genre of the narratives found in Genesis 12-50 is most closely related to the genre of hero stories (Jenkins, 2003:178). As noted earlier, contemporary Biblical scholarship generally regards Genesis as the product of a number of authors and editors over a long period of time (Brettler, 2010:53).

#### 4.3.2.4 The socio-historical context and the first audience of the pericope

A number of Old Testament scholars concur that the patriarchal narratives recorded in Genesis 12-50 have a firm historical basis in the second millennium BC. Faley (2005:69) emphasises, “The events and customs described are not incongruous in terms of a second-millennium provenance”. The first audience of Genesis was quite possibly the generation of Israelites who were on their way to entering the Promised Land (Greidanus, 2007:34), but future generations of Israelites were most likely also in view (Yoreh, 2010:86).

#### 4.3.2.5 Word study of relevant concepts in the central verse

In order to understand the significance of Jacob having “striven with God” and “prevailed” (Gen. 32:28), it is important to gain clarity about the meaning of the following three Hebrew terms, namely *Yisrael*, (ESV: “Israel”), *sarah* (ESV: “striven”), and *yakol* (ESV: “have prevailed”). Mounce (2009:296,953) notes that *Yisrael* means “one who strives with God” or “he struggles with God”, while Benedix (2009:48) points out that it can also mean “God strives”. According to Brown-Driver-Briggs (2006), *sarah* means “persist, exert oneself, persevere”, while *yakol* means “be able, have power prevail, endure”.

#### 4.3.2.6 The revelation about God and salvation history in the pericope, and the challenges it poses

Jacob’s primary role in salvation history is that of patriarch, along with the other two patriarchs, Abraham and Isaac. These three patriarchs are, in a sense, the “founding fathers” of the Christian faith: “Through them God began to prepare for the coming of the promised seed, the Savior” (Kendall, 2012:38). With regard to the salvific role of Jacob’s wrestling with God, Boulding (2010:38) remarks, “Jacob’s courageous struggle wins him a blessing from his opponent, and his name is changed to ‘Israel’, the name of destiny that signified a vital role in the story of salvation”. Mayes (2002:13) highlights how Jacob’s struggle could be regarded as a metaphor for the experience of all believers as they struggle in their relationship with God. Allender (2011:48) agrees with Mayes, but emphasises Jacob’s experience of brokenness exemplifies the reality of human brokenness as an integral part of God’s redemptive work: “[W]hen God renames us, he also makes each one of us a new person through a redemption that requires brokenness”.

#### 4.3.2.7 Scripture with Scripture comparison

There are a number of instances in Scripture where God changes a person's name, which serve a similar function as God's renaming of Jacob to Israel (Gen. 32:28). For example, God changes Abram's name to Abraham (Gen. 17:5), Sarai to Sarah (Gen. 17:15), John and James to Boanerges (Mark 3:17), Simon to Peter/Cephas (Matt. 16:16-18). As Köstenberger (2004:77) points out, in Old Testament times, God often changed a person's name to signify their special calling, while rabbis in the time of Jesus sometimes gave characteristic names to their followers. Moreover, in the context of the Ancient Near East, changing someone's name was also a way of exercising authority over that person (Walton and Matthews, 1997:65-66). According to Revelation 2:17, Jesus will give new names to the believers in Pergamum: "I will also give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name is inscribed that no one knows except the one who receives it". Oropeza (2012:203) notes that this new name "probably refers to faithful individuals who leave behind their literal, earthly names for new, heavenly ones that are comparable with their character and deeds".

#### 4.3.2.8 A disability reading of the pericope

For Yong (2011), there are three important aspects of the text which are relevant from a disability perspective. Firstly, Jacob's disability (his limp) is more a sign of strength than weakness. Despite having wrestled all night, Jacob showed no sign of giving up (Gen. 32:24-25). Even after sustaining the injury to his hip, Jacob continued to struggle, refusing to let go (Gen. 32:26). Secondly, Jacob was able to wrestle a blessing from his opponent, despite his physical disability. As Yong (2011:Chapter 2, Section 4) remarks, "[Jacob's] disability was a sign not just of one who had shown his strength in wrestling with another, but of one who had prevailed even against God himself". Wynn (2007:101) agrees, but qualifies Yong's position in an important way: "The blessing was not a result of the disability, nor was the disability a result of the blessing. It is something he took away as a lifelong reminder of what happened there". Thirdly, Jacob's disability can be regarded as a sign of Israel's covenant with God. Yong (2011: Chapter 2, Section 4) explains, "[G]iven Jacob's patriarchal status among the people of Israel, the reference to their not eating the thigh muscle can be taken also as symbolically indicative of their ongoing reception of a disabled man as one of their founding fathers". The latter view is shared by Abrams (1998:85), "Israel, then, in its first incarnation is physically disabled".

According to Anderson (2013), God's action in causing Jacob's disability through an injury is best understood as an act of grace, in the sense that it helped to restore and sustain Jacob's relationship with God. From this perspective, Jacob's disability should be regarded as a gift from God, in the sense that it helped him to realise his need for God. Therefore, disability may be regarded as a blessing, reminding the person how spiritually important it is for God's power to be made manifest in the midst of human weakness.

### 4.3.3 Exegesis of Leviticus 19:13-14

#### 4.3.3.1 Text: Leviticus 19:13-14

Verse 13: You shall not oppress your neighbor or rob him. The wages of a hired worker shall not remain with you all night until the morning.

Verse 14: You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God: I am the Lord.

#### 4.3.3.2 Choice of Leviticus 19:13-14

In order to facilitate the full inclusion of PWDs in our churches, it is important that there should be an awareness and understanding of the way in which churches have “cursed” and put “stumbling blocks” in front of PWDs. Anderson (2013:21) challenges churches to reflect upon the extent to which Leviticus 19:14 can be applied to the contemporary context as a divine admonition to ensure that barriers to full inclusion and participation of PWDs in church life and worship are eliminated.

#### 4.3.3.3 The central verse, textual context, the place, and the literary genre of the pericope

The central verse of the pericope is verse 14: “You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God: I am the Lord”. This verse emphasises that the Israelites were obligated to treat PWDs with respect, being careful not to take advantage of them. Ridiculing a deaf person was shameful, since the person could not hear the insult; such behaviour would have totally exploited their disability. Similarly, it was dishonorable to put a stumbling block in front of a blind person. As Sklar (2014:246) notes, “Both groups of people are at the mercy of others and represent all those at some physical or social disadvantage, whether physically or mentally challenged, poor, widowed, or displaced”. Moreover, the Israelites were to always keep in mind the fact that, while PWDs, such as those who are deaf and blind, were possibly not able to hold people who mistreated them accountable, the Lord himself would most definitely hold such offenders accountable. While Leviticus 19:11-12 addressed the question of unjust acts between people who were essentially equals, Leviticus 19:13-14 addresses unjust acts perpetrated by the powerful against those who were unable to defend themselves (Sklar, 2014:245). The pericope should be considered in the context of Leviticus 19:9-19, which deals with the ethical concerns of holiness in the lives of the Israelites. The literary genre of Leviticus 19 is best understood as a kind of “congregational catechism”. As Gerstenberger (1996:263) explains concerning the style of the language employed in Leviticus 19, “Such direct, exhortatory, and admonitory discourse to a group of assembled listeners is characteristic of congregational catechism”. As is the case with Genesis, the authorship of Leviticus has traditionally been attributed to Moses. Nevertheless, a number Old Testament scholars today regard Leviticus as the work of multiple authors and editors associated with two primary

sources, namely the so-called Priestly (P) source, responsible for composing chapter 1-16, and the Holiness (H) source, responsible for composing chapter 17-26 (McEntire, 2008:125).

#### 4.3.3.4 The socio-historical context and the first audience of the pericope

Leviticus is set in the period between Israel's sojourning in the wilderness and entry to the Promised Land (Hiers, 2001:49). According to the Book of Leviticus, the Lord communicated the laws to Moses in "the tent of meeting" (Lev. 1:1), while the Israelites were camped at Mount Sinai (Lev. 25:1). The book was especially relevant to the context of the Levitical priesthood, in the sense that it provided the priests with a manual by which to guide the people of Israel (Benware, 1993:61-62). The Holiness Code, as the laws of Leviticus 17-26 are commonly referred to, was quite likely composed in Jerusalem, shortly before the Babylonian exile (Bandstra, 2009:153). With regard to the implied audience of the book, Raphael (2008:38) notes that Leviticus seems to focus on "the lay Israelite who needs to know the purity regulations for everyone and who needs to participate appropriately through animal offerings in the cult".

#### 4.3.3.5 Word study of relevant concepts in the central verse

In the context of the present study, it is important to gain a better understanding of the meaning of the following concepts found in Leviticus 19:14, namely, the Hebrew terms *qalal* (ESV: "curse"), *cheresh* (ESV: "deaf"), *mikshol* (ESV: "stumbling block"), and *ivver* (ESV: "blind").

According to Mounce (2009), *qalal* may have the following meanings:

- To curse;
- To express mitigation, in the sense of "receding" or "lightened";
- To despise someone; and
- To consider something despicable and vile.

In Leviticus 19:14, *qalal* is used in the sense of "to curse", denoting the contemptuous and trifling treatment of the blind person (Miller, 2009:103). As for the word *cheresh*, Renn (2005:244) points out that the word occurs nine times in the Old Testament, always referring to physiological deafness.

According to Brown-Driver-Briggs (2006), *mikshol* may refer to:

- The act of stumbling, in either a figurative or literal sense; or
- A stumbling-block, in a figurative, literal, or ethical sense.

With regard to the use of *mikshol* in Leviticus 19:14 specifically, the meaning is "stumbling-block" in a literal sense (Brown-Driver-Briggs, 2006). As for the term *ivver*, the Old Testament uses the term twenty-five times, to denote either a physical or spiritual condition (Renn,

2005:121). In the case of Leviticus 19:14, *ivver* is used to refer to physical blindness (Renn, 2005:121).

#### 4.3.3.6 The revelation about God and salvation history in the pericope, and the challenges it poses

Leviticus 19:13-14 highlights the seriousness with which the Lord regards matters of social justice. Defrauding people and withholding their wages (Lev. 19:13), as well as cursing the deaf and putting a stumbling block in front of the blind, are all forms of oppression that indicate a lack of fear of the Lord. Demarest (1990:221) offers some important insights regarding such oppression. Firstly, it could take the form of postponing the payment of wages, wages that were sorely needed by the labourer to provide a daily meal to his family. Secondly, any harsh treatment of the deaf and the blind was regarded as totally unacceptable.

Oppression of a neighbor can take many forms. . . . Delay in the payment of wages is also a form of oppression. In that day, it was the practice to pay the laborer at the end of each working day. Only then could the poor worker purchase the evening meal for his family. To delay payment was to inflict hardship. . . . Cruel treatment, whether in mockery of the deaf or in taunting the blind, was never to be any part of the life of the people of the community of faith.

From a salvation history perspective, it is important to note the prophet Isaiah's proclamation that, when the Messianic era arrives, both the deaf and blind will be healed: "In that day the deaf shall hear the words of a book, and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see" (Isaiah 29:18). This Messianic prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled in the coming of Jesus Christ, who brought healing to the deaf (Mark 7:31-37) and the blind (Matt. 9:27-31; 12:22; 20:30-34; Mark 8:22-26; 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43; John 9:1-41).

#### 4.3.3.7 Scripture with Scripture comparison

The divine admonition to be mindful of the needs of the deaf and the blind is not found in Leviticus 19:14 alone. Deuteronomy 27:18a states: "Cursed be anyone who misleads a blind man on the road". In Job 29:15a, Job emphasises the fact that he showed concern for the blind: "I was eyes to the blind". In the Book of Isaiah, when the Lord speaks about bringing back Israel from their Babylonian exile, He specifically includes those Israelites who are blind and deaf: "Bring out the people who are blind, yet have eyes, who are deaf, yet have ears!" (Isaiah 43:8).

#### 4.3.3.8 A disability reading of the pericope

Verster (2012:74) strikingly summarises the general significance of Leviticus 19:13-14 for the life of the church: "The community of faith should . . . always consider the needs and circumstances of one's fellow human being. This community should honour God in their love

towards one another". Lucenay *et al.* (2004:35) emphasise the specific way in which Leviticus 19:14 should be regarded as a fundamental guideline for the church vis-à-vis PWDs, especially in terms of "the way we construct our facilities, plan our worship, and interact with one another".

Another important aspect raised by Leviticus 19:14 is the fact that some people do not regard certain medical conditions as disabilities. Congregations could unwittingly construct "stumbling blocks" by seeking to be disability-friendly when, in fact, some people do not regard themselves as someone living with a disability. For example, many deaf people do not regard deafness as a disability (Hull, 2013:125-126), but consider themselves part of a certain type of sub-culture, namely, "Deaf Culture" (Spencer, 2015:437-438). As Lucas *et al.* (2005:253, original emphasis) explain, "The phenomenon known as *Deaf culture* consists of a *community of people* who use sign language to communicate". Similarly, some people living with Asperger Syndrome do not regard it as a disability, but rather as a certain personality type (Lyons & Fitzgerald, 2005:310). Accordingly, churches should engage in constructive dialogue with people living with such medical conditions, in order to avoid harbouring a potentially alienating perspective that stands in conflict with the individual's self-understanding of their medical condition.

#### 4.3.4 Exegesis of 2 Samuel 9

##### 4.3.4.1 Text: 2 Samuel 9

Verse 1: And David said, "Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?"

Verse 2: Now there was a servant of the house of Saul whose name was Ziba, and they called him to David. And the king said to him, "Are you Ziba?" And he said, "I am your servant."

Verse 3: And the king said, "Is there not still someone of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God to him?" Ziba said to the king, "There is still a son of Jonathan; he is crippled in his feet."

Verse 4: The king said to him, "Where is he?" And Ziba said to the king, "He is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar."

Verse 5: Then King David sent and brought him from the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar.

Verse 6: And Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, son of Saul, came to David and fell on his face and paid homage. And David said, "Mephibosheth!" And he answered, "Behold, I am your servant."



- Verse 7: And David said to him, “Do not fear, for I will show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan, and I will restore to you all the land of Saul your father, and you shall eat at my table always.”
- Verse 8: And he paid homage and said, “What is your servant, that you should show regard for a dead dog such as I?”
- Verse 9: Then the king called Ziba, Saul’s servant, and said to him, “All that belonged to Saul and to all his house I have given to your master’s grandson.
- Verse 10: And you and your sons and your servants shall till the land for him and shall bring in the produce, that your master’s grandson may have bread to eat. But Mephibosheth your master’s grandson shall always eat at my table.” Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.
- Verse 11: Then Ziba said to the king, “According to all that my lord the king commands his servant, so will your servant do.” So Mephibosheth ate at David’s table, like one of the king’s sons.
- Verse 12: And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name was Mica. And all who lived in Ziba’s house became Mephibosheth’s servants.
- Verse 13: So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, for he ate always at the king’s table. Now he was lame in both his feet.

#### 4.3.4.2 Choice of 2 Samuel 9

The perceptions of people without disabilities toward PWDs play a significant role in shaping PWDs experiences of the church. As Webb-Mitchell (2009:12) asserts, “Our perceptions of people with disabling conditions become the material that produces the brick and mortar of our attitudinal barriers between Christ’s community of those who are not disabled, and the community of people with disabling conditions”. The narrative concerning David and Mephibosheth, found in 2 Samuel 9, offers insights that may be of great value for the church when reflecting on the issue of perceptions vis-à-vis disability (Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 2005).

#### 4.3.4.3 The central verse, textual context, the place of the pericope in the Book of 2 Samuel, and the literary genre

The central verse of the pericope is verse 7: “And David said to him, ‘Do not fear, for I will show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan, and I will restore to you all the land of Saul your father, and you shall eat at my table always’”. The two books that constitute 1 and 2

Samuel were originally a single book, but were later divided into two books by the translators of the Septuagint (LXX). Within the context of the Hebrew Bible, 1 and 2 Samuel are regarded as part of the prophetic corpus known as the Former Prophets (namely, the books of Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings). The Hebrew Bible regards the Former Prophets and the Book of Deuteronomy as together comprising the Deuteronomistic History. The translators of the Septuagint (LXX) considered 1 and 2 Samuel, along with 1 and 2 Kings, as part of one continuous history, referring to the latter four books as the “Books of the Kingdoms”. 2 Samuel 9 forms part of what is often referred to as the “Succession Narrative” (2 Samuel 9-20, along with 1 Kings 1-2). The authorship and date of composition of 1 and 2 Samuel are uncertain. While some contemporary Biblical scholars argue that the prophet Samuel was involved in recording some of the materials that constitute 1 and 2 Samuel, it is nevertheless agreed that the formation of the final, canonical form of the work was a more complex process (Bergen, 1996:18-19).

#### 4.3.4.4 The socio-historical context and the first audience of the pericope

The events recorded in 1 and 2 Samuel occurred in ancient Israel over a period of approximately 130 years, spanning from the beginning of the eleventh century BC to the early part of the tenth century BC. This period was of great importance in the history of Israel, especially in terms of the socio-political changes that it brought. As Brueggemann (1990:1) explains, “The books of Samuel present the radical transformation that occurred in the life of ancient Israel when Israel ceased to be a marginal company of tribes and became a centralized state”. Brueggemann (1990:1) highlights the profound social changes that this political reconfiguration brought about as Israelite society transformed from “amorphous social order to centralized power, from barbaric social practice to oppressive social relations, and from unstable order to monopolistic order”. The narrative of 2 Samuel is especially concerned with relating the history of David’s reign, which ushered in a period of great military success, geographical expansion and prosperity for Israel (Tomasino, 2011:36). The original readers of 1 and 2 Samuel were Jews living in either the sixth or fifth centuries BC (Andrews & Bergen, 2009:2). They were concerned with rebuilding their nation following the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem, as well as determined to understand the historical factors that shaped their lives at the religious and political level (Andrews & Bergen, 2009:2).

#### 4.3.4.5 Word study of relevant concepts in the central verse

For an in-depth understanding of 2 Samuel 9:7 from a disability perspective, it is important to grasp the meaning of the following Hebrew words, namely, *asah* (ESV: “show”), *hesed* (ESV: “kindness”), and *shulchan* (ESV: “table”).

According to Mounce (2009), the basic meaning of *asah* is “to do, make”, in the sense of being engaged in some sort of activity – the term used in a number of contexts, and in a variety of

ways. Depending on the context, it may have one of the following meanings: 1) the divine act of creation; 2) other things God has made; 3) the making of objects; 4) the preparation of food or sacrifices; 5) attainment; 6) bringing about a new set of circumstances; 7) the simple performing of an action (Mounce, 2009). In the context of 2 Samuel 9, *asah* refers to performing an action.

With regard to the term *hesed*, Mounce (2009) notes that the basic meaning is “kindness, love, loyalty, mercy” – the term is employed in the context of the relationship between God and human beings, as well as the relationship between one human being and another. Pertaining to its use in referring to divine-human relations, O’Collins and Farrugia (2000:104) highlight the important covenantal dimension of the term: “*Hesed* indicates God’s merciful fidelity in keeping the covenant promises despite the fickleness of the human partners”. In order to fully appreciate the significance of *hesed* in the context of 2 Samuel 9:7, it is crucial to bear in mind Jonathan’s request to David for *hesed* in 1 Samuel 20:14-15 (ESV): “If I am still alive, show me the steadfast love of the LORD, that I may not die; and do not cut off your steadfast love from my house forever, when the LORD cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth”. Accordingly, when David tells Mephibosheth, “I will show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan”, David is most certainly exercising *hesed* in accordance with fulfilling the promise of the covenant between himself and Mephibosheth’s father, Jonathan (Chisholm, 2013:229).

According to Brown-Driver-Briggs (2006), the word *shulchan* refers to a “table”, but originally in the sense of a “skin or leather mat spread on ground”. In the context of ancient Israel, tables were used for eating, as well as holding the bread of the Presence in the tabernacle and the temple (Mounce, 2009). Moreover, Mounce (2009) points out that eating at someone’s table indicated acceptance and peace.

#### 4.3.4.6 The revelation about God and salvation history in the pericope, and the challenges it poses

From a salvation-historical perspective, the scene described in 2 Samuel 9 is symbolic of the unmerited grace and favour that God extends to humanity through Jesus Christ. Barron (2015:87) poignantly summarises the significance of the pericope for understanding the ministry of Jesus and its salvific consequences:

Jesus consistently invited both the worthy and the unworthy to sit at table with him, graciously drawing them into the divine fellowship. Sensing the sheer surprise and paradox of what was happening to him, Mephibosheth cries out, “What is your servant, that you should look upon a dead dog such as I?” (2 Sam. 9:8). Classical Christian tradition, both Protestant and Catholic, teaches that salvation cannot be merited or earned through the exertions of the will and that human beings stand before God in a state of sin and helplessness. We are “dead dogs”, in the words of Mephibosheth, but

we have received an amazing grace from the God who condescended to invite us into his household and to share the treasury of his intimacy and regard.

#### 4.3.4.7 Scripture with Scripture comparison

As noted above, the story of David and Mephibosheth is symbolic of the unmerited kindness God extends to humanity through Jesus Christ. There are other stories, both in the Old Testament and New Testament, that serve to illustrate this undeserved kindness of God. For example, in the Old Testament, God's decision to establish a redemptive relationship with the nation of Israel was not based on any innate goodness or greatness on their part, but rather based on the covenant of grace He had previously established with the patriarchal fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Deut. 7:6-8). In the New Testament, the apostle Paul emphasises that Abraham was justified by faith, not by works of the law (Rom. 4:2-3). The parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37) is symbolic of how Christ reaches out with his mercy and kindness to those who are unable to help themselves. The parable of the great banquet (Luke 14:15-24) is a metaphor of how Christ identifies with those rejected by society, "the poor and crippled and blind and lame" (Luke 14:21). The parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) is a beautiful metaphor of the Father's kindness toward undeserving human beings.

#### 4.3.4.8 A disability reading of the pericope

The text highlights a number of important insights regarding the issue of people's perceptions about disability. Firstly, Beates (2012:36) points out that David's decision to show compassion towards Mephibosheth was not based on the premise of Mephibosheth getting better or being healed: "[Mephibosheth] remained broken and weak. But the model displayed by David is that God's people are called to identify with those the world rejects, with those the world considers liabilities". Accordingly, preachers and their congregations should be proactive in teaching their members to reach out to and accept PWDs as fellow members of the church of Christ, regardless of whether or not people receive physical healing.

Secondly, Anderson (2013:130) emphasises the restorative role that David played in Mephibosheth's transformation:

David transformed Mephibosheth from a helpless disabled person to a man of wealth and status. Saul's estate was restored to him, Ziba was appointed to oversee the estate on behalf of Mephibosheth, and Mephibosheth was made a member of David's household – "adopted" as a son to dine at the king's table. Note that David intentionally reached out to Mephibosheth. He did not hesitate to show kindness nor did his view of Mephibosheth change when he learned of his disability.

In light of David's example, Anderson (2013:130) challenges churches to reflect on the following three questions:

- How can you model that same grace and kindness to people with disabilities?
- What specific acts of kindness can you and your church do for individuals or families affected by disability?
- How can you and your church "find" people with disabilities in your community?

Thirdly, Anderson (2013:130) wonders to what extent Mephibosheth's self-appellation as a "dead dog" (2 Sam. 9:8) reflected Mephibosheth's acceptance of the negative view of disability characteristic of the culture of the time. Taking Anderson's question seriously, I believe that churches should, more than ever, seriously reflect on the potentially destructive influence their negative views of disability may have in the lives of believers with disabilities.

Lastly, Yong (2011) notes that, contrary to what one might initially expect, the text does not portray Mephibosheth as a helpless person, but someone who is active and able to undertake some activities independently. Yong (2011:Chapter 2, Section 4) elaborates:

For example, the very passage that emphasizes Mephibosheth's impaired mobility (2 Sam. 19:26) also says that he "came down to meet the king" (2 Sam. 19:24). Whereas other parts of this story recognize his needing assistance in order to get around, this text emphasizes his initiative instead. Mephibosheth in this case was like many others who made their way to Gilgal to declare their solidarity with David as he returned to the throne of Israel. More specifically, the text doesn't say that Mephibosheth relied on Ziba, but rather suggests that he approached David independently, even if they appear to have been in the same procession (2 Sam. 19:15-18).

Accordingly, while there is nothing wrong with churches urging their members to show compassion toward PWDs, it should be done in a way that also emphasises the fact that PWDs are able to live with some measure of independence, depending on the nature of their specific situation and disability.

## **4.4 NEW TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVES ON DISABILITY**

### 4.4.1 Exegesis of Mark 2:1-12

#### 4.4.1.1 Text: Mark 2:1-12

Verse 1:       And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home.

- Verse 2: And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them.
- Verse 3: And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men.
- Verse 4: And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay.
- Verse 5: And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."
- Verse 6: Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts,
- Verse 7: "Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"
- Verse 8: And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question these things in your hearts?"
- Verse 9: Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'?
- Verse 10: But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" – he said to the paralytic –
- Verse 11: "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home."
- Verse 12: And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

#### 4.4.1.2 Choice of Mark 2:1-12

During the last few decades, the question of the accessibility of churches, at both an architectural and organisational level, has become increasingly important (Webb-Mitchell, 2010:94). The measure of accessibility exhibited by a church ultimately communicates the level of acceptance toward PWDs. Such is especially true of architectural accessibility: "There seems to be a basic level acceptance of people with disabilities whenever a church building or structure is even partially accessible to people with disabilities" (Webb-Mitchell, 2010:94). As for organisational accessibility, certain attitudes and beliefs of people without disabilities have gravely hampered the full inclusion of PWDs. In the latter regard, one of the most toxic beliefs has been the notion that divine healing depends on a person's level of faith (Arterburn & Felton,

2001:41). Mark 2:1-12 addresses the issue of accessibility at a number of levels, as well as offering insight on divine healing, thus making a systematic exegesis of the pericope desirable (Black, 1996:110-123).

#### 4.4.1.3 The central verse, textual context, the place, and the literary genre of the pericope

The central verse of the pericope is verse 5: “And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven’”. Hurtado (2011:36) highlights the significance of Mark 2:5, noting that Jesus’ authority to forgive sins – not the healing of the disabled man – constitutes the primary focus of the story. New Testament scholars are generally agreed that Mark 2:1-12 is the first in a series of five controversy stories that span Mark 2:1-3:6. These controversy stories have been structured in such a manner as to form a single literary unit with an essentially chiasmic structure (Dewey, 2013:53), with two of the stories – namely, Mark 2:1-12 and Mark 3:1-6 – focusing on controversial healings (Blomberg, 1997:235). As with the other canonical gospels, the author of the Gospel of Mark is not identified. Nevertheless, ancient church tradition, based primarily on the testimony of the second century bishop Papias, traces the authorship to someone named Mark, who is reported to have been a companion of the apostle Peter (Borg, 2011:13).

#### 4.4.1.4 The socio-historical context and the first audience of the pericope

A number of New Testament scholars contend that the Gospel of Mark was written in Rome, sometime between 64 and 70 AD. However, an increasing number of scholars question the book’s Roman provenance, arguing that it was written from somewhere in the area of Galilee (Peterson, 2000:14-15). I agree with Blomberg (2009:136) that the traditional argument in favour of Rome is still the best option: “The Roman origin of the Gospel is . . . clearly the better attested and fits well with the internal evidence of Mark’s narrative”. During the time of Nero’s reign, Christians in Rome were fiercely persecuted, even to the point of being blamed for the great fire of Rome in 64 AD (Edwards, 2002:7). The latter reality helps to explain why the theme of persecution is so prominent in the Gospel of Mark (Donahue & Harrington, 2002:43). Mark wrote his gospel for a predominantly Gentile Roman audience, as is evidenced from the fact that he felt the need to explain Jewish customs to his audience (Hanna, 2014:40).

#### 4.4.1.5 Word study of relevant concepts in the central verse

From a disability perspective, there are five Greek words in the central verse that are especially significant, namely, *pistin* (ESV: “their faith”), *paralytiko* (ESV: “paralytic”), *teknon* (ESV: “son”), and *aphientai* (ESV: “forgiven”).

The lemma for the word *pistin* is *pistis*. According to Mounce (2009), *pistis* may have one of the following meanings:

- The act of believing;
- Christian doctrine or collection of beliefs;
- A conviction or certainty of belief; or
- “Faithfulness” or “trustworthiness”.

In the context of Mark 2:5, *pistis* clearly refers to the act of believing. As Mounce (2009) explains concerning this type of faith, “In the gospels, Jesus heals people as an affirmation of their faith and a visual aid of the spiritual healing they experience”.

The lemma for the word *paralytiko* is *paralytikos*, which denotes a “lame person” or “paralytic” (Trenchard, 2003:119). Picirilli (2003:64) points out that *paralytikos* has a range of possible meanings. While the most apparent meaning in this particular context is paralysis, it may, in more general terms, refer to the man being lame or crippled. As for the term *teknon*, while it may refer to either a “child” or “son” (Trenchard, 2003:156), the context of Mark 2:5 reveals that the term should be understood as “son”, used in a loving sense, “as a term of endearment” (Mounce, 2009).

