


History and developments of pastoral care in Africa: A survey and proposition for effective contextual pastoral caregiving

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The practice of pastoral care (*cura animarum*) over the ages has been informed and influenced by the need to develop creative ways (interventions) to respond to people's contextual challenges. These approaches have been well documented. However, the history, developments and emerging pastoral care practices in Africa have not been documented. This article, by way of a survey, considers the pastoral care approaches that emerged in Africa from the period when Christianity was introduced to the continent. It addresses three interlinked questions. Firstly, to what extent has pastoral care approaches and practices in Africa been influenced by the African context and developments? Secondly, to what extent has the context and the emerging pastoral care approaches in Africa been discerned from historical developments and documented? Thirdly, what links can be drawn between pastoral care practices in Africa and its historical as well as cultural context? In answering these questions, the article retrieves pastoral care developments in Africa by discerning pastoral care during the periods of Christianity in Africa. The notion of *cura animarum* as 'soul care', referring to care for the whole person (holistic care, i.e., nephesh care) from a Christian spiritual perspective, will be employed as a framework. The assumption guiding the article is that pastoral care practices and approaches in Africa have arisen as responses to the contextual realities being experienced at the interface of Christianity and the African people. These realities arose and persist to this day as a struggle to relate, apply and live out an authentic African Christian life to cope with life in a meaningful way. It concludes by suggesting ways on how pastoral care in Africa should be practiced in the current period and going forward.

Keywords: pastoral care history; africa pastoral care developments; pastoral care in Africa; pastoral ministry in Africa; spiritual care in Africa; holistic pastoral care; Africa theology and pastoral care; missionaries and pastoral care in Africa.

Introduction

Pastoral care refers to care provided from a spiritual perspective. The term 'pastoral' from the Latin word *Pastorem* [shepherd] refers to the notion of tending to the needs of the vulnerable (McClure 2012:269). Viewed from an African perspective, the notion of care connotes an attentive concern for the other person. Pastoral care entails intentional enacting and embodying of a theology of presence, an embodiment of the love of God and of the neighbour in response to people's needs (McClure 2012:269). Pastoral care is known as *cura animarum* (i.e. cure of souls), which refers to the care of people in their existential situations (Lartey 1997; Mills 1990). Louw (2014, 1998) explained that the term *cura animarum* describes a very special process of caring: caring for human life because it is created by God, belongs to God and is saved by God in Christ. *Cura animarum* describes care for the whole person from a specifically Christian spiritual perspective. Pastoral care as 'cure of souls' is about soul care. Louw (2014) rightly stated that soul care is about people and the centre of their existence as well as their focus on God and dependence upon him because of a faith shaped by the salvific events of the cross and resurrection.

However, rendering pastoral care (*cura animarum*) as spiritual care as performed within the fields of helping and healing professions robs pastoral care of its unique identity and connection with *cura animarum* (Nauer 2010:55–57). Thus, Louw (2014) argued that to merely refer to spiritual healing within processes of professionalisation is to run the danger of making the ministry of pastoral care superfluous. To avoid this superfluous approach, Louw (2014) states

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that pastoral care should stick to the notion of 'soul care' (German: *Seelsorge*; Afrikaans: *sielsorg*). The combination between 'soul' (Hebrew *nēphēsh*; Septuagint: *psuchē*; Latin: *anima*), care and cure captures the core identity of caregiving and can be rendered as the basic proposition for a Christian approach to caregiving, which keeps the Christian identity clear (Nauer 2010:66–69).

The total human being (soul – Hebrew *nephesh*) and his or her needs for care and cure (healing) is the central concern of pastoral care. However, the developments over the years have revealed that the approaches employed in performing pastoral care are hugely influenced by context. Lartey (1997:21) observed that the historical description of pastoral care by Clebsch and Jaekle (1964) in *Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective* rightly demonstrates 'creativity and contextuality' of pastoral care over the ages. Pastoral care approaches have been influenced by historical, cultural and ecclesial contexts. Lartey (1997), like many other pastoral care theologians (e.g. Gerkin 1997; Louw 1998; McClure 2012), has highlighted the influence of context to pastoral approach as caregivers seek to respond appropriately to the prevailing needs of their time.

In describing pastoral care historical developments and responses, the highlighted periods and responses¹ include: (1) Old Testament Biblical times where care and moral direction was performed through wisdom teachings; (2) New Testament early church where there was initiation in the light of the *Parousia*; (3) the age of persecutions where discipline and reconciliation was a major focus; (4) the imperial church era where there was formalised pastoral care; (5) the fall of the Roman Empire during which there was an authoritarian role of the priest, and care was mechanical and prescriptive with neglect of the needs of the parishioners; (6) the Middle Ages where there was some level of exaggeration of sacraments; (7) the Reformation period where personal relationship with God through pastoral encounter and guiding by the faith community was the focus; (8) the Enlightenment era where secularism and modernism, life without God, trust in human rationality and empirical methods of finding truth and voluntarism were prominent; and (9) the early 20th century to the current period where there is a call to return to theology of the Reformation and Bible as well as other notable movements such as Anton Boisen and the Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), emphasising on integration between psychology and pastoral care, dominance of Freud and Carl Rogers as well as impetus on academic study of pastoral care as a developed specialised area of study.

Noting that context plays a critical role in the development of relevant pastoral care approaches, three interlinked questions emerge in the African pastoral care context, which is the focus of this article. Firstly, to what extent has pastoral care

approaches and practices in Africa been influenced by the African context and developments? Secondly, to what extent has the context and the emerging pastoral care approaches in Africa been discerned from historical developments and documented?. Thirdly, what links can be drawn between pastoral care practices in Africa and its historical as well as cultural context? In attempting to respond to these questions, this article retrieves pastoral care developments in Africa by surveying the developments that have occurred. It does so by excavating practices that are discerned as pastoral care during the period of Christianity in Africa. The notion of *cura animarum* as 'soul care' referring to care for the whole person from a Christian spiritual perspective will be employed as a framework. This framework entails considering pastoral care from a holistic care perspective. The assumption of the article is that pastoral care practices and approaches in Africa have arisen as responses to the contextual realities being experienced at the interface of Christianity and the African people. These realities arose and persist in the current African situation as a struggle to relate, apply and live out an authentic African Christian life in order to cope with life in a meaningful way.

Contextual developments that framed and influenced pastoral care

The developments that shaped pastoral care approaches in Africa are multiple and complex but related. At least seven observations of interrelated developments can be identified as having the greatest influence on the manner in which pastoral care has been practiced. The developments are not presented following a timeline.

They are observations noted to have played a role in the manner in which pastoral care has been practiced as a response to the situation.

