An Army that Brings Life?
Complex Disability, The Salvation Army, and Fullness of Life

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Abstract

As a faith community engaged with ministry to the marginalised, The Salvation Army appears well-positioned to address issues of support amongst its constituency. This international body of believers is committed to preaching, teaching and embodying the transformational agenda of Jesus Christ to all people, everywhere, without discrimination. This research specifically considers people living with a complex disability in the context of Salvation Army congregational settings in *Aotearoa*, New Zealand. The Salvation Army in New Zealand positions itself as, “The Army that Brings Life.” To what extent it can make that claim, in the context of life with a complex disability, is the core of this enquiry.

The research explores how people with complex disabilities are supported in Salvation Army congregations within New Zealand and how they understand the biblical statement, “I have come that they might have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10b). Using Swinton and Mowat’s 2016 “Practical Theological Reflection Model”, the research includes qualitative data obtained from 10 interviews and two focus groups. The research further highlights the contribution and limits that disability studies, activism and human rights initiatives have made to facilitating fullness of life for disabled people. Consideration is also given to the practice, biblical, theological and doctrinal frameworks that underpin The Salvation Army’s claim to be “The Army that Brings Life.”

Findings indicate that support for people with complex disability in Salvation Army congregations in New Zealand occurs in an improvised and uncoordinated manner. I argue that a lack of understanding regarding disability, a lack of attention to training, and a lack of representation at a local and governance level have the effect of limiting consistent and life-bringing support for people with complex disabilities. These limitations compromise the potential for people living with disability to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ and make their unique contribution to the “body of Christ” (1 Cor 12:12-14).

While other studies have examined notions of welcome and support in faith communities, no such enquiry has occurred within the context of The Salvation Army in New Zealand. While the New Zealand territory of The Salvation Army includes Fiji, Tonga and Samoa, one of the limitations of the study is geographical in nature. Due to travel restrictions, all of the interviews and focus groups took place within New Zealand.

The research proposes that, in order to be an army that brings life, The Salvation Army must embrace a collaborative model of support. Individuals with complex disabilities, family members, fellow congregants, disability support groups, corps officers (pastors) and the administrative systems and structures of The Salvation Army each share a responsibility in the embodiment of such a model—however, the origin and impetus for such collaboration remains Christological. Further, if the collective calling of this faith community is to serve God and serve others, then The Salvation Army is called to provide opportunities for those who live with complex disabilities to do likewise.

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Abbreviations

HOD	The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine
SASB	The Salvation Army Song Book
TSA	The Salvation Army
TWC	The Salvation Army War Cry (magazine)
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NIV	New International Version

Notes on Style

The Salvation Army's foundation Deed Poll and style guides for all its publication stipulates the capitalisation of the initial "T" in its legal name. Literature within the organisation which refers to the Founder/s tends to do likewise.

Scripture

Scripture quotations used throughout this research are from Today's New International Version (TNIV), copyright © 2007. Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI, unless otherwise stated.

Glossary of Salvation Army Terms[1]

Adherent: A person who regards The Salvation Army as his/her spiritual home but has not made a commitment to soldiership.

'Blood and Fire': The Army's motto; refers to the blood of Jesus Christ and the fire of the Holy Spirit.

Cadet: A Salvationist who is in training for officership.

Commission: A document presented publicly, authorising an officer, or local officer to fulfil a specified ministry.

Corps: A Salvation Army unit established for the preaching of the gospel, worship, teaching and fellowship and to provide Christian-motivated service in the community.

Corps Sergeant Major: The chief local officer for public work who assists the corps officer with meetings and usually takes command in his/her absence.

General: The officer elected to the supreme command of the Army throughout the world. All appointments are made, and all regulations issued, under the General's authority.

Junior Soldier: A boy or girl who, having accepted Jesus as their Saviour, has signed the Junior Soldier's Promise and become a Salvationist.

Local Officer: A soldier appointed to a position of responsibility and authority in a corps; carries out the duties of the appointment without being separated from regular employment or receiving remuneration from the Army.

Mercy Seat or Penitent Form: A bench provided as a place where people can kneel to pray, seeking salvation or sanctification, or making a special consecration to God's will and service. The mercy seat is usually situated between the platform and main area of Army halls as a focal point to remind all of God's reconciling and redeeming presence.

Officer: A Salvationist who has been trained, commissioned and ordained to service and leadership, in response to God's call. An officer is a recognised minister of religion.

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[1] The General of The Salvation Army, *The Salvation Army Year Book* (London: Salvation Books, 2022).

Outpost: A locality in which Army work is carried out and where it is hoped a society or corps will develop.

Pastoral Care Council: Established in each corps for the pastoral care of soldiers and adherents and maintenance of the membership rolls.

Promotion to Glory: The Army's description of the death of Salvationists.

Salvation: The work of grace which God accomplishes in a repentant person whose trust is in Christ as Saviour, forgiving sin, giving new direction to life, and strength to live as God desires.

Soldier: A converted person at least 14 years of age who has, with the approval of the pastoral care council, been enrolled as a member of The Salvation Army after signing the Soldier's Covenant.

Soldier's Covenant: The statement of beliefs and promises which every intending soldier is required to sign before enrolment. Previously called 'Articles of War.'

Territory: A country, part of a country or several countries combined, in which Salvation Army work is organised under a territorial commander.

Acknowledgements

The expressions of gratitude documented on this page reflect a deeper vein of ongoing indebtedness to many people who have supported me throughout this research process.

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I am grateful beyond words to all of the research participants who gave their time so willingly and shared their stories so vulnerably. Your gifts cannot be underestimated.

How to thank an extended family unit whose public and private support has been the source of strength during some very difficult days. My husband, Kevin, died suddenly during the final months of writing this research. The memory of his unwavering support and enthusiasm for this project has literally carried it through to completion. To my children, siblings and friends—my gratitude is carried to you all on a full tide of deep and abiding love.

This thesis is dedicated to Kevin Eric Bridle (5th December 1954 – 29th May 2022).

> The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you (Psalm 9:9-10).

AUT Ethics Approval: 19/247, August 29th, 2019.

Attestation of Authorship

“I hereby declare that this submission is my own and work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.”

June 26th, 2023.

Confidential Material

This research contains data obtained from participants who live in New Zealand and attend Salvation Army faith communities. The participants also live with a disability, or care for a family member who lives with a disability.

The research is conducted within the context of The Salvation Army. In New Zealand, this is a relatively small organisation. As such, it is possible that those who live with a disability within its communities can be readily identified. As part of the consent process leading into interviews with the research participants, the notions of anonymity and confidentiality were discussed. Some participants were not concerned about being identified within the subsequent findings and discussion. Others expressed concern. They felt that their specific disability might make them individually identifiable and they expressed a desire that this was mitigated as much as possible.

In light of this concern, reference to specific types of disability and geographical locations is only highlighted in a general way within the body of the thesis. The research examiners had access to a table of detailed classifications which used the pseudonyms appearing in the thesis.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

The love here is real. It's not superficial, or people just pretending. It's people, they live what they believe. (Ann)

1.1 Introduction

In 1989, a group of 42 primary school children crafted a personalised square of cotton fabric. Using hand-stitching and fabric paint, they applied their names and a favourite image. A home economics teacher gathered the uniquely painted and embroidered squares together and formed a quilt. The quilt became a tactile representation of the individual children who made up the entity known as "Room 1 & 2" in that year.[2] This quilt incorporated 42 individual stories, meeting at the edges of other stories and gathered together to form a shared corporate story. The quilt endures and continues to bear witness to the interweaving of personal and communal human experiences that occurred during that year.

Life itself can be thought of as an intricately woven quilt of unique and shared human experience. All human beings exist in a dynamic interplay of particular and universal encounter and expectations. People living with complex disabilities are no different in this regard. They embody a unique experience of life, while also sharing similar aspirations, concerns and joys as their fellow citizens. The various settings, in which the living out of these unique and shared experiences occurs, can negatively or positively contribute to the bleakness or richness of the resulting quilt. As one quilt square is diminished, so is the whole. As the whole is diminished, so is the one. In other words, as one experiences fullness of life—so the whole experiences fullness of life (John 10:10b).[3]

1.2 Defining the Problem

The church is one of those settings in which the lived experience of people with complex disability carries variations that lead to either a diminished, or enriched, sense of self as part of a community. In both a personal and a communal sense, untested assumptions regarding living with a complex disability can lead to un-redemptive postures, policies and practices. Such actions fail to recognise that all human beings are

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[2] My husband, Kevin E. Bridle, was the class teacher and the quilt was made as a gift to celebrate the birth of our first child – Samuel Kevin Bridle.

[3] John 10:10b, "…I have come that they might have life, and have it to the full."

ultimately irreplaceable. These assumptions also undermine the praxis of the church as a whole. Conversely, an orientation towards the actualisation of fullness of life for all human beings steers us towards redemptive postures, policies and practices.

Personal narratives provide a widely accessible window into the experience of people within the church. Such a story appeared in the New Zealand edition of the magazine, *War Cry*, published by The Salvation Army in June 2020.[4] Attending their local Salvation Army worship service, a family with two autistic daughters found themselves, more often than not, in the creche managing their children. Tabitha (mum) commented,

> We definitely felt like there was no point coming to church with the kids because we'd end up in the crèche, fully focused on our kids and not able to connect with other people or the message.[5]

Rather than being able to participate with the broader worshipping community, the family questioned the point of going to church at all. A lack of education for church leadership in the field of disability and limited integration opportunities for their children, led to their personal disquiet and eventual departure. Ultimately, the whole quilt, both the individual family and the broader faith community, are diminished by such an experience.

The Salvation Army (TSA) has been my faith community since childhood.[6] It has blessed, nurtured, challenged and, at times, frustrated me. It is the faith community into which my children were born. One of those children lives with a complex disability and has attended services with us for more than 30 years. The impetus for the research that follows developed out of a concern to address stories such as his and the family noted above. It is driven by a desire to witness and document the lived experience of people with complex disabilities attending congregational settings within TSA (*Te Ope Whakaora*) in New Zealand (*Aotearoa*).

In order to eliminate experiences that do not contribute to fullness of life, it is necessary to first uncover and acknowledge their existence. Such processes can be unsettling. Catherine Booth, co-founder of TSA, embraced this call to honesty and clarity. In a sermon entitled "Assurance of Salvation," Catherine Booth acknowledged a degree of

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[4] Bethany Slaughter, "Let Them Come to Me: Churches and the Autism Community," *War Cry*, June, 2020, 7.

[5] Ibid.

[6] The Salvation Army's foundation Deed Poll and style guidelines for all its publications stipulates the capitalisation of the initial "T" in its legal name.

apprehension regarding the content of her message on Romans 8:3-4 and its potential to cause controversy. Catherine lamented,

> I wish there was a way of improving the future without disturbing the present, but it is a misfortune, I suppose, that there is not, and however carefully one may guard oneself in trying to lead the Lord's people higher, there is always somebody who will quibble and make objections and take exceptions.[7]

Further commentary in her sermon outlines her conviction that the ripples caused by this "disturbing" were led by the Spirit of God and were necessary to honour the text of scripture and the lives of the people to whom she ministered.[8] Today, improving the future for people living with complex disabilities may mean that present practice in TSA requires some disturbing.

1.3 Defining Fullness of Life

The introduction to this chapter included reference to the biblical text, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full (John 10:10b)." The notion "fullness of life" is an organising thread that is woven through this thesis. While its meaning in the lives of the research participants is noted in Chapter 7 and its theological implications are examined in Chapter 8, some definition is helpful at this point.

In this passage of scripture, known as the Shepherd Discourse, Jesus declares his mission—to bring fullness of life (v10). Against a backdrop of deceivers, imitators and imitations (v.8), Jesus declares that in him, humanity witnesses the fullest expression of human life. Jesus is the fullness of God (John 1:16) and, as such, life to the full is found in relationship with him. Abundant life is then experienced as one responds to this grace-filled invitation.

John's gospel highlights that this abundant life has broken into the present with the birth of Christ (John 1:14).[9] While abundant life is also understood as eternal life, Craig Keener notes John's linking of the word life with present tense verbs.[10] That is, abundant life occurs in the context of faith and following Jesus in the present. Herman

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[7] Catherine Booth, *Aggressive Christianity* (London: The Salvation Army International Headquarters, 1891), 63.

[8] Selwyn Bracegirdle, "Catherine Booth's Disturbing Quote," *The Australasian Journal of Salvation Army History* 6, no. 2 (2021): 32.

[9] Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, vol. 1 (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 2003), 813.

[10] Ibid., 385.

Ridderbos further notes that Jesus as shepherd does not bring "just enough" for his sheep. Rather, in the pattern of the Old Testament, he brings plenty (Psalm 23, Ezekiel 34).[11] The salvation that Jesus offers is all-encompassing and reflects his desire as shepherd to ensure his flock experience salvation, security and nourishment.

Fullness of life is not understood here in the sense of a busy life, or a crowded calendar. Rather fullness is understood as a life rich with the meaning, purpose, love, hope and freedom found in a personal relationship with Jesus. As Eugene Peterson notes, Christ does not bring the barest of survival rations—he deals in *perrison* (extravagance).[12] Jesus does not just bring an idea, or a philosophy or a set of rules—He brings himself.

In these verses in John, Jesus describes himself as the gate (v.9), or doorway to salvation, and then he identifies the type of shepherd he is—a good one (v.11). He will lay down his life for the welfare of those whom he promises abundant life. Leon Morris notes that as the Good Shepherd, Jesus is different from earthly shepherds. He has the power to both lay down his life and take it up again.[13] That is, the abundant life which Christ embodies and offers, also speaks to a life lived in the shadow of a cruel cross that ultimately leads to the vividness of resurrection life. In this sense, as J. Ramsey Michaels notes, abundant life is not blandly endless in duration, but describes a qualitatively different life.[14]

Life to the full is not a life devoid of suffering, disappointment or trauma. Rather it is to live life in the power and promise of both the cross and the resurrection. Jesus brings salvation. Jesus brings life—life is his gift to us. Peterson further notes, "There is so much joy and beauty and ecstasy in the way of Jesus."[15] Christ patterns a new way to live as a human being—one in which human beings can flourish in the present and experience complete fullness of life in the future transformation of all things. The quest to live a full and abundant life is hardwired into us. Peterson, commenting on this quest notes,

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[11] Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 358.
[12] Eugene H. Peterson, *The Word Made Flesh: The Language of Jesus in His Stories and Prayers* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2008), 44.
[13] Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John: Revised Edition, The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 449.
[14] J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John, The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2010), 585.
[15] Eugene H. Peterson, *The Jesus Way: A Conversation in Following Jesus* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2007), 32.

> We are after something—more life than we get simply by eating three meals a day, getting a little exercise, and having a decent job. We're after the God-originated and God-shaped life: a holy life.[16]

Fullness of life originates in the fullness of God, has been made accessible in the person of Christ and is mediated by the Holy Spirit. A personal experience of fullness of life flows from the knowledge that we are deeply loved—loved from eternity. The first General of the TSA, William Booth, underlined the fullness of this love in letters he addressed to Salvationist congregations. Booth wrote,

> He loves us as much today as He did the hour He came down from heaven to save us… Oh, how He must have loved you my comrades on that day—even you, who are listening to this letter—to face for you the humiliation, hardship, scorn, and suffering that he endured!...He realised the poor return you would make for His love; but these things did not deter Him from coming. He has not altered. He has not given you up. You have not worn out His compassion.[17]

Further reflections from Booth outline TSA's understanding of fullness of life as both eternal salvation found in the person of Christ and evidenced in transformed lives and circumstances in the present. He wrote,

> Now I saw that this was the work that Jesus Christ came to accomplish—that He was manifested to dispossess all these fiends of evil for the souls of men, to destroy the works of the devil in the present time, and to set up in the soul the kingdom of heaven instead…He is come to set men free from their bonds. He is indeed the Saviour of the world! Men can have liberty, gladness here and now through Him.[18]

Reflecting on his ministry and commitment to preaching and living this understanding of fullness of life, Booth proposed that through the ministry of TSA, multitudes had experienced changed living conditions. He further noted, "whole lives, at work and in their dwellings, have been brightened as with the atmosphere of heaven."[19] In other words, for Booth and TSA the fullness of life experienced in Jesus Christ, joins heaven and earth together.

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[16] Ibid., 147.

[17] William Booth, *The Founder's Messages to Soldiers: During Years 1907–1908*, 2nd ed. (London: Salvationist Publishing and Supplies, 1921), 33.

[18] William Booth, "Salvation for Both Worlds: A Retrospect," *All the World,* November 18, 1889, 2. I am grateful to Lt Col, (Doctor) Karen Shakespeare for sharing this resource with me.

[19] Ibid., 3.

1.4 Disturbing the Present to Improve the Future

Moving to the contemporary context, translation of the Māori phrase, *Te Ope Whakaora*, underlines the self-identification of TSA in New Zealand as, “The Army that Brings Life.”[20] It must be noted that in the broader sense this tagline refers to an understanding of life as being rooted in a relationship with Jesus Christ. However, in a narrower sense, one can ask to what extent TSA as a faith community brings life to people with complex disabilities who declare it to be their spiritual home. Ultimately, only the people living with complex disabilities, or their significant others, can disturb the present and answer that question with authority. Hence, every chapter in this thesis begins with an epigraph drawn directly from the interview data. Some disturb the present and some highlight supportive action already in progress.

The current research project is concerned with developing a faithful and critically informed framework for future practice within TSA and beyond. It is a constructive response to the data supplied by people with complex disabilities during the enquiry process. It outlines a way forward for Salvationist congregations to set aside assumptions and embrace redemptive postures, policies and practices. The theoretical analysis is intentionally overlaid with the voices of persons (or significant others) living with complex disability who attend TSA as a faith community.[21] In this way, the project honours the call from disability activists to resist agendas that are championed by those outside the disability community. At the same time, by also attending to the voices of significant others, operating in the role of nuanced advocacy, the resultant framework also reflects the experiences of those whose communication styles can be misunderstood leading to broader marginalisation.[22]

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[20] The Salvation Army, "Mission Plan Images," The Salvation Army Territorial Headquarters, accessed October 20, 2021. https://intranet.sarmy.net.nz/index.php/53-tsmp/tsmp-resources/2594-mp-promotional-resources.

[21] It is acknowledged that qualitative research associated with persons living with complex intellectual disability can be a contested practice, especially around issues such as consent, language, comprehension, and voice. C.f. Jill Harshaw, *God Beyond Words: Christian Theology and the Spiritual Experiences of People with Profound Intellectual Disabilities* (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2016), 68-84. However, this project proceeds from a commitment to place, hear and document these voices. C.f. James I. Charlton, *Nothing About Us without Us: Disability Oppression and Empowerment* (Los Angeles: University of California, 1998); R. Munford, J. Mirfin-Veitch, and J. Conder, "Ethics and Research: Searching for Ethical Practice in Research," *Ethics and Social Welfare* 2, no. 1 (2008).

[22] Complex Care Group, "Definition Document: Children and Adults with High and Complex Care Needs," Complex Care Group, accessed October 20, 2021. https://www.complexcaregroup.org.nz/voice/definintion-document/. For example, The Complex Care Group in NZ note that, while society perceives the adult with a complex disability to be an autonomous individual, this is not the reality. Families continue to care for the young person/adult who lives with the cognition of a child.

A finely balanced tension exists regarding who is best positioned to speak for those who identify as disabled. On the one hand, the emphatic call from the disabled community, harnessed in the words of James Charlton, “Nothing about us without us,”[23] alerts us to the significance of self-advocacy. However, differing communication styles associated with complex disability mean it is possible to misunderstand what is being communicated. In this case, embracing a nuanced advocacy role is essential.[24] In order to carefully navigate this tension, attention must be given to both the individual voice and the advocate. This research attempts to address the tension by making space to attend to both voices—the person living with a complex disability and significant others closely associated with people living with complex disabilities.

The enquiry itself is framed in the context of Practical Theology. Theology, or our study of God, can be understood as “faith seeking understanding.” Practical theology seeks to consider the faithful witness of the church in both the church and the world. While the reasons for this choice are delineated more comprehensively in later chapters, it is important to note that a natural symmetry exists between TSA’s self-understanding and practical theology as a field of theological enquiry. In both instances, the notion of “faith in action”[25] is a fundamental framework underpinning all praxis. That is, redemptive praxis arises from a fully orbed understanding of the faith from which it is derived and by paying close attention to the world in which it is active.

1.5 Purpose and Rationale for the Research

The primary purpose of the research is to examine how people with complex disabilities are supported in Salvation Army congregations. In order to examine theoretical and practical representations of support, attention is given to the historical, doctrinal and theological foundations of TSA in conversation with practical theology and disability studies. Attention is also given to the lived experience of people with complex disabilities attending Salvation Army congregations. It is acknowledged that the notion of support may be a contested construct. However, in the context of New Zealand, the

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[23] Charlton.

[24] Ed Pilkington, "The Ashley Treatment: ‘Her Life Is as Good as We Can Possibly Make It’," *The Guardian,* March 15, 2012, https://www.theguardian.com/society/2012/mar/15/ashley-treatment-email-exchange. I use the phrase “nuanced advocacy” deliberately here. In doing so, I signal the tension associated with parental advocacy that has led to developments such as the “Ashley Treatment.” C.f. Jason Reimer Greig, *Reconsidering Intellectual Disability: L’ Arche, Medical Ethics and Christian Friendship* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2015). Greig provides a helpful overview of the ethical, legal and philosophical arguments in support and in opposition to the Ashley Treatment for those with profound cognitive disability. Further attention will be given to this tension in Chapter 8.

[25] Paul Ballard and John Pritchard, *Practical Theology in Action: Christian Thinking in the Service of Church and Society*, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 2006), 25.

notion of “a supported life” frames the current approach of the disability sector.[26] Support also underlines the reality of our status as created and interdependent beings. Support is not equated with weakness but reality. No-one can exist on their own.

A secondary purpose of the research is to inform and facilitate a call to action on the part of TSA. That is, in identifying attitudes, practices or assumptions that undermine support for complexly disabled people, a critically faithful and constructive framework for future practice can be formed. In doing so, the project seeks to close any potential gaps in understanding between these two groups.

Thirdly, the research examines the overarching notion of “fullness of life” (John 10:10b).[27] Here, the goal is to note potential points of divergence, or congruence, between persons with complex disability and those involved in leadership, training or administration for TSA and local congregations. It is anticipated that a more holistic understanding of “life to the full” might emerge that is both a critique of limited ableist postures, policies or practices and a catalyst for redemptive ways of being the whole body of Christ together.[28]

In terms of rationale for the study, research indicates a gap between the self-understanding of faith communities as welcoming towards people with disabilities and the incidence of bad experiences by people with disabilities in church settings.[29] If the notion “life to the full” and assumptions regarding disability have different meaning for persons with complex disabilities, or their significant others, and those who provide leadership, teaching and programmes within TSA, then the gap between a perceived inclusion and a realised inclusion may persist. However, if the voices of people with complex disabilities are heard and implementation of their wisdom is facilitated, then the understanding and practices of TSA may be seen to align in such a way that fullness of life can be the experience of all members of the body of Christ.

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[26] Ministry of Health, "Disability Services," New Zealand Government, accessed November 15, 2022. https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/disability-services.

[27] Zoë Bennett, *Using the Bible in Practical Theology: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 134. While this specific biblical text frames this project, I am wary of using the Bible in a “proof texting” manner. Rather, as Bennett proposes, I am shaped by “the book of the Bible *as well as* the book of life…not fundamentally a practice of *making* connections but of *seeing* connections.” Any commitment to “the tyranny of the text,” or “the tyranny of experience,” is ultimately unhelpful.

[28] Sylvia Bell, "Dignity and Disability," in *Human Dignity: Establishing Worth and Seeking Solutions*, ed. Edward Sieh and Judy McGregor (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 37-38. For example, in her work, Bell highlights that, in terms of disability, the notion of equality can in fact disenfranchise people with disabilities. Outcomes take precedence over equal treatment.

[29] Andy Calder, "To Belong, I Need to Be Missed," *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health* 16, no. 3 (2012): 272.

1.6 Locating the Research

Organisationally, TSA is arranged in five zones across the globe. These are Africa, Americas and Caribbean, Europe, South Asia, and South Pacific and East Asia. There are a number of Territories, Commands, or Regions within each zone.[30] The Territory in which this enquiry occurs includes New Zealand (*Aotearoa*) and extends to the Pacific Islands of Fiji, Tonga and Samoa. However, data were not gathered beyond the geographical boundaries of New Zealand. The reasons for that decision include matters of cultural difference between the four settings, travel limitations in a time of COVID-19 pandemic uncertainty and potential language barriers. It is anticipated that further work in these settings might follow the research conducted in New Zealand.

TSA locates itself as part of the universal church. It has a particular focus on ministry with the marginalised in society. Its International Mission Statement reads,

> The Salvation Army, an international movement, is an evangelical part of the universal Christian Church. Its message is based on the Bible. Its ministry is motivated by love for God. Its mission is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and meet human needs in his name without discrimination.[31]

A strong historical and contemporary social justice narrative underpins its operations. In the New Zealand context, statistics indicate that people with disabilities occupy a vulnerable position in society in terms of health, employment, well-being and income measures.[32] This research enables analysis of how those associated with Salvation Army congregations experience vulnerability, or are socially and spiritually resourced and supported to combat this marginalisation. In New Zealand, statistics are not available to determine the number of people in TSA with complex disabilities;[33] however, correlations can be noted globally with other evangelical faith communities.[34]

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[30] The General of The Salvation Army, 378.

[31] The Salvation Army, "Mission Statement," The Salvation Army Territorial Headquarters, accessed October 20, 2021. https://www.salvationarmy.org.nz/about-us/mission-statement.

[32] Stats NZ, "Disabled People Still Faring Worse Than Non-Disabled People," New Zealand Government, accessed October 20, 2021. https://www.stats.govt.nz/news/disabled-people-still-faring-worse-than-non-disabled-people.

[33] TSA does not collect statistical data in terms of gender, ethnicity, age, or disability, related to its congregational attendees.

[34] Linda L. Treloar, "Spiritual Beliefs, Response to Disability, and the Church: Part 1," *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health* 3, no. 4 (2000): 24. In this qualitative study, Treloar notes the paucity of children and young adults with disability in evangelical congregations. “My experiences, contact with others, and data from the study suggest that people with disabilities and their families represent a sizeable, unchurched population.”

As already noted, this research is located in the field of practical theology.[35] This theological discipline helpfully facilitates consideration of current church practice, the faithfulness of that practice and how said practice intersects with the practices of the world at large. As such, the research is both a conversation between people with complex disabilities and TSA *and* a conversation between the church and contemporary society.