The lemma for the term *aphientai* is *aphiémi*, which has the basic meaning of “forgive, leave, abandon” (Mounce, 2009). In the context of Mark 2:5, *aphientai* refers to the forgiveness of sins. However, Witherington (2001:115) notes an important textual problem with regard to the meaning of *aphientai* in Mark 2:5:

We have a textual problem at v. 5 in regard to the verb. Should we read the present passive *aphientai* (are sent away/forgiven) or the perfect passive *apheontai* (have been forgiven/sent away)? Probably the present tense is to be preferred, which would mean forgiveness is conveyed at that very moment . . .

I share Witherington’s view that forgiveness of sin in Mark 2:5 refers to the notion of immediate forgiveness, not forgiveness granted at some point in the past.

#### 4.4.1.6 The revelation about God and salvation history in the pericope, and the challenges it poses

From a salvation-historical perspective, one of the most important aspects of the story of the healing of the paralysed man is the fact that Jesus is shown to have the authority to grant forgiveness of sins. Hooker (1991:84) highlights the powerful salvific truth inherent to Jesus’ power to forgive sins, relevant to the situation of the first readers of Mark, as well as subsequent generations of Christians:

For the readers of the gospel, the story brings assurance of the power of Jesus to forgive sins. They, too, may be gathered in a house listening to someone preach the



word. . . . Whether or not the congregation of Mark's day experienced healings, they would certainly know about the new life which comes to those who are forgiven.

#### 4.4.1.7 Scripture with Scripture comparison

As Black (1996:104) points out, the narrative of the healing of the paralysed man, recorded in Mark 2:1-12 (with its parallel narratives in Matthew 9:1-8 and Luke 5:17-26), is one of only two instances in the gospels that deal specifically with persons who are paralysed (the other instance is found in Matthew 8:5-13, which records the narrative of the healing of the centurion's servant who is paralysed). However, there are other sections of the gospels that mention people who are paralysed as part of the groups of people who approached Jesus for healing (cf. Matt. 15:30-31; 21:14) or were seeking an intervention from God in some other way (cf. John 5:3). In the Book of Acts, the Lord continues to heal paralysed people through the ministry of the apostles (Acts 8:7; 9:33-34).

#### 4.4.1.8 A disability reading of the pericope

From a disability perspective, Black (1996:120-123) identifies several salient aspects of the narrative. Firstly, as noted earlier, PWDs who seek divine healing are sometimes accused of having a lack of faith when physical healing of their bodies is not forthcoming. Mark 2:1-12 challenges the notion that it is the faith of the person with disability which is instrumental in divine healing. The text asserts that Jesus' actions were in response to the faith of the four men who brought the paralyzed man to him (Mark 2:5). As Black points out, "Jesus does not place prerequisites on healing. The person who was paralyzed was not required to believe something or even to become a disciple in order for Jesus to cure him". The latter insight also has relevance for the way in which churches conceive of membership, especially in relation to people living with severe intellectual disabilities. Many churches consider the intellectual capacity to believe as essential for gaining membership to their faith communities, in effect excluding people with severe intellectual disabilities (Black, 1996:121). Accordingly, a disability reading of the pericope challenges churches to be more flexible in the way they conceptualise conditions of membership.

Secondly, a disability reading of the pericope reminds us of the importance of working to change the structures and attitudes in our society that alienate PWDs. As Black (1996:121) emphasises, "Jesus not only cured the man who was paralyzed, he also challenged the systemic structures that perpetuated oppression". In the first century culture of Jesus' time, the idea that paralysis was caused by personal sin was pervasive. Such thinking only served to aggravate the sense of isolation and alienation experienced by PWDs. Bearing the latter in mind allows us to understand the revolutionary nature of Jesus' actions in the narrative: "By both forgiving the man's sins and curing his physical paralysis, Jesus broke all the causes of alienation" (Black, 1996:121-122). Moving forward to the present day, while many churches

might not equate disability with sin, there are certain other factors that can make PWDs's experience of the church a markedly isolating experience:

- People with disabilities often feel betrayed by God or isolated from Him; therefore they are not sure about worship. They wrestle with the question, "If God is so loving and so powerful, why did He allow this terrible thing to happen to me?"
- In a group of able-bodied people, people with disabilities often feel isolated and ignored – not part of the family.
- Some people with disabilities are continually confronted with the base side of life. They often feel uncomfortable and uneasy about their appearance and behaviors. They know that they may seem bizarre or revolting to others. (Leach, 2010:8)

Churches should follow Jesus' example by seriously seeking to address the underlying structural and attitudinal barriers that alienate PWDs from the church and society (Black, 1996:122). Moreover, the example of the four men who brought the paralyzed man to Jesus illustrates the importance of being willing to transgress the prejudicial social norms that may keep someone away from Jesus. As Wilhelm (2008:39) observes, "Jesus is not the only one to demonstrate boundary-breaking behavior in the Gospel of Mark, since [the paralytic man's friends] are also willing to move beyond what is considered right or acceptable behavior in order to help someone else".

Thirdly, the pericope offers a new way of approaching the traditional understanding of the relationship between sin and sickness. Traditionally, many interpreters have suggested that the paralysed man may have committed some sin that brought about his paralysis. From this perspective, the man's paralysis would be regarded as punishment from God. Such a negative understanding of disability, which connects disability to sin, has been the driving force for many believers with disabilities who have sought desperately for a cure for their disability (Calder, 2012b:8). However, from a disability perspective, the focus should rather be on the sins against the person with disability and its potentially destructive effect, especially the sickness and suffering caused by prejudicial attitudes such as mentioned above. Black (1996:122) explains the importance of the latter realisation: "Just to name aloud the reality that many people experience suffering and even psychological paralysis, blindness, or deafness as a result of others' sin *against* them can be a liberating word of hope". Capps (2008:53-54) agrees with Black's insight regarding the potentially harmful pathological effect of prejudicial attitudes that may have been experienced by the paralyzed man, suggesting that excessive religious and cultural emphasis on purity, characteristic of first century Judaism may have brought about a psychological condition that caused the paralysed man's paralysis.

Fourthly, the text highlights the importance of thinking creatively and innovatively regarding the issue of accessibility. The four men in the story displayed great tenacity in bringing the

paralysed man to Jesus. As Black (1996:122) notes, “[They] found an unconventional way to bring someone who was alienated from the religious community to the teaching and healing presence of Jesus”. Both the attitudes of people in the church, as well as the church’s architecture, play a crucial role in terms of accessibility. Black (1996:123) elaborates on the role of attitudes (as shaped by preaching) and architecture with regard to accessibility: “The attitude that excludes is often shaped by the preaching of these healing narratives and by the theologies espoused in these sermons. A church’s architecture usually reflects the attitude (and the pocketbook) of the congregation’s leadership and members”.

Moreover, Anderson (2013:17) explains why such attitudinal and architectural barriers should not be found in the church:

If there are any barriers of attitude, communication, or architecture for anyone, then the foundations of the House of God is weakened. God said, “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples” (Isaiah 56: 7). All peoples includes those with disabilities. Recognizing specific barriers in one’s heart and in one’s church, and determining how these barriers can be removed, gives direction to disability ministry.

Another illuminating aspect of the pericope especially from a disability perspective, is that spiritual healing, rather than the healing of the man’s physical disability, was Jesus’ number one priority. Haynes and Kelly (2006:8) elucidate this aspect of the text: “[In] Jesus’ view, it was more important to be reconciled to God and enjoy peace of soul than to be able to walk of one’s own accord. Forgiveness, or reconciliation, has priority”. In order to further clarify the latter, it is instructive to keep in mind the distinction between cure and healing as set forth by Anderson (2013:97):

Cure pertains to the elimination of at least the symptoms, if not the disease or the disability itself. This was actually rare in biblical times, and generally not expected, making Jesus’s miracles all the more significant. To heal, on the other hand, centers on evoking a sense of well-being, peace, comfort, and support, but does not imply a cure. Isaiah 53:5, for example, says that “the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.” The “peace” is shalom— the well-being, completeness, and reconciliation that Christ provides. “Healed” refers to our being made whole in spirit; that is, our healing from sin – release from bondage to and the consequences of sin (Romans 5:8-11, 6:1-6; Galatians 5:1).

I agree with Anderson (2013:97) when he argues that spiritual healing, as opposed to physical cure, was the primary thrust of Jesus’ ministry: “The true focus of Jesus’s activity was on healing more than curing – his atoning sacrifice did not bring freedom from illness, accidents, or disability; it brought us from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light”. The biblical

notion of healing may sometimes include physical healing, but, importantly, “[i]t gives priority to the spiritual transformation that occurs as the individual is cured” (McNamara, 2008:40). From a disability perspective, Temple and Ball (2012:48) note that it should not be assumed that PWDs’s prayer requests will necessarily relate to their disability and/or a need for physical healing. Preachers, especially able-bodied preachers, might be inclined to think that PWDs experience their disability as a form of suffering, whereas many PWDs in fact do not experience their disability in such negative terms. Rather, as Temple and Ball (2012:48) argue, “People who have a long-term experience of disability generally become pretty comfortable in their own skins. The challenges that lead them to seek prayer ministry are like to be the same as those anyone faces: loss of job, money worries, relationship breakdown, whatever”. Accordingly, preachers and churches would do well not to assume that PWDs necessarily seek physical cure, but should rather focus on helping people to find spiritual healing (cf. Magezi, 2006:517).

Another aspect, often overlooked, but especially relevant from a disability perspective, is what the text teaches with regard to the role of community in the process of spiritual healing. Jesus pronounced forgiveness of sin to the paralysed man on the basis of the determined faith exercised by the four men who brought him to Jesus (Mark 2:4-5). Allen and Williamson (2004:103) explain how the actions of the four men illustrate the important role of community in bringing salvation to the paralysed man: “The paralysed man can get to Jesus only with the help of his friends. Jesus acts in behalf of the paralytic only after seeing his friends’ trust that the realm of God was coming to expression through Jesus’ ministry”. Applied to our contemporary context, it is important that churches, as communities of faith, will remember the important role they play in bringing the Good News to PWDs.

#### 4.4.2 Exegesis of Luke 14:12-24

##### 4.4.2.1 Text: Luke 14:12-24

Verse 12: He said also to the man who had invited him, “When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid.

Verse 13: But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind,

Verse 14: and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”

Verse 15: When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said to him, “Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!”

- Verse 16: But he said to him, “A man once gave a great banquet and invited many.
- Verse 17: And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’
- Verse 18: But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.’
- Verse 19: And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.’
- Verse 20: And another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’
- Verse 21: So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.’
- Verse 22: And the servant said, ‘Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.’
- Verse 23: And the master said to the servant, ‘Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.
- Verse 24: For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.’ ”

#### 4.4.2.2 Choice of Luke 14:12-24

It is a tragic fact that PWDs were marginalised by the church for many centuries, albeit that official church teaching encouraged believers to show mercy and compassion toward PWDs. For example, during the Middle Ages many Christians believed that PWDs were “devils and witches” (Rimmerman, 2013:15). One of the most influential leaders of the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther, advised that a malformed boy, who was also regarded as demon-possessed, should be drowned (Yong, 2007:34). During the Enlightenment, such an astute Christian philosopher as John Locke contended that people with severe intellectual disabilities would not be granted access to eternal life (Yong, 2007:38). Lest we think that such marginalisation is a thing of the past, Creamer (2009:36) offers a sober reminder: “Even today, barriers of architecture or attitude intentionally or unintentionally exclude people with disabilities from worship services”. Accordingly, Luke 14:12-23, with its unequivocal invitation of welcome to PWDs, is a very important pericope to study in seeking to understand the biblical mandate for shaping disability-friendly churches (Webb-Mitchell, 2009:84-85).

#### 4.4.2.3 The central verse, textual context, the place, and the literary genre of the pericope

The central verse of the pericope is verse 13: “But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind”. Bock (1996:1266) explains the significance of Luke 14:13: “The focus is on those who have need and cannot repay the invitation. Such hospitality is given without concern for reciprocity and so it pleases God”. Luke 14:12-14 serves as an introduction of the basic principle which underlies the parable of the great banquet recounted in Luke 14:15-24. The pericope as a whole is most likely concerned with the question of who will be permitted to enter the eschatological Kingdom of God (Evans, 2011:222). Jesus’ remark that people should not invite their friends, brothers, relatives or rich neighbours when hosting “a dinner or a banquet” (Luke 14:12), should be understood from the perspective of the honour and shame culture prevalent in first century Israel. Evans (2011:222) elucidates the prejudiced religious and cultural attitude that Jesus sought to expose: “[One] cannot assume that only those whom we respect (or envy) are also respected by God. Others, such as the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind, are valued and respected by God and will be among those invited to the great feast of the last days”. As in the case of the Gospel of Mark and the other canonical gospels, the author of the Gospel of Luke is anonymous. However, from the second century onwards, the author has been identified as Luke, the travelling companion of Paul mentioned in Philemon 24 and 2 Timothy 4:11. I consider Boring and Craddock’s (2009:174) observation regarding the authorship of Luke as instructive for approaching authorship in all four canonical gospels: “[The] early church’s attribution of the gospel to Luke was not primarily a matter of historical correctness but a means of affirming that the narrative is an authentic representative of the apostolic faith”.

#### 4.4.2.4 The socio-historical context and the first audience of the pericope

The first few verses of the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke, specifically verses 1 through 4, provide some important background information regarding the occasion for the writing of the gospel. The writer makes it clear that he conducted an extensive investigation into the life of Jesus, feeling it necessary to write his own “orderly account” for the benefit of someone named Theophilus, in order for Theophilus to “have certainty concerning the things [he] [has] been taught” (Luke 1:4). Very little is known about Luke’s addressee, Theophilus, except that he is obviously the same Theophilus addressed at the beginning of the Book of Acts, and that he had received some instruction regarding the Christian faith. Porter (2004:101-103) explains the significance of Theophilus for uncovering information regarding the first audience of the Gospel of Luke:

Perhaps the only information that we can usefully take from Luke’s reference to Theophilus is that he was most likely a Gentile and that, while Luke addresses him specifically, Luke has in mind a wider circle of readers, also Gentile. The Gospel,

therefore, has a Gentile orientation. . . . Luke's purpose in writing was to present the gospel of salvation, now available in Jesus Christ, in order to confirm the faith of his readers (Theophilus in particular) and to lead to faith those interested in Christianity.

While some have suggested that the name Theophilus should be understood as a literary device for referring to all those who are "beloved of God", Stanton (2002:83) rightly notes, "There is no reason to doubt that Theophilus was a real person . . . Luke addresses him as 'your excellency', a term of respect for a very distinguished member of society". There are some early Christian sources that identify Antioch as the place of composition for Luke-Acts, however, this identification is contested by a number of contemporary scholars (Edwards, 2015:12-13).

#### 4.4.2.5 Word study of relevant concepts in the central verse

For a better understanding of the disability application of Luke 14:13, it is important to take a more in-depth look at the following Greek terms, namely, *dochen* (ESV: "a feast"), *kalei* (ESV: "invite"), *ptochous* (ESV: "poor"), *anapeirous* (ESV: "crippled"), *lame* (ESV: *cholous*), and *typhlous* (ESV: "blind").

The word *dochen* is derived from the lemma *dechomai*, which may have the following range of meanings: "to take, receive; grasp; receive (as a guest), welcome; put up with, tolerate; be open to, approve, accept" (Trenchard, 2003:34). In the context of Luke 14, the text is referring to the notion of *dechomai* in the sense of "receiving a guest". With regard to the term *kalei*, the term is derived from *kaleó*, which means "to call, invite, summon" (Mounce, 2009).

*Ptochous* is derived from *ptochos*, which is an adjectival form of *ptóssó*. As Mounce (2009) explains, *ptochos* may be used in one of two senses: "literally, referring to the economically disadvantaged, and figuratively, referring to the one whose vulnerable state leads to total dependence on God". Bosch (2011:100) emphasises that one should be careful of drawing too sharp a distinction between these two senses of *ptochos* when it comes to the Gospel of Luke:

*Ptochos* ("poor") is . . . often a collective term for all the disadvantaged . . . All who experience misery are, in some very real sense, the poor. This is particularly true of those who are sick. Lazarus, the exemplary poor person in Luke, is both poor and sick. Primarily then, poverty is a social category in Luke, although it certainly has other undertones as well. It is, however, unwarranted to allow what is secondary to become primary.

The term *anapeirous* is a variant form of *anapeiros*, which some render as "crippled", but actually refers to "physical disability of an unspecified kind" (Dunn, 2003:604). As for the word, *cholous*, it has the following possible meanings: "lame, crippled, deprived of one foot; lame person, what is lame, lame leg" (Trenchard, 2003:173). In the context of Luke 14:13, *cholous*

denotes a person who is paralysed. With regard to the last term for consideration in Luke 14:13, namely, *typhlous*, it is used with reference to someone who is blind. As was the case with *ptochous*, the New Testament uses the term in both a literal, physical sense, and a metaphorical sense (Mounce, 2009).

4.4.2.6 The revelation about God and salvation history in the pericope, and the challenges it poses

Green (2003:122) points out the implications of the parable of the great banquet for understanding the salvific role of Christians' present life in determining their presence at the Lord's eschatological banquet:

In this instance, the question, Who will enjoy God's hospitality at the end-time banquet? is answered with reference to a second: Who is now enjoying the hospitality of your table? That is, one's place at the kingdom feast is determined by one's behavior in the present, with regard to the poor and dispossessed.

Wright (2004:178-179) emphasises how the parable challenges followers of Jesus to shape the message of the gospel in such a way that those considered outcasts in contemporary society would understand and respond to the message.

4.4.2.7 Scripture with Scripture comparison

In the Old Testament, the crippled, the lame, and the blind were excluded from serving in the Levitical priesthood (Lev. 21:17-21). Turning to the New Testament, Jesus' invitation of welcome to "the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind", recorded in Luke 14:13, is repeated in Luke 14:21. This list of people matches the very people who Jesus reached out to in his ministry. For example, a few chapters earlier in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus declares the following concerning his ministry of healing: "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them" (Luke 7:22; cf. Matt. 11:4-5). Similarly, Matthew 15:30 notes, "And great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others, and they put them at his feet, and he healed them".

4.4.2.8 A disability reading of the pericope

For Beates (2012:54), the parable of the great banquet directly challenges the church to reflect on the extent to which PWDs are made to feel welcome at church, as well as the extent to which the church's evangelistic efforts reach out to PWDs. In the latter regard, Beates' (2012:54) words of admonition are worthy of serious consideration:



Do these kinds of people today feel welcome at God's banquet in the church? Too often, sadly they do not. Too often, merely coming to church is too much of a burden. People encounter both physical and social obstacles. And how many churches intentionally go about the business of seeking such people and using the church's manpower to go and bring them in? Again, too often, the church does not.

Anderson (2013:45) challenges believers to reflect on their primary motivation for reaching out to those with disabilities, pointing to Jesus' words in Luke 14:13-14: "But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just". Anderson (2013:45) explains the importance of having the right motivation, as well as noting the blessing that accompanies it:

The point is that such hospitality must be demonstrated out of Godlike compassion and love; not out of obligation or self-interest, but solely for God's sake and in God's name. The result will be that God becomes our "debtor" and will repay us at the resurrection. But many who have shown compassion and love to persons with disabilities, and have entered into a relationship with them, will confess that they have already been blessed through that relationship.

Yong (2011:Chapter 5, Section 4, original emphasis) offers a somewhat provocative interpretation of Luke 14's parable of the great banquet, arguing that "the text clearly situates people with impairments at the final banquet just *as they are*, not with their impairments erased or made invisible". In order to understand his argument, I believe it is important to quote Yong's (2011: Chapter 5, Section 4) explanation at length:

My argument is that there will be no more tears in the eschaton not because our impairments will be eliminated but because they will be redeemed. By this I am not insisting that people with disabilities will exist literally as such eschatologically. As Paul indicated, the resurrected body will be a spiritual one, so in the life to come there will be as much discontinuity as continuity with our present existence. My point is to challenge the absence of disability images altogether in the Christian eschatological imagination. The scars in the hands and the side of Jesus' resurrected body, the presence of people with impairments in the Parable of the Great Banquet and in these prophetic texts – all suggest that our final salvation involves not necessarily the removal of the imprints that constitute our embodied identities but their transvaluation and transfiguration. Hence God's final salvation honors people with disabilities distinctively by redeeming their weaknesses so that the divine power, wisdom, and glory are thereby most clearly and finally magnified.

If I understand Yong's argument correctly, he seems to imply that people's disabilities will not necessarily be healed in the eschaton, but will rather – in light of the power and wisdom of God – remain a constitutive part of the redeemed person's eschatological life, as well as being revealed as having a significance that was not previously imagined. However, in his laudable attempt to develop a biblical theology that is radically inclusive of PWDs, I believe Yong has overlooked the significance and importance of divine healing, especially when considered in the context of Jesus' ministry of healing. I share Klink's (2013:355-356, original emphasis) sentiments regarding Yong's notion that disability must somehow form part of our eschatological existence:

[I]f Christ did not want us to change our physical state as the result of grace, why did Christ heal so many people? Yong is right to note that the suffering of the disabled will not be obliterated but "redeemed" in the resurrection, although that does not mean it will not be taken away. His insistence that 'redemption' REQUIRES the preservation of disability is, however, not carefully or convincingly argued.

For me, Morris' (2011:140) view on the relationship between eschatological salvation and disability is the most balanced perspective: "[W]e do not all need to be the same in order to 'be saved'. When I suggest that for some, salvation is release from their condition in this world, but for others it is not, I am proposing multiple ways of understanding both disability and salvation".

#### 4.4.3 Exegesis of John 9:1-7

##### 4.4.3.1 Text: John 9:1-7

- Verse 1: As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth.
- Verse 2: And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"
- Verse 3: Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.
- Verse 4: We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work.
- Verse 5: As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."
- Verse 6: Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud
- Verse 7: and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

#### 4.4.3.2 Choice of John 9:1-7

Arterburn and Felton (2001:49) identify a toxic belief that is especially relevant to the situation of PWDs, namely, the theologically mistaken notion that, “Problems in my life result from some particular sin”. Sometimes this “particular sin” is even traced to some sinful action that may have been committed by the parent(s) of a person with disability, the parental sin causing God to punish the person with disability (Black, 1996:24). Arterburn and Felton (2001:49) share a story that relates the terrible emotional pain that such toxic belief can bring to someone’s life:

My wife and I have some friends who have been through this devastation with two girls. Both were born with severe birth defects. One will never outgrow the defect; the other has a good chance of developing normally. The parents’ great pain increased through the remarks of some Christian friends who told them that there must be some hidden sin in their lives for which God was disciplining them. Their grief was only compounded by the insensitive remarks.

The present pericope, John 9:1-7, offers some helpful correctives to the misguided theological convictions underpinning the abovementioned toxic belief.

#### 4.4.3.3 The central verse, textual context, the place, and the literary genre of the pericope

The central verse of the pericope is verse 3: “Jesus answered, ‘It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.’” In the previous verse, Jesus’ disciples asked a question which assumed a correlation between the man’s physical disability and sin: “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” (John 9:2). Jesus rejected both of the disciples’ suggestions: the man’s blindness was not due to any sin of his parents or himself, but was an occasion for “the works of God” to be displayed in his life (John 9:3). Talbert (2005:164) explains: “Here blindness is not due to human sin . . . Since the problem exists (for whatever reason), there is a divine necessity for Jesus to do God’s work so that it may be manifest in the man”.

Kruse (2004:386) notes that the Gospel of John records seven signs performed by Jesus: turning water into wine in Cana (John 2:1-11), raising the royal official’s son (John 4:46-54), healing the lame man at the Pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-9), feeding the five thousand (John 6:1-14), walking on the sea (John 6:16-21), healing the man born blind (John 9:1-7), and raising Lazarus (John 11:1-44). The healing of the man born blind is thus the sixth sign story related in the Gospel of John. Weber and Miller (1995:22) highlight the significance of sign stories in the Gospel of John: “In John, a sign is a way of saying something about Jesus through a miraculous event”. John 9:1-10:21 should be regarded as a single literary unit, given the Gospel of John’s general “structural pattern of sign, dialogue, discourse” (Lewis, 2014:91). The Gospel of John identifies the author of the gospel as “the beloved disciple” (John 21:24). Church tradition has

commonly identified the figure of the beloved disciple with John, the son of Zebedee, although contemporary Johannine scholarship has largely abandoned this identification (Reinhartz, 2005:22).

#### 4.4.3.4 The socio-historical context of the pericope and the first audience of the pericope

There is no agreement regarding where the Gospel of John may have been composed. Ephesus, Antioch, and Alexandria have been suggested as possible locations for its composition (Morris, 1995:54-55). However, with regard to the general cultural context of the first audience of the Gospel of John, Boomershine (2008:152) is adamant that, “The cultural horizon of the gospel is congruent with the cultural horizon of diaspora Judaism in the Hellenistic cities of the Greco-Roman world”. Moreover, Boomershine (2008:152) notes that the historical audiences of the Gospel of John most likely correspond with the audiences addressed in the gospel itself: “Jews, Pharisees, the followers of John the Baptist, perhaps Samaritans, and Jews who believed in Jesus”.

#### 4.4.3.5 Word study of relevant concepts in the central verse

For the purpose of the present study, a better understanding of the following Greek terms in John 9:3 are especially important – *emarten* (ESV: “sinned”), *ta erga tou theou* (ESV: “the works of God”), and *phanerothe* (ESV: “might be displayed”).

The lemma of *emarten* is *hamartanó* – a term that is related to the notion of “missing the mark, losing, or falling short of a goal (particularly a spiritual one)” (Mounce, 2009). Generally speaking, *hamartanó* refers to “sins or sinning against oneself or another person”, but may also refer to “sins against God, often with consequences” (Mounce, 2009). The phrase, *ta erga tou theou*, should be understood as “the works of God” or “deeds demanded by God” (Westerholm, 1988). More specifically, in the context of the Gospel of John, *ta erga tou theou* refers to “the works that the Father has charged Jesus to accomplish” (Ridderbos, 1997:333). The lemma for the term *phanerothe* is *phaneroó*, which refers to “the act of making visible or disclosing that which is not readily seen” (Mounce, 2009).

#### 4.4.3.6 The revelation about God and salvation history in the pericope, and the challenges it poses

Gundry (2011) discusses the salvation-historical significance of the pericope, noting how the notions of sin, the works of God, and salvation should be understood:

It’s true that all human beings sin and that all human suffering has its *ultimate* origin in sin. But it’s equally true that not all human suffering has its *immediate* origin in a particular sin . . . [Jesus’] main point is a positive one, that the man was born blind that the works of God might be manifested in him. . . . The blind man will become an

advertisement of a salvation that consists in God's working through Jesus rather than in our vain efforts.

Schreiner (2008:250) emphasises the importance of the metaphorical meaning of the healing of the man born blind, specifically as it relates to the revelation of God in Christ: "Jesus is the true revelation of God and grants spiritual sight to the blind. But those who insist that they have no need of light and refuse to admit their spiritual blindness continue to exist in darkness".

#### 4.4.3.7 Scripture with Scripture comparison

There are a number of Old Testament texts that deal with blindness. For example, according to Exodus 4:11, God gives people both their abilities and disabilities, including blindness: "Then the LORD said to [Moses], 'Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?'" As discussed earlier, Leviticus 19:14 urged the Israelites to be mindful of the needs of the deaf and the blind: "You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God: I am the LORD". Pointing ahead to the time of the Messiah, Isaiah 29:18 declares: "In that day the deaf shall hear the words of a book, and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see".

Turning to the New Testament, a number of salient texts may be noted. Besides the narrative of the man born blind (John 9:1-41), Black (1996:57) points out four other gospel narratives about persons who are blind: Matthew 9:27-31 features a narrative about the healing of two blind men; Matthew 12:22 makes brief mention of a blind and mute man who was considered demon-possessed; Mark 8:22-26 records the narrative of a man from Bethsaida who was blind; all three Synoptic gospels contain the narrative of a man who was blind, and sat alongside the road to Jericho (Matt. 20:30-34; Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43); there are also a number of general references to Jesus giving sight to people who were blind (cf. Matt. 11:5; 15:30). Moreover, Acts 9:17-18 mentions how the Lord used Ananias to heal Paul's temporary blindness.

#### 4.4.3.8 A disability reading of the pericope

Black (1996:77) highlights a number of important disability-related issues that the narrative of John 9:1-7 brings into perspective. Firstly, the text dispels any erroneous notion that personal or ancestral sin may be regarded as the cause of disability in a person's life (John 9:3). While noting that there are some rare instances where disability is the result of disobedience, Beates (2012:56) agrees with the essence of Black's argument, stressing the potential role of disability in manifesting the power of God:

Though there are times when disability is clearly the result of sin and disobedience toward God (Samson's blindness is one example), Jesus taught here that this is not

necessarily the first and certainly not the only option. In fact, consistent with the developing pattern we are seeing, God should be expected to use the disabled, the weak, and the broken for his special purposes precisely so that he will get the glory he desires and deserves.

Preachers and churches should strive to clearly communicate the fact that sin is rarely connected to a person's state of disability, with the exception of instances where a person's irresponsible, evidently sinful behavior, such as drunk driving, may have brought about the disability. Nevertheless, even in cases such as the latter, the idea that the person's resulting disability is somehow a punishment from God should be completely rejected.