The first observation relates to the arrival of missionaries and their evangelisation focus. When missionaries arrived in Africa like any other continent, their primary focus was evangelisation. It should be noted that the 18th century missionaries focussed on evangelising native people, which was their primary concern (Association of Religion Data Archives [ARDA] n.d; Thomas & Lamport 2016). The evangelisation focus was informed and influenced by the Reformation movement and its theological roots, among other things, which, in turn, influenced the broad pastoral approach. The pastoral care approach that largely emerged from the Reformation period focussed on personal relationship with God through pastoral encounter (Gerkin 1997; McClure 2012; Mills 1990). However, as missionaries interacted with native Africans, the needs that emerged promoted them to respond in a certain pastoral responsive way that will be discussed in the 'Pastoral care approaches during African Christian periods' section.

The second contextual development was pastoral care that was integrated with broad general Christian ministerial practices. Pastoral care was integrated within Christian

1. For a discussion on the pastoral care developments, see Gerkin (1997) (Chapters 1–2, pp. 23–97); Heitink (1993:90–99, 1999); Lartey (1997:19–29); and McClure (2012:269–278).

ministry with little or no emphasis on viewing it as a distinct ministry focus. The early missionaries considered their Christian work as one integrated ministry. Despite pastoral care developments in the West where pastoral care and practical theology were distinct (Dreyer 2014; Louw 2014), the missionaries and early African Christians focussed on one integrated Christian ministry praxis.

Thirdly, located within the broad Christian ministry work, Christianity and Christian workers who were largely missionaries came into conflict with African people's life and world view. For instance, the African spirituality and supernatural world view, communality and worship, among other things, confronted these Christians with challenges they were unfamiliar with (Aderibigbe & Medine 2015; Hastings 1994; Mbiti 1970). These early Christians and missionaries were challenged to respond to the situation to the best of their abilities based on the training they received as well as their experiences.

Fourthly, closely related to the third development, as early Christians particularly missionaries interfaced with African people's world view and practices, some of the ministry and pastoral care approaches that were developed were viewed as inappropriate and were resisted. This resulted in a push back politically and theologically. African theological reflection movements were born out of this resistance. For instance, African theology emerged as a reaction to the early Western missionaries and some Western theologians that advocated for the elimination of all that had to do with pre-Christian African tradition (Bediako 1997).

The fifth contextual dynamic was the 'marriage' or 'alliance' that was formed between missionaries and their Christian agenda with colonial governments. Missionaries colluded consciously or unconsciously with colonial governments to build institutions that were legitimised as instruments of advancing Christian ministry without upsetting the *status quo* (Okon 2014; Vallgård 2016). Okon (2014:192) asked the following questions: 'What was the relationship between missionaries, traders and administrators in the colonial era? What can we identify as the predetermined objective of colonialism vis-a-vis missions in Africa?' He established the collusion relationship and makes a compelling case of the relationship in his paper, entitled 'Christian Missions and colonial rule in Africa'. For instance, schools were built to educate people with an underlying motive to prepare them to read the Bible, among other things.

The sixth development relates to the developments that occurred at the onset of democracy in many African countries and also in post-colonial Africa. Linked to the fourth and fifth points, there has been a notable increase in the assertion for recognition and respect of African way of life, world view and norms that were negatively portrayed by early Christians, particularly missionaries. These developments have taken the form of exploring and developing authentic African Christian and pastoral approaches (Bediako 1997). African theology groupings and movements such as Reconstruction

theology or Circle of Concerned Women Theologians are no longer reactionary or apologetic theological movements but have progressed to explore development of models that address African issues (Mugambi 2003; Phiri 2008).

The seventh development relates to the proliferating indigenous African churches. Nwachuku (2014) rightly noted that Christianity and theology in Africa are caught in a quandary of fast-growing African independent churches (AICs) that belong to two categories. The first group entails those churches that belong to the Zionists or white garment churches that worship under the trees. These churches draw their practices from African traditional religion and the Bible. The second group is of churches with a charismatic and Pentecostal outlook.

They are emerging in all corners of cities. Therefore, Nwachuku concluded that the greatest challenge in Africa today is no longer the referencing and importing of Western practices as was the case during missionaries' era but how to bring personal theologies of daily life that are often informed by subjective experiences into a meaningful scholarly engagement. This situation is resulting in the emergence of some forms of pastoral care.

The above contextual sketch highlights the diverse developments arising in the African Christian space. The notion of space is more than physical space. It denotes, among other things, contextual and existential dynamics within the practice of Christianity where the Christian faith interfaces with the reality of African people's lived experiences. The developments are non-linear, intermixed and overlapping. Against these developments, there have been pastoral care approaches and practices that have been employed and continue to be presently employed.

Therefore, the questions that are posed to guide our next discussion are: What pastoral care approaches and practices emerged at the praxis level within the above context as well as in response to prevailing challenges? How are these pastoral care practices linked to historical and cultural contexts? To follow a systematic approach, the pastoral care practices will be discerned and retrieved from the broad African Christian history time frames.

Pastoral care approaches during African Christian periods

The pastoral care approaches that have emerged in Africa occurred within the context of practical Christian ministry. Accordingly, these developments should be understood from the perspective of theology intra-disciplinary perspective where, for instance, preaching, missionary work, pastoral care and other areas of theology occurred in an integrated way. Thus, the exercise of attempting to outline pastoral care is akin to a sifting and selection of artefacts based on how pastoral care has become to be known based on the broad markers by the 'so-called pastoral care theologians for which I am one'.

Origin of Christianity in Africa: Pre-missionary era and pastoral care

One historical fact that is widely held by church historians is that Christianity started well before the era of colonialism.² This history is well described by Fatokun (2005) in his essay, 'Christianity in Africa: a historical appraisal', that we will substantially draw from in this section. The first urban centre of Christianity in Africa was Alexandria in Egypt (Fatokun 2005:358). It is acknowledged that the New Testament has no record of missionary activity in Africa and yet various contacts are implied (Fatokun 2005:357–368; Grove 1948:58). For instance, the story of Joseph and Mary (Mt 2:13–15) and the story of the Ethiopian Eunuch who was converted to Christianity on his way back to Africa through Phillip's interpretation of the gospel to him (Ac 8:26–40) substantiate this fact. Furthermore, the Coptic Christian tradition states that the Gospel of Jesus Christ was brought to Egypt and Alexandria by Mark the Evangelist (Fatokun 2005:358). Although this view is contradicted by another tradition, the Syrian *Clementine Homilies*, which portrays the apostle Barnabas as the first one to preach the gospel on the streets of Alexandria after his break with Paul, the Coptic Christian tradition casts light on the fact that Christianity in Africa came well before the advent of colonialism in Africa.

