

Management College of Southern Africa

**The contribution of Appreciative Inquiry on the attitudes of
church members towards a change in strategic focus**

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**The contribution of Appreciative Inquiry on the attitudes of church members
towards a change in strategic focus**

by

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Declaration

I, Francois Jacobus Retief, do hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigation and research and that it has not been submitted in part or full for any other degree or to any other University.

Signature

30 June 2009

Acknowledgements

In the true spirit of Appreciative Inquiry I wish to express

- ◆ my appreciation for the enthusiasm and guidance of my supervisor, Ritasha Sookdew

- ◆ my appreciation to my family, friends and colleagues for the interest they have shown in this endeavour

- ◆ my appreciation for the understanding, patience, love and support of my wife, Lizna, and my sons, Andries, Tobie and Francois

You have all become part of my unique Positive Core of experiences, alliances and visions of possibility.

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ABSTRACT

The business management focus of this study is on researching the attitudes of members of an organisation towards the implementation of a change in strategic focus. The organisation studied had been a congregation in Ermelo in Mpumalanga. The possible contribution of a relatively lesser known change management model called Appreciative Inquiry formed the basis of this study.

The proposed strategic focus of the congregation had been described by the leadership as "being a positive and healthy presence in society." This new approach entailed a move away from an inward focus on the needs of the members of the congregation to a focus on the needs of the community.

The objectives of the study were to determine members' attitudes towards the proposed change and to then determine the contribution of the Appreciative Inquiry concept of discovering the Positive Core on their attitudes.

The research had been done as a qualitative study using Thematic Analysis. Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain the data.

The study findings had indicated that the Appreciative Inquiry model has the potential to elevate the change conversation to a higher level where resistance and cautiousness no longer have the final say in determining members' reactions to the change in strategic focus. The change conversation began to focus on topics such as purpose, opportunities and continuity. Interviewees had experienced that discovery of the Positive Core of the congregation had indeed helped them to embrace the proposed changes rather than resist it.

It is trusted that this study will help congregations to facilitate strategic change processes that lead to members' commitment and enthusiasm.

Table of Contents

Content	Page
Title Page	i
Declaration	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Executive Summary	iv
Table of contents	v
List of Figures	ix
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background information	1
1.3 Significance of the study	2
1.4 Definition of terms	3
1.5 Aim of the study	4
1.6 Objectives of the study	4
1.7 Problem statement	4
1.7.1 Purpose of the study	5
1.7.2 Expected outcome	5
1.8 Research questions	5
1.9 Scope and Limitations	6
1.9.1 Scope	6
1.9.2 Limitations	6
1.10 Format of the study	7
1.11 Conclusion	7
Chapter 2 Literature Review	9
2.1 Introduction	9
2.2 Disciplinary Orientation: Change Management	9
2.2.1 Nature of the change	11
2.2.2 Rationale for the change in strategic focus	12

2.2.3	Implications of this change	12
2.2.4	Reaction to the change	13
2.3	The Role of Appreciative Inquiry	15
2.3.1	The origins of Appreciative Inquiry	16
2.3.2	The Theoretical Basis of Appreciative Inquiry	16
2.3.2.1	The founders	16
2.3.2.2	Appreciative Inquiry and Positive Psychology	19
2.3.2.3	Principles of Appreciative Inquiry	20
2.3.3	The Appreciative Inquiry Process	21
2.3.4	The Positive Core	24
2.3.5	Appreciative Inquiry compared to popular OD models	25
2.4	Conclusion	28
Chapter 3 Research Methodology		29
3.1	Introduction	29
3.2	Research design	29
3.2.1	Research approach	29
3.2.2	Research Method: The Interview	31
3.2.3	The Interview Schedule	32
3.2.4	Target population	35
3.2.5	Sampling	35
3.2.6	Pilot Study	36
3.3	Research process	37
3.3.1	Verification of Validity and Reliability	37
3.3.2	Data gathering	38
3.3.3	Informed Consent	40
3.3.4	Data analysis	41
3.3.5	Ethical considerations	42
3.3.6	Limitations of study	43
3.3.7	Control of Bias	43
3.4	Conclusions	44
Chapter 4 Statement of Findings and Analysis of Data		45
4.1	Introduction	45

4.2	Initial reaction to change	46
4.2.1	Initial Reaction To Change: Codes	46
4.2.1.1	Positive	46
4.2.1.2	Cautious	47
4.2.2	Initial Reaction To Change: Themes	48
4.2.2.1	Preference Theme	48
4.2.2.2	Conviction Theme	48
4.3	Discovering The Positive Core	49
4.3.1	Discovering The Positive Core: Codes	49
4.3.1.1	Focus Areas	49
4.3.1.2	Motivation	52
4.3.1.3	Experience	53
4.3.2	Discovering The Positive Core: Themes	53
4.3.2.1	Appreciation Theme	53
4.4	Impact Of Appreciative Inquiry	54
4.4.1	Impact Of Appreciative Inquiry: Codes	54
4.4.1.1	Purpose	54
4.4.1.2	Opportunities	55
4.4.1.3	Continuity	56
4.4.1.4	How?	57
4.4.2	Impact Of Appreciative Inquiry: Theme	57
4.4.2.1	Higher Level Theme	57
4.5	Validity and Reliability of Research Findings	58
4.6	Conclusion	59
Chapter 5	Discussion of Findings	60
5.1	Introduction	60
5.2	Initial Reaction to Change	60
5.2.1	'Positive'	61
5.2.2	'Cautious'	61
5.2.3	Compilation	62
5.3	Discovering the Positive Core	64
5.3.1	Focus Areas	64
5.3.2	Motivation	65

5.3.3	Experience	66
5.3.4	Compilation	66
5.4	Impact of Appreciative Inquiry	68
5.4.1	Purpose	68
5.4.2	Opportunities	68
5.4.3	Continuity	69
5.4.4	How?	70
5.4.5	Compilation	70
5.5	Contribution of Appreciative Inquiry to managing change in a congregation	71
5.6	Conclusion	72
Chapter 6 Conclusions and Recommendations		73
6.1	Introduction	73
6.2	Findings	73
6.2.1	Findings from the Literature Review	73
6.2.2	Findings from Primary Research	74
6.2.2.1	Initial reaction to Change	75
6.2.2.2	Discovering the Positive Core	75
6.2.2.3	Contribution of the Appreciative Inquiry model	76
6.2.3	Conclusion	77
6.3	Recommendations	77
6.4	Conclusion	78
Bibliography		79
Appendices		85
Appendix A: Interview Schedule Construction		85
Appendix B: Covering Letter requesting permission from Church Board		87
Appendix C: Letter from Church Board giving permission for research		88
Appendix D: Pilot Study Interview Transcriptions		89
Appendix E: Research Study Interview Transcriptions		95

List of Figures

Figure	Page number
2.1 Force Field Analysis Model	13
2.2 Change Curve of the Life Cycle of Resistance to Change	15
2.3 Prominent Role Players in the Development of AI	17
2.4 The 4D Cycle Process	22
2.5 The Appreciative Inquiry 4D Process	23
2.6 The Positive Core of an Organisation	25
2.7 Two Paradigms for Organisational Change	27
3.1 Diagram illustrating the Interview Schedule	34
4.1 Background Information of Interviewees	45
5.1 The Change Conversation elevated to a Higher Level	60
5.2 Force Field Analysis Model showing Initial Reaction to Change	62
5.3 Positive Core of the Congregation	65

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The business management issue of change management and its relevance to the change process in a congregation is introduced in this chapter.

Meyer (2004:70) says that the focus of change management is to help organisations to redefine themselves and their role. It was this sentiment of the congregation that resulted in the proposed changes in strategic focus.

The remainder of this chapter discusses the background to the management issue under research as well as the significance of the study. The study is then further defined in terms of aims, objectives and problem statement. The research questions that the study had to answer are discussed. The scope and limitations of the research are pointed out and the format of the study is mentioned.

1.2 Background information

The business management focus of this study was on implementing change in an organisation. The study investigated the attitudes of members of a congregation towards a change in strategic focus. The possible contribution of a change management model called Appreciative Inquiry formed the basis of this study.

The change that is referred to was the adoption of a new strategic focus by the leadership of the congregation of moving away from an inward focus on the needs of members to a focus on the needs of the community. This new focus had been defined as "being a positive and healthy presence in society."

According to Passmore (2007:1) "organisational change has, in recent decades, become stuck in a rut." Passmore (2007:1) argues that traditional Organisational Development works with a "medical model" that assumes that everything will work better if one just fixes what is not working well. He writes that this Organisational Development approach remains the dominant methodology and that it ignores the people aspect of change.

In contrast to this, the Appreciative Inquiry philosophy advocates that change be aligned with the Positive Core of an organisation (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005:8). It encourages transformation from the Positive Core "based on unique experiences of the exceptional already lived by individual stakeholders" (Donovan, Meyer and Fitzgerald, 2007:2). These "unique experiences of the exceptional" are the assets, strengths and resources that form part of the Positive Core of all organisations – including a congregation.

The research was conducted on the Dutch Reformed Church Ermelo in Mpumalanga.

1.3 Significance of the study

The significance of this study lies in the fact that Appreciative Inquiry is a largely unknown change management model in the church environment in South Africa. This observation had been confirmed by the puzzled reaction of pastors when the topic of this research study had been discussed with them. This study therefore intended to make a contribution towards the church community in terms of its ability to successfully manage change.

The concept of the Positive Core can help churches to be relevant in an environment that is characterised by poverty, unhealthy relationships, conflict and declining moral values. When congregations begin to change in line with their convictions, traditions and strengths, the potential for deep, lasting change is increased.

1.4 Definition of terms

As the Appreciative Inquiry model of change management has not been widely used in change intervention programmes, it is important to define the terms that will be frequently used in this study.

Appreciate	<i>v., to value, recognise the best in people or the world around us; affirm past and present strengths, successes, and potentials; to perceive those things that give life to living systems (Cooperrider et al., 2008:1).</i>
Inquire	<i>v., 1. to explore and discover. 2. to ask questions, to be open to seeing new potentials and possibilities. Synonyms: discover, search, systematically explore, and study (Cooperrider et al., 2008:1).</i>
4 D Process	The Appreciative Inquiry process consists of 4 steps i.e. Discover, Dream, Design and Destiny. These 4 steps are used to build a change process upon the Positive Core of the organisation (Lewis, Passmore and Cantore, 2008:44).
Positive Core	The untapped and rich accounts of the positive in an organisation – the past, present and future possibilities. An organisation discovers this Positive Core during the first stage of the 4 D process. In a congregation this will refer <i>inter alia</i> to traditions, achievements, lived values, relational resources and visions of possibility (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005:8).
Congregation	An organisational structure formed around the religious convictions of its members. These convictions have on the one hand a history going back thousands of years and on the other hand are shaped by the

congregation's recent history. The congregation that was studied consisted of volunteers who served as leaders and members under the leadership of two senior pastors.

1.5 Aim of the study

This study investigated the possible contribution of the Appreciative Inquiry model of change management on the attitudes of members of a congregation towards a change in strategic focus.

The change entailed a shift from the current inward focus on the needs of members to a focus on the needs of the community.

1.6 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study were:

- to determine members' attitudes towards the proposed change
- and, to then determine the contribution of the Appreciative Inquiry concept of the Positive Core on their attitudes.

1.7 Problem statement

The research done by Barna (2006:56) confirmed the general perception that congregations with a long and rich history do not easily accept change. Traditions, values and practices are often ingrained to such an extent that change becomes almost impossible.

For a change in strategic focus to be successfully implemented, it is important to know the attitudes of members towards this change.

1.7.1 Purpose of the study

This study investigated the attitudes of members of the congregation towards a proposed change in strategic focus. The question had then been raised as to what impact the Appreciative Inquiry model could have on members' attitudes towards change.

1.7.2 Expected outcome

This study expected to show that discovering the Positive Core of the history and traditions of the congregation would have a positive impact on members' attitudes towards change. Their positive acceptance and embracement of the proposed changes would provide evidence for the impact that the Appreciative Inquiry model of change management could have.

In the words of Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros (2008:22) this study focused on "history as positive possibility."

1.8 Research questions

The research was planned to get answers to the following questions during the study:

- What are the general attitudes of members to the proposed change in the congregation?
- What is the impact of discovering the Positive Core on their attitudes towards change?
- What is the contribution that Appreciative Inquiry can make towards change management in a congregation?

1.9 Scope and Limitations

1.9.1 Scope

This research project had been undertaken in one congregation situated in Ermelo in Mpumalanga. It was therefore specifically focused on the church environment.

The congregation was unique in the sense that it had an extra-ordinary long history. It had been founded in 1870 (Lombard, 1980: 15) This means that the Positive Core of the congregation had been created by traditions, stories, strengths and embedded knowledge over many generations. The researcher had made the choice to use a congregation with a long history in order to investigate the impact of the Appreciative Inquiry process on an organisation that can be perceived to be resistant to change.

The change that the congregation was being confronted with was the adoption of a new vision to become a positive and healthy presence in society. This was a deviation from the then prevailing narrow focus on the needs of the members themselves – to the exclusion of the needs of the community.

The attitudes of members towards change – and their response to the Appreciative Inquiry concept of the Positive Core - had been investigated.

1.9.2 Limitations

The study focused on a countryside congregation in the platteland. It is possible that an investigation into attitudes towards change in urban congregations may result in different findings because of their greater exposure to changes in the community at large.

The research had been done in only one congregation. The researcher had addressed this limitation by selecting a wide spectrum of interviewees in terms of age, occupation and role in the congregation.

Most members have had very little exposure to the Appreciative Inquiry method. However, this did not have a negative effect on the study as the researcher led interviewees through the different stages of this method.

1.10 Format of the study

The study will commence in chapter 2 with an overview of the relevant literature. The focus will be on change management as the business management issue under discussion. Appreciative Inquiry as a change management model will be introduced by briefly discussing its history and origins. The 4 D model of Appreciative Inquiry will be discussed in more detail as the concept of the Positive Core evolves from this framework.

Chapter 3 will present the research methodology chosen for this study. This will include explaining the research design and research process.

The findings of the research process and analysis of data will be presented in chapter 4.

A thorough discussion of the findings will follow in chapter 5. The findings of the research will be linked to the literature that has been discussed in the literature review.

Chapter 6 will be used to make concluding remarks and recommendations.

1.11 Conclusion

Change management is a core issue in the functioning of a congregation. In order to stay relevant every congregation has to adapt to the changing

environment within which it operates. For the congregation being studied it has meant a decision to be a positive and healthy presence in society. As the literature review in the next chapter will reveal, the Appreciative Inquiry model of change management may well contribute towards the fulfilment of the dream of the congregation.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This section provides a review of literature in the area of change management. This review begins by defining change and then discusses the various aspects of change in an organisation which is a congregation in this instance. Then the Appreciative Inquiry model of change management will be introduced and explained.

2.2 Disciplinary Orientation: Change Management

This study is about change management and was conducted in a congregation situated in the Mpumalanga town of Ermelo in South Africa. This discussion focuses on the disciplinary area of change management in relation to the topic.

The leadership of the congregation had decided on a change in strategic focus. Whereas the focus had in the recent past been on serving the needs of the members, leadership had decided to shift the focus of the congregation to become a positive and healthy presence in society. The implications of this change will be discussed further on.

The field of Organisational Development (or Change Management) studies change in organisations. Organisational development is seen as "a planned process of change, based on behavioural science technology, research and theory" (Nel et al., 2004:495). Brown and Harvey (2006:3) state that the aim of Organisational Development is to increase the effectiveness of the organisation. The basis of Organisational Development is found in the behavioural sciences. This study therefore used management insight from the Organisational Development field to research the change process in the congregation.

It is important to make the point that a congregation is inherently the same as any other organisation in terms of management. In his seminal work on managing non-profits, Drucker (1990) makes the point that non-profit organisations – including churches – have to use management principles that are common in the business sector. A congregation, therefore, uses the general principles of management theory to plan its operations, projects and strategy. Just like business-oriented organisations, it is influenced by its environment. The chosen values and beliefs play a significant role in shaping the culture of the congregation. Strategic planning to fulfil its vision is part of its very nature. A congregation also experiences resistance to change. Thus, a congregation is an organisation just like any other studied in Organisational Development – and can therefore be researched just like any other organisation.

Meyer (2004:71) defines change management as follows:

Change management is the systematic process of putting in place systems, processes, procedures and mechanisms to support, integrate and co-ordinate changes in the external and internal environment of an organisation in order to ensure efficiency, productivity and the sustainability and growth of the organisation.

This definition highlights the process character of organisational development. As such, the researcher argues that in line with this definition, the conceptual framework of Appreciative Inquiry will have a positive impact on these processes in a congregation – with a pertinent focus on the attitudes of members towards change.

The main focus of Organisational Development is on the changes facing organisations. Importantly, Ulrich (2007:14-16) points out that, because change is a process rather than an event, the challenge becomes turning what an organisation knows into what an organisation does. The Appreciative Inquiry method aims to use what an organisation knows to launch change that is congruent with the history of the organisation.

The congregation that had been examined in this study had a history that was rich with tradition. There was a wealth of positive emotions, achievements, organisational wisdom, lived values, embedded knowledge, relational resources and member loyalty. These are exactly the elements making up the Appreciative Inquiry Positive Core of an organisation – and it is these elements that had been studied to ascertain their role in a change process in the congregation (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005:9).

Hirsch (2006:53) mentions that the track record of churches in terms of successful change is rather poor. This is ascribed to the fact that churches are generally not willing to change the systems story of the congregation. The term "systems story" strongly correlates with the Appreciative Inquiry concept of the Positive Core. Hirsch's approach to congregational change is different to those advocated by the Appreciative Inquiry model in that he advocates changing this systems story whereas Appreciative Inquiry aims to use the Positive Core to lead an effective change intervention process.

The following section specifically discusses the nature of change in relation to the congregation.

2.2.1 Nature of the change

The nature of the envisioned change in the congregation was a move away from the established strategic focus of meeting the needs of the members into a strategy where the aim of the congregation was to be a positive and healthy presence in society.