Secondly, later in the narrative – when the Pharisees decide to expel the man who was healed from the synagogue (John 9:34) – it becomes apparent that physical healing may sometimes have an alienating effect in a person's family and social life. As Black (1996:77) remarks, “[T]he man's cure added to his isolation rather than giving him a sense of belonging. . . . Major life changes often result in loss of community and identity”. Nevertheless, Anderson (2013) points out that, while the man experienced loss of communion with the synagogue, he gained communion with God through his faith in Jesus. Churches should bear in mind that PWDs often form part of a community where they experience meaningful relationships and a sense of belonging. Churches should strive to nurture and cultivate such relationships in the lives of PWDs.

Thirdly, the text challenges the notion that faith is always necessary before the Lord physically heals a person. Black (1996:77) explains: “Here it is clear that the man did not have faith at the time of the cure. His faith developed as he began to articulate his experience to those who challenged him”. Preachers and churches should be sensitive to the way in which they communicate the importance of faith in the life of the believer, never suggesting that a lack of faith is the reason for a lack of physical healing.

Yong (2011) notes the man's agency, character, and personality, as portrayed in John 9, challenge the stereotypes that some people may have about blind people. Accordingly, I believe that preachers should challenge their congregations to confront the stereotypes they may hold regarding PWDs.

#### 4.4.4 Exegesis of 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

##### 4.4.4.1 Text: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

Verse 12: For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

- Verse 13: For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit.
- Verse 14: For the body does not consist of one member but of many.
- Verse 15: If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body.
- Verse 16: And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body.
- Verse 17: If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell?
- Verse 18: But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.
- Verse 19: If all were a single member, where would the body be?
- Verse 20: As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.
- Verse 21: The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.”
- Verse 22: On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable,
- Verse 23: and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty,
- Verse 24: which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it,
- Verse 25: that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.
- Verse 26: If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.
- Verse 27: Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

#### 4.4.4.2 Choice of 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

As noted in the introduction of the present study, research suggests that people living with disability are less likely to attend religious services than people without a disability (Hendershot,

2006). Creamer (2009:36) notes, “While many people with disabilities have found welcome in the church, many others still wait outside the gates”. Anderson (2013:xvi) argues that the church has generally evaded the responsibility of reaching out to the approximately 15% of the world’s population who are living with disability, prompting him to assert that “[people with disabilities] form the largest unreached people group in the world”. Able-bodied people exacerbate the alienation of PWDs by regarding them as “people who are insignificant, not worthy of attention, unable to contribute in any beneficial manner” (Anderson, 2013:xix). Angrosino (2001:89) puts the following challenge to the church:

Think about the abilities of “disabled” people. What sorts of roles in a church community might people with hearing or visual or cognitive or physical impairment be able to play? (In other words, think beyond what the congregation can do to compensate for these people’ deficits; think in terms of what the people can positively contribute to the life of the church in general.)

Accordingly, it is important to consider 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, which offers the church some valuable insights regarding the way in which PWDs can contribute to the church.

#### 4.4.4.3 The central verse, textual context, the place, and the literary genre of the pericope

The central verse of the pericope is verse 12: “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ”. Garland (2003:590) explicates the body metaphor which Paul employs in this verse: “Just as the body has many limbs and organs and despite their number and differences make up one body, so Christ’s body has many limbs and organs and despite their number and differences make up one body”. 1 Corinthians 12:12 essentially serves as an opening statement and summary of the two primary themes which Paul subsequently develops in chapter 12 – namely, the diversity of the body (verses 14-19) and the unity of the body (verses 20-26). The analogy of the body as a symbol of social unity was a common literary motif in first century Greco-Roman literature, as well as within the context of the New Testament writings (Collins, 1999:458-460). The primary focus of chapter 12 as a whole emphasises the necessity of diversity of gifts within the unity of the body (Blomberg, 1995:210). Biblical scholars are agreed that both internal and external evidence unequivocally identifies the apostle Paul as the author of 1 Corinthians (Dunn, 1999:13-14).

#### 4.4.4.4 The socio-historical context of the pericope and the first audience of the pericope

I agree with Hogeterp (2009:214) that the recipients of Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians were most likely primarily Gentile converts to Christianity, as may be evidenced from Paul’s reference to their Gentile past (1 Cor. 12:2; 16:5). Nevertheless, as Hogeterp (2006:305) further argues, “This does not exclude the possibility that the Corinthians congregation included



Godfearers (cf. Acts 18:7) and proselytes to Judaism”. Although located in Greece, the Corinth of Paul’s time was a very multicultural city, influenced by a variety of worldviews. As Oster (1995:24) puts it, “[Corinth] was geographically Greek, it was administratively and politically Roman, and its denizens came from throughout the central and eastern parts of the Mediterranean Basin”.

#### 4.4.4.5 Word study of relevant concepts in the central verse

In order to gain a deeper understanding of 1 Corinthians 12:12, it is important consider the following Greek words, namely, *sóma* (ESV: “a body”), *en* (ESV: “one”), *polla* (ESV: “many”), and *mele* (ESV: members).

The term, *sóma*, has the following range of meanings: “body, dead body, corpse, living body” (Trenchard, 2003:153). Mounce (2009) explains a few important issues to keep in mind when considering the meaning of *sóma* in the context of 1 Corinthians, especially noting the confusing influence Greek philosophy may have had on the Christians in Corinth:

Greek philosophy set a course of dualism that the Bible does not recognize, i.e., that the body and the soul are separate entities. This led to a general depreciation of the body as compared to the soul. This misunderstanding is what plagued the Corinthians, who viewed things done in the body, such as joining sexually with a prostitute, as inconsequential for maintaining spiritual vitality and purity. Lying with a prostitute was no different from eating a bowl of stew – both were bodily functions. Paul would have none of it as he unmistakably drew the conclusion that whatever you subject your body to, you are at the same time involving the Holy Spirit, who lives in your body (1 Cor. 6:18-20). Thus, in Paul’s writings especially, *body* takes on the idea of *person*.

Accordingly, the word *sóma* should be understood in the sense of personhood, not merely as denoting the physical body.

The lemma for *en* is the word *heis*, which has the basic meaning of “one”, but in the context of 1 Corinthians 12:12 it is used even more emphatically to refer to the singularity and unity of the body of Christ (Mounce, 2009). With regard to the term *polla*, it is derived from the lemma *polus*, meaning “many, numerous, mighty” (Trenchard, 2003:129). As for the word *mele*, its lemma form is *melos*, which can mean “member, part, limb” (Mounce, 2009). As Mounce (2009) notes, “Many occurrences of *melos* appear in Paul’s discussions about the importance of all parts of the body of Christ and using all the gifts of the Spirit”.

#### 4.4.4.6 The revelation about God and salvation history in the pericope, and the challenges it poses

From a salvation-historical perspective, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 is especially important for its reflection on the church as the body of Christ. As Colijn (2010:257) explains, “The most important metaphor of incorporation in Christ is Paul’s metaphor of the body of Christ. Believers are baptized into the body of Christ, the church, by the Holy Spirit, at conversion”. Moreover, MacDonald (2004:74-75) highlights the interconnected nature of belonging to Christ and belonging to the church as the body of Christ, emphasising its foundation in the salvific work of Christ:

When Paul employs the symbol of the body of Christ, he does more than use a metaphor for community; his language is rooted in an identification with the death and resurrection of Christ and a mission to build a community gathered around Christ. . . . [A]ttachment to the Messiah and incorporation into a community where members share that attachment go hand in hand.

Therefore, salvation should never be conceptualised merely as a matter of the individual believing in Christ for his or her salvation, but should be regarded as the experience of a community of Christ followers who encounter Christ in the midst of their shared life.

#### 4.4.4.7 Scripture with Scripture comparison

The notions of “one body” and “body of Christ” – which are central to 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 – are also found elsewhere in the New Testament. Earlier in 1 Corinthians, Paul remarks, “Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Cor. 10:17). Similarly, Colossians 3:15 declares: “And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful”. Ephesians 4:4a agrees: “There is one body and one Spirit”. Ephesians also stresses the importance of equipping believers “for building up the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12), as well as emphasising the notion that the church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:15-16; 5:23,30). As is the case with 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, the Book of Romans combines the themes of ‘one body’ and ‘body of Christ’: “For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another” (Rom. 12:4-5).

#### 4.4.4.8 A disability reading of the pericope

From a disability perspective, Paul’s development of the concept of ‘body of Christ’ in relation to the church (1 Cor. 12:12-27) is crucial for understanding the position and function of PWDs in the church. Beates (2012:63-64) explains:

The literal picture is that certain parts of our bodies are weaker but indispensable. We have internal organs, vital to our survival, that are fragile and require great care and protection. Likewise, such parts of the body, though necessary for function, are kept hidden because their very appearance is rather frightful. Paul seems to say that the body of Christ, the church, should have as integral members parts that are weak (ostensibly in the world's eyes), less honorable, and less presentable (again at least in the world's eyes). . . . [C]onsistent with the witness of God in the Old Testament and Christ in the Gospels, these weaker, less honorable, and less presentable parts may be the blind, the lame, the crippled, the poor, and the broken. Those counted worthless or a liability in the world's eyes, God consistently counts as crucial to his plans and to the function of his new community.

Anderson (2013:48) further expounds on the concept of 'body of Christ', specifically as it relates to the church's ministry to PWDs, stressing the importance of the practical dimension of such ministry. Being the body of Christ necessitates serving PWDs by journeying with them, following Christ's example of service and willingness to journey with his disciples during his early ministry. As Anderson (2013:48) puts it, "To say that Christians are the 'Body of Christ' does not simply mean we are spiritually united with him. It means we are the location of Christ's ongoing ministry in the world today". Indeed, as Sullivan (2012:60) argues, part of this practical dimension of being the body of Christ is helping *all* people achieve their potential.

Reflecting on the practical theological implications of 1 Corinthians 12:22, Reagan (2013:49) prefers to speak of PWDs as being "differently abled": "Rather than 'disabled', I choose the term 'differently-abled' bodies. Possessing a 'variant embodiment' becomes 'disabling' only when there are impediments to full participation in the life of the faith community".

Elaborating on the disability-related application of Paul's discussion of the "weaker" members of the body in 1 Corinthians 12, Anderson (2013:19) emphasises the important role that PWDs have to play in the church. Although PWDs may seem to be unimportant members of the body of Christ, they are "the very ones on whom God bestows greater honor and who, in God's view, are necessary for his kingdom" (Anderson, 2013:19). Similarly, McNair and Schindler (2011:98) point out that the text challenges the church to make sure that PWDs enjoy full participation in the life of the church, since even those who appear to be weaker are vital to the overall functioning of the body of Christ.

Yong (2010:89) offers a concise but insightful threefold outline of the central disability insights to be gleaned from Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, highlighting the importance of the contributions that PWDs, empowered by the Holy Spirit, have to offer to the body of Christ. Firstly, since the church is made up of the weak, PWDs should be regarded as central to understanding what being the people of God entails. Secondly, through the presence and work

of the Holy Spirit in each person's life – regardless of the level of their disability – each PWDs contributes something important to the body of Christ. Finally, PWDs serve as a paradigm for understanding the power of God in the Christian life.

Ultimately, I believe the primary disability insight that the pericope brings to the fore is that churches need to focus on the talents of PWDs, enabling PWDs to contribute their specific giftings for the benefit of the body of Christ. As Temple and Ball (2012:74) importantly point out, “If we miss out on the gifting that God has provided to our church because we don't see beyond a person's disability to his or her God-given talents, then we are in effect disabling that church”.

#### 4.4.5 Summary of Disability-Relevant Exegetical Insights from the Analysed Pericopes

##### 4.4.5.1 Summary of disability-relevant exegetical insights from Genesis 1:26-28

- Fundamental to understanding the Old Testament view of disability is the assertion that God created human beings in his own image or likeness (Gen. 1:26-28, 31; 2:7).
- The substantive view's interpretation of the *imago Dei* associates the image of God with those characteristics of human beings that reflect – to some extent – the perceived characteristics of God. From a disability perspective, it is important to note that a person with limited or no ability to reason or communicate would essentially be excluded from bearing the image of God.
- The functional view's interpretation of the *imago Dei* associates the image of God with notions of dominion and stewardship, stressing that Adam (and, by implication, humankind) was appointed to manage everything that God created (Anderson, 2013:30). From a disability perspective, the functional view of the image of God is problematic, since it – by definition – excludes people who do not have the ability to manage or oversee God's creation (for example, people with certain kinds of intellectual disabilities).
- The relational view's interpretation of the *imago Dei* associates the image of God with the importance of enjoying a loving relationship with God and others (Anderson, 2013:30).

##### 4.4.5.2 Summary of disability-relevant exegetical insights from Genesis 32:22-32

- Jacob's disability (his limp) is more a sign of strength than weakness. Despite having wrestled all night, Jacob showed no sign of giving up even after sustaining the injury to his hip, Jacob continued to struggle, refusing to let go.
- Jacob was able to wrestle a blessing from his opponent, despite his physical disability. However, as Wynn (2007:101) clarifies, “The blessing was not a result of the disability, nor

was the disability a result of the blessing. It is something he took away as a lifelong reminder of what happened there”.

- Jacob’s disability can be regarded as a sign of Israel’s covenant with God. Indeed, it may be argued, “Israel, then, in its first incarnation is physically disabled” (Abrams, 1998:85).
- God’s action in causing Jacob’s disability through an injury is best understood as an act of grace, in the sense that it helped to restore and sustain Jacob’s relationship with God.

#### 4.4.5.3 Summary of disability-relevant exegetical insights from Leviticus 19:13-14

- Leviticus 19:14 should be regarded as a fundamental guideline for the church vis-à-vis PWDs: “People’s disabilities require forethought in the way we construct our facilities, plan our worship, and interact with one another” (Lucenay *et al.*, 2004:35).
- Leviticus 19:14 serves as a reminder that some people do not regard certain medical conditions – such as deafness – as disabilities. Congregations could unwittingly construct “stumbling blocks” by seeking to be disability-friendly when, in fact, some people do not regard themselves as someone living with a disability.

#### 4.4.5.4 Summary of disability-relevant exegetical insights from 2 Samuel 9

- David’s decision to show compassion towards Mephibosheth was not based on the premise of Mephibosheth getting better or being healed.
- Anderson (2013:130) emphasises the restorative role that David played in Mephibosheth’s transformation: “David transformed Mephibosheth from a helpless disabled person to a man of wealth and status. . . . He did not hesitate to show kindness nor did his view of Mephibosheth change when he learned of his disability”.
- Mephibosheth’s self-appellation as a “dead dog” (2 Sam. 9:8) may have reflected Mephibosheth’s acceptance of the negative view of disability characteristic of the culture of the time (Anderson, 2013:130).
- The text does not portray Mephibosheth as a helpless person, but someone who is active and able to undertake some activities independently (Yong, 2011).

#### 4.4.5.5 Summary of disability-relevant exegetical insights from Mark 2:1-12

- Mark 2:1-12 challenges the notion that it is the faith of the person with disability which is instrumental in divine healing. The text asserts that Jesus' actions were in response to the faith of the four men who brought the paralysed man to him (Mark 2:5).
- A disability reading of the pericope reminds us of the importance of working to change the structures and attitudes in our society that alienate PWDs. As Black (1996:121) emphasises, "Jesus not only cured the man who was paralysed, he also challenged the systemic structures that perpetuated oppression".
- From a disability perspective, the focus should rather be on the sins against PWDs and its potentially destructive effect, especially the sickness and suffering caused by people's prejudicial attitudes to PWDs.
- The text highlights the importance of thinking creatively and innovatively regarding the issue of accessibility. The four men in the story displayed great tenacity in bringing the paralysed man to Jesus.
- An illuminating aspect of the pericope especially from a disability perspective, is that spiritual healing, rather than the healing of the man's physical disability, was Jesus' number one priority.
- Another aspect is what the text teaches with regard to the role of community in the process of spiritual healing. Jesus pronounced forgiveness of sin to the paralysed man on the basis of the determined faith exercised by the four men who brought him to Jesus (Mark 2:4-5).

#### 4.4.5.6 Summary of disability-relevant exegetical insights from Luke 14:12-24

- The parable of the great banquet directly challenges the church to reflect on the extent to which PWDs are made to feel welcome at church, as well as the extent to which the church's evangelistic efforts reach out to PWDs.
- The text challenges believers to reflect on their primary motivation for reaching out to those with disabilities. As Jesus declares in Luke 14:13-14, "But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just".

- Some commentators, such as Yong (2011), suggest that the text opens up the possibility that people’s disabilities will not necessarily be healed in the eschaton, but will rather – in light of the power and wisdom of God – remain a constitutive part of the redeemed person’s eschatological life, as well as being revealed as having a significance that was not previously imagined.

#### 4.4.5.7 Summary of disability-relevant exegetical insights from John 9:1-7

- The text dispels any erroneous notion that personal or ancestral sin may be regarded as the cause of disability in a person’s life (John 9:3).
- From a disability perspective, it may be noted that the Pharisees’ decision to expel the man who was healed from the synagogue (John 9:34) suggests that physical healing may sometimes have an alienating effect in a person’s family and social life.
- The text challenges the notion that faith is always necessary before the Lord physically heals a person.
- The man’s agency, character, and personality, as portrayed in John 9, challenge the stereotypes that some people may have about blind people (Yong, 2011).

#### 4.4.5.8 Summary of disability-relevant exegetical insights from 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

- Paul’s development of the concept of “body of Christ” in relation to the church is crucial for understanding the position and function of PWDs in the church. From a disability perspective, one of the central insights of the text is: “Those counted worthless or a liability in the world’s eyes, God consistently counts as crucial to his plans and to the function of his new community” (Beates, 2012:63-64).
- A disability reading of 1 Corinthians 12:22 suggests that it might be preferable to speak of PWDs as “differently-abled”. As Reagan (2013:49) explains, “Rather than ‘disabled’, I choose the term ‘differently-abled’ bodies. Possessing a ‘variant embodiment’ becomes ‘disabling’ only when there are impediments to full participation in the life of the faith community”.
- The pericope highlights the importance of the gifts and contributions that PWDs, empowered by the Holy Spirit, have to offer to the body of Christ.

## 4.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The present chapter sought to uncover normative perspectives on disability from selected passages in the Old Testament and New Testament. A number of exegetical insights relevant to the experiences of PWDs were identified. In Chapter 2, which constituted the descriptive-empirical phase of the study, my grounded theory analysis of interviews with selected AFM preachers yielded six core categories or theoretical models about PWDs. Three of the latter theoretical models – namely, ‘PWPDs are a challenge’, ‘PWPDs are like able-bodied people’, and ‘PWPDs need physical healing’ – were identified as essentially ableist in approach. In Chapter 3, which formed the interpretive phase of the study, I sought to contextualise and elucidate the findings of the descriptive-empirical phase with reference to the fields of disability studies and disability theology, as well as insights from the theological teachings of selected AFM leaders. Since the findings of the descriptive-empirical phase, the interpretive phase, as well as the normative phase, are now available, the study may proceed towards the task of integrating the key insights from the aforesaid phases, a task which Osmer (2008:4) calls the pragmatic task of practical theological investigation.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **A PENTECOSTAL HOMILETICAL STRATEGY FOR SHAPING DISABILITY-FRIENDLY CONGREGATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter of the study seeks to bring to fruition the primary aim of the study, namely, the development a Pentecostal homiletical strategy that can contribute to shaping disability-friendly congregations. Consequently, this chapter will focus on Osmer's (2008:4) fourth and final question of practical theological investigation: "How might we respond?" According to Osmer (2008:4), such questioning forms the basis of the pragmatic task of practical theology. This pragmatic task calls for the development of a praxis theoretical model in light of the overall findings of the study. Put differently, the pragmatic task entails "the task of forming and enacting strategies of action that influence events in ways that are desirable" (Osmer, 2008:176).

As pointed out in Chapter 1, Osmer (2008:176) distinguishes between two basic approaches to formulating "strategies of action"; specifically, models of practice and rules of art. Models of practice provide a general overview of the particular field of study, highlighting the ways in which leaders might fashion the field towards certain desired objectives (Osmer, 2008:176). Rules of art offer more precise strategies regarding how to perform specific actions or practices (Osmer, 2008:176). In light of the aforesaid distinction, my focus is on developing rules of art for a Pentecostal homiletic that may contribute to shaping disability-friendly congregations. Furthermore, following Osmer's (2008:192) guidance, I sought to remember the importance of grounding these rules of art in a spirituality of servant leadership: "Servant leadership is leadership that influences the congregation to change in ways that more fully embody the servanthood of Christ".

#### **5.2 AIM**

Bearing in mind the principles of the pragmatic task, I sought to develop Pentecostal homiletical rules of art for shaping disability-friendly congregations. More specifically, I engaged in the following steps:

- Firstly, as promised in Chapter 1, I offer a detailed discussion of my understanding of the notion of Pentecostal preaching. Such a discussion is vital, since the present study seeks to propose a Pentecostal homiletical strategy, which thus requires clarity about my conception of Pentecostal homiletics. I discuss Pentecostal preaching by reference to a threefold homiletical framework, namely, Pentecostal homiletical hermeneutics, Pentecostal homiletical preparation, and Pentecostal homiletical delivery. These three components of my

discussion of Pentecostal preaching serve as the theoretical foundation from which I seek to construct my homiletical rules of art for shaping disability-friendly congregations.

- Secondly, I seek to propose particular rules of art for approaching Pentecostal preaching in a way that may contribute to shaping disability-friendly congregations, drawing on the research findings of the present study, as well as my understanding of Pentecostal preaching. These homiletical rules of art are developed in light of the findings from the descriptive-empirical (Chapter 2), interpretive (Chapter 3), and normative (Chapter 4) phases of the study. My discussion of the findings from each of these phases of the study are not repeated. However, to the extent that particular insights from each of the aforesaid phases of the study are relevant to my proposed homiletical strategy, such central references will be included in the subsequent discussion. My proposed Pentecostal homiletical rules of art for shaping disability-friendly congregations have a threefold structure:
  - 1) Disability-friendly Pentecostal homiletical hermeneutics (which outlines disability-friendly rules of art for approaching Pentecostal homiletical hermeneutics).
  - 2) Disability-friendly Pentecostal homiletical preparation (which outlines disability-friendly rules of art for undertaking Pentecostal sermon preparation).
  - 3) Disability-friendly Pentecostal homiletical delivery (which outlines disability-friendly rules of art for preaching Pentecostal sermons).
- Thirdly, and finally, after relating the basic outline of the envisioned Pentecostal homiletical strategy for shaping disability-friendly congregations, my final chapter (Chapter 6) concludes the study by evaluating whether or not the study's primary objectives have been achieved, as well as offering some recommendations and themes for further research.

### 5.2.1 Pentecostal preaching

In Chapter 1 of the study, I briefly noted that I understand the term 'Pentecostal preaching' with reference to the threefold definition proposed by Hughes (2012:117-118): "(1) True Pentecostal preaching always centers in the Word; (2) Pentecostal preaching always exalts Jesus Christ; and (3) Pentecostal preaching is always directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit". Moreover, I noted that this study regards the Pentecostal homiletical characteristics outlined by Eutsler (2013, 2014) as the basis for understanding the shape of Pentecostal homiletical hermeneutics: Pentecostal preaching is biblical; Pentecostal preaching aims to please God; Pentecostal preaching seeks to communicate clearly; Pentecostal preaching is bold; Pentecostal preaching is spiritual; Pentecostal preaching is practical. Furthermore, I wish to note that, in the context of the present study, the terms 'Spirit-filled' and 'Pentecostal' are regarded as essentially synonymous, although I appreciate and acknowledge the fact that an emphasis on the role of

the Holy Spirit in preaching is by no means exclusive to the Pentecostal tradition (cf. Azurdia, 1998; Cunnington, 2015; Forbes, 1989; Heisler, 2007; Kinlaw, 1985; Martin, 2011; Powery, 2009; Vines & Shaddix, 1999).

In order to more carefully articulate and construct this study's envisioned Pentecostal homiletical strategy for shaping disability-friendly congregations, it is imperative that the abovementioned Pentecostal homiletical characteristics identified by Eutsler (2013, 2014) – which form the foundation of my understanding of Pentecostal preaching – be explored in greater detail. Accordingly, I outline my understanding of Pentecostal preaching by considering the following three Pentecostal homiletical dimensions: 1) Pentecostal homiletical hermeneutics, 2) Pentecostal homiletical preparation, and 3) Pentecostal homiletical delivery. While offering this overview of my understanding of Pentecostal preaching, I shall seek to contextualise my remarks by referencing and engaging the work of selected contemporary homileticians, both Pentecostal and otherwise.

#### 5.2.1.1 Pentecostal homiletical hermeneutics

The notion of homiletical hermeneutics may be defined in the following way: “[A] movement from what God has said to what God says . . . It is putting the message into a medium from which the audience can create a meaning for themselves which is in accord with God’s message” (Miller, 2003:114). In a similar way, Hogan (2006:97) remarks, “Homiletical hermeneutics is permeated by application for the contemporary readers/listeners”. Moreover, Hogan (2006:97) emphasises the central task of homiletical hermeneutics as the task of bridging the gap between the world of the text and the world of the contemporary reader/listener: “It is not enough just to talk about the ‘what God did back then’ of a text, but must point to ‘what God is doing now’ in and through the same text”. While I agree with the essence of both Miller and Hogan’s understanding of homiletical hermeneutics, it is my belief that homiletical hermeneutics should be understood in a more holistic sense. In the latter regard, I regard Yang’s (2015:7) definition of homiletical hermeneutics as a more holistic, integrated understanding: “[A] framework for interpreting biblical texts, theology, and lived experience that wraps itself around the entire preaching experience, including sermon context/reception, sermon content, and the liturgical symbol of the preacher”. Bearing Yang’s (2015:7) definition in mind, I regard the Pentecostal homiletical characteristics outlined in Eutsler (2013, 2014) as constituting the framework for interpreting the Pentecostal “preaching experience”.

##### 5.2.1.1.1 *Pentecostal preaching is biblical*

The first characteristic of Pentecostal preaching identified by Eutsler (2013) is that Pentecostal preaching is biblical. For Eutsler (2013), the biblical grounding of Pentecostal preaching encompasses three aspects. Firstly, “Pentecostal preachers study and proclaim the Word of

God” (Eutsler, 2013). Although this dimension of the Pentecostal preacher’s calling is sometimes neglected, it remains essential:

Not every Pentecostal preacher studies and proclaims the Bible like he or she should. But those true to their calling do. Preachers have no “Thus says the Lord”, unless they study their Bibles and hear from God. But when they do, God reveals to them in the study what they must repeat in the sanctuary. (Eutsler, 2013)

Practically speaking, this intricate connection between the study and proclamation of the Word of God should always be kept in mind by the Pentecostal preacher: “Before preachers stand in the pulpit, they must have something to say. The only subjects they can preach with authority are those the Bible addresses. Therefore, preachers must study Scripture carefully and preach it clearly” (Eutsler, 2013). Similarly, Samuel (2013:200) asserts, “Preachers must diligently study the written word – inspired by the Spirit – in order to appropriate it best for the preached word, while also remaining sensitive to the Spirit’s present leading in the preparation for preaching and the preaching event”. Furthermore, Crabtree (2003:162) asserts: “The preacher must never neglect the study of God’s Word by replacing it with other great writings, even books based upon the Scriptures. Because the Scriptures are inspired and God-breathed, they alone can satisfy the needs of the soul and spirit”. I think Lombard (2013) speaks to the heart of the matter, stressing the danger of relying on secondary sources instead of first-hand study of the Scriptures: “Knowing what God is saying does not merely depend on what others have said, but it depends upon prayerfully studying God’s Word”.

For Eutsler (2013), the second aspect related to the biblical grounding of Pentecostal preaching is that “Pentecostal preachers emphasize the work of the Holy Spirit”. This pneumatological dimension of Pentecostal preaching may be traced back to the preaching ministry of Jesus:

Jesus was not only a Bible preacher; He was also a Pentecostal preacher. The Holy Spirit conceived Him. The Holy Spirit descended upon Him. The Holy Spirit led Him. The Holy Spirit enabled Him to cast out demons. The Holy Spirit anointed Him to preach. His whole life was lived in the Spirit. (Eutsler, 2013)

Such an emphasis on the guidance of the Holy Spirit may also be discerned in the preaching of the apostles. As Eutsler (2013) explains, “The apostles understood that the Spirit had come to take Jesus’ place not only as their Comforter, but also as their Teacher and Guide”.

An important dimension of the Holy Spirit’s ministry in Pentecostal preaching is the prophetic nature of the Holy Spirit’s work, especially in pointing out sin in the life of the believer:

The prophets addressed a person’s obedience to the will of God. They were not shy to call attention to sin. They were quick to correct with clear instructions concerning the will

of God. Since the Spirit inspired the prophets of old to speak, Pentecostal preachers see themselves as their modern heirs. (Eutsler, 2013)

Blair (2013) shares Eutsler's emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in preaching, even going further than Eutsler by suggesting that, in a sense, the Holy Spirit is the actual preacher: "It is the Holy Spirit who really preaches through the preacher to convict, convince, and convert those who hear about what God has done".