In Fatokun's (2005:359) view, the fact that Christianity came to Africa before colonialism can be further substantiated by the fact that the first theological learning and catechetical schools started in Alexandria. Thus, the Egyptian church claims its important influential role in the development of theological learning. While the precise date that Christianity penetrated North Africa cannot be identified with certainty, it cannot be denied that North Africa was a centre for Christianity in Africa in earlier times. The origin of Christianity in this region was before 180 AD as that was the period in which the church in that region became famous as a result of the martyrdom of 12 of its members who refused to sacrifice their Christian faith by succumbing to the opposing forces of their days (Fatokun 2005:360). Fatokun (2005:360) citing Grove (1948:59) indicated that the martyred Christians were Christians from Scillium in Numidia – seven men and five women who were tried, condemned and executed in Carthage on 17 July 180 AD. After the aforementioned martyrdom of Christians in North Africa central, the church in North Africa grew rapidly since the beginning of the 4th century. It witnessed the presence of over 250 bishoprics (Fatokun 2005:360). At this point in time, the church in North Africa central became more vigorous, comprising well-intellectualised, well-disciplined and well-organised Christians.

Ethiopia is also considered the major centre of early Christianity in Africa (Fatokun 2005:360). In drawing from Hildebrandt (1981), Fatokun (2005:360) described the

penetration of early Christianity in Ethiopia as a third major centre of early Christianity in Africa (Fatokun 2005):

The Church apparently spread through this region when, in the fourth century, two Christians named Frumentius and Edesius arrived there from Tyre. The local church traces its origin to the time when these two disciples of Christ preached the gospel in the Kingdom of Axium. Many years after the initial contact, Frumentius went to Athanasius (Bishop of Alexandria) from whom he received Episcopal consecration in 350 AD. On his return there developed a great expansion of the Church in Abyssinia. Tradition has it that after winning over the king of Axium, Christianity became the official religion in the region and a large church was subsequently built there. (pp. 360–361)

The Ethiopian church was further strengthened in the 5th and 16th centuries by the arrival and activities of the Syrian missionaries from the Church of Syria (Fatokun 2005:361). Fatokun (2005:361) stated that these missionaries strengthened the church by commencing monasteries and translating the New Testament into the vernacular language of the Ethiopians. The fourth centre of Christianity was Nubia (Fatokun 2005:361). This church has its origins in the 6th century during the reign of Presbyter Justinian in 527–565 AD. It was born out of two different missions, namely, the first mission under the leadership of Presbyter Julian (a monophysite from Egyptian) who established a church in the then region of Nabodae in Northern Sudan (Fatokun 2005:361). The second mission came to Sudan in the time shortly after Julian came to power. However, the Christology of this second mission was not Monophysite; thus, it resulted in doctrinal disputes in that early church. In view of these developments, it is observed that (Fatokun 2005):

With missionary activity in both the Northern and Southern regions of the country, the Christian faith took strong root and greatly flourished also in this part of North (Eastern) Africa. Many Churches were built and the region, like its neighbours to the north, became a Christian kingdom for many years to come. (p. 361)³

The pastoral care question that arises from this period is: How was pastoral care practiced? A response to this question can be answered from inferences as there is no literature that devoted to write exclusively about pastoral care. The first inference was that pastoral care was an organic and integrated ministry of the church. The ministry was part of the process of establishing the church. The second inference is the focus on making Christians' understand and relate to the Bible through intense teaching. The theological learning and catechetical schools provided a strong foundation to Christians. Pastoral care was about making people to know and understand the Bible. The third inference is Christian sacrifice and devotion as a result of deep Christian foundation. Martyrdom did not extinguish the Christian spirit but seemed to fan it. The fourth inference entails a vigorous, well-intellectualised, well-disciplined and well-organised Christians. It seems that pastoral care was

²It is noted that this can be contested by historians as the Hellenists for one were known to have colonies. However, it depends on the definition used for colonialism. The subject of what is colonialism and when it started is widely discussed by historians, which is not the focus of this article.

³For a detailed discussion on Christianity in Africa, see Isichei (1995); Sundkler and Steed (2000); and Kalu (2005).

shaped and organised by Christians and churches to ensure functional structures. The approaches are summarised and described in a thematic matrix below.

The realisation that Christianity and church establishment in Africa predates the early missionary era helps us understand the broader historical roots. Because of this reality, it therefore suggests that African lessons for pastoral care should be gleaned beyond the missionary era period.

Missionary period era pastoral care approaches

Building of schools to educate Africans as a form of pastoral care

In the article, entitled 'Christian Missions in Africa and their role in the transformation of African societies', Pawliková-Vilhanová (2007:249) examined the role of missionaries in transforming societies in Africa. He argued that the third phase of missionary movement in Africa (namely, the end of the 18th century until the 20th century) resulted in a dramatic expansion of Christianity called the fourth great age of Christian expansion in Africa. He observed that the missionary pioneers of the third missionary movement managed to expand Christianity in Africa because they built denomination mission schools and disseminated education (Gray 2018:89–100; Pawliková-Vilhanová 2007:249). The mission schools built in the third phase of missionary movement in Africa disseminated education to Africans and attracted Africans to the Christian faith (Pawliková-Vilhanová 2007:249). This expansion of Christianity in Africa was also because of production of grammar, dictionaries, textbooks and translation of religious texts of missionaries to African indigenous language. This laid the foundation for literature in African languages. However, Pawliková-Vilhanová (2007) argued that Christian enterprise was significant for the Westernisation of Africa. This Westernisation of Africa was also precipitated by the fact that Africans were not resistant⁴ to new influences and cultural patterns that differed from theirs (Gray 2018:89–100; Pawliková-Vilhanová 2007:249).

While the built schools played a critical educational role, it is also clear that Western missionaries' efforts conflated with colonialism. Pawliková-Vilhanová (2007:256) maintained that the consequences of missionary activities were manifold. Mission schools grew out of the desire to spread the gospel, that is, conversion, education and training went hand in hand. The primary goal of the missionaries was to win the converts. Pawliková-Vilhanová (2007:256) noted that religion was at the forefront of all mission schools' curricula. Most missions provided basic support to ensure the inculcation of proper Christian principles and enable Africans attending mission schools to become good Christians. Pawliková-Vilhanová (2007:257) maintained that 'Both White Fathers and Protestant missionaries hoped that in providing education they would

4.This point does not suggest that there was absolutely no resistance but presents an overall broad picture. There are documented examples of resistance to cultural influences throughout Africa that many missionaries commented upon regarding the resistance they encountered from local chiefs not to teach their children to read and write.

also be able to form Christian character'. The missionary schools that were established by the missionaries were usually boarding schools that sought to remove African converts from the traditional cultural influences of their homes, thus reducing the chances of the new converts giving up their Christian faith as they were isolated from their pagan communities (Pawliková-Vilhanová 2007:257). In addition, the schooling system of the Western missionaries seemed to promote Western values and desires, as the forms of religious services although translated into African languages were reproductions of the liturgy of their home church, replete with hymns.