It is true that this new focus had always been a small part of the culture of the congregation. However, it had been envisioned that this would now become its major focus. The programmes and projects of the congregation would now focus on fulfilling this new vision. The impact of this change is discussed further on.

2.2.2 Rationale for the change in strategic focus

The rationale for this change in strategic focus could be traced to the deepest convictions of the leadership as to the calling of the congregation. As this is not a theological study, the theological background for these convictions will not be discussed. However, the values according to which the leadership aims to lead the congregation were rooted in their theological beliefs as to what the role of a congregation was in the external environment within which it operated.

These beliefs included the conviction that the congregation was called to have an impact on the community. The leadership was convinced that the congregation had a role to play in society in terms of issues such as poverty, HIV/AIDS, moral degeneration, unemployment, conflict resolution and education.

2.2.3 Implications of this change

This change in strategic focus implied that the members of the congregation had to rethink their role in the congregation. Members had become used to being the central focus of the congregational programmes and projects. They had become accustomed to be ministered to. The strategic change implied that the congregation would in future focus on the needs of the community – and serve them in accordance with this vision.

This implications of this new strategic direction included serving in the community, forging relationships with people outside their traditional sphere of friendship, overcome prejudices, standing up against moral degeneration and giving material support where needed.

This change in strategic focus also had implications for the allocation of resources such as personnel and the budget of the congregation. This allocation of resources had to reflect the shift that was being made.

Members' reaction to the proposed change was important. Their reaction could either facilitate a successful change or inhibit the change process. Therefore the members' reaction to change will be discussed next.

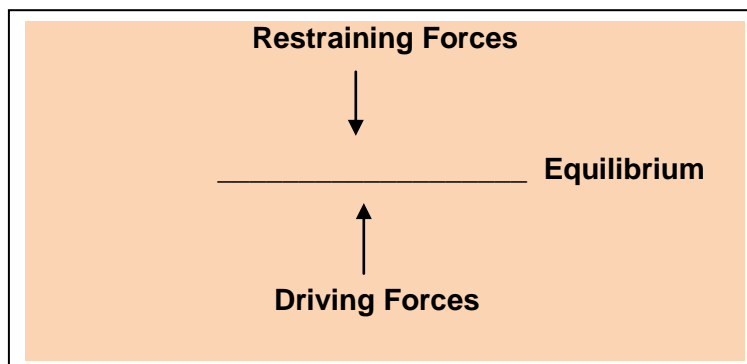
2.2.4 Reaction to the change

The reaction of the members of the congregation to the change was two-fold. There were members who accepted the change whole-heartedly. They had seen this as being congruent with the values and beliefs of the congregation. They found a sense of fulfilment when making a difference in the community and in the lives of other people.

There were, however, also members who resisted the changed strategic focus of the leadership. They used words like uncertainty, loss and anger to express their feelings. This observation of members' reaction concurs with the view expressed by Egan and Feyerherm (2005:1) that emotional intensity and uncertainty are usually experienced by many people that face organisational change.

The situation in the congregation can be accurately described by referring to the Force Field Analysis Model of Kurt Lewin (Brown and Harvey, 2006:140).

Figure 2.1 Force Field Analysis Model



Source: Adapted from Brown and Harvey (2006:141)

Their model predicts that organisational behaviour can be described as "a dynamic balance of forces working in opposite directions." There are forces that push for change whilst at the same time there are restraining forces resisting change. At any given moment, it is assumed that the organisation is in a state of equilibrium. Change then takes place when there is an imbalance between the two types of forces. This can be controlled by increasing or decreasing the strength of the forces or by adding new forces.

The driving forces pushing for change were the values and beliefs as held by the leadership. It was their conviction that the congregation was called to be a positive and healthy presence in society.

The restraining forces resisting change were the feelings of loss, anger and dissatisfaction of members.

It has to be acknowledged that the negative reaction of certain members is quite understandable. Their perception was that they would be asked to sacrifice something while on the other hand they would receive little to none as an incentive for such a change.

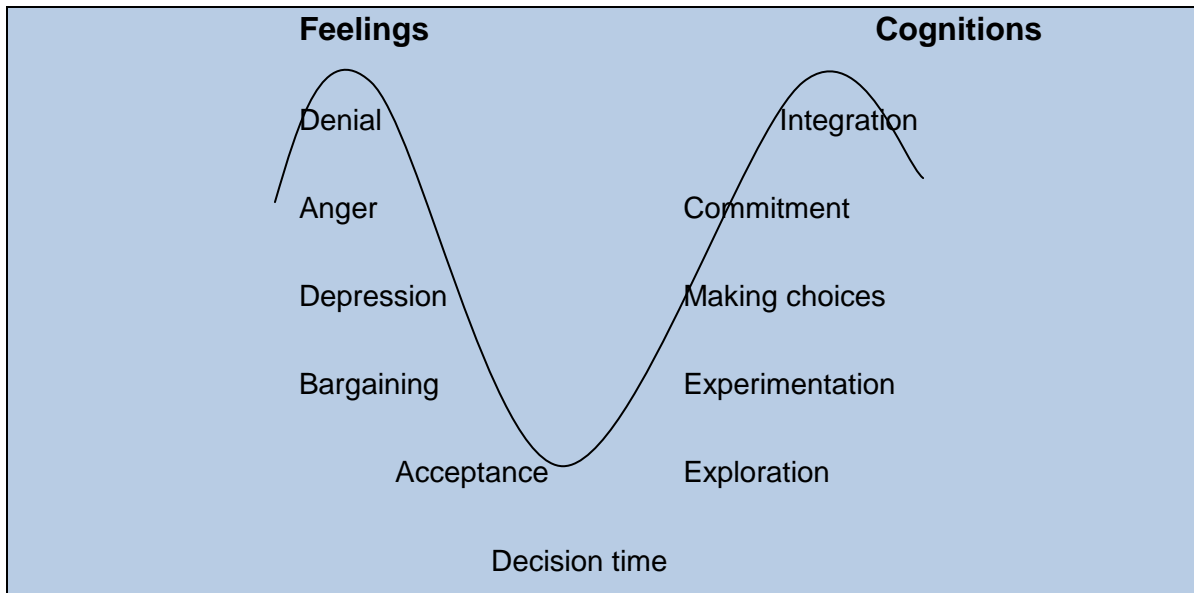
In view of these complexities, this study investigates the impact that an Appreciative Inquiry process may have on members' attitudes towards change. At this stage it is important to note that the Appreciative Inquiry framework works with what people value. Lewis, Passmore and Cantore (2008:49) observe that Appreciative Inquiry "is about connecting today to the history which is the life blood of the organisation."

This positive approach has the potential to overcome the resistance that people have to change. Appreciative Inquiry claims to use what is important to an organisation and its members – and then build the future of the organisation on it. In this way, the sense of loss is replaced by a sense of continuity.

Resistance to change has been shown to have its own unique life cycle. The following diagram reminds one of the contributions of grief therapist

Elizabeth Kübler-Ross who worked with terminally ill patients and their families. The processes are similar as both are associated with dealing with loss.

Figure 2.2 Change Curve of the Life Cycle of Resistance to Change



Source: Adapted from Seed Educational Trust (2008:26)

The challenge in a change intervention programme is to guide members towards a rational choice that leads to commitment to the proposed change. The contribution of the Appreciative Inquiry model to this change process has been studied during this research.

2.3 The role of Appreciative Inquiry

This study researches the possible contribution of the Appreciative Inquiry model of change management in the change process of this congregation.

To understand the Appreciative Inquiry model it is necessary to briefly discuss its history and origin. The discussion will then focus on some of the core concepts of this model. The Appreciative Inquiry process will then be discussed and compared to popular Organisational Development models.

2.3.1 The origins of Appreciative Inquiry

The origins of Appreciative Inquiry date back to the 1980's when David Cooperrider – then a doctoral student at Case Western Reserve University – had to "research what was *wrong* with the human side of the Cleveland Clinics in typical OD action research tradition." (Van Tonder and Roodt, 2008:90) Cooperrider, however, decided to look at the research data exclusively in search of the positives. He wanted to define what it was that gave life to the organisation and to its people when it was most effective, committed and empowered (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros, 2008:xxvii). His method of analysis was to systematically appreciate everything of value – and then to use this analysis to speculate on possibilities for the future. He eventually created a theory of future possibility.

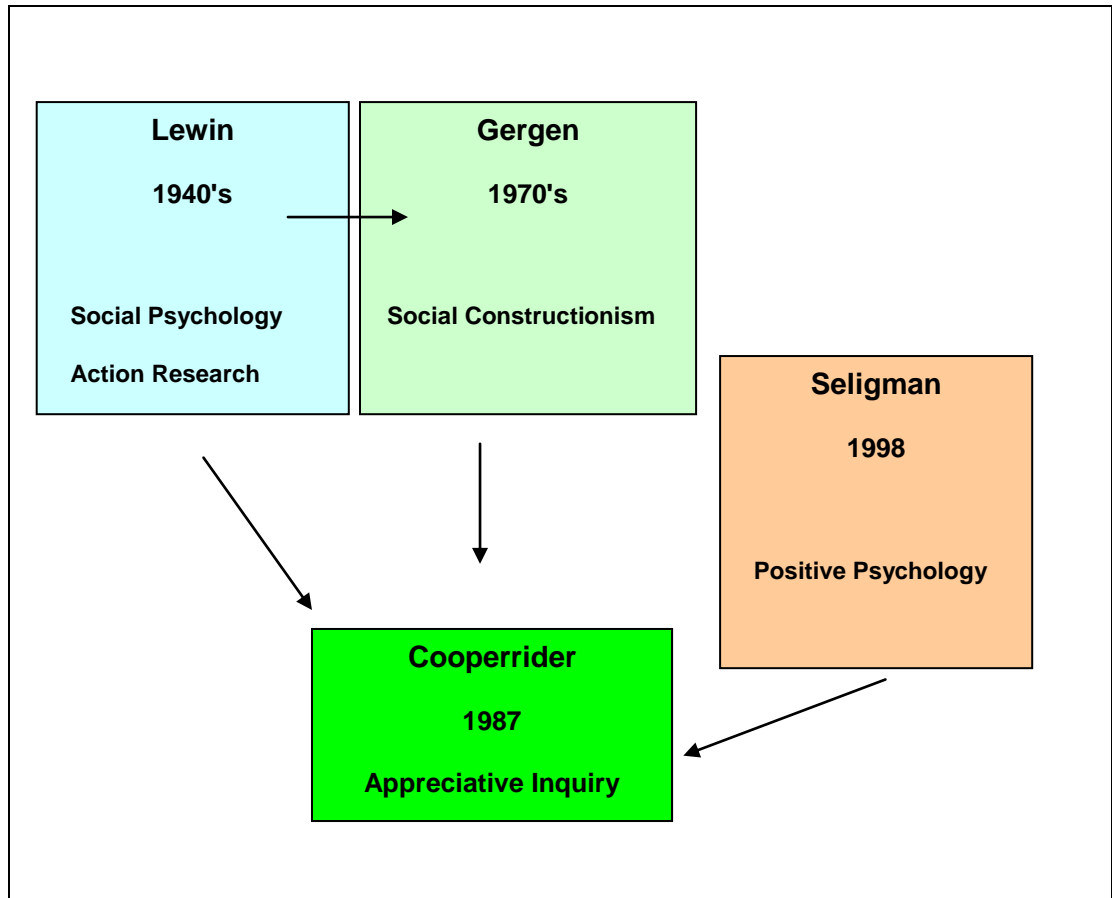
In 1987 Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) published their seminal article "Appreciative Inquiry in Organisational Life." This started the Appreciative Inquiry adventure. The focus was initially on change management and the relevancy of Appreciative Inquiry principles and practices in the organisational development field. From there it has developed into an instrument used in strategic planning in organisations. A few articles were published in the AI Practitioner that sparked new interest in the possibilities of the Appreciative Inquiry process (Stavros and Hinrichs, 2007:1)

2.3.2 The Theoretical Basis of Appreciative Inquiry

2.3.2.1 The founders

When the theoretical basis of Appreciative Inquiry is researched, there are four names that feature prominently. They are Kurt Lewin, Kenneth Gergen, David Cooperrider and Martin Seligman (Lewis et al., 2008:34). Their respective roles in this development are illustrated as follows:

Figure 2.3 Prominent role players in the development of Appreciative Inquiry.



Source: Adapted from Lewis et al., 2008:34-35

Carter (2005:1) is correct when she points out that these scholars from various behavioural sciences share "an emphasis on positive experience, and a reliance on a participative process that enables people to co-create a preferred future."

"Kurt Lewin is credited with the early development of Action Research in the 1940's" (Lewis et al., 2008:34). This method of research accentuates a spirit of inquiry. The focus is not on a mechanistic analytical study. The research undertaken is also not an abstract exercise by observers. The research itself "brings about change in whatever is being explored" (Lewis et al., 2008:35). It is clear that Appreciative Inquiry has grown from these principles.

The Social Constructionism concept developed by Kenneth Gergen in the 1970's is fundamental to the Appreciative Inquiry process (Cooperrider et al., 2008:8). By this is meant that an organisation in effect creates its own reality. Bushe (2007:1) uses the term "generative" to describe "this quest for new ideas, images, theories and models that liberate our collective aspirations, alter the social construction of reality..." This is in contrast to the traditional thinking of Action Research which "treats social and psychological reality as something fundamentally stable, enduring and 'out there'" (Bushe, 1995:1).

Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987:139) make the point that the social order is fundamentally unstable. It is a product of the moment and is continually reconstructed. The process of knowing is socially constructed and happens through the relatedness of people. People, who share an objective, construct their future, in this case the future of their organisation. The effect of this is that the organisation is creating its own future. People control their destiny by envisioning what they want to occur and developing actions to move towards their desired future (Cooperrider et al., 2008: 14).

Hall and Hammond (1998:3) state that the assumptions of Appreciative Inquiry include inter alia that "what we focus on becomes our reality" and "reality is created in the moment and there are multiple realities." This is in line with the underlying principles of Social Constructionism.

Egan and Feyerherm (2005:2)) mention three principles that are critical to the Appreciative Inquiry process. These are

- people are drawn to the positive
- thoughts and words create worlds
- you create the world you pay attention to.

These three principles are clearly in line with the spirit of Social Constructionism. Appreciative Inquiry then uses this theoretical framework and places it in a positive context.

How does all of this impact on the situation of a congregation faced with change?

The Social Constructionist principle of Appreciative Inquiry allows members of the congregation to be participants in the change intervention process. Appreciative Inquiry stresses the importance of member participation in discovering the Positive Core of the organisation, thereby positively impacting their attitudes towards change.

2.3.2.2 Appreciative Inquiry and Positive Psychology

Passmore (2007:1) states that Appreciative Inquiry has its grounding in positive theory, in particular in **Positive Psychology**. This is probably too strong a statement as Appreciative Inquiry has been developed before Martin Seligman's speech in 1998 brought Positive Psychology to the fore. Lewis et al. (2008:35) are more correct when they state that Positive Psychology could not have influenced Appreciative Inquiry's early development but that it is true that Appreciative Inquiry is a positive psychological method.

Maymin (2007:1) makes the point that the history of psychology as far as studying the good aspects of life is rather rocky. The main focus of psychologists has been on mental illness. According to Maymin the positive in Positive Psychology refers to "strengths, optimal functioning and flourishing." Passmore and Hain (2005:1) agree that psychological thinking has been dominated by a focus on the negative aspects of human behaviour.

Luthans (2002:289) describes how Martin Seligman – who was later to become president of the American Psychological Association – reacted against the preoccupation that psychology has had with the negative, pathological aspects of human functioning and behaviour. Seligman started to promote studying the strengths of people and organisations.

The topics studied in Positive Psychology include positive subjective experiences, positive traits and positive institutions. Gable and Haidt (2005:104) write that Positive Psychology "is the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups, and institutions." Luthans (2002:289) states that the aim of Positive Psychology is to "use scientific methodology to discover and promote the factors that allow individuals, groups, organisations and communities to thrive."

It is clear that Appreciative Inquiry has borrowed much from Positive Psychology. What Appreciative Inquiry has done, was to take key concepts from the field of Positive Psychology and mould them into a change management model. It has been noted earlier in this study that Nel et al. (2004:495) have written that change is "based on behavioural science technology, research and theory." Appreciative Inquiry makes ample use of Positive Psychology.

2.3.2.3 Principles of Appreciative Inquiry

A last aspect that will be briefly mentioned is the **Principles of Appreciative Inquiry** as described by the innovators of this model. These principles are mentioned as the cornerstones of Appreciative Inquiry. They guide the Appreciative Inquiry thinking and process. Cooperrider et al. (2008:8) mention five of these principles as the main building blocks of Appreciative Inquiry:

- Constructionist Principle: "Words create worlds" because reality is socially created through conversation.
- Principle of Simultaneity: "Inquiry creates change" because we begin to create change the moment we ask a question.
- Poetic Principle: "We can choose what we study" and our choice makes a difference.

- Anticipatory Principle: "Imagine inspires action" because human systems move in the direction of their images of the future.
- Positive Principle: "Positive questions lead to positive change" when these questions amplify the positive core.

The theoretical basis of Appreciative Inquiry is widely discussed in literature. This description of the basis of Appreciative Inquiry has provided the foundation for a discussion of the Appreciative Inquiry process.