1.7 Positioning the Researcher

As the researcher, I signal my earlier career as an oncology nurse and my role as parent to a complexly disabled adult son. My eldest son, at the time of writing, is 33 years old and has lived at home with his father and me since his birth. The reality of disability became part of my lived experience when Samuel's life hung in the balance as a 3-month-old baby. Cortical brain damage sustained at that time continues to affect his physical and cognitive embodiment. However, as Melanie Dimmitt notes, "Once plucked from abstraction and embodied by a child, disability is unremarkable."[36] The unfolding of Samuel's life story, and our shared engagement in that story, have shaped who we are as individuals, parents and family. His life has helped shape who I am as a practical theology and disability scholar.

I have previously noted that I am a member of TSA. That is, I call TSA my spiritual home. I am not employed by TSA and this research has not been commissioned, initiated or funded by TSA. Having said that, I received some financial assistance towards my studies through the "Strategic Mission Fund."[37] TSA New Zealand, Fiji, Tonga, and Samoa Territory currently has approximately 6,382 members, 538 active or retired officers and employs 1,944 staff. There are 90 corps settings along with 20 outposts.[38] It is a relatively small organisation and, while I do not hold positions of power (financial or administrative), my son and I are "known" throughout the organisation. I also serve voluntarily on local boards such as the "Moral and Social

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[35] John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM Press, 2016), 4. Swinton and Mowat describe Practical Theology as, "…dedicated to enabling the faithful performance of the gospel and to exploring and taking seriously the complex dynamics of the human encounter with God."

[36] Melanie Dimmitt, *Special: Antidotes to the Obsessions That Come with a Child's Disability* (Edgecliff: Ventura Press, 2019), 7.

[37] Such grants are given to help Salvationists gain tertiary qualifications that enable them to meet personal ministry goals understood as serving God within TSA or through a career in the secular environment.

[38] The General of The Salvation Army, 203.

Issues Council" and internationally on the "International Theological Council" based in London.

The perspective from which I approach this research warrants comment at this point. In the context of a faith community, I recognise persons with complex disabilities as brothers and sisters in Christ, whose whole life experience brings a more nuanced perspective to our shared existence.[39] In 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, the apostle Paul likens the church to a body, where all parts of the body make a contribution to the functioning of the whole.[40] No one "part" is deemed more significant than the other, save the head, Christ himself. This notion of the way we each have a part to play in enabling fullness of life underpins the approach of this thesis.

Collaboration within and beyond the body of Christ also broadens the conversation in life-enhancing ways. As Paul Fiddes notes, maintaining theological integrity does not mean that collaboration with other disciplines is impossible or undesirable.[41] Therefore, as the researcher, I submit that the *phronesis*, or practical and creative wisdom, that enables human beings to flourish into fullness of life is not restricted to one body of knowledge or one socially delineated group.

I also locate myself as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Having noted that various disciplines contribute to the experience of fullness of life in our contemporary context, I also signal that, by faith, I believe Jesus Christ to be the ultimate source of all life (John 14:6-7). Further, I accept the text of scripture, understood as the story of God's engagement with humanity, as the primary source of life, wisdom and truth. Steeped, as I am, in the Wesleyan tradition of the church, I note that the theological lenses I bring to this work follow in that tradition.

1.8 Research Questions

1. How are people with complex disabilities supported in Salvation Army congregations in New Zealand?

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[39] John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2018), 32. For example, Creswell and Poth note that, "…researchers using a ***disability interpretive lens*** focus on disability as a dimension of human difference and not as a defect."

[40] Brian Brock, "Theologizing Inclusion: 1 Corinthians 12 and the Politics of the Body of Christ," *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health* 15, no. 4 (2011): 352. Brock proposes that this Pauline account understands all people, as members of Christ's Body, are active *givers* or *conduits* of divine love.

[41] Paul S. Fiddes, "Ecclesiology and Ethnography: Two Disciplines, Two Worlds?," in *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, ed. Pete Ward (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 34.

2. What does the biblical notion "life to the full" mean to people with complex disabilities within TSA?
3. What action does TSA need to take in order to faithfully support the full participation and discipleship of people with complex disabilities in its congregations?

In regard to Question 1, the notion of support is broader than simply doing unto others. While this will be discussed in more detail later in the thesis, some clarification follows. First, both the biblical record (Gen 1:26-27; Psalm 8; Isa 45:12) and the doctrinal position of The Salvation Army,[42] indicate an understanding of human life as supported by the creative will and ongoing preserving and governing action of God. Secondly, the church understood as the "body of Christ" indicates the interdependence of all humanity. The biblical imperatives towards justice, sharing resources and caring for others, underlines that a mutuality of support is embedded in God's covenantal arrangements with humankind. As Guhrt notes, this relational partnership is underscored by the notion of *hesed*, meaning that God is a loyal and trustworthy partner.[43] In this sense, God is committed to protective action on behalf of covenant relationships. Thirdly, Article 1 of the "United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" (UNCRPD), to which New Zealand is a signatory, underscores the inherent dignity of all people with disabilities and calls on the international community to embody mutual support and respect.[44] Fourthly, the notion of life-honouring support is part of the New Zealand disability context. The "New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016–2026" demonstrates this call for a national commitment to supportive cultures and structures when its vision statement notes,

> New Zealand is a non-disabling society – a place where disabled people have an opportunity to achieve their goals and aspirations, and all of New Zealand works together to make this happen.[45]

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[42] *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine* (London: Salvation Books, 2010), 25. Doctrine 2 states, "We believe there is only one God, who is infinitely perfect, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things, and who is the only proper object of religious worship."

[43] J Guhrt, "Covenant, Guarantee, Mediator," in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 373.

[44] United Nations, "Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Disability," United Nations, accessed October 20, 2021. https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-1-purpose.html.

[45] Office for Disability Issues, "Our Vision: Where to from Here?," New Zealand Government, accessed October 20, 2021. https://www.odi.govt.nz/nz-disability-strategy/about-the-strategy/new-zealand-disability-strategy-2016-2026/read-the-new-disability-strategy/new-zealand-disability-strategy-read-online/our-vision-where-to-from-here/.

Finally, disability service providers within the New Zealand context actively facilitate support. For example, “The New Zealand Disability Support Network,”[46] formed in 2010, provides support services to people living with disability through a variety of initiatives ranging from networking, lobbying government, and providing service contracts, to information and media releases and raising disability awareness throughout the country.

1.9 Research Objectives

This project aims to meet three broad objectives. The first objective is to witness the lived experience of people with complex disabilities and family members of those living with disability, within Salvation Army congregations in New Zealand. In subsequently taking these experiences to two specific focus groups, the project attempts to prompt TSA to consider its pastoral and institutional postures, policies and practices, with a view to transformed modes of practice.

The second objective is to examine the historical development of disability as a construct, site for activism and field of study, in order to highlight where and how such initiatives have contributed to human flourishing. Consideration is given to whether or not notions such as dignity, justice and worth, understood outside a theological context, can deliver fullness of life for persons living with disability. The word “persons” is used deliberately here to indicate a broadness to personhood that is not necessarily covered by narrow conceptions of the human being or the individual.[47] While the research considers disability in its broader theoretical context, the narrower focus of the work is people with complex disabilities occurring across the lifespan.[48] This includes people living with cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injuries and neuro-developmental delay associated with genetic conditions. The phrase “complex disability” is defined later in this chapter. Broadly understood, it indicates a potential combination of physical and/or cognitive impairments.

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[46] New Zealand Disability Support Network, "We Provide Networking and Representation for Disability Support Organisations," New Zealand Disability Support Network, accessed October 20, 2021. https://nzdsn.org.nz.

[47] Sue Patterson, "Disability and the Theology of 4-D Personhood," in *Theology and the Experience of Disability: Interdisciplinary Perspectives from Voices Down Under*, ed. Andrew Picard and Myk Habets (London: Routledge, 2016), 12.

[48] By noting disability across the lifespan, I am also indicating my concern with how attitudes or actions may change in respect of someone born with a disability, within a faith community, and those acquiring a disability later in life.

As a subset of the disabled community, people with complex disabilities who experience diminished cognitive functioning occupy a liminal space in both disability studies and in wider society.[49] It can be argued that they are the marginalised within a minority group. For example, Deborah Beth Creamer notes that, "Cognitive disability is difficult to theorise, perhaps much more messy and therefore less appealing than interpreting Deaf Culture."[50] This project is concerned with giving voice to this group and their families and naming the silences that confine them to this liminal space. It also challenges the exclusionary nature of some approaches to people living with complex disability, both within the broader church setting and in wider society.[51]

This thesis later demonstrates that the issue of marginalisation of people with complex disabilities also occurs within the context of TSA. As noted earlier, inclusion of autistic children within an Army congregation proved difficult. The exact reasons for this exclusion are unclear. However, Creamer's assertion gives some guidance on the potential causes of such marginalisation. Later, the thesis notes the marginalisation of Salvationist interview participants who were stopped from participating in ministry opportunities within the corps setting and/or in the public arena as representatives of TSA. Further, while statistical data is not available, the lack of disabled people in positions of leadership, would also indicate that if present, disabled persons are on the margins of the community rather than involved in its leadership or decision-making structures. As will be noted in Chapter 5, TSA has a longstanding history of ministry with the marginalised of society. New Zealand disability statistics (noted in Chapter 2) underline the ongoing vulnerability of disabled persons. Therefore, the marginalisation of this minority group might be said to be of ongoing concern for TSA.

The final objective of the project is the construction of a faithful, critically informed framework for future Salvation Army practice. The sources for the construction of that framework include the experience of the research participants in conversation with biblical, doctrinal and theological sources. It also includes attention to disability studies, models and activism, along with human rights initiatives. In all settings, the underlying intention is to develop a framework that acknowledges how each area has contributed

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[49] Peter Singer, *Writings on an Ethical Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 2000), 39. Ethicist Peter Singer makes a distinction by which the cognitively impaired are held not to be persons. He notes, "There are many beings who are sentient and capable of experiencing pleasure and pain but are not rational and self-conscious and so not persons."

[50] Deborah Beth Creamer, *Disability and Christian Theology: Embodied Limits and Constructive Possibilities, American Academy of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 107.

[51] Peter Beatson, *The Disability Revolution in New Zealand: A Social Map* (Palmerston North: Massey University, 2000), 349. The notion of NIMBY (not in my back yard) comes into play here.

positively to the lived experience of people with disabilities and their families. It also provides a lens on factors outside of TSA that account for barriers to fullness of life.

The work calls the church to recognise the limits and barriers it has constructed and how other systems have deconstructed some of these barriers. If the church is to posit a life-giving and comprehensive theological response to the reality of disability, it has some tensions to negotiate. To state the obvious—the church has history. By openly engaging with this and other tensions, the project enables the church to grapple with how faith both informs and intersects with disability. Further, the response of Salvation Army officers, administrators and leaders to the experience of people with complex disabilities in their midst, may demonstrate how open conversations can deconstruct barriers between congregants and between faith communities and secular society. Ultimately, a synthesis of both streams of knowledge results in a broadened approach to disability that embraces the person with complex disability as an individual, embodied, social, cultural, emotional *and* spiritual being.[52]

In summary, this research seeks to determine how people with complex disability are supported in Salvation Army congregations in New Zealand. It further examines their understanding of fullness of life and pursues what action TSA needs to take to facilitate full participation and discipleship for disabled people in its congregations. In order to answer these questions, the research has three objectives. The first objective is to witness the lived experience of the research participants. Secondly, it examines the historical development of disability as a construct, site for activism, field of study and arena for theological reflection. The concluding objective is the construction of a faithful and critically informed framework for future Salvation Army practice.

1.10 Disability Language

The field of disability studies is not a static entity. While the word “disability” has been part of the English language since at least the 16th century, its use and meaning has been wide-ranging.[53] Over the past 60 years, new ways of understanding and speaking about disability have emerged. One of those is concerned with disability identity. That is, should one speak of “persons with a disability,” or should one speak of “disabled

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[52] See https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/populations/maori-health/maori-health-models/maori-health-models-te-whare-tapa-wha. Mason Durie’s model of the four dimensions of Māori well-being is insightful here. The four dimensions are *Taha Tinana* (Physical Health), *Taha Wairua* (Spiritual Health), *Taha Whanau* (Family Health), and *Taha Hinegaro* (Mental Health).

[53] Rachel Adams, Benjamin Reiss, and David Serlin, "Disability," in *Keywords for Disability Studies*, ed. Rachel Adams, Benjamin Reiss, and David Serlin (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 6.

person"? In the first instance "people first" language is utilised and, in the second, "identity first" language is applied. Arguments on both sides of the ongoing debate will be considered more extensively in the following chapter. While person-first language still features in the New Zealand context,[54] a preference for identity-first language is also signalled by other disability organisations.[55] As such, it can be argued that this becomes a matter of personal or organisational preference. Therefore, this project utilises both forms interchangeably.

1.11 Defining Complex Disability

This research is concerned specifically with persons who live with a complex disability. Disability is a fluid construct and, as such, will be reviewed more extensively in the following chapter. At this point, it is important to note how complex disability is understood in the context of this research. As a distinct group within the broader disability sector, the complexity of the needs of this group of people can side-line them in terms of support, voice and recognition.[56] For example, I would suggest that some people who live with complex brain trauma cannot always participate in the processes of self-definition that sit at the core of disability activism.

The phrase "complex disability" is often used interchangeably with "complex support needs."[57] As such, it indicates an interplay between person, environment and social systems. Complex disabilities may include physical impairments that interfere with physical abilities such as mobility and muscle tone. It can also indicate a combination of health conditions and disabilities. Complex disabilities may also include cognitive impairments that interfere with cognitive processing such as speech, memory, attention and thought processing. Further to this, independence in activities of daily living, emotional expression and oral communication may be compromised. Such disability may be associated with traumatic or acquired brain injuries, global neuro-developmental delay, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's or Parkinson's disease.

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[54] People First New Zealand, "History of People First New Zealand," People First New Zealand, accessed October 20, 2021. https://www.peoplefirst.org.nz/who-what-where/who-is-people-first/history/.

[55] Disabled Persons Assembly NZ, "Disabled Persons Assembly: Strategic Plan," Disabled Persons Assembly NZ, accessed October 20, 2021. https://www.dpa.org.nz/about-us/what-we-do/dpa-strategic-plan-2017.

[56] Complex Care Group,

[57] Leanne Dowse, Michele Wiese, and Louisa Smith, "Workforce Issues in the Australian National Disability Insurance Scheme: Complex Support Needs Ready?," *Research and Practice in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities* 3, no. 1 (2016): 55.

1.12 The COVID-19 Pandemic

The declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 signalled a destabilising time for individuals and communities throughout the world. This invisible but devastating virus has left a trail of grief, loss and ongoing anxiety in its wake. The direct impacts of the pandemic on this research project will be signalled in Chapter 4. However, in a more global sense, the pandemic has underscored the vulnerabilities and inequities faced by people living with disability.

During the early days of the pandemic, the World Health Organization (WHO) signalled the potential difficulties and barriers faced by the disabled community in meeting recommended health and safety protocols.[58] Subsequent research in New Zealand and around the world has highlighted the inequity and fragility of living with a disability in these days. For example, research in New Zealand indicated the challenges encountered in producing disability-specific messaging in accessible formats and initial shortages in provision of personal protective equipment for caregivers, thus putting disabled people at further risk.[59] The indigenous disabled people of New Zealand, Māori, are further marginalised with decreasing health outcomes due to the intersectionality of these two identities—Māori and disabled.[60]

Australian researchers note the pandemic has debunked the myth of the autonomous individual and highlighted legislative and structural issues that place the burden of staying healthy solely on the individual.[61] In the United Kingdom, there has been no co-ordinated response by the government towards people facing the pandemic while living with a disability. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and self-advocacy groups have had to step into the gaps.[62] American researchers note that COVID-19 has caused disruption for people with disabilities in the areas of accessibility, identity and daily life.[63] Those living with an intellectual or developmental disability are reportedly three

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[58] World Health Organization, "Disability Considerations During the Covid 19 Outbreak," World Health Organization, accessed October 20, 2021. https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-2019-nCoV-Disability-2020-1.

[59] Meredith A. Perry et al., "“At Risk” and “Vulnerable”! Reflections on Inequities and the Impact of Covid 19 on Disabled People," *New Zealand Journal of Physiotherapy* 48, no. 3 (2020): 109-11.

[60] Ibid., 109.

[61] David Colon-Cabrera et al., "Examining the Role of Government in Shaping Disability Inclusiveness around Covid-19: A Framework Analysis of Australian Guidelines," *International Journal for Equity in Health* 20, no. 166 (2021): 9-10.

[62] Anne Kavanagh et al., "Improving Health Care for Disabled People in Covid-19 and Beyond: Lessons from Australia and England," *Disability and Health Journal* 14, no. 2 (2021): 5.

[63] Sabrina Epstein et al., "New Obstacles and Widening Gaps: A Qualitative Study of the Effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic on U.S. Adults with Disabilities," *Disability and Health Journal* 14, no. 3 (2021): 7.

times more likely to die of COVID-19 than persons without such disabilities.[64] Lamenting the predominantly non-disabled persons driving worldwide messages and responses to the pandemic, others note the difficulty inherent in messages to stay home whilst experiencing homelessness, or social distancing when one needs close-contact, supportive assistance with activities of daily living.[65] Living with a disability himself, Rijul Kochhar notes that, in the wake of COVID-19, broken-hearted measures “serve as a patchwork quilt of nonresponses.”[66]

1.13 Chapter Overview

Theological enquiry has been a feature of the academic landscape for millennia. In contrast, disability research is a relatively new discipline. However, neither discipline would consider the quest for knowledge to have reached saturation. Over the course of conducting this research, new insights, trends, themes and future research projects have unfolded. In Chapters 2 and 3, the foundations and developments in disability research are reviewed. As noted earlier, this research employs an inclusive approach in terms of multi-disciplinary engagement with the field of disability. The organising principle of Chapters 2 and 3, is consideration of how these different approaches contribute to fullness of life for the person with a complex disability. The chapters also underline the literature that informed and brought context to the current project.

In Chapter 4, the focus turns to the methodology utilised in this investigation. The chapter locates the research in the field of practical theology. It outlines the Practical Theology Reflection Model (PTRM)[67] as the framework for exploring how people with complex disabilities are supported in Salvation Army congregations in New Zealand. Having defined the problem, this research seeks to address gaps between the self-understanding of the church as supportive of people with disability and evidence to the contrary. “Reflexive Thematic Analysis”[68] is employed to determine and present the themes formulated from the qualitative data.

TSA in New Zealand forms the context in which the research has been conducted. Following the steps of the PTRM, Chapter 5 continues the process of cultural and contextual analysis noted in Stage 2 of the model. Here, consideration is given to the

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[64] Ibid., 2.
[65] Rijul Kochhar, "Disability and Dismantling: Four Reflections in a Time of Covid 19," *Anthropology Now* 12, no. 1 (2020): 73.
[66] Ibid., 75.
[67] Swinton and Mowat, 90.
[68] Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, *Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide* (London: Sage, 2022).

historical and contemporary identity and praxis of this particular church setting. In order to be “the Army that brings life”, the objective of the chapter is to ascertain how TSA is positioned to do so in the context of complex disability.

Chapters 6 and 7 continue the cultural and contextual analysis by engaging directly with disabled people and their family members. Chapter 6 presents the qualitative data and four subsequent themes from 10 individual, in-depth interviews. Chapter 7 describes findings and two subsequent themes from two focus groups. One data set relates the experience of officers in pastoral settings and the other data set arises from mission support people holding strategic deployment within the Army structure in New Zealand.

Then, moving to the third stage of PTRM, Chapter 8 pursues theological reflection and discussion on the practices and traditions of the church, along with experience as noted by the research participants. The theological reflection within this chapter presents a Christological foundation. In his person, Christ is described as the source, meaning and telos of fullness of life. In the context of his earthly ministry, Christ is described as collaborative in nature and practice. In conversation with theologian Jürgen Moltmann, consideration is then given to the notion “fullness of life,” alongside the nature and role of the church, as the context in which persons with disability experience community and learn to live a life of faith and obedience. Finally, the chapter turns towards theological reflection on the experience of the research participants and in conversation with various disability theologians. In doing so, the chapter highlights how disabled people within Salvation Army congregations might be supported to experience “life to the full” within the body of Christ.

In the final stage of the PTRM, Chapter 9 presents a framework for revised practice within TSA in New Zealand. Drawing on the themes presented earlier, the chapter discusses action imperatives for personal, pastoral, educational and structural support by TSA. Holding the tension between self-advocacy and advocates who come alongside the person with complex disability, the chapter describes how redemptive practices might be embedded into the fabric of Salvationist identity and praxis moving forward. Here, the person of Christ and the notion of collaboration are identified as the threads holding the TSA’s disability and fullness of life quilt together.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review (Part A)

I think one thing I would want them [people] *to know is that having a disability isn't all bad.* (Harry)

2.1 Introduction

The quilt that was described in the previous chapter highlights the notion of a collaborative endeavour. Individual squares were brought together to celebrate and record the contribution that each child made to the overall story of the classroom. Each square related its own information but was then attached to another, in ways that relayed a bigger story. The completed quilt was created by bringing diverse threads together and organising them in patterns that resulted in a foundational, coherent and informative whole. Such is the task of a literature review.

In the field of disability studies, many quilts have already been created. These disability quilts relate information and research in different ways. They use varied methodological and organising threads. They edge, or bind, the quilt within different frameworks. Each quilt contributes a unique view to the field of disability enquiry. Chapters 2 and 3 highlight and evaluate those quilts by reviewing the associated literature. They also highlight the unique dimensions of the quilt being crafted from this current research enquiry.

This literature review is structured around the three objectives noted earlier and the organising motif of the research, "life to the full." The review is limited to African, Antipodean, British, European and North American voices.[69] While models of disability are not the primary focus of this research, the literature review reflects that they are foundational to probing different contemporary approaches and representations of disability. These models also appear in nuanced iterations within the data gained from the research participants noted later in Chapters 6 and 7. As I am seeking to construct a faithful framework for future practice, the models and approaches reviewed here form a quilted backdrop from which to move the disability conversation forward within TSA and beyond.[70]

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[69] The Nordic countries propose a "Relational Model" of disability which understands disability as an interaction between impairment and the environment. The *World Disability Report* of 2011 is based on the Nordic Relational Model.

[70] A. Llewellyn and K. Hogan, "The Use and Abuse of Models of Disability," *Disability & Society* 15, no. 1 (2000): 163.

The review that unfolds across Chapter 2, begins with definitions associated with disability studies, considers global models and theories of disability and highlights disability statistics and initiatives in New Zealand. It then reviews disability scholarship related to the ethics of care and the significance of personal narratives. In Chapter 3, the literature review continues with specific emphasis on theological approaches to the field of disability studies.

2.2 Locating Disability

Disability is an historical, cultural and global reality. The 2011 "World Report on Disability" notes that 15% of the world's population are disabled and continue to face barriers in terms of injustice, access to healthcare, economic deprivation, abuse and discrimination.[71] The prevalence of disability is higher in developing countries and one-fifth of the estimated disabled population worldwide live with significant disabilities.[72] The "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," formulated by the UN, includes sustainable development goals directly related to improving the lives that are located behind these troubling statistics.[73]

2.3 A Broad Definition of Disability

The notion of disability is a fluid and contested construct. Disability can be described as an umbrella term and as a universal human experience—we all experience some degree of disability across a lifespan. However, such a wide-ranging observation can be problematic for those who find themselves living with disability. That is, the notion of universality can be detrimental to the recognition and requisite attention necessary for particular support needs. Nailing down a definition is challenging. The WHO notes that disability is the result of different factors,

> Disability results from the interaction between individuals with a health condition such as cerebral palsy, down syndrome and depression as well as personal and environmental factors including negative attitudes,

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[71] World Health Organization, "World Report on Disability 2011," World Health Organization, accessed October 23, 2021. https://www.who.int/teams/noncommunicable-diseases/sensory-functions-disability-and-rehabilitation/world-report-on-disability.

[72] World Bank Group, "Disability Inclusion," World Bank Group, accessed October 23, 2021. https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/disability#1.

[73] United Nations, "Sustainable Development Goals (Sdg's) and Disability," United Nations, accessed October 23, 2021. https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/about-us/sustainable-development-goals-sdgs-and-disability.html.

> inaccessible transportation and public buildings and limited social support.[74]

Article 1 of the UNCRPD includes the notion of impairment in their definition,

> Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.[75]

Definitions that highlight the difference between impairment and disability are important. Impairment is generally understood in medical terms. The "International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health" (ICF) provides the definition, "Impairments are problems in body function or structure such as a deviation or loss."[76] Disability, in contrast and as noted earlier, can be understood as an expression of exclusion.[77] It is understood to occur across different domains of life, which may result in the loss of opportunity to participate in community life, physical and social barriers, and financial and/or employment inequities.[78] Philosopher Susan Wendell combines impairment and disability to propose a definition of disability as, "socially constructed from a biological reality."[79]

Broadening that definition, Tom Shakespeare helpfully suggests that disability is a relationship between intrinsic factors (impairment, personality and motivation) and extrinsic factors (environments, support systems and oppression).[80] In other words, disability describes a relationship between individual factors (personality, skills and impairment), societal factors (accessibility and attitudes) and factors within systems of support (social support, professional care, assistive devices).[81] Shakespeare also notes that disability is ubiquitous in nature—barriers are linked to local contextual, cultural and resource factors. These factors play a significant role in how disability is defined and experienced. His call to a global orientation, highlights that Western definitions of

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[74] World Health Organization, "Disability: Overview," World Health Organization, accessed October 23, 2021. https://www.who.int/health-topics/disability#tab=tab_1.

[75] United Nations, "Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Disability."

[76] World Health Organization, *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health* (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2001), 10.

[77] Colin Barnes and Geoff Mercer, *Exploring Disability: A Sociological Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 42.

[78] Rebecca Mallett and Katherine Runswick-Cole, *Approaching Disability: Critical Issues and Perspectives* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 4.

[79] Susan Wendell, "Towards a Feminist Theory of Disability," *Hypathia* 4, no. 2 (1989): 104-23. While I find this definition helpful, it does not highlight the breadth of human personhood indicated in my earlier comments.

[80] Tom Shakespeare, *Disability Rights and Wrongs Revisited*, 2nd ed. (Milton Park: Routledge, 2014), 76.