The pastoral care approaches embedded within these practices were threefold. Firstly, holistic pastoral care related to deepening Christian education and understanding of the Christian message that was integrated with the need to provide education to African children. During this period, missionaries provided schools for African Christian children to be taught more about God and the Christian values as they were raised in the Christian faith (Pawliková-Vilhanová 2007:249). Furthermore, non-Christian children could be enrolled in the mission schools and get converted and nurtured in Christian values and ethos. In these cases, the future of African people and children was cared for through educational enlightenment. The pastoral approach was a holistic approach where spiritual needs to understand the Bible were integrated with educational needs.

Secondly, pastoral care entailed adaptation of the Christian message to the local people, which took the form of developing indigenous languages and translation of missionaries' religious texts to be understood by the local people. This served to deepen Christian faith by adapting it to the people's context in order that they understood the Christian faith, life and message. Thirdly, pastoral care entails Christian character formation (Christian values and discipline) through a change of cultural patterns to include church attendance, Christian morality, table manners and so on (Pawliková-Vilhanová 2007:257).

The translation of the Christian religious literature into African vernacular by missionaries as a form of pastoral care

Extending the above discussion, it is important to note that the provision of Africans with grammar, dictionaries, textbooks and translation of religious text by missionaries in African indigenous languages can be termed pastoral care. The aim was to make African Christians literate so that they can read the Bible in their own language and address issues that they struggle with as they hear God speaking and confronting them in their indigenous languages (Pawliková-Vilhanová 2007:255–257). Western missionaries were empowering Africans as a means of enabling them to understand the Word of God in their indigenous language and relate to their life challenges. African converts could meet, hear and listen to God speaking in their own languages as he addresses their African contextual needs.

In his hermeneutic of the identity method, Bediako (1995) underscored the importance of translating the Bible into the vernacular of African Christians when he stressed in his theological framework that the church in Africa should 'possess a viable heritage of Christian tradition in its indigenous language' through the translatability of the gospel into various traditional African cultures (Bediako 1995:61). For Bediako (1995:109), 'translatability is also another way of saying universality' and 'the translatability of the Christian religion signifies its fundamental relevance and accessibility to persons in any culture within which the Christian faith is transmitted and assimilated'. This means African Christians will reflect a deeper understanding of the saving work of Christ (Balcomb 1998:12).

From this approach, pastoral care entailed three aspects. Firstly, enabling people to hear God in their language in order to relate to him (God) in their contextual challenges. Secondly, empowerment of individuals to read the Bible and address their own issues. Thirdly, translation of God in a manner that addresses people's existential experience. Thus, overall, pastoral care in this sense was a sort of contextual incarnational theology to engage Christians in their own context.

Early Western missionaries' pastoral care to African converts' problems of the spiritual world

There is a general understanding among scholars that early Western missionaries imposed their presupposed superior world view upon African people 'mainly at a presuppositional level' (Bosch 1991:292). Some missionaries were concerned with the promotion of Western culture (Aguwa 2007:127–128; Setiloane 1976:89), as they were convinced that their cultural beliefs were superior to traditional African beliefs. Interestingly, the Western missionaries' mindset was so dominant that any cultural differences between Western missionaries and any particular group of Africans 'would have been mere evidence of how depraved and uncivilized the lower (African) races were' (Setiloane 1976:89). There is a shared understanding among African theologians that most early Western missionaries were dismissive of traditional African beliefs in invisible forces, which had a real negative impact on African lives (Adewuya 2012:253–254; Aho 2005:102; Ezigbo 2008:2–18; Ishola 2002:44–60). Missionaries regarded African spiritual forces as merely superstitious or irrational beliefs that could be addressed by a process of civilisation (Ezigbo 2008:2–17; Imasogie 1983:46–53; Ncozana 2002:147; Te Haar 2007:45).

To some extent, the above approach resulted in missionaries failing to recognise the reality of African people's context of supernatural spirits. For instance, Casalis (1992:vi, xvii, 270–271), who arrived in Africa in 1833, was one of the missionaries who failed to recognise the African Christians' fears and challenges of spiritual forces that emanated from the world of spiritual powers. He dismissed traditional African beliefs as irrational, unscientific or superstitious. Similarly, David Livingstone, a British medical doctor, missionary and explorer, believed that traditional African

beliefs were superstitious beliefs that could be eradicated through civilisation (Conradie 2013:118–130). Conradie (2013:119) further noted that Livingstone encouraged a 'cultural value system that would facilitate education, health and law and order' as a means of eliminating traditional African beliefs and the negative influence of spiritual powers in their lives.

Emerging from the missionaries' stance above, their pastoral approach therefore sought to confront, dispel and shift this supernatural spiritual world mentality and influence. Therefore, the pastoral care approach employed entailed three aspects. Firstly, influencing Africans with the gospel so that they abandon their African traditional customs and beliefs. Some Western missionaries banned some traditional life aspects and religions of African converts. Secondly, encouraging Africans to work hard as a way of protecting African converts from being tempted to revert to their former traditional life and religion. Thirdly, practical supervision of African converts to the Christian faith to inhibit them from reverting to their traditional life, customs and religion. They were supervised to safeguard them from falling back to their former traditional lives and religion. Thus, despite questionable approaches and motives, conversion, hard work and spiritual protection through supportive structures were encouraged as evident pastoral care efforts.

Medical health centres as a form of missionaries' pastoral care

Manala (2013:285–302) argued that missionaries in the sub-Saharan region established medical centres, mission hospitals and clinics, which improved the health of those who lived in the region. Some of the missionaries sought to overcome the notion of African spiritual forces and their dependence on diviners by building clinics, hospitals or medical centres for African Christians. In doing so, the missionaries aimed to prevent the African converts from reverting to their former traditional diviners for treatment because they were now treated at mission hospitals and clinics as a Christian alternative. However, it can be argued that while building of health care facilities provided important medical care, for many African converts, this did not address the issue of traditional African spirituality of believing in supernatural forces (Banda 2005:2–6; Nurnberger 2007:8–42). As a result of this, there was high health pluralism where people applied Western medicine together with African medicine, including addressing of spiritual forces. At a Christian spirituality level, this resulted in syncretism where African Christians would adhere to Christian values and principles during the day and call on traditional healers at night to hide away from missionaries (Ejenobo 2009:77–78).

The approach of the missionaries entailed providing holistic pastoral care. The holistic pastoral care of missionaries was understood well by Nkomazana (1998) when he wrote that:

Livingstone's concept of missionary enterprise differed from most of his older colleagues among London Missionary Society (LMS) missionaries. He saw mission centres not only for strictly evangelization purposes, but encompassing the whole spectrum

of human activity. He divided these into three categories: commerce, Christianity, and civilization (meaning good government, education etc.). (p. 44)

Notably, therefore, building of hospitals and any other educational and empowerment interventions were performed as part of holistic Christian duty. Accordingly, pastoral care entailed (1) establishment of practical ministries of care such as hospitals to treat sick people, (2) development of skills to uplift people's lives and (3) modelling of whole life in Christ. Many people followed missionaries and got converted because of the Western lifestyle they lived.