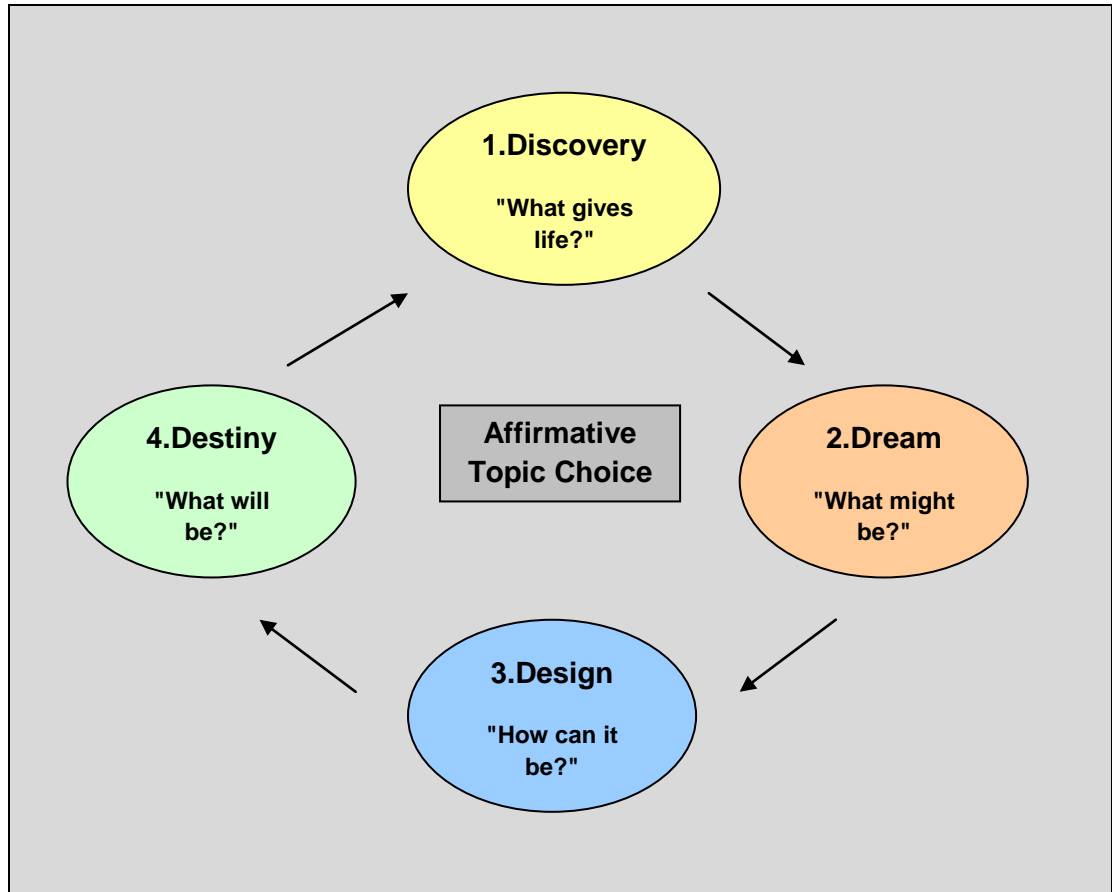
2.3.3 The Appreciative Inquiry Process

Cooperrider et al. (2008:3) define Appreciative Inquiry as follows:

Appreciative Inquiry is the cooperative co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organisations, and the world around them. It involves the discovery of what gives 'life' to a living system when it is at its most effective, alive, and constructively capable in economic, ecological and human terms. Appreciative Inquiry involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential. The inquiry is mobilised through the crafting of the 'unconditional positive question,' often involving hundreds or thousands of people. Appreciative Inquiry interventions focus on the speed of imagination and innovation instead of the negative, critical and spiralling diagnoses used in organisations. The discovery, dream, design, and destiny models links the energy of the positive core to changes never thought possible.

Appreciative Inquiry works with a 4D concept of Discover, Dream, Design and Destiny. Cooperrider et al. (2008:34) illustrates this concept in the following diagram:

Figure 2.4 The 4 D Cycle Process



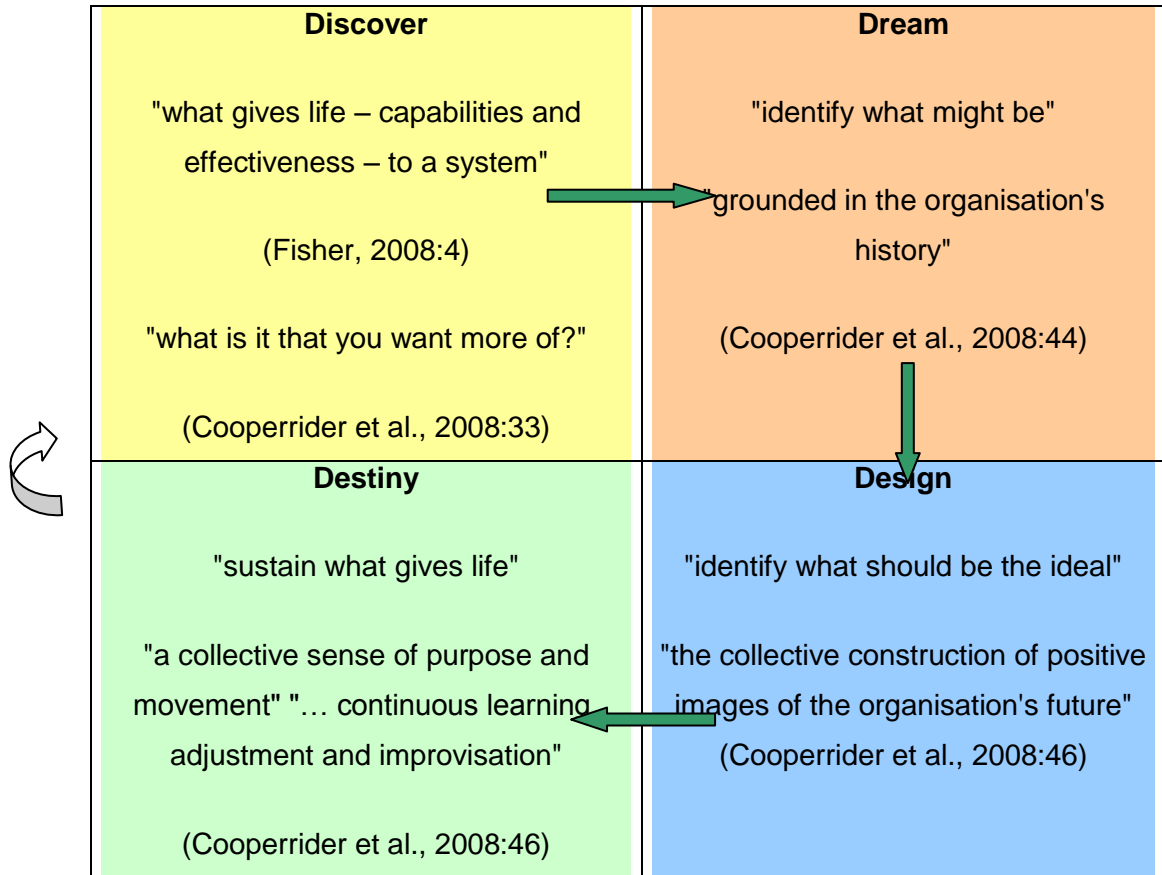
Source: Adapted from Cooperrider et al. (2008:34)

The essence of the model is the process of inquiry to discover people's best experiences. These experiences are then used as the platform for imagining the future. The next step is to design the processes that will make this imagined future a reality and then the new design is created.

In the context of a congregation in transition, the Appreciative Inquiry model would be used to help members discover that which they value, use this Positive Core to launch change within their context, decide on action plans and implement these change to realise their dream.

The 4 D model will be briefly discussed to give insight into the Appreciative Inquiry process.

Figure 2.5 The Appreciative Inquiry 4 D Process



Source: Adapted from Fisher (2008:4) and Cooperrider et al. (2008:33-46)

Egan and Feyerherm (2005:1-6) use the metaphor of "moving house" to describe the impact of Appreciative Inquiry on a change process. Instead of being told that you will have to move to a new house without you having any say in where, how and when this will happen, Appreciative Inquiry proposes that you become part of a team building the collective dream house. (It has to be noted that, although they use the term "deliver" and not "destiny" as most of the other writers do, the meaning is essentially the same.)

Using this metaphor, they describe the four basic Appreciative Inquiry processes as

- carry the best of the past into the future ("*discover*")
- harness the power of imagining and dreaming ("*dream*")
- create a blueprint for change that integrates the past and the future ("*design*")
- begin the remodelling or new construction by matching resources with interests and abilities ("*deliver*") (Egan and Feyerherm, 2005:1-6)

This is an ongoing process as organisations continue to grow, search for opportunities and potential.

The business management question that has been asked in this study is whether Appreciative Inquiry can have an impact on the attitudes of members of the congregation to help them embrace the proposed changes. Can Appreciative Inquiry minimise the resistance to change that some members' experience?

The researcher expected the Appreciative Inquiry concept of the **Positive Core** to play a significant role in this respect.

2.3.4 The Positive Core

The concept of the **Positive Core** is central to the Appreciative Inquiry model. The Positive Core of an organisation is described as that which gives life to the organisation. This Positive Core is discovered through the positive questions asked during the Discover phase of the 4D process. Appreciative Inquiry philosophy then proposes that the future should be constructed on these strengths of the organisation. When the Positive Core is linked to the change agenda, topics never before thought possible are created (Cooperrider et al., 2008:34).

Cooperrider and Whitney (2005:9) have compiled a list of the "diverse set of assets, strengths, and resources that, when discussed, broadly constitute an organisation or a community's positive core." The following table displays some of these best practices.

Figure 2.6 The Positive Core of an Organisation

Achievements	Strategic opportunities	Product strengths
Best business practices	Positive emotions	Technical assets
Core competencies	Organisation wisdom	Elevated thoughts
Visions of possibility	Leadership capabilities	Vital traditions
Lived values	Social capital	Collective spirit
Embedded knowledge	Financial assets	Visions of possible futures
Alliances and partnerships	Strategic advantages	Relational resources

Source: Adapted from Cooperrider and Whitney (2005:9)

From the change management perspective of this study the question needs to be asked whether discovering this positive core of the congregation – and linking the new strategic focus to it - may contribute towards the successful implementation of the change in the congregation. The AI Practitioner (2007:2) writes that "in order for an organisation to sustain itself in the 21st century, it must take advantage of opportunities, leverage internal strengths and use its human capital for building a society that enhances our planet." It is exactly this Appreciative Inquiry sentiment that has been researched.

2.3.5 Appreciative Inquiry compared to popular OD models

Cooperrider and Whitney (2005:1) reckon that Appreciative Inquiry is turning the practice of change management inside out by proposing that organisations are not problems to be solved. They write that "every

organisation was created as a solution designed in its own time to meet a challenge or satisfy a need of society." Organisations are filled with life-giving potentials such as relationships, alliances, and webs of knowledge that can harness the power of combinations of strengths. Appreciative Inquiry is a strengths-based approach to organisational development, change management and strategic planning.

Mann (2005:1) describes Appreciative Inquiry as a capacity-building approach that "supports innovation and change by translating images of possibility into reality and beliefs into practice."

The views of Weeks (2007:24) confirm this approach. He discusses the **traditional approach** to change management – without referring to the Appreciative Inquiry model as such. His comments show the flaws in the traditional approach to Organisational Development. He calls it the incremental adaptive approach. This approach has led to various models and processes – of which the well known SWOT analysis is one. His problem with this approach is that it assumes that cause-effect relationships can be determined which could then lead to strategies that would align the organisation with its context. He asserts that this is an approach "that is based on rational deductive analysis and linear causality."

Weeks (2007:28) continues by suggesting that strategy should be seen as "strategy-as-emergent-process" in order to deal with non-linear causality and unpredictability. He reckons that this can only happen where dialogue and free flow discussions can take place (2007:28). He calls this a complexity theory perspective that uses narrative (2007:27) – an approach with which the proponents of Appreciative Inquiry would heartily agree.

This approach will – in the situation of a changing congregation – lead to renewed discussions of what members' value and which traditions are regarded as being part of the Positive Core, thereby helping the leadership to manage the change process. These conversations will have as their basic assumption the fact that the organisation – and in this instance the

congregation – "is a mystery with infinite capacity to be embraced." (Carter, 2005:2)

The difference between the Appreciative Inquiry approach and a deficit-based approach can be summarised as follows:

Figure 2.7 Two paradigms for Organisational Change.

Problem-solving vs. Appreciative Inquiry	
Problem-solving	Appreciative Inquiry
Identification of a problem "Felt need"	Appreciating and valuing the best of "what is"
Analysis of possible causes	Envisioning "what might be"
Analysis of possible solutions	Dialoguing "what should be"
Action planning as "treatment"	Innovating "what will be"
<i>Basic assumption: Organisation is a problem to be solved</i>	<i>Basic assumption: Organisation is a mystery with infinite capacity to be embraced</i>

Source: Adapted from Carter (2005:2)

The definition used by the Corporation for Positive Change (date unknown:1) encapsulates these thoughts when it states that

Appreciative Inquiry is the study and exploration of what gives life to human systems when they are at their best. It is an organisation development methodology based on the assumption that inquiry into and dialogue about strengths, successes, values, hopes and dreams is in itself transformational.

This study focused on the impact of this Positive Core of strengths, successes, values, hopes and dreams on the attitudes of members of a congregation faced with change.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has given an overview of literature that is relevant to the research. The various aspects of change have been discussed. The Appreciative Inquiry model of change management has been introduced as a possible model of intervention. In the next chapter the research methodology will be discussed.

Chapter 3

Research methodology

3.1 Introduction

This section explains the research design that was used in this study.

Appreciative Inquiry as an organisational development model is by its very nature more suited to a qualitative research strategy. As such, the research approach that is explained is of a qualitative nature. Hence, the specific qualitative methodological approach and design is explained.

3.2 Research design

3.2.1 Research approach

As stated in the introduction, a qualitative approach was used. Denscombe (2003:267) describes qualitative research as that which focuses on meanings and the way people understand things. It studies the activities of social groups and look for patterns of behaviour.

An interpretivist qualitative approach was used in this study. This is because the focus of this study was on identifying and using the Positive Core of the congregation to have a positive impact on members' reaction to the proposed changes.

With regard to the qualitative research approach in general, criticisms do exist that qualitative data is weaker than quantitative data. Lancaster (2005:67) states that the "dichotomy between quantitative and qualitative research stems essentially from the notions of what constitutes scientific as opposed to non-scientific research methodologies." He dismisses the idea that quantitative data has a higher value and validity than qualitative data.

As such, this study had to ensure that the design is strong to withstand such criticisms in defence.

Rosnow and Rosenthal (2005:86) mention that qualitative research is ideally suited for studies in organisational management. To this, Trochim (2006:1) adds that "qualitative research has special value for investigating complex and sensitive issues." The researcher who wants to have a deep understanding of people's attitudes needs to do a qualitative research. Hence it was very well suited to this research topic.

This qualitative study follows an interpretive approach. According to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2008a:1) the following are assumptions of this approach about the nature of knowing and reality:

- Relativist ontology where reality is constructed through the meanings and understandings developed socially and experientially
- Transactional epistemology which assumes that we cannot be separated from what we know. The researcher and the object of research are linked. This means that a researcher's values are inherent in every part of the research process.
- Knowledge is created through dialogue as an investigation proceeds
- All interpretations are based in a particular moment. They are located in a particular context or situation or time. This means that they are always open to re-interpretation.

The methodology that corresponds with the interpretive paradigm is characterised by the following:

- The approach relies on interviewing, observation and analysis of existing texts
- The dialogue between researcher and interviewees results in them collaboratively constructing a new reality
- Meanings emerge from this research process
- Qualitative methods are used (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2008a:1)

3.2.2 Research Method: The Interview

Individual in-depth interviews were used as the research method.

Lancaster (2005:133) describes the interview as being "extremely fruitful in the context of organisational and management research." To this Denscombe (2003:165) adds that the decision to use interviews as research method is a decision "to go for depth rather than breadth in the material." This is in the best tradition of qualitative research as the required data are based on emotions, attitudes, experiences and feelings.

Rosnow and Rosenthal (2005:130) mention the fact that the interviewer can establish rapport with the people that are interviewed. The trust and cooperation that can be established during the interview ensure the richness and depth of data that is needed.

Rossouw (2003:144) points to the importance of the attitudes of the interviewer. He mentions unconditional acceptance of the interviewee, respect, openness, sincerity, modesty and showing empathy as necessary attitudes. Furthermore the interviewer needs to have the interpersonal and interviewing skills that are essential. Rosnow and Rosenthal (2005:130) mention the importance of good listening skills such as being patient, hearing the facts and not interrupting the interviewee.

In order to achieve the desired climate that would allow participants in the interview process to freely express their opinions regarding the proposed strategic change, the interviews were conducted in their homes. It was important to ensure that interviewees felt at ease. They were informed beforehand of the focus of the interviews. Interviewees were assured of the confidentiality of their remarks. (Hofstee, 2006:135)

The interview method chosen for this study had been the semi-structured interview. A list of open-ended questions around the research questions was compiled and formed part of the interview schedule.

Open-ended questions are in line with the Appreciative Inquiry method. The value of open-ended questions lies in the fact that they invite the interviewee to offer more information than a close-ended question would do. (Lewis, et al. 2008:67) The aim is to get responses from the interviewees that would inform, enlighten, surprise and enrich the discussion. Semi-structured interviews allow this freedom to the researcher to react to remarks being made, to phrase questions differently and even to ask different questions. In this manner, data that capture the rich and deep attitudes of the interviewees is extracted.

3.2.3 The Interview Schedule

The Appreciative Inquiry model is in essence a series of questions to lead participants towards discovery of the Positive Core of the organisation. Cooperrider et al. (2008:106) discuss the crafting of an engaging appreciative question in the context of its importance to the process of discovering the Positive Core of the organisation. They give the following guidelines for producing appreciative questions:

- State questions in the affirmative.
- Give a broad definition to the topic.
- Invite participants to use storytelling and narratives.
- Phrase in rapport talk, not report talk.
- Allow ambiguity because it gives room to "swim around."
- Value "what is."
- Spark the appreciative imagination by helping the person locate experiences that are worth valuing.
- Convey unconditional positive regard.
- Evoke essential values, aspirations, and inspirations.

The aim of the interviews was to obtain feedback about members' experiences of the change initiatives, especially the new change in the strategic direction in the organisation as well as the impact of discovering

the Positive Core on their attitudes. The structure of the interview was semi-structured, which allowed the interviewee the opportunity to expand on issues.

The Appreciative Inquiry process requires that the interviewer asks questions that facilitate the interviewees to discover and value the role of the Positive Core of the organisation. Therefore, interview questions focused on investigating the impact of this process on the attitudes of the interviewees towards the change in the congregation.