[81] Ibid., 78.

impairment and disability, do not necessarily reflect the only pathways to empowerment for people living with disabilities.[82] This acknowledgement of the global and contextual nature of disability experience is important for this thesis. While the research itself is conducted within the geographical context of New Zealand, TSA is an international movement within the global church. Therefore while some of the pathways to empowerment for disabled people in other Salvation Army settings may be similar to those noted here, the research findings are recognised as contextually and culturally derived. Shakespeare's definition of disability is also useful to this thesis. First, the categories that he notes—individual, societal and systems of support—are echoed in the responses from the research participants noted in Chapter 6. Secondly, the framework that is presented in Chapter 9, notes the collaboration that is necessary between all of these personnel and systems, to ensure supportive practice in TSA for people living with complex disabilities in the future.

2.4 Disability Studies

Disability studies is understood as an interdisciplinary field of enquiry. It draws on voices ranging from the social and behavioural sciences to the humanities, medical and educational disciplines.[83] The field of disability studies itself is relatively new, emerging in Britain, Europe and North America during the 1970s. Increased awareness of the marginalisation of persons with disability has given rise to both political and scholarly attention. As Samuel Joeckel notes, in the first instance, political activists have sought to effect social change and, in the second, scholars have attempted to create a body of knowledge from which that social change might be effected.[84]

Disability theory is orientated towards praxis and identifies theory and social change as inextricably linked.[85] Various genres of disability studies have emerged in the past 30 years including Critical Disability Studies. Described as a "transdisciplinary destination,"[86] critical disability studies centre around continuous examination of disability in relation to political, theoretical and ontological complexities. For example,

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[82] Tom Shakespeare, "Disability in Developing Countries," in *Routledge Handbook of Disability Studies*, ed. Nick Watson, Alan Roulstone, and Carol Thomas (Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2012), 273-81.

[83] Ronald J. Berger and Laura S. Lorenz, "Disability and Qualitative Research," in *Disability and Qualitative Inquiry: Methods for Rethinking an Ableist World*, ed. Ronald J. Berger and Laura S. Lorenz (London: Routledge, 2016), 1.

[84] Samuel Joeckel, "A Christian Approach to Disability Studies: A Prolegomenon," *Christian Scholar's Review* 35, no. 3 (2006): 325.

[85] Dan Goodley, "Social Psychoanalytic Disability Studies," *Disability & Society* 26, no. 6 (2011): 725.

[86] Margrit Shildrick, *Dangerous Discourses of Disability, Subjectivity and Sexuality* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

Crip theory, Ableism[87] and Feminist Disability Studies[88] all link into the field of critical disability enquiry. They will be considered in more depth later in this chapter.

As noted in Chapter 1, debate continues around the use of language in relation to people with disabilities.[89] For example, “people-first” language holds that people are persons in the first instance and disabled in the second.[90] Thus, personhood is stressed before disability. In contrast, the preference for use of “disabled people,” signals that disability is something done to a person by society. Rebecca Mallett and Katherine Runswick-Cole helpfully summarise these arguments, broadly noting that language choice can affect how people are subsequently treated.[91] They also note that Tom Shakespeare proposes the validity of both phrases, as is my personal position in this thesis (noted in Chapter 1). Shakespeare argues that a change in language does not denote a change in societal attitudes.[92] Hans Reinders also suggests that negative connotations reside in minds rather than in language—thus, a deeper, attitudinal shift is required.[93] This need for an attitudinal shift, is also reflected in the New Zealand disability statistics, strategy and action plan that will be reviewed later in the chapter.

2.5 Disability Activism

At its core, disability activism is concerned with ensuring that human rights and the values of equality, dignity and inclusion are embedded and protected in the everyday lives of people living with disability. Disability activism disrupts the status quo. The disability models that are examined below arise out of various historical and more contemporary activist movements and agendas concerned with enshrining those values. As African disability educator Tsitsi Chataika notes,

> The intention of any disability activism is to break attitudinal, environmental (physical and communication) and institutional (policy

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[87] Dan Goodley, *Disability Studies: An Interdisciplinary Introduction*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage, 2017), 191-213.

[88] Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "Integrating Disability: Transforming Feminist Theory," in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. Lennard J. Davis (New York: Routledge, 2017)..

[89] Mallett and Runswick-Cole, x-xi. Mallett and Runswick-Cole note further key debates in Disability Studies as, 1. The relationship between the academy and disability activism, 2. The study of cultural and media representations of disability, 3. Shifting historical conceptions of disability, 4. National and international perspectives related to children with disability, 5. Political identity and the activism of disabled people, and 6. Notions of the body as it relates to disability theory.

[90] People First New Zealand,

[91] Mallett and Runswick-Cole, 4-5.

[92] Shakespeare, *Disability Rights and Wrongs Revisited*, 55.

[93] Hans S Reinders, *Receiving the Gift of Friendship: Profound Disability, Theological Anthropology, and Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 46.

> and programming) barriers, which prevent disabled people from realising human rights, just like other citizens.[94]

Chataika notes that the disability community can be physically and socially isolated, resulting in fragmented access to equal rights and opportunities. Echoing the comments from Tom Shakespeare noted earlier, she notes that grassroots and global responses are therefore necessary to ensure culturally located and productive advocacy for disabled people. In co-locating disability activism with the notion of advocacy, she also proposes non-confrontational activism based in constructive dialogue as the path to sustainable development of the disability rights agenda.[95]

A further distinction that Chataika makes in relation to disability activism is the gap that exists between soft and hard rights. "Soft rights" are rights which have not been enacted in law. Such rights have no actual mechanism by which to ensure their implementation. An example of this would be the contextual outworking of the ratification of the UNCRPD into national policies.[96] The differentiation between soft and hard rights is significant to the pursuit of fullness of life. Fullness and half-measures are antithetical. It could be argued that attention focused only on soft rights is an example of a minimalist approach to disability rights.[97]

Activist mothers of disabled children located in the United Kingdom, Liz Crow and Wendy Merchant, also offer unique observations on disability activism. Merchant and Crow highlight three distinct but overlapping roles—advocacy, campaigning and political activism.[98] *Advocacy* is understood as supporting their children by being alongside them, *campaigning* encompasses activity intent on broadening access for others, and *activism* pursues political engagement oriented to structural and/or cultural change. Activism is thus an interweaving of various strategies that require a level of sustained commitment and energy.

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[94] Tsitsi Chataika, "A Virtual Roundtable: Re/Defining Disability Activism with Emerging Global South Disability Activists," in *The Routledge Handbook of Disability Activism*, ed. Maria Berghs et al. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), 21.

[95] Ibid., 35.

[96] NZ Govt, "Optional Protocol," accessed April 29, 2023. https://www.odi.govt.nz/united-nations-convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/optional-protocol/. In the context of New Zealand, it is noted that, "New Zealand acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on 5 October 2016. The Optional Protocol means that if a disabled person has their rights breached under the Convention, they may be able to make a complaint to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities."

[97] Chataika, in *The Routledge Handbook of Disability Activism*, 35.

[98] Liz Crow and Wendy Merchant, "Disabled Mothers of Disabled Children: An Activism of Our Children and Ourselves," in *The Routledge Handbook of Disability Activism*, ed. Maria Berghs et al. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), 159.

Crow and Merchant highlight two themes that were also, ultimately, echoed in my research. First, they emphasise the impetus towards activism that is initiated by witnessing the exclusion or dangers directed towards disabled children by what they describe as "professional arrogance."[99] Secondly, they discuss the difficulties they have faced engaging with medical and allied professionals operating solely from a medical or individual model.[100] Their observations resonate with some of the contributions from participants in this research and are discussed in more depth in Chapter 8.

Disability activists are also cognisant of the reality that communication around disability issues can become disjointed. Cork et al.[101] bring attention to the tension that can arise when groups formed around specific diagnoses are seeking resources in competition with other groups. Such tensions can lead to fragmentation across the disability community and, ultimately, to diluted communication in political and cultural settings. Their review of historic and contemporary community-based, strategic movement towards justice for disabled people underlines the power of community and planning.[102] They call for a move beyond "random acts of diversity"[103] and towards a unified disability community. In such a community, issues of formation, identity and resistance are negotiated together in ways that lead to sustained change for the disability community as a whole.[104]

This call to move beyond "random acts of diversity" is revisited later in this thesis. There is a possible tension implicit in this call. While it is unclear if Cork et al. borrow this phrase from the social movement promoting "random acts of kindness,"[105] I agree that isolated, random or anonymous charity towards disabled people does little to move society, or faith communities, towards comprehensive equity, inclusion and fullness of life. However, I would suggest that both systemic *and* random individual responses are important. The experience of fullness of life comes from both systemic support and from the spontaneous actions and attitudes of individuals responding to disabled people in the moment.

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[99] Ibid., 164.
[100] Ibid., 166.
[101] Stephanie J. Cork et al., "Beyond Random Acts of Diversity: Ableism, Academia and Institutional Sites of Resistance," in *The Routledge Handbook of Disability Activism*, ed. Maria Berghs et al. (Milton Park: Routledge, 2020).
[102] Ibid., 301.
[103] Ibid., 299.
[104] Ibid., 303.
[105] Random Acts of Kindness Foundation, "About Us," accessed March 5, 2023. https://www.randomactsofkindness.org/about-us.

2.6 Contemporary Models of Disability

Attention now turns to the work of various activists and community resistance initiatives intent on redressing some of the discriminatory practices and inequities that people with disabilities experience. In order to address different understandings and approaches to disability, the past 50 years have witnessed the emergence of various disability models. The review that follows begins with brief comments on hybrid models such as the political minority model and the bio-psycho-social model. The brevity reflects the limited association my research participants had with these approaches. Later, the individual, social and cultural models are reviewed in more depth. These three models underpinned more of the commentary that emerged in the research interviews.

The essence of the political minority model is one in which disabled people can identify as members of a minority group for whom equal rights, opportunities and anti-discrimination legislation is pivotal in challenging societal attitudes.[106] Further political proposals, such as the "capabilities approach," developed by Martha Nussbaum, organise the disability conversation around entitlements common to all human beings that, realised together, constitute a just society.[107] The opportunity for people with disabilities to live good lives is central to this approach.[108] Drawing on economist Amartya Sen, who argues that human rights can be monitored through the law *and* public advocacy,[109] Nussbaum presents ten capabilities which she argues are central to the pursuit of a dignified life.[110] These capabilities are presented as minimum core social entitlements. In the case of people living with disabilities, Nussbaum pursues a concept of care that integrates these capabilities based on individual and inherent dignity.[111] Some degree of resonance with the capabilities approach is noted later in thesis, particularly where participants note a reluctance for some people to recognise their capabilities (See theme1b, sub-theme 2 in Chapter 6).

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[106] Edurne Garcia Iriarte, "Models of Disability," in *Disability and Human Rights: Global Perspectives*, ed. Edurne Garcia Iriarte, Roy McConkey, and Robbie Gilligan (London: Palgrave, 2016), 18.

[107] Martha C. Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 76-77, 155. Nussbaum argues that the capabilities approach is a political, rather than moral doctrine. The capabilities are a list of fundamental entitlements for all citizens.

[108] In this sense Nussbaum's liberal theory of justice might also be considered a human rights approach.

[109] Judy McGregor, Sylvia Bell, and Margaret Wilson, *Human Rights in New Zealand: Emerging Faultlines* (Wellington, NZ: Bridget Williams Books 2016), 11.

[110] Nussbaum, 76-77. Nussbaum's open-ended list includes; Life, Bodily Health, Bodily Integrity, Senses, Imagination and Thought, Emotions, Practical Reason, Affiliation, Other Species, Play, Control over One's Environment.

[111] Ibid., 168-69.

The hybrid bio-psycho-social model proposes a synthesis of the individual and social models which will be examined more closely shortly. This model is framed within the context of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)[112] proposed by the WHO in 2001.[113] The model underlines connection between individual health concerns, personal factors and contextual concerns such as the environment.[114] In terms of bringing fullness of life, the model positively holds that all human beings are on a continuum—rather than divided into polarities of disabled and non-disabled. The “Affirmative Model,” developed by John Swain and Sally French, argues that disability is a positive quality.[115] Disability brings a sense of pride and positive collective identity. Some connections can be traced between this model and theologian Tom Reynolds’ work, which privileges disability and thereby reverses societal norms.[116]

2.6.1 The Individual or Medical Model

The scientific and medical legacy of the modern era towards persons living with disability can be characterised by the notions of *deficit* or *functional limitation*. As Barnes and Mercer note, the individual or medical model[117] organises disability around the themes of medical intervention, allied service provision and a personal tragedy narrative that reinforces isolation and dependence.[118] That is, the problem of disability is located in the individual person, rather than in environmental factors. In receiving a diagnosis of disability, the individual is classified as having deviated from biomedical norms and is therefore in need of fixing, curing or rehabilitating. Again, acknowledging my nursing background, I would suggest a tension exists at this point. Subsequent intervention can be viewed as the alleviation of suffering, improvement of functioning and compassionate care. Or, intervention can be viewed as dehumanising the individual by implying they need to be fixed in order that the perceived tragedy of their lives may be reduced. Tom Shakespeare helpfully proposes that disability does involve a

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[112] Jerome E. Bickenbach, "The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health and Its Relationship to Disability Studies," in *Routledge Handbook of Disability Studies*, ed. Nick Watson, Alan Roulstone, and Carol Thomas (London: Routledge, 2012), 51-66. Bickenbach provides a helpful summary of the development of the ICF, and how it can be utilised in disability studies.

[113] World Health Organization, *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health*.

[114] Iriarte, in *Disability and Human Rights: Global Perspectives*, 20.

[115] John Swain and Sally French, "Towards an Affirmation Model of Disability," *Disability & Society* 15, no. 4 (2000).

[116] Thomas E. Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008).

[117] Michael Oliver, *Understanding Disability: From Theory to Practice*, 2nd ed. (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 45. Michael Oliver makes a distinction here preferring the Individual Model, which includes medicalisation as one component. His proposal of the “Social Model” of disability does not preclude the efficacy of interventions, be they medical, rehabilitative or educative.

[118] Barnes and Mercer, 14.

decrement in health and that impairment is not neutral.[119] However, he notes that, "disability is a decrement in health not in moral value."[120] Therefore, the alleviation of suffering and the facilitation of happiness, is as applicable to those who live with a disability as those who do not.

The biological orientation of the medical model, which highlights the notion of embodiment, is signalled in the work of Tobin Siebers. He notes that disability studies requires a theory of complex embodiment that "values disability as a form of human variation."[121] Siebers' observation is helpful, particularly in regard to the dangers of purely theoretical, or dis-embodied disability conversations, that occur within and beyond the church. Tom Shakespeare, for example, argues that scant attention is paid to the lived reality of a body that functions with an impairment (impairment is not neutral) and that disability studies must be coherent across a wide range of differences.[122] For example, he notes that disability theories must account for small differences in embodiment, such as cleft lip and palate, through to profound intellectual disability.[123] Shakespeare's observation, that disability is an interplay of limitations, echoes the work of disability theologian Deborah Beth Creamer.[124] Creamer's "Limits model of disability" is considered in Chapter 3.

In terms of bringing fullness of life, I would contend that the medical model is problematic but not entirely without merit. I accept Shakespeare's notion that impairment is not neutral. However, the way in which impairment is negotiated by health care professionals can be problematic if they are authoritarian, non-collaborative in nature, or only concerned with finding a cure.[125] It must be acknowledged that attention to improving functioning with assistive devices, cures and/or interventions, is

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[119] Gerard Goggin and Christopher Newell, *Disability in Australia: Exposing a Social Apartheid* (Sydney: University of New South Wales, 2005), 35. Goggin and Newell also acknowledge that chronic pain and various disabling conditions require medical treatment so that people can live. However, they propose that oppositional categories of 'disability' and 'impairment' achieve little as they are "socially mediated and culturally inscribed." Their proposals turn towards the cultural model of disability noted later in the thesis.

[120] Shakespeare, *Disability Rights and Wrongs Revisited*, 86.

[121] Tobin Siebers, *Disability Theory* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 25.

[122] Shakespeare, *Disability Rights and Wrongs Revisited*, 75-80.

[123] Ibid., 80.

[124] Creamer.

[125] Eli Clare, *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 85. Clare relates an example of this orientation towards cure in his engagement with an orthopedist who signaled brain surgery to end tremors was only ten years away. No breakthroughs were forthcoming and Clare notes the gap between his desire for less pain in his joints and the doctor's desire for a cure.

welcomed by some and dismissed by others in the disability community.[126] Ultimately, negotiating what will bring fullness of life must happen on a case by case basis. Swinton et al. also note the potential of the medical model to protect people by providing alternative narratives that help people move forward in their lives.[127] For example, a specific diagnosis can be more helpful than misdirected or unsolicited prayers for healing.[128] What the medical model does fail to do is acknowledge the limitations that societal environments and attitudes place around disabled people. It also operates from an overarching framework of curing disability, which casts a shadow over the lived experience of those who have not been cured.[129] I suggest that a collaborative approach, echoing the "interactional approach" proposed by Tom Shakespeare,[130] that acknowledges the expertise of the individual living with disability and the expertise of medical professionals, might result in a more sustained experience of fullness of life.[131]

2.6.2 The Social Model

With the emergence of the social model in the mid-1980s, disability moved from being understood as a personal, functional limitation to instead being a result of societal structures and attitudes that impose restriction, limitation or disadvantage. In the UK, a group of physically disabled men, collectively known as the "Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation" (or UPIAS), called for the replacement of segregated facilities and the full control of disabled people over their own lives.[132]

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[126] Shakespeare, *Disability Rights and Wrongs Revisited*, 140-44. Shakespeare challenges any blanket political opposition or simplistic approaches to medical intervention. He notes that different people with different impairments have different reasons for turning to medicine and/or have different reactions to their own impairment.

[127] John Swinton, Harriet Mowat, and Susannah Baines, "Whose Story Am I? Redescribing Profound Intellectual Disability in the Kingdom of God," *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health* 15, no. 1 (2011): 10.

[128] Shane Clifton, "The Dark Side of Prayer for Healing: Toward a Theology of Well-Being," *Pneuma* 36 (2014): 206-07. Reflecting on his own disability and life within the Pentecostal tradition, Clifton critiques a church culture that cannot acknowledge the fragility of life and maintains a "maddening" pursuit of the one perceived to need/desire healing.

[129] Clare. Clare presents a compelling personal narrative on the complex relationship that people with disabilities have with the notion of "cure".

[130] Shakespeare, *Disability Rights and Wrongs Revisited*, 78-80. Shakespeare notes that the "interactional approach" balances the medical and social aspects of disability and can account for the breadth of disability experience.

[131] Linda L. Treloar, "Spiritual Beliefs, Response to Disability, and the Church: Part 2," *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health* 4, no. 1 (2000): 12. Treloar draws a connection between the medical model and acute care and people in the church rushing to help in times of crisis but not providing ongoing, sustained support.

[132] Tom Shakespeare, "The Social Model of Disability," in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. Lennard J. Davis (New York: Routledge, 2017), 196.

Building on these early foundations, sociologist Michael Oliver argues that all disability can be removed from the world if we make changes to how society is organised.[133] Originally developed for his social work students, the social model has become an organising mechanism for the emerging disabled people's movement. It proposes social oppression theory, social action, individual and collective responsibility, choice, politics and social change.[134] Essentially, Oliver expresses his argument in plain terms, stating, "We spend too much time and money searching for non-existent cures and not enough removing disabling barriers from the world in which we live."[135]

That this model offers a contribution to fullness of life cannot be denied, in spite of the debate that continues.[136] The philosophy underpinning the model has provided a foundation on which to examine embedded forms of discrimination. Politically, the model has been effective in building the social movement of disabled people. Functionally, increased ease of access for persons with disability has resulted from the employment of this model. The model has been used as a framework to underpin the UNCRPD. It could also be argued that the groundswell of activism emerging from the late 20th century led to the initiatives footnoted below.[137]

Not only has the social model provided new ways of understanding and responding to disability, it has also provided a sense of collective identity for disabled people. There is a sense of psychological liberation.[138] That is, if society is disabling, rather than my bodily limitation, then the problem of disability has been relocated—away from me. And therein lies a potential difficulty with the social model—we simply have another iteration of disembodiment. That is, the reality of impairment and its non-neutral state, can be ignored. Further, Tom Shakespeare argues that the model *presumes* oppression on behalf of people with disability.[139] I concur with his observation that many disabled people do not consider themselves oppressed and that societal responses to them *can* be

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[133] Oliver, 44.
[134] Ibid., 45.
[135] Ibid., 44.
[136] Shakespeare, "The Social Model of Disability," in *The Disability Studies Reader*, 198. Shakespeare notes that, "For more than ten years, a debate has raged in Britain about the value and applicability of the Social Model (Morris 1991; Crow, 1992; French, 1993; Williams, 1999; Shakespeare and Watson, 2002.)"
[137] Global: 2001: WHO International Classification of Functioning, Disability & Health (ICF); 2006: UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD);2011: WHO World Report on Disability 2011; New Zealand:1993: The Human Rights Act – illegal to discriminate on basis of disability;1996: Census – contains questions regarding disability for first time; 2000: Special Education launched in NZ; 2008: Ratification of UNCRPD; 2001, 2016–2026: NZ Disability Strategy.
[138] Shakespeare, 198.
[139] Shakespeare, *Disability Rights and Wrongs Revisited*, 76-77.

rich, un-coerced, meaningful and interdependent.[140] Finally, the idea of a totally barrier-free society has little precedent in human history or society. However, this does not signal that efforts towards that goal are without substance or merit.

2.6.3 The Cultural Model

Another perspective on disability is referred to as the cultural model. Emerging from a North American context, the cultural model highlights the interaction of various notions of disability within a given cultural setting.[141] While the social (and minority) models noted earlier have emanated from disciplines such as education, sociology and social policy, the humanities have introduced literary and cultural analyses to disability studies. Scholars such as Gerard Goggin and Christopher Newell underscore the significance of this approach when they note that, “Media plays a central role in culturally embedding the profound sense of otherness that many people with disabilities experience.”[142] The cultural life of many, particularly in the western world, is shaped by such media. Goggin and Newell highlight the significance of a strong sense of being and personhood when confronted with the alienating effects of otherness. Further consideration is given to this notion of “being” later in the thesis.

The cultural model proposes that disability is a state of being in the world. Therefore, disability itself is interpreted within culture and embodied by cultural artefacts.[143] Culture and disability thus inform and re-inform each other. Meaning is assigned to disability from within and across cultural traditions, mores and belief systems. That is, in an objective sense, bodies are not good or bad, normal or impaired—our particular cultural, historical and hermeneutical lenses shape our engagement with disability. For example, Helen Meekosha examines the colonisation of Aboriginal people in Australia. She notes that in the context of dispossession, disabled people are often more concerned with survival than theoretical models or human rights initiatives. In this sense, disability is not viewed as a personal tragedy but as “social suffering” that arises in the context of cultural dispossession.[144]

A helpful example of assigning meaning across cultural traditions is the work of Lennard Davis. Davis draws on the notion of “normal” to demonstrate this

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[140] Shakespeare, *Disability Rights and Wrongs Revisited*, 77.

[141] Goodley, *Disability Studies: An Interdisciplinary Introduction*, 14-15.

[142] Goggin and Newell, 35.

[143] Iriarte, in *Disability and Human Rights: Global Perspectives*, 15.

[144] Helen Meekosha, "Decolonising Disability: Thinking and Acting Globally," *Disability and Society* 26, no. 6 (2011): 670.

phenomenon, arguing that 19th century notions of normal, yoked to the development of statistics and industrialisation, have led to a domination by the “world of norms.”[145] In turn, those perceived to be “below” the norm are perceived as deviant at worst, or as a minority at best. Rod Michalko develops this idea further in relation to the concept of “natural”. He comments, “All negative cultural representations of disability simultaneously picture the ‘natural body’ as ‘normal life’ and thus as the only life worth living.”[146] In contrast to this perception, he and Tanya Titchkosky highlight the potential of disability as embodied diversity and difference, or disability as “a process of meaning-making.”[147] Emerging from such understandings are specific cultures, such as “Deaf culture.” Deaf culture embodies shared social beliefs, language and cultural characteristics amongst people who have been deaf all their lives or pre-lingually. As such, sign language is acknowledged as their first language.

The idea of cultural location is a further dimension of a cultural approach to disability. David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder, in their earlier work, suggest that people with disabilities have been culturally located—for example, within institutions or sheltered workshops—as a way to pathologise and manage disability.[148] Their work on distinctions between the supposed able and those deemed less able, attempts to unmask how elusive analysis can be when these categories are couched in scientific or genetic facts or testing. Amy Laura Hall affirms their analysis, noting that markers of difference (such as genetic testing for Trisomy21), deem some lives as not worth living. Such markers that highlight difference, hold the power to encompasses individuals, neighbourhoods and whole groups of people or races.[149]

The nature of disability as portrayed in literature is also considered in a cultural approach. For example, Mitchell and Snyder investigate why individuals with disabilities are socially situated beyond notions of desirability, creativity and acceptability, given that all species are sustained by “mutation, convergence and divergence, embodied vulnerability and adaptive re-routings…”[150] Mitchell and Snyder

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[145] Lennard J. Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness and the Body* (London: Verso, 1995), 23.

[146] Rod Michalko, *The Difference That Disability Makes* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 68.

[147] Tanya Titchkosky, *Reading & Writing Disability Differently: The Textured Life of Embodiment* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2007), 12.

[148] Sharon L. Snyder and David T. Mitchell, *Cultural Locations of Disability* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2006), 3-5.

[149] Amy Laura Hall, "A Ravishing and Restful Sight: Seeing with Julian of Norwich," in *Disability in the Christian Tradition: A Reader*, ed. Brian Brock and John Swinton (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 153.

[150] David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, *The Biopolitics of Disability: Neoliberalism, Ablenationalism, and Peripheral Embodiment* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015), vii.

have coined the phrase “narrative prosthesis,” understood as the dependency of literary narratives upon disability which is used as an opportunistic metaphorical device. They highlight the way literature represents disability as a problem, crisis or special situation.[151] Examples of the use of narrative prosthesis, used in theological reflection, are noted later in the literature review.

The importance of disability as embodied and embedded in culture is also explicit in the work of Rosemarie Garland-Thomson.[152] Garland-Thomson proposes connections between disability studies and feminist studies. She develops feminist disability literature around the key themes of *retrievals* (capturing the experience of disability through other stories), *re-imaginings* (rewriting oppressive scripts) and *re-thinkings* (opening up to other theories).[153] Garland points out that dynamic and distinct bodies, feminine and/or disabled, continually interact within the matrix of the social and material worlds.[154] Her work is considered in more depth later in the thesis.

The cultural model has also contributed to the experience of fullness of life. The model has influenced the move away from institutions, the recognition of the influence of text and media, the recognition of embedded historical perspectives that contribute to marginalisation and the emergence of cultural groups in which people with disability experience a sense of belonging—such as Deaf culture. A potential limitation of the model is the degree of separation that may exist between the theorising by cultural analysts and the experience of persons who, by the nature of their disability (such as profound intellectual disability), are unable to establish a sense of cultural identity.