Emerging responsive pastoral care by African practitioners: Theological movements as pastoral care

Pastoral care within African theology movement during and prior to African democracies

The African theological movements that emerged prior to and during democracy of African states are African theology and black theology. They arose in response to the mistakes, oversights and disregard of African people's culture, practices and world view by missionaries. Bediako (1997:426–444) rightly observed that African theology emerged as a reaction to the early Western missionaries and some Western theologians who advocated for the elimination of all that have to do with pre-Christian tradition in Africa. Bowers (2002:109–125) explained that the term African theology commonly refers to the lively conversation within the African Christian community that, beginning early in the 1960s and increasing unabated to the present, seeks to address the intellectual and theological issues that concern African people on the African continent. Maluleke (2005:485–501) clarified that 'African culture and African religion have long been acknowledged (albeit sometimes grudgingly) as the womb out of which African Christian theology must be and/or has been born'.

Bujo (1992) added that the quest for a definitive African theology only became an academic concern in the late 1950s and the 1960s. The theoretical framework behind the reflections that led to the emergence of African theology as Nkansah-Obrempong (2007:140–150) argued is twofold: firstly, the African 'Personality' in Anglophone Africa and the 'Negritude' movement of Francophone Africa. African theology puts African religion and culture forward as an important interpretive framework for African Christianity (Maluleke 2005:489).

Bediako (1997:426ff.) linked African theology and black theology by tracing the context out of which African theology was born. The context is firstly the struggle for the social and political transformation of the conditions of inequality and oppression in South Africa that gave rise to black theology. Black theology is a theology of liberation in the African setting. The second context is the theological explorations into the indigenous cultures of the African peoples who gave rise to a different theological strand designated as African theology.

Historically, black theology in South Africa is an import from the United States where it originated. Black theology developed in the black culture and black churches of the United States where, for centuries, black American people were segregated and marginalised in a white racist society. The influence of this theology extended throughout the Caribbean, all the way to South Africa (Mwambazambi 2010:1–7). While African theology and black theology can be distinguished and are somewhat different, the two theologies have arguably converged in recent years. Mwambazambi (2010) considers black theology as a branch of African theology as he noted that, 'within African theology, the South African branch was called South African Black theology' (Mwambazambi 2010:2).

It is important to note regarding African theology and black theology that even though their foci are slightly different, they are closely related. The pastoral care approach that emerged from the black theology movement is pastoral care of promise and resistance amidst the pain of oppression and racism. African theology with its roots from Africa's traumatic experience with Western imperialism and missionaries focusses on reaction and response of Africans to the West and the Christian model imposed on the African people. Therefore, pastoral care approach arising from African theology is pastoral care as affirmation of African culture and identity. Thus, overall, both African theology and black theology pursue dignity, liberation, recognition and emancipation of the African people. The pastoral care approach integrates some kind of activism and political theology. The pastoral care entails, among other things, demanding respect and recognition for African people and their culture, resistance to oppression of African people, instilling promise and dignity among African people, adaptation and contextualisation of Christian ministry to effectively address African people's contextual realities and assertion.

Pastoral care within African theology movements in democratic African countries

African theology and black theology started during colonial periods and are still continuing as theological reflection approaches. However, the two African theologies that emerged in recent years are African Reconstruction Theology and the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians. Reconstruction theology is suggested as a theological approach to replace black theology (Mugambi 1995, 2003; Villa-Vicencio 1992).

In advocating for Reconstruction theology, Mugambi (2003:128) argued that all forms of African theology or black theology should shift emphasis from the Exodus motif of liberation to a theology of reconstruction. Mugambi argued that the problems of racism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, bad governance, corruption, poor leadership, and so on, have caused major destruction in African societies; hence, Africa needs a theology of rebuilding rather than reacting or being apologetic to the West. The reconstruction should happen at three levels: (1) personal level dealing with efforts to

reconstruct personal life (finances, intentions, motives, etc.), (2) ecclesial level where the church and its theology engage public issues to propel society in the direction of rebuilding what had been destroyed through colonialism and (3) cultural-level dealing with cultural reorientation involving economic, political, social and ethical issues. Reconstruction theology challenges the proponents of black theology to shift their position from the clamour for justice and equity to reconstruction (Villa-Vicencio 1992:7–9). Theological proclamation for justice and affirmation of human dignity by the church should stir her (the church) to action that restores humans from their sufferings. In Villa-Vicencio's view, theology of reconstruction integrates all issues that affect humanity such as political, social, economic and legal aspects of life. In Mugambi's (1995:7–9) comprehensive definition of what he means by theology of reconstruction, he argues that theology of reconstruction is an all-encompassing notion – an action that affects all aspects of life. Apart from Reconstruction theology, a group of women theologians in Africa called 'The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians', which is a community of African women theologians, have generated considerable theological work. They do not necessarily focus on broad African theological issues but reflect on what it means to them to be women of faith within their experiences of religion, culture, politics and socio-economic structures in Africa (Phiri 2008:63–81). The circle has produced research on women of faith in Africa since its establishment in 1989.

In some kind of vision expression, the pastoral care approaches that can be deduced from Reconstruction theology is Christian ministry or theological motivation where pastoral care should drive social and community development and transformation. Pastoral care is a form of public theology that should change systems and structures, a kind of Christian social activism. Pastoral care also entails being a vehicle for social moral conscience, particularly within public spaces and among officials. Pastoral care also entails instilling a sense of citizen responsibility and innovativeness to resolve public issues rather than blaming external forces on post-colonial Africa. The pastoral care approach emerging from the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians is pastoral care as creation of a theological space for voicing, venting and catharsis among oppressed women because of patriarchal influence of theology and the structures that have been developed over the years to sustain the status quo. It is about expression, representing the views, feelings and ideas of marginalised women.