Albrecht (1999:164) also points out this essentially pneumatological character of Pentecostal preaching, highlighting that Pentecostal preaching is "a prophetic announcement, directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit".

For me, Heisler's (2007:19) notion of 'Spirit-driven preaching' best captures what Eutsler is trying to communicate regarding the importance of the Holy Spirit in preaching: "Spirit-driven preaching is focused on the dynamic of the Spirit and the Spirit's text. The Spirit drives the sermon along the predetermined path of the Biblical text. Spirit-driven preaching culminates in Christological witness and Spirit-filled living". Heisler (2007:19-20) explains the aforesaid homiletical principle by utilising the analogy of the Holy Spirit and the biblical text as, respectively, a train and its tracks:

Spirit-led preaching should be as narrow and as wide as the tracks of the biblical text. When we get off the tracks and go "rabbit chasing" in our sermons, then we can expect (and probably have experienced!) sluggishness in our preaching engine because our preaching has gotten off the Spirit-inspired track. If we don't get the sermon back on the tracks by returning to the heart of the biblical text, we will eventually come to a grinding and screeching halt because we are working against both the Word and the Spirit.

For Eutsler (2013), the third aspect of the biblical grounding of Pentecostal preaching is rooted in the conviction that "Pentecostal preachers are creative". Since Pentecostal preachers are biblical in their approach and depend on the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they should remember the homiletical implications of the fact that "[t]he Scriptures inspired by the Spirit use a wide variety of methods to reach their hearers" (Eutsler, 2013). The latter realisation opens up a world of possibilities for the Pentecostal preacher as he or she seeks to proclaim the gospel in a way relevant to the context(s) of the contemporary hearer:

The Bible contains laws, stories, poetry, proverbs, and prophecies. So Pentecostal preachers use different types of messages to communicate the gospel. We recognize many preachers because of their story-telling skills. Like Jesus, some use object lessons. Others include drama in their messages. Pentecostal preachers were among the first preachers in the 20th century to use cars, vans, and trucks to take the gospel

everywhere. They were among the first to preach on the radio and then later on television. Since the Spirit is omniscient, there is no end to the variety and creativity of Pentecostal preaching. (Eutsler, 2013)

While I agree with Eutsler's basic argument regarding the creative possibilities of Pentecostal preaching, I think Heisler's (2007:60-61) words of caution regarding the inherent limits of homiletical creativity should be carefully heeded:

Only the truth of God's Word combined with the convicting power of the Holy Spirit can change lives for all eternity. Not my creativity or ingenuity as a preacher. Not my loud voice or my dynamic delivery. Not the poetic beauty or perfect symmetry of my well-crafted sermon. The truth of the Word and the power of the Spirit – that's our hope!

At an even more fundamental level, I agree with Eaton (2012:161) that, in our contemporary – and some would argue post-Christian – culture, an unqualified emphasis on creativity, not rooted in a Christocentric gospel, might even be spiritually dangerous:

The modern world is not keen on preachers proclaiming a message of baptism and repentance. They want a quiet preacher who is known for creativity, film clips, and drama sketches. But in a culture with little or no bent at all toward God, preaching must be centered on the Christ who saves.

#### *5.2.1.1.2 Pentecostal preaching aims to please God*

The second characteristic of Pentecostal preaching identified by Eutsler (2013) is that Pentecostal preaching aims to please God. Eutsler (2013) explains this characteristic in the following way:

The purpose of Pentecostal preaching is to please God. Preachers can only attain this purpose when they preach the Bible. God serves as the first person preachers should be concerned about when they preach. People should be their second concern. If preachers faithfully preach God's Word, they will exalt God and edify people.

Piper (2004:23) describes this theocentric aim of preaching in a poignant manner, expanding the theocentricity of preaching to extend to even the foundation of preaching: "God is the goal of preaching, God is the ground of preaching, and all the means in between are given by the Spirit of God". Moreover, from a Pentecostal perspective, I share and appreciate Old's (2002:265) perspective that "preaching is worship": "Preaching is worship because it is the setting forth of God's Word. The minister of the Word serves God in devoutly expounding God's Word. The congregation serves God by listening to and living by God's Word".

Practically speaking, this emphasis on pleasing God instead of human beings will sometimes mean that the Pentecostal preacher must exercise the courage to speak about controversial issues in society. Eutsler (2013) explains: “God asks Pentecostal preachers to preach on difficult subjects from time to time like the fate of the heathen, divorce and remarriage, or the relationship of believers to a hostile government. He expects preachers to have the courage to obey”. Indeed, since God should be the ultimate focus of preaching, the following remarks by Piper (2004:23-24) put matters into proper theological perspective:

My burden . . . is to plead for the supremacy of God in preaching . . . Then when preaching takes up the ordinary things of life (family, job, leisure, friendships) or the crises of our day (AIDS, divorce, addictions, depression, abuses, poverty, hunger, and, worst of all, unreached peoples of the world), these matters are not only taken up – they are taken all the way up into God.

#### *5.2.1.1.3 Pentecostal preaching seeks to communicate clearly*

The third characteristic of Pentecostal preaching identified by Eutsler (2013) is that Pentecostal preaching seeks to communicate in an understandable and clear way. Eutsler (2013) traces the need for clear communication in preaching to the biblical examples of Jesus and Paul, who both sought to communicate with people in everyday language, utilising stories and experiences many people could relate to. Eutsler (2013) explains the implications of approaching the task of preaching with clarity in mind:

To preach clearly, preachers must first understand their own message well. Then they must think about how best to present the message to their congregations. While preaching, they should note whether the listeners seem to understand it. If not, preachers should try to adapt their message as much as possible to ensure that their congregations understand. How? By using easily understood language and plenty of examples native to the culture.

While I regard Eutsler’s advice as helpful for the preacher, both Pentecostal and otherwise, I believe McDill’s (2006:73) notion of “fuzzy thinking” is particularly instructive for determining the level of clarity in a preacher’s homiletical communication:

The great failure of much preaching is *fuzzy thinking*. The preacher is not quite clear about his subject and the ideas that express it. His language is imprecise. The progression of his thought meanders in search of a line of direction. . . . If the preacher is unsure of his thoughts, the audience will be even more unsure of what he is saying. The key to clear thinking is the careful use of precise language.

Besides the possible communication barriers associated with fuzzy thinking, I share Fry Brown's (2008:3) concern that the type of voice and diction utilised by the preacher may also have a profound influence on the preacher's ability to communicate clearly and effectively. In the latter regard, it is worth quoting Fry Brown's (2008:3) explanation of the homiletical significance of "oral competence" at length:

Oral competence is grounded in the intentions of the speaker and receptivity of the listener as he seeks to know what the preacher thinks or feels. In other words, when the preacher's delivery is marked by obscure meaning, monotone delivery, misarticulation of sound, mispronunciation of words in the biblical text, insufficient volume, or failure to consider the language levels or abilities of the listener, the sermon – regardless of the proficiency of exegesis, depth of poetic creativity, or brilliance of attire – will suffer disruptions in communication.

Accordingly, it is my view that clear homiletical communication should include consideration of one's thinking as a preacher (i.e., the avoidance of fuzzy thinking in the delivery of the sermon), as well as consideration of the role of voice and diction (oral competence).

#### *5.2.1.1.4 Pentecostal preaching is bold*

The fourth characteristic of Pentecostal preaching identified by Eutsler (2013) is that Pentecostal preaching is executed with an attitude of boldness. This confidence, which, once again, was also evident in the preaching of Jesus and Paul, is by no means prideful or arrogant, but is rather connected to a sense of urgency for people's eternal fate. Eutsler (2013) explains the evangelical motivation for this sense of urgency and the preacher's consequent boldness:

People's eternal destiny hangs in the balance. Eternity is at stake. It is no time for cowardly preaching when people are headed for hell. The world needs bold and fearless preaching. If someone's house were burning, a person would not hesitate to boldly shout, "Fire! Fire!" Can Pentecostal preachers do less when a person's eternal destiny is at stake?

Accordingly, the Pentecostal preacher should possess a boldness for the sake of the gospel, a boldness that is willing to step outside one's comfort zone, even if some of the territory may be considered dangerous: "Pentecostal preachers are bold enough to take risks for God. As they preach, they are open to the possibility that the Spirit may lead them in an unexpected manner" (Eutsler, 2013). However, in agreement with Merida (2009:174), I believe it is important to remember that such boldness is in itself a work of the Holy Spirit:

Boldness is a mark of the Spirit. The early Christians prayed for boldness instead of the removal of persecution. Paul request prayer not only for preaching clarity (Col. 4:4), but



also for holy boldness (Eph. 6:18-20). We too should seek the fullness of the Spirit that we might proclaim the riches of Christ with boldness.

In a similar way, Heisler (2007:136) highlights the pneumatological origin of the boldness that preachers may enjoy, noting that “[t]he boldness of our proclamation stems from the Spirit-given confidence that the Word of God is a powerful sword that can penetrate the deepest darkness of sin”.

Where preachers, both Pentecostal and otherwise, dare to preach boldly about difficult issues affecting our society, such preaching has the potential to have an immensely liberating effect in the lives of the listeners. For example, in the context of the various social challenges faced by women, Smith (1992:81) remarks, “The literature suggests that when preachers are bold and clear in their sermons about issues related to woman battering, rape, or incest, women do come forward to speak with them in an attempt to break the silence and the violence”. Such boldness in preaching is in accord with Smith’s (1992:2) notion of preaching as an “act of naming”, where preaching is conceived as “an act of public theological naming” that seeks to transform reality by “shattering illusions and cracking open limited perspectives”.

#### *5.2.1.1.5 Pentecostal preaching is spiritual*

The fifth characteristic of Pentecostal preaching identified by Eutsler (2013) is that Pentecostal preaching is spiritual. For Eutsler (2013), there are five aspects related to the spiritual nature of Pentecostal preaching. Firstly, “Pentecostal preaching is soaked in prayer” (Eutsler, 2013). Tracing the importance of an active prayer life to the example of Jesus and the disciples, Eutsler (2013) insists that prayer should constitute an essential part of the preaching ministry of every Pentecostal preacher:

Pentecostal preachers, as D.L. Moody said, need to pray as if everything depends on God; then preach like everything depends on you. Without the power of God, a sermon is ineffective. It is mere words. But with the power of God, any sermon can move mountains. It becomes the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16). Prayer does not justify poor preparation. But it does recognize the essential role the Holy Spirit plays in the anointing of the preacher and the conviction of the sinner.

Accordingly, in order to preach effectively, Pentecostal preachers should seek to pray on a daily basis, preferably “[praying] over their messages before they preach” (Eutsler (2013). By taking such a prayerful approach to preaching, Pentecostal preachers declare their utter reliance on the power of the Holy Spirit in the ministry of preaching (Eutsler, 2013). Such an emphasis on the importance of prayer in preaching is also emphasised by Blair (2013): “I am convinced that the power of one’s preaching is predicated on or established through the preacher’s acute

intimate relationship with Christ as he or she practices the disciplines of prayer”. Moreover, in practical terms, I think Baker (2013) helpfully highlights the clarity that prayer brings to preaching, in the sense that prayer prepares our minds to be more attentive to the voice of the Holy Spirit.

For Eutsler (2014), the second aspect of the spiritual nature of Pentecostal preaching relates to the fact that “Pentecostal preaching depends on the anointing”. While acknowledging the complexity of defining the notion of anointing, Eutsler (2014) argues that the anointing “makes God’s presence more real”, as well as “[improving] the ability of the preacher, the effectiveness of the Word, and the reception of the hearers”. Some of the signs of such anointed preaching are boldness, signs and wonders, and courage (Eutsler, 2014). However, this anointing will only be present in the ministry of a preacher who lives a holy life, surrendered to the will of God, and committed to prayer (Eutsler, 2014). Hughes (1981:23) shares Eutsler’s basic understanding of the anointing, but expands on how the anointing enables the preacher by noting that the anointing sometimes enables the Pentecostal preacher to “speak and act beyond themselves” by means of “a word of knowledge, a word of wisdom, or a revelation”.

The third aspect of the spiritual nature of Pentecostal preaching is that “Pentecostal preaching leads to revival” (Eutsler, 2014). For Eutsler (2014), each revival in history displays characteristics that are common to Pentecostal preaching:

Throughout Church history, Pentecostal preaching has resulted in revivals (in addition to those recorded in the Book of Acts), such as the Welsh revival, Azusa Street, the healing campaigns of Oral Roberts, the Pensacola revival, etc. As someone has observed, as the pulpit goes, so goes the pew. While Pentecostal preachers have not started every revival, each revival, as a rule, has shared characteristics of Pentecostal preaching. This result of revival is true especially since the turn of the 20th century. Around the world today, revival continues to break out wherever Pentecostal preachers go.

Eaton (2012:154) affirms Eutsler’s argument regarding the correlation between Pentecostal preaching and revival, albeit indirectly, by pointing out how preaching has been largely neglected in contemporary church growth and leadership models:

In some denominations, church planting initiatives and leadership models do little to emphasize the need for Spirit-empowered preaching. Rather, the models focus mostly on structure, organizational techniques, and trends. . . . But I wonder if we can imagine once again that revival, church growth, and renewal can come from preaching. . . . I am not arguing that preaching is the only task of church leadership. But preaching is primary, and when it is on the decline, so is the church.

According to Eutsler (2014), the fourth aspect of the spiritual nature of Pentecostal preaching is that “Pentecostal preaching inspires faith”. While Eutsler (2014) admits that God utilises non-Pentecostal preaching to inspire faith, he is convinced that “Pentecostal preaching is more inclined to do so”:

Pentecostal preaching inspires faith specifically in the Lord Jesus Christ. Thereby the gospel becomes the “power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16). Pentecostal preaching also inspires faith for healing as in the case of the lame man at Lystra (Acts 14:8–10). Pentecostal preaching inspires faith for the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and for signs and wonders. Through expressing faith, God answers our prayers, we overcome sin, we win spiritual victories, and we receive and exercise spiritual gifts.

In a similar way, Hughes (2012:120) argues, “[T]here are few moments when, or few places where, the Word is more piercingly sent forth than during an anointed, Pentecostal sermon. . . . It is through faith produced by the Word that signs and miracles follow Pentecostal preaching”.

Although I respect Eutsler’s (2014) and Hughes’ (2012) perspectives, I disagree with their argument that Pentecostal preaching is somehow “more inclined” to inspire faith in people. It is my view that it is not a specific type of preaching, or even preaching in general, that inspires faith, but rather the Holy Spirit. Powery (2012:52) underlines this fundamentally pneumatic foundation of preaching: “The Spirit of God is the source of new life and hope, not any human being or preacher. One’s preaching does not bring salvation but the Spirit working through one’s preaching initiates it”. Moreover, while I appreciate the fact that Eutsler (2013) believes Pentecostal preaching best inspires “faith for the baptism in the Holy Spirit”, it seems that Eutsler is arguing from a perspective that views Spirit baptism exclusively “as an experience of empowerment for Christian service evidenced by speaking in tongues and distinct from both Christian conversion and water baptism” (Macchia, 2006:110). In agreement with Macchia (2006:110), I believe that Spirit baptism should be understood in a broader sense as “[involving] an experience of prophetic calling and empowerment”. If the latter more ecumenical understanding of Spirit baptism is accepted, all preaching, not just Pentecostal preaching, may serve to inspire Spirit baptism.

The fifth and final aspect of the spiritual nature of Pentecostal preaching highlighted by Eutsler (2014) is “Pentecostal preaching stirs up opposition”. Eutsler (2014) explains what he means by “opposition”:

Both in the New Testament and in modern times, Pentecostal preaching has stirred up opposition (Acts 19:23–41). This opposition comes from both human and demonic forces. Jesus regularly confronted demons because of His preaching (Mark 1:23; 5:2; 7:25; Luke 9:42). He also ran afoul of the religious leaders of His day because He taught

as one who had authority (Matthew 5:20; Luke 5:30; John 7:32). On mission fields today, Pentecostal missionaries often run into spiritual, political, and personal opposition (cf. Acts 18:6). Genuine Pentecostal preaching causes its listeners to either accept or reject the message.

However, I question Eutsler's assertion that such preaching is primarily associated with Pentecostal preaching. Rather, I share Campbell's (2002:90) conviction that the very nature of preaching – *all* preaching, whether Pentecostal or otherwise – is rooted in ethical action, where preaching takes the form of an act of nonviolent opposition or resistance, which "[helps to] create the space and the possibility for a community to engage in further resistance to the powers".

#### *5.2.1.1.6 Pentecostal preaching is practical*

The sixth and final characteristic of Pentecostal preaching identified by Eutsler (2014) is that Pentecostal preaching is practical. For Eutsler (2014), this practical dimension of Pentecostal preaching encompasses four aspects. Firstly, "Pentecostal preachers preach about God and people", in the sense that they "should preach about how God can solve people's problems" (Eutsler, 2014). Eutsler (2014) stresses the latter point: "What people need to hear is how God can meet their needs". Eutsler's understanding of Pentecostal preaching as addressing people's most pressing needs is echoed by Albrecht (1999:163) when he notes how a Pentecostal message "expresses the world view of the congregation, that is, the message helps . . . to give voice to a common definition of the 'things that matter most'". Such an approach has three distinct benefits: 1) it tends to hold people's attention; 2) ensures that the preaching is practical; and 3) highlights God's action(s) through Jesus Christ (Eutsler, 2014). However, despite the aforementioned benefits noted by Eutsler, it is my view, along with Willhite (2001:48), that preachers should be careful of adopting an approach that only addresses the perceived problems or needs of the audience:

No preacher can possibly speak to all the identified needs in most audiences. In fact, why would any preacher want to speak to identified (or felt) needs only? . . . The Bible speaks to needs that are far more significant than most of the needs that people have identified in their lives. If we probe a little, people will adjust their thinking to more significant needs, the kind that sermons should address.

Furthermore, I believe another possible danger of focusing on how God can meet people's needs is neglecting to preach on important doctrinal matters. Along with a host of recent homileticians (cf. Allen, 2002; Breidenbaugh, 2010; Hughes & Kysar, 1997; Long & Farley, 1996; Ratzinger, 2005; Smith, 2008; Thompson, 2001), it is my view that frequent doctrinal preaching, rooted in sound systematic theology, remains an important aspect of the

contemporary preacher's ministry. Speaking about the importance of systematic theology for preaching, Allen (2002:21) notes six reasons why systematic theology needs to enjoy greater attention in contemporary preaching:

1. Systematic theology in preaching helps appropriately shape Christian community for today.
2. Many people today are hungry for the holistic interpretation of life that systematic theology offers.
3. Preaching systematic theology helps the church make sense of diverse theological claims.
4. Preaching out of systematic theology helps pastor and congregation relate to the pluralism of postmodernity.
5. Explicit theology in sermons is an antidote for theological illiteracy.
6. Systematic theology helps the preacher honor the integrity of elements of the Bible and Christian tradition.

The second practical aspect of Pentecostal preaching identified by Eutsler (2013) is that "Pentecostal preachers love people". Eutsler (2014) offers a thorough explanation of what he means by the latter assertion, highlighting the evangelistic motivation that grounds his conviction:

Not only are [Pentecostal preachers] equipped with spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12) and educated in their use (1 Corinthians 14), they are also motivated by love to reach the lost and edify the saved (1 Corinthians 13). God loves the whole world and commends His love for us while we are yet sinners (John 3:16; Romans 5:8). Those who love God and are Christlike care about the same things He does. As a matter of fact, Paul says, "Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died" (2 Corinthians 5:14). In other words, Jesus' love urges Pentecostal preachers to tell others about Him so they too can be saved.

While I agree with Eutsler about the importance of the preacher being motivated by a love for people, I share MacArthur's (2015:23) concern that such love should never be used as an excuse to avoid confronting people with biblical truth that may challenge them at some level. As MacArthur (2015:23) explains, a love that avoids biblically-grounded confrontation is not actually authentic love: "If I say, 'It is not actually loving to confront', then I do not love people. Rather, I am loving myself – I am more concerned about people liking me than about speaking the truth".

The third practical aspect of Pentecostal preaching identified by Eutsler (2014) is that "Pentecostal preachers have a concern for holiness". Eutsler (2014) explains the practical and ethical dimensions of this "concern for holiness": "Not only do [Pentecostal preachers] avoid sin,

they keep their promises and appointments. They avoid dirty jokes. They ask the Lord to keep a watch over the words they speak (Psalm 141:3). Pentecostal preachers are filled with the Holy Spirit". For Eutsler (2013), the holiness of the preacher has a direct bearing on the efficacy of his or her preaching: "If the preacher's life does not match his or her testimony, no one will pay any attention to his or her sermons". Heisler (2007:149) shares Eutsler's emphasis on the necessity of holiness in the life of the preacher, but frames the issue with reference to the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit in the preacher's ministry: "Preachers who live in disobedience lack the holiness that the Spirit desires. Sometimes we want the Spirit's empowerment, but we forget the first part of his name is Holy". While I appreciate both Eutsler and Heisler's viewpoints regarding the importance of holiness in the preacher's life, I am more inclined to agree with Ramsey (2008:80) that, in the final analysis, the efficacy of the preached Word of God does not depend on the moral character or holiness of the preacher: "The preacher like all Christians holds the treasures of faith in 'earthen vessels'. God can and does choose to act through sermons and sacraments delivered by tainted hands".

The fourth and final practical aspect of Pentecostal preaching identified by Eutsler (2013) is that "Pentecostal preachers work at relationships". For Eutsler (2014) this focus on relationships is connected to Pentecostal preachers' relationship with their family, their congregation, and other Christians. With regard to the preacher's family and congregation, Eutsler (2014) points out how important both these relationships are in the preacher's life: "Pentecostal preachers take care of their families as well as their churches. They support their spouses and love their children". With regard to the Pentecostal preacher's relationship with other Christians, Eutsler (2014) believes that the ecumenical search for Christian unity should be taken seriously by Pentecostal preachers: "Since the Holy Spirit crosses denominational lines, Pentecostal preachers will work with other Christians who believe in Christ and in the Bible . . . Pentecostals recognize the value of unity". While I fully agree that Pentecostals should earnestly strive for Christian unity, I believe it is important that all Christians remember that visible Christian unity will only come about as Christians submit to the Holy Spirit and recognise unity as a gift of the Holy Spirit. As Pfister (2010:78) notes, "If the unity of Christians is not, in the end, a human task, but a work of the Holy Spirit, it is, nonetheless, our responsibility to yield to the Spirit".

#### 5.2.1.2 Pentecostal homiletical preparation

"God makes the person before He makes the sermon" (Wood, 1998) – these words form the foundation of the Pentecostal approach to homiletical preparation. Blair (2013) elaborates on the way in which the preacher's relationship with God forms the starting point for preaching:

Preaching is not just an art, a craft, or a moment in time between preacher and people; it is communication through the speaking of a consecrated personality who is on fire for God. Therefore, Spirit-filled preaching is based on our relationship with God and a

quality of character that makes it inviting for Him to exercise His rule in the inner person. Additionally, character involves forthrightness in our relationship with God's people. Such preaching invites the spontaneous move of God, for it is grounded in prayer and a pure heart.

In a similar way, Wood (1998) argues that the preacher's relationship with the Holy Spirit will determine the level of the Spirit's presence in the preacher's sermons: "Our sermons will never be more full of the Spirit than our lives. And we will never stand up unless Jesus pulls us up, unless we also tarry and receive the promise of the Holy Spirit".

Central to the Pentecostal preacher's relationship with God, especially as it relates to sermon preparation, is a lively and robust prayer life. Martin (2013) regards prayer as absolutely essential to Pentecostal sermon preparation: "The preparation for a Pentecostal sermon is the prayer closet". While thorough study and exegesis of the biblical text remains an essential task of the Pentecostal preacher, such study in itself is not enough: "In order to bring ourselves to the spiritual place where the Spirit will move when we preach, we must . . . begin with prayer" (Martin, 2013). Moreover, Martin (2013, original emphasis) connects the efficacy of Pentecostal preaching to prayer: "In order for Pentecostal preaching to reach its goal of divine encounter and transformation, *the sermon must be birthed in prayer*".

Besides aiding in the realisation of the goal of preaching, Martin (2013) explains how prayer will also help the preacher to discern "a burden from the Lord":

When we are in prayer, we get more than just a sermon – we receive a message from God. In Pentecostal preaching, the sermon is a prophetic message, a "burden" (Mal. 1:1). Pentecostal preaching is passionate – it is the release of the Word, which is like a "fire shut up in [our] bones" (Jer. 20:9). This burden cannot be obtained in any way except by prayer, fasting, devotion, and times of testing.

In agreement with Martin (2013), I am convinced that the preacher should preach about issues regarding which he or she feels "a burden from the Lord". However, since such preaching will inevitably tend to be more topical in approach, relying on the preacher's personal decision about the sermon topic, there is a danger that systematic, expository preaching might be neglected or even discarded by the preacher. As a Pentecostal preacher, I take Edwards' (2009:64) words of caution about an exclusively topical approach very seriously:

Do you really want to select every idea you preach? I don't. I'm sinful. I can think of no more effective way to transform God's people into my image rather than His. Preaching books of the Bible helps me make sure that God's agenda, not mine, is accomplished in the lives of my people.

Accordingly, when it comes to topic and/or text selection, I regard Heisler's (2007:89-90) advice about the role of the Holy Spirit in this area of sermon preparation as very important:

Planning is not contrary to the Spirit, and neither are praying and waiting. The goal of our text selection is to choose the Scriptures we expound with an openness and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit and to maintain that sensitivity to the Spirit's leading for potential changes or adjustments. The Holy Spirit can lead us into a series on prayer or the family just as well as he can lead us to preach through the book of Philippians. One of the keys to Spirit-led preaching is believing you have the right message at the right time, for the right context, no matter what shape or form your preaching calendar may take.

Lastly, in preparing a sermon, Wood (1998) argues that the Pentecostal preacher should take the needs and interests of their audience into account:

Pentecostal preaching is not about sermons; it's about communicating God's Word to people in order to inform and change them.

How about you? Do the children and youth in your congregation love to hear you preach? Are you using language and stories that reach them while touching the adults as well? It's so vital that we desire to preach to our audience rather than simply getting a sermon ready and delivering it.

Similarly, Rummage (2002:40) underlines the importance of the preacher shaping their communication with the audience in mind: "A wise preacher will study his congregation, learn who they are, and then adapt his communication to them. He will make adjustments to his preaching plan based on what he discerns about his congregation, their character, and their needs". For me, one of the most powerful tools a preacher can utilise to gain in-depth understanding of their audience is 'congregational exegesis' (Tisdale, 1997:56). Tisdale (1997:56-90) suggests that there are several 'culture texts' that may be particularly helpful in deepening our understanding of the congregational culture:

- Stories;
- Archives;
- Demographics;
- Architecture and visual arts;
- Rituals;
- Events and activities; and



- Prominent and marginalised people

Based on my own experiences as a preacher, I can certainly attest to the fact that keeping the needs of the congregational audience in mind helps the audience to connect to the message in a more dynamic, life-changing way (cf. Lybrand, 2008; Tisdale, 1997; Willhite, 2001).

Another, more direct, way of taking the needs and interests of the congregational audience into account is engaging in ‘collaborative preaching’, where the preacher intentionally involves other people in the process of sermon preparation (cf. Allen, 2005; McClure, 1995, 2007). McClure (2007:13) offers a helpful explanation of what the process of collaborative preaching entails:

Collaborative preachers form small groups of laypersons, from within and outside the church, who meet with the preacher to discuss biblical, theological, and experiential materials for the upcoming sermon. . . . The preacher takes careful notes during the process of sermon brainstorming and prepares the sermon so that it resembles both the form and message of the collaborative brainstorming process. After the sermon is preached, preachers return to these groups for feedback and to begin the process again.

Along with McClure (1995:51), I am convinced that one of the greatest strengths of such a collaborative approach is that “[a]ll voices are equally valued”, thus recognising the importance of the experiences and perspectives of everyone in the congregation in relation to sermon preparation.

### 5.2.1.3 Pentecostal homiletical delivery

#### 5.2.1.3.1 *Pentecostal sermons are delivered with passion*

Pentecostal sermons are preached with passion (Martin, 2013). Martin (2013) explains the origin and nature of this passion:

The burden of the Lord will produce a passion. When we have a burden from the Lord, we will appeal to more than just the minds of our hearers – we will appeal to their hearts. We will appeal to the whole person. The entire person will be addressed in a Pentecostal sermon.

Since Martin (2013) does not flesh out his understanding of passion in the context of preaching, except for noting that it should “appeal to [hearers’] hearts” and “appeal to the whole person”, I find Foley’s (1998) remarks on the threefold nature of passion in preaching to be helpful in developing a more nuanced understanding of such passion. Firstly, the preacher should have a passion for the Word of God, “[delighting] in this untamed Word and in the possibility that one path the Word will take on its journey back to the Holy One is right through the preacher” (Foley,

1998:1). Secondly, the preacher should have a passion for the worship service or liturgy, understanding “public worship as the font and summit of both ecclesial and personal life” (Foley, 1998:1). Finally, the preacher should have a passion for the baptised assembly, valuing the congregations’ “experiences and expectations [as] essential ingredients in the preaching event” (Foley, 1998:1).