The **framework** for the interview schedule consisted of the following three issues:

- Identifying the general attitudes towards the proposed change in the congregation.
- Discovering the Positive Core of the congregation using typical Appreciative Inquiry questions.
- Determining how the Appreciative Inquiry method contributes towards change management in a congregation.

This has led to the following interview questions: (See Figure 3.1)

Interview schedule

Please describe the background of your connection with the congregation. For example, how long have you been a member? Do you consistently attend church as a member of the congregation?

Part 1: Attitude towards change in the congregation

- When you hear about "change in the congregation", what is your reaction?
- The new strategic focus of the congregation is described as "being a positive and healthy presence in society." This implies a shift from an

inward focus on the needs of the members to a focus on the needs of the community. What is your first reaction to this?

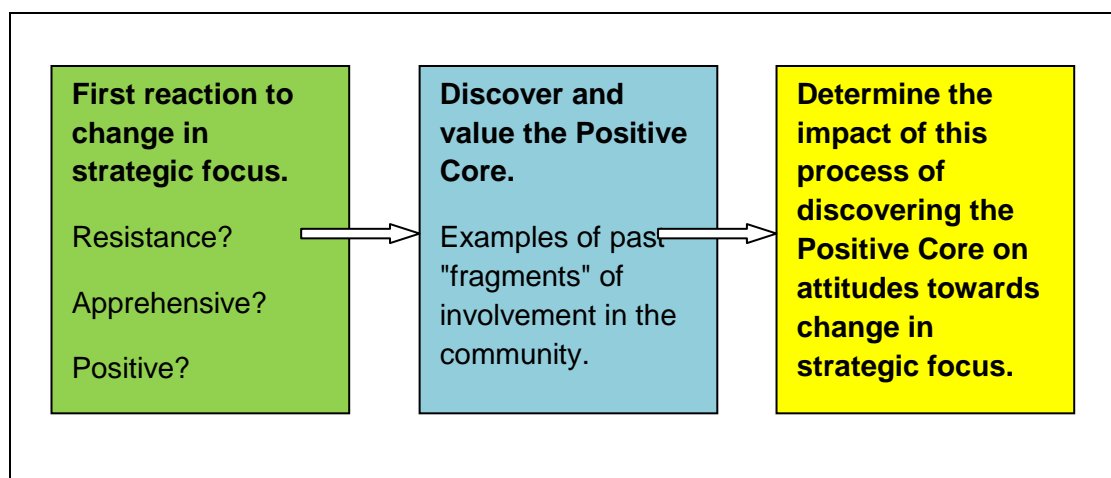
Part 2: Discovering the Positive Core of the congregation

- What do you value most about the congregation?
- How would you describe the past involvement of the congregation in the community? Examples of this?
- Thinking back on these examples of involvement in the community, how can the congregation repeat its contribution in the community today?
- How would it make you feel if the congregation can continue making an impact in the community?

Part 3: The Contribution of the Appreciative Inquiry model on Change Management in the congregation

- If the new strategic focus ("being a positive and healthy presence in society") is built on these examples of involvement in the community (the Positive Core), how would you accept the change?
- How would you feel to be part of a congregation that has decided to primarily focus on making a practical contribution to the community?

Figure 3.1 Diagram illustrating the Interview Schedule



Source: Self generated

3.2.4 Target population

The population in this study were all congregation members of the Dutch Reformed Church Ermelo in Mpumalanga. It currently consists of approximately 980 adult members and 245 children.

3.2.5 Sampling

The non-probability sampling method of purposive sampling was used as a selection strategy. Lancaster (2005:136) is of the opinion that it is more effective to interview those "who can shed light on the issue being explored; who is likely to volunteer this data most readily and who might be approached for information." Descombe (2003:172) agrees with this viewpoint when he writes that "people tend to be chosen deliberately because they have some special contribution to make, because they have some unique insight or because of the position they hold."

How many interviews are enough? The research undertaken by Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006:59-82) studied the concept of saturation, that is the point at which no new themes or information are observed in the data. They have found that saturation occurred within the first 12 interviews. The basic elements for metathemes occurred within 6 interviews.

The researcher had decided to conduct 6 interviews.

The interviewees had to meet the following criteria:

- The interviewee had to be an adult member of the congregation.
- The interviewee had to be a member of the congregation for at least 8 years (to be able to have an appreciation of the history and traditions of the church)
- The interviewee had to be an active member of the congregation in terms of at least regularly attending services and participating in church projects – thereby showing commitment to the congregation.

3.2.6 Pilot study

Rosnow and Rosenthal (2005:127) mention the necessity for pilot testing when doing survey-based research. This will ensure that questions are worded correctly, that there is no uncertainty as to what is meant by a phrase or question and that leading questions which "suggest" an answer are avoided. This pilot testing will also show whether the open-ended questions indeed produce answers that are useful.

The researcher had done a pilot study by interviewing two members of the congregation. The subjects for these interviews had to meet the same criteria as mentioned above.

The results from the pilot study highlighted a few aspects of the interview schedule that needed some attention:

- The researcher needed to spend more time helping interviewees to discover the Positive Core of the congregation in terms of its involvement and impact in the community. It appeared as if younger members of the congregation – even though they have been members for more than 8 years – did not have such a vivid picture of this aspect of the congregation's Positive Core. To help interviewees with this discovering of the Positive Core, the researcher used information from a document that has been drawn up at a 2008 congregational meeting of members during which they have described the Positive Core as they see it. Using this document ensured that the personal bias of the researcher did not influence the interviewees.
- The pilot study indicated that the interviewer had to narrow down the discussion on the Positive Core to ensure that the congregation's involvement in the community stayed in the focus. Interviewees wanted to speak on many other topics that were not relevant to this study.
- The researcher found that it was important to explain the implications of the change in strategic focus to interviewees (in terms of the purpose of the congregation, an inward versus an outward focus, and the allocation of resources like money, time and personnel). This was important to

ensure that their reaction to the specific proposed changes was heard. The interviewer used a standard explanation of these implications in all interviews to ensure that all interviewees reacted to the same common understanding of the implications.

These remarks on the pilot interviews were discussed with the study supervisor – and it was agreed that the changes be made. As the interviews were semi-structured interviews the researcher made the necessary notes in his copy of the interview schedule to ensure that these aspects got the needed attention during the research interviews.

Despite these necessary changes, the information provided by interviewees during the pilot interviews was valid and reliable. The researcher had therefore analysed the results from the pilot interviews with those that emanated from the research interviews to give a total of 8 interviews.

3.3 Research process

3.3.1 Verification of Validity and Reliability

Morse, J.; Barrett, M.; Mayan, M.; Olson, K. and Spiers, J. (2002) wrote an article challenging the new thinking on reliability and validity in qualitative research. Their concern is that qualitative research does not show enough rigor in its methods and processes.

Morse, et al (2002:13) constructed a process of verification that can "contribute to and build reliability and validity." The aim of the process is to ensure congruence among question formulation, literature, recruitment, data collection strategies, and data analysis.

The researcher aimed and planned to meet the criteria of this process. In the following summary of the process developed by Morse, et al. (2002) the commitment of the researcher to validity and reliability will clearly show.

Their five step process consists of

- Methodological coherence: the congruence between the research questions and the research methods. The researcher ensured that the research questions were linked to the interview schedule.
- Appropriate sample of participants who can provide knowledge about the research. The researcher set certain criteria that had to be met by the interviewees.
- Collecting and analysing data concurrently: the iterative interaction between what is known and what the researcher needs to know. The interview method chosen by the researcher ensured that this criterion was met.
- Thinking theoretically as all data have to be verified in existing theory. The researcher verified the data with the literature on the theory of the Appreciative Inquiry model.
- Theory development: theory has to be developed as a result of the research and as a template for future development of the theory. The researcher aimed to present research that would make a meaningful contribution to change management in the church environment.

3.3.2 Data Gathering

It has been stated already that the method of gathering data decided on was the interview. It has been shown that the interview is an appropriate method when the attitudes of people are investigated.

The interview as research method has certain challenges. Descombe (2003:169) refers to "the interviewer effect" when he writes "Research on interviewing has demonstrated fairly conclusively that people respond differently depending on how they perceive the person asking the questions."

In this study there had been an existing pastor-member relationship between the interviewer (the researcher) and the interviewees. The researcher had to be sensitive as to how this relationship might influence interviewees' willingness and ability to discuss issues during the interview.

The interviews had been conducted in Afrikaans as this was the language that the interviewees were comfortable with. It was important to the researcher to ensure that the interviewees were able to comfortably express themselves. As all of them were bilingual in terms of reading English, they had been asked to check the English translation of their interviews to confirm that the transcription accurately reflected their views and attitudes.

"Member checks" is a recognised method of ensuring validity and reliability of research. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2008b:1) has defined it as

when data, analytic categories, interpretations and conclusions are tested with members of those groups from whom the data were originally obtained. This can be done both formally and informally as opportunities for member checks may arise during the normal course of observation and conversation. Typically, member checking is viewed as a technique for establishing the validity of an account.

Shamblin (2006:97) stresses the importance of using these "member checks" in order to ensure that the translation accurately reflects the content of the interview that has been conducted.

The researcher recorded the interviews held with members of the congregation using a Speed-Link Digital Voice Recorder. One of the advantages of using a digital recorder was the fact that the researcher did not need to change cassette tapes after a period of time. The digital voice

recorder can record interviews of considerable length without any interruption of the interview.

Immediately after each interview the researcher transcribed the interview in Afrikaans using the Intelligent Verbatim approach. (Michaels:1) The researcher removed remarks or reactions from interviewees that were not relevant to the research topic. After the transcription had been completed, the researcher translated it into English. It was this English translation that had been used for the member checks.

The researcher used the transcription process to make notes of codes and themes that began to emerge.

3.3.3 Informed consent

Informed consent refers to the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that every participant have an understanding of the nature of the implications of participating in the research. (Hofstee, 2006:211)

Pedroni, J.A. and Pimple, K.D. (2001:5-8) mention 4 essential elements of informed consent. These are

- information: the participant in the research needs to have all necessary information on the nature of the research. The researcher informed interviewees of the exact nature of the study, the academic institution involved, the expected duration of the interviews and the fact that they would remain anonymous as pseudonyms would be used.
- understanding: the participants had the ability to understand the exact nature of the research.
- voluntariness: the researcher had asked for the permission of each participant before the research had been done.
- decision making capacity: each participant had the mental capacity to make a decision on participation in the research project

3.3.4 Data analysis

In his discussion on the nature of data analysis, Lancaster (2005:155) identifies four key roles for analysis:

- distillation of the large volumes of data into forms that can be managed and discarding data that is not appropriate in the context of the project
- classification by grouping data into categories
- identification of cause relationships
- communication of research findings

Denscombe (2003:271-273) describes the steps of data analysis as

- descriptive accounts of the situation being investigated
- coding and categorising the data
- reflection on early coding and categories
- identification of themes and relationships
- return to the field to check out emerging explanations
- develop a set of generalisations
- use the new generalisations to improve any relevant existing theories.

The researcher has chosen **Thematic Analysis** as method for doing the qualitative data analysis.

In an article written by Braun and Clarke (2006:77-101) they follow the same basic process as outlined by the two writers quoted above. They distinguished the following 6 steps in Thematic Analysis:

- Transcribing the data, reading, re-reading and noting initial ideas
- Generating initial codes that identify features of the data that appears interesting
- Searching for themes by collating data relevant to each theme
- Reviewing themes
- Defining and naming the themes
- Producing a report

Thematic Analysis has proved itself over time as a reliable tool for analysing the information provided during survey-based research. It "provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data." (Braun and Clarke, 2006:78) As such it is a foundational method for qualitative analysis.

Braun and Clarke (2006:78) describe thematic analysis as a research method that "provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data."

The researcher followed the thematic analysis stages suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006:86-93).

- Each interview had been recorded by Dictaphone. The recorded interviews were then transcribed on a computer.
- The transcriptions of the interviews were read and re-read. During this process initial codes were identified and noted in the margin of the text.
- The research questions were used as headings under which the identified codes were arranged.
- By looking at general patterns of answers and expressed attitudes the researcher began to search for themes.
- These themes were then defined and named according to the essence of what they represent.
- A thematic map was constructed to display the relationships between themes. These relationships were analysed according to their impact on the attitudes of the interviewees.
- The report is presented in chapter 4.

3.3.5 Ethical considerations

Permission to interview subjects had been obtained from the Church Board as the governing body in the congregation.

Prospective interviewees were properly briefed as to the aim and method of the research. This includes the fact that interviews would be recorded.

The anonymity of those taking part in the research had been ensured by using pseudonyms instead of interviewees' real names in the transcription of the interviews.

The interviews were conducted by the researcher who is a senior pastor in the congregation.

3.3.6 Limitations of the study

The following factors may have had an impact on the research process or findings:

- The research had been done in a countryside congregation in the platteland. It is possible that an investigation into resistance to change in an urban congregation may result in different findings because of its members' greater exposure to changes in the community at large.
- The study had been limited to 8 members of one congregation.
- Most members had no previous exposure to the Appreciative Inquiry method. The researcher led interviewees through the various stages of the Appreciative Inquiry method.

3.3.7 Control of bias

It had been important to the researcher to ensure that personal bias in terms of the attitudes of members to the proposed changes did not play a negative role in the research process. The researcher aimed to conduct the research according to sound scientific principles and practices at all times.

The researcher had tried to maintain the integrity of the data so as to ensure that personal opinion on the process in the congregation played no

role in analysing the interview data. The same held true for the researcher's professional relationship as pastor to these members.

3.4 Conclusion

The researcher trusts that the research will prove that the Appreciative Inquiry model is a change intervention method with potential that has as yet not been recognised in the South African congregational context. Further studies – and the application of the Appreciative Inquiry philosophy – may open up exciting new possibilities in Organisational Development.

Chapter 4

Statement of Findings and Analysis of Data

4.1 Introduction

The results from the 2 pilot interviews and 6 research interviews conducted are presented in this chapter. (see 3.2.6)

The 8 interviewees had been selected according to the criteria discussed in 3.2.5. Pseudonyms were used to ensure anonymity as discussed in 3.3.5. An overview of the interviewees' background looks as follows:

Figure 4.1 Background information of interviewees

Pseudonym	Age (years)	Role in congregation	Membership (years)
Carin	39	Children's ministry	15
Abraham	57	Elder	33
Retha	69	Elder & Woman's ministry	69
Herbert	46	Elder	21
Ester	40	Youth ministry	9
Nico	67	Elder & Finance	52
Rhona	61	Member	46
Janine	45	Member	10

Source: Self generated

In order to facilitate data analysis, the data was organized into three coding categories. These categories correlate in broad terms with the research questions and the "structure" of the semi structured interview method used. However, what will be seen is that specific codes were extracted from the data that were not expected! These codes were studied to discover relevant themes.

This chapter is structured in a manner consistent to the data analytic approach used. It consists of three sections, each discussing the relevant coding category, the codes used as well as the themes that have emerged from the data. This chapter is concluded with a summary of the findings and an introduction to chapter 5.

4.2 Initial Reaction To Change

This category was coded using 'Positive' and 'Cautious.'

4.2.1 Initial reaction To Change: Codes

4.2.1.1 Positive

Positive had been defined as "accepting change in the congregation, being open to change and being enthusiastic about the proposed change in the congregation."

The reactions of the interviewees to this question came from several perspectives. It would be wrong at this stage to rate one perspective higher or as being more important than the other. Interviewees were answering these questions without having had time to prepare or reflect on an answer. The aim was to get a first impression of members' reaction to the proposed change in the congregation.

Some of the interviewees reacted to the question in terms of their personal disposition. They are people who are generally open to change. It is just part of their character. Carin explained this by saying "change excites me." She described herself as a "go-for-it-person" who is "pro-change."

Other interviewees also referred to their convictions about the church and the congregation. Janine for example explained her openness to change as

"what we are supposed to do" and "in line with our beliefs." Ester reckoned that it is part of "our purpose as congregation" to be open to change.

For him to be open to change in the congregation, Nico had the prerequisite that this change "must add value to the congregation."

Several interviewees explained their positive reaction to the proposed change as "having a willingness to serve others" and "wanting to address the needs of others."

4.2.1.2 Cautious

Cautious was defined as "being neutral or negative" about the proposed changes.

Members reacted in this cautious way mainly from two perspectives: their personal disposition or their experiences.

Some people are generally optimistic, open to change and enthusiastic about challenges. Others are just the opposite. They want to live in a comfort zone that must not be disturbed. Retha described herself as being "wary of change" asking "why is it necessary?" and "what is the secret agenda?" when confronted with change.

Carin – although declaring that she is excited by change – referred to a general "fear of the unknown" that people have. Abraham described himself as being somebody who "does not want to change" and who "does not like change."

Some interviewees mentioned experiences that had made them wary of change. Abraham described his experiences in his work situation. His reaction to the questions was "I do not want to be confronted with change in the church as well." He called the proposed changes "drastic." Nico concurred with this theme when he referred to the political changes in the country and expressed a fear of "losing that which has value..."

Nico – although being positive about the changes – expressed some concern over the possibility of "offending other members of the congregation" when the changes are implemented.

4.2.2 Initial Reaction to Change: Themes

Two themes emerged from the data studied and analysed in this category.

4.2.2.1 Preference Theme

It became clear that some interviewees answered this question from the perspective of their preferences in terms of their personal disposition or their experiences in life.

This emerged either in the form of positive remarks about the proposed change such as Herbert being "positive about change" or cautious remarks such as Nico mentioning his "resistance to change."

It is reasonable to accept that some people are more comfortable with change than others. The general trend has been that the older interviewees felt more comfortable with the status quo than younger people. The reason might well have been that the younger people were more used to change in their workplaces and in general.

4.2.2.2 Conviction Theme

Interviewees who were positive about the proposed change readily mentioned their reasons for taking this stance. It became clear that for some it was a matter of principle. To them it had not merely been a question of "whether I like change in the congregation or not" – it was a matter that had to be answered from the perspective of their beliefs and values. These interviewees were all positive about the proposed changes.

Ester mentioned "our purpose" and her "willingness to serve" as the reasons for being positive and enthusiastic about the changes.