Pastoral care by pastoral care theologians

It should be noted, as already indicated earlier, that pastoral care in Africa has been integrated in broad Christian ministry practice. However, a distinction (though unclear!) should be made between general theological writings and particular writings of pastoral care theologians in an effort to articulate the notion of 'pastoral care in Africa'. A notable development in pastoral care in Africa has been the establishment of the

African Association for Pastoral Studies and Counselling (AAPSC) in February 1985 at Limuru, Kenya. The AAPSC was established to promote the advancement of pastoral studies and counselling from a distinctively African perspective and world view. It seeks to encourage specialised consultation, researched publications and training in clinical and counselling education relevant to the African situation (Magezi 2016:2). A number of AAPSC conferences have been held to advance pastoral care scholarship in Africa (i.e. Kinshasa [Democratic Republic of Congo], Accra [Ghana] 1993, Pretoria [South Africa] 1997, Yaoundé [Cameroon] 2001, Abuja [Nigeria] 2001, Stellenbosch [South Africa] 2009, Accra [Ghana] 2018). These conferences have generated significant African pastoral care literature. For instance, African scholars' contributions to the publication by the Society for Intercultural Pastoral Care and Counselling have been based on Contributions in International Seminars (1988–2008) and Pastoral Care and Counselling Today Manuscript (1991). These publications contain essays with a focus on African pastoral care issues authored by African Pastoral Care theologians, including Masamba ma Mpolo, Kongo (Democratic Republic of Congo), Emmanuel Y. Lartey (based in the United States but originally from Ghana), Charles K. Konadu (Ghana), Wilhelmina J. Kalu and Daisy N. Nwachuku (Nigeria), Daniel J. Louw, Julian Müller and Stephan de Beer (South Africa), Archiboldy Elifatio Lyimo and Derrick Lwekika (Tanzania) and Rose Zoé-Obianga (Cameroon). Other developments can be noted, but our interest is in the pastoral care approaches advanced.

Ma Mpolo (2013) who was instrumental with other African Pastoral care theologians trailblazers in establishing AAPSC argued that there are clearly discernible elements that are common in Africa. These elements can be found in different forms and he (Ma Mpolo) called them *homo africanus* elements. These are sanctity of life; relation between illness, misfortune and sin; spirits and ancestors in the life of the community; and life experienced as a whole. Magezi (2016) in his article, 'Reflection on pastoral care in Africa: Towards discerning emerging pragmatic pastoral ministerial responses', Louw (2008) in his publication, 'Cura vitae: Illness and the healing of life in pastoral care and counselling', and other pastoral care theologians writing from the perspective of African spirituality describe these elements in considerable detail. However, the basic argument advanced is that African pastoral care and philosophy should focus on the above four qualities (the *homo africanus* elements) if pastoral care is to be effective and address African people's realities. Pastoral care should respond to and address the challenges that arise from the threat of wholeness. People should be whole and anything that threatens this should be addressed. Pastoral care should focus on physical healing rather than spiritual healing. Pastoral care should include a strong dimension of fostering community life. A human being lives an abundant life when he or she shares life with others and lives in communion with others. Pastoral care should also address spirituality issues. There is the need to recognise the pervasiveness of supernatural spiritual forces and engage them. Notwithstanding, the

insightful recommendations of Ma Mpolo (2013) and others who anchor pastoral care in Africa on these four campus elements, discussions on the current practices and efforts are much complex. Lartey (2017:viii) in the introduction to the book, *Pastoral Care, Health, Healing, and Wholeness in African Contexts: Methodology, Context and Issues*, rightly observed that Christian ministry practice in African contexts has been influenced as well as interfaced with three bodies of knowledge that has informed pastoral care practices. These bodies are (1) theology (Bible, history and Christian teaching), (2) human sciences (including sociology, psychology and health sciences) and (3) culture (African beliefs, practices and traditions).

This clearly indicates that the four *homo Africanus* elements have been altered and moderated, while in some instances, these elements have integrated with other knowledges. In other instances, these elements have been written off by some Africans, especially those in the diaspora and living in urban contexts.

Pastoral care as it happens at the praxis level in Africa

The previous sections retrieved some pastoral care aspects from African church history developments, African theologians and pastoral care practitioners. However, it is important to underline that pastoral care approaches adopted by academic practitioners and church people (pastors) providing pastoral care at the praxis level on a daily basis differ. Bowers (2009:91–114) observed that African intellectuals tend to focus on debates where they look for categories that are relevant in African culture at the theoretical level, which is sometimes not applicable at the praxis level. Church leaders at the praxis level are more interested in pastoral implications of the academic and theoretical discussions. Magezi (2016:5) noted that the people (pastors) providing pastoral care at the forefront of ministry on a daily basis tend to adopt multiplicity of approaches administering and practicing pastoral care in real-life situations. For this reason, Tiéno (1990:73–76) rightly advised that the defining matrix of ministry in Africa, with its needs and expectations, its requirements and preoccupations, is the Christian community.

Tiéno's argument is that sometimes, African intellectual categories do not reflect the needs and practicalities of church and pastoral care in life on people at the practical level.

To ensure that pastoral care approaches at the practical level in Africa are understood, Magezi (2016:5–6) outlined seven discernible ways on how pastoral care is happening at the practical level in Africa. These ways organically arise as responses to the context of people's pastoral needs. These approaches are distinct but integrated. They are often practiced eclectically. The application of these approaches is influenced, among other things, by church background, intensity of problems, position in family, distance of an individual from traditional extended family, level of education and age. These are (1) mixing African traditional

practices and Christian pastoral care practices, (2) maintaining dichotomy between Christian values and practical life, (3) alienation from family and community because of Christian devotion in difficult times, (4) formation of family and community coping support structures, (5) family group enrichment, (6) exorcism and healing and (7) abandonment of the Christian faith and its approaches to care and adopting a traditional African approach.

From the practices employed at the praxis level, pastoral care entails engaging a problem from the prevailing needs. The practices are employed in an eclectic way. The type of pastoral care provided is informed by the person's need and context.

The summary of the various pastoral care approaches discussed above is summarised in Table 1.

Pastoral care in Africa and the future – Proposition for effective pastoral caregiving

The previous discussions on pastoral care approaches during African Christian periods revealed that there are various ways in which pastoral care should be understood. Prior to the missionary era, the early African church employed pastoral care practices that largely focussed on theological training. The missionary era was characterised by pragmatic approaches and imposition of Western approaches in a manner that neglected African people's culture and world view. The rise of African theological intellectualism resulted in resistance against Western culture and values imposition, assertion of African culture and advancement of approaches that affirmed African people's dignity as well as response to African people's issues in a respectful way. However, at the praxis level where people in ministry engage with issues on a daily basis, the approaches have been characterised by being eclectic with no definitive approaches.

The location of pastoral care as part of church ministry in Africa is in line with trends in pastoral care (Gerkin 1997; Heitink 1993; Magezi 2016; Van Arkel 2000) where the care is provided from the perspective of the Christian faith and spirituality within a context of the faith (Christian) community. However, the multiplicity of approaches with little focus and defined approaches poses a huge threat and challenge to pastoral care.

Nwachuku (2014:515–524) who is a leading and respected pastoral care theologian in Africa observed that the pioneering struggles of Bediako, Idowu, Mbiti, Pobee and many other African theologians to have African churches that bear and reflect African-ness have been achieved and even overtaken. However, she lamented that the greatest challenge in Africa today is no longer the referencing and importing of Western practices but how to bring personal theologies of daily life that are often informed by subjective experiences into a meaningful scholarly engagement. There is the need for a balance between practice (popular level) and

TABLE 1: Summary of pastoral care approaches during the different periods.