2.6.4 The Human Rights Approach to Disability

Thus far the literature review has considered definitions of disability, disability studies, disability activism, political proposals regarding disability and three models of disability that inform this thesis. Attention now moves to the notion of human rights in relation to the experience of disability. This section of work also clarifies the significance of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

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[151] David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder, "Narrative Prosthesis," in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. Lennard J. Davis (New York: Routledge, 2017), 204-05.

[152] Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Literature and Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

[153] Goodley, *Disability Studies: An Interdisciplinary Introduction*, 46.

[154] Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "Feminist Disability Studies," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 30, no. 2 (2005): 1583.

The human rights approach to persons with disability is described as a paradigm shift. It has the capacity to influence a radical reappraisal of policy and practice across global societies.[155] The notion of human rights and their application to impairment, existed before the introduction of the UNCRPD. For example, in the aftermath of World War II, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) adopted in 1948, underlines civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Subsequent legally binding treaties include the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) Both covenants affirm the principles of self-determination and non-discrimination.[156] Further international treaties include those noted below.[157]

In the New Zealand context, legislation that underpins the human rights of people with disabilities include the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act (1990); the Human Rights Act (1993); and the Health and Disability Commissioner Act (1994). Subsequent to these pieces of legislation, the Disability Act of 2008 enabled the ratification process for the UNCRPD and ensured compatibility with the international convention. New Zealand has established a Minister for Disability Issues in government, along with an Office for Disability Issues (ODI).[158] Further consideration is given to the New Zealand Disability Strategy, coordinated by the ODI, later in this chapter.

2.6.4.1 The UNCRPD

The human rights approach to disability is grounded in the “United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability,” formulated in 2006 and ratified by 157 countries in 2008.[159] As a result of the UNCRPD, people with disability now have an operational framework for developing, implementing and measuring policy

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[155] Peter Mittler, "The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability: Implementing a Paradigm Shift," in *Disability and Human Rights: Global Perspectives*, ed. Edurne Garcia Iriarte, Roy McConkey, and Robbie Gilligan (London: Palgrave, 2016), 47.

[156] Margaret Bedggood, "Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: The International Background," in *Law into Action: Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Aotearoa New Zealand*, ed. Margaret Bedggood and Kris Gledhill (Wellington, NZ: Thomson Reuters, 2011), 4-8.

[157] McGregor, Bell, and Wilson, 11. McGregor et al. note the seven major treaties as the ICCPR; the ICESCR; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (CERD); the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); the Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC); the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD); and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT).

[158] Huhana Hickey and Kris Gledhill, "Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of Persons with Disabilities," in *Law into Action: Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Aotearoa New Zealand*, ed. Margaret Bedggood and Kris Gledhill (Wellington, NZ: Thomson Reuters, 2011), 255.

[159] UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability," United Nations, accessed December 6, 2021. https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html.

outcomes.[160] Even more broadly, as Theresia Degener notes, the human rights approach acknowledges that difference, impairment and death are an undeniable part of the human condition.[161] Social justice theories must therefore be comprehensive enough to address rights issues associated with impairment and dependence. That is, consideration needs to be given to these aspects of living with a disability as well as the social and cultural limitations addressed in the earlier models. As the most current international human rights treaty, the UNCRPD brings disability into the human rights setting and utilises the social model of disability to frame a treaty that has the potential to address the marginalisation of people living with disabilities.[162]

New Zealand played a significant part in ensuring that people with disabilities were included in the development of the convention. McGregor et al. note the lobbying that led to a partnership in which Disability Peoples' Organisations (DPOs) worked with government representatives. Further representation was facilitated by a commitment to financing the attendance of at least two disability sector representatives in each delegation to the UN.[163] The process signalled here embodies two factors important to the pursuit of fullness of life for people with disabilities. First, it actively embraces the claim, "nothing about us without us" from the disability sector. Secondly, it highlights the power of collaborative practice. Ministerial commitment, alongside the development of institutional frameworks and working groups that included NGOs representing disabled persons, collaborated together to establish a convention that covers 30 substantive articles addressing the human rights of people living with disabilities.

The UNCRPD emphasises the inherent dignity of persons with disability. Article 1 states, "The purpose of the present Convention is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities and to promote respect for their inherent dignity."[164] Also significant for this project is that people with higher support needs are deliberately covered within the "Preamble" section of the convention.[165] The UNCRPD encompasses the broader

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[160] Iriarte, in *Disability and Human Rights: Global Perspectives*, 24.
[161] Theresia Degener, "A New Human Rights Model of Disability," in *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: A Commentary*, ed. V. Della Fina, R. Cera, and G. Palmisano (Cham: Springer, 2017), 47.
[162] McGregor, Bell, and Wilson, 116.
[163] Ibid., 118-20.
[164] See https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-1-purpose.html.
[165] Degener, in *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: A Commentary*, 48.

dimensions of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.[166] Michael Perlin notes that, “it is the first legally binding instrument devoted to the comprehensive protection of the right of persons with disabilities.”[167] Further, the UNCRPD has been lauded for the high level of participation from people with intellectual disabilities. Linda Hogan highlights the significance of this participation;

> Human rights can only function as a voice with the voiceless, as a framework of advocacy, when it names the silences and enables previously disqualified voices to be heard.[168]

Another dimension of the human rights approach to disability centres around the right to life and euthanasia debates. These debates, while not the central focus of this thesis, remain relevant in a broad sense. For example, one parent participant in this research noted the offer of termination when her child was diagnosed with genetic anomalies in utero. Luke Clements and Janet Read caution that, around the globe, the right to life for persons with disability is far from guaranteed.[169] They propose that the language of human rights affirms the sanctity of all human persons and is a helpful platform from which to discuss and progress their rights.[170] Drawing on personal experience and case studies, Jane Campbell counters the notion of “assisted dying” with a call for broader commitment to “assisted living.” She highlights the reality that many people still consider people living with disability to be experiencing interminable suffering and/or experiencing lives not worth living.[171]

Obstacles to implementation of the convention do remain. For example, Peter Mittler notes the lack of political will, lack of resourcing for disabled people’s organisations and ongoing lack of research and data, as factors that potentially undermine progress.[172]

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[166] Micheline R. Ishay, "Human Rights: Historical and Contemporary Controversies," in *The Human Rights Reader: Major Political Essay, Speeches, and Documents from Ancient Times to the Present*, ed. Micheline R. Ishay (New York: Routledge, 2007), xxi-xxii. Ishay presents a useful summary of the crafting of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948.

[167] Michael L. Perlin, "“There Must Be Some Way out of Here”: Why the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Is Potentially the Best Weapon in the Fight against Sanism," *Psychiatry, Pyschology and Law* 20, no. 3 (2013): 466.

[168] Linda Hogan, *Keeping Faith with Human Rights* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2015), 89.

[169] Luke Clements and Janet Read, "Life, Disability and the Pursuit of Human Rights," in *Disabled People and the Right to Life: The Protection and Violation of Disabled People’s Most Basic Human Rights*, ed. Luke Clements and Janet Read (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 8.

[170] Ibid., 24.

[171] DBE Baroness (Jane) Campbell, "It’s My Life - It’s My Decision?: Assisted Dying Versus Assisted Living," in *Disabled People and the Right to Life: The Protection and Violation of Disabled People’s Most Basic Human Rights,* ed. Luke Clements and Janet Read (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 89.

[172] Mittler, in *Disability and Human Rights: Global Perspectives*, 34.

While acknowledging that there are questions regarding how well human rights in general—and the UNCRPD, in particular—are being implemented and monitored globally,[173] there are processes in place to monitor the compliance of New Zealand to its treaty obligations. For example, McGregor, Bell and Wilson's research considers how New Zealand is responding to such obligations.[174] The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), introduced the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), in 2007.[175] The UPR mechanism examines the compliance of countries with treaty obligations. Having been through two UPR cycles, McGregor et al. note both positive and negative responses. Positively, they note a maturing of the monitoring process and increased engagement from civil society through wider NGO consultation and lobbying. Of some concern is the variation of language that has emerged between the two reviews. They note a lack of specificity and the use of semantic devices to qualify responses. Thus a troubling distinctive is made between acceptance in spirit and acceptance in action.[176]

The UPR has facilitated closer scrutiny and data gathering regarding the human rights record of New Zealand and other signatories. However, in a similar response to that noted by Pallant and Mittler above, McGregor et al. note that, "information alone will not improve human rights on the ground."[177] Looking beyond the New Zealand context, Mallett and Runswick-Cole also signal that the notion of individual rights largely reflects western values and may not translate into community and family focused cultures.[178]

In summary, the human rights approach is contributing to fullness of life by providing equal access to and before the law, establishing accountability frameworks for local bodies and national governments and by its acknowledgement that people with disability contribute positively to the diverse nature of human experience. However, as Mittler and Pallant indicate, human rights conventions do not necessarily result in real-time changes for people living with disability.

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[173] Dean Pallant, "Happy 70th Birthday Human Rights- Will You Survive the 21st Century?" (paper presented at the Human Rights: Spirituality, Refugees, Trafficking in Persons and Violence Against Women Conference, Sao Paulo, May 29, 2018). Pallant highlights that "political popularism" dictates that conventions on human rights do not necessarily equate with improved outcomes for people in real-time.

[174] McGregor, Bell, and Wilson.

[175] Ibid., 159.

[176] Ibid., 165-69.

[177] Ibid., 173. McGregor et al. suggest three improvements to the UPI process, "the nature of the recommendations made, including their specificity; greater sophistication in monitoring states' promises; and more accountability for lack of implementation."

[178] Mallett and Runswick-Cole, 28.

2.6.5 Normalisation, Crip Theory, and Ableism

The term "normalisation" refers to a system of support proposed by Wolf Wolfensberger.[179] It was drawn initially from a Swedish programme that enabled people with disabilities to obtain and maintain culturally normative behaviour and practices. That is, the programme attempted to ensure that everyday patterns of living were made available to those living with intellectual impairment. It provided a framework to assess the efficacy of services, professionals and policy outcomes.[180] The negative association of the term, in suggesting that the intellectually impaired are required to conform to patterns prescribed by the supposed "normal" in society, eventually led to a change in name. Normalisation is now understood as "social role valorisation."[181]

Social role valorisation was widely embraced in New Zealand during the 1980s. It was subsequently critiqued as requiring people to have specific roles in order to be socially valued. Such critique aligns with the position taken later in this thesis that people with complex disabilities have value by virtue of their being created in the image of God, rather than in the any social roles they might fulfil. Further, and in line with a human rights approach, human dignity is affirmed in *being* a human being rather than in what one might *do* in a utilitarian sense.

Crip Theory,[182] emerging in the early 2000s and influenced by queer identity theory, seeks to demonstrate and celebrate disability's capacity to disturb and disrupt normative understandings of the cultural and political landscape. So, for example, the historically negative connotations of the word "cripple" have been reclaimed in a culturally understood phrase, "coming out crip."[183] Dan Goodley notes that crip theory simultaneously argues that disability identity is negated against a backdrop of "compulsory able-bodiedness," and is also a subversive entity that disruptively crips normative societal standards.[184]

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[179] Wolf Wolfensberger, *Normalization: The Principle of Normalization in Human Services* (Toronto: National Institute on Mental Retardation, 1972).

[180] Goodley, *Disability Studies: An Interdisciplinary Introduction*, 17.

[181] Mallett and Runswick-Cole, 21-22. Mallett and Runswick Cole provide a useful summary of the positive and negative implications of normalisation principles. For example, the principle of normalisation has been used to improve services for people with disabilities, negatively, the principle maintains the power of professionals in the lives of disabled persons.

[182] Robert McRuer, *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

[183] Ibid., 3.

[184] Goodley, *Disability Studies: An Interdisciplinary Introduction*, 193.

Able-bodiedness “masquerades as a non-identity, as the natural order of things,” according to Robert McRuer.[185] He proposes that this system of “compulsory able-bodiedness” produces disability, in a manner similar to compulsory heterosexuality producing queerness. He argues that it does this by implying choice where the systems involved actually provide no choice.[186] McRuer posits that this compulsory able-bodiedness continually asks the disabled to respond that they would rather be able-bodied.[187] This notion is signalled here as it reflects some of the commentary from the research participants—none of them expressed a desire to live in any other form of embodiment. In essence, disability is reframed as a site of resistance—in arenas as diverse as media, politics, economics and the arts. While Goodley describes Crip theory’s influence on disability as “paradigm-shifting,”[188] Kirstin Marie Bone, in contrast, argues that it continues a cycle of exploitation, carries historical gang violence rhetoric and has not realised its transformative agenda.[189] In essence, Crip theory can obscure or silence the very real vulnerability of disabled people.

Linked to the field of Crip studies is the notion of “ableism.” Essentially, ableist responses frame disability as a diminished state of being. Fiona Kumari Campbell broadens the theoretical concept of ableism, describing it as a constellation of practice, belief and process that construct a specific type of body that is then presented as the typical and therefore fully human body.[190] This preoccupation with the ideal, or perfect body, means that any impairment is cast as inherently bad and in need of correction, elimination or cure. It is pertinent to note here that both Crip theory and ableism focus attention on the material body. While ableism is witnessed in other disability contexts such as mental health,[191] the body is the particular focus of this thesis.

Goodley notes that Campbell’s analysis of ethical, legal, normative and political aspects of life demonstrates how ableist notions are entrenched in the “species-typical citizen man.”[192] Deviation from this ideal leads to exclusion. This exclusion takes different forms. First, for example, Richard Kearney traces the notion of scapegoating in relation to exclusion, noting that human beings build self-identity by situating our own

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[185] McRuer, 1.
[186] Ibid., 8.
[187] Ibid., 9.
[188] Goodley, *Disability Studies: An Interdisciplinary Introduction*, 195.
[189] Kirstin Marie Bone, "Trapped Behind the Glass: Crip Theory and Disability Identity," *Disability and Society* 32, no. 9 (2017): 1302.
[190] Fiona Kumari Campbell, *Contours of Ableism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 5.
[191] Perlin, 464. For example, Perlin discusses ableism and “sanism” in the context of people with mental health disabilities engaging with the judicial system.
[192] Goodley, *Disability Studies: An Interdisciplinary Introduction*, 57.

strangeness well outside of ourselves. In the face of difference, we place what we do not understand, like or accept about ourselves out onto the stranger.[193] Secondly, Bill Hughes considers the responses of fear, pity and disgust that occur in response to people with disabilities, describing them as “a tabloid of ableist sentiments.”[194]

Studies in ableism contribute to fullness of life for people with disability when they challenge underlying societal narratives that celebrate misplaced notions of human perfection (a notion considered in Chapter 8), and ostracise or marginalise the non-conformist body.

2.7 Disability in New Zealand

Although New Zealand became a catalyst and signatory for the UNCRPD in 2008, insecurity and exclusion associated with living with disability continue to dominate the sector. In 2013, 24% of the New Zealand population identified as disabled.[195] A Disability Strategy was launched by the New Zealand government in 2001. The current iteration, spanning the years 2016–2026, highlights eight areas of focus intended to address the social and economic disparity that continues.[196] A review of the health and disability sector further highlights how difficult it can be for disabled people to make their voices heard in the policy development arena.[197]

In late 2021, the New Zealand government announced a new ministry to address some of these poor outcomes. At the time of writing, it is too early to assess or even document much detail regarding this newly established, *Whaikaha*-Ministry of Disabled People. While there are causes for hope with the establishment of such a dedicated ministry,

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[193] Richard Kearney, *Strangers, Gods, and Monsters* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

[194] Bill Hughes, "Fear, Pity and Disgust: Emotions and the Non-Disabled Imaginary," in *Routledge Handbook of Disability Studies*, ed. Nick Watson, Adam Roulstone, and Carol Thomas (London: Routledge, 2012), 76. C.f. Brian Brock, *Disability: Living into the Diversity of Christ’s Body*, *Pastoring for Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021), 132-33. In contrast to these reactions, Brian Brock notes that the degree to which we find others repellant, is the degree too which our view of beauty is distorted. Thinking about the context of the resurrection, he notes, “Bodies and minds that today some find repulsive will be gloriously visible to all in the beauty that God’s eyes behold in them.”

[195] Stats NZ, "One in Four New Zealanders Identified as Disabled," New Zealand Government, accessed June 30, 2023. https://www.stats.govt.nz/news/one-in-four-new-zealanders-identified-as-disabled/. At the time of writing a further disability survey associated with the 2023 NZ census is in process. No data is yet available. C.f. Stats NZ, "Household Disability Survey 2023: Final Content," New Zealand Government, accessed June 30, 2023. https://www.stats.govt.nz/reports/household-disability-survey-2023-final-content/#introduction.

[196] Office for Disability Issues, "New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016-2026," Ministry of Social Development, accessed December 6, 2021. https://www.odi.govt.nz/nz-disability-strategy/about-the-strategy/new-zealand-disability-strategy-2016-2026/.

[197] Radio New Zealand, "Government Announces New Ministry for Disabled People and Accessibility Law," Radio New Zealand, accessed December 6, 2021. https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/political/454501/government-announces-new-ministry-for-disabled-people-and-accessibility-law.

some stakeholders, such as parent advocacy groups, already note exclusion practices such as no formal engagement with parental advocates or parent organisations.[198]

The high rates of violence and abuse perpetrated against disabled people in New Zealand, was signalled in a report released by the Disability Rights Commissioner, Paula Tesoriero,[199] According to the report, it is conservatively estimated that violence and abuse towards disabled people is twice that of the non-disabled population, rising to four or five times the prevalence for children and women.[200]

These are alarming statistics. Two implications are stark. First, documents such as the UNCRPD and NZ Disability Strategy are only the first steps towards implementing societal change.[201] Secondly, the statistics highlight the fundamental disregard that NZ society has for the well-being and worth of persons with disability. Structural change has its place in addressing these inequities—but a change of heart towards people living with complex disability is essential if such statistics are to be eliminated from New Zealand society. The church in general, and TSA in particular, has responsibilities in that journey. For example, at a minimum, TSA has a theologically informed responsibility to loving ones' neighbour and a missional orientation towards the reforming of society. These missional perspectives are discussed in more depth in Chapter 5.

2.8 Personal Narrative

An understanding of the power and efficacy of personal narrative underpins this research project. Attention is given to the stories of five individuals with complex disabilities and seven parents or siblings of disabled people. In telling these stories, their voices are added to a host of others whose personal narratives contribute to a fuller understanding of the experience of living with a disability.

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[198] Colleen Brown, "Hesitantly Hopeful," Attitude, accessed December 6, 2021. https://attitudelive.com/read/hesitantly-hopeful/?fbclid=IwAR3xQ46y0Wv4Y64QhyuHoAfm2HEWc72fVypytHMQdnOipUwzM4HYOV1-y7c.

[199] Human Rights Commission, "Violence and Abuse against Disabled People at 'Epidemic' Proportions Says Commissioner," Human Rights Commission, accessed December 6, 2021. https://www.hrc.co.nz/news/violence-and-abuse-against-disabled-people-epidemic-proportions-says-commissioner/.

[200] Human Rights Commission, *Acting Now for a Violence and Abuse Free Future* (Wellington: Human Rights Commission, 2021), 5, accessed December 6, 2021, https://www.hrc.co.nz/files/9316/3822/4755/Acting_now_for_a_violence_and_abuse_free_future_FINAL.pdf.

[201] Goggin and Newell. Sixteen years ago Goggin and Newell described the disability situation in Australia as a form of Social Apartheid. These NZ statistics would suggest that this description might remain apt on this side of the Tasman.

Particular stories enable us to tease out what it is to live universally.[202] There is both informative and transformative power in the act of being witnessed as a storied person. Leigh Neithardt underlines this premise when she notes a desire for social conversations around her self-disclosure as a person living with cerebral palsy that avoid awkwardness or pity—experiences that Nancy Eiesland describes as “rituals of degradation.”[203] Instead, Neithardt lives in hope that these responses might be avoided by people simply acknowledging a lack of knowledge about cerebral palsy and inviting her to tell her story.[204] Leigh Neithardt’s reflections also signal the person with the disability as the expert in their own story.

The personal stories informing this project range across the spectrum from philosophy, ethics, theology, sociology and journalism. Alice Wong crafts a contemporary compilation of personal essays from disabled persons around a helpful framework of being, becoming, doing and connecting.[205] These threads are also reflected in the responses from research participants noted later in Chapter 6. While the stories in Wong’s collection reflect particular experiences of disability, the overarching narrative is one based on a sense of community and collaboration as the space in which things might improve for those currently experiencing marginalisation.[206]

Traumatic brain injuries fall within the research parameters of this enquiry. Douglas Kidd speaks from a two-fold position, both as sibling to a brother who experienced a traumatic brain injury and then, later in life, surviving a car accident himself that left him with a traumatic brain injury.[207] His story maps his evolutionary transition from losing his brother and pitying his altered circumstances, to subsequently recognising his

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[202] Eva Feder Kittay, *Learning from My Daughter: The Value and Care of Disabled Minds* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 11. Kittay notes, “The autobiographical is not merely an individual’s idiosyncratic narrative. With every life experience, with every choice we make, with each set of circumstances that we find ourselves in, we take up an interpretive work that becomes our autobiography. From this interpretive matrix arise intuitions, motivations for inquiry as well as action, and biases that incline us to one theory or another. Here the personal and the autobiographical can facilitate and be a resource for the enlargement of knowledge.”

[203] Nancy L. Eiesland, *The Disabled God: Towards a Liberatory Theology of Disability* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 92-93. Eiesland describes such experiences of awkwardness and pity as “rituals of degradation.”

[204] Leigh A. Neithardt, "What I Wish You Would Ask: Conversations About Cerebral Palsy," in *Barriers and Belonging: Personal Narratives of Disability*, ed. Michelle Jarmin, Leila Monaghan, and Alison Quaggin Harkin (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2017), 131.

[205] *Disability Visibility: First-Person Stories from the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Vintage Books, 2020).

[206] Ibid., xviii-xx.

[207] Douglas Kidd, "My Brother’s Traumatic Brain Injury and Its Effect on Me," in *Barriers and Belonging: Personal Narratives of Disability*, ed. Michelle Jarmin, Leila Monaghan, and Alison Quaggin Harkin (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2017).

brother as the touchstone of his own identity as a disabled person.[208] No longer viewing his brother as the "other," Douglas notes that he and his brother, along with all disabled people, teach us the quality of humanity in all its embodiments.[209] In describing themselves as vital and educative members of the community, they echo the responses from individuals and family members in this research.

Violence against disabled persons was noted earlier in the New Zealand context. Such experiences are not geographically isolated. American poet and essayist, Eli Clare, confronts his readers with raw and "triggering" stories of various forms of violence perpetrated against people with disabilities.[210] Set against the story of his own journey[211] and navigating the benefits of technological advances in assisting people with disabilities to live full lives, he also documents the negative connotations associated with the pursuit of cure,

> Cure saves lives; cure manipulates lives; cure prioritizes some lives over others; cure makes profits; cure justifies violence; cure promises resolution to body-mind loss.[212]

Drawing on narratives of abuse, hospitalisation and institutionalisation, Clare brings together a mosaic of understanding underscored by the notion of "brilliant imperfection." Against the backdrop of these stories of survival, the polarities of normal/abnormal and natural/unnatural are challenged.[213] Clare also highlights the notion of interdependence, noting its messy but necessary contours for living a life of brilliant imperfection.[214] Interdependence is a concept that will be considered later in the thesis.

Stories specifically associated with complex disability are highlighted in this research. Philosopher Eva Feder Kittay notes that life with her complexly disabled daughter has caused her to re-examine what makes life worth living. Caring for her daughter has altered her understanding of philosophy itself. Lacking the ability to reason and develop arguments, capacities so prized in philosophical debate, Eva's daughter, Sesha, has taken her full circle to discover what she was always searching for in philosophy—"an

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[208] Ibid., 88.
[209] Ibid., 87.
[210] Clare, xx.
[211] Ibid., 37-39.
[212] Ibid., xvi.
[213] Ibid., 173.
[214] Ibid., 136.

understanding of things that matter."[215] Kittay's discussion of the parental role, as advocate, is particularly helpful in the context of this research. She outlines the difficulty inherent in speaking for or on behalf of the disabled, particularly in the context of "nothing about us without us." However, similarly to some of the participants in this research, her daughter is severely intellectually disabled and in Kittay's words is, therefore, "doubly disabled and silenced."[216]

The personal stories noted above alert us to the lived experience of people with disabilities. They also inform and guide future revised practice. However, speaking for oneself is not the privilege of all disabled people. Recalling my experience with our profoundly disabled son, I recall a doctor once telling me that the contours of Samuel's future life were uncertain. The doctor commented, "we will have to wait for him to tell his own story." The dimensions of that story, to name a few, include silent lessons in perseverance, patience and presence. However, in order to tease out further universal insights, or to interpret the more particular, the responsibility to tell some stories of disability, falls to those who live alongside people with disabilities. That is, speaking up *and* speaking for, can co-exist as empowering sides of the same storied coin.

In conclusion, this chapter has reviewed models and theories of disability emerging from a more broadly secular context. The analysis has been organised around the central motif of the thesis, "life to the full." Employing the inclusive approach highlighted in Chapter 1, the contributions and limits that such models and theories make to an experience of fullness of life, have been identified and examined. In the following chapter, the second part of the literature review considers the theological approaches and models of disability that have framed this research and what they offer to the conversation.

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[215] Kittay, 6.

[216] Ibid., 7.

Chapter 3 – Literature Review (Part B)

What abundant life is for Edward, is peace without being medicated. (Eve)

3.1 Introduction

The models, theories and narratives about disability considered in Chapter 2, are not necessarily grounded in an understanding of human beings living in a life-giving relationship with God. In contrast, theological approaches to disability start with this assumption. That is, the assumption of (a) human-divine relationship and (b) that this relationship should bring fullness of life. The person of Christ (John 14:6), the witness of scripture (Acts 17:28) and reflection from centuries of church tradition, warn against any "pretended autonomy."[217] In doing so, theological approaches to disability studies broaden the notion of fullness of life beyond the material world and finite human existence. They underline the notions of hope and liberation found in the person and work of Jesus Christ—which are fully grounded in the person of Christ but find their telos beyond the temporal realm.

3.2 Disability Theology

Framing disability theology is a useful place to begin this section of work. Brian Brock notes that, "the community of faith does not create *new* knowledge, but understands *old* knowledge in new *constellations* and *contexts*."[218] While disability studies might be considered a relatively new field of enquiry, theological enquiry would posit that God and the church tradition have already said much about disability—old knowledge. However, much is yet to be re-said—new constellations and contexts. A new generation of the faithful are thus responsible for redescribing fullness of life in the context of those living with disability in New Zealand in the 21st century.