Seeing that the church is an organisation built on convictions and beliefs, it became clear that these interviewees' attitudes have been formed by the values of the congregation.

None of the interviewees who were cautious or negative about the changes explained their views from the perspective of the values and beliefs of the congregation.

4.3 Discovering The Positive Core

The second category was coded using Focus Areas, Motivation and Experience.

4.3.1 Discovering The Positive Core: Codes

4.3.1.1 Focus Areas

Focus Areas as a code had been defined as the specific areas of the congregation's previous involvement in the broader community of Ermelo as recalled by the interviewees.

Interviewees were free to recall any such involvement. In some cases it had been something they have experienced themselves while in other cases it was something that had been told to them by parents or older members of the congregation.

The Focus Areas mentioned by interviewees covered the whole spectrum of community life. These areas were schools, elderly people, morality, the farming community, needy people, organisational structure of the congregation and the security found in the congregation's way of doing.

It soon became clear that interviewees had a huge appreciation for the congregation's contribution to school life in Ermelo. As Abraham put it "It is a fact that the congregation has had a major impact on the whole school community of Ermelo. This has happened mainly through the pastors but other members have also been involved with youth activities at the school hostels." Nico was in total agreement with this perception. "When I think back to the 1950's, I can clearly remember how the congregation had been involved with the schools of Ermelo. The scholars attended the services on Sundays. The pastor of that time, Rev Veltman, played a significant role in the establishment of the Technical High School as there had been a need for such a school."

This was confirmed by Rhona: "The congregation had really cared for the well-being of the scholars."

The remarks by Nico about Rev Veltman's role confirm the perception that the major forces behind this involvement with the schools had been the pastors of that time. As they were seen as leaders in the community, they were in the position to have a huge influence on the schools. It is important to note that the interviewees "claimed" this involvement of the pastors for the congregation. In this, they are correct, as the pastor had been in the service of the congregation. Their impact on the schools happened with the blessings of the congregation.

Abraham mentioned the contribution of the congregation to the elderly. This had happened through the establishment of an Old Age Home. He has emphasised that the Old Age Home "would not have existed had it not been for the input by this congregation. This has shown the passion of the members for elderly people."

As for the Service Centre for the Aged, Retha – who had acted as manager for 7 years - said: "The Centre was an initiative of the congregation."

The impact of the congregation on the moral values of the community had also featured in the interviews. Nico described it as follows: "During the

1970's the congregation had made a huge effort to impact people's moral choices. Reverend Viljoen organised conferences addressing different moral issues. These resulted in an awareness of morality and values. I think what helped in those years was the fact that the church was sort of the 'moral policeman' of the era. It was expected from the church to set the values – and enforce them."

The Ermelo community consists of two components: people living in the town and the farming community. Rhona mentioned the fact that the congregation really had compassion for the situation of the farmers: "I think the congregation associated closely with the farming community of Ermelo. When there had been a severe drought, it was this congregation that would organise a prayer meeting for the whole community. And the community reacted positively to this initiative. All the shops would close their doors and everybody attended the service."

Janine had drawn the attention to a novel perception on the role the congregation had played when she mentioned that the congregation's structure has played a huge role in the impact it has had over the years. She explained it: "Well, I think that the congregation has one big advantage, and that is the fact that it has a structure. By this I mean that the church is not a fly-by-night entity. It is an organisation with a structure that can have a sustainable impact in the community. It can organise people around a certain cause. It can have a huge impact. When you think about the fact that the congregation has access to many people; that it has their contact details; probably knows them in terms of abilities and interests – well, then you have to see the congregation as having a possible huge influence in the community. And this structure has the ability to organise people, to get resources in terms of money and skills – and then make a difference."

Abraham appreciated the "stability and security" provided by the congregation over the years. When he recalled nearly 140 years of the history of the congregation, the church was experienced as a stable and

secure entity in the town, despite all the changes that had happened around it.

4.3.1.2 Motivation

The question that had to be asked was why the congregation had been so involved in the community. After all, there are numerous examples in church history where churches have thought of themselves as being secluded from the world in the sense of not wanting to have any contact with the sinful world. What was it that motivated the Ermelo congregation to do otherwise?

Maybe Nico summed it all up when he stated that acting in such a way was "what a church was supposed to do." Rhona expressed the same sentiment when she said "I think the congregation has felt a responsibility towards the broader community, not just to members of the congregation."

Several interviewees expressed the view that by being involved in the wellbeing of the community, the congregation had merely acted according to its primary purpose in the world. In the words of Retha "we want to be a congregation that fulfils our primary purpose on earth. I have read an article about the habits that make churches successful – and one of the habits mentioned is 'serving the community.' I think it is something that we have to do. This is why we are here..."

Another perspective on this question had been the remark by Herbert that "I think the underlying values of the congregation have played a big role. Caring for others and loving one another must have motivated them..." He added that most people have this need to show other people that they care.

It is clear from these responses that the question about the motivation for being committed to the community took interviewees back to the roots of the congregation. It helped them to think about the deepest beliefs of the

congregation, about the purpose of the congregation and how it can make a positive impact on society.

As has been stated previously, this is not a theological study. Therefore the theological base for these convictions of members is not discussed. They are merely mentioned as the deep felt beliefs of these members.

4.3.1.3 Experience

As the questions asked about this Positive Core of the congregation have been 'positive questions' (in line with the Appreciative Inquiry model), it was to be expected that the replies would be of a positive nature.

Ester stated that she was "proud of my congregation and its achievements." Rhona described it as "a positive memory" to recall the contribution of the congregation. "I am thankful to be part of a congregation with such a history."

4.3.2 Discovering the Positive Core: Theme

4.3.2.1 Appreciation

There is one golden thread running through members' recollections of the congregation's relationship with the community: appreciation.

This theme had been grounded differently by the various interviewees.

To some it was an appreciation that the congregation has been true to its beliefs and values.

Others had an appreciation for the fact that the congregation had been fulfilling its purpose. This purpose had been linked to the calling to love

people, to serve where needed and to set the moral guidelines according to beliefs.

Others' appreciation stemmed from the difference the congregation had made in the lives of the people of the town such as the children, the elderly and the needy. The appreciation for the structural effectiveness of the congregation emphasised this, as the difference made was sustainable and enduring.

The observation of the researcher is that discovering and discussing the congregation's Positive Core of strengths, beliefs, sense of purpose, past successes and human potential brought a deep appreciation for the congregation and what it has stood for over the years.

4.4 Impact of Appreciative Inquiry

This part of the data has been coded using the following 4 concepts: Purpose, Opportunities, Continuity and How?

4.4.1 Impact of Appreciative Inquiry: Codes

4.4.1.1 Purpose

Purpose was defined as the conviction of interviewees that the congregation is required to do more than just please its members – it has a higher reason for existence. As a faith based organisation, it follows that this conviction flows from the deepest beliefs of the congregation regarding God's will for their existence. These beliefs were not tested by the researcher as this is not a theological study. They have been accepted on face value as presented by the interviewees.

This concept surfaced in nearly all of the interviews. Carin said "I see this as what being a congregation really is all about." Herbert concurred with

her viewpoint when he stated that "I will experience a sense of purpose – this is why we are here as a congregation..."

Ester spoke in similar vein when she declared herself willing "to attend to the needs of somebody else. I feel that this is the purpose of the church in our community." Rhona referred to the changed community and the possibility of repeating the impact of previous years that "It will certainly have to look different, but I still think that we need to be involved in the community." She added "we have a role to play."

"We are here to reach out to others..." was the observation of Janine. "I will feel that I am making a difference. I will feel that I am fulfilling my purpose on earth. And I will be proud to belong to a church that is making a difference. After all, isn't that the real test of our faith?"

It became clear that the issue of having – and living with – a purpose was of the utmost importance to members of the congregation. Apart from it probably being a purely human need, one could hear therein the deeper value of a calling to make a difference in the community.

4.4.1.2 Opportunities

The interviews generally ended with interviewees mentioning several opportunities to live according to what they discovered about the congregation. These opportunities linked onto what the congregation had done in a previous generation. However, the positive story of the congregation also opened up new possibilities.

Retha told the story of her small group which had begun to reach out to street children. Admittedly, there had been some frowns in the group over this new venture, but the important aspect to notice is that this was a totally new aspect of congregational life and focus to all of the members. It was a new opportunity that they had identified.

Janine used two striking metaphors to describe her vision of the congregation grasping every opportunity making a difference: "I think of the church as having many arms. It can reach out to others. It has to reach out to others. Furthermore, there is something symbolic about the fact that our church is located right in the centre of our town - maybe so that we can reach out to others according to our values and beliefs...?" She followed this up with a reference to the opportunity for the church to make an impact in the field of the labour market. It is not important here to ask how this can be done. The fact is that the Appreciative Inquiry method of positive questioning has led to an innovative idea in her mind.

A last example of this is when Carin saw the opportunity for the congregation to become involved with the youth at her school, but then not merely as somebody that brings a message and then disappears; no, she saw opportunities for supplying material and the training of youth leaders that could have long term results.

4.4.1.3 Continuity

The researcher deliberately tested interviewees' reaction to the fact that the Appreciative Inquiry model works with what has previously worked well – and then ask how and what of this can be continued.

The reaction to this question had been overwhelming positive. Rhona articulated this sentiment when she said "and we have to discover that this new focus is just a new way of being faithful to the beliefs and values of those that have been living before us."

Herbert found inspiration in the knowledge that the congregation would actually be continuing that which had previously been a characteristic of this congregation: "That will inspire us to repeat this impact on the community."

The church puts a high value on its past. The history of a congregation is something sacred. When interviewees grasped the Appreciative Inquiry

concept of continuation they became excited and inspired. It was as if they had discovered a way of adapting to a changed milieu without having to cast their unique history aside. In fact, admiring it, getting motivated by it – those are the things that would help them to create a new history of involvement in the community!

4.4.1.4 How?

This code tried to describe the reaction of members who were still not convinced that the congregation would be able to play a role in a changed world. It was generally uttered in the form of "yes, but how...?"

Abraham described this sentiment when he said: "I think it is important for the congregation to have an influence – but the way to do this..." He had serious reservations about the congregation's ability to play any significant role in the community.

"Our congregation needs to have a mind shift" was the comment of Ester who felt that, although she herself was positive about the opportunities to make a difference, the vast majority of the members would not be ready for this. Her remark should be seen as a purely practical comment, realising that there would still be some convincing to do.

In all fairness to interviewees it has to be remarked that the question as to how these changes would be implemented had not been addressed in this research. It is part of a next step in the Appreciative Inquiry process that falls outside the scope of this study.

4.4.2 Impact of Appreciative Inquiry: Theme

4.4.2.1 Higher Level Theme

The one thought running through the data on the impact of the Appreciative Inquiry process is that of a Higher Level thinking and reaction. It has

become clear by analysing the data that interviewees have generally begun thinking on a higher level about the issue at hand. It would have been easy to remain at the level of "I like..." or "I do not want..." What has however emerged is a sense of purpose, calling and continuity. Interviewees began to view their world with new eyes, searching for new opportunities to carry forward that which has been valuable in the past. This has even led to the crossing of old traditional barriers of class, race and religion. The whole community has become their terms of reference.

And because this has been linked to the deepest values and beliefs of their faith, it has become the strongest possible motivation to "be a positive and healthy presence in society."

4.5 Validity and Reliability of research findings

The question as to the validity and reliability of the research method has already been discussed in chapter 3.3.1. The approach of Morse, et al. (2002:13) to validity and reliability in qualitative research had been adopted by the researcher.

The five-step process consisted of the following:

- Methodological coherence: this points to the congruence between the research questions and the research methods. In this study, the research method was the semi-structured interview. The researcher ensured that the research questions and the interview schedule are linked to one another.
- Appropriate sample of participants: the researcher ensured that this criterion for validity and reliability by selecting interviewees to represent the diversity in the congregation in terms of gender, age, occupation and role in the congregation. The primary criterion was the ability to provide the information that was needed for the research. The number of

interviewees has been decided on according to the literature on qualitative research.

- Collecting and analysing data concurrently: The semi-structured interview method was the ideal tool to ensure that this criterion was met. It gave the researcher the opportunity to react to information given by interviewees, to clarify viewpoints and to probe deeper when needed.
- Thinking theoretically as all data have to be verified in existing theory: The data that had been obtained during the research had indeed been verified with the literature review in chapter 2. This had been done in chapter 5.
- Theory development: The researcher had fulfilled this requirement by developing theory on the Appreciative Inquiry process. This theory centred around the ability of the Appreciative Inquiry process to lift the change conversation to a higher level where the focus is on the congregation's purpose and values rather than on resistance to the proposed change.

The researcher had succeeded in satisfying the criteria for qualitative research that is reliable and valid.

4.6 Conclusion

The research has aimed to describe the impact that the Appreciative Inquiry method could have on a change process in a congregation.

The data analysed suggests that Appreciative Inquiry has huge potential in the church environment. The mere act of discussing the Positive Core of the congregation and using this to view the community today has led to remarkable insights and a deepening of commitment to values and beliefs.

The results of the research will be discussed and linked to relevant theory and literature regarding change and the reaction to change in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

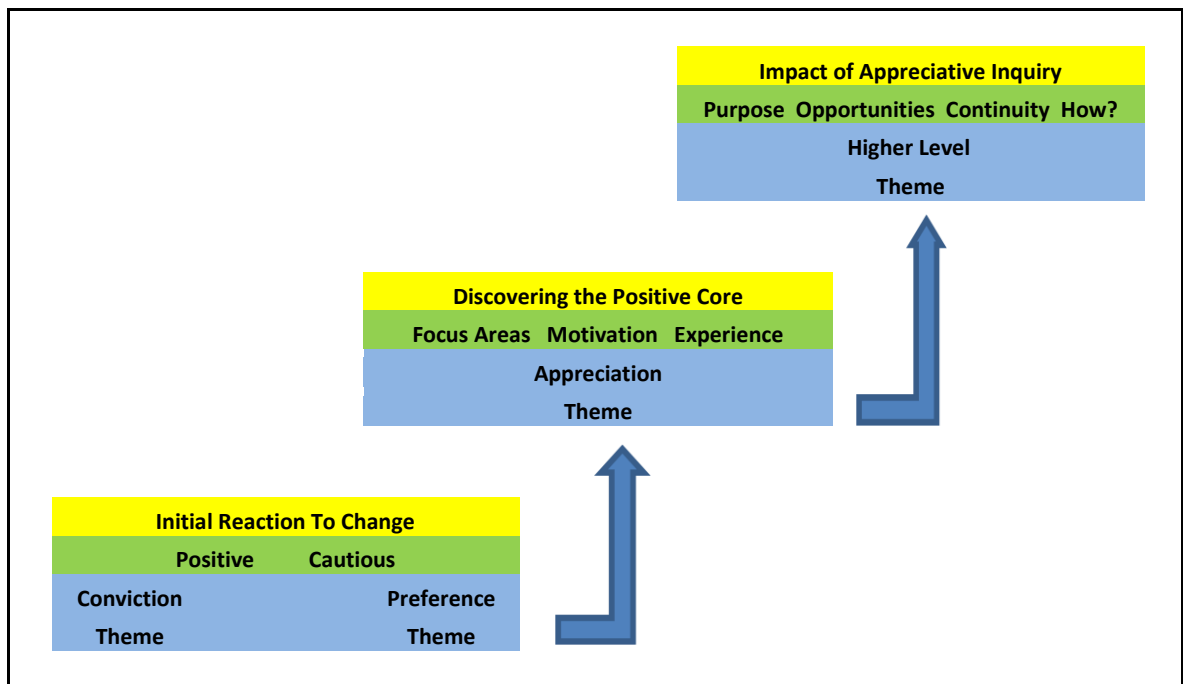
Discussion of Findings and Linking to Literature Review

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss, analyse and interpret the findings that have been presented in chapter 4 of which Figure 5.1 is a diagrammatic illustration. The discussion will also link the findings to the literature review.

The structure of the chapter follows the structure of the research. The three categories and their codes that have been used in chapter 4 will be discussed. A compilation of the findings from the primary data and secondary data follows after each category has been discussed.

Figure 5.1 The Change Conversation elevated to a Higher level



Source: Self generated

5.2 Initial Reaction to Change

Interviewees' initial reaction to the proposed change in strategic focus of the congregation varied between 'positive' and 'cautious.'

5.2.1 'Positive'

The origin of members' positive reaction to change was twofold: a personal disposition towards being open to change, and personal convictions regarding the importance of change in the congregation's strategic focus.

The openness to change from a personal disposition was well illustrated by the comment of Carin that "change excites me," going on to describe herself as a "pro-change" person.

Interviewees' convictions about the role of the church and the congregation played a role in their positive reaction to the proposed change. Terms such as "what we are supposed to do" and "in line with our beliefs" were used to describe this.

In terms of the Force Field Analysis Model discussed in Chapter 2, these positive reactions to the change functioned as driving forces pushing for change. The fact that some of these reactions came from people's deepest convictions about the role of the church made them very strong driving forces that could have a huge impact on the change process in the congregation.

5.2.2 'Cautious'

The cautious reaction of members also came from two perspectives: a personal disposition that was cautious of any form of change, and the individual 'negative' experiences of members.

Interviewees reacting from a cautious disposition referred to "the comfort zone," being "wary of change" and "a fear of the unknown." It became clear that a perception existed that the congregation was expected to play the role of an environment providing stability and security amongst the many changes people are experiencing. The comment of Abraham that "I do not want to be confronted with change in the church as well" confirmed this

observation. It may well be argued that this is a misconception of what a congregation is all about, but this perception was certainly present.