Period	Pastoral care approaches
Pre-missionary era and pastoral care	<p>Pastoral care was organic and integrated within the ministry of the church</p> <p>Pastoral care was about making people know and understand the Bible – theological learning and catechetical schools</p> <p>Pastoral care engendered Christian sacrifice and devotion as a result of in-depth Christian foundation</p> <p>Pastoral care focussed on vigorous, well-intellectualised, well-disciplined and well-organised Christians</p>
Missionary era	<p>Building of schools to educate Africans as a form of pastoral care</p> <p>Holistic pastoral care – educational enlightenment through Christian education and understanding that was integrated with the need to provide education</p> <p>Pastoral care as adaptation of Christian message – translation of missionary texts to local languages and efforts</p> <p>Pastoral care as Christian character formation – Christian values and discipline</p> <p>The translation of the Christian religious literature into African vernacular as a form of pastoral care</p> <p>Pastoral care as enabling people to hear God in their language in order to relate to him (God) in their contextual challenges</p> <p>Pastoral care as empowerment of individuals to read the Bible and address their own issues</p> <p>Pastoral care as translation of God in a manner that addresses people's existential experience</p> <p>Early Western missionaries' pastoral care to African converts' problems of spiritual world</p> <p>Pastoral care entailed encouraging conversion</p> <p>Pastoral care entailed encouraging hard work</p> <p>Pastoral care entailed spiritual protection through supportive structures</p> <p>Medical health centres as a form of missionaries' pastoral care</p> <p>Pastoral care entailed establishment of practical ministries of care such as hospitals to treat sick people</p> <p>Pastoral care entailed development of skills to uplift people's lives</p> <p>Modelling of a Christian life by missionaries</p>
Pastoral care by African practitioners – theological movements	<p>Pastoral care of African theology movement during and prior to African democracies</p> <p>Pastoral care as affirmation of African culture as well recognition of the importance of African people's culture</p> <p>Pastoral care as resistance to oppression of black people</p> <p>Pastoral care of promise and emancipation</p> <p>Pastoral care as assertion demanding respect</p> <p>Pastoral care of collegiality at global Christianity roundtable</p> <p>Pastoral care of engagement with African people's lives and world view</p> <p>Pastoral care as an adapted and contextualised Christian ministry</p> <p>Pastoral care in democratic African countries – Reconstruction theology</p> <p>Pastoral care as social transformation and social and community development</p> <p>Pastoral care as public theology to change systems and structures</p> <p>Pastoral care as social activism</p> <p>Pastoral care as a vehicle for social moral conscience</p> <p>Pastoral care as inculcating responsibility rather than blame</p> <p>Pastoral care in democratic African countries – circle of concerned women theologians</p> <p>Pastoral care as theological space for voice, venting and catharsis</p>
Pastoral care by pastoral care theologians	<p>Pastoral care should be contextual ministry that addresses four key issues critical to African people's sanctity of life; relation between illness, misfortune and sin; spirits and ancestors in the life of the community; and life experienced as a whole.</p>
Pastoral care as it happens (the praxis level)	<p>Pastoral care as eclectically responding to people's needs</p> <p>Pastoral as responsive to human needs in their family and community context</p>

academic or intellectual reflection. Both approaches are legitimate, but if pastoral care practitioners are to proceed effectively, there is the need to engage in intellectual reflection while paying attention to praxis. The intellectual preoccupations should not be at a tangent to what is practically happening in the lives of people (Bowers 2009:94–100; Tiéno 1990:74–76). Intellectual theories should be tested on the praxis front. In the recent volume, *African Practical Theology: Pastoral Care, Health, Healing, and Wholeness in African Contexts*, edited by Mucherera and Lartey (2017), they rightly noted that African heritage and ways of life are expressed and lived rather than reflected intellectually. This reality should be noted.

There is a clear gap that exists in pastoral care in Africa. In many respects, pastoral care seems to be stuck and preoccupied with the elements that Ma Mpolo (2013) called the *homo africanus* elements. These elements are important for pastoral care, as they form the foundation for African people. However, they are deficient in addressing emerging challenges in the modern and technologically advanced Africa. For instance, providing care within Africa is sandwiched between modernity and African traditional patterns (Magezi 2010). Commenting on the backward looking of African theological focus, Lartey (2013) stated that African-led churches even in the diaspora exhibit backward African thinking and much less progressive African thinking. Gifford (2008) advised that promoting

'traditional' forms is worthwhile, but this should not be performed uncritically. African traditional norms should not be promoted in a manner that is regressive by encouraging Africa to return to the past. If African Christianity and indeed pastoral care are to contribute to the world of Christianity, they should reconsider and improve their agenda in light of contemporary African challenges. The current reflection efforts on pastoral care seem not deep enough. There is a gap regarding substantial systematic consideration of pastoral care. It is important for pastoral care to respond to contextual challenges and critically reflect on its theory as well as its contribution to global care rather than be narrowly focussed.

Therefore, as a way forward, the following suggestions can be made as pointers to focus and strengthen pastoral care in Africa.

Firstly, pastoral care approaches should engage and pastorally respond to the need for holistic protection. Holistic protection relates to (1) protection from spiritual forces (angry ancestors, witchcraft, bad omen and spells, etc.), (2) physical protection from possible life threats to one's life (work, family, finances, etc.) and (3) physical health. This calls for proficiency, appreciation and awareness of African world view, interpretational framework, life patterns and reality of people's continuous state of fear. The engagement

should be both at an academic reflection level to develop relevant theoretical frames and at a practical level. Mucherera and Lartey's (2017) edited volume, *African Practical Theology: Pastoral Care, Health, Healing, and Wholeness in African Contexts*, is an example of efforts to contribute to addressing this void.

Secondly, the need to develop pastoral care that is sensitive to and addresses the balance between the tension of individual (I) and community (us or we). Pastoral care with its spiritual resources calls for individual choices and yet such choices are suppressed in many African communities. Furthermore, the individuals live within a context where there is pressure from global economics, consumerism and globalisation. This results in compounding one's problems as there are sometimes added family tensions and pressure. Magezi (2006:505–521, 2018:1–8) discusses some of these tensions. They include intrapsychic tension and dissonance as a result of community preferences versus individual preferences; rural and urban tension and the ensuing challenges of living an African rural communal life versus Western life (individualistic focus) mostly in urban centres; family tension and threat of isolation where an individual lives in-between worlds, that is, urban and rural life styles, and the resultant challenge of double allegiance; split personality between adhering to and focussing on nuclear family versus the extended family; adhering to African tradition and Christian redefined way of living (Christian transformation); conflict between humanity based on geographical location, relationality and blood connection versus brotherhood of people outside geographical location (them) and the resultant implications on nepotism and public ethics; confusion or identify redefinition within the complexity of global forces (Who am I?) within African complex realities; African tradition versus Christianity (What does a new life in Christ mean or entail? Who am I in relation to my family or community? Am I an economic machine? Where do I stand in view of changing values and life patterns? What is my role in preserving family needs and heritage?); integrated and connected spirituality (What does it mean to be truly Christian and truly African who upholds his or her values?)