Theology contains various branches, genres and frontiers.[219] John Hull, whose early work navigates biblical texts from the position of personal blindness,[220] understands these theological entities as situated at different points on a large theological map. He posits that disability theology, as a genre of theology, works at the frontier between

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[217] William Edgar, *Created and Creating: A Biblical Theology of Culture* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 2017), 113.

[218] Brian Brock, "What Is Research on Disability? Looking Backward to See Forward," *Journal of Disability & Religion* 26, no. 4 (2021): 7, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/23312521.2021.1912684.

[219] John M. Hull, "Theology: Theology of Disability," in *Disability: The Inclusive Church Resource* (London: Darton Longman Todd, 2014), 53.

[220] John Hull, *In the Beginning There Was Darkness* (London: SCM, 2001).

faith and secular understandings of disability. Thus, disability theology challenges the church and wider society to examine their understanding and response to the presence, or absence, of disabled people in their midst. Such active attending alerts the community to the ongoing hermeneutic activity (interpretation) necessary to attend to experience and ensure ongoing faithful practice. As a genre of theology, disability theology draws attention to the realities of injustice faced by people living with disability. As a branch of theology, it is engaged with critical reflection on scripture, doctrine and the ongoing task of announcing the gospel message to new generations.[221]

Numerous researchers and writers within the church are committed to understanding this *old* knowledge in new ways. As mentioned earlier, this project reflects a commitment to reading the text of scripture and the text of life. Nancy Eiesland underscores this conviction when she notes that theological responses to disability have increased following the emergence of the Disabled Rights Movement.[222] New contexts have caused the church to pause and consider—what might we have forgotten, lost or misinterpreted? In other words, social, political or ideological movements sometimes propel the church to consider new perspectives and to pursue conversations towards mutual understanding[223]—but always against the backdrop of old knowledge. Such theological dynamism has witnessed the development of disability theology across the

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[221] Hull, in *Disability: The Inclusive Church Resource*, 61-90.

[222] Nancy L. Eiesland, "Barriers and Bridges: Relating the Disability Rights Movement and Religious Organisations," in *Human Disability and the Service of God: Reassessing Religious Practice*, ed. Nancy L. Eiesland and Don Saliers (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 200.

[223] William C. Gaventa, *Disability and Spirituality: Recovering Wholeness, Studies in Religion, Theology, and Disability* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2018), xix.

disciplines of biblical studies,[224] systematic theology,[225] ethics and moral theology,[226] church history and contemporary practice,[227] pastoral care and spirituality.[228]

These ideas of hermeneutical enquiry and theological dynamism can be seen in approaches which draw on the person and work of Jesus Christ. John Swinton proposes that disability theology draws Christians together for the purpose of interpreting the complete "Christ event" across the historical and contemporary experience of disability.[229] David McLachlan also considers the work of Christ through a disability lens and specifically in relation to his atoning work on the cross.[230] Arguing for the "atonement as participation," McLachlan challenges the faith community to recognise the cross of Christ as both objective reconciliation and a subjective experience of societal and personal change.[231] In this sense, the atonement of Christ is inherently accessible and inclusive of all people. The medical, social, cultural and human rights models already noted do not consider disability in light of the Christ event. For the Christian, all of life is altered by this paradigmatic and personal event. Such an understanding of the complete Christ event is critical to the framework presented later in the thesis.

Informing and/or unsettling categories of human experience, a theology of disability broadens the conversation beyond questions around what we are and what we can do. It moves us towards the question of who we are. Attention to this question then enables

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[224] *The Bible and Disability: A Commentary* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2017). C.f. H. Avalos, S. J. Melcher, and J. Schipper, eds., *This Abled Body: Rethinking Disabilities and Biblical Studies* (Atlanta: SBL, 2007); Candida R. Moss and Jeremy Schipper, eds., *Disability Studies and Biblical Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).
[225] Amos Yong, *The Bible, Disability, and the Church: A New Vision of the People of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011). C.f. David McLachlan, *Accessible Atonement: Disability, Theology, and the Cross of Christ* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2021).
[226] Hans S. Reinders, *Disability, Providence, and Ethics: Bridging Gaps, Transforming Lives* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014). C.f. Shane Clifton, *Crippled Grace: Disability, Virtue Ethics, and the Good Life* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2018). Keith Dow, *Formed Together: Mystery, Narrative, and Virtue in Christian Caregiving* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2021).
[227] *Disability in the Christian Tradition: A Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012). C.f. Courtney Wilder, *Disability, Faith, and the Church: Inclusion and Accommodation in Contemporary Congregations* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2016); Brian Brock, *Wondrously Wounded: Theology, Disability, and the Body of Christ* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2019). Erik W. Carter, *Including People with Disabilities in Faith Communities: A Guide for Service Providers, Families, & Congregations* (Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes, 2007). Stanley Hauerwas, *Suffering Presence: Theological Reflections on Medicine, the Mentally Handicapped, and the Church* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1986).
[228] *Aging, Disability and Spirituality: Addressing the Challenge of Disability in Later Life* (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2008). C.f. Anna Katherine Shurley, *Pastoral Care and Intellectual Disability: A Person-Centered Approach* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2017).
[229] John Swinton, "Who Is the God We Worship? Theologies of Disability: Challenges and New Possibilities," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 14, no. 2 (2012): 274.
[230] McLachlan.
[231] Ibid., 133.

practical theology to ask whether TSA is participating in ableist agendas that undermine who we are as God’s image bearers. For example, Andrew Picard and Myk Habets explore ableist agendas by challenging false binaries such as a normal/abnormal. They argue that such false binaries locate the disabled outside of the rich diversity inherent in God’s good creation.[232] There are echoes here of Tobin Siebers’ efforts to locate disability as complex embodiment and the stories presented by Eli Clare that challenge the normal/abnormal polarities.

3.3 Scripture and Disability

It has already been acknowledged that the Bible appears to present some difficult messaging regarding disability. What must be noted in the first instance is that our understanding of disability across ages and cultures is not static—recalibrating our reading enables those new constellations and contexts to emerge. Several contemporary biblical scholars noted below are addressing some of the apparent mixed messages.

Biblical scholarship in regard to disability has developed at some pace over the past 20 years. A turning point in the conversation between disability studies and biblical studies is acknowledged as the 2004 meeting of the Society for Biblical Literature. At this time a programme entitled “Biblical Scholarship and Disabilities” was initiated.[233] Subsequently, disability studies across both Old and New Testament texts have made contributions to how disability is understood and engaged with across faith communities.

3.3.1 The Old Testament

In regard to the Hebrew Bible, one of the early monographs, written by Jeremy Schipper,[234] draws on Mitchell and Snyder’s idea of narrative prosthesis, noted earlier.[235] Schipper considers the story of Mephibosheth within the history of the Davidic dynasty. For Schipper, the complexity of Israel’s unfolding identity, is presented by the Deuteronomic Historian using complex characters and motifs—in this case, Mephibosheth and disability. In the story of Mephibosheth, Schipper proposes that rather than evaluating him as a negative or positive image, the writer presents his

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[232] Andrew Picard and Myk Habets, "Theology and the Experience of Disability ‘Down Under’: Introduction," in *Theology and the Experience of Disability: Interdisciplinary Perspectives from Voices Down Under*, ed. Andrew Picard and Myk Habets (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 3.
[233] Melcher, Parsons, and Yong, 3.
[234] Jeremy Schipper, *Disability Studies and the Hebrew Bible: Figuring Mephibosheth in the David Story* (New York: T & T Clark, 2006).
[235] Ibid., 123.

identity as complex in nature—thus destabilising simplistic oppositional narratives between insiders and outsiders, or disability and ability.[236]

Other examples of disability-related content in the Hebrew Bible include articles in the volume, *This Abled Body: Rethinking Disabilities and Biblical Studies*[237] ranging from audio-centric readings of Deuteronomy, the intersections of gender and disability in the priestly interactions of Leviticus 21, and how normative interpretations by biblical scholars can misrepresent disability.[238] In his monograph, Saul Olyan[239] focuses on representation of the social dimensions of disability located in the Hebrew text and how these representations stigmatise the disabled as unclean, weak, vulnerable or dependent—and, subsequently, marginalises them.[240] His work echoes strands of the cultural model examined earlier, in that he notes some of this stigmatisation is culturally dependent. Essentially, Olyan argues that the Hebrew text offers a wide range of perspectives on YHWH's response towards disabled people. In noting those responses, he posits that it is possible that they reflect the cultural perspective of the writers.[241]

Further to the Levitical reference above, it must be noted that strict social boundaries existed in Israel's community life. For example, priests with physical disabilities were prevented from temple service (Leviticus 21:17-23).[242] Reflecting on this passage, Julia Watts Belser argues that the disabled were expected to tame their disability, ensuring that they did not distract from the activity of the priest.[243] She proposes that Leviticus 21 provides a powerful lens through which to consider why human beings judge some bodies as superior to others. Sceptical of any claims that God has a particular vision of beauty, she prefers a God that "regards with pleasure and satisfaction the vast, riotous diversity of human and creature-kind."[244]

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[236] Ibid., 125.
[237] Avalos, Melcher, and Schipper.
[238] Kirsty L. Jones, "Disability in the Hebrew Bible: A Literature Review," *Journal of Disability & Religion* 25, no. 4 (2021): 365.
[239] Saul M. Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible: Interpreting Mental and Physical Differences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
[240] Ibid., 123.
[241] Ibid., 126-27.
[242] Amos Yong, "Disability and the Renewal of Theological Education," in *Theology and the Experience of Disability: Interdisciplinary Perspectives from Voices Down Under*, ed. Andrew Picard and Myk Habets (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 252-54. C.f. Mary Elise Lowe, "'Rabbi, Who Sinned?' Disability Theologies and Sin," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 51, no. 3 (2012).
[243] Julia Watts Belser, "Priestly Aesthetics: Disability and Bodily Difference in Leviticus 21," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 73, no. 4 (2019): 358.
[244] Ibid., 361.

The Hebrew text employs contrasting literary genres. Rebecca Raphael employs the cultural model of disability as an organising framework for her examination of disability across contrasting literary genres within the Hebrew text. Moving across wisdom, law, poetry and prophecy texts, she examines how disability relates to significant biblical themes such as election, ethics, power and holiness. She notes that disability is not " an incidental thread in this tapestry."[245] Her work does not gloss over the difficulty associated with ideological constructions that present the human male as normal and reflect that construction onto God.[246] One of the strengths of her work, as Sarah Melcher notes, is a commitment to not stretching the text to overlay it with disability-sensitive interpretations, where few exist.[247]

3.3.2 Both Testaments

Further biblical scholars consider specific texts across both testaments. Jeremy Schipper and Candida Moss present a compilation of scholarly contributions that consider specific texts, in specific cultural contexts and utilising various methodologies.[248] The editors helpfully introduce the compilation with an introduction to a passage in Mark 9:43-48 in which casual readings of the text are compared with closer readings. The caution given is that casual or proof text approaches to disability and biblical scholarship are unhelpful.[249]

Sarah Melcher, Mikael Parsons and Amos Yong also present a commentary spanning biblical disability content across both testaments.[250] The intention of the commentary is noted as the ongoing building of understanding across the fields of biblical and disability scholarship—both noted to work with different presuppositions. The content of the commentary includes essays concerned with blocks of biblical literature rather than discrete texts.[251]

3.3.3 New Testament

Consideration is now given to the framing of disability in various early Christian texts. New Testament scholar Anna Rebecca Solevåg considers the notion of intersectionality

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[245] Rebecca Raphael, *Biblical Corpora: Representations of Disability in Hebrew Biblical Literature* (New York: T & T Clark, 2008), 132.

[246] Ibid., 136-37.

[247] Melcher, Parsons, and Yong, 8.

[248] Moss and Schipper.

[249] Ibid., 2.

[250] Melcher, Parsons, and Yong.

[251] Ibid., 12. For example, attention is given to creation, law, history, wisdom, prophets, the synoptic gospels, Johannine literature, the apostle Paul and the book of Hebrews.

in such texts.[252] Intersectionality refers to the hierarchies in play when race, gender, class and sexuality converge with disability and increase the experience of powerlessness and/or oppression.[253] Her examination of disability as it intersects with race, gender, age and class is underpinned by engagement with various theories that were noted earlier. For example, crip theory, monster theory (where disabled people are culturally imagined as the embodiment of fears), and the use of narrative prosthesis are all included in her work. Solevåg also highlights a stream of resurrection thought that appears later in my research, where some participants envisage non-disabled bodies in a post-resurrection context—life without limits. Describing the biblical text as "polyphonic,"[254] Solevåg also notes the resurrection scars of Christ as indication of identity and continuity.

While Solevåg discusses Paul's thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians 12:7) as evidence of a non-normative body, disability theologian Louise Gosbell turns her attention to Paul's understanding and use of the "body of Christ" imagery (Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12) to assess its historical context and subsequent applicability to disability ministry.[255] Reviewing conceptions of unity proposed by the Stoics and Greco-Roman societal pursuit of social hierarchies and the status quo, Gosbell proposes that Paul's use of the metaphor is a message to the Corinthian church that reminds them that, in the body of Christ, everyone is valued.[256] Social positioning is of no consequence. Hierarchies are dismissed and the weaker members are reconsidered as indispensable.

Rather than proposing that the church is incomplete without the presence and work of disabled members, Gosbell proposes that Paul writes to correct the attitudes of church members towards each other.[257] Everyone who is "in Christ" is part of the community. Everyone carries the responsibility to dismantle barriers that limit the participation of others who are "in Christ." This call to consider the attitudes of congregants towards each other is also discussed later in the thesis. In Chapter 6 attitudes are identified as opening or closing the literal and metaphorical space that people with disabilities are promised as members of the body of Christ.

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[252] Anna Rebecca Solevåg, *Negotiating the Disabled Body: Representations of Disability in Early Christian Texts* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018).
[253] Ibid., 3.
[254] Ibid., 157.
[255] Louise Gosbell, "A Disability Reading of Paul's Use of the "Body of Christ" Metaphor in Romans 12:3-8 and I Corinthians 12:12-31," in *Romans and the Legacy of St Paul: Historical, Theological, & Social Perspectives*, ed. Peter G. Bolt and James R. Harrison (Macquarie Park: SCD Press, 2019).
[256] Ibid., 302.
[257] Ibid., 316.

3.4 Theological Models in Disability Studies

This section of work begins with some general comments and early theological models of disability. It then moves towards contemporary themes and approaches indicating how disability understood as a theological construct might contribute to the experience of fullness of life for persons with disability within TSA and beyond. In doing so, I note that the relationship between models, theories and concepts is best described as interconnected. For example, Stephen Bevans notes,

> Models, in the same way as images and symbols, provide ways through which one knows reality in all its richness and complexity. Models provide a knowledge that is always partial and inadequate but never false or merely subjective…if one model points to certain aspects of experience, another model or **other words** [emphasis mine]can be employed to bring other aspects of experience to light.[258]

While there is definitional fluidity between the notion of models, theories and concepts, each seeks to present a pattern of cohesive ideas. They facilitate comprehensive engagement and explanation across a subject. Sally McFague helpfully describes a model as, "a metaphor with staying power."[259] She suggests that models, drawing on metaphorical constructs, can assist the church to pursue an ongoing and "imaginative construal"[260] of the relationship between God, the earth and God's people.

Christians draw on the Judeo-Christian tradition of all people as created in the image of God—and reframe that through reflection on scriptures such as Romans 8:20-24. Therefore while holding that all human beings are endowed with dignity, value and equality—Christians hold that the cosmos and every being within it, currently exists in a state of incompleteness (Romans 8:20-24). Understanding and dealing with this incompleteness is where the church and broader society are sometimes at odds. How this incompleteness manifests itself is also contestable *within* the faith community.[261]

3.4.1 The Moral/Religious Model

The religious, or moral, model of disability casts disability as either a mechanism for God's punishment for sin, or God's provision for testing and building faith. For

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[258] Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, Revised and Expanded Edition ed. (New York: Orbis, 2009), 30.

[259] Sallie McFague, *Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 34.

[260] Ibid., 32.

[261] Amos Yong, *Theology and Down Syndrome: Reimagining Disability in Late Modernity* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007), 34. For example, Yong notes Martin Luther calling for the drowning of a "misshapen boy" as "one without a soul." C.f. Brock and Swinton. Brock and Swinton bring together a series of papers reflecting the teaching of the patristics through to contemporary models of disability.

example, Michael Beates, drawing on Genesis 4:10 and Exodus 4:1, argues that God takes credit for disability.[262] George Hammond categorically states that “all disability is the result of the fall, a contradiction of the ‘very good’ of creation.”[263] Pope Jean Paul II posits disability as a sign of God’s particular blessing when he notes that disabled people are “living icons of the crucified Son.”[264] In one sense, such an understanding perpetuates the myth of virtuous suffering identified by Eiesland. In another sense, Frances Young notes that Catholic piety maintains a long tradition of seeing the image of God in the poor rather than in the powerful.[265] Imagined this way, disability might be understood as a setting in which the image of God is most powerfully demonstrated.

As Marno Retief and Rantoa Letšosa summarise, the religious model still reflects the belief system of some scholars but holds limited validity for contemporary disability theology in general.[266] For example, scholars such as Candida Moss argue that earlier interpretations of the gospels of Matthew and Mark reflect imaginations constricted by “mild ableism.”[267] Further to this critique, the work of Nancy Eiesland unmasks notions of virtuous suffering, noting that they have caused people with disabilities to internalise a second-class citizen mentality.[268]

3.4.2 The Charity Model

The charity model proposes that disability is a tragedy and that disabled people are in need of sympathy and charity from non-disabled members of the community.[269] Bill Hughes notes that the charitable act towards the disabled is an attempt to ameliorate the deficits of the supposed unfortunate. He describes it as an act of “othering.”[270] In Christian communities the charity model has historically been associated with the biblical imperative to care for those on the margins of society. However, many

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[262] Michael S. Beates, *Disability & the Gospel: How God Uses Our Brokenness to Display His Grace* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 29.

[263] George C. Hammond, *It Has Not yet Appeared What We Shall Be: A Reconsideration of the Imago Dei in Light of Those with Severe Cognitive Disabilities* (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 2017), 189.

[264] Stanley Hauerwas and Jean Vanier, *Living Gently in a Violent World: The Prophetic Witness of Weakness* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2008), 39.

[265] Frances Young, *Arthur’s Call* (London: SPCK, 2014), 93.

[266] Marno Retief and Rantoa Letšosa, "Models of Disability: A Brief Overview," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 74, no. 1 (2018): 2, http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v74i1.4738.

[267] Candida R. Moss, "Mark and Matthew," in *The Bible and Disability: A Commentary*, ed. Sarah J. Melcher, Mikeal C. Parsons, and Amos Yong (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2017), 299-300.

[268] Eiesland, 72.

[269] Shane Clifton, *Hierarchies of Power: Disability Theories and Models and Their Implications for Violence against, and Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation of, People with Disability* (Australia: 2020), 4, https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/hierarchies-power-disability-theories-and-models-and-their-implications-violence-against-and-abuse-neglect-and-exploitation-people-disability.

[270] Hughes, in *Routledge Handbook of Disability Studies*, 70-71.

contemporary members of the disabled community and their advocates prefer models such as those described earlier. Almut Caspary suggests that the emergence of Christianity and its appreciation for the intrinsic value of human life, paved the way for the development of public institutions that provided charitable care for the socially excluded.[271] He notes that the church fathers and mothers of the third and fourth centuries pursued philanthropy and pastoral care on behalf of those marginalised by disability and social, or economic, privation. Thus the origins of the charity model could be considered well-intended.

Anne Masters proposes that current iterations of the charity model no longer reflect the imperatives of the gospel from which it originated.[272] Instead, her research highlights reductionist responses to people with intellectual disabilities that patronise and stereotype them. The charity model thus perpetuates notions of tragedy and pity in relation to disability. Masters' argues for an approach that combines charity as understood in the biblical accounts linked with human rights. Barnes and Mercer's critique of the model also suggests that disability is unhelpfully framed as victimhood, or used as inspiration in order to secure funding.[273] Similar concerns are raised by TSA mission support staff noted in Chapter 7.

Shane Clifton cautions that the charity model is pervasive beyond churches and carries the potential to further marginalise people with disabilities.[274] In his research report for the Australian government, Clifton posits that an understanding of disability as either a tragedy, or something that can be erased by acts of financial charity, is detrimental to the well-being of disabled persons.[275] Such mechanisms hold disabled people in a state of dependency and/or powerlessness. Clifton argues that while welfare and service provision themselves are not problematic, "paternalistic presumptions of charity and pity still prevail."[276] Clifton calls for "co-production," or the active involvement of consumers (disabled persons in this case) in policy development, service provision and decision-making.

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[271] Almut Caspary, "The Patristic Era: Early Christian Attitudes toward the Disfigured Outcast," in *Disability in the Christian Tradition: A Reader*, ed. Brian Brock and John Swinton (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 25-26.

[272] Anne Masters, "Considering a Case for Rights and Charity," *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 22, no. 1 (2022): 58-59.

[273] Barnes and Mercer, 161-65. Barnes and Mercer provide some context to the role of charities in the Disability Movement.

[274] Clifton, *Hierarchies of Power: Disability Theories and Models and Their Implications for Violence against, and Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation of, People with Disability*.

[275] Ibid., 4.

[276] Ibid., 6.

While the limits of the charity model are noted above, Tom Shakespeare proposes that charity, understood in the context of compassion, rather than pity, is part of a caring and collaborative society.[277] Here, Shakespeare's work echoes the call of the gospel to care and collaborate out of an awareness of human mutuality and interdependence.

3.5 Theological Themes in Disability Studies

The following section of work presents some of the theological themes emerging from recent disability scholarship. While not an exhaustive account, the six bi-focal themes indicate concepts that contribute to an experience of fullness of life in the context of complex disability.

3.5.1 Care and Compassion

Some elements of a caring and collaborative society have already been signalled. Shakespeare, noted above, proposes that compassion is a marker of a caring community. The participants in the current study later underline the personal and communal dynamics of caring for people with complex disabilities. Philosopher Eva Feder Kittay, introduced earlier in the literature review, speaks directly to the notion of dependency, dependency workers and an ethics of care.[278] In calling for wider society to accept shared responsibility for the care of vulnerable or dependent persons *and* their actual carers (most of whom are women), she underscores the validity of giving and receiving caring responses. Naming these as "essential goods,"[279] she proposes that they are as foundational as political freedom and economic well-being.

Commenting from a feminist theological and disability framework, Jana Bennett, drawing on the work of Rosemary Radford Ruether, notes the challenge in any ethic of care that presupposes women are uniquely gifted in some way to provide care.[280] Of further concern is any implication that disabled people need more care than do others. The associated inference that caring for someone who is different is somehow more complicated, or beyond the capacity of a parent for example, is also problematic. These notions are a challenge to the church—where some of this neglect, assumption and pity continues to exist. In contrast, the gospel notion of care and compassion, seen in the response of Christ to varied experiences of vulnerability (Matt 9:36, 14:4, 20:34; Luke

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[277] Shakespeare, *Disability Rights and Wrongs Revisited*, 239.

[278] Eva Feder Kittay, *Love's Labor: Essays on Women, Equality and Dependency*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2020).

[279] Ibid., 192.

[280] Jana Bennett, "Women, Disabled," in *Disability in the Christian Tradition: A Reader*, ed. Brian Brock and John Swinton (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 434.

7:13), comes from a place of unconditional love rather than misguided understandings of the nature of human difference, or indeed any disguised pity.

Working within a Christian organisation, Keith Dow proposes a Christian ethic of care. His work explores the moral motivation for the practice of care. Dow highlights the specific dynamics in play in the context of Christian caregiving when he notes,

> Christian care-giving involves a "call *to*" serve people together with being "called *by*" the people one encounters…In being defined not by our similarities or differences to one another but by a radical equality *before God*, the call of eternity helps to situate particular concerns and areas of calling within a larger perspective of Christ's command to *love our neighbors as ourselves.*[281]

Therefore, Christian care-giving recognises both the mystery of the *imago dei* present in every person and the transcendent origins of the call to care for one another.

3.5.2 Liberation and Limits

The pursuit of liberation from disability is a contested notion. For example, Professor Hugh Herr, describes disability as a *shackle*, with technology holding the capacity to eventually eliminate it from human experience.[282] This position would suggest that liberation is freedom from all disability. The use of the word shackle suggests, unhelpfully in my opinion, that fullness of life is not possible while living with a disability. Barnes and Mercer note that advances in genetic screening coexist with this position when they determine what kind of disability or difference is socially acceptable.[283] Such movements towards eradication of disability are chilling for those currently living with a disability. In contrast, the Christ event, understood through an incarnational lens, has brought liberation in the midst of disability and hope for the future. In light of this event, fullness of life can be experienced in the present whilst its ultimate realisation is yet to come. Creation currently operates within a paradigm of limits. A theological approach to disability acknowledges and lives within this tension—liberation and limits.

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[281] Dow, 38.

[282] "The Future Factory," Sixty Minutes, accessed November 24, 2021. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/60-minutes-mit-media-lab-making-ideas-into-reality-future-factory-2019-08-04/. Professor Hugh Herr, a double amputee from M.I.T., claims that, "…technology removes the shackles of disability from humans," and that, "…one day, through advances in technology, we will eliminate all disability."

[283] Barnes and Mercer, 228.

Christ is proposed as the symbol of the disabled God in the work of Nancy Eiesland.[284] That is, because Christ, as God in flesh, became maimed, bruised and broken on the cross and scarred in his resurrection appearances, God has experienced first-hand what it is to be disabled. For Eiesland, this is a liberating notion that ends any sense of estrangement from her body and makes it possible to live in an "unconventional body."[285] In contrast, Myk Habets proposes that Christ's post-resurrection scars are visible for the purpose of identification and authentication and are not necessarily permanent.[286] George Hammond also argues that, while scars are present on the body of the resurrected Christ, they are not an indication of disability.[287] Varied responses to these positions are noted later in the thesis.