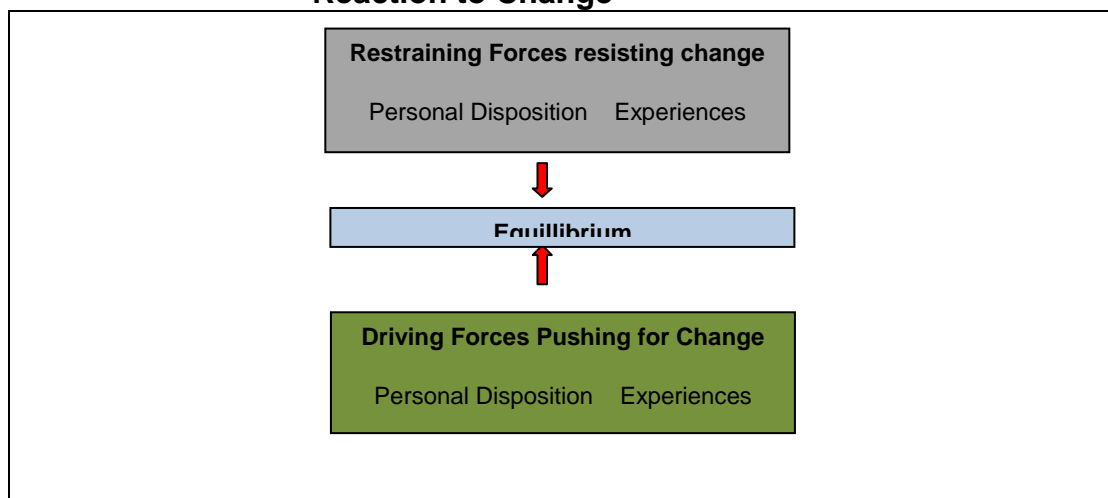
It was clear that negative experiences had a significant impact on some members' general attitude towards change. They mentioned negative experiences in their working environment as well as some negative implications of the political changes in South Africa. These negative experiences had not been questioned for their validity; they were taken on face value as the honest comments of members on change in general.

The research findings confirmed the view of Egan and Feyerherm (2005:1) in 2.2.4 that people facing organisational change experience it with an emotional intensity and sense of uncertainty.

5.2.3 Compilation

When the Force Field Analysis Model is used to describe the initial reaction to the change process, it can be illustrated as follows, showing the restraining forces resisting change as well as the driving forces pushing for change: (Figure 5.2)

Figure 5.2 Force Field Analysis Model showing Initial Reaction to Change



Source: Self-generated

Brown and Harvey (2006:163 – 165) mention a list of restraining forces that have the potential of blocking the implementation of a change program. The list includes such factors as

- The comfort zone
- A fear of the unknown
- The disruption of routine
- "What's in it for me?"
- A threat to security
- Disturbance of social networks
- Conformity to norms and culture

It became clear from the research data that all of these restraining forces played a role in the congregation.

The Change Curve used in 2.2.4 describes people's reaction to change. This model has as underlying premise the idea that change inevitably means "accepting a loss."

Members from the "cautious" viewpoint would agree with this. The feeling of losing their security, stability and the well known way of being had been expressed by several members.

However, the research showed that there was another side to this. Members that were positive about the proposed change never expressed anything related to a "loss." In fact, those members that articulated a positive attitude towards the change from their convictions about the congregation's reason for existence expressed a sense of purpose. They would not be found on the left hand side of the Change Curve!

Robson (date unknown :1) puts a valid question on the table referring to the change curve when he writes "why have we given change such a bad press that it is considered synonymous with grief?"

The proponents of Appreciative Inquiry will heartily agree with Robson's viewpoint. Appreciative Inquiry works with what people value. It aims to

replace the sense of loss with a sense of continuity – so as to get commitment and enthusiasm for change. What is continued is that which is valued by the organisation. The challenge for the organisation is to discover this Positive Core.

5.3 Discovering the Positive Core

In chapter 4 it has been reported that exposing members to an Appreciative Inquiry type of interview has resulted in 3 codes that were then used to describe this experience.

5.3.1 Focus Areas

The different focus areas mentioned by members talking about the past involvement of the congregation in the community covered the whole spectrum of community life.

The important point to make about these focus areas is that they are neither right nor wrong. The researcher did not try to make a judgement as to the success of the involvement of the congregation. It was purely the experience and perception of the interviewees. These focus areas formed the unique Positive Core of the congregation as expressed by these interviewees in their reaction to a question about the congregation's past impact on the community.

Discovering the Positive Core of the congregation is not about any form of judgement of the past. It is about appreciation. It is about what members value. It is about what gives life to this congregation in the area of making an impact on the community.

Cooperrider and Whitney (2005:8) call these "rich accounts of the positive – what people talk about as past, present and future capacities, or the positive core."

Comparing the focus areas identified by the interviewees with the description of the Positive Core as given by Cooperrider and Whitney in 2.3.4 shows that the focus areas can be related to several of these aspects. These include the following that were highlighted in their list:

Figure 5.3 Positive Core of the congregation

Achievements	Strategic opportunities	Product strengths
Best business practices	Positive emotions	Technical assets
Core competencies	Organisation wisdom	Elevated thoughts
Visions of possibility	Leadership capabilities	Vital traditions
Lived values	Social capital	Collective spirit
Embedded knowledge	Financial assets	Visions of possible futures
Alliances and partnerships	Strategic advantages	Relational resources

Source: Self generated

These focus areas were uncovered through the Appreciative Inquiry process of discovering the Positive Core where inquiry is mobilised through what Cooperrider et al.(2008:3) called "the crafting of the unconditional positive question"(2.3.3)

5.3.2 Motivation

The question as to what motivated the congregation to make an impact in the past was an important one. It forced interviewees to dig deeper and put themselves in the shoes of a previous generation. This question searched for the values motivating the congregation to care for the community.

The reaction of the interviewees unveiled a number of these attitudes and values such as "what a church was supposed to do" and "acting according to their purpose." It became clear that the congregation had felt a responsibility towards the broader community.

This discussion led members to think about the real roots of the congregation. It put the issue of the congregation's reason for existence on the table and focused the discussion on the purpose of the congregation.

5.3.3 Experience

Interviewees clearly enjoyed thinking about these positive memories! It filled them with a sense of "being proud of the congregation." Members were thankful for the role the congregation had played in the past.

This experience of the interviewees correlates with what has been written of the Discovering the Positive Core process. Lewis, et al. (2008:49) write that

this phase is about understanding what gives life to the organisation and what has brought it this far or to this point in its history. The discovery phase is about exploring and uncovering the unique qualities of the organisation: its leadership, history, reasons for existing, or values, which have contributed to its life and success.

Lewis, et al. (2008:49) stress the importance of using this phase to help members of an organisation to "come to know the history of their organisation as a history of positive possibilities rather than problematic past events, crises and forgotten or irrelevant events."

The positive experience of the interviewees can be contributed to the positive questions asked.

5.3.4 Compilation

This part of the interviews was characterised by a deep felt appreciation for the contribution of the congregation to the community.

This appreciation ran deeper than merely being proud of the congregation as a successful organisation. Interviewees valued the ability and willingness of the congregation to fulfil its role in the community according to its primary purpose.

Discovering the Positive Core of the congregation of Ermelo has demonstrated the validity of some of the principles of Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider et al., 2008:8) as mentioned in 2.3.2.3. These principles include the following:

- Principle of Simultaneity: "Inquiry creates change" because we begin to create the moment we ask a question.
- Poetic Principle: "We can choose what we study" and our choice makes a difference.
- Positive Principle: "Positive questions lead to positive change"

Discovering this unique Positive Core provided the positive foundation for the successful implementation of a strategic change in the congregation. In 2.3.3 the 4-D Model of Appreciative Inquiry has been discussed. It shows how the Positive Core of an organisation can be utilised to facilitate a change process that is congruent with what is being valued. The viewpoint of Egan and Feyerherm (2005:1-6) in 2.3.3 has been justified by the research. It is good to "carry the best of the past into the future."

If this model of facilitating a change process is compared to a change model from the deficit-based philosophy, it becomes clear that Appreciative Inquiry is much better suited to produce positive results. The comparison has been made in 2.3.5 showing that the traditional approach to Organisational Development is thinking about an organisation as a "problem to be solved." The Appreciative Inquiry approach is to think of an organisation as "a mystery with infinite capacity to be embraced." That is why positive questions are being asked when members are interviewed about their organisation. The positive answers, emotions and attitudes are then used to build the change on.

5.4 The Impact of Appreciative Inquiry

The research process was designed to lead to this important question: what is the impact of the Appreciative Inquiry model on a change process in the congregation? The results obtained from the interviews have answered this question.

5.4.1 Purpose

Perhaps the most exciting discovery of the Appreciative Inquiry process was the fact that members began talking about the purpose of the congregation. Discovering the Positive Core of the congregation in terms of its past involvement in the community led members to realise the purpose of their congregation today.

In an organisation such as a congregation, a sense of purpose is of the utmost importance. It is connected to members' perception of a higher calling, a sense of "we were destined to do just this!" This has a huge impact on their acceptance of change. It replaced any possible sense of loss with a higher reason for existence.

This aspect of the research is much more than merely overcoming resistance to change. It gives a deeper motivation for being "a positive and healthy presence in society."

5.4.2 Opportunities

In 2.3.1 it has been mentioned that Cooperrider has called Appreciative Inquiry a theory of future possibility (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros, 2008:xxvii). This was confirmed by the research done. Interviewees began to think in terms of future possibilities asking "what if...?" The discovery of

the Positive Core and the discussion thereof opened up possibilities that have not been thought of previously.

Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros (2008:xxvii) described Appreciative Inquiry as a process that "systematically appreciate everything of value – and then speculate on possibilities for the future." (2.3.1) The research showed how the interviewees began to think in terms of possibilities.

Bushe (2007:1) has been quoted in 2.3.2.1 calling Appreciative Inquiry a "generative" process because of its quest for ideas, images, theories and models. The research confirmed his viewpoint.

5.4.3 Continuity

The traditional thinking on change is that change implies a break with the past. In the church environment, where people put a high value on tradition and a certain way of doing, a break with the past can be a huge challenge to a change process.

The research showed that change is not necessarily equal to experiencing a loss. Members were discovering that the proposed change was very much in line with what the congregation used to be. This provided them with a sense of continuity. Rhona expressed this as "a new way of being faithful to beliefs and values of those that had been living before us." This sense of continuity inspired Herbert to repeat the contribution to the community that he had discovered had been part of the congregation's Positive Core.

Appreciative Inquiry has always proposed to use what is important to organisations and build their future on this. In doing so the sense of a possible loss is replaced by something positive and of value – in this case a sense of continuity.

5.4.4 How?

It has been mentioned that interviewees expressing a more cautious attitude to the proposed changes often asked the question "how?" They were unsure how the change would be implemented, what the implications would be and whether it would really be possible to make such a huge shift in strategic focus without losing the support of the members.

It has also been noted in chapter 4 that this question had not been answered during the interviews. The reason is that the "how?" falls outside the scope of this study.

The questions are indeed valid concerns. To be honest in a change intervention, these concerns will have to be addressed. Appreciative Inquiry does not sidestep these difficult issues. In 2.2 Ullrich (2007:14-16) had been quoted as saying that the "challenge is to turn what you know into what you do." Appreciative Inquiry accepts this challenge.

Chapter 2 has described the 4D model of Appreciative Inquiry change. This study focused on the first D namely Discover. During the interviews this had led to the Dream phase where possibilities and opportunities began to present themselves in the minds of the interviewees. The "how?" is addressed during the Design phase when action plans and details are discussed to implement a successful change programme. This eventually leads to the Destiny phase where a new way of being and doing is finalised.

5.4.5 Compilation

It is the observation of the researcher that the process of discovering the Positive Core and the conversation about this Positive Core has indeed lifted the change process to a higher level. In 2.2.1 the nature of the envisioned change in the congregation has been described as a move away from the established strategic focus of "meeting the needs of the

members" into a strategy where the aim of the congregation is to be "a positive and healthy presence in society."

It became clear that this new strategic focus is on a higher level than merely meeting the needs of members (2.2.1). The research showed that members had begun to think and reason on this higher level. This was clear from their focus on the congregation's calling and purpose. They began envisioning new opportunities, and in doing so started to cross old traditional borders of religion, race and class. Their motivation for this stemmed from their conviction that this is the real purpose of the congregation: to be a positive and healthy presence in society.

On this higher level of talking about the envisioned change, the possible negative implications have begun to diminish in value. A new higher level perspective has begun to develop.

5.5 Contribution of Appreciative Inquiry to managing change in a congregation

In 2.2 it has been mentioned that this study was going to use management insights from the Organisational Development field to research the change process in the congregation. It was envisioned that the reaction to this change could either facilitate a successful change process or inhibit the implementation of the proposed change (2.2.3).

The research has shown that members indeed were prone to feelings of loss, uncertainty and even fear of change. However, through the Appreciative Inquiry process of discovering the Positive Core and discussing this Positive Core, these negative feelings were replaced with positive attitudes towards the proposed change. Members were thinking in terms of possibilities, of having an impact in the community, and of being a positive and healthy presence in society.

The fact that members realised that this new strategic focus is congruent with the roots of the congregation has replaced any sense of loss with a sense of purpose and calling.

5.6 Conclusion

The research findings have produced evidence that the Appreciative Inquiry method of discovering the Positive Core of an organisation has indeed potential in the situation where a congregation is faced with strategic changes. In chapter 6 certain recommendations will be made to ensure that the potential of this model of Organisational Development is fully exploited.

Chapter 6

Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overall picture of the research, its findings and the way forward.

The findings of the primary and secondary research will be reviewed to come to an overall conclusion. Possible recommendations for change management practice in the church environment or for further studies will be discussed.

6.2 Findings

6.2.1 Findings from the Literature Review

The literature review of chapter 2 will be discussed from the perspective of the research questions.

When the reaction to change was discussed in the literature review, the following has emerged:

- The literature on Organisational Development approach change from the perspective of conflict and resistance. The Force Field Analysis Model is a clear example of this.
- Change is often seen as some kind of loss which then leads to an approach where members of an organisation have to be guided through the various stages of this process of loss. The Change Curve of the Life Cycle of Resistance to Change is the prime example of this approach.
- The Appreciative Inquiry approach, on the other hand, is one of valuing what is important and building change on this Positive Core of positive experiences, assets and emotions. Appreciative Inquiry aims to

overcome resistance to change and build commitment to change through a process of social constructionism where each participant becomes a partner in the change process.

The research question on the discovery of the Positive Core of an organisation introduced Appreciative Inquiry to the study. The definition used in 2.3.1 has described the Appreciative Inquiry method as one where everything of value is systematically approached. This Positive Core is then used to speculate about future possibilities for the organisation.

This is in contrast to the traditional Organisational Development approach where organisations are often seen as problems to be solved. Appreciative Inquiry works with a strengths-based approach as opposed to the deficit-based approach of, for example, the SWOT analysis.

The three Appreciative Inquiry principles mentioned by Egan and Feyerherm (2005:20 in the literature review describe the Appreciative Inquiry philosophy accurately, namely (1) people are drawn to the positive; (2) thoughts and words create worlds; and (3) you create the world you pay attention to.

The third research question on the possible contribution of the Appreciative Inquiry model of change management in a congregation formed the aim of this research study. It was envisioned that the research would yield conclusive evidence of the impact of an Appreciative Inquiry process in a changing congregation.

6.2.2 Findings from the Primary research

The three research questions have been discussed in chapter 4 and 5 in terms of the themes that have emerged during the interviews.

6.2.2.1 Initial reaction to Change

The first question regarding the initial reaction to change in the congregation has confirmed that some members had a deep seated cautious approach to change. This was in some instances related to the implications of the proposed change as discussed in 2.2.3. These implications were, amongst others, the challenge to step outside of a comfort zone, the allocation of resources of the congregation to projects, the challenge to forge relationships with others outside of the normal sphere of contact and to overcome possible prejudices.

These reservations about the proposed change have all been mentioned in members' cautious attitudes.

There were, however, those who were positive about the proposed changes. To them, these changes presented an opportunity to demonstrate the values and beliefs of the congregation. They felt a sense of purpose in implementing these changes.

The primary research has confirmed that the Force Field Analysis Model is a valid description of the various attitudes towards change. There is a wide spectrum of attitudes ranging from cautious and apprehensive to positive and enthusiastic.

6.2.2.2 Discovering the Positive Core

Discovering the Positive Core of the congregation had been a positive experience for all the interviewees. It helped them to form a clear picture of who the congregation really had been in previous years. Discovering the different areas in which the congregation had an impact, filled the interviewees with appreciation for its role. Discussing this Positive Core and pondering about the motivation of previous generations to be involved in the community had an energising effect on members. It filled them with

pride and self-esteem. It is as if they discovered that the congregation can indeed make a difference.

This positive conversation about the impact of the congregation then opened up new possibilities. Members began to think in terms of purpose and opportunity. Even those who had initially been cautious about the proposed change began to speak about the values of the congregation, its role in the community and how it can continue the tradition of being committed to have an impact on the surrounding community.

It is true that there had been some reservations about this process. Some interviewees had been unsure about how these changes would be implemented and their implications. It has been shown how this forms a natural transition to the next step of the 4D process of Appreciative Inquiry where the practical implications of the changes have to be discussed.

6.2.2.3 Contribution of the Appreciative Inquiry model

This positive experience has carried over into the discussion on the possible contribution of the Appreciative Inquiry model. It became clear that the Appreciative Inquiry process – and specifically the discovery of the Positive Core - has resulted in lifting the change conversation to a higher level where people were creatively discussing purpose, values and opportunities. At this level of conversation, personal disposition and preferences became less of an issue in exchange for a sense of purpose and being connected to certain deep-seated beliefs and values. It would be fair to claim that the Appreciative Inquiry process has resulted in removing the resistance to change and replacing it with a commitment to the proposed changes.

6.2.3 Conclusion

The aim of this research project has been to determine the contribution of the Appreciative Inquiry model of change management on the attitudes of church members towards a change in strategic focus. The leadership of the congregation had decided on changing the strategic focus from an inward focus on the needs of the members towards an outward focus on the needs of the community. The implications of the proposed change had the potential to elicit resistance to this new strategic focus.

The Appreciative Inquiry model of change management had been chosen by the researcher because of its potential to overcome resistance to change by helping members to discover the Positive Core of the congregation.

In 1.7.2 it had been stated that the positive acceptance and embracement of the proposed changes by the members would provide the evidence for the positive impact of the Appreciative Inquiry model of change management. The research had indeed provided this, but also much more: the fact that the change conversation had been lifted to a higher level where purpose, opportunities and values were the core of the discussions proved the value of this change management philosophy.