Thirdly, pastoral care should engage in efforts to empower and give voice to the marginalised groups. These groups include young people and women. Hendriks (2014:61–80) rightly observed that theology in Africa should hear the voices from the fringes. The majority of people in Africa are women and young people. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) report on world population states that the world has more young people than any other period in human history. There are 1.8 billion young people between the ages of 10 and 24 years, and the youth population is growing the fastest in developing countries (UNFPA 2014:ii). The high number of young people noted by UNFPA (2014) reflects potential for economic and social progress. The United Nations Population Fund (2014:ii) advised that the manner in which the individual countries harness the

potential of young people defines the world's common future. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) noted that the youth bulge has investment implications for education, health and economic development (UNESCO 2013:12).

Listening to and respecting young people and women's views in decision-making is critical. This entails engaging structural issues, such as patriarchy, and other issues that compromise the marginalised people, such as corruption, bad governance, through integrated church and community civic action. Pastoral care should include empowerment, particularly development of life skills to cope with life's challenges.

Fourthly, the need to ensure pastoral care as spiritual care integrates technical life skills. This entails skills to perform activities that result in physical and material returns than simply focussing on prayer. Pastoral care should focus on developing church spaces to cultivate and nurture human capabilities, investments and business skills in light of poor and limited resources on the continent.

Fifthly, pastoral care should entail genuine compassion that leads to sincere care for people rather than abusing or manipulating them in the name of religion. In many instances, churches are used as spaces where people are manipulated by the church leaders or the politicians for personal gains. Pastoral care should place emphasis on genuine compassion for people. Louw (2011:1) usefully explained that *ta splanchna* (strong feeling of mercy and compassion expressed by the intestines) denotes a compassionate praxis of co-suffering (*the passio Dei*). Therefore, pastoral care should have a humane caring face, resulting in embracing the other and reaching out to the other.

Sixthly, pastoral care should prepare African people to live in-between worlds because of the rise in migration. In-country migration, rural to urban and vice versa, international migration from country of origin to other countries as well as migrating back to home country are common phenomena. African pastoral care should prepare people for global citizenship. Many Africans are leading big churches in the United Kingdom and the United States. This challenges the notion of what it means to be home. Home is redefined. The redefining of home and community calls for mental shifts in order to cope with the theological notion that Magezi (2017:227–228) termed 'home away from home'. This, among other things, calls for a shift from mitigatory care where pastoral care is performed as repairing work for healing to pastoral care as preventive care. This means that pastoral care should shift from just focussing on intrapsychic care and counselling to preventive and empowerment care. This entails preparing people to cope with the challenges of the fast-changing terrain of their lives.

Seventhly, pastoral care should shift to public pastoral care. The focus on addressing public issues such as corruption has become a priority in theological reflection in Africa.

The Network for African Congregational Theology (NetACT), which is a network of theological institutions in sub-Saharan Africa that was created to assist in preparing leaders for missional congregations through networking and sharing of resources, recently (2018) launched a research book project, entitled *African Public Theology*. The research essays to be published in the book seek to address 'the endemic corruption and lack of principled Christian leadership in our continent' (NetAct 2018:1). The contributors to the book come from all the regions of Africa. This book indicates the urgency and the need of pastoral care to shift to public issues. Miller-McLemore (2005) advised pastoral care not only to focus on individuals' intrapsychic needs but also on public structures. Louw (2014) encouraging a public pastoral care approach argued that theology must be humanised and democratised. Public theology with the focus on ethical questions has become focus areas of research in academic circles and theological education. McClure (2012:276) added that pastoral care as public practice entails developing practices from the ground. It is about engaging the real issues that people struggle with on a daily basis in society. Pastoral care therefore in Africa should adopt an intentional public pastoral role. Together with theological movements, such as Reconstruction theology, pastoral care should engage issues of society.

Conclusion

Understanding the developments in pastoral care as has been performed above is daunting and confusing. On the one hand, it seems to portray pastoral care as a silver bullet for everything theological and social. On the other hand, it seems to dump or at least make all issues pertinent to pastoral care, such as missions, church history, contextual theology, African theology and so on. This indeed is true. However, it indicates the burden of pastoral care as a discipline. Dealing with people's issues at the front line of life is not linear and single but also very complex. All disciplines and issues, such as religion, theology, sociology, psychology, economics, international development, community development, gender, youth challenges and other issues, intersect on a human being. A human being lives in a real world, where forces of life meet. Life is complex and requires complex approaches rather than adopting simplistic approaches. Pastoral care in Africa is much more complex than other places, particularly the West where an individual can go to a psychologist, consult an investment specialist, approach social workers and so on. In pastoral care, many things and expectations converge: a homeless child, a child without school fees, an abused woman, a youth who needs professional guidance, an old woman neglected by children living in the city, a community leader to officiate public functions, a hospital chaplain, a marriage counsellor, a community activist, a community peace broker, a demon-possessed person in church and so on. In such a situation, can a pastor choose what to attend to? Certainly not!

Pastoral care in Africa needs to be understood as an integrated task requiring diverse skills. This presents the opportunity of

providing holistic care and yet this opportunity is also a challenge, because one person cannot be all. Louw's (1998) advice is apt that 'being' is better than techniques. Embodiment of Christ is better than skills. Louw (2014) added that pastoral care is being with people. The practice of caregiving should reflect essentially the praxis of God. It is this praxis of God that shapes caregivers into agents of promise. To avoid the pitfall of making pastoral care a bad quasi-psychology, sociology or community development science, it should strongly maintain a strong caregiving approach to ensure its unique contribution to healing and wholeness. Thus, Louw (2014) usefully argued that pastoral caregiving is in line with the Christian wisdom tradition and its understanding of spirituality. Caregiving is also a more inclusive approach within the tradition of *cura animarum* because it includes religious content, actions of communication and verbalising, events of human encounter, conversational interaction (talk therapy), structured procedures of intervention and professional help (counselling), the fostering of possible change and healing (therapy) and actions of service or outreach in communities, irrespective of belief systems (diakonia). This entails care for all aspects of human beings' 'soul *nepshesh* care'.

Therefore, pastoral care in Africa should adopt multiplicity of approaches. It should adopt an integrated approach to the complexity of African people's lives. This calls for what Louw (2015:14) called a zigzag approach, which entails a circular approach within the hermeneutics of a spiral model and zigzag methodology of interpretation. Pathos is zigzag and spiral because of compassionate networking and the paradoxical character of kenotic love and consolatory being-with people. In doing so, pastoral care will mean human beings embody Christ and become agents and beacons of desire and wounded healers of life despite the zigzag patterns of suffering.

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