#### *5.2.1.3.2 Pentecostal sermons should be delivered with divine unction*

Pentecostal sermons should be preached with “divine unction” (Martin, 2013). As may be recalled, Eutsler (2014) identifies such divine unction or anointing as an essential characteristic of Pentecostal homiletical hermeneutics. In the most basic sense, the notion of anointing refers to “the highly dynamic and experiential presence of God” (Eaton, 2012:155). In the context of preaching, Hughes (1981:23) connects the anointing to preaching where the charismatic manifestations of the Holy Spirit are present in a way that exceeds the natural abilities of the preacher – for example, “when a word of knowledge, a word of wisdom, or a revelation comes to the preacher right out of heaven”.

For Martin (2013), when the Pentecostal preacher delivers a weak or bad sermon, they should not comfort themselves by insisting that, despite challenges, they did their best. Such an attitude is regarded as unacceptable, since God did not ask them to do their best. Rather, God asked them “to pray, fast, and immerse [themselves] in the Word of God until [they] are filled with the Holy Spirit and filled with the message He wants [them] to proclaim” (Martin, 2013). Neither did God ask the Pentecostal preacher about his level of ability: “God does not ask for our ability, neither does He ask for our skillfulness. He wants to divinely enable us. He doesn’t want our best; He wants *more* than our best. He wants us to believe for the impossible” (Martin, 2013). Therefore, Martin (2013) contends that Pentecostal preachers should remind themselves of Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 3:5: “Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God”, as well as 2 Corinthians 12:10: “For when I am weak, then I am strong”.

Griffs (2013) summarises the benefits of anointed preaching, especially as a way of engaging in spiritual warfare:

Anointed preaching is instructional to the believer, comforting to the downtrodden, encouraging to those in despair, inspiring to those who need leadership, and convicting to those guilty of sin. It can also shake the foundations of hell and send a trembling through demonic ranks. When Jesus preached, demons cried out in protest, “What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth?” (Mark 1:24). Powerful preaching has always made the devil nervous, and the reason is simple: the sword of the Spirit cuts and tears down the trouble Satan has built in human lives.

Along with Heisler (2007:130), it is my view that the question of the anointing in preaching has been a misleading and frustrating topic for many preachers. Yet, as Heisler (2007:130) remarks, “The anointing for preaching is hard to define and maintains a sense of mystery about it, but that admission is no reason to conclude that it does not exist”. In agreement with Eaton (2012:157), I believe there are ultimately only two essential criteria that both Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal preachers should consider to determine whether or not their preaching ministry is anointed. Firstly, the preacher should have a dynamic relationship with God the Father: “To begin with, it would assert that like Jesus, the preacher has a special relationship with the Father” (Eaton, 2012:157). Secondly, preachers should have a realisation of their continual dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit: “[T]he preacher would sense that he or she is standing under the continual influence of the Spirit. . . . [I]t is only as preachers yield to the Spirit that anointed preaching occurs” (Eaton, 2012:157). If the aforementioned two qualities are present, I regard such a preaching ministry as anointed.

#### *5.2.1.3.3 Pentecostal sermons include the gifts of the Holy Spirit*

Pentecostal sermons should include the manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, since “signs, wonders and spiritual gifts” were clearly present in the life of the New Testament church (Martin, 2013). Martin (2013) explains the nature and significance of such gifts of the Holy Spirit in the context of preaching: “A Pentecostal preacher will preach with charismatic gifts, with words of wisdom and knowledge, with healings and miracles, and with discernment”. Similarly, Hughes (1981:23) emphasises that Pentecostal preaching should be marked by the occurrence of “a word of knowledge, a word of wisdom, or a revelation”. Blair (2013) argues that Pentecostal preaching may involve “speaking in tongues, should the Spirit lead that way”. Although such preaching may sometimes have a disruptive effect and come across as “a little harsh and rough around the edges”, it has the potential to powerfully “touch people’s hearts” (Martin, 2013).

Despite the fact that I am convinced of the biblical validity of emphasising the manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in preaching, I concur with Heisler (2007:151) that such gifts of the Holy Spirit need not be present in someone’s preaching for it to be considered as empowered or anointed preaching. Rather, along with Heisler (2007:151), I declare: “I am simply calling pastors and preachers to take a hard look at the biblical ministry of the Holy Spirit and his relationship to the preaching of the Word of God”.

#### *5.2.1.3.4 Pentecostal sermons are a form of worship*

Pentecostal preaching may be regarded as a form of worship, in the sense that “[b]oth the preacher and the congregation worship God during the act of preaching” (Martin, 2013). Martin (2013) offers a more detailed explanation of how such worship functions during the preaching

event, highlighting the “worship experience” of the preacher, the people, as well as God who receives their worship:

In a Pentecostal sermon, the preacher sees not only the people, but God also. The act of preaching is an act of worship, in which the preacher stands in God’s holy presence, with one eye on God and the other eye on the congregation, with one foot on earth and the other foot in heaven, with one hand reaching up to God and the other hand stretched out to the people. The people also worship – they look both to the preacher and to God as they yield to the Holy Spirit. God Almighty participates in the service as well. He is looking down and saying, “Amen, amen.”

For Quicke (2011:88), the abovementioned interplay between the preacher, the people, and God, rooted in an understanding of preaching as worship, is characteristic of all preaching, whether Pentecostal or otherwise: “Preachers worship when they preach, hearers worship as they listen, and all participants worship as they respond. Worship is the primary dynamic in which preaching engages – the integrator of preaching within God’s big picture”.

In commenting on the preaching of the apostle Paul, Old (1998:189) strikingly summarises the importance of viewing preaching as worship:

The preaching and the hearing of the Word of God is in the last analysis worship, worship in its most profound sense. Preaching is not an auxiliary activity to worship, nor is it some kind of preparation for worship which one hopes will follow. . . . [T]he proclaiming of the Word of God, simply in itself, is high service to God. The solemn reading and preaching of Scripture in the midst of the congregation is a cultic act, if we may use that term, in continuity with the sacrifices of the Old Testament. Even more it fulfills these ancient cultic acts.

In agreement with Old’s employment of sacrificial imagery vis-à-vis preaching, Frankland (2015:115) describes the sermon as “a sacrificial gift”: “When the preacher and congregation recognise that the sermon is, in and of itself, a response to God, it becomes a sacrificial gift”. Ultimately, along with Heisler (2007:98-99), I think it is fitting that the preacher should offer his or her sermon as a prayer to God: “[P]rayering your sermon back to God as an offering of worship is a powerful way to keep your preaching in the context of worship and to remind yourself who you are preaching for”.

### 5.3 RULES OF ART FOR A PENTECOSTAL HOMILETICAL STRATEGY THAT MAY SERVE TO SHAPE DISABILITY-FRIENDLY CONGREGATIONS

Bearing in mind the basic contours of Pentecostal preaching as outlined above, I shall now seek to integrate the insights from the descriptive-empirical, interpretive, and normative phases of the study into a coherent Pentecostal homiletical strategy for shaping disability-friendly congregations. As noted earlier, the findings from each of the aforementioned phases of the study are not repeated, but central references from each of these phases are integrated into my discussion of the proposed homiletical strategy.

#### 5.3.1 Disability-friendly Pentecostal Homiletical Hermeneutics

The title of my dissertation, “Enabling faith: Towards a Pentecostal homiletical strategy for shaping disability-friendly congregations”, begins with two words, namely, “enabling” and “faith”. These two words highlight the primary aim of the study, which is to shape disability-friendly congregations – congregations where both PWDs and able-bodied people may encounter the Christian faith in a way that enables their full participation in the life of the church. More precisely, I define a disability-friendly congregation as a “congregation that emphasises the ability and not the disability of a believer living with disability, ensuring that such a believer enjoys equal opportunity in every dimension of congregational life and is not discriminated against in any way” (Lengnick-Hall, 2007:99).

As noted earlier, Yang (2015:7) offers the following definition of homiletical hermeneutics: “[A] framework for interpreting biblical texts, theology, and lived experience that wraps itself around the entire preaching experience, including sermon context/reception, sermon content, and the liturgical symbol of the preacher”. Consequently, taking into account both the Pentecostal and disability-friendly emphases of the present study, I propose disability-friendly rules of art for engaging in Pentecostal homiletical hermeneutics.

##### 5.3.1.1 Commitment to interpreting the Bible with PWDs in mind

Pentecostal preachers are called to proclaim the truths contained in the Word of God (Eutsler, 2013), but are called to do so in a way that is “liberative and healing” to PWDs, and “not oppressive to persons who live with disabilities today” (Black, 1996:180). The Bible should be regarded as the *norma normans* for any normative theological reflection, and, by extension, any preaching, on the issue of disability. As noted in Chapter 3, two of the ableist perspectives that emerged from my analysis of the interview data, namely, the ‘PWPDs are a challenge’ model, as well as the ‘PWPDs need physical healing’ model, may be associated with the moral/religious model of disability. Moreover, I suggested that the implicit presence of the moral/religious model of disability in the ableist perspectives of some of the participating AFM preachers may be traced to the kind of hermeneutical training they received. Accordingly,

following Yong's (2011) lead, Pentecostal preachers should seek to critically examine possible ableist tendencies in their interpretation of what the Bible teaches about disability. As Yong (2011:Chapter 1, Section 3) points out, "The goal is to question our own presuppositions about disability in order to see afresh how the Bible is and can be good news not only for PWDs but also for societies with people across the spectrum of abilities".

I believe Yong's (2011) hermeneutical guidelines for interpreting Scripture in a disability-sensitive way, outlined at the beginning of Chapter 4, should continually be borne in mind by Pentecostal preachers. In addition to Yong's basic guidelines for interpreting the Bible in a disability-friendly way, Black (1996) offers preachers several practical guidelines for engaging in disability-friendly exegesis, an approach she calls a 'healing homiletic'. Firstly, when preaching about any text that directly or implicitly deals with disability, preachers should be careful about interpreting such disability in metaphorical ways, especially when such metaphorical usage is somehow connected to sin. Black (1996:183) explains the disability-friendly way of approaching metaphorical language in the biblical text:

Instead of saying we are blind, deaf, mute, or paralyzed to the will of God, we should say what we mean: "we do not understand who Jesus is", "we ignore God's will for our lives", "we do not testify to God's presence in our world", "we refuse to act on God's behalf", and so on.

Secondly, when preaching about texts that feature PWDs, the preacher may choose to shift the focus to considering the situation of the person with disability in the text. If such an approach is selected, Black (1996:184) observes that the preacher may focus the audience's attention by asking the following two questions:

- When have you been isolated or ostracized from your community because of who you are, not by what you have done?
- When have we isolated or ostracized someone from our community because of our own fears about who they are?

Thirdly, the narratives about Jesus' healing ministry are marked by a profound willingness to reach beyond the cultural and religious boundaries, often transgressing the ritual purity codes of his day (for example, by touching the man with leprosy, as recorded in Matthew 8:1-4, Mark 1:40-45, and Luke 5:12-16). In light of Jesus' example, contemporary preachers need to confront their congregations with the following question: "What boundaries have our communities of faith established to protect themselves from those considered unclean today?" (Black, 1996:184).

Fourthly, another way of approaching texts that feature PWDs is to highlight the action or actions of PWDs in the biblical narrative. Black (1996:185) explains the significance of this approach, emphasising the proactive role that various biblical PWDs took in facilitating change in their lives:

On the margins of society, expected to be passive and out of sight so they can also be out of society's mind, Bartimaeus, the woman with the flow of blood, the man with leprosy, and the Syrophoenician woman all take matters into their own hands. They are bold and active, taking the initiative in their own journey toward well-being.

Recognising the active role that biblical characters with disabilities took in changing their situation, preachers should urge their congregations to consider the ways in which they can enable PWDs "in their search for well-being", while resisting any "tendency . . . to judge those who take the initiative" (Black, 1996:185).

The last disability-inclusive hermeneutical method suggested by Black (1996:185) is to analyse the reactions of the crowds in the biblical narratives featuring PWDs. For example, in the narrative about the healing of Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52), the crowd attempts to silence Bartimaeus, urging him to sit down and behave as was expected of a blind beggar. In considering the response of the crowd, Black (1996:185-186) contends that the preacher should challenge the congregation with a number of questions that may serve as the basis for self-examination vis-à-vis people's attitudes toward disability:

How do we respond to the unfamiliar, the out-of-the-ordinary, those who are unlike us? Are we seized with fear? Do we try to make them "go away"? Or do we simply try to silence those who are different from us? Do we enforce an expectation of passivity – out of sight and out of mind – on those we consider less important than us? Or maybe we are just among the curious bystanders. Where are the leaders today who are willing to stop and model attention to and respect for those on the margins?

Another important hermeneutical consideration for the preacher is the distinction between cure and healing (cf. Anderson, 2013; Black, 1996; McNamara, 2008). The notion of cure refers to "the elimination of at least the symptoms, if not the disease or the disability itself" (Anderson, 2013:97). Such cures were uncommon in biblical times, which makes Jesus' acts of curing various diseases all the more remarkable (Anderson, 2013:97). Nevertheless, such a mindset is characteristic of how people in our time approach the issue of disease: "As consumers of what modern medicine and health care have to offer, we hope for a cure when disease afflicts us. Cure . . . primarily in a physical sense" (McNamara, 2008:40). However, the notion of healing "centers on evoking a sense of well-being, peace, comfort, and support, but does not [necessarily] imply a cure" (Anderson, 2013:97). The biblical notion of healing may sometimes

include physical healing, but, importantly, “[i]t gives priority to the spiritual transformation that occurs as the individual is cured” (McNamara, 2008:40). Accordingly, from a New Testament perspective (Rom. 5:8-11; 6:1-6; Gal. 5:1), preachers should focus on the fact that healing “refers to our being made whole in spirit; that is, our healing from sin – release from bondage to and the consequences of sin” (Anderson, 2013:97).

Since Pentecostal preachers should seek the Holy Spirit’s guidance in prophetically pointing out sin in the lives of the congregation (Eutsler, 2013), they should not only be sensitive to possible ableism in their own thinking, but also be especially sensitive to possible ableist tendencies among members of their congregations. The preacher should focus on the sins against the person with disability and its potentially destructive effect, especially the sickness and suffering that may be caused by prejudicial attitudes of church members (cf. Black, 1996; Capps, 2008). As Black (1996:122, original emphasis) rightly notes, “Just to name aloud the reality that many people experience suffering and even psychological paralysis, blindness, or deafness as a result of others’ sin *against* them can be a liberating word of hope”.

The normative phase of the present study identified a number of disability-related exegetical insights from the respective pericopes that were analysed. Some of the most notable of these insights are:

- All people are created in the image of God, regardless of any specific ability or disability.
- It is important to be attentive to the particular “stumbling blocks” that may hamper the full inclusion of PWDs in a faith community.
- There are passages in the Bible that portray PWDs as proactive role players in shaping the course of their lives, independent of the help of able-bodied people.
- Disability is in no way related to personal or ancestral sin – God does not punish a person by giving them some form of disability.
- Divine healing is not dependent on the level or quality of faith a person displays, but is ultimately a sovereign decision made by God.

Insights such as the above should serve as a guide to any Pentecostal preacher who seeks to be disability-sensitive in his or her Bible interpretation and preaching.

#### 5.3.1.2 Commitment to confronting ableist attitudes to PWDs

The primary aim of the Pentecostal preacher should always be to please God, not human beings (Eutsler, 2013). In practical terms, such an emphasis means having the courage to speak openly and candidly about difficult issues confronting the church (Eutsler, 2013). Given the importance of such willingness to confront difficult issues, I am fundamentally persuaded that the following remarks by Smith (1992:16-17) about ableism – or, as she puts it, ‘handicappism’ (cf. Chapter 1) – should be taken to heart by every Pentecostal preacher:



Preachers must not speak in response solely to the needs and concerns of their own congregations, but must also address the needs and concerns of all God's people. How shall we preach when so many strands of the human community are not represented or present in our collective life? How can we work for change as preachers and congregations, so that persons with disabilities are empowered to speak out, feel that our churches are responsive enough to make their distinctive needs and desires known, and feel invited to add their wisdom to the transformation of our churches . . . into more inclusive communities?

Preaching about the need for transformation in our attitudes toward PWDs is essential to the goal of shaping disability-friendly congregations, since "changing attitudes and going beyond accessibility to reach full and equal participation of *all* members, in all areas of communal life, is the last barrier to be crossed before achieving full inclusion" (Webb-Mitchell, 2010:116).

An important, yet, in my opinion, often ignored aspect regarding attitudes toward disability is the fact that some people do not regard their particular medical conditions as disabilities. Preachers could unwittingly construct "stumbling blocks" by seeking to be disability-friendly when, in fact, some people do not regard themselves as someone living with a disability. For example, as discussed in Chapter 4, many deaf people do not regard deafness as a disability (Hull, 2013:125-126), but consider themselves part of a certain type of sub-culture, namely, "Deaf Culture" (Spencer, 2015:437-438). In the same way, some people living with Asperger Syndrome do not regard Asperger Syndrome as a disability, but rather as a certain personality type (Lyons & Fitzgerald, 2005:310). Accordingly, preachers should engage in attentive and constructive dialogue with people living with such medical conditions, in order to avoid harbouring a potentially alienating perspective that stands in conflict with the individual's self-understanding of their medical condition.

In light of the research findings presented in Chapter 3, preachers should also be attentive regarding whether or not one or more of the following three ableist perspectives on PWDs is present in their congregation, namely, 'PWDs are a challenge', 'PWDs are like able-bodied people', and 'PWDs need physical healing'. As a way of determining the extent to which such ableist attitudes are present in the congregation, the preacher may refer to the "barriers of attitude" identified by DeYoung and Stephenson (2011:30):

- Have PWDs (and, where applicable, their caregivers) been asked if they feel welcome in worship, leadership, and church programs?
- Is the church intentional about engaging PWDs in all aspects of church life?
- Does the church have a disability committee and/or church disability advocate?

- Have ushers, teachers, and youth leaders/mentors been instructed regarding appropriate ways to greet and respond to the needs of PWDs?
- Does the church offer transport for PWDs who cannot drive?
- Has the church adopted a church policy on disabilities?
- Are church leaders working with PWDs and caregivers so that needs – including pastoral care – are addressed?

### 5.3.1.3 Commitment to communication that allows PWDs full access to sermons

Since one of the characteristics of Pentecostal preaching is that it seeks to communicate in an understandable and clear way (Eutsler, 2013), Pentecostal preachers should endeavour to make their sermons as accessible as possible to people with various levels of physical, emotional, and cognitive ability (cf. Duck, 2013:32; McClure, 2007:22). Accordingly, as suggested by DeYoung and Stephenson (2011:30), preachers and congregations should keep in mind the following “barriers of communication” that may influence the quality of PWDs’s worship experience (including their experience of the sermon):

- Does the church have assistive listening devices (infrared, loop, FM) available for people with hearing impairments?
- Is sign language interpretation available by prior arrangement with the church?
- Is the overall lighting in the church adequate for signing and speech reading, or for individuals with low vision?
- Are songbooks, Bibles, bulletins, and handouts available in an alternative format (large print and Braille, when requested in advance) and displayed in a place where they are easily accessible?
- Are copies of the day’s sermon and spoken elements of worship available for people with impaired hearing, and is captioning used in visual projection?

The fundamental principle the preacher needs to remember is that different forms of disability require different forms of homiletical communication. Although no preacher can be expected to develop homiletical communication skills required for all the different forms of disability, it is my opinion that preachers should aim to develop such skills for at least some of the forms of disability (cf. Appendix G: Advice for communicating with people with various forms of disability). For example, there are specific issues the preacher should consider when preaching to an audience where people with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are present. Mayo Clinic (2015) defines ASD in the following way: “[A] serious neurodevelopmental disorder that impairs a child’s ability to communicate and interact with others. It also includes restricted repetitive behaviors, interests and activities. These issues cause significant impairment in social, occupational and other areas of functioning”. Accordingly, when preaching to people with ASD, there are two crucial issues to bear in mind. Firstly, since people with ASD are easily distracted

by both external and internal stimuli (Yapko, 2003:44), the preacher should “think about how to minimise distractions so that those on the autism spectrum can concentrate on what is being said, e.g. noise from adjacent rooms” (Churches for all, 2015). Secondly, since people with ASD find it difficult to understand metaphorical language (Barton, 2012), the preacher should strive to employ plain language, “[explaining] metaphors either from the front, or via someone who can explain quietly to the person at the time if needed, or afterwards if asked”, as well as making use of visual aids (Churches for all, 2015).

#### 5.3.1.4 Commitment to evangelising PWDs

Pentecostal preachers should be passionate about evangelism, especially since the eternal destiny of people’s souls is at stake (Eutsler, 2013). The urgency of such evangelism vis-à-vis PWDs should be no more or less than for anyone else. As Anderson (2013:76) points out, “The necessity of doing evangelism with persons who have disabilities is the same as for everyone else: all have sinned and are under the sentence of death (Romans 3:23, 6:23), and Jesus is the only way of salvation (John 14:6; Acts 4:12)”. Preachers will do well to remember Beates’ (2012:54) words of admonition:

Do [people with disabilities] today feel welcome at God’s banquet in the church? Too often, sadly they do not. Too often, merely coming to church is too much of a burden. People encounter both physical and social obstacles. And how many churches intentionally go about the business of seeking such people and using the church’s manpower to go and bring them in? Again, too often, the church does not.

In the process of undertaking such evangelism, evangelistic preaching is important in reaching PWDs with the gospel. However, as Anderson (2013:76) argues, practising and embodying an “incarnational ministry” has even great potential for impacting the lives of PWDs:

We are to follow Jesus’s example of incarnational ministry (John 1:14), freely and openly relating to persons with disabilities in love and humble service (John 13:5-14) and with the same attitude as Christ displayed (Philippians 2:5-11). Our presence and willingness to become involved with people who have disabilities is a witness to the change that Jesus has wrought in our own lives. But more than that, building a relationship with persons who are disabled opens the way for us to give verbal testimony to who Jesus is, and what reconciliation with God through Jesus’s sacrifice on the cross and subsequent resurrection can mean for them.

Such “incarnational ministry” can and should also be applied to the ministry of preaching through “incarnational preaching”:

As Christ the Word became incarnate flesh, the preacher also should incarnate God's revealed Word by the Spirit's power. The result is a preacher who visibly manifests "grace and truth" in the pulpit. In Spirit-led preaching, incarnating the message we preach is critical to the Spirit's purpose of transformation. What people need to see in the pulpit is someone who has been changed and transformed by the truth he is proclaiming, not an imposter under the pretense of false spirituality. (Heisler, 2007:98)

Practically speaking, an incarnational approach to preaching about disability entails that the preacher who preaches about the necessity of the church being a disability-inclusive community should live a life marked by sensitivity and understanding for the experiences of PWDs (Black, 1991).

Joni and Friends (2009:286), a Christian organisation committed to ministering to PWDs, notes several salient factors that preachers should take into consideration if they desire to make progress in their evangelism efforts with PWDs:

- [Engage] in the biblical truths of disability ministry;
- [Explain] the applications of doctrine and theology;
- [Educate] your congregation on real-life issues;
- [Equip] people with ideas and support;
- [Encourage] loving action;
- [Exhort] a higher level of commitment; and
- [Expect] results from one another in your faith community

#### 5.3.1.5 Commitment to spiritual reflection on the situation of PWDs

Given the spiritual foundation of Pentecostal preaching, Pentecostal preachers should: 1) be serious about the role of prayer in preaching; 2) seek the anointing of the Holy Spirit in their preaching; 3) work for revival through their preaching; 4) seek to inspire faith through their preaching; and 5) expect opposition to their preaching (Eutsler, 2014). For the Pentecostal preacher who seeks to encourage the formation of a disability-friendly congregation, each of the aforementioned spiritual aspects of Pentecostal preaching has specific implications for preaching to PWDs.

Firstly, with regard to the importance of prayer, the Pentecostal preacher should seek to prayerfully listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit in order to discern what the Holy Spirit might be trying to relate to the preacher and the congregation regarding disability (cf. Haslam, 2012; Hryniuk, 2010; Reynolds, 2015).

Secondly, pertaining to the anointing of the Holy Spirit, the Pentecostal preacher should earnestly pray that everyone in the congregational audience, both those with disabilities and those without, will experience the presence of God during the sermon (cf. Kim, 1999; Kuruvilla, 2015; Saunders, 2010; Williams & Martin, 2013).

Thirdly, with regard to having an emphasis on revival in his or her ministry, the Pentecostal preacher should pray and work for a revival of faith among PWDs, especially given the fact that recent research suggests that a large percentage of PWDs feel alienated from the church (cf. Hendershot, 2006; Woolverton, 2011). Consequently, the preacher, as visionary leader of the congregation, “needs to commit to exhorting, educating, equipping, and encouraging [the church’s] members to minister to other members and regular attenders with disabilities of all kinds” (Woolverton, 2011:386).

Fourthly, with regard to the importance of inspiring faith, Pentecostal preachers should remember that ableist attitudes among members of their congregation will most certainly serve to frustrate the spiritual growth of PWDs. Pentecostal preachers should thus regard their preaching as one of the primary means to root out any form of ableism among congregation members (cf. Smith, 1992; Park & Nelson, 2001; Webb-Mitchell, 1996).

Lastly, with regard to the possibility of opposition to their preaching, Pentecostal preachers should be aware of the fact that some congregation members who harbour ableist attitudes will oppose the idea of full inclusion for PWDs. Such opposition is to be expected and should be resisted with all the strength and courage the preacher can muster (cf. Gayes, 2012; Harshaw, 2010; Smith, 1992).

#### 5.3.1.6 Commitment to practical preaching that may assist PWDs

Pentecostal preachers are fundamentally committed to ministering in a way that is practical and relevant to people’s lives (Eutsler, 2014). Such a practical emphasis is apparent in the fact that Pentecostal preachers: 1) seek to emphasise the ways in which God can solve people’s problems; 2) have a genuine concern and love for people; 3) emphasise the importance of holiness in the Christian life; and 4) live a life marked by deep and enduring relationships with their family, congregation, and other Christians (Eutsler, 2014). Commitment to these four practical dimensions of Pentecostal preaching has important consequences for how preachers approach disability.

Firstly, as discussed in Chapter 3, PWDs are confronted with various “barriers to participation” in the church and society at large, most notably, architectural and communication barriers, attitudinal barriers, theological barriers, and aspirational barriers (Anderson, 2013:15). Since Pentecostal preachers are called to give witness to the power of God in solving people’s problems (Eutsler, 2014), they should seek to address the underlying problems that contribute

to the continued existence of these ableist barriers in the church and society, emphasising the fact that such barriers must be removed. As Block (2002:132) insists, “When we live for God, in Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, we cannot help but give hope to others, and we cannot help but be inclusive”.

Duck (2013:32) offers a helpful chart (Table 5.1) that preachers and congregations may utilise to ensure that their worship services are accessible to PWDs.

Table 5.1 Hospitality in worship for persons with disabilities

|                        | <b>Access to See, Hear and Participate</b>   | <b>Worship Practices and Materials</b>  |
|------------------------|--|---|
| <b>In General</b>      | Train ushers and others to greet, welcome, and assist people with varied abilities and disabilities.   | Seek unified themes for worship, drawing on all the senses.<br>Avoid negative images of disability.<br>Invite persons with disabilities to share their gifts in worship.<br>Make space to express lament and anger and to advocate for justice.   |
| <b>Mobility Issues</b> | Remove snow from sidewalks; provide accessible parking, as well as elevators, ramps, and chairlifts so that all can enter the building.<br>Make room for people to sit in wheelchairs among the congregation, through flexible seating or openings scattered among pews (not only in the front or back). | Provide access for all to liturgical actions, movements, and spaces, including pulpits, lecterns and choir seating.<br>Consider means of distributing communion.  |
| <b>Visual Issues</b>   | Seek good lighting and sight lines.<br>Welcome guide dogs.   | Leaders say their names.<br>Some prayers and songs don't require print.<br>Give verbal cues for participation (e.g., don't depend only on the bulletin or visual cues to invite people to stand).<br>Provide braille and large print materials (e.g. Bible, hymnals, books of worship). |

|                       | <b>Access to See, Hear and Participate</b>  | <b>Worship Practices and Materials</b>  |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| <b>Hearing Issues</b> | Assisted listening devices are provided, and kept in good repair. Good sound systems allow more people to hear. | Sign interpreters are provided. Leaders speak with good diction. Printed copies of sermons may be provided. |
| <b>Other Concerns</b> |   | Provide gluten-free wafers or bread and options other than wine for Communion.                              |

Source: Duck (2013:32)

Secondly, research shows that PWDs experience loneliness and social isolation (cf. Giddings & Roy, 2014; Lubkin & Larsen, 2013; Reiter, 2008), as well as being at greater risk of developing depression (Giddings & Roy, 2014:111). Although it would seem that PWDs should not experience such isolation in their local congregation, the reality is, as pointed out in Chapter 4, there are certain factors that can make PWDs's experience of the church a markedly isolating experience: a sense of betrayal by and isolation from God, isolation from people and discomfort in the presence of others.