The objectives of this study had been achieved in that the results had provided the necessary data to make a scientific decision as to the value of Appreciative Inquiry. The results had provided sufficient evidence of the invaluable contribution of Appreciative Inquiry to the field of Organisational Development – specifically in the church environment.

6.3 Recommendations

Following the research study and information collected during the course of this project, the following recommendations are made trusting that they

could make a contribution to change management in the church environment:

- There is a definite need for congregations to ensure that members know the Positive Core of their congregation. Members have to share their positive experiences of the past so as to inspire a next generation.
- Leaders of congregations have to focus on this Positive Core. They have to be aware of the achievements of the congregation. They need to be focused on organisational wisdom. Leaders have to ensure that the collective spirit, the vital traditions and alliances and partnerships are conserved and used in a new era. It will be these elements of the Positive Core that will ensure that a congregation remains relevant.
- Leaders of congregations have to ensure that the change conversation is conducted on the 'higher level' where purpose, opportunities and the role of the church are discussed. Change in congregations is too often discussed on the level of personal preferences.
- The leadership of a congregation would do well to have regular focus groups that discuss this Positive Core of the congregation. In this way they will ensure that the congregation remains ready for change because of the sense of purpose and a commitment to the values and beliefs of the congregation.

6.4 Conclusion

Hirsch (2006:53) was quoted in 2.2 as saying that the track record of congregations in terms of change is rather poor. The researcher contends that this research study has shown that the Appreciative Inquiry model of change management has the potential to put this record straight.

It is up to leaders facilitating change interventions to do just this.

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Appendix A

Interview Schedule Construction

The following excerpt from 3.2.6 describes the pilot studies and their impact on the final research instrument

The researcher had done a pilot study by interviewing two members of the congregation. The subjects for these interviews had to meet the same criteria as mentioned above.

The results from the pilot study highlighted a few aspects of the interview schedule that needed some attention:

- The researcher needed to spend more time helping interviewees to discover the Positive Core of the congregation in terms of its involvement and impact in the community. It appeared as if younger members of the congregation – even though they have been members for more than 8 years – did not have such a vivid picture of this aspect of the congregation's Positive Core. To help interviewees with this discovering of the Positive Core, the researcher used information from a document that has been drawn up at a 2008 congregational meeting of members during which they have described the Positive Core as they see it. Using this document ensured that the personal bias of the researcher did not influence the interviewees.
- The pilot study indicated that the interviewer had to narrow down the discussion on the Positive Core to ensure that the congregation's involvement in the community stayed in the focus. Interviewees wanted to speak on many other topics that were not relevant to this study.
- The researcher found that it was important to explain the implications of the change in strategic focus to interviewees (in terms of the purpose of the congregation, an inward versus an outward focus, and the allocation of resources like money, time and personnel). This was important to ensure that their reaction to the specific proposed changes was heard. The interviewer used a standard explanation of these implications in all

interviews to ensure that all interviewees reacted to the same common understanding of the implications.

These remarks on the pilot interviews were discussed with the study supervisor – and it was agreed that the changes be made. As the interviews were semi-structured interviews the researcher made the necessary notes in his copy of the interview schedule to ensure that these aspects got the needed attention during the research interviews.

Despite these necessary changes, the information provided by interviewees during the pilot interviews was valid and reliable. The researcher had therefore analysed the results from the pilot interviews with those that emanated from the research interviews to give a total of 8 interviews.

Appendix B

Covering Letter requesting permission from Church Board

11 November 2008

The Chairman: The Church Board

DR Church Ermelo

PO Box 148

ERMELO 2350

Sir

I am currently a MBA student at MANCOSA, a business school accredited by the Council for Higher Education.

As part of my studies I want to interview 8 members of the congregation on how they experience the change in strategic focus that is being implemented in the congregation.

Participation in these interviews will be voluntary and members will be fully informed as to the exact nature of the research.

I hereby request your permission to conduct these interviews during the next few months.

Yours faithfully

FJ Retief

Appendix C

Letter from Church Board giving permission for research

Dutch Reformed Church Ermelo

PO Box 148 Ermelo 2350

19 November 2009

Reverend FJ Retief

PO Box 148

Ermelo 2350

Interviews with members of the congregation

The Board has discussed your request to interview members of the congregation as part of your research project.

The Board has decided to give you permission to interview members.

We wish you success with your studies!

PJG van Niekerk: Chairman

Appendix D

Pilot Study Interview Transcriptions

Pilot Interview 1

Carin (pseudonym)

06 April 2009 10:00

39 years School secretary

Please describe the background of your connection to the congregation.

I have been a member of this congregation since 1994. I am actively participating in the youth ministry – especially the smaller children. I am also involved in a small group that meets every week.

Part 1: Attitude towards change in the congregation

- 1. When you hear about "change in the congregation", what is your reaction?**

It is important to me not to stay in a comfort zone. I generally have the need to begin new projects and discover new challenges. So in a sense it would be correct to say that change excites me. However, I must admit that when hearing about change, I also ask the question 'so what is wrong?' or 'why is the change necessary?' I guess everybody has this fear of the unknown...

- 2. The new strategic focus of the congregation is described as "being a positive and healthy presence in society." This implies a shift from an inward focus on the needs of the members of the congregation to a focus on the needs of the community. What is your first reaction to this?**

I am excited to hear this. I have a soft spot for the needs of children and if this new focus implies that their needs will be addressed it would make me very happy. On the other hand I am well aware that there may be many members who would not share my excitement. It may perhaps be

necessary to convince them first by focusing on them and their needs for a period of time.

Part 2: Discovering the Positive Core of the congregation

3. What do you value most about the congregation?

My participation in our small group. The caring relationships amongst us are important to me. We have also decided to become part of a project in the community that focuses on the needs of abused children.

4. How would you describe the past involvement of the congregation in the community? Examples of this?

I haven't experienced much of this in the recent past. Maybe this was due to my personal circumstances as I was raising my own children.

At a recent meeting of members, one of the aspects of the congregation's past that was highlighted has been the involvement of the congregation at the schools. Granted, this involvement was restricted mostly to the pastors of the congregation. But nevertheless, the members of the congregation have noted this as an important part of the history of this congregation.

That sounds exciting. In a sense this tells something of the congregation's passion for the youth and for children. As a secretary at the primary school I am all too aware of the needs of our children.

5. Thinking back on these examples of involvement in the community, how can the congregation repeat its contribution in the community today?

I think there are wonderful opportunities in the field of youth ministry. The fact that our congregation are reaching out to children in the community – irrespective of their denomination – is a wonderful development. Being on a daily basis in the school environment, I can see that the church can make a contribution there. Maybe the congregation can contribute to our Youth Organisation with resources like material, and training of youth leaders.

- 6. How would it make you feel if the congregation can continue making an impact in the community?**

I am positive about this development in the congregation.

Part 3: The Contribution of the Appreciative Inquiry model to change management in the congregation

- 7. If the new strategic focus ("being a positive and healthy presence in society") is built on these examples of involvement in the community (the Positive Core), how would you accept the change?**

I think it would be important to spell out the implications of this new strategic focus to all members. For myself, I see this as what being a congregation really is all about.

- 8. How would you feel to be part of a congregation that has decided to primarily focus on making a practical contribution to the community?**

I would feel that we are being true to our calling in this world. I feel that we have been destined for just this. It will certainly challenge us but we will be true to our values. It will feel that we then function on a level where our primary focus is not to be happy and content, but rather asking how we can make a difference today.

Pilot Interview 2

Abraham (pseudonym)

06 April 2009 15:00

57 years Department of Education

Please describe the background of your connection to the congregation.

I have been a member of this congregation since 1976. I have served as deacon and am currently serving as an elder. I am also involved in a small group that meets every week.

Part 1: Attitude towards change in the congregation

1. When you hear about "change in the congregation", what is your reaction?

My immediate reaction is one of 'I don't want to change.' I don't like change. I feel safe with what I know. My feelings on this may well originate from the fact that I have to face many changes in my work situation. It is as if I want one place where I am not confronted with change – and I guess I think of the congregation as that one place.

2. The new strategic focus of the congregation is described as "being a positive and healthy presence in society." This implies a shift from an inward focus on the needs of the members of the congregation to a focus on the needs of the community. What is your first reaction to this?

I think this would be a drastic step to take. OK, I know it is our calling to reach out to all people, but the question remains: am I responsible for other poor people while at the same time my own poor people suffer? This is not an easy question to answer. I furthermore think that the political situation in South Africa has complicated the situation. The fact is that some of our members have lost their jobs due to political pressures in terms of laws and regulations. I don't think that they feel much for the needs of the community

at this stage. So, I am not sure that it would be a good move to make. I think the times that we live in would complicate such a drastic change.

Part 2: Discovering the Positive Core of the congregation

3. What do you value most about the congregation?

The fact that we value our traditions and the stability that goes with this. I have already mentioned that the congregation – in contrast to some other congregations – has always been an organisation that values our traditions and way of doing. It gives a sense of security.

4. How would you describe the past involvement of the congregation in the community? Examples of this?

Having been in the school environment for the past 35 years, I guess most of my experience of the congregation's involvement will be focused on the youth. It is a fact that the congregation has had a major impact on the whole school community of Ermelo. This has happened mainly through the pastors but other members have also been involved with youth ministry.

Other examples of the congregation's involvement in the community are the establishing of the Old Age Home as well as the Service Centre for the aged. These organisations would not have existed had it not been for the input by this congregation. This has shown the passion of the members for elderly people.

Any impact from the church's side on the values of the community?

I think the church had a major impact on the morality and values of the community. In a previous era the pastor and the church were seen as the moral leaders of the town. It was expected of them to act as such and the community has accepted this. Somehow, this is no more the case.

5. Thinking back on these examples of involvement in the community, how can the congregation repeat its contribution in the community today?

I think it will be impossible to repeat the situation of the past. Times have just changed too much. I think it will be an enormous challenge for the church to determine how it can have the same kind of impact on the Ermelo community today. One may even find that the impact of members living our values in their daily activities is far greater than that of the church as an institution. I think the influence of the church as an organisation is not as big as it had been in earlier years. People don't want to be prescribed by the church about morality anymore. An organisation like the school just won't accept it. I think it is important for the congregation to have an influence – but the way to do this...It will be a huge challenge.

6. How would it make you feel if the congregation can continue making an impact in the community?

I think it would be good if we can be able to do this. I am convinced that we have something that can make a difference in the community.

Part 3: The Contribution of the Appreciative Inquiry model on change management in the congregation

7. If the new strategic focus ("being a positive and healthy presence in society") is built on these examples of involvement in the community (the Positive Core), how would you accept the change?

I think it may work as long as you can motivate this strategic shift. And motivating it as being a continuation of what we valued in the past may be a good way of getting members' commitment. I still think it will be a major challenge to design this new way but it has the potential to make a big difference.

8. How would you feel to be part of a congregation that has decided to primarily focus on making a practical contribution to the community?

I will be proud of my congregation if it can design this new way of impacting the community. I think there are numerous opportunities to do just this.

Appendix E

Research Study Interview Transcriptions

Interview 3

Retha (pseudonym)

22 April 2009 11:00

69 years Retired teacher

Please describe the background of your connection to the congregation.

I have been born a member of this congregation. This means that I am part of the congregation for the past 69 years. I have lived here all my life and have a deep loyalty to the congregation and the town. I am currently serving as elder and as the leader of a small group that meets every week.

Part 1: Attitude towards change in the congregation

- 1. When you hear about "change in the congregation", what is your reaction?**

My first reaction is to ask 'what is the secret agenda behind this?' I am wary of change – perhaps because of my age! Older people tend to be more traditional in their thinking. I usually ask questions like 'why is the change necessary?' or 'what are the implications of the proposed change?'

I guess you can call me 'cautious' about change in the congregation. I like to stay with what I know...

- 2. The new strategic focus of the congregation is described as "being a positive and healthy presence in society." This implies a shift from an inward focus on the needs of the members of the congregation to a focus on the needs of the community. What is your first reaction to this? The implications of this change will be a new attitude towards the purpose of the congregation, our projects, and the way we**

structure the budget... We will begin to look away from ourselves – focusing on the needs of the community... What is your first reaction to this?

It is a fact the community of Ermelo has changed. The political changes since 1994 have made a huge impact on Ermelo. I am unsure about the contribution that the congregation can make.

Will you be against an involvement in the community?

No, definitely not. But I am a practical person. I always ask the question 'how are we going to do this?' Furthermore I think that there will be members of the congregation who will not be able to accept such a change in strategic focus.

Part 2: Discovering the Positive Core of the congregation

3. What do you value most about the congregation's contribution to the community in the past?

How would you describe the past involvement of the congregation in the community? Examples of this?

While working as a teacher I have sort of lived a very "isolated life" where I was mostly unaware of what was going on in the rest of the community.

But since my retirement I have become involved in community projects. I have acted as manager of the Service Centre for the Aged for a period of 7 years – and there I have become aware of our congregation's intense involvement in the community. The Centre was an initiative of the congregation. Later on the other congregations began to take part in this venture – but essentially it has been our centre...

Has the congregation been involved in the management of the town, like in the City Council?

I am not sure of this. I guess the pastors would sometimes have been asked to deliver a message... but I don't have firsthand knowledge of this.

Any impact from the church's side on the values of the community?

I think the congregation had a huge influence on the moral values of the people of Ermelo in a previous era. The pastor and the church were seen as the conscience of the town.

4. Thinking back on these examples of involvement in the community, how can the congregation repeat its contribution in the community today?

I have already mentioned that the community has changed during the past two decades. I think it will be difficult to repeat the situation of the past.

For instance: when we speak about poverty today, the people who are needy are very different from twenty years back. In my small group I have asked people for contributions of food and money that will be used to alleviate the need of children searching for food at the local rubbish dump. Some of the members were really positive about this, but there are still those who do not like the idea. Their attitude usually is one of 'let's take care of our own people.' But I am glad to say that some of them have begun to change their attitude.

In our family we have had the experience of someone who has met with considerable resistance when he began to reach out to people outside of his group – crossing borders of race and religion. The interesting thing is that his commitment to this has actually resulted in many people in the end changing their attitude...

5. How would it make you feel if the congregation can continue making an impact in the community?

I think it will be an indication that we want to be a congregation that fulfils our primary purpose on earth. I have read an article about the habits that make churches successful – and one of the habits mentioned is 'serving the community.' I think it is something that we have to do. This is why we are here...

Part 3: The Contribution of the Appreciative Inquiry model on change management in the congregation

- 6. If the new strategic focus ("being a positive and healthy presence in society") is built on these examples of involvement in the community (the Positive Core), how would you accept the change? Would it in some way indicate that we are true to our past?**

This will actually be a continuation of our past way of doing and being. I am still not sure how we will go about to accomplish this – but we will be true to our deepest convictions about being a congregation.

It may well be that only a small part of the members will be willing to commit to this...

Perhaps you have heard of the 80/20 principle which claims that 20% of the people in effect determine the focus of an organisation? Perhaps we will be able to convince 20% of the members?

I think that is possible.

- 7. How would you feel to be part of a congregation that has decided to primarily focus on making a practical contribution to the community?**

I will feel that I am making a contribution to the community. It will be a huge challenge to know how to do this, but I am willing to give it a go...

Interview 4

Herbert (pseudonym)

22 April 2009 17:00

46 years Chartered Accountant

Please describe the background of your connection to the congregation.

I have been a member of this congregation for the past 21 years, since 1988. I have served as a deacon and as member of the Financial Ministry.

Part 1: Attitude towards change in the congregation

- 1. When you hear about "change in the congregation", what is your reaction?**

A few years ago I probably would have been uneasy with change in any form. I guess I have become used to change, seeing that we are experiencing it everywhere. I would describe myself as someone who is positive about change now.

Why would you have been "uneasy" previously?

I think everybody is wary of change. One feels comfortable with what one knows. The unknown takes you out of the so called comfort zone. But today we are confronted with change in every aspect of our lives – so we are getting used to it! If we are going to talk about change in the congregation, I think one may find that the older people are not happy about it. They feel comfortable with what they know and what they are used to do. The younger generation is used to change – they are open to many things.

- 2. The new strategic focus of the congregation is described as "being a positive and healthy presence in society." This implies a shift from an inward focus on the needs of the members of the congregation to a focus on the needs of the community. What is your first reaction to this? The implications of this change will be a new attitude towards the purpose of the congregation, our projects, and the way we**

structure the budget... We will begin to look away from ourselves – focusing on the needs of the community... What is your first reaction to this?

I won't have a problem with this. I can see some other people feeling that their needs are not met but to me personally this change won't be a problem.

In fact, I think that a church that does not adapt to change may find that it has become irrelevant.

Part 2: Discovering the Positive Core of the congregation

3. What do you value most about the congregation's contribution to the community in the past?

How would you describe the past involvement of the congregation in the community? Examples of this?

I cannot really mention any specific examples of this. In my 21 years as member of the congregation I haven't really experienced the congregation as being involved in the community.

During a meeting that was held in 2008, the older members of the congregation have told us about their experiences of the contribution of this congregation to the community. They spoke about its role in the schools. They mentioned the role of the church in the poor-white crisis in the first half of the previous century. Some of them told us about the impact of the congregation on the moral values of the people. They mentioned the input of the church into establishing an Old Age Home.

In short, they had many stories to tell about the role of the congregation in this community. And they were very positive about

this. And yet, it seems like a younger generation is not able to add to these stories?

Doesn't this have something to do with what has happened in our country? I think our people have begun to feel that they don't have a role to play anymore – even as a church... I think the church has developed an inward focus, focusing on the needs of its members. I have experienced it likewise in some of the community organisations where I am a member...

If we hear these stories about the congregation's past, what do you think has been their motivation to act in this way?

Apart from a purely humanistic perspective I think the underlying values of the congregation have played a big role. Caring for others and loving one another must have motivated them...

- 4. Thinking back on these examples of involvement in the community, how can the congregation repeat its contribution in the community today?**

I think that the congregation can repeat this contribution. I think people have a need to do just this. They want to feel that they still have a role to play in our community. They want to have an impact on society. And I think this is one way that we can show the world that we care.