Disabled lives are ordinary lives waiting to be lived, according to Nancy Eiesland.[288] Deborah Beth Creamer highlights this ordinary life as one framed within limits.[289] As *created* beings, humans experience limits and disability reminds us of our limits.[290] All people are fragile, vulnerable and mortal. For Creamer, limits are an unsurprising characteristic and intrinsic part of human experience. Therefore, disability is part of an ordinary life.[291] Creamer's work underlines a further aspect of the Christ event—having taken on "flesh," Christ is cognisant of the material reality of uncooperative bodies.[292] Drawing on the vulnerability to which Creamer alludes, Thomas Reynolds suggests that it is vulnerability that we all share as human beings.[293] In this sense, our shared vulnerability is a nexus of solidarity. His work is also helpful in that it reframes disability from that of deficit to a positive presence in the world that is revelatory in nature and contributes to the richness of living.[294]

The social model, noted earlier, highlights the way in which society constructs physical and ideological barriers. Jennie Weiss Block presents a theology of access, understood as both a mystical and moral matter. Block argues that the gospel of Christ is a message

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[284] Eiesland, 434.
[285] Ibid., 105.
[286] Myk Habets, "Disability and Divinization: Eschatological Parables and Allegations," in *Theology and the Experience of Disability: Interdisciplinary Perspectives from Voices Down Under*, ed. Andrew Picard and Myk Habets (London: Routledge, 2016), 233-34.
[287] Hammond, 189.
[288] Eiesland, 75.
[289] Creamer.
[290] Ibid., 31.
[291] Ibid., 94.
[292] Deborah Beth Creamer, "Embracing Limits, Queering Embodiment: Creating/Creative Possibilities for Disability Theology," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 26, no. 2 (2010): 126.
[293] Reynolds, 14.
[294] Ibid., 17. Reynolds notes, "Disability is not the defining aspect of any life."

of access and the church is called to a ministry of liberatory access. She calls the church to face the truth of its systematic exclusionary practices.[295] The notion of "copious hosting" underscores her work and prompts attention to the expansiveness of the inclusive gospel mandate.[296] That is, Christ, the one who always positions himself with the outsider, becomes the pattern for moving beyond notions limited to physical accessibility. A theological approach to disability seeks to develop environments of heart, mind and action that nourish, sustain and liberate persons living with complex disability.

3.5.3 Mutuality and Inclusion

Liberatory environments cannot be limited to simply *doing to, or for*, the disabled. A theological approach to disability is centred on an understanding of our mutuality and interdependence as human beings. For example, Anna Katherine Shurley presents a person-centred approach to pastoral care that actively engages the intellectually disabled as partners in spiritual care. Such caring can only occur in the context of authentic relationships that honour the notion of reciprocity. Shurley calls for a pastoral approach to ministry that is collaborative and inclusive. Drawing on the "Person Centered Support" paradigm, she outlines an approach that is not ministry *to* the intellectually disabled but ministry *with* and *by* the disabled.[297]

The notion of mutuality also arises in the work of Molly Haslam.[298] As both theologian and physical therapist, Haslam argues for a theological anthropology that is based on relationality and the space *between* subject and object.[299] Haslam deconstructs notions of human being as intellectual capacity or the ability to use symbolic material such as language. She demonstrates that people with profound intellectual disability participate as responders in relationships, rather than as passive recipients.

The work of L'Arche communities, once lauded for embodied expressions of mutuality,[300] currently falls under the shadow of the recently revealed exploitative

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[295] Jennie Weiss Block, *Copious Hosting: A Theology of Access for People with Disabilities* (New York: Continuum, 2002), 122.

[296] Ibid., 131.

[297] Shurley, 21."

[298] Molly C. Haslam, *A Constructive Theology of Intellectual Disability: Human Being as Mutuality and Response* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012).

[299] Ibid., 9.

[300] L'Arche Internationale, "Identity Statement," L'Arche Internationale, accessed December 3, 2021. https://www.larche.org/identity-and-mission. Founded in 1964, L'Arche is French for "The Ark" – an international movement of residential communities around the world.

behaviour of its founder Jean Vanier.[301] In this movement, core residents with learning difficulties share life in community with people (assistants) from all walks of life. The giving and receiving of life within these communities occurs in both directions. Jason Greig notes that L'Arche communities embody the claim that friendship and mutuality can occur in the context of "radical asymmetry."[302] That is, the disabled as core residents are both teacher and exemplar. This embrace of radical asymmetry and relational mutuality moves beyond medical, social, cultural or rights based models of disability.

The notion of inclusion is tested in the work of John Swinton.[303] He proposes that inclusion is an insufficient objective in the disability discourse. Swinton notes that "thin" descriptions of disability in turn lead to thin forms of inclusion.[304] For example, while a disabled person might be included in the Sunday service in the local church, this does not necessarily translate into inclusion beyond that one setting. The counter-narrative in Swinton's proposal is a move beyond inclusion towards the pursuit of "belonging."[305] In this sense, the disabled person finds themselves included in the daily lives of congregants beyond the Sunday service. It is in the move towards belonging that a thicker understanding of disability is facilitated. The experience of belonging in turn leads to a richer, thicker understanding of our shared humanity, personhood and desire to love and be loved.[306]

3.5.4 Friendship and Self-Love

This relationality is described as friendship in the work of Hans Reinders, who demonstrates the profound humanity of persons living with complex disability.[307] He illustrates how our own limitations—or our deeply embedded perception that purposive agency and a sense of selfhood make us worthy of being befriended—ultimately get in

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[301] Brian Brock, "The Troubled Inheritance of Jean Vanier: Locating the Fatal Theological Mistakes.," *Studies in Christian Ethics* (April, 2023): 2, http://dx.doi.org/ https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1177/09539468231168953. While calling for "forensic and repentant examination" of Vanier's work and theology, Brock also notes the paradox of the "L'Arche legacy. On the one hand, L'Arche homes have cared for disabled people in beautiful and enriching ways. On the other, the founder of the movement has been found to be abusive and manipulative. C.f. Sarah Shin, "The Challenge of Biography: Reading Theologians in Light of Their Breached Sexual Ethics," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 35, no. 3 (2022).

[302] Greig, 217.

[303] John Swinton, "From Inclusion to Belonging: A Practical Theology of Community, Disability and Humanness," *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health* 16, no. 2 (2012), http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15228967.2012.676243.

[304] Ibid., 179.

[305] Ibid., 182.

[306] The notion of "belonging" is examined further in Chapter 9.

[307] Reinders, 244.

the way of being truthful friends to the person with a complex disability. For Reinders, the culturally embedded hierarchy of disability places those with profound cognitive disability at the bottom of the disability rights agenda.[308] As noted earlier, this hierarchical reality inspires this project to deliberately engage such voices in its qualitative enquiry. Reinders grounds his proposals in the notion of God's friendship and graceful relationship with all of humanity. In Christ, differing capacities do nothing to alter this unique relationship.[309] Highlighted by the research findings, some of the specific dynamics of friendship are considered in more depth in Chapter 8.

A call to a ministry of friendship is also embedded in the work of John Swinton. He writes broadly in arenas such as mental health,[310] cognitive degeneration related to dementia,[311] and the discipleship of persons with profound intellectual disability.[312] In his early work Swinton considers learning disability and mental health under the rubric of shalom.[313] He provides a model of care-in-community and calls the church to recognise itself as a community of friends.[314] Further to that, he explores the notion of God's love having a speed, coined in his work as "slow time," a speed which corresponds with aspects of the way in which some disabled people live their lives—with gentleness, trusting responses and non-competitiveness.[315]

A further aspect that ties relationality, love and friendship together is the notion of self-love, understood in this context as the second greatest commandment, "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Matt 22:39). As already noted, persons with complex disability are often depicted as unlovable. A theological approach to disability underlines the falsity of this perspective. Jürgen Moltmann, who challenges the society of the strong, capable and employable, proposes that health is not the condition of a person's body but rather, "true health is the strength to live, the strength to suffer, and the strength to

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[308] Ibid., 24-27.
[309] Ibid., 273-74.
[310] John Swinton, *From Bedlam to Shalom: Towards a Practical Theology of Human Nature, Interpersonal Relationships, and Mental Health Care* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000).
[311] John Swinton, *Known to God: Living in the Memories of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012).
[312] John Swinton, *Becoming Friends of Time: Disability, Timefullness, and Gentle Discipleship* (London: SCM, 2017).
[313] Swinton, *From Bedlam to Shalom: Towards a Practical Theology of Human Nature, Interpersonal Relationships, and Mental Health Care*, 60. Drawing on Old and New Testament frameworks, he describes shalom as "…the integral experience of a person who is functioning as God intended, in consonant relationship with Him, with others and with one's self. Shalom describes the experience of being harmoniously at peace within and without."
[314] Ibid., 156.
[315] Swinton, *Becoming Friends of Time: Disability, Timefullness, and Gentle Discipleship*, 88.

die."[316] Alongside these particular notions of strength, Moltmann links loving oneself with finding liberation. He underlines the "as yourself" portion of the imperative in Matthew 22:39, arguing that in loving oneself our true humanity is liberated. For example, Moltmann proposes that the Disability Rights Movement is a concrete example of self-love in action. He writes,

> The protest of persons with disabilities against their social disadvantaging is an expression of love, of love of self and love of neighbor.[317]

While these proposals related to friendship, relationality and self-love are compelling, it must also be noted that relationality can be a contested construct. Jennifer Ann Cox, in her work with persons with Autism, demonstrates this well.[318] Cox, drawing on the notion of humanity created in the image of God, notes that relational understandings of this motif are inconsistent for a person with Autism for whom relationships are difficult. Cox grounds her proposals in Christ as the perfect human being and argues that humanness and personhood are extrinsic to the individual. Therefore, disability or ability cannot alter humanness or personhood.[319]

3.5.5 Spiritual Experience and Spiritual Vocation

This thesis considers the lived experience of people with complex disabilities in TSA. The definition of complex disability, noted in Chapter 1, signals that such disabilities can include cognitive impairment. The work of theologians Jill Harshaw[320] and Frances Young,[321] makes important contributions to a theological understanding of intellectual disability. Both women are mothers to children with profound complex disabilities and draw on personal experience as well as considered doctrinal and biblical reflection.

The concept of spiritual experience as it relates to people with profound cognitive disability is examined in Harshaw's work. In response to questions about how those who cannot speak or read come to a place of saving faith, Harshaw's work acknowledges a level of ambiguity that cannot be dismissed or ignored. However, her

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[316] Jürgen Moltmann, "Liberate Yourselves by Accepting One Another," in *Human Disability and the Service of God: Reassessing Religious Practice*, ed. Nancy L. Eiesland and Don E. Saliers (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 111.
[317] Ibid., 108.
[318] Jennifer Anne Cox, *Autism, Humanity and Personhood: A Christ-Centered Theological Anthropology* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017).
[319] Ibid., 229.
[320] Harshaw.
[321] Young.

research helpfully highlights both the theory of divine accommodation[322] and the notion of mystical perception.[323] The argument of her work is two-fold. In the first instance, she examines divine accommodation theory which, broadly understood, argues that God adjusts God's revelation to accommodate the needs of those to whom the revelation is directed. As human beings unable to comprehend God, Jesus is noted as the ultimate example of such accommodation.[324] In the second instance, Harshaw proposes that an absence of spoken acknowledgment of an experience of God, does not deny that such an experience is accessible to intellectually disabled people.

The concept of spiritual vocation, in the context of intellectual disability, is considered in the work of Frances Young. Living with her for the first 45 years of his life, her son Arthur's story unfolds in the context of severe learning disabilities.[325] In reflecting on the purpose of Arthur's life, Young notes that his vocation and ministry have been particular to him but are also gifts to the world. Recognising the specific ways in which Arthur's hands move, Young describes these gifts in the form of five fingerposts. In the first instance, this intellectually disabled man points towards human values of community and mutuality in contrast to individualism, dominance and competition.[326] Secondly, he points the way to the desert experience where displacement, anxiety and self-pity are exposed and met with a response of fondness, a smile and the dispersion of depression. In the final three fingerposts, Young notes that he signals the presence of Christ, points to the life to come and embodies the mystery of grace.[327]

Young's narrative, intertwined with theological reflection, echoes the power of personal story noted earlier. It also contributes to a broader understanding of fullness of life—one in which beauty is found in damaged bodies and treasure is located in fragile people.[328] In her consideration of bodily existence, she notes the expectation, particularly in the West, that broken or fragile bodies will be repaired, that life will be endlessly prolonged and that ills will be cured. The fingerposts from the fragile and unrepaired body of Arthur, expose this delusion and direct attention to the healing and transformation yet to come.

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[322] Harshaw, 101-16.
[323] Ibid., 146-76.
[324] Ibid., 115.
[325] Young, 1.
[326] Ibid., 142-43.
[327] Ibid., 147-57.
[328] Ibid., 93.

3.5.6 Healing and Transformation

The healing ministry of Jesus Christ, as it connects with the idea of belonging to a faith community, can highlight some tension around the notion of causality.[329] Texts such as those noted earlier in the Old Testament and Levitical codes appear to indicate that in order to experience welcome into community, disability must be rectified in some way. Further questions arise when one ponders the telos of human healing. For example, if disability confers identity, then disability becomes logically consistent with the resurrection experience that sits at the hope-filled heart of Christian theology (1 Corinthians 15:20-23; Rev 21:1-4). If disability makes us who we are, then who will we be if there is no disability in our ongoing existence? The Christian faith claims that the life to come is about creation transformed.

The exact dimensions of that transformation pose an ongoing line of enquiry for disability theologians. In the research findings presented later in the thesis it is noted that some participants signalled belief in an observable alteration to their disability.[330] In contrast, systematic theologian Amos Yong writes against a postmodern framework of Down Syndrome understood in reductive genetic terms.[331] His critique at this point is helpful, as it aligns with the danger of genetic screening to eliminate difference signalled earlier by Barnes and Mercer. Notions of bodily perfection come under Yong's scrutiny in relation to post-resurrection existence. He makes a distinction between illness and disability, claiming Christ healed illness not disability and, as such, people with Trisomy 21 will remain persons with Trisomy 21 post resurrection.[332] Others, such as Ryan Mullins, argue that people are not identical to their disability.[333] Character traits may emerge as a result of a disability, which in turn may shape identity but not determine it. In New Zealand, Myk Habets notes that the healing narratives in the Gospels indicate that disability is not God's final intention for humanity.[334] Drawing

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[329] See for example, Mark 2:1-12 where Jesus appears to link sin, healing and the faith of the four caregivers.

[330] *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine*, 225-26. TSA affirms the doctrine of the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body. It notes, "The Christian doctrine of immortality affirms that we are whole persons, originally brought to life by God (Genesis 2:7), and because of God's action there will be no loss of integrated, embodied personality in the life beyond present existence…[Jesus] had a Resurrection body that was different from his human body, yet recognisable. Our resurrection, too, through Christ, will be a total re-creation."

[331] Yong, *Theology and Down Syndrome: Reimagining Disability in Late Modernity*.

[332] Ibid., 269. Yong writes, "To say that people with disabilities…will no longer be disabled in heaven threatens the continuity between their present identities and that of their resurrected bodies."

[333] R. T. Mullins, "Some Difficulties for Amos Yong's Disability Theology of the Resurrection," *Ars Disputandi* 11, no. 1 (2011): 27.

[334] Habets, in *Theology and the Experience of Disability: Interdisciplinary Perspectives from Voices Down Under*, 220.

on the doctrine of *theosis*, or becoming *more human* by conforming to the likeness of Christ, Habets notes that complex disability will be healed in order to function as Christ does—not in order to function like other human beings.[335] The research participants bring corroborating and unique perspectives to these different positions in Chapter 6.

The purpose and dynamics of the healing service in a church programme are also considered within disability theology. Devan Stahl helpfully summarises the history of the healing service in the church, outlines key church teaching, and notes how disability linked with sin and ableist healing services can continue to marginalise the disabled.[336] Drawing on stories from the Pentecostal tradition, Shane Clifton examines the negative impact that praying for healing can have on the disabled and proposes a re-orientation towards well-being.[337] Bethany McKinney Fox calls attention to the healing way of Jesus, noting seven specific threads found in the healing narratives that should inform any approach to healing within the church.[338] Data presented later in the thesis highlight a broadness of understanding in relation to healing in the present. There is indication of unsolicited approaches from people in relation to prayer and activity around healing. Such approaches appear to operate from an ableist orientation and/or limited understanding of fullness of life.

3.6 Disability and the Church

In Chapter 1, the story of a family with autistic children attending a Salvation Army congregation, brought focus to the problem that this research seeks to address—how does TSA support people with complex disabilities in its congregations? In this case, while the receiving congregation perceived themselves to be a welcoming community, the experience of this family did not align with that perception. The family are not isolated in this observation. For example, Grant Macaskill, in relation to his work in the context of Autism, notes that contemporary churches may pursue a more “slick” form of worship than that experienced in the early church.[339] The distinction that Macaskill

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[335] Ibid., 227.

[336] Devan Stahl, "Reimagining the Healing Service," *Theology Today* 77, no. 2 (2020): 173.

[337] Clifton, "The Dark Side of Prayer for Healing: Toward a Theology of Well-Being," 231.

[338] Bethany McKinney Fox, *Disability and the Way of Jesus: Holistic Healing in the Gospels and the Church* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2019), 146-51. McKinney Fox names these as 1. Positive Reception by the Person Receiving the Healing, 2. Attention to the Body and its Healing/Transformation, 3. Presence with Compassion, 4. Impact on and Transformation of the Broader Community, 5. Clarifying Identities of the Person Healed and of Jesus, 6. Transformation on Multiple Levels, 7. Expanding Categories and Enlarging Imagination.

[339] Grant Macaskill, *Autism and the Church: Bible, Theology, and Community* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2019), 123. Macaskill notes that the early church population lived in poverty and amongst the slave

makes here between slick (or formulaic and controlled) worship settings and the early church, is relevant in the context of this research. Commentary by participants noted in Chapter 6, highlights that slick worship settings did not make them feel welcome or supported. The World Council of Churches also acknowledges that marginalisation in relation to disability occurs within the church and calls on the church community to redress this situation.[340]

Church attendance by disabled people is somewhat difficult to quantify. However, reflecting on the Australian church, Jason Forbes and Lindsey Gale's observations from the 2011 Church Life Survey indicate the possibility that the disabled population is significantly under-represented within church congregations. For example, Forbes and Gale note that, according to the survey, the Australian Church has less than half the proportion of people with disability as the general population (7.7% to 18.5%).[341] TSA in New Zealand, does not record statistics regarding attendance by people with disabilities in its congregations. Therefore, definitive claims cannot be made in this context. Nevertheless, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the Australian statistics regarding under-representation might be similar to the New Zealand context. Some of the possible reasons for non-attendance, in Salvation Army settings, are noted later in the thesis.

In the case of the family noted above, I highlighted a disconnection in the internal rhetoric of the receiving congregation. In the United States of America, Jeff McNair's 2007 study considered the internal rhetoric of the church attendees, where 89% of respondents indicated that disabled people would feel welcome in their church.[342] McNair highlights a disconnection between this perception and a further observation regarding the active recruitment of disabled people for ministry tasks within the church. That is, only 48% of respondents felt that their church would have a ministry place for their intellectually disabled family member.[343] The subject of participation in congregational settings is also highlighted by participants in Chapters 6 and 7 in this

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and lower classes of society. As such, their attendance and participation were unlikely to reflect a smooth, uninterrupted or formulaic approach to worship.

[340] World Council of Churches, "Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network," World Council of Churches, accessed December 6, 2021. https://www.oikoumene.org/what-we-do/edan#disability-discourse-in-churches-and-theological-institutions.

[341] Jason Forbes and Lindsey Gale, "Disability in the Australian Church: Results from the 2011 Church Life Survey," in *Theology and the Experience of Disability: Interdisciplinary Perspectives from Voices Down Under*, ed. Andrew Picard and Myk Habets (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 99.

[342] Jeff McNair, "Christian Social Constructions of Disability: Church Attendees," *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health* 11, no. 3 (2007): 59.

[343] Ibid., 60.

research. The research aligns with McNair’s finding in regard to limited active recruitment of disabled people for ministry positions. The final theme of this research speaks directly to TSA’s understanding of disabled people as ministry partners.

While this research did not directly engage with children, some participants signalled the impact of children’s ministries programmes, run by TSA, in the early lives of their disabled children. The nature of those impacts is discussed in more depth later in the thesis. The experiences of disabled children attending faith communities is highlighted in the work of Elizabeth O’Hanlon. Her research into the experience of families with special needs children, attending a range of faith traditions, found that more than two-thirds of the participants had negative experiences.[344] Her work suggests that teaching the notion of inclusion in faith communities could improve attitudes towards disability and enable wider participation in such communities.[345]

The survey by O’Hanlon also notes which activities within the church setting were important to families of children with disabilities. She reported that 90% of the respondents indicated that all of the following activities were important or very important: religious education, youth activities, formal religious ceremonies and worship services. Also of significance is the 90% of respondents who rated support from religious leaders ***and*** members as either important or very important (emphasis mine).[346] Of particular note here is the reference to leaders and congregational members. Data highlighted later in the thesis corroborate this call for pastoral leadership and congregational responsibility towards eliminating negative experiences.

Having noted the negative experiences of some disabled children attending church, the impact of involvement in religious groups must also be considered. For example, if experiences of church are negative, what impact might that have on their spiritual development? Valerie Michaelson et al. present a quantitative study into religious group involvement and the spiritual health of children with and without disabilities resident in Canada.[347] Among the findings of the study, it is noted that disabled children may not be receiving the same benefits of attending church as do non-disabled children. The authors of the study note varied reasons for this finding but highlight the concern that

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[344] Elizabeth E. O’Hanlon, "Religion and Disability: The Experiences of Families of Children with Special Needs," *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health* 17, no. 1 (2013): 55.
[345] Ibid., 43.
[346] Ibid., 50.
[347] Valerie Michaelson et al., "Religious Involvement and Self-Perceived Spiritual Health: A Quantitative Study of Canadian Children with Disabilities," *Journal of Disability & Religion* 24, no. 4 (2020).

such an outcome should pose for the church.[348] One of the potential explanations given for the negative outcomes for disabled children is that occupying space in the faith community may be contingent on a narrow understanding of good behaviour.[349] The study also notes that such findings may indicate a lack of theological framing around imaging God as a person living with disability. Both issues are consistent with the story of exclusion noted in Chapter 1 and participant commentary noted in Chapters 6 and 7.

Religious attitudes towards disability can be hurtful. Andy Calder and Christopher Newell, reflecting on responses from conferences on disability issues in Australia during 1996, 1998 and 2001, note that many Australians living with disabilities have been hurt by religious attitudes that frame disability as deficit or cause for charity.[350] Further attitudes are framed in cliches, which Calder notes include comments such as, "God has blessed you with this gift-you are a lucky couple; God has chosen this for you; It's a test of your faith; These things are meant to be; We all have our crosses to carry."[351] Calder's later collaborative research, conducted in co-operation with the Uniting Church and the Victorian State government of Australia, examines experiences of inclusion, obstacles to participation, teaching about disability and the role of leadership.[352] The results of the interfaith enquiry highlight attitudinal, structural and cultural issues as problematic for people with disabilities in faith communities. Examples of this dissonance include patronising attitudes, a perception of discomfort on the part of the non-disabled when confronted with disability and restrictions in the form of language and physical access.[353]

The notion of a gap between perceived notions of welcome and inclusion in faith communities is also highlighted in the early work of Denise Poston and Ann Turnball. Their research examines the role of spirituality and religion in relation to quality of life

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[348] Ibid., 382. e.g. The data suggest that the spiritual health of disabled children is being compromised.

[349] Ibid., 384. e.g. This may reflect attitudes reminiscent of children being 'seen and not heard.'

[350] Christopher Newell and Andy Calder, "Introduction: An Antipodean Perspective on Disability and Spirituality," in *Voices in Disability and Spirituality from the Land Down Under: Outback to Outfront*, ed. Christopher Newell and Andy Calder (Binghamton: Haworth Pastoral Press, 2004), 2.

[351] Andy Calder, ""God Has Chosen This for You"-"Really?" a Pastoral and Theological Appraisal of This and Some Other Well-Known Cliches Used in Australia to Support People with Disabilities," in *Voices in Disability and Spirituality from the Land Down Under: Outback to Outfront*, ed. Christopher Newell and Andy Calder (Binghamton: Haworth Pastoral Press, 2004), 6. C.f. Laura MacGregor, "A Holy Mess of a Story: Maternal Reflections on Caregiving, Chaos, and Intellectual Disability," *Journal of Disability and Religion* 27, no. 1 (2023): 127. Mother and Disability Scholar, MacGregor, reports similar experience with cliches. Life with her complexly disabled child was identified by her faith community as bestowing on her particular favour, wisdom and strength. In contrast to these assumptions, she describes her spiritual confusion and subsequent withdrawal from the faith community.

[352] Calder, "To Belong, I Need to Be Missed," 262.

[353] Ibid., 272.

for families with disabled children.[354] In regard to the experience of church attendance, half of the participants noted a good experience such as joy associated with the music, inclusion in choirs and all facets of church life. The other half of the participants noted experiences of difficulty associated with lack of acceptance and few opportunities for their children to participate.[355] Charlene Schultz provides a wide review of the research into how people with disabilities experience welcome and opportunities to participate in church. Her review highlights that fear, stereotypes, attitudes, funding and a lack of disability awareness drive some congregations, while others actively embrace an orientation towards acceptance and active support of parents and children with disability. Church leadership and training opportunities, along with mentoring programmes, are seen as essential elements in ensuring consistency. [356]

The factors associated with participation in faith communities by individuals with intellectual disability and their families is also important to this research. Melinda Jones Ault, in collaboration with Belva Collins and Erik Carter, investigates such factors with families across 35 states in America.[357] This qualitative research notes that effective planning, meaningful and individualised support models, along with strong and inclusive leadership, are some of the factors necessary to close the gap.[358] Also noted in the research was the significance of attitudes in a faith-based setting. Specifically, where individuals and families experienced love and acceptance of the disabled person, they found their faith communities to be a source of strength and support. Conversely, where attitudes were marked by a lack of welcome, love and support—within a community understood to represent love, acceptance and belonging—the resulting wounds were deep and painful.[359]

Further elements to closing this gap are highlighted in Rebecca Spurrier’s 3-year ethnographic research project at Sacred Family Church in Atlanta.[360] Spurrier’s work informs a theology of worship that embraces difference within the worship setting.

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[354] Denise J. Poston and Ann P. Turnball, "Role of Spirituality and Religion in Family Quality of Life for Families of Children with Disabilities," *Education and Training in Developmental Disabilities* 39, no. 2 (2004).

[355] Ibid., 103.

[356] Charlene Y. Schultz, "The Church and Other Body Parts: Closing the Gap between the Church and People with Disabilities," *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health* 16, no. 2 (2012): 196-200.

[357] Melinda Jones Ault, Belva C. Collins, and Erik W. Carter, "Factors Associated with Participation in Faith Communities for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities and Their Families.," *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health* 17, no. 2 (2013).

[358] Ibid., 204-07.

[359] Ibid., 207.

[360] Rebecca F. Spurrier, *The Disabled Church: Human Difference and the Art of Communal Worship* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019).