Given the above factors, I think Leach (2010:9) is right in frankly asking, "Why should a person with a disability confront the logistical hassles of going to church and being lonely when they can be lonely at home?" Accordingly, since Pentecostal preachers are called to express genuine concern and love for people (Eutsler, 2014), their preaching should specifically address the factors that may contribute to PWDs's sense of isolation. Preachers must seek to shape congregations that "welcome all persons regardless of their behaviors or disabilities" (Hogan, 2012:56).

Thirdly, all Christians are called to holiness (cf. 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Thess. 4:7; Heb. 12:14; 1 Pet. 1:13-16; 1 John 3:3), but the concept of holiness has often been construed in ways that manifest a definite ableist bias (cf. Abrams, 1998; Eiesland, 1994; Cochran, 2011; Raphael, 2008; WCC, 2003). For example, based on an ableist reading of Leviticus 21:17-23, the fact that people with certain bodily deformities were excluded from serving in the sanctuary may be interpreted to reinforce the notion that "holiness finds physical expression in wholeness and normality" (Wenham, 1979:290). From this perspective, "[P]hysical disability is a distortion of the divine image and an inherent desecration of all things holy" (Eiesland, 2002:11). Consequently, in preaching about holiness, Pentecostal preachers should seek to dispel any such ableist conceptions of holiness, reminding their congregations that, for some people, disability is one of the constitutive aspects of their self-identity, and thus an integral part of their "holy and acceptable" (Rom. 12:1) offering of themselves to God (WCC, 2003).

Fourthly, and finally, since Pentecostal preachers are expected to cultivate healthy relationships with their family, congregation, and other Christians (Eutsler, 2014), they should also strive to cultivate deep and meaningful relationships with PWDs. Cultivating such relationships will enable the preacher to gain direct insight into the lives of PWDs. Moreover, such relationships are a powerful way of exercising “incarnational preaching” (as discussed earlier), as well as a way of “[earning] the right to be heard”:

Building relationships builds trust. Many people impacted by disability have had their trust abused in the name of religion. . . . [T]hey don’t trust God because they wrestle with the question, “If God is an all-powerful God who loves me and has a good plan for my life, how could He allow this terrible thing to happen?” While there are theological answers to that question, the flesh and blood answer is a face-to-face encounter with absolute, irresistible love that transcends normal human experience. If you know Jesus, then you are His love with skin on (see Rom. 5:5), and encounter with you can become an encounter with Him – but you have to earn the right to be heard. (Leach, 2010:26)

### 5.3.2 Disability-friendly Pentecostal Homiletical Preparation

#### 5.3.2.1 Commitment to praying about, for and with PWDs

The foundation of Pentecostal preaching is the preacher’s relationship with God. As Blair (2013) emphasises, “Spirit-filled preaching is based on our relationship with God and a quality of character that makes it inviting for Him to exercise His rule in the inner person”. Central to the preacher’s relationship with God is prayer: “In order to bring ourselves to the spiritual place where the Spirit will move when we preach, we must . . . begin with prayer” (Martin, 2013). Moreover, the Holy Spirit actively helps us to pray. As the apostle Paul states, “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words” (Rom. 8:26). Therefore, preachers should seek the Holy Spirit’s guidance regarding the pastoral needs of PWDs, praying for insight that may serve to enhance the quality and efficiency of their preaching about disability. Anderson (2013:75) summarises the importance of such prayer cogently:

Once the pastor has a clear understanding of the need for outreach and ministry to individuals and families affected by disability, his or her role as an equipper of the congregation will involve communicating the vision for disability ministry, committing the need to the Lord in persistent prayer, and waiting expectantly for God to raise up others to come alongside or to take the lead in such ministry.

Furthermore, remembering the apostle Paul’s instruction that “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people” (1 Tim. 2:1), preachers should not only



pray *about* but also *for* PWDs. Markham (2012) underlines this responsibility: “We are obligated to pray for and are commissioned by Christ to minister to those affected by disabilities”. However, as noted in Chapter 4, when praying for PWDs, whether in public or private, there are some common, yet avoidable, errors that preachers should be aware of. Firstly, preachers should not assume that PWDs’s prayer requests will necessarily relate to their disability and/or a need for physical healing. Preachers, especially able-bodied preachers, might be inclined to think that PWDs experience their disability as a form of suffering, whereas many PWDs in fact do not experience their disability in such negative terms (Temple & Ball, 2012). Rather, as Temple and Ball (2012:48) point out, “People who have a long-term experience of disability generally become pretty comfortable in their own skins. The challenges that lead them to seek prayer ministry are like to be the same as those anyone faces: loss of job, money worries, relationship breakdown, whatever”. Secondly, while preachers should not assume PWDs are seeking physical cure, they may and should pray for spiritual healing for PWDs. Such an emphasis may be traced to the ministry of Jesus himself: “The true focus of Jesus’s activity was on healing more than curing – his atoning sacrifice did not bring freedom from illness, accidents, or disability; it brought us from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light” (Anderson, 2013:97).

Lastly, besides praying *about* and *for* PWDs, preachers should also pray *with* PWDs, in the sense of inviting PWDs to fully participate in congregational worship and ministry. In the context of worship, such an emphasis may be termed ‘inclusive worship’ (Browne, 2004; Healy, 2009; Kilbourn, 2013; Webb-Mitchell, 2009, 2010), while in the context of ministry in general, such an emphasis may be termed ‘inclusive ministry’ (Conner, 2012; Schurter, 1994; Swinton & Powrie, 2004; Temple & Ball, 2012; Phelps-Jones *et al.*, 2013; Wetherbee & Philo, 2015). Ultimately, the following three interrelated questions, posed by Temple and Ball (2012:59), are questions every preacher should pose to their congregation sooner or later:

- Beyond the physical provision of the environment and the openness of its activities, does the church allow for the expression of talents and gifts which disabled people can offer to church life?
- Are disabled people able to take part and express their God-given gifting in all areas of ministry from welcoming at the door to providing refreshments, leading worship or prayers, church leadership, preaching and teaching, being active in the children’s and youth ministry, taking part in outreach and so on?
- Does the church foster relationships of interdependency that include disabled people in a mutuality of giving and receiving?

I want to highlight a part of Temple and Ball's (2012:59) second question, namely, their question regarding the extent to which PWDs are "preaching and teaching" in the church.

While there are a number of preachers who are living with some form of disability, many church buildings and pulpits are entirely inaccessible to people who are mobility impaired or visually impaired (McClure, 2007:23). Nevertheless, with the necessary resolve and dedication from congregations, such obstacles can be overcome (McClure, 2007:23). Therefore, I am convinced that churches can and must do more to fully incorporate the preaching ministries of PWDs. Along with Burns (2012:47), I invite churches to seriously reflect on the following two questions: "How much would we benefit from hearing preachers with disabilities? What insights on the Bible's healing stories might they offer?"

#### 5.3.2.2 Commitment to discerning a disability-related "burden from the Lord"

During the process of sermon preparation, Pentecostal preachers pray for a particular "burden from the Lord" (Martin, 2013). As Martin (2013) insists, "We must seek God for a Spirit-filled burden from the Lord". Thus, from a disability perspective, the preacher should ask him- or herself questions such as the following:

- Have I recently experienced any pastoral situation pertaining to PWDs that warrants being addressed through a sermon or sermon series?
- Do I sense the Spirit of God is prompting me to address a particular disability-related issue and/or biblical passage?
- Do any of my upcoming sermon topics directly or indirectly touch upon issues related to the experiences of PWDs? If so, might the Lord be guiding me to discuss one or more of those issues during my sermon?

Openness to such a disability-related "burden from the Lord" allows the preacher to engage in a form of prophetic witness. Hull and Calaghan (2014:97) poignantly summarise the importance and potential of such disability awareness in calling preachers to a prophetic dimension in their preaching, including actively encouraging the emergence and development of church leaders with disabilities:

Disabled people are not so much a pastoral problem as a prophetic potential. We need to ask not how the church can care for disabled people but to ask what is the prophetic message of the church in our culture and how disabled people can make a unique contribution to that renewal. This is not to value disabled people because of what we are supposed to be able to learn from them, such as their alleged courage, patience and cheerfulness. That would be to make instrumental use of disabled people. My question is not what we have to learn from disabled people but how the whole church can

respond to its evangelical calling and how disabled people can not only participate in this but can become witnesses to and leaders of it.

### 5.3.2.3 Commitment to awareness of PWDs as part of the congregational audience

When preparing a sermon, Pentecostal preachers should take the needs and interests of their congregational audiences into account (Wood, 1998), including the needs and interests of PWDs (cf. Anderson, 2013; Beates, 2012). As already discussed earlier, any ableist hermeneutical and/or theological barriers, as well as any practical communication barriers, should be kept in mind during sermon preparation. Such a disability-inclusive approach is rooted in a contextual model of preaching (cf. Brown, 2003; Cilliers, 2004; Farris, 1998; Ihewulezi, 2010; Nieman, 2008; Pieterse, 2001; Tisdale, 1997) and reminds preachers of the importance of engaging in ‘congregational exegesis’ (Tisdale, 1997:56). Drawing on Tisdale’s (1997:56-90) methodology for conducting congregational exegesis and adapting her methodology to focus on PWDs, I am convinced that the disability-inclusive preacher needs to pay attention to several congregational “culture texts” that may inform their understanding of PWDs in their local congregation:

- stories about and/or interviews with PWDs (and/or their families);
- archival materials (e.g., newsletters and bulletins) relating to PWDs;
- demographics pertaining to PWDs;
- architecture and visual arts (what it conveys about PWDs);
- the inclusion or exclusion of PWDs in leading congregational rituals (such as Holy Communion, baptism, and preaching);
- events and activities involving PWDs; and
- in-depth studies of both notable and marginalised PWDs in the congregation.

Drawing on my earlier discussion of collaborative preaching, it is my view that preachers who seek to be disability-sensitive, should seriously consider forming small groups of PWDs, both inside and outside the congregation, who may meet with the preacher to discuss their biblical, theological and personal perspectives on disability (McClure, 2007:13). The preacher may then incorporate such disability insights during the process of sermon preparation.

With regard to specific initiatives that may serve to foster awareness about PWDs in the congregation and wider community, there are a number of options the preacher could consider. Firstly, preachers and their congregational leadership may decide to celebrate Disability Awareness Sunday every year. The purpose of Disability Awareness Sunday is to “raise awareness concerning people with disabilities and to explore their full engagement in the church’s life” (DeYoung & Stephenson, 2011:29). In South Africa, Disability Awareness Sunday takes place every year on the last Sunday of August (Ramp Up, 2011a). There are a number of

ways Disability Awareness Sunday may be celebrated (cf. Kilbourn, 2013; Leach, 2010; Ramp Up, 2011a; Tada & Jensen, 1997), but DeYoung and Stephenson (2011:29) offer seven particularly helpful suggestions:

- Start with a planning committee and target the needs of your local community. Reach out to the community by inviting persons with disabilities and their families to participate in worship and educational offerings.
- Complete a church accessibility audit that involves church leaders and people with disabilities. Find ways to make your church as accessible as possible.
- Schedule an adult forum on living with a disability (or a similar topic). Offer children a chance to meet people with disabilities, use a wheelchair and crutches, and learn sign language.
- Plan a worship service themed around God's love and acceptance of all people. Encourage the worship leader to consider gathering a few persons from your church community who have a disability or parent a child with a disability to talk about what they experience, what scriptures are particularly helpful or hurtful, what life experiences might be helpful as sermon illustrations, etc.
- In worship planning, invite persons with disabilities to share their gifts in appropriate ways (as liturgists, ushers, communion servers, musicians, preachers, etc.), but do so in a way that avoids putting people with disabilities "on display".
- Use "people-first language", not language that emphasizes the disabling condition (the child who is blind vs. the blind child, the man who is paralyzed vs. the paralytic).
- Emphasize that persons with disabilities are made in the image of God and that all are part of the body of Christ, meaning all have value, dignity, and spiritual gifts.

Along with Disability Awareness Sunday, the preacher and his or her congregation may consider hosting disability awareness events throughout the year. For example, the congregation could host disability awareness training workshops (cf. Anderson, 2003; Byzek, 2001), a disability training program for Sunday school teachers (cf. Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 2005), a "Luke 14 Banquet" (cf. Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 2005) and/or inclusive sports festivals (cf. Houlihan & Green, 2011; Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 2005; Thomas & Smith, 2009).

Another way for the preacher to create congregational awareness about PWDs is to ensure that his or her congregation develops and adopts an official church policy on PWDs (cf. Appendix I: Template for church policy on disabilities). Based on my interviews with the participating AFM preachers, it seems that some preachers are concerned that becoming a disability-friendly congregation requires considerable financial resources. However, while it is true that finances might become a factor with regard to addressing certain accessibility concerns, a congregational commitment to being as accessible as possible is ultimately not so much a matter of money as a matter of the heart. As Leach (2010:13) remarks, “An accommodation policy is simply a commitment to do whatever it takes to include PWDs in the full life of the church. All that is required is a compassionate heart, some ingenuity, and a few strong backs”. Nevertheless, the preacher should be particularly sensitive to the fact that architectural barriers are only one aspect of addressing accessibility, the more fundamental issue is attitudinal barriers. Therefore, a congregational policy on PWDs needs to focus attention on the need to systematically remove both architectural and attitudinal barriers. As a way of determining the exact nature of the architectural and attitudinal barriers that may be present in the congregation, conducting a church accessibility audit can be a very helpful exercise (cf. Appendix H: Example of church accessibility audit).

If the preacher is part of a denomination where such a policy on PWDs is not yet in place at denominational level, they may also consider urging their denomination’s leadership to officially adopt such a policy. Almost all the AFM preachers who were interviewed for the present study were of the opinion that a denominational policy document on PWDs is seriously needed. Looking at the South African context, my research found that none of the Pentecostal denominations in South Africa have as yet adopted a denominational policy document on PWDs. Therefore, I urge Pentecostal preachers to approach their denominational leadership structures about the possibility of adopting an official policy document on PWDs. In the Pentecostal context, the Assemblies of God USA’s (2000) statement, “Ministry to people with disabilities: A biblical perspective”, may serve as a point of reference for Pentecostal denominations that seek to formulate a denominational policy document on PWDs.

Finally, the preacher may inspire greater awareness of PWDs by urging congregation members to become involved in some form of disability ministry. In congregations with no disability ministry, the preacher’s focus on the experiences of PWDs might inspire someone to become a church disability advocate and/or initiate the formation of a church disability committee (DeYoung & Stephenson, 2011:30).

### 5.3.3 Disability-friendly Pentecostal Homiletical Delivery

#### 5.3.3.1 Commitment to the passionate preaching of disability-friendly sermons

Pentecostal preaching is marked by passion, in the sense that the Pentecostal preacher should aim to “appeal to the whole person” (Martin, 2013). Taking the emphasis on passion in preaching seriously, and Drawing on Foley’s (1998:1) understanding of the threefold nature of passion in preaching, I suggest that passionate, disability-friendly preaching will have one or more of the following qualities:

- The preacher will have a passion for sharing the biblical, normative perspectives on PWDs, calling on all congregation members to examine their beliefs and attitudes about disability in light of the Word of God.
- The preacher will have a passion for an approach to public worship that is radically inclusive of PWDs, sensitive to the full participation of PWDs in every aspect of the congregation’s worship (including worship planning and opportunities to lead worship).
- The preacher will have a passion for the experiences of PWDs, drawing on personal experiences to inform his or her preaching.

#### 5.3.3.2 Commitment to recognising the power of the anointing

Pentecostal preaching should be characterised by “divine unction” (Martin, 2013). At a fundamental level, the notion of divine unction or anointing refers to “the highly dynamic and experiential presence of God” (Eaton, 2012:155). From a disability perspective, I regard Hughes’ (1981:23) argument that the anointing allows preachers to exceed their natural abilities as especially illuminating for the ministry of preachers with disabilities. Hughes (1981:23) states, “In the pulpit, under the anointing of God’s Spirit, men often speak and act beyond themselves. There are times when a word of knowledge, a word of wisdom, or a revelation comes to the preacher right out of heaven”. Furthermore, Martin (2013) insists that God is ultimately not concerned about the preacher’s natural level of ability: “God does not ask for our ability, neither does He ask for our skillfulness. He wants to divinely enable us. He doesn’t want our best; He wants *more* than our best. He wants us to believe for the impossible”. Accordingly, able-bodied preachers should never underestimate the influence and power of the ministries of preachers with disabilities, since both preachers with disabilities and able-bodied preachers equally rely on the power of God to make their preaching fruitful and effective. As the apostle Paul declares in 2 Corinthians 3:5, “Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God”.

### 5.3.3.3 Commitment to avoiding ableist ideas about the gifts of the Holy Spirit

Pentecostal preaching should include the manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, since “signs, wonders and spiritual gifts” were apparent in the life of the New Testament church (Martin, 2013). However, from a disability perspective, I believe it is important to stress that such an emphasis on the gifts of the Holy Spirit – especially as it relates to the gift of healing – should be approached with great caution. As noted in Chapter 1, Yong (2007:242) strikingly summarises the faith experience of many PWDs in relation to Pentecostal congregations as often resulting in disappointment, negative experiences and disillusionment.

Moreover, as noted in Chapter 2, three of the participating preachers’ interviews displayed characteristics of the ‘PWDs need physical healing’ model, which conceives of divine healing almost exclusively in terms of physical healing.

Should a preacher wish to conduct a healing service and/or make prayers for healing a part of the worship service, then the following advice from Black (1996:182) on how to conceptualise healing is of cardinal importance:

Although healing services are very important for a wide variety of people, they can be oppressive for those who have permanent, incurable disabilities when the emphasis is on cure rather than healing. . . . [H]ealing services that focus on the *healing* of broken relationships and the isolation some experience from the community and important people in their lives can be very important. Services that build people’s self-esteem and inner strength to handle the problems they face can be truly *healing*.

The preacher’s emphasis should thus be on care as opposed to cure (Anderson, 2013:99), communicating the fundamental truth that “each person deserves love and inclusion because of who they are, and not in spite of it” (Edmonds, 2011:129).

### 5.3.3.4 Commitment to preaching that inspires worship in PWDs

Pentecostal preaching may be regarded as a form of worship: “Both the preacher and the congregation worship God during the act of preaching” (Martin, 2013). There is a dynamic interplay in the “worship experience” of the preacher, the people, as well as God who receives their worship. In this regard, it is my view that the Pentecostal preacher should seek to communicate a message about PWDs that inspires worship at three levels. Firstly, the preacher should worship God by celebrating his faithfulness in the lives of both PWDs and able-bodied people. The following remarks by Webb-Mitchell (2009:107) underline the latter the latter truth and are worthy of frequent reference:

Christian communities can no longer afford to live life without people with disabilities, for they are the invited guests to God’s Banquet Feast. The Church’s goal involves being

and becoming a place for all who wish to worship rather than just for those with or without certain abilities and limitations.

The hope of this vision of God's Banquet Table is that two groups are necessary in order to finally be one in God. If a congregation is composed of just people who are seemingly able bodied, things are incomplete. If a congregation is comprised of those who have one kind of disabling condition, the gathering is still incomplete. For the Banquet Table to be complete, there needs to be the Host and the guests.

Secondly, the preacher should inspire both able-bodied and differently-abled congregation members to worship God for his work of salvation in their lives, recognising that "we do not all need to be the same in order to 'be saved'" (Morris, 2011:140). As the apostle Paul declares in 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit".

Thirdly, as the preacher and the congregation worship God through proclamation of and response to the Word of God, they actively invite God's presence and participation in the worship service (Martin, 2013). Whether or not a person is differently-abled or able-bodied is not important when compared to the vital importance of worshipping God: "God simply wants our love, our fellowship, our worship – things which all can give him, regardless of able-bodiedness or disability" (Anderson, 2013:18). While the present study has repeatedly insisted on the importance of accommodating and including PWDs in every dimension of congregational life and worship, especially by means of disability-friendly preaching, I want to emphasise that the ultimate goal of my homiletical strategy is to inspire *all* people to worship the Triune God in a way that brings him joy. Along with Kidder (2009:11), I declare: "What is most important is that God enjoys the worship experience. We are here to worship and bless *Him*".

#### **5.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

The primary focus of this fifth chapter of the study was to perform Osmer's (2008:4) last task of practical theological reflection, namely, the pragmatic task. In light of the findings of the first three phases of practical theological investigation (i.e., the descriptive-empirical, interpretive, and normative phases), the central question that the pragmatic phase sought to answer was, "How might we respond?" (Osmer, 2008). As Osmer (2008:4) explains, the purpose of the pragmatic task is to "[determine] strategies of action that will influence situations in ways that are desirable and entering into a reflective conversation with the 'talk back' emerging when they are enacted". In the context of the present study, the purpose of the pragmatic task is thus to



determine Pentecostal homiletical strategies of action that may influence congregations in such a way that they become places of radical welcome for PWDs.

As noted earlier, for Osmer (2008:176), such strategies of action may be divided into models of practice and rules of art. Models of practice provide a general overview of the particular field of study, highlighting the ways in which leaders might fashion the field towards certain longed for objectives. Rules of art offer more precise strategies regarding how to perform specific actions or practices. Since my aim is to provide practical guidelines on how Pentecostal (and other) preachers should preach about disability, I opted to focus on developing homiletical rules of art.

The present chapter proposed a Pentecostal homiletical strategy for shaping disability-friendly congregations, utilising a threefold homiletical framework:

- Disability-friendly Pentecostal homiletical hermeneutics;
- Disability-friendly Pentecostal homiletical preparation; and
- Disability-friendly Pentecostal homiletical delivery.

With regard to the first dimension of the proposed homiletical strategy – i.e., disability-friendly Pentecostal homiletical hermeneutics – six homiletical rules of art were developed:

- Commitment to interpreting the Bible with PWDs in mind;
- Commitment to confronting ableist attitudes to PWDs;
- Commitment to communication that allows PWDs full access to sermons;
- Commitment to evangelising PWDs;
- Commitment to spiritual reflection on the situation of PWDs; and
- Commitment to practical preaching that may assist PWDs.

With regard to the second dimension of the proposed homiletical strategy – i.e., disability-friendly Pentecostal homiletical preparation – three homiletical rules of art were developed:

- Commitment to praying about, for and with PWDs;
- Commitment to discerning a disability-related “burden from the Lord”; and
- Commitment to awareness of PWDs as part of the congregational audience.

With regard to the third dimension of the proposed homiletical strategy – i.e. *disability-friendly Pentecostal homiletical delivery* – four homiletical rules of art were developed:

- Commitment to the passionate preaching of disability-friendly sermons
- Commitment to recognising the power of the anointing
- Commitment to avoiding ableist ideas about the gifts of the Holy Spirit
- Commitment to preaching that inspires worship in PWDs

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter concludes the study by providing a summary of the findings to determine whether the objectives of the study have been met, as well as offering recommendations for preachers, congregations, denominations and seminaries, and recommendations for future research.

In Chapter 1, four primary objectives for the present study were outlined, each of the objectives being associated with a particular chapter (and phase) of the practical theological investigation:

- To identify AFM preachers' perspectives on disability in order to determine the extent to which ableist perspectives about disability are found among the participating preachers. (Chapter 2 – the descriptive-empirical phase).
- To determine what insights the field of disability studies and the theological teachings of selected AFM leaders may offer in relation to interpreting AFM preachers' perspectives on physical disability. (Chapter 3 – the interpretive phase).
- To determine what ethical and theological perspectives Scripture offers that may contribute to the development of a disability-friendly Pentecostal homiletical strategy. (Chapter 4 – the normative phase).
- To develop a Pentecostal homiletical strategy that may contribute to the formation of disability-friendly congregations by cultivating disability-friendly ethical and theological perspectives among preachers and their congregations. (Chapter 5 – the pragmatic phase).

The discussion that follows demonstrates to what extent these objectives have been achieved.

#### 6.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

##### 6.2.1 Summary of the Findings and Conclusions from Chapter 2

Chapter 2 constituted the descriptive-empirical phase of the study and sought to identify AFM preachers' perspectives on disability in order to determine the extent to which ableist perspectives about disability were present among the participating preachers. An empirical study was undertaken among a limited number of AFM preachers in the Western Cape area. The empirical study was conducted from a qualitative perspective, utilising semi-structured interviews conducted with the aid of set questionnaires (Heitink, 1999:224-226). Furthermore,

grounded theory analysis was utilised in order to identify the participating AFM preachers' primary perspectives on physical disability (David & Sutton, 2011:110).

The grounded theory analysis of the interview data generated six core categories, reflecting particular conceptual models regarding PWPDs. The six models of PWPDs that emerged from the data are:

- Everyone has a disability;
- PWPDs are a challenge;
- PWPDs are like able-bodied people;
- PWPDs are not disabled;
- PWPDs are gifted; and
- PWPDs need physical healing.

Bearing in mind Campbell's (2001:44) definition of ableism as "a network of beliefs, processes and practices that produce a particular kind of self and body (the corporeal standard) that is projected as the perfect, species-typical and therefore essential and fully human", I was able to identify three of the six models as ableist in orientation.

The three models that display definite characteristics of ableist thinking are: 'PWPDs are a challenge', 'PWPDs are like able-bodied people', and 'PWPDs need physical healing'. With regard to the 'PWPDs are a challenge' model, the ableism of the preachers who adhered to this model is rooted in the fact that they regard the experiences and needs of the able-bodied majority in their congregation as being of greater importance than the experiences and needs of PWPDs (Albrecht, 2005; Marshak, *et al.*, 2009; Thompson, 2014). As for the 'PWPDs are like able-bodied people' model, the ableism of the preachers is found in the fact that they define "normal" as being able-bodied (cf. Mallett & Runswick-Cole, 2014; Rocco, 2011; Steinberg, 2009). Finally, with regard to the 'PWPDs need physical healing' model, the ableism of the preachers who held to this model is inherent in their implicit assumption that PWPDs would prefer to be physically healed of their impairment (cf. Bacon, 2014; Dorn, 2005; Jakubowicz & Ho, 2014).

### 6.2.2 Summary of the Findings and Conclusions from Chapter 3

Chapter 3 formed the interpretive phase of the study and sought to determine what insights the field of disability studies and the theological teachings of selected AFM leaders may offer in relation to interpreting AFM preachers' perspectives on physical disability. Drawing on the fields of disability studies and disability theology, as well as an analysis of the theological teachings of selected AFM leaders, I identified eight models of disability as particularly useful for the purposes of the present study. The eight models are:

- The moral/religious model: disability as an act of God;
- The medical model: disability as a disease;
- The social model: disability as a socially constructed phenomenon;
- The identity model: disability as an identity;
- The cultural model: disability as culture;
- The charity model: disability as victimhood;
- The economic model: disability as a challenge to productivity; and
- The limits model: disability as embodied experience.

I pointed out that five of the models are especially useful for explaining the ableism that was identified in some of the perspectives held by the participating AFM preachers, namely: the moral/religious model of disability, the medical model of disability, the social model of disability, the charity model of disability, and the economic model of disability.

The moral/religious model of disability's use of the metaphor of disability as God's will helped to explain the ableism in the perspectives of AFM preachers who hold to the 'PWPDs are a challenge' model and the 'PWPDs need physical healing' model. With regard to the former, ableism is reinforced by the fact that some AFM preachers seemed to regard physical disability as a test of a person's faith and character. From this perspective, physical disability is something to be endured with faith and patience, without being too vocal or demanding about the person with disability's specific congregational needs. With regard to the notion that PWPDs need physical healing, some of the participating preachers regarded physical disability as an opportunity for God's miraculous power to be made manifest – the notion of miracle being understood in physical terms, i.e., as miraculous physical healing. While such an understanding need not be regarded as necessarily ableist in nature, such a narrow conception of what constitutes a miracle tends to ignore the miracle of a person's inner transformation by the power of the Holy Spirit.

As for the medical model of disability, the disease metaphor helped to explain the ableism inherent in the 'PWPDs are a challenge' model and the 'PWPDs need physical healing' model. The AFM preachers who adhered to these two models seemed to regard physical disability as something undesirable and abnormal. Such thinking connects to the medical model's disease metaphor vis-à-vis disability. Moreover, the medical model's emphasis on the 'sick role' that PWPDs should play seems to be at the heart of the ableist orientation inherent to the 'PWPDs are a challenge' model, in the sense that the preachers who subscribed to this view seemed to regard PWPDs as people who are in need of ministry from the trained professionals (the visionary leaders or pastors), and not as people who are willing and able to minister to other people in the congregation.

The social model of disability focuses on the socially constructed nature of disability, whether that be at societal or organisational level. None of the AFM visionary leaders who participated in the study were aware of any denominational resources regarding PWPDs. For example, according to all the participating preachers, there is no AFM policy document on the inclusion of PWPDs in congregations. Consequently, the lack of clear denominational guidance regarding the inclusion of PWPDs in congregations may have inadvertently contributed to the formation of ableist tendencies in the thinking and preaching of some of the preachers.

The charity model of disability’s victim metaphor seems to contribute to the ableist assumptions found in some of the preachers’ perspectives on PWPDs, especially in the sense of portraying PWPDs as helpless victims of circumstance. Moreover, the disciplinary perspective of the charity model is rooted in social work, as well as, to some extent, in practical theology. While not illuminating ableism as such, the social work and practical theological dimensions of the charity model do help to highlight the genuine needs and concerns of PWPDs, albeit in a way that fails to recognise the proactive role PWPDs can and do play in addressing the challenges of their own situation.