- 5. How would it make you feel if the congregation can continue making an impact in the community?**

It is one way of demonstrating our values and beliefs.

Part 3: The Contribution of the Appreciative Inquiry model on Change management in the congregation

- 6. If the new strategic focus ("being a positive and healthy presence in society") is built on these examples of involvement in the community**

(the Positive Core), how would you accept the change? Would it in some way indicate that we are true to our past?

Yes, I think so. I believe that these stories of our past commitment to the community will inspire the older people – "we have previously done this and we can do it again" – as well as the younger members – "this is who we really are and how we do it..." What can prevent us from repeating this?

Will it help members today if we can show them that" becoming a positive and healthy presence in society" is in fact where we come from? We are actually just continuing the tradition from the past...

Yes, I believe so. I think we need to hear the story of our congregation's involvement in the community. That will inspire us to repeat this impact on the community.

7. How would you feel to be part of a congregation that has decided to primarily focus on making a practical contribution to the community?

It will excite me. I will experience a sense of purpose – this is why we are here as a congregation...

Interview 5

Ester (pseudonym)

22 April 2009 18:00

40 years Housewife

Please describe the background of your connection to the congregation.

I am a member of the congregation since my marriage in 2000. I have lived in Ermelo since childhood but have been a member of another congregation. I am serving as a Sunday school leader and take responsibility for the Grade 8 group.

Part 1: Attitude towards change in the congregation

- 1. When you hear about "change in the congregation", what is your reaction?**

I am pro-change. Everything is changing at such a tempo that one just has to adapt to change. If not, you will just fall behind...

- 2. The new strategic focus of the congregation is described as "being a positive and healthy presence in society." This implies a shift from an inward focus on the needs of the members of the congregation to a focus on the needs of the community. What is your first reaction to this? The implications of this change will be a new attitude towards the purpose of the congregation, our projects, and the way we structure the budget... We will begin to look away from ourselves – focusing on the needs of the community... What is your first reaction to this?**

My first reaction will be 'go for it.' I mean, we don't live isolated from what is going on in the community. One sees the need in Ermelo. I see it as the purpose of the congregation to be involved in the community.

Even if this means that the focus will be less on you and more on the needs of the community?

This will not be a problem for me. I am not somebody that needs the attention of other people. But I am more than willing to attend to the needs of somebody else. I feel that this is the purpose of the church in our community.

Part 2: Discovering the Positive Core of the congregation

3. What do you value most about the congregation's contribution to the community in the past?

How would you describe the past involvement of the congregation in the community? Examples of this?

I am not that much aware of the history of our congregation. In fact, I don't know the history of our congregation's role in the community.

During a meeting that was held in 2008, the older members of the congregation have told us about their experiences of the contribution of this congregation to the community. They spoke about its role in the schools. They mentioned the role of the church in the poor-white crisis in the first half of the previous century. Some of them told us about the impact of the congregation on the moral values of the people. They mentioned the input of the church into establishing an Old Age Home.

In short, they had many stories to tell about the role of the congregation in this community. And they were very positive about this.

Somehow the congregation must have lost this way of being. My experience is that people who have become part of the congregation in the last 20 – 25 years haven't had this experience.

Yes, I can confirm that. I feel that the congregation has developed a focus on its own members, and that to the exclusion of others who are also part of the broader community.

What do you think has been the motivating factor for the congregation in that "good" era to act in the way they have done?

I guess that they have felt a responsibility towards the community? They have probably felt that is was expected from them.

How do you feel to be part of a congregation with a history of concern for the community such as this?

I have mixed feelings on this. On the one hand I am proud of my congregation and its achievements. On the other hand I am feeling guilty for the fact that we are no longer doing this...

- 4. Thinking back on these examples of involvement in the community, how can the congregation repeat its contribution in the community today?**

I have an idea that the first thing that will be needed is the acceptance that the community has changed. The demographics of our community look vastly different to what it looked like in a previous era. Our congregation needs to have a mind shift – and I am sure it can be done in order to make a contribution to the wellbeing of Ermelo.

- 5. How would it make you feel if the congregation can continue making an impact in the community?**

I will experience it as being true to our purpose here in Ermelo.

Part 3: The Contribution of the Appreciative Inquiry model on Change management in the congregation

- 6. If the new strategic focus ("being a positive and healthy presence in society") is built on these examples of involvement in the community**

(the Positive Core), how would you accept the change? Would it in some way indicate that we are true to our past?

The examples of the past involvement of members of our congregation really inspire me to do likewise.

Will it help members today if we can show them that" becoming a positive and healthy presence in society" is in fact where we come from? We are actually just continuing the tradition from the past...

Yes! But then people need to talk to each other about this. And we have to discover that this new focus is just a new way of being faithful to the beliefs and values of those that have been living before us.

7. How would you feel to be part of a congregation that has decided to primarily focus on making a practical contribution to the community?

I will be proud of the congregation and will feel that we are making a contribution to the community.

Interview 6

Nico (pseudonym)

24 April 2009 18:00

67 years Manager/Accountant

Please describe the background of your connection to the congregation.

I have been a member of this congregation since 1957; I think that gives me 52 years, doesn't it? I have served as a deacon previously and am now serving as an elder. I am also Chairman of the committee looking after the facilities of our congregation and serve as a member of the Management Committee.

Part 1: Attitude towards change in the congregation

- 1. When you hear about "change in the congregation", what is your reaction?**

I think I am just like most other people in having an inborn resistance to change. I have an apprehension of, a fear of change, when I feel that I am losing something of value. When change adds value, then I am all for it. But I don't want to lose that which has value.

When I for instance think about our congregation's Children's Ministry on a Wednesday afternoon, I see that as something of value. I don't want to lose that.

- 2. The new strategic focus of the congregation is described as "being a positive and healthy presence in society." This implies a shift from an inward focus on the needs of the members of the congregation to a focus on the needs of the community. What is your first reaction to this? The implications of this change will be a new attitude towards the purpose of the congregation, our projects, and the way we structure the budget... We will begin to look away from ourselves – focusing on the needs of the community... What is your first reaction to this?**

I think my reaction to such a change would be determined by whether I deem the change to be based on a firm foundation. I don't want the congregation to implement such a drastic change – and then in a few months' time to backtrack on its steps because the change is not working. It will have to be a well-thought-out and well-planned model. One will have to be cautious not to offend members who don't have a strong loyalty to the congregation. There is always the possibility of losing such members. But I have seen how people resist change but once the change has been implemented they acknowledge that the change has been good. It is a fine line...

I often wonder what the impact of the political changes has been on our people. Maybe younger people are more comfortable with change whereas older people find it difficult to accept change. Perhaps this has an impact in the church as well?

Part 2: Discovering the Positive Core of the congregation

3. What do you value most about the congregation's contribution to the community in the past?

How would you describe the past involvement of the congregation in the community? Examples of this?

When I think back to the 1950's I can clearly remember how the congregation had been involved with the schools of Ermelo. The scholars attended the services on Sundays. The pastor of that time, Rev Veltman, played a significant role in the establishment of the Technical High School as there had been a need for such a school. I think the congregation felt a responsibility towards the children of the community.

Any impact on the moral values of the community?

During the 1970's the congregation had made a huge effort to impact people's moral choices. Rev Viljoen organised conferences addressing different moral issues. These resulted in an awareness of morality and

values. I think what helped in those years is the fact that the church was sort of the 'moral policeman' of the era. It was expected from the church to set the values – and enforce them.

During a meeting that was held in 2008, the older members of the congregation have told us about their experiences of the contribution of this congregation to the community. They spoke about its role in the schools. They mentioned the role of the church in the poor-white crisis in the first half of the previous century. Some of them told us about the impact of the congregation on the moral values of the people. They mentioned the input of the church into establishing an Old Age Home.

In short, they had many stories to tell about the role of the congregation in this community. And they were very positive about this.

Now, when we hear these stories about the congregation's past, what do you think has been their motivation to act in this way?

I think they reasoned that it was the right thing to do. I think it was sort of the obvious thing to do – from their perspective of what a church was supposed to do.

- 4. Thinking back on these examples of involvement in the community, how can the congregation repeat its contribution in the community today?**

I think that the congregation can repeat this contribution. It will be difficult because so many things have changed. People don't know each other as well, we are a busy generation not having much time for the next person, yes, it will be difficult, but I think it can be done. Maybe the church can play a role in bringing people together... I often think about the security situation. We don't know each other, we don't have a plan as community for when a catastrophe strikes...maybe here is a role for the church to play...

If I think back on our past involvement with the children, I wonder whether there is the potential to repeat this. Of course, we will have to accept that children are different today – it will require a different approach.

How will it make you feel if the congregation can continue making an impact in the community?

I will be proud of my congregation.

Part 3: The Contribution of the Appreciative Inquiry model on Change management in the congregation

- 5. If the new strategic focus ("being a positive and healthy presence in society") is built on these examples of involvement in the community (the Positive Core), how would you accept the change? Would it in some way indicate that we are true to our past?**

Yes, I agree with that. It is true that at this stage we are not focused on the community. But it can change. And I would be willing to accept this change. I think there are plenty opportunities for us...

Will it help members today if we can show them that "becoming a positive and healthy presence in society" is in fact where we come from? We are actually just continuing the tradition from the past...

Yes, I believe so. I think we have lost the vision of what the congregation can achieve...

- 6. How would you feel to be part of a congregation that has decided to primarily focus on making a practical contribution to the community?**

I know it would not be easy – and we will have to convince many members of this new strategy. But I think we need to make this change.

Interview 7

Rhona (pseudonym)

24 April 2009 19:00

61 years Housewife

Please describe the background of your connection to the congregation.

I have been a member of the congregation since 1963. I play an active part in the activities of the Women's Ministry of the congregation.

Part 1: Attitude towards change in the congregation

- 1. When you hear about "change in the congregation", what is your reaction?**

I am a bit uneasy with the idea of change. I feel safe with what I know in the church, and the way we are doing things.

- 2. The new strategic focus of the congregation is described as "being a positive and healthy presence in society." This implies a shift from an inward focus on the needs of the members of the congregation to a focus on the needs of the community. The implications of this change will be a new attitude towards the purpose of the congregation, our projects, and the way we structure the budget... We will begin to look away from ourselves – focusing on the needs of the community... What is your first reaction to this?**

Well, I am always willing to serve in the congregation. But I have to admit that the idea of change on this scale is something that makes me feel uneasy. I am not sure how I will feel about it.

Part 2: Discovering the Positive Core of the congregation

3. What do you value most about the congregation's contribution to the community in the past?

How would you describe the past involvement of the congregation in the community? Examples of this?

What I remember is the congregation's attitude towards the children of the local schools. The congregation had really cared for the well-being of the scholars. It wasn't something that just had to be done. There had been a deep-seated commitment to those children. Thinking back on that time now is actually a positive experience...

Any other examples of the congregation's involvement in the community?

Yes, I think the congregation associated closely with the farming community of Ermelo. When there had been a severe drought, it was this congregation that would organise a prayer meeting for the whole community. And the community reacted positively to this initiative. All the shops would close their doors and everybody attended the service.

During a meeting that was held in 2008, the older members of the congregation have told us about their experiences of the contribution of this congregation to the community. They spoke about its role in the schools. They mentioned the role of the church in the poor-white crisis in the first half of the previous century. Some of them told us about the impact of the congregation on the moral values of the people. They mentioned the input of the church into establishing an Old Age Home.

In short, they had many stories to tell about the role of the congregation in this community. And they were very positive about this.

Somehow the congregation must have lost this way of being. My experience is that people who have become part of the congregation in the last 20 – 25 years haven't had this experience.

What do you think has been the motivating factor for the congregation in that era to act in the way they have done?

I think the congregation has felt a responsibility towards the broader community, not just to members of the congregation.

How do you feel to be part of a congregation with a history of involvement in the community such as this?

I am thankful to be part of a congregation with such a history.

- 4. Thinking back on these examples of involvement in the community, how can the congregation repeat its contribution in the community today?**

It will certainly have to look different, but I still think that we need to be involved in the community. I have mentioned the congregation's caring for the farming community – I can see this as something that can be repeated – in terms of security, their uncertainty because of land claims... We have a role to play.

If I think about the street children, I think we can mean something to them, making them feel worthwhile, caring for them... The challenge is to find out how...

Would you accept it when your pastor – who is after all paid by the congregation – becomes more involved at the schools? Would you experience it as in some way we are being true to our past?

Yes, most definitely. I think it will be good. I think it is necessary. It is the right thing to do...

- 5. How would it make you feel if the congregation can continue making an impact in the community?**

I will experience it as being true to our purpose here in Ermelo.

Part 3: The Contribution of the Appreciative Inquiry model on Change management in the congregation

- 6. If the new strategic focus ("being a positive and healthy presence in society") is built on these examples of involvement in the community (the Positive Core), how would you accept the change? Would it in some way indicate that we are true to our past?**

Yes. But we need to hear these examples from the past.

Will it help members today if we can show them that "becoming a positive and healthy presence in society" is in fact where we come from? We are actually just continuing the tradition from the past...

Yes! But then people need to talk to each other about this. And we have to discover that this new focus is just a new way of being faithful to the beliefs and values of those that have been living before us.

- 7. How would you feel to be part of a congregation that has decided to primarily focus on making a practical contribution to the community?**

I will feel that we are fulfilling our purpose here in Ermelo. I see our purpose as making a difference in the whole community...

Interview 8

Janine (pseudonym)

27 April 2009 16:00

45 years Business owner

Please describe the background of your connection to the congregation.

I have been a member of this congregation since 1999. I have grown up in Ermelo but have been member of another congregation before joining here in 1999. My grandparents, however, have been members of the Ermelo Congregation. I am serving on the board of the Women's Ministry. In the community I am involved with the Childcare Organisation. I am also acting as secretary of the Ermelo Business Association. As you can see, I am a busy woman!

Part 1: Attitude towards change in the congregation

- 1. When you hear about "change in the congregation", what is your reaction?**

In the church environment I am wary of change. I am comfortable with a certain way of doing things in the services – and I would be cautious of changing that. I guess it also depends on the nature of the change...

On the other hand I think we have seen a lot of changes in the congregation during the past few years. I see it in the professionalism with which things are done. I see it in the Sunday school – and the new way that is managed. I see it in the caring of members for each other. And I think the pastors play a huge role in this change...

- 2. The new strategic focus of the congregation is described as "being a positive and healthy presence in society." This implies a shift from an inward focus on the needs of the members of the congregation to a focus on the needs of the community. What is your first reaction to this? The implications of this change will be a new attitude towards**

the purpose of the congregation, our projects, and the way we structure the budget... We will begin to look away from ourselves – focusing on the needs of the community... What is your first reaction to this?

I am all for it!

Why?

I think this is the way that we are supposed to be. This is in line with our deepest beliefs about who we are and why we are here. We are here for the community. The broader community and its needs should be our focus. We are here to reach out to others...

Part 2: Discovering the Positive Core of the congregation

3. What do you value most about the congregation's contribution to the community in the past?

How would you describe the past involvement of the congregation in the community? Examples of this?

Well, my grandparents have told me about many church members who have reached out to poor people in the first half of the previous century.

During a meeting that was held in 2008, the older members of the congregation have told us about their experiences of the contribution of this congregation to the community. They spoke about its role in the schools. They mentioned the role of the church in the poor-white crisis in the first half of the previous century. Some of them told us about the impact of the congregation on the moral values of the people. They mentioned the input of the church into establishing an Old Age Home.

In short, they had many stories to tell about the role of the congregation in this community. And they were very positive about

this. They felt that the congregation had a big impact on the community.

I totally agree with that. From what I have heard, this is my impression of this congregation as well. The people have experienced the church as being part of the community.

- 4. Thinking back on these examples of involvement in the community, can the congregation repeat its contribution in the community today?**

Yes!

Why do you feel positive about this?

Well, I think that the congregation has one big advantage, and that is the fact that it has a structure. By this I mean that the church is not a fly-by-night entity. It is an organisation with structure that can have a sustainable impact in the community. It can organise people around a certain cause. It can then make a huge impact.

When you think about the fact that the congregation has access to many people; that it has their contact details; probably knows them in terms of abilities and interests – well, then you have to see the congregation as having a possible huge influence in the community.

And this structure has the ability to organise people, to get resources in terms of money and skills – and then make a difference.

How would it make you feel if the congregation can continue making an impact in the community?

Doesn't everybody have the need to make a difference? It would make me feel that we are making a difference in somebody else's life.

Part 3: The Contribution of the Appreciative Inquiry model on Change management in the congregation

- 5. If the new strategic focus ("being a positive and healthy presence in society") is built on these examples of involvement in the community (the Positive Core), how would you accept the change? Would it in some way indicate that we are true to our past?**

Well, I have already said that I am all for this sort of change. And I would think that other members of the congregation will also accept this change when it is built upon our tradition of being a congregation that cares for the community within which we live.

Will it help members today if we can show them that "becoming a positive and healthy presence in society" is in fact where we come from? We are actually just continuing the tradition from the past...

Yes, I believe so. Maybe we are too comfortable in our comfort zone. I think that when we are confronted with the needs of the community like HIV and poverty, we as members will begin to act according to our deepest values. We are here to make a difference...

Yes. The community looks different to what it has looked in previous years...

I agree. But it still is the same challenge... I think of the church as having many arms. It can reach out to others. It has to reach out to others. Furthermore, there is something symbolic about the fact that our church is located right in the centre of our town -maybe so that we can reach out to others according to our values and beliefs...?

And I repeat – we have the organisational structure that can do it. The congregation can have a sustainable impact.

For instance, what prohibits the congregation from beginning a labour service where jobless people and businesses looking for employees can be connected? But then it will be important to ensure that people develop new skills so that they feel worthy of a human being. In that sense the impact of the congregation in the community will then be sustainable and ongoing.

- 6. How would you feel to be part of a congregation that has decided to mainly focus on making a practical contribution to the community?**

Very good. Positive. I will feel that I am making a difference. I will feel that I am fulfilling my purpose on earth. And I will be proud to belong to a church that is making a difference. After all, isn't that the real test of our faith?