Here, disruption is embraced as a sign that communal worship is idiosyncratic in nature.[361] It is enacted in different ways by different individuals. Spurrier draws on the metaphor and art of weaving, an activity that members of the church participate in through an arts programme. In doing so, she demonstrates the notion of interdependence, as non-conformist patterns of worship are drawn in from the margin and help to moor the community. She also highlights the importance of engaging all the senses in worship and the contribution of art to the theological imagination.[362] Spurrier's research names aspects of congregational life that are also highlighted by participants in my research.

The training and experience of church leadership is also significant in outcomes for people with disabilities in church settings. A mixed methods study into the perceptions of church leaders towards including children with disabilities, by Jared Stewart-Ginsburg et al., reveals that 68.2% of leaders have not received any formal training on ways to support children with disabilities.[363] The research notes that respondents often indicate their personal conviction that they do not have the skills, or knowledge required, to support children with intellectual disability or emotional behavioural disorders in their congregations.[364] These results align with data presented later in the thesis—particularly in relation to the training and experience of pastoral officers and leaders. In a different setting, Justin Radstake's interviews with seven Pentecostal pastors in Canada indicate the perception that their ministry responsibility was universal in nature rather than particular. That is, they express a conviction to serve all people inclusively but are less comfortable with one-to-one ministry towards people with intellectual or developmental disabilities.[365] This lack of personalised pastoral engagement is also noted by participants in my research, outlined later in the thesis.

Integrating people with disabilities into local congregations, is a further concern for disability theologians. Erik Carter proposes five congregational barriers that may be influential in limiting integration of people with disability into the full life of the church. They include architectural, attitudinal, communication, programmatic and liturgical barriers.[366] This earlier work from Carter is a comprehensive guide to dismantling these

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[361] Ibid., 66.

[362] Ibid., 74-75.

[363] Jared H. Stewart-Ginsburg et al., "Sanctuaries, 'Special Needs,' and Service: Religious Leader Perceptions on Including Children with Disability.," *Journal of Religion & Disability* 24, no. 4 (2020): 7.

[364] Ibid., 12.

[365] Justin Radstake, "Serving All People: Pentecostal Experiences in Ministering to People with Idd in Ontario," *Journal of Disability & Religion* 25, no. 2 (2021): 90.

[366] Carter, 9-14.

barriers and enabling churches to critically assess their current performance with a view to mapping congregational commitment to collaborative assessment, planning and engagement that moves beyond simplistic activity programmes.

In further calls towards integration, Jill Harshaw calls the church to witness the prophetic role embodied by people with complex disability.[367] She posits that their prophetic message is twofold. In the first instance, people with intellectual disabilities witness to the nature of true humanity—fragility and vulnerability. In the second instance, their prophetic message challenges the church against any pretension towards self-sufficiency.[368] John Swinton calls the church to recognise that difference is the norm and that—in Christ—everyone belongs.[369] The summons of Tom Reynolds towards "deep access" highlights notions of power and decision-making in regard to people with disability.[370] By reclaiming early church understandings of disability, Brian Brock urges the church to again see people with disabilities as equal servants of God's redemptive work in the world.[371] This work is completed in one sense (John 19:30), but not in another (Matthew 28:16-20). The journey of discipleship is a call issued to all believers.

The intention to facilitate a critical conversation between the church and broader society in this research has already been signalled. The work of William Gaventa is a good example of this intention in action. He constructs a bridge between the worlds of disability and spirituality—often held as two distinct fields of enquiry and understanding.[372] Gaventa proposes that such division stunts both spheres and that efforts to integrate them would enable fuller flourishing for all persons involved. That is, if service providers and disability experts are not engaged with and/or informed on the spiritual dimensions of a disabled client's life—building deep and authentic relationships will be made more difficult.[373] There is a note of caution in his work. In bringing faith and spirituality to the disability table, Gaventa cautions against oversimplification of different perspectives, on both sides of the table. Finally, he suggests that bringing disability and spirituality together would enable persons with

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[367] Jill Harshaw, "Prophetic Voices, Silent Words: The Prophetic Role of Persons with Profound Intellectual Disabilities in Contemporary Christianity," *Practical Theology* 3, no. 3 (2010).
[368] Ibid., 319-21.
[369] Swinton.
[370] Thomas E. Reynolds, "Invoking Deep Access: Disability Beyond Inclusion in the Church," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 51, no. 3 (2012).
[371] Brock, *Wondrously Wounded: Theology, Disability, and the Body of Christ*.
[372] Gaventa.
[373] Ibid., 271.

disability, health professionals, policy makers, families and caregivers to collaboratively construct lives rich with quality and meaning. This notion of collaboration, as a means to bring about fullness of life, will be examined in more detail in Chapter 8.

3.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has highlighted broad understandings of disability and the basic contours of contemporary approaches to disability. Key voices in these contexts have been noted, along with how they contribute to particular understandings of fullness of life for persons with disability.[374] The chapter has then described disability theology and noted some of the contemporary voices in relation to scripture, notions of liberation and limits, mutuality and interdependence, friendship and relationality, ethics, healing and the response of the church to disability. The theological approaches to disability that have been identified help to dismantle the notion of disability as "shackling," and question scientific and economic agendas bent on eliminating it.[375]

While TSA identifies as "The Army that Brings Life," the problem this research seeks to engage with is the gap between perceived and actual experiences of welcome and belonging within its congregations. In order to close that gap, it is necessary to consider how persons with complex disabilities are witnessed and supported, and how they experience fullness of life in local Salvation Army congregations in New Zealand. The following chapter outlines the methodology employed to enable that analysis to begin.

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[374] Marcia Webb, "A Narrative Account of Abundant Life with Mental Illness," *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health* 19, no. 3 (2015): 263-64. For example, rather than "fullness of life" referring to a quality or power possessed by human beings, Webb underlines that this fullness refers to the communal connection with God as our creator, the One who cares, guides and protects us.

[375] Janet Read and Luke Clements, "Demonstrably Awful: The Right to Life and the Selective Non-Treatment of Disabled Babies and Young Children," in *Disabled People and the Right to Life: The Protection and Violation of People's Most Basic Human Rights*, ed. Janet Read and Luke Clements (London: Routledge, 2008).

Chapter 4 – Methodology

Some people talk to me like a baby. (Bob)

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter highlighted many quilts of knowledge in the broadening field of disability studies. In this chapter, the methodology involved in crafting a new quilt is explained. The field of practical theology is concerned with the faithful practice of the gospel, both within the church and as it engages with the world. The Salvation Army, in seeking to fulfil its mission to bring life, is part of that universal church. As such, the faithfulness of its ongoing practice bears scrutiny. Therefore, in order to answer the research questions and meet the project objectives, I have employed the theological reflection methodology developed by John Swinton and Harriet Mowat. The "Practical Theological Reflection Model (PTRM),"[376] outlined by Swinton and Mowat, enables a reflection on cultural and qualitative data in conversation with biblical, theological and doctrinal sources, in order to present revised forms of practice for the church where indicated. The methodology also facilitates a further key goal of the research—to document the voices of those who actually live with a complex disability.

There is a natural symmetry between the methodology chosen for this research and the understanding and practice of TSA writ large. Seeded in the Wesleyan tradition of the church, TSA draws on methodological roots noted in the work of John Wesley. In order to live out faith in the context of everyday life, Wesley adopted the Anglican framework for theological reflection—scripture, tradition, reason—expanding it to include experience.[377] In more contemporary times, Albert Outler, in tracing the development of Wesley's complex theological method, coined the phrase "The Wesleyan Quadrilateral."[378] While the phrase does not appear in Wesley's work, this "quadrilateral" helpfully frames theological enquiry as accountable to scripture, tradition, reason and the inward experience of faith. These four elements, interacting together, enable both the pursuit of a maturing personal understanding of faith and a communal enactment of said faith as it engages with the wider world.

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[376] Swinton and Mowat, 90.

[377] The United Methodist Church, "Glossary: The Wesleyan Quadrilateral," The United Methodist Church, accessed November 1, 2021. https://www.umc.org/en/content/glossary-wesleyan-quadrilateral-the.

[378] Albert C. Outler, "The Wesleyan Quadrilateral in Wesley," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 20, no. 1 (1985): 16. I am grateful to Commissioner Mark Tillsley for pointing out the source of this phrase.

4.2 The Issue of Critical Faithfulness

As already noted, this research is framed within the context of theology. As such, it is necessary to make some comments regarding the notions of the primacy of scripture and critical faithfulness. The concern here is to articulate an authentically hospitable space for the voices within the research while acknowledging the Christo-centric nature of the underlying framework. For example, Karl Barth's understanding of God's revelation in the person of Jesus Christ as sufficient, stands in contrast to the contextual theology proposed by Paul Tillich. While this research utilises a contextual approach, it does so with a caveat. While the subject of our faith is God, the incarnation of Christ as a first-century Jewish rabbi who experienced all that it is to be human, validates human experience as *a* source of knowledge. For example, while John Wesley affirmed the primacy of scripture, his emphasis on "practical divinity" and Christian living as the outcome of faith and love in action, supports the caveat noted above.[379]

Paul Fiddes, mentioned earlier in relation to collaboration with other disciplines or sources of knowledge, also notes that theology is contextual and that the incarnation, sacraments and revelation all indicate that nuanced inductive approaches to theological reflection are appropriate. Faith is embodied and its embodiment exists within and beyond the church walls. The task of theological reflection that looks across and beyond ecclesiastical boundaries is to identify those connections and thus move against a separation between the world of the church and that which is perceived to be outside it.[380]

The nature of reality is another point that requires clarification. The Christian tradition holds that, through scripture, creation and in the person of Jesus Christ, the church universal has received revelation.[381] As such, some of the boundaries of reality can be said to be known, even if through blurred lenses. In contrast, a social constructivist view argues that reality is constructed by human beings.[382] The two positions appear as polar opposites. However, while noting that God's self-revelation has occurred within the context of vulnerable and interdependent humanity, the notion of divine accommodation affords some hospitable space to human constructions that facilitate deeper access to reality. Swinton and Mowat note that, while revelation holds logical priority, the

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[379] The United Methodist Church, "What We Believe," The United Methodist Church, accessed November 1, 2021. https://www.umc.org/en/what-we-believe.

[380] Fiddes, in *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, 18-20.

[381] Swinton and Mowat, 35.

[382] Braun and Clarke, 179.

interpretation of that revelation, and the way it is embedded, is perennially influenced by differing contexts, traditions and history. Such interpretations subsequently influence and organise the types of practices that emerge in the church.[383]

The notions of hospitality and conversion are also at play within this methodological approach. As a Christian theologian, taking a hospitable approach to the contribution of a qualitative research paradigm reflects the biblical imperative towards making space for the other—be it person, research approach or discipline. However, in doing so, the theologian's goal is a reflective conversation, not unwarranted coalition with positions beyond her epistemological framework.[384] Swinton and Mowat also propose that the notion of conversion is significant in relation to how the results of qualitative research are ultimately helpful in the church. In this sense, all things find their telos in God. The insights, directions and challenges uncovered by qualitative research undergo a conversion process, no longer isolated or autonomous, but concordant with God's creative intent for the world.[385]

4.3 Practical Theology

John Swinton and Harriet Mowat describe practical theology as, "critical, theological reflection on the practices of the Church as they interact with the practices of the world with a view to ensuring faithful participation in the continuing mission of the triune God."[386] As such, it is concerned with what might be described as the performance of faith and, in particular, the faithfulness of that performance.[387] Faithful practices contribute to fullness of life.

In regard to bringing fullness of life, Helen Cameron suggests six criteria with which to evaluate practical theology. These are noted below.[388] Three in particular warrant comment at this point. First, Cameron proposes that faithful practical theology should transform a person's beliefs, actions or both. The point she makes is that what someone believes about their practice can be transformative for the individual and the faith

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[383] Swinton and Mowat, 85.
[384] Ibid., 86-87.
[385] Ibid., 88.
[386] Ibid., 24.
[387] Dean Pallant, *Keeping Faith in Faith-Based Organizations: A Practical Theology of Salvation Army Health Ministry* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2012). Dean Pallant also utilises the Practical Theological Reflection Model within the context of Salvation Army healthcare practice.
[388] Helen Cameron, ""Life in All Its Fullness" Engagement and Critique: Good News for Society," *Practical Theology* 5, no. 1 (2012): 14. Cameron's six criteria are 1) Transformative of belief or action or both, 2) Connects the pastoral, the practical and the political, 3) Methodologically self-aware, 4) Seeking to dialogue with "others", 5) Pedagogically apt and 6) In dialect but grammatically correct.

community. Secondly, practical theology actively seeks dialogue with others outside of its immediate context and is defined by limitless curiosity. Finally, Cameron alerts us to the contextual nature of practical theology but notes that it speaks with a theological dialect. While it might share a grammatical understanding with other disciplines, its own dialect is distinctive.[389]

Practical theology locates itself between the revelation of scripture, doctrine, tradition, human experience and the ongoing, innovative, if imperfect, performance of the gospel both within the church and as it intersects with the world.[390] As such, it enables the weaving of theological thought with lived human experience. It therefore lends itself to the critical and constructive dialogue between faith communities, contemporary society, and academic disciplines, as mentioned earlier.[391] In light of its ongoing concern with theology as it intersects with the world, the field also lends itself to the question of how TSA in particular is meeting its civic and faithful responsibilities in relation to persons living with complex disability.

Seeking to understand the conditions of life in their concrete particularity is a further dynamic of practical theology.[392] Every story of disability thus becomes important. Each concern, or lived experience, challenges and asks new questions of the church as it seeks a place of faithful habitation with the surrounding culture. There is a dynamism to the discipline because it keeps our engagement with the world open.[393] Finally, in engaging with grounded challenges, practical theology is a discipline that facilitates continuous appraisal of whether the practices of the church are faithful to God's call and instruction to it and whether or not those living with complex disabilities find a particular and a universal place of belonging within it.[394]

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[389] Ibid.

[390] Swinton and Mowat, 5.

[391] Elaine Graham, "Is Practical Theology a Form of 'Action Research?'," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 17, no. 1 (2013): 160-61. Graham argues that the hospitality Swinton and Mowat propose regarding experience and the performance of the church is limited. For example, she notes a clear distinction in their proposal between the revelation of scripture and experience as a source of revelation. Graham's critique is that practice itself is not recognised as a "source of meaning and disclosure." Graham proposes that "Theological Action Research" bridges that gap. C.f. Helen Cameron et al., *Talking About God in Practice: Theological Action Research and Practical Theology* (London: SCM, 2010). C.f. Pete Ward, "Helen Cameron, 'Life in All Its Fullness' Engagement and Critique: Good News for Society (a Response)," *Practical Theology* 5, no. 1 (2012): 29. Ward calls on such research to make explicit connections between everyday experience and the presence of God in those experiences. That is, practical theological research, drawing on tradition, must make clear how God is present in the experience or action under scrutiny.

[392] Terry A. Veling, *Practical Theology: "On Earth as It Is in Heaven"* (New York: Orbis, 2005), 16.

[393] Ibid., 7.

[394] Swinton and Mowat, 21.

4.4 The Methodology – PTRM

As noted earlier, this research is situated in the field of practical theology and uses PTRM as its methodology (see Figure 1).[395] Swinton and Mowat have developed this model based on the "Pastoral Cycle." The pastoral cycle, a heuristic tool, has its origins in the work of Belgian priest, Fr Joseph Carijn, ministering between the two world wars of the 20th century. Carijn counselled Christians to "see, judge and act" in response to their experience.[396] Ballard and Prichard note that practical theology owes its understanding of the pastoral cycle to the work of Latin American Liberation Theology of the 1960s and is now used as a model of action reflection within disciplines such as teacher education, nursing and social work.[397]

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[395] Ibid., 90.
[396] Laurie Green, *Let's Do Theology: Resources for Contextual Theology* (London: Mowbray, 2009), 18.
[397] Ballard and Pritchard, 82-87.

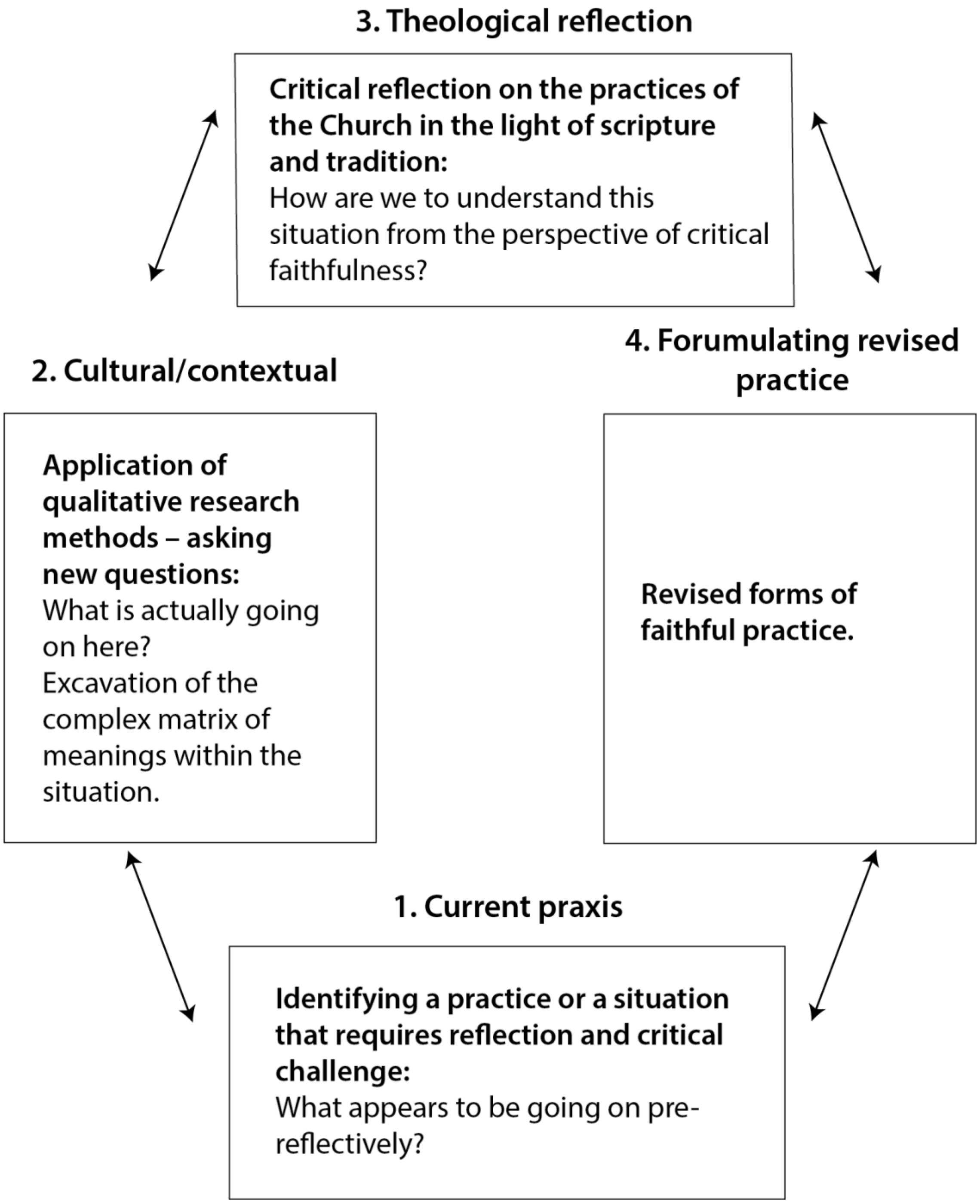

Figure 1. Swinton & Mowat: “Practical Theological Reflection Model” (Used with permission).

4.5 Stages in the “Practical Theological Reflection Model” (PTRM)

Stage 1: In this stage, a practice, situation or issue is identified that calls for critical reflection and/or challenge. The researcher is engaged with an examination of why things are the way they appear to be.

Stage 2: In this stage, qualitative research methods are used to identify what is going on at a cultural and contextual level. The researcher is searching for deeper and wider levels of understanding, within the identified situation. This stage enables the researcher to enter into dialogue with wider sources of knowledge.

Stage 3: This stage presents the opportunity for critical reflection on the church context and its practices. This reflection occurs through the lenses of scripture, doctrine and tradition.

Stage 4: In this stage, reformulated practices are identified and presented as potential vehicles for more faithful enactment of the gospel. Here, the researcher draws on the cultural/contextual data and the theological reflections, along with the initial investigation, to suggest revised forms of practice.[398]

4.6 Theological Enquiry in The Salvation Army

The symmetry that exists between PTRM, the Wesleyan Quadrilateral and the Salvation Army's approach to theological reflection was noted earlier. While John Wesley was not a systematic theologian, his theological approach is certainly distinct. For Wesley, there is an interdependent relationship between scripture, tradition, reason and experience which avoids "static and mechanical" literalism in relation to biblical interpretation.[399] Traces of the notion of hospitality mentioned earlier can be found in Wesley's approach to theological enquiry. Wesley saw no contradiction in having theology engage with other fields of knowledge such as the sciences and philosophy. While he held theology to be superior in significance, it was informed by other disciplines.[400] Don Thorsen notes that,

> Wesley believed that Scripture is entirely trustworthy, but also that it established its authority through the crucible of rational and experimental testing.[401]

In a more contemporary variation on the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, Dean Pallant[402] develops a Salvationist-specific model drawn from Helen Cameron's tool, "Four Voices of Theology."[403] While the current project does not propose utilising this model, it is highlighted here to verify the symmetry already claimed. While Pallant's model is

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[398] Swinton and Mowat, 89-92.
[399] Don Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Reason, and Experience as a Model of Evangelical Theology* (Lexington: Emeth Press, 2005), 57.
[400] Ibid., 70.
[401] Ibid., 87.
[402] Dean Pallant, *To Be Like Jesus: Christian Ethics for a 21st Century Salvation Army* (London: Salvation Books, The Salvation Army International Headquarters, 2019).
[403] Cameron et al.

presented as a circle (see Figure 2), his explanation of the model suggests a hierarchy. “Authoritative Theology” describes scripture as the primary authority, along with Salvationist Doctrine and Covenant Statements.[404] The doctrine book of TSA acknowledges the possibility, present in all generations, to misread or misinterpret scripture. In order to safeguard against such tendencies, it highlights the three biblical pillars that frame secure Christian faith and practice: the teaching of scripture (2 Timothy 3:16-17), the illumination of the Spirit (Acts 8:28;9:10-19;13:1-3;16:6-8), and the consensus of the Christian community throughout history.[405]

Pallant explains “Academic Theology” as affirming cross-disciplinary engagement to be important for understanding and pursuing the mission of God in the world. While tensions and conflicts may arise, the pursuit of understanding and open dialogue are necessary. “Approved Theology” describes the subset of documents that inform TSA’s specific manner of engagement in mission. That is, approved theology sets out the path for strategic engagement by way of positional statements, vision and mission plans along with *Orders and Regulations* that govern the day-to-day outworking of Salvationist strategy. Finally, this model describes “Action Theology” (operative theology), in which Pallant highlights that actions carry meaning. TSA has a strong heritage, both helpful and unhelpful, in this arena. Our actions therefore require constant re-examination under the microscope of Authoritative, Academic and Approved Theology.[406] Such examination enables us to name, examine and realign any discrepancies in church practice or, in the vernacular of Swinton and Mowat, pursue revised forms of practice. It is in examining and engaging the dynamic interplay between theory, history, theology and experience, that new understanding and altered directions are forged.

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[404] In offering a critique of Pallant’s model, I would suggest that it is unhelpful to place the doctrine book and TSA covenant documents in the same context as scripture.

[405] *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine*, 6-7.

[406] Pallant, *To Be Like Jesus: Christian Ethics for a 21st Century Salvation Army*, 30-31.

Figure 2. Dean Pallant: “Four Voices Model” (Used with permission).

4.7 Qualitative Research and Practical Theology

Swinton and Mowat argue a complementarity and mutuality exists between qualitative research and practical theology. First, qualitative research is open-ended in nature and thereby facilitates a range of perspectives, methods and approaches for the exploration of the social world as people experience it.[407] Secondly, qualitative research facilitates new ways of seeing, knowing and understanding the world—there is an inherent dynamism which correlates with the dynamism of practical theology. Thirdly, there is a utility associated with qualitative research that aligns with the task of practical theology—both are concerned with delineating knowledge that is practically useful and transformative in nature. That is, the qualitative research process enables the collection of “culturally specific and contextually rich data,” that is vital for the ongoing health of institutions such as the church.[408] Qualitative research uses words as data and, as previously signalled, the words of people with complex disability are an essential

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[407] Swinton and Mowat, 27-28.

[408] Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 59.

component of this research. Making sense of that data also requires attention to the context from which they emanate.[409]

In her collaborative work on ecclesiology, practical theology and action research, Clare Watkins highlights the tension inherent in the painstaking processes of gathering qualitative data and considering it theologically.[410] Such processes have, in some spheres, called on a correlational approach.[411] The issue with seeking correlation is the tendency to separate out the spheres of heavenly matters and earthly matters. Conversely, seeking integration without bifurcation holds the potential to pursue wholeness of theological reflection in service of the whole church. That is, theological notions of transcendence are articulated through concrete practices that enable human beings to transcend their own finitude. Elaine Graham's work on non-legislative transforming practice echoes this conviction. She notes,

> In the face of uncertainty and Divine provisionality, Christian pastoral practices can still affirm some kind of (interim) truth and value by virtue of their location in the continuing life and work of the faith-community. The exact nature and purpose of ultimate reality may be cloaked in mystery; but at least a purposive and practising community meets to celebrate and realize the Divine possibility. It is within such a community that those who suffer may find support and healing, and through its celebrations and acts of compassion that healing and redemption may decisively be experienced and prefigured.[412]

Further to this, Watkins argues convincingly that, to treat the theory of theology and church practice in isolation from each other, is to suggest polarities where none should exist.[413] For Watkins, and for this research project, theological reflection and theological practice within a faith community are two sides of the same coin. All theological practice is driven by theological theory and both carry a sense of incompleteness.[414] As such, they call for the humility to engage in the conversation of theology rather than the finished work of theological enquiry. Precise norms for how to faithfully pursue the task

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[409] Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, *Successful Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide for Beginners* (London: Sage, 2013), 21.

[410] Clare Watkins, *Disclosing Church: An Ecclesiology Learned from Conversations in Practice* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), 6-7.

[411] David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978).

[412] Elaine E. Graham, *Transforming Practice: Pastoral Theology in an Age of Uncertainty* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 209.

[413] Watkins, 42-43.