The economic model of disability’s root metaphor of productivity is especially prone to ableist interpretation. The economic model helps to explain why some AFM preachers regarded PWPDs as a significant financial challenge to their congregation. These preachers quite possibly, and unknowingly, viewed PWPDs through the lens of economic productivity, regarding PWPDs as unable to contribute “goods and services” in the context of the community of faith. Furthermore, such ableist thinking could influence preaching as well, since a preacher may, deliberately or inadvertently, decide to focus his or her sermons to reach only those congregation members who are regarded as able to contribute “goods and services” to the local church.

### 6.2.3 Summary of the Findings and Conclusions from Chapter 4

Chapter 4 constituted the normative phase of the study and sought to uncover ethical and theological perspectives from Scripture that may contribute to the development of a disability-friendly Pentecostal homiletical strategy. The following pericopes were selected for exegesis, based specifically on their relevance to the realities and experiences of PWDs in the church today:

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Old Testament | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genesis 1:26-28</li> <li>• Genesis 32:22-32</li> <li>• Leviticus 19:13-14</li> <li>• 2 Samuel 9</li> </ul> |
|---------------|---|

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| New Testament | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mark 2:1-12</li> <li>• Luke 14:12-24</li> <li>• John 9:1-7</li> <li>• 1 Corinthians 12:12-27</li> </ul> |
|---------------|--|

Throughout the process of exegesis, I sought to remain sensitive to any possible ableism in my interpretation of the biblical text by employing a ‘disability hermeneutic’. Yong (2011: Chapter 1, Section 4) defines a ‘disability hermeneutic’ as “an approach to the Bible that is informed by the experiences of disability”. I strove to bear in mind the hermeneutical guidelines of the disability hermeneutic proposed by Yong (2011), as well as the hermeneutical guidelines associated with Black’s (1996) ‘healing homiletic’.

My disability-sensitive exegesis of the selected pericopes yielded a number of disability-relevant exegetical insights. With regard to my exegesis of Genesis 1:26-28, I noted that the text’s assertion that God created human beings in his own image or likeness is central to understanding the Old Testament’s general approach to disability. Three common ways of understanding the *imago Dei* are the substantive view, the functional view and the relational view. According to the substantive view, the *imago Dei* should be identified with those characteristics of human beings that pertain to the ability to reason and communicate. However, from a disability perspective, it should be noted that a person with limited or no ability to reason or communicate would thus not qualify as being made in the image of God.

As for the functional view’s interpretation of the *imago Dei* associates the image of God with notions of dominion and stewardship, stressing that Adam (and, by implication, humankind) was appointed to manage everything that God created (Anderson, 2013:30). From a disability perspective, the functional view of the image of God is problematic, since it – by definition – excludes people who do not have the ability to manage or oversee God’s creation (for example, people with certain kinds of intellectual disabilities). Ultimately, I argued that the relational view’s interpretation of the *imago Dei*, which associates the image of God with the importance of enjoying a loving relationship with God and others, is the most disability-inclusive understanding of the *imago Dei*.

With regard to my exegesis of Genesis 32:22-32, I pointed out several disability-relevant dimensions of the text. Firstly, Jacob’s disability (his limp) should be regarded more as a sign of strength than weakness. Jacob displayed tremendous determination, refusing to give up. Secondly, Jacob was able to wrestle a blessing from his adversary, despite his physical injury and subsequent disability. Thirdly, Jacob’s disability may even be regarded as a sign of Israel’s covenant with God. Fourthly, and finally, God’s action in bringing about Jacob’s disability may

be viewed as an act of grace, in the sense that it helped to re-establish and uphold Jacob's relationship with God.

As for my exegesis of Leviticus 19:13-14, I noted that Leviticus 19:14 should be regarded as a basic point of reference for the church vis-à-vis PWDs, since the text may serve to remind the church about the importance of keeping PWDs in mind when constructing church facilities, planning worship, and evaluating the church's general approach to interacting with PWDs. Moreover, Leviticus 19:14 serves as a helpful reminder that some people do not regard certain medical conditions – such as deafness – as disabilities. Such a realisation is important, since it underscores the necessity of not presuming that a person identifies as a PWD.

With reference to 2 Samuel 9, I observed that David's decision to show compassion towards Mephibosheth was not based on the assumption of Mephibosheth necessarily getting better or being physically healed. David played a restorative role in Mephibosheth's life, displaying kindness to him and treating him with dignity. Moreover, the text does not portray Mephibosheth as dependent on the help of able-bodied people, but rather portrays him as an active role player in managing the activities of his life.

Mark 2:1-12 challenges the commonly accepted idea that it is the faith of the person with disability which is instrumental in his or her receiving divine healing, since the text asserts that Jesus' actions were in response to the faith of the four men who brought the paralysed man to him (Mark 2:5). The text also reminds us of the importance of challenging ableist societal attitudes and structures, as well as being more sensitive to the sinful attitudes of some able-bodied people toward PWDs. Furthermore, the text underlines the importance of thinking creatively and innovatively regarding the issue of accessibility, since the four men in the story displayed great innovation and determination in bringing the paralysed man to Jesus. Finally, Jesus placed greater emphasis on the man's spiritual healing as opposed to his physical healing. Such an emphasis serves to remind preachers and churches that the focus should always be a person's spiritual healing, regardless of whether or not the person experiences or even desires physical healing.

As for Luke 14:12-24, the parable of the great banquet clearly challenges the church to reflect on the extent to which PWDs are welcomed and included in the local church, as well as the extent to which the church actively seeks to reach PWDs with the gospel. Moreover, the text opens up the intriguing possibility that people's disabilities will not necessarily be physically healed in the eschaton, but will rather – in some as yet unknown way – remain an integral part of the redeemed person's eschatological life.

John 9:1-7 dismisses any mistaken notion that personal or ancestral sin may be regarded as the cause of disability in a person's life (John 9:3). From a disability perspective, it may be observed that the Pharisees' decision to expel the man who was healed from the synagogue

(John 9:34) suggests that physical healing may sometimes serve to marginalise a person, in the sense that it may uproot them from the community where they experienced fellowship and belonging. Furthermore, the man's proactive agency, character, and personality challenge the stereotypes about PWDs as people who require the help of able-bodied people.

Lastly, with regard to 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, Paul's development of the concept of 'body of Christ' in relation to the church is essential to reflecting on the position and function of PWDs in the church. A disability reading of 1 Corinthians 12:22 suggests that it might be preferable to speak of PWDs as 'differently-abled', emphasising the fact that PWDs also have particular abilities and gifts to contribute to the church.

#### 6.2.4 Summary of the Findings and Conclusions from Chapter 5

Chapter 5 comprised the pragmatic phase of the study and sought to develop a Pentecostal homiletical "rules of art" (Osmer, 2008:176) that may contribute to the formation of disability-friendly congregations by cultivating disability-friendly ethical and theological perspectives among preachers and their congregations. Before developing my Pentecostal homiletical strategy for shaping disability-friendly congregations offered an in-depth discussion of my understanding of the notion of Pentecostal preaching. Such a discussion was vital, since the present study seeks to propose a Pentecostal homiletical strategy, which requires clarity about my conception of Pentecostal homiletics.

I discussed Pentecostal preaching by reference to a threefold homiletical framework, namely: Pentecostal homiletical hermeneutics, Pentecostal homiletical preparation, and Pentecostal homiletical delivery. These three components of my discussion of Pentecostal preaching formed the theoretical foundation from which I constructed my Pentecostal homiletical rules of art for shaping disability-friendly congregations. After completing my discussion of Pentecostal homiletics, I sought to propose particular rules of art for approaching Pentecostal preaching in a way that may contribute to shaping disability-friendly congregations. In order to construct this homiletical strategy, I drew on the insights derived from my discussion of Pentecostal homiletics, as well as the primary findings from the descriptive-empirical (Chapter 2), interpretive (Chapter 3), and normative (Chapter 4) phases of the study.

Ultimately, I proposed a Pentecostal homiletical strategy for shaping disability-friendly congregations, utilising a threefold homiletical framework:

- Disability-friendly Pentecostal homiletical hermeneutics;
- Disability-friendly Pentecostal homiletical preparation; and
- Disability-friendly Pentecostal homiletical delivery.



With regard to the first dimension of the proposed homiletical strategy, i.e., disability-friendly Pentecostal homiletical hermeneutics, six homiletical rules of art were proposed:

- Commitment to interpreting the Bible with PWDs in mind;
- Commitment to confronting ableist attitudes to PWDs;
- Commitment to communication that allows PWDs full access to sermons;
- Commitment to evangelising PWDs;
- Commitment to spiritual reflection on the situation of PWDs; and
- Commitment to practical preaching that may assist PWDs.

With regard to the second dimension of the proposed homiletical strategy, i.e., disability-friendly Pentecostal homiletical preparation, three homiletical rules of art were proposed:

- Commitment to praying about, for and with PWDs;
- Commitment to discerning a disability-related “burden from the Lord”; and
- Commitment to awareness of PWDs as part of the congregational audience

With regard to the third dimension of the proposed homiletical strategy, i.e. disability-friendly Pentecostal homiletical delivery, four homiletical rules of art were developed:

- Commitment to the passionate preaching of disability-friendly sermons;
- Commitment to recognising the power of the anointing;
- Commitment to avoiding ableist ideas about the gifts of the Holy Spirit; and
- Commitment to preaching that inspires worship in PWDs.

In light of the above discussion, which highlights how each of the four primary research objectives of the dissertation were addressed, I am convinced that the stated objectives of the dissertation have been achieved.

### **6.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Some limitations of the present study need to be considered.

- Firstly, as noted in Chapter 1, I acknowledge the possible role of my reflexivity as researcher in shaping the results of the study. Along with Osmer (2011:1), I admit that “practical theologians make decisions about how they view the theory-praxis relationship, interdisciplinary work, the relative weight of Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience and the theological rationale that justifies their approach” (Osmer, 2011:1).
- Secondly, I am aware that, even as I endeavoured to write a dissertation that aims to have a positive impact on the lives of Christians living with disabilities and sought to do so being self-aware of possible ableist biases I may have, my “personal situatedness” (cf. Kovach,

2015:378) as someone who is able-bodied may have influenced the way I understood and approached particular disability-related aspects of the study.

- Thirdly, since the descriptive-empirical phase of the study employed a qualitative research approach, it is important that some limitations regarding the generalisability of the empirical findings be pointed out. Since, generally speaking, qualitative research cannot rely on statistical representativeness (O'Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015), I acknowledge that the generalisability of the core categories derived from my grounded theory analysis should be considered from the viewpoint of “analytical generalisability” (Collingridge & Gantt, 2008). Analytical generalisability refers to “the utility of concepts and constructs to explain a situation” (Saltzberg, 2002:58). Accordingly, in terms of factors that may hinder analytical generalisability, it should be noted that the present study only involved preachers who are part of the AFM. Furthermore, the preachers who participated in the study all reside in the Western Cape. Also, although triangulation was employed to bolster the validity of the empirical research results, more funding would have allowed a comprehensive external inquiry audit (Greener, 2011:106), as well as external review of the results by a panel of local and international experts in the field of disability studies and/or disability theology (Hofer, 2012:108).

## **6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

In light of the findings of the present study, the following recommendations are made to preachers, congregations, denominations and seminaries, respectively. It should be noted that although my research was undertaken from a Pentecostal perspective, I offer the following recommendations with an ecumenical awareness and trust that they will be useful to preachers, congregations, and denominations across a broad theological spectrum. However, as a member of the AFM, it is my hope that the following suggestions will be considered as especially helpful for promoting disability-friendly preaching and ministry in the context of the AFM.

### **6.4.1 Recommendations to Preachers**

- It is recommended that preachers acquaint themselves with some of the literature that explores the Bible, theology, and ministry, especially the ministry of preaching, from a disability perspective (cf. Appendix J: A bibliography of selected works related to disability theology).
- It is suggested that preachers prepare their sermons with a keen sensitivity to the possible presence of PWDs in the audience, making sure that they avoid any ableist perspectives in their preaching.

- It is recommended that preachers include PWDs in the planning and celebration of worship services.
- It is suggested that preachers make their sermons available in a variety of formats, for example, text, audio, video, and Braille.
- It is recommended that preachers study the basic communication challenges faced by people with various forms of disability and adapt their preaching style accordingly, if and where possible (cf. Appendix G: Advice for communicating with people with various forms of disability).
- It is suggested that preachers consider utilising the present study's proposed Pentecostal homiletical strategy for shaping disability-friendly congregations, adapting it to their particular circumstances and context.

#### 6.4.2 Recommendations to Congregations

- It is recommended that churches make every effort to ensure that both architectural and attitudinal barriers vis-à-vis PWDs are systematically eradicated from congregational life.
- It is recommended that congregations develop and adopt a congregational policy document on PWDs (cf. Appendix H: Template for church policy on disabilities).
- It is suggested that congregations establish a disability committee and/or appoint a disability advocate as part of an ongoing process to ensure that the congregation is disability-friendly in its pastoral approach. Such a disability committee and/or disability advocate may function in cooperation with a specific disability ministry in the congregation or oversee disability-related ministries in the congregation.
- It is recommended that congregations celebrate Disability Awareness Sunday every year, as well as host disability awareness events throughout the course of the year.
- It is suggested that congregations partner with Christian ministries that focus on reaching PWDs with the gospel (such as Ramp Up and Joni and Friends).

#### 6.4.3 Recommendations to Denominations

- It is recommended that denominations adopt an official denominational policy document on PWDs and/or establish an office that deals with disability-related pastoral matters.

- It is suggested that denominations encourage PWDs to consider full-time ministry, ensuring that ministry candidates with disabilities are fully accommodated in every sphere of church life.
- It is recommended that denominations make disability-related ministry materials available to preachers, thus empowering them to proactively shape disability-friendly congregations.

#### 6.4.4 Recommendations to Seminaries

- It is recommended that seminaries develop a homiletics module that deals specifically with disability-friendly homiletical strategies. Such a module should constitute one of the obligatory modules during the aspiring preacher's homiletical training.
- It is suggested that seminaries develop a pastoral ministry module that focuses on ministry to PWDs. Such a module should form part of the core curriculum for any aspiring minister.
- It is recommended that seminaries make every effort to remove any architectural and/or attitudinal barriers that may hinder a PWD from enrolling for and receiving a theological education of the highest quality.

### 6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- The discipline of homiletics itself should reflect on possible ableism that may be found in the field of homiletics. Black (1998:13) highlights some of the most apparent homiletical ableism she has encountered:

We talk about the preacher as the *speaker* and the congregation as the *hearers*. In litanies, the congregation often responds with “*hear* our prayer”. The hymns we sing present image of “the *voice* of God is calling” and “open my *ears* that I may *hear*”. How is it possible for people who cannot hear to feel at home in such an orally and aurally oriented context?

Accordingly, it is suggested that a study of homiletics handbooks be undertaken, focusing on the extent to which these texts utilise ableist language.

- The present study proposed a Pentecostal homiletical strategy for shaping disability-friendly congregations. It is suggested that future researchers consider constructing disability-friendly homiletical strategies rooted in the theology and praxis of other Christian traditions as well. For example, what would a Reformed homiletical strategy for shaping disability-friendly congregations look like? What would a Catholic homiletical strategy for shaping

disability-friendly congregations look like? Or what would a Lutheran homiletical strategy for shaping disability-friendly congregations comprise? Moreover, such disability-friendly homiletical strategies could be compared with each other in order to develop an ecumenical homiletical strategy for shaping disability-friendly congregations.

- During the descriptive-empirical phase of the study, only preachers were interviewed for their perspectives on physical disability. Would interviewing congregation members yield similar empirical results to the present study? Would interviewing congregation members who have disabilities yield similar results?
- The descriptive-empirical phase of the study considered the preachers' perspectives on physical disability only. It is suggested that future researchers look at preachers' perspectives regarding other specific forms of disability, for example, autism spectrum disorder (ASD), Down Syndrome, and Alzheimer's disease.
- Although the present study looked at a small number of sermons in order to compare the disability perspectives in the sermons with the disability perspectives in the interviews, a thorough homiletical analysis from a disability perspective is yet to be undertaken. I suggest that future researchers consider conducting a comparative homiletical analysis of the disability perspectives that may be found in the sermons of various preachers.
- One of the preachers who participated in the descriptive-empirical phase of the study is a PWD. What perspectives on disability would preachers with disabilities have to offer?
- How would a disability-friendly homiletical strategy developed by a preacher with a disability differ from a disability-friendly homiletical strategy developed by an able-bodied preacher?

There is an urgent need for future research relating to the abovementioned themes. Such research will serve to cultivate the formation of disability-friendly congregations. Along with Webb-Mitchell (2010:136, original emphasis), I pray for and confidently anticipate the day where being disability-friendly will form such an integral part of the ecclesial self-understanding of local congregations that "*all* have and know their place in the body of Christ".

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Yoreh, T. 2010. *First book of God*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Young, D. 2000. Transformation through proclamation and leadership: Transcending walls and building bridges. D.Min. United Theological Seminary.

## APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT LETTER

Faculty of Theology  
Internal Box 147  
Potchefstroom Campus  
North West University  
Private Bag X6001  
Potchefstroom  
2520  
DATE

RECIPIENT NAME

ADDRESS

CITY, POSTAL CODE, PROVINCE

Dear RECIPIENT NAME

My name is Marno Retief. I am a doctoral student in Homiletics at North West University. I am currently working on my dissertation research, under the supervision of Prof Rantoa Letšosa. The empirical phase of my research involves interviewing senior pastors of AFM congregations in order to understand their perspectives on the participation of people with physical disabilities in AFM congregations.

I am contacting you because I would like to invite you to participate in my research. Your participation in the study will be of great value, since very little research has been done about the perspectives of AFM pastors regarding the participation of people with physical disabilities in congregations. By gaining a better understanding of the perspectives of AFM pastors regarding the latter subject, it is hoped that the present study will help AFM churches to become increasingly disability-friendly in orientation, encouraging and fostering the participation of people with physical disabilities in congregational life.

Participation in the present study will encompass an interview of approximately 60 to 90 minutes. The questions that comprise the interview will focus on your perspectives on the inclusion of people with physical disabilities in AFM congregations, as well as how the AFM and its teachings influence your understanding of physical disabilities. For example, one of the questions will be: "What do you think about the inclusion of people with physical disabilities in

congregational life?” The interview will end with a few questions regarding your specific role in your congregation, as well as some basic demographic questions.

This study will only proceed once final approval has been obtained from the North-West University Research Ethics Committee.

Please note that participation in the research is entirely voluntary – you may choose to skip questions or even stop participation in the project at any time. Neither your name nor the name of your congregation will be shared with anyone at any point during or after the research.

I am attaching an informed consent document and interview questions to this letter in order to afford you time to consider your possible participation in this study. I shall be contacting you telephonically in a few days to share some more information about the study, as well as giving you the opportunity to answer any possible questions you may have regarding the study. Should you then be interested in participating in the study, we shall proceed to arrange a date, time, and location of your choice to conduct the interview. Should you prefer to contact me prior to me calling you, you are welcome to call me at the following cell number, 076 337 2050, or, alternatively, to email me at [marnoretief@gmail.com](mailto:marnoretief@gmail.com)

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

.....

**Marno Retief**

Doctoral student

Homiletics

North-West University, Potchefstroom, North West Province

(Recruitment letter adapted from Patka, M. 2014. Individuals with intellectual disabilities in faith communities: Perspectives of Catholic religious leaders. Unpublished PhD thesis. Portland State University.)

## APPENDIX B: TELEPHONE INTERVIEW SCRIPT

P = Potential participant

I = Interviewer (Marno Retief)

I: May I please speak to (name of potential participant)?

I: My name is Marno Retief and I am a doctoral student at North-West University. As part of my dissertation research, I am conducting research on the inclusion of individuals with physical disabilities in AFM congregations. I am conducting interviews with senior pastors (visionary leaders) to understand their views on including individuals with physical disabilities in AFM congregations.

I recently emailed you a letter about my research, and I wanted to know if you would be interested in learning more about my study. Is this a convenient time?

P: No, could you call back later (agree on a more convenient time for Marno to call back).

OR

P: Yes.

I: Background information:

- The purpose of my study is to understand how AFM pastors construct meaning of physical disabilities and their perspectives toward the participation of individuals with physical disabilities in their congregation in order to construct a Pentecostal homiletical strategy that will contribute to shaping disability-friendly congregations.
- I will be conducting interviews starting on (insert date)
- The interview questions seek to understand your views on the inclusion of people with physical disabilities in AFM congregations.
- The interviews will last about 60 to 90 minutes, and would be arranged at a time and location of your choice.
- Participation in this interview is entirely voluntary. The probability of harm or discomfort anticipated is no greater than what you experience in daily life.
- You may decline to answer any of the interview questions you do not wish to answer and you may terminate the interview at any time.
- I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and approved by the North-West University Research Ethics Committee. However, the final decision to participate is yours.
- After all of the data has been analysed, you will receive a summary of the research results. You will have the opportunity to provide feedback on the summary.

If you are interested in participating, we can set up a time, date, and location to meet for the interview.

P: Sure

I: What is the best location, time, and date for us to meet? (DECIDE ON TIME). If any questions or concerns arise, please feel free to contact me at 076 337 2050. Thank you for your time.

OR

P: No, I am not interested in participating.

I: That is not a problem. May I know why you are not interested in participating?

Thank you for your time.

I: Goodbye.

P: Goodbye.

(Telephone script adapted from Patka, M. 2014. Individuals with intellectual disabilities in faith communities: Perspectives of Catholic religious leaders. Unpublished PhD thesis. Portland State University.)



## APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT

Faculty of Theology  
Internal Box 147  
Potchefstroom Campus  
North West University  
Private Bag X6001  
Potchefstroom  
2520  
DATE

### Informed consent

#### **Enabling faith: Towards a Pentecostal homiletical strategy for shaping disability-friendly congregations**

I, Marno Retief, a doctoral student at North-West University, am inviting you to participate in the empirical phase of my dissertation research. This study is being undertaken under the supervision of my promoter, Prof Rantoa Letšosa. The purpose of this consent form is to provide you with the necessary information to decide whether or not you wish to participate in the study. Please read this form carefully, noting any possible questions you may have about the research. Once all your questions regarding the research have been answered, you can decide if you want to be participate in this study.

#### **Aim and objectives of the proposed study**

The aim of the proposed study is to develop a Pentecostal homiletical strategy that can contribute to shaping disability-friendly congregations. In order to achieve this research aim, the proposed study has the following objectives:

- To identify AFM preachers' perspectives on disability in order to determine the extent to which ableist perspectives about disability are found among the participating preachers.
- To determine what insights the fields of disability studies and disability theology, as well as the theological teachings of selected AFM leaders, may offer in relation to interpreting any ableist perspectives held by the participating AFM preachers.
- To determine what ethical and theological perspectives Scripture offers that may contribute to the development of a disability-friendly Pentecostal homiletical strategy.

- To develop a Pentecostal homiletical strategy that may contribute to the formation of disability-friendly congregations in the AFM and other classical Pentecostal denominations by cultivating disability-friendly ethical and theological perspectives among preachers and their congregations.

### **The nature of participation in the study**

Participation in the present study will encompass an interview of approximately 60 to 90 minutes. The questions that comprise the interview will focus on your perspectives on the inclusion of people with physical disabilities in AFM congregations, as well as how the AFM and its teachings influence your understanding of physical disabilities. For example, one of the questions will be: "What do you think about the inclusion of people with physical disabilities in congregational life?" The interview will end with a few questions regarding your specific role in your congregation, as well as some basic demographic questions. You are free to answer or refrain from answering any question.

I ask your permission to make an audio recording of the interview, in order to have an accurate record of the interview. The interview will be transcribed and assigned a number, so that neither your name nor any other identifying information will be associated with the transcript of the interview.

### **Possible risks**

In order to maintain confidentiality and respect your privacy, I shall not share your name or any other identifying information with anyone other than my promoter. Should the results of the research be published, your name and any other identifying information will not be used.

Should you for any reason feel uncomfortable answering one or more of the questions, you are free to refrain from answering the question(s) and may choose to end the interview at any time you should wish to do so.

### **Significance of this study**

A systematic search of various international dissertation databases (most notably, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Database; Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations; Electronic Theses Online Service) has uncovered that, as yet, no empirical study has been undertaken to construct a Pentecostal homiletical strategy for shaping disability-friendly congregations; nor has any study considered possible ableist perspectives held by Pentecostal pastors in order to develop a Pentecostal homiletical strategy for shaping disability-friendly congregations. Given the fact that research shows that over a billion people worldwide are living with some form of disability, and that approximately 5% of the South African population are

living with some form of disability, the need to construct a Pentecostal homiletical strategy that will contribute to building disability-friendly congregations is imperative.

**Participant consent statement**

The aim, objectives and significance of this study have been sufficiently explained to me. I hereby volunteer to participate in the research. I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions I may have concerning the study, but should I have any further questions, I understand that I am free to contact the researcher, Marno Retief, at any time by calling him on 076 337 2050 or emailing him at [marnoretief@gmail.com](mailto:marnoretief@gmail.com)

Should I have any questions regarding my rights as a research participant, I may contact the North-West University Research Ethics Committee at any time by emailing the committee at [ethics@nwu.ac.za](mailto:ethics@nwu.ac.za) or writing to the committee at the Office of the Ethics Committee, Box 116, PUK, North-West University, Potchefstroom, 2520.

Should I have any questions for Marno Retief’s research promoter, Prof Rantoa Letšosa, I can contact him by phoning him at 018 299 1592, emailing him at [rantoa.letsosa@nwu.ac.za](mailto:rantoa.letsosa@nwu.ac.za) or faxing him at 018 299 1061.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent form.

**Audio Recording**

- I grant permission for the researcher to audio record my interview.
- I do not grant permission for the researcher to audio record my interview.

**Consent**

- I grant my consent to be interviewed.

.....

**Participant printed name**

.....

**Participant signature**

**Date**

.....

**Researcher signature**

**Date**

## APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW GUIDE

### Enabling faith: Towards a Pentecostal homiletical strategy for shaping disability-friendly congregations

**This interview consists of two parts. First, I will ask you about your perceptions toward individuals with physical disabilities within your congregation, and then I will ask you questions about yourself.**

The Code of Good Practice on Key Aspects on the Employment of People with Disabilities, defines “physical disability” in the following way: “A partial or total loss of a bodily function or part of the body. It includes sensory impairments such as being deaf, hearing impaired or visually impaired”.

Do you have any questions about the definition of physical disability?

1. How would you describe your leadership role within your congregation?

This may include:

- Motivating members of the community
- Conveying church mission
- Providing a vision
- Decision making processes
- Mentorship
- Counseling
- Disability specific services

2. How would you describe your congregation?

3. How would you describe your experience with individuals with physical disabilities?

- This may include:
- Their age
- Life characteristics
- Outside your faith community
- Inside your faith community
- How they are involved in your faith community
- How often you see them
- Type of relationship (e.g., mentorship, friendship)
- Do you know their name(s)

4. What do you think about individuals with physical disabilities being included in congregations?
5. How are individuals with physical disabilities involved in your faith community?

Settings may include:

- Holy Communion
  - Baptism
  - Religious education
  - Church social events
  - Church council
  - Ushering
  - Care ministry
  - Worship ministry
  - Preaching
  - Full-time ministry (including all or some of the above elements)
6. Do you think there are any congregational activities individuals with physical disabilities should not participate in?
    - What are the reasons behind your view?

Probe: Can you elaborate on that?

7. Can you describe anything that prevents the inclusion of individuals with physical disabilities in congregations?

This may include:

- Communication barriers (e.g. individuals who use sign language or have no formal communication system)
  - Physical accessibility
  - Attitudes
  - Preaching
  - Programming
  - Policies

Probe: Can you say more about that?

How might you address these barriers?

8. Do you think individuals with physical disabilities should be more included within your faith community?

If yes:

What do you think could contribute to greater inclusion within your faith community?

What might get in the way?

If no:

Can you explain why?

Probe: Would you elaborate on that?

**We are about halfway through the interview now. I think it is going very well and you are providing important information. How is the process going for you?**

9. What resources does the AFM use in shaping its understanding of and approach to people with physical disabilities?

Probes:

Are there specific passages from the Bible that guide the AFM's thinking?

Policy documents from the AFM's Head Office?

The Constitution of the AFM?

How do you present the AFM's resources on physical disability when you preach?

10. What kinds of secular resources do you use to inform your understanding of physical disabilities?

11. What is the highest level of education you completed?

Did your educational training include disability issues?

Was it part of your theological training?

What was taught?

What did the training consist of?

Lecture based?

Contact with individuals with disabilities?

12. When you prepare sermons that deal with Scripture passages where Jesus healed people with physical disabilities, do you bear in mind how congregation members with disabilities will experience the sermon?

**I do not have any more questions for Part 1. Is there anything you would like to add?**

Next, I will ask you questions about yourself.

13. How long have you been in your current position?

14. What was your role prior to this position?

Where was your past role?