[414] Ibid., 245.

have varied over the history of the church, as noted with John Wesley earlier and, as Watkins observes, remain a work in progress for the contemporary church.[415]

In bringing practical theology and qualitative research together, certain epistemological assumptions are held by the researcher. First of these is my identification as a Christian within the TSA. While I employ a posture of hospitality and respect toward other sources, methodologies and forms of knowledge, the *merging* of these with theology does both a disservice. I am seeking faithful co-habitation.[416] Further, as the researcher, I assume an ultimate dependence on God's grace and direction. In seeking to reflect critically on the faithfulness of the church, I also assume the interpretative illumination of the Holy Spirit, as in the world historically, presently and in the future.

4.8 Theoretical Framework

The essential dimensions of qualitative research include the pursuit of meaning and understanding, the researcher as primary agent of data collection, fieldwork, an inductive orientation and findings or recommendations that are richly descriptive in nature.[417] Qualitative research occurs within an interpretative paradigm that carries certain ontological and epistemological assumptions. These assumptions include the notions of inductive enquiry, interpretivism and reflexive knowledge.[418] These are discussed in more detail below.

Within the field of qualitative research, the current project embraces the notion of *big-Q* research.[419] In contrast to *small-q*, which is more aligned with scientific methods that incorporate reliability and statistical or numerical measures, big-Q research involves deep engagement with the data, is informed by theory and produces knowledge that is situated truth. Measuring rigour in this setting relies on engagement with the data. In contrast to small-q, the researcher is active in bringing insight to the research area.

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[415] Ibid., 7-8.

[416] John Swinton, "“Where Is Your Church?” Moving Towards a Hospitable and Sanctified Ethnography," in *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, ed. Pete Ward (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 86-88. Swinton discusses the limits of seeking correlation between theology and other disciplines whose theories are not neutral.

[417] Sensing, 57.

[418] Swinton and Mowat, 34-35.

[419] Gareth Terry and Nikki Hayfield, *Essentials of Thematic Analysis* (Washington: American Psychological Association, 2021), 9.

4.8.1 Inductive, Interpretivist and Reflexive

In the first instance, this research is inductive in nature—that is, the project does not begin with a hypothesis. Rather, it anticipates that a theory or framework will be formulated from within the data as the enquiry and analysis unfolds.[420] An iterative approach, particularly in reference to the data collected, means attention is required in relation to the non-linear nature of the enquiry. Checking and rechecking for meaning thus becomes an essential component of the process.[421]

Secondly, it utilises an interpretivist approach which facilitates the opportunity to understand subjective meaning. Human beings interpret their lives and situations in order to assign meaning to them.[422] In searching for deeper understanding, an interpretative approach seeks to move beyond merely observing human behaviour to actively seeking to understand human behaviour. Two significant implications follow—the boundary lines between researcher and the participants are less defined and the researcher, also involved as an active participant, becomes a "co-creator of the interpretative experience."[423]

Thirdly, the notion of reflexivity acknowledges the impossibility of the researcher as dislocated from the research field. More specifically, the researcher plays an active role in the research. Therefore, attention to personal positioning and ongoing reflection about said positioning throughout the research process is critical.[424] In terms of personal reflexivity, I have already indicated the personal values, beliefs and experiences that shape the research. In regard to epistemological reflexivity, I am cognisant of the way in which the shape and design of the research has influenced the research outcomes and findings.[425]

4.8.2 Philosophical Assumptions and Critical Realism

Qualitative research differs from quantitative research in that the former seeks to understand the experiences and situations of life and uncover their meaning, rather than objectively observe, or explain phenomena, as occurs in the latter.[426] Philosophical assumptions that frame this research include ontological assumptions, concerned with

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[420] Braun and Clarke, *Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide*, 10.
[421] Ibid., 70.
[422] Swinton and Mowat, 36.
[423] Ibid., 34.
[424] Braun and Clarke, *Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide*, 13-15.
[425] Swinton and Mowat, 56-59.
[426] Ibid., 36.

the nature of reality, and epistemological assumptions, concerned with how we know what we know, or what counts as knowledge.[427] Qualitative research assumes multiple realities; that is, my reality as the researcher is different to the reality of the interview participant. For example, themes developed in the research are drawn from different voices, living in different contexts and drawing on different experiences. In terms of epistemology, the knowledge generated comes from close encounters with the subjective experience of research participants.[428] In this sense, prolonged engagement with the participants in the interview process, following up after the interviews and ongoing immersion in the data, ensures that the distance between myself as researcher and participants is minimised.

Critical realism (realist and subjective), as a philosophical tradition, navigates a middle way between positivism, concerned with objective knowledge about the world (e.g., scientific method) and constructivism, which holds that meaning is socially constructed and theory dependent. This middle way holds that objective truth is constructed through subjective interpretations. Critical realism takes on a critical orientation and interest in the structures that enable or limit experience.[429] As Swinton and Mowat note, reality is real and accessible but occurs within an interpretative paradigm.[430] Or, as Terry and Hayfield note, a specific or underlying reality expressed by an interviewee is also mediated by numerous social realities related to the participant and the wider culture.[431]

Braun and Clarke note that critical realism proposes, “a material reality exists independent of our ideas about it, but that our experiences and representations of reality are mediated by culture and language.”[432] Critical realism thus holds together realism (which assumes the world is as it appears to be and can be accessed through our senses) and relativism (which assumes that truth cannot be accessed directly).[433] “Truth” is therefore contextual and perspectival. Critical realism posits that agency and social structures are real. In this sense, it facilitates the recognition of the lived experience of my research participants while also examining how their context, within TSA, both structures and limits that experience.[434]

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[427] Creswell and Poth, 20-21.
[428] Ibid., 21.
[429] Terry and Hayfield, 8.
[430] Swinton and Mowat, 36.
[431] Terry and Hayfield, 8-9.
[432] Braun and Clarke, *Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide*, 286.
[433] Ibid., 169.
[434] Ibid., 173.

4.8.3 Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke describe thematic analysis (TA) as a flexible and foundational method for answering a research question and identifying themes, noted as patterns of meaning, across a data set.[435] The nomenclature, “thematic analysis”, also refers to numerous understandings or iterations of TA.[436] Analysis and interpretation of the data in this research project has employed their more specific iteration of TA, “Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA).”[437]

RTA is a data analysis method theoretically congruent with qualitative interviews. It is also a method that is flexible in nature. This flexibility denotes the situated reality of the researcher, whose personal skill and engagement with the data contribute to the richness of the analysis and theme development.[438] RTA is also helpful in the context of smaller data sets, such as the 10 interviews and two focus groups in this project. Braun and Clarke note that RTA, from a critical realist perspective (discussed above), facilitates access to both situated and interpreted realities.[439] For example, data from interviews with participants in this research reflect their situated realities as persons living with complex disability and the world of TSA in which those realities exist and are examined. As the research does not begin with a hypothesis, RTA is useful for generating unexpected insights and producing analysis that leads to actionable outcomes.[440] As such, it is congruent with the purpose of the research to identify revised forms of practice in TSA if, and where, they might be indicated.

Braun and Clarke identify 10 key assumptions in the practice of RTA.[441] These aspects include researcher subjectivity which also involves a positive framing of my researcher “bias”. That is, my Christian faith, having a disabled child of my own, and noting TSA as my spiritual home, are openly acknowledged as aspects having some influence on the design, application and interpretations of the research data. Analysis, or interpretation, of the data cannot be held to be objective but it can produce rich and/or thick understandings which, in this instance, can bring new awareness to the practice of the church. Coding of the data begins with immersion in the text and purposeful ongoing reflection on the data. The content of the interview and focus group data has been

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[435] Braun and Clarke, *Successful Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide for Beginners*, 175.

[436] Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "One Size Fits All? What Counts as Quality Practice in (Reflexive) Thematic Analysis?," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 18, no. 3 (2021).

[437] Braun and Clarke, *Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide*, 4-24.

[438] Ibid., 11.

[439] Ibid., 171.

[440] Ibid., 261.

[441] Ibid., 8.

constantly revisited throughout the analysis and theme development. Themes, built from codes, have been actively produced by my efforts and reflect a pattern of shared meaning that responds to the research question. Understood as an “art,”[442] the creative process of data analysis also acknowledges my reflexivity (as discussed earlier), and theoretical assumptions, such as those already noted in association with practical theology, TSA and critical realism.

4.9 Elements of the Research Design

Prior to commencement of the research, permission was sought from the territorial leadership of TSA in New Zealand to conduct the research amongst its membership, officers or employees. Comprehensive protocols were developed that outlined the intentions, research process and potential participant groups, along with the risks and potential benefits of the research (see Appendix B). A comprehensive ethics process, managed through AUT’s Ethics Committee, preceded the commencement of the qualitative research segment of the project. In honouring the notion of partnership, I also consulted with a professional disabled person, not associated with me or TSA, to ensure the validity of the research design. His key recommendation was to include the option for significant others, not just parents, in relation to the second data set.

4.9.1 Confidentiality

There was an inherent tension associated with maintaining anonymity within a relatively small organisation. That is, the potential for research participants to be recognised was managed with the use of pseudonyms and the lack of specific identifying geographical or diagnostic detail within the body of the research text. Some participants indicated that they were unconcerned about being able to be identified. Others were concerned to a greater extent, particularly in the case where overt critique of TSA might form part of their responses. A transcriber, used for some of the transcription of recorded files, signed a confidentiality agreement.

4.9.2 Participant Recruitment

The recruitment of all participants followed the development of comprehensive protocols for all groups (see example, Appendix B). Circulation of the advertisement was enabled through the office of the Chief Secretary of TSA and through divisional executive assistants and corps offices throughout the four divisions within the New

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[442] Ibid.

Zealand geographical context. In the first stage of the enquiry, recruitment was for people with a complex disability to participate in an interview with the researcher, at a location convenient to the participant. When all 10 interviews were completed, attention turned to the second phase of the research, which involved co-ordinating two focus group discussions. The same process as noted above was employed to recruit Corps Officers for focus group one. For the second focus group, for which self-selection uptake was slower, a follow-up reminder letter was also sent to Heads of Department.

Recruitment was advertised for persons over the age of 18, who lived with a complex disability, or were a family member of someone with a complex disability. Actual participants' ages ranged from 21 years to 61 years. While it was noted that English speaking was necessary, it was also noted that communication devices and support people were welcome in the interview process. In the case of interview participants, a further requirement was that they had personally attended a Salvation Army congregational setting within the previous 2 years. For focus group one, the self-selecting officers needed to have been in a corps setting within the previous 2 years. No specific experience or association with people with complex disabilities was required. For focus group two, no specific ministry settings or association with disabled people was required.

When people responded to the advertisements, for either interview or focus group engagement, I forwarded an email with the "Participant Information Sheet" (see Appendix B), along with a 2-week timeframe for them to respond regarding their desire to participate in the research or not.

4.9.3 Research Participants

Recruitment for research participants was facilitated by an advertisement approved by both TSA and the ethics committee at AUT, as noted earlier. Interview participants were then self-selecting and drawn from every geographical area of New Zealand except Northland. Participants were located in both cities and provincial towns. One of the unintended limitations of the self-selecting process involved in the research was the lack of cultural diversity. All research participants were Pākehā. Five women and seven men took part in the interviews. The first focus group consisted of two men and five women. The second focus group comprised four women and one man.

With the exception of the last interview, all interviews took place in person. Due to the travel restrictions associated with COVID-19 in New Zealand in 2020, the final interview took place via videoconference (Zoom), following amended ethics approval. Focus Group one took place in person. Focus Group 2 was conducted via Zoom in light of the widespread geographical location of participants. Explanations were given and consent forms were signed prior to the commencement of each interview or focus group (see Appendix C).

Two interviews were conducted in support homes, five were conducted in private homes, and two in the Salvation Army corps building. One interview was conducted over Zoom as a result of the COVID-19 travel restrictions noted earlier. One interviewee had a parent present to help with clarifying and/or interpreting some complexity in speech phrasing. Two of the family interviews had both father and mother present for the interview. While partners had not been specified in the initial recruitment, I welcomed the willingness of both parents to be present at the interview. The person with the disability was not present in the parental/sibling interviews.

The first focus group was facilitated at a central Salvation Army corps building in Auckland. One of my research supervisors was present as an observer. Due to conflicting pastoral commitments and/or ill-health, two participants withdrew from focus group one, after initial scheduling. All participants in this focus group were located from within the larger metropolitan area of Auckland and all had been located within a pastoral setting within the previous 2 years, as required by the recruitment process.

In the second focus group, where the intention had been to gather views from personnel involved in mission support or with strategic and organisational roles, there was limited initial uptake of the invitation to participate. Anecdotal responses revealed that potential participants considered that they did not know enough about the subject of disability to comment—in spite of clear indications that disability experience was not necessary to the efficacy of this part of the enquiry process. The second focus group was conducted via Zoom due to ongoing COVID-19 concerns but also in light of the widespread geographical location of participants. Five participants in total attended this focus group with one participant arriving late to the conversation due to an emergency.

4.9.4 Participant Vulnerability

This research was also conducted in line with the National Ethical Standards for Disability Research in New Zealand. The Health and Disability Commission fosters awareness of ethical principles in relation to any research conducted with vulnerable communities.[443] In light of the specific needs, or potential vulnerability (understood as capacity to communicate, understand concepts or express views), of the interview participants with a complex disability, several steps were taken to manage the associated risk. First, “Easy Read” versions of participant information sheets, the consent form, and a shorter question schedule were developed. Secondly, all participants were offered the option to have a support person with them during the interview itself. Thirdly, communication devices were welcomed as part of the interview process. Fourthly, in light of the potential for the interview process to unearth difficult issues for the participant, access to support personnel in the form of counselling services at AUT were offered. Fifthly, during the consent process at the commencement of each interview, the researcher highlighted that the transcribed copy of the interview would be sent back to them for verification. At that point, they would have a month in which to ask for clarification of their answers during the initial interview or to make alterations. They were invited to ask a trusted person to help with that process if required.

Finally, I was continually cognisant of the potential power imbalance during the interview process. In an attempt to offset this, participants chose the setting for the interviews—the majority of which occurred in the interviewee’s home. One chose an office in her church building with her officer in the room for the introductory period of the interview. Regular breaks were offered and taken, and light food options were accessible on a low table. I reinforced throughout the interview that there were no right or wrong answers, that there was no requirement to answer every question, that it was an opportunity to share their own story. If tired, or sad, or confused, the interview could be stopped at any time. Expressions of my gratitude for their participation was a constant thread throughout the interview and in the follow-up email.

4.9.5 Data Collection

Swinton and Mowat note that interviews are an effective method of mining rich data between a researcher seeking meaning and a participant willing to share their experience.[444] Focus groups enable group interaction and synergy around the question(s) relayed by the researcher and can also facilitate the emergence of rich

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[443] National Ethics Advisory Committee, "Ethical Management of Vulnerability," New Zealand Government, accessed October 10, 2022. https://neac.health.govt.nz/national-ethical-standards/part-two/6-ethical-management-of-vulnerability/.

[444] Swinton and Mowat, 60.

data.[445] The goal of these two avenues of data collection was to identify redemptive and non-redemptive practices occurring in the thought and actions of each group of participants, with a view to analysing any points of connection or misunderstanding.

Data were collected in two ways. In the first instance, a total of 10 interviews took place from 25 October 2019 through to 17 June 2020. I conducted semi-structured interviews in locations chosen by each participant. A question schedule ensured continuity throughout interviews, although this was not applied in a rigid manner (see Appendix D). Five interviews were audio-recorded with persons who self-identified as living with a complex disability and a further five interviews were audio-recorded with a parent, sibling, or significant other of a person living with a complex disability. The interviews were between 1 hour and 2.5 hours in duration. This time differential occurred due to the employment of computer-generated communication software with one participant and two interviews where a husband and wife both opted to be part of the interview. As the interviews progressed, I was able to gain a preliminary sense of areas in which the participants experienced a sense of support, or lack thereof, from their engagement with Salvation Army congregations in New Zealand.

In the second instance of data-gathering, I facilitated two focus group discussions. The first was conducted with seven self-selecting Corps Officers from the Northern Division of TSA in New Zealand, hosted in person on 23 June 2020 at a corps hall in east Auckland. A further focus group had five self-selecting personnel from Divisional Missional staff, Children's Ministry staff, Officer Training staff and staff from the Communications team at Territorial Headquarters in Wellington and took place on 14 July 2020. Due to the varied geographical locations of these participants, the second focus group was conducted via Zoom.

4.9.6 Reflexive Journal

Field notes were made post each interview and data regarding demographics such as age, location and specific diagnoses are on private record. Due to the relatively small population base, the decision was made in consultation with participants, supervisors, and ethical guidelines not to reveal detailed participant information in this context. Reflexive journal[446] notes were also made after each interview and focus group and throughout the data coding and analysis process. Some of these occurred in the form of

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[445] Sensing, 120.

[446] Braun and Clarke, *Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide*, 19.

hardcopy notes and some as computer memos attached to interview transcripts throughout the coding/theme development process.

4.9.7 The Stages of Data Analysis

A data analysis plan was developed in consultation with both supervisors and framed around the six phases of RTA outlined by Braun and Clarke.[447] This analysis plan guided the process and was adapted as each stage of the plan was completed. Data analysis occurred using the same process across the 10 interviews and the two focus groups.

In the first of Braun and Clarke’s phases, familiarisation with the data set, the process of immersion in the data set began with listening to the recordings of the interviews. All sessions were audio-recorded on two devices. The data were then transcribed. As the researcher, I transcribed three interviews and employed an independent transcriber to complete the final seven. The transcriber signed a confidentiality agreement. Similarly, I transcribed one focus group discussion and employed the same independent transcriber to prepare the second focus group transcript. In this way, I was able to further familiarise myself with the contents and contours of the data in both settings. When the transcripts were completed, I printed out hard copies and further familiarisation occurred as each interview was read and notations made throughout.

As the interviews and focus group data were also stored as electronic Word files, I began employing memo and summarising techniques to facilitate code development.[448] In this second phase, coding, the entire data sets were coded. Initially, 120 codes were identified. Over time, this was narrowed to a total of 52 codes. The codes were described, text searches and queries were run on the codes and refining of the codes was also conducted via hand sorting and software.

In the third phase, clusters of codes were constructed into candidate or initial themes, focused on the data that appeared to address the research question. Ongoing reflection on the candidate themes occurred in conjunction with a postgraduate lecture I gave at Laidlaw College. Eleven initial themes were subsequently refined into six themes, each with three sub-themes that highlight important features of the theme.[449] In the fifth phase of the data analysis, these themes were given short names and concrete

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[447] Ibid., 36.
[448] Johnny Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (London: Sage, 2016).
[449] Braun and Clarke, *Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide*, 86.

descriptions, reviewed by both supervisors and wider colleagues. Finally, writing up the analysis has involved referring back to reflexive journaling, referring to the notes made in the earlier familiarisation, and the more formal work of Chapters 6 and 7.

Throughout the data analysis I have also used qualitative data management software (NVivo 12), to manage the data associated with the coding process and to maintain an audit trail. Although the database was comparatively small, the density of some of the transcripts made the use of software applicable, usefully helping me to manage and re-code sections of transcript, and refine codes, as the analysis continued.[450]

4.9.8 Validation of Data

Research validity was safeguarded through strategies also identified by Creswell and Poth. These included collaborating with professionals in the field of disability regarding key research decisions, generating thick descriptions which enable the reader of the research to determine transferability, having a prolonged engagement in the field and "member checking" through opportunity for participant feedback.[451] Each completed transcript was sent to the individual interview participant for their review and confirmation of its accuracy. The reliability of the study was also based on meticulous records regarding the data collection process. As the researcher, I maintained personal diaries noting all theoretical and practical developments as they arose, in consultation with both supervisors and via the electronic audit trail on NVivo, which recorded the process of establishing and refining the codes.

4.10 Methodological Limitations

The methodological limitations of this research included sampling restrictions, uncontrolled variables such as the COVID-19 pandemic and that fewer participants than I had hoped for joined Focus Group 2. Tim Sensing also highlights the difficulty associated with perceived "experts" in the field of enquiry. That is, members of the focus groups, as pastors or mission support personnel in TSA, may have been considered as expert in relation to interview participants who were drawn from some of the congregations they led.[452] It must also be noted that qualitative research is not understood as being widely transferable, as it does not generally seek broad-ranging, "one-size-fits-all" answers to complex questions. Instead, as Swinton and Mowat

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[450] Creswell and Poth, 208. Creswell and Poth review the advantages and disadvantages of such software.

[451] Ibid., 260.

[452] Sensing, 21.

comment, data are identified that enable “theoretical light to be cast on similar but different situations.”[453]

4.11 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter has identified the scope and design of the methodology, and theoretical assumptions and framework, that underpin this research. In the following chapter, the thesis turns to consider the second stage of the PTRM. In order to consider the challenge of the perceived gap in support for people with complex disabilities in Salvationist congregations in NZ, the chapter considers the historical and contemporary settings of Salvationist life, belief and practice.

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[453] Swinton and Mowat, 71.

Chapter 5 – *Te Ope Whakaora* (The Army that Brings Life)

At the moment, I think the Army's very welcoming, but they don't know much about inclusion. (Ian)

5.1 Introduction

To be an Army that brings life requires deliberate and sustained attention to the call of Catherine Booth, noted in Chapter 1. To better the future for people living with complex disability in Salvation Army congregations, it is necessary to disturb the present. Disturbing the present is one of the aims of this project. The second is to ensure that this disturbing informs future practice. In terms of TSA itself, Catherine was part of emerging Salvation Army history. How that history would unfold, and ultimately help or hinder the future, is obviously beyond her consideration.

Catherine and her husband, William, were students of scripture, along with Wesleyan and Holiness Revivalist theology. They were also contextually engaged with the people on their doorstep, the social issues of their day and the movement they founded. Now, 150 years later, their legacy remains—but to what degree is it disturbing the present and improving the future for people who live marginalised lives? In order to reflect on the efficacy of TSA's contemporary support practices, we must look back before we move forward. This chapter considers some of those historical dynamics in order to ascertain how they might contribute to the support of people with complex disabilities in Salvation Army congregations in New Zealand.

In Chapter 1, brief details of the structure and operational frameworks for Salvationist practice, both globally and locally, were outlined. Now, in order to answer the research question, *How are people with complex disability supported in Salvation Army congregations in New Zealand?*, attention is given to the historical narrative. This chapter will consider the emergence of TSA in Victorian England and New Zealand, key figures who informed its mission and ministry, biblical and doctrinal positions considered normative for Salvationist thought and practice, and contemporary mission imperatives, structures and operational processes. Such foundations will form a further quilted backdrop against which the lived experience of people with complex disabilities attending Salvation Army congregations will be noted in Chapter 6.[454]

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[454] Ibid., 19. Swinton and Mowat note, "…that all human practices are historically grounded and inherently value-laden…the forms of practice that we participate in are *theory-laden*."

5.2 The Origins of The Salvation Army

The genesis of TSA has been examined and documented by both internal and external historians.[455] Naturally, each record reflects the different lenses through which the original material has been viewed. This project is no different in that regard. Given that many contemporary beliefs, values, traditions, structures, practices and procedures can trace their lineage back to the early days of TSA, a review of their origins is important as I examine how this Salvation Army "DNA" might contribute to the support of people with complex disabilities in contemporary settings.

Broadly speaking, the "quasi-military denomination,"[456] now known as TSA, traces its inauguration to the East End of London in the latter half of the 19th century. William Booth, an ordained Methodist minister, and his wife Catherine, began their ministry as itinerant holiness revivalist preachers throughout England. As an ordained minister in the Methodist New Connexion, William's appointments occurred in association with the annual Conference. He had held a position as an itinerant evangelist for 3 years when, in 1857, the Conference appointed the Booths to the Halifax circuit—an appointment that involved ministry at a central church and oversight of others.[457] While the appointment meant a period of more settled domestic life for the growing family, William was not settled in pastoral ministry. Although he wanted to return to itinerant work, this would not occur within the context of the Methodist New Connexion. Some degree of antipathy towards him and his ministry was stirring within the Connexion.

William and Catherine had also begun to describe concern and frustration with the direction and management of the Connexion.[458] When a ministry compromise was suggested to the Booths at the Conference meeting of 1861, William's longing to pursue an iterant evangelistic vocation won the day and Catherine and William left the Methodist New Connexion. Offers of financial support and invitations to preach elsewhere soon followed. Having left Methodism, the Booths retained the spirit, if not

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[455] Norman H. Murdoch, *Origins of the Salvation Army* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1994); Robert Sandall, *The History of the Salvation Army*, vol. I (London: Thomas Nelson, 1947); Pamela J. Walker, *Pulling the Devil's Kingdom Down: The Salvation Army in Victorian Britain* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001); Arch Wiggins, *The History of the Salvation Army: 1886–1904*, vol. IV (London: Thomas Nelson, 1964); Murdoch; Sandall; Walker; Wiggins.

[456] David W. Taylor, *The Salvation Army, the Church, and the Churches: Like a Mighty Army?* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2014), 4.

[457] John Larsson, *Those Incredible Booths* (London: Salvation Books, 2015), 17.

[458] Roger J. Green, *Catherine Booth: A Biography of the Cofounder of the Salvation Army* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 115.

the letter,[459] of Wesleyan theology as the next stage of their ministry unfolded. Eventually, the family moved to London where William would "find his destiny," as the temporary preacher at a tent meeting in London's Mile End.[460]

Observing the poverty, hunger and destitution associated with life in London among the poor and working classes, William and Catherine, supported by local Christian business people, turned their attention to this "submerged tenth"[461] of English Society. At the time, England was a dominant power on the international stage. However, the aspirations and actions of the British Empire had not translated into economic prosperity or social security for all of its citizenry.[462] The industrialisation and urbanisation of the 18th and 19th centuries led people in two seemingly opposite directions—towards wealth or poverty.

Reform voices within this historical period were cognisant of this reality. For example, as part of the non-conformist and temperance movements, the Quakers introduced cocoa drinking as a practical alternative to the deprivation and misery caused by alcohol abuse. This social reform and working-class access to the experience of drinking chocolate, also reflected judgement on the decadence and perceived debauchery of the 18th century "Chocolate Houses." George Cadbury, a Quaker, found success in the cocoa essence business in the mid-19th century and built the family business around concern for production of quality product and attention to employee welfare.[463] He was also a member of the Anti-Slavery Society, echoing the work of William Wilberforce's earlier successful campaign against the British slave trade. The work of Elizabeth Fry in forming "The Association for the Improvement of Female Prisoners" involved inspection of prisons and advocating and lobbying for female prison reform. Raising awareness and promoting legislation on shorter working hours and child labour reforms was championed by the Earl of Shaftesbury.[464] Such reform movements indicate that the plight of the poor was not ignored in all quarters of English society. William Booth's moment of holy discontent emerged within this milieu of societal disparity. For example, William Booth argued that London's cab horses experienced better conditions

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[459] R. David Rightmire, *The Sacramental Journey of the Salvation Army: A Study of