15. Does your church have a formal administration or management group?

How many people does it consist of?

Are they also ministry leaders in the congregation?

Paid staff?

What are their duties?

(Interview guide adapted from Patka, M. 2014. Individuals with intellectual disabilities in faith communities: Perspectives of Catholic religious leaders. Unpublished PhD thesis. Portland State University.)

## **APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW GUIDE SHORT FORM**

### **Enabling faith: Towards a Pentecostal homiletical strategy for shaping disability-friendly congregations**

**This interview consists of two parts. First, I will ask you about your perceptions toward individuals with physical disabilities within your congregation, and then I will ask you questions about yourself.**

The Code of Good Practice on Key Aspects on the Employment of People with Disabilities, defines “physical disability” in the following way: “A partial or total loss of a bodily function or part of the body. It includes sensory impairments such as being deaf, hearing impaired or visually impaired”.

Do you have any questions about the definition of physical disability?

1. How would you describe your leadership role within your congregation?

This may include:

2. How would you describe your congregation?

3. How would you describe your experience with individuals with physical disabilities?

4. What do you think about individuals with physical disabilities being included in congregations?

5. How are individuals with physical disabilities involved in your faith community?

Settings may include:

6. Do you think there are any congregational activities individuals with physical disabilities should not participate in?

7. Can you describe anything that prevents the inclusion of individuals with physical disabilities in congregations?

8. Do you think individuals with physical disabilities should be more included within your faith community?

**We are about halfway through the interview now. I think it is going very well and you are providing important information. How is the process going for you?**

9. What resources does the AFM use in shaping its understanding of and approach to people with physical disabilities?



10. What kinds of secular resources do you use to inform your understanding of physical disabilities?

11. What is the highest level of education you completed?

12. When you prepare sermons that deal with Scripture passages where Jesus healed people with physical disabilities, do you bear in mind how congregation members with disabilities will experience the sermon?

**I do not have any more questions for Part 1. Is there anything you would like to add?**

Next, I will ask you a few questions about yourself.

13. How long have you been in your current position?

14. What was your role prior to this position?

15. Where was your past role?

16. Does your church have a formal administration or management group?

## APPENDIX F: RESOURCE LIST ON DISABILITY AND THE CHURCH

Source: Ramp Up (2015): [www.rampup.co.za](http://www.rampup.co.za)

### PEOPLE WHO ARE WILLING TO SPEAK AT YOUR CHURCH ABOUT DISABILITY ISSUES

#### FREE STATE

##### **Mrs Esmé Hattingh (Visually impaired)**

Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, Wilgehof, Bloemfontein

Cell: 082-451-9819

E-Mail:

[emhat@absamail.co.za](mailto:emhat@absamail.co.za)

#### GAUTENG

##### **Mr Hendrick Mmusi (Mobility impaired)**

Sotho-speaker; fluent in Afrikaans and English

Member of the Alarga Stroll team

Gateway Presbyterian Church, Kempton Park

Cell: 083-681-4650

E-mail: [hendrick.mmusi@sanyati.co.za](mailto:hendrick.mmusi@sanyati.co.za)

##### **Mr Abraham Allies (Visually impaired)**

Member of Blind Workers Organization Orion, Pretoria

Tel (home): 012-343-2339

Tel (work): 012-351-1000

Cell: 072-635-0036

E-mail: [alliesa@telkomsa.net](mailto:alliesa@telkomsa.net)

##### **Pastor Willie Botha (visually impaired)**

Pastor with the Apostolic Faith Mission; Gospel singer

He and Crystal (his sighted wife) run the Oesland evangelistic ministry

Tel: 012-548-0765

Cell: 082-335-6014

E-mail: [oesland@xsinet.co.za](mailto:oesland@xsinet.co.za)

##### **Mrs Erika Barnard**

Was a teacher at Prinshof School for the Visually Impaired, Pretoria

Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, Hartbeesspruit, Queenswood, Pretoria

Tel (home): 012-333-1330

Cell: 082-859-9809

E-mail: [erikabarnard2@vodamail.co.za](mailto:erikabarnard2@vodamail.co.za)

**Mr and Mrs Eric and Pat Pollock**

Experienced in presenting the Alarga Stroll [The Walk to Emmaus for people with disabilities].

Pat is involved in caring for people in old age homes and people with Alzheimer's disease

Tel: 011-763-5455

Cell: 082-717-2708

E-mail: [mwlecire@mweb.co.za](mailto:mwlecire@mweb.co.za)

**Mr Daan and Mrs Lettie van Niekerk (both visually impaired)**

They serve as volunteers in assisting newly blinded adults in adapting to life-changing circumstances

Tel (home): 012-333-2105

Cell Numbers: 083-285-0630, 083-281-0258;

E-mail: [zs6btm@absamail.co.za](mailto:zs6btm@absamail.co.za) or [dajvn@absamail.co.za](mailto:dajvn@absamail.co.za)

**Dr Cival Mills**

Motivational Speaker with Locked-in syndrome; he uses a computer with specialised software to communicate

E-mail: [drcmills@mweb.co.za](mailto:drcmills@mweb.co.za)

Cell: 083-258-6006 (sms only)

**Mrs Sarie Odendaal**

(Assistant to Dr Mills)

Cell: 083-242-7331

E-mail: [sarieo@iburst.co.za](mailto:sarieo@iburst.co.za)

**Mr Dewald Louwrens van Deventer (Visually impaired)**

Piano teacher and composer of backtracks

Norkem Park Coastal Assemblies of God, Kempton Park

Cell: 082-461-4865

Fax: 086-517-8331

E-mail: [dewaldvandeventer@gmail.com](mailto:dewaldvandeventer@gmail.com)

Skypename: dewie007

**Mrs Anna Atkins**

Executive Officer at The Association for Autism – Pretoria

Parent of a child with Autism  
E-mail: [afautism@iafrica.com](mailto:afautism@iafrica.com)  
Cell: 072-292-2366  
Work 012-993-4628

**Ms Janie Fourie (blind)**

Member at Moreleta Park church, Pretoria. Helped to write materials for the Ramp Up project.  
Tel (home): 012-998-3684  
Cell: 082-467-4500  
Email: [dominofourie@telkomsa.net](mailto:dominofourie@telkomsa.net)

**Michael and Desirae Pillay**

Parents to three children – Savannah 15 has autism and cerebral palsy, Talisa 9 and Eli Michael 4.  
Michael serves as a deacon at Mountain View Bible Church and together with his wife Desirae, serves in ministry to people with special needs and their families.  
Desirae is a disability consultant.  
Cell: Michael - 083 648 9910  
Desirae – 082 822 5193  
E-mail: [pillay.md@gmail.com](mailto:pillay.md@gmail.com)  
[pillaydesirae@gmail.com](mailto:pillaydesirae@gmail.com)

**Mrs Busi Hlongwane**

Mother of a child with cerebral palsy. Heading up a centre for children with disability in Mamelodi, Pretoria. She worships at Charity and Faith Mission church in Mamelodi.  
Work: 012 311 3614  
Cell: 074 103 9322  
Email: [busihngwn2@gmail.com](mailto:busihngwn2@gmail.com)

**Ms Elize Schutte**

Elize's brother has mobility impairment. From Moreleta Park, Pretoria.  
Work: 011 847 5007  
Cell: 082 9222 919

**KWA-ZULU NATAL**

**Mrs Barbara Watt (Paraplegic)**

Co-ordinates disAbility Connexion, of African Enterprise in Pietermaritzburg.  
Work: 033-347-7005

Email: [bwatt@ae.org.za](mailto:bwatt@ae.org.za)

**Ms Bongzi Zuma (mobility impairment)**

Advocacy Officer of CREATE, Pietermaritzburg.

Work: 033-345-5088

Email: [create3@telkomsa.net](mailto:create3@telkomsa.net)

**Peter Meanley (Paraplegic)**

Coordinator at Durban disAbility Connexion

Phone work: 031-307-1064

Email: [pmonline@telkomsa.net](mailto:pmonline@telkomsa.net)

**MPUMALANGA**

**Ds Cliff van Vuren (Visual impairment)**

Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, Middelburg

Cell: 082-508-4794

Tel: 013 245-2722

E-mail: [cliffvv@mweb.co.za](mailto:cliffvv@mweb.co.za)

**Ms Renche du Toit (mobility impairment)**

A social worker at Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, Middelburg

Cell: 083 735 1339

Home: 013 282 5174

Email: [cwrs@lantic.net](mailto:cwrs@lantic.net)

**NORTHERN CAPE**

**Mrs Retha Stofberg (Visual impairment)**

Social worker at "Yonder", a protective workshop and residential facility for adults with intellectual disabilities, Kimberley

Cell: 082-442-0467

Tel (work): 053-841-5032

E-mail: [retha@intekom.co.za](mailto:retha@intekom.co.za)

**Ms Dorothy Anne Howitson (Quadriplegic due to polio)**

Has accessibility expertise. Lives in Kimberley.

Tel (home) 053 833-3706

Cell 082-926-5754

Email: [elohim@mweb.co.za](mailto:elohim@mweb.co.za)

## **NORTH WEST**

### **Wilhelm van Deventer (Visual impairment)**

Minister of the Uniting Reformed Church, Promosa, Potchefstroom.

Specialist Counsellor at FAMSA.

Tell: 018-294-3765

Cell: 083-458-4058

Email: [wilhelmvand@lantic.net](mailto:wilhelmvand@lantic.net)

## **WESTERN CAPE**

### **Mr Fanie du Toit (Hearing impaired)**

Patron: South African Hearing Institute ([www.sahi.org.za](http://www.sahi.org.za))

Hosts Afrikaans radio program for people with disabilities ([www.rsg.co.za](http://www.rsg.co.za))

E-mail: [fanie.dt@mweb.co.za](mailto:fanie.dt@mweb.co.za)

SMS: 082-820-7358

## APPENDIX G: ADVICE FOR COMMUNICATING WITH PEOPLE WITH VARIOUS FORMS OF DISABILITY

Source: DeYoung and Stephenson (2011:18-26).

### Tips on Autism

Common characteristics of people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (from Autism Society of America):

- Lack of or delay in spoken language
- Repetitive use of language and/or motor mechanisms
- Little or no eye contact
- Lack of interest in peer relationships
- Lack of spontaneous or make-believe play
- Persistent fixation on parts of objects, routines, or topics
- Tendency to take all statements literally
- Attempts to hide or escape from social situations.

Relating with a person who has autism:

- Give a normal greeting with brief eye contact, whether a response is forthcoming or possible. Greet the person by name.
- Offer, but don't demand, a handshake.
- Provide aides for Sunday school, small-group meetings.
- Routine is important for many people with autism. Surprises are often scary. Allow for predictability and give advance warning of changes.
- Offer visual supports of instructions.
- Confusion may be expressed as anger.
- Sudden, loud noises – including unexpected applause – may cause fear.
- Remember that for some people certain sensations that most people take for granted are distasteful or even painful.

### For further information:

- *Autism and Your Church*, by Barbara Newman
- The Gray Center for Social Learning and Understanding – [www.thegraycenter.org](http://www.thegraycenter.org)
- *Autism and Faith: A Journey into Community*, edited by Mary Beth Walsh, Alice F. Walsh, William C. Gaventa

## **Tips on Deaf and Hard of Hearing**

- Speak clearly, not overemphasizing, a little slowly, in short sentences.
- Reduce background noise. Close doors; turn off TV.
- Face the listener.
- Allow adequate light to fall on your face. Do not stand in front of a window or light source.
- Give the listener a clear view of your face. Keep hands or other objects down. Don't chew gum.
- Avoid talking while writing or walking.
- Gain the person's attention before beginning to speak. Say the listener's name at the beginning of the sentence.
- Have the person repeat to be sure the message was understood. In a group setting, repeat any questions asked before beginning with answers.
- Be redundant. Repeat or rephrase. Or say things in different words, redundantly.
- Write key words if the person can read and see what you are writing.
- Arrange seating in small groups, preferably in circles or at round tables.
- In large meetings, ask speakers to provide outlines.
- If sound amplification technology is available, use it! Do not assume everyone can hear adequately.

### **For further information:**

- Canadian Association of the Deaf — [www.cad.ca](http://www.cad.ca)
- National Association of the Deaf — [www.nad.org](http://www.nad.org)
- Information on hearing loops — [www.hearingloop.org](http://www.hearingloop.org)

## **Tips on Visual Impairments**

- Identify yourself by name when you approach a person with a vision disability and tell them when you are leaving the conversation or area.
- Use a normal tone of voice (for some reason, people with vision disabilities are often shouted at).
- It is OK to use vision references such as see or look.
- Give a person with a visual impairment a brief description of the surroundings; for example, "There is a table in the middle of the room, about six feet in front of you."
- Use descriptive phrases that relate to sound, smell, and distance when guiding a visually impaired person.



- Offer the use of your arm. If your assistance is accepted, the best practice is to offer your elbow and allow the person with the vision disability to direct you. Walk as you normally would.
- Guide dogs are working animals and should not be treated as pets.
- Do not grab or try to steer the cane of a person with visual impairments.
- Always determine the format in which a person with a visual impairment wants information, such as Braille, large print, audio, or computer disk/electronic text. Do not assume what format an individual uses or prefers.
- Direct your comments, questions, or concerns to the person with a visual impairment, not to his or her companion.

(Abridged from “Basic Etiquette: People with Visual Impairments,” National Center on Workforce and Disability, [www.onestops.info](http://www.onestops.info).)

**For further information:**

- American Council of the Blind — [www.acb.org](http://www.acb.org)
- American Foundation for the Blind — [www.afb.org](http://www.afb.org)
- Canadian National Institute for the Blind — [www.cnib.ca](http://www.cnib.ca)
- Canadian Council of the Blind — [www.ccbnational.org](http://www.ccbnational.org)

**Tips on Mental Illnesses**

- Greet the person normally, making brief eye contact with “Hello” and the person’s name.
- Avoid asking, “How are you doing?” or “How do you feel?” These phrases can be extremely painful, especially when other people are present.
- Don’t be afraid to make “small talk.”
- “I’m glad to see you,” is one of the most helpful phrases.
- Do not push or pressure other people when they say they cannot do something you ask them to do.
- Listen when they try to talk about their difficulty. It’s important to them that you know and care.
- Do not try to make light of the difficulty. It may seem like a small problem to you, but it is a big problem to them.
- Do not try to determine what people can or cannot do from what you observe them doing. Sometimes people can do things in one environment that they cannot do in another.
- Above all, realize that most people are doing the best they can at any given moment with the abilities they have and in the environment surrounding them.

### **For further information:**

- Canadian Mental Health Association — [www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca)
- Pathways to Promise: Ministry and Mental Illness — [www.pathways2promise.org](http://www.pathways2promise.org)
- National Alliance on Mental Illness — [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)
- Shalem Mental Health Network — [www.shalemnetwork.org](http://www.shalemnetwork.org)

### **Tips on Mobility Impairments**

- Assist people in wheelchairs to be as independent as possible by helping them only when they request it. If they appear to need help, ask before helping.
- If it is necessary to transport a person in a wheelchair up or down stairs, lift only where and how you are instructed to lift. It is easy to tip people out of their wheelchairs. Their disabilities often prevent them from protecting themselves, and the end result could be serious injury.
- If you are going to converse for a fair amount of time (two minutes or more) with someone sitting in a wheelchair, try to seat yourself so you are talking at eye level.
- Make sure you speak directly to the person in the wheelchair and not just to the able-bodied companion who may be there too.
- If you are planning an outing, make sure that the destination is barrier-free to avoid embarrassment for people who use wheelchairs or have other special needs.

### **For further information:**

- Click on “Accessibility and Awareness Resources” on the disability pages of the CRC and RCA websites — [www.crcna.org/disability](http://www.crcna.org/disability) and [www.rca.org/disability](http://www.rca.org/disability)
- Congregational Accessibility Network - [www.accessibilitynetwork.net](http://www.accessibilitynetwork.net)

### **Tips on Alzheimer’s/Dementia**

- Be patient and calm.
- Touch is very important.
- Don’t use baby talk.
- Really listen to what the person is trying to say.
- Think about the feelings behind the words he or she is trying to say.
- If the person appears angry or upset, then ask if that is the case.
- Treat the person with dignity and respect.
- Don’t debate, argue, or try to reason with the person.
- Don’t say “I just told you that.” Simply repeat the answer you have already given.
- Don’t ask the person to remember things that happened in the past. Talk about what you remember or know happened and how he or she was a part of it.

(Adapted from J. Frank Broyles, *Coach Broyles' Playbook for Alzheimer's Caregivers*.)

**For further information:**

- Alzheimer's Association — [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)
- Alzheimer Society Canada — [www.alzheimer.ca](http://www.alzheimer.ca)

**Tips on Children with Disabilities**

- Ask parents about their child and allow them to talk, or respect their wishes not to talk at that time.
- If new parents find out that their unborn or recently born child has a disability, we should remain excited and eager to congratulate them.
- Ask them about their child as you would any other (what are their interests, gifts, hobbies, etc.).
- Realize that life with a child who has a disability can be extremely difficult mentally, physically, and emotionally, regardless of how competent or “put together” they may seem.
- Realize that parents are doing the best they possibly can. Ask parents, or someone who knows them, if there is any way you can lend a helping hand.
- See to it that your church welcomes children with disabilities and accepts responsibility for their spiritual, educational, and social needs.
- Talk to parents about different teaching methods used at school and at home that have been successful.

**For further information:**

- Barbara Newman, *Autism and Your Church*
- Friendship Ministries — [www.friendship.org](http://www.friendship.org)
- Barbara Newman, *Helping Kids Include Kids with Disabilities*
- National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities — [www.nichcy.org](http://www.nichcy.org)
- Emily Perl Kingsley, “Welcome to Holland”

([www.downsyn.com/holland.php](http://www.downsyn.com/holland.php)), which compares having a child with a disability to planning a trip to Italy and arriving in Holland.

**Tips on Chronic or Terminal Illnesses**

- Acknowledge the illness. For example, don't avoid use of the word “cancer.” It is very real to the ill person. “I know you must be having a difficult time dealing with your diagnosis of cancer.”
- Be there; offer a listening ear.

- Be honest that you “may not know exactly what to say or how to help.”
- Offer to accompany the person to appointments if there is no family member available.
- Do not dominate conversation with your own story of illness or recovery.

**For further information:**

John G. Cook, *A Compassionate Journey: Coming Alongside People with Disabilities or Chronic Illnesses*

**Tips on Intellectual Disabilities**

- Get to know people as individuals with distinct personalities, likes, and dislikes. Do not assume what a person can or cannot do.
- Extend common courtesies such as shaking hands.
- If you are having difficulty understanding what he or she is saying, ask rather than pretending to understand.
- Have a family or individual within the congregation welcome and sit with them worship and assist, if needed.
- Think of people by chronological age rather than mental age or cognitive ability. Treat adults as adults.
- Do not refer to them as “kids” or with cute names such as “God’s special people.”
- Include children or adults with cognitive impairments in as many church programs as possible.
- Encourage them to use the gifts God has given to them. Ways to serve can include testimonies, hospitality, prayer partners, singing in the choir, reader for Scripture or litany (rehearsal may be needed), dramas, or dance.
- Liturgies that allow participation without a lot of reading are helpful. Also helpful are repetitive phrases such as “Lord, have mercy,” and “Thanks be to God.”

**For further information:**

- Friendship Ministries — [www.friendship.org](http://www.friendship.org). Friendship programs are great ways to prepare people with cognitive impairments for fuller participation in worship, the sacraments, and full church membership.
- Barbara Newman, *Helping Kids Include Kids with Disabilities*
- Erik W. Carter, *Including People with Disabilities in Faith Communities*
- Bethesda Lutheran Homes and Services, *Building a Developmental Disability Ministry: A Manual for Congregations*

## APPENDIX H: TEMPLATE FOR CHURCH POLICY ON DISABILITIES

Source: Adapted from DeYoung and Stephenson (2011:32).

### Church Policy on Disabilities

*This sample policy can be adapted as needed by churches desiring to establish an official policy on disabilities.*

According to Statistics South Africa, approximately 7.5% of South Africans are living with a disability, demonstrating that disabilities are a natural part of life and can be acquired at any time. Whether physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory, many of the barriers faced by people with disabilities result from attitudes and environments rather than the disability itself.

We believe that everyone should have the opportunity to participate, contribute, and belong to our community. We also believe that people with disabilities positively affect and enhance human diversity and community life. Therefore, in keeping with Biblical teachings, with our doctrinal standards, and with decisions of our denomination regarding people with disabilities, we, the consistory/council of [church name], adopt the following policy.

1. In this congregation, we value people with disabilities as created in the image of God, as partners to the covenant, and as co-laborers in the kingdom of God.
2. We consider all people – with disabilities and without – to have gifts from the Holy Spirit, and we encourage everyone to enrich congregational life by practicing their faith and using their gifts in ministries of discipleship, leadership, and mission.
3. We will endeavor to integrate people with disabilities into all ministries and activities of the church. This includes worship, education, small groups, outreach, activities, etc.
4. We will seek to name, understand, and attend to the special spiritual, physical, and psychological needs of those of us affected by disabilities, including caregivers, and will offer training to respond appropriately to disability issues and to raise awareness in our congregation.
5. We will modify any policy, practice, procedure, or architecture that tends to exclude those of us with disabilities from any aspect of congregational life.

Adopted by the [name of governing body] of [name of church] on [date]

## APPENDIX I: EXAMPLE OF CHURCH ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT

Source: (United Methodist Committee on Disability Ministries, 2014).

### ANNUAL ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT FOR UNITED METHODIST CHURCHES

Church \_\_\_\_\_ District \_\_\_\_\_

Date Form Completed \_\_\_\_\_ Charge Conference Date \_\_\_\_\_

| YES                              | NO | N/A | Description / Guidelines   | Explain "NO" Answers |
|----------------------------------|----|-----|--|----------------------|
| <b>GETTING INTO THE CHURCH</b>   |    |     |  |                      |
|                                  |    |     | Clearly visible signs direct people to accessible entrances  |                      |
|                                  |    |     | Designated parking spaces on level ground are close to entrance and do not require crossing traffic or moving behind parked cars   |                      |
|                                  |    |     | At least 1 per 25 spaces is clearly marked with access symbol on vertical signs and on pavement (# of accessible spaces: _____)  |                      |
|                                  |    |     | Accessible spaces are 8' wide with adjacent 5' access aisle.   |                      |
|                                  |    |     | At least one space is van accessible with adjacent, painted with slash lines, 8' access aisle on right side of vehicle   |                      |
|                                  |    |     | 36" wide curb cuts (curb ramps) are provided close to parking  |                      |
|                                  |    |     | Sidewalks are smooth, flat, and at least 36" wide providing an access route to an accessible entrance into the church  |                      |
|                                  |    |     | Ramp has maximum incline of 1:12, preferably 1:20 (length: _____ rise: _____ ratio: _____) with no more than 30' between landings  |                      |
|                                  |    |     | Ramp has minimum width of 36" between handrails (width: _____) and has non-slip surface  |                      |
|                                  |    |     | Handrails are 34-38" high on both sides of ramp/ stairs and extend 12" beyond; lower railing is no higher than 4" above deck   |                      |
|                                  |    |     | There is a 60" x 60" level platform at entry door and at least 18" on pull side of door  |                      |
|                                  |    |     | Entrance door is 36" wide; threshold level or max beveled ½" high; no more than 10 lb force needed to open door  |                      |
| <b>GETTING AROUND THE CHURCH</b> |    |     |  |                      |
|                                  |    |     | Corridors are at least 36" wide with 60" passing spaces every 200' and non-glare floor surface   |                      |
|                                  |    |     | No objects protrude more than 4", and lowest part of protruding object is no more than 27" above floor height to allow a person who is blind to detect the object with a cane and avoid injuries |                      |
|                                  |    |     | Multi-level building has interior elevator, lift and/ or ramp to allow access to all common/ program areas   |                      |
|                                  |    |     | Doorways have a minimum of 32" clearance and thresholds are level or no more than ½" high and beveled  |                      |

| YES   | NO | N/A | Description / Guidelines   | Explain "NO" Answers |
|---|----|-----|--|----------------------|
|   |    |     | Door handles are easy to grasp and operate with one hand/single effort, using no more than 5 lbs. force  |                      |
|   |    |     | Carpet pile is level and no more than ½" thick, with no or firm padding; all floor mats have rubberized backing and are stable   |                      |
|   |    |     | Fire alarm controls and extinguishers are no more than 48" from floor; visual and auditory fire alarms are in place  |                      |
|   |    |     | At least one accessible marked unisex restroom (or both male and female restrooms) per floor has 60 x 60 " turning space   |                      |
|   |    |     | Sink has 29" clearance from floor, controls easy to operate (lever style, automatic, etc.), drain pipes insulated,   |                      |
|   |    |     | Soap and paper towels are no higher than 48", bottom edge of mirror is 40" or lower  |                      |
|   |    |     | One+ stall is 66"x 60" with 33" – 36" high wall-mounted grab bar by toilet extending 54" from back wall; toilet height 17" – 19"   |                      |
|   |    |     | Drinking fountain is no higher than 36" with easy hand controls and wheelchair clearance or paper cup dispenser  |                      |
|   |    |     | Stairs and ramps have handrails on both sides; surface is non-slip; leading edges are marked with a contrasting color  |                      |
| <b>SANCTUARY, CLASSROOMS, FELLOWSHIP AREA</b> |    |     |  |                      |
|   |    |     | Level pew cuts/ wheelchair spaces are next to aisles and distributed throughout the room for choice in seating. Spaces are 33"x48" forward approach, and/or 33"x60" side approach, with view of screen/ pulpit when others stand |                      |
|   |    |     | Chancel area and choir loft are accessible (via ramp, or platform lift if needed)  |                      |
|   |    |     | If there are steps to the chancel, handrails are provided  |                      |
|   |    |     | Aisleways are at least 36" in common areas   |                      |
|   |    |     | Fellowship area and one work area in kitchen are accessible  |                      |
|   |    |     | In fellowship area and classrooms at least one table has minimum of 29-30" clearance on underside; some chairs have armrests and height of chair seat from floor of these chairs is 18" or more                                  |                      |
| <b>COMMUNICATIONS AND ENVIRONMENT</b>         |    |     |  |                      |
|   |    |     | Members sensitized about need to minimize use of fragrances  |                      |
|   |    |     | All soaps, cleaning products and other chemicals fragrance free; candles are unscented and non-petroleum-based   |                      |
|   |    |     | Lighting adequate for reading in meeting areas, for safety in halls  |                      |
|   |    |     | Large/bold print provided via projection or bulletin, songbook, and Bible; Braille or alternative media available upon request   |                      |
|   |    |     | Microphone used by all speakers or comments repeated; assisted listening devices provided; ASL interpreter provided upon request   |                      |
|   |    |     | Printed copies of sermon are available if requested  |                      |
|   |    |     | Videos and other media are clearly captioned   |                      |
| <b>ATTITUDES</b>                              |    |     |  |                      |

| YES   | NO | N/A | Description / Guidelines   | Explain "NO" Answers |
|---|----|-----|--|----------------------|
|   |    |     | Access and accommodations available are described in church phone message, website, internet postings, signage, etc.   |                      |
|   |    |     | Pastor(s)/ ushers/ greeters/ leaders/ members have had training in disability awareness and etiquette  |                      |
|   |    |     | Signs or bulletin boards give visible evidence that people with cognitive challenges, mental illness, and chronic illness are welcome and included in the life of the congregation |                      |
|   |    |     | Disruptions are accepted and incorporated into worship   |                      |
|   |    |     | Service animals or guide dogs are welcome within the church building(s) including the sanctuary  |                      |
|   |    |     | Worship leader invites people to "rise in body or in spirit" and to "be in an attitude of prayer" or uses similar inclusive language   |                      |
|   |    |     | Educational programs are adapted as needed for inclusion of children and adults with disabilities  |                      |
|   |    |     | Disability Awareness Sunday was celebrated during past year  |                      |
|   |    |     | Persons with disabilities serve in worship and leadership roles and help plan ways to improve access   |                      |
|   |    |     | Needs of those on special diets considered when food is offered, including gluten free communion elements  |                      |
|   |    |     | Transportation; valet parking assistance; buddy system (for those needing 1:1 assistance) offered if needed  |                      |
| <b>GOALS FOR ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENT FOR THE UPCOMING YEAR</b>                |    |     |  | <b>Target Date</b>   |
| 1.  |    |     |  |                      |
| 2.  |    |     |  |                      |
| 3.  |    |     |  |                      |
| 4.  |    |     |  |                      |
| 5.  |    |     |  |                      |
| YES __ NO __ Request consultation from Conference Disability Concerns Committee |    |     |  |                      |
| Comments:   |    |     |  |                      |
| Signature of Pastor:  |    |     |  | <b>Date</b>          |
| Signature of Trustees chair:  |    |     |  |                      |
| Signature of District Superintendent:   |    |     |  |                      |



Form completed by \_\_\_\_\_ Contact  
information \_\_\_\_\_

Contact person for church \_\_\_\_\_ Contact  
information \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX J: A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SELECTED WORKS RELATED TO DISABILITY THEOLOGY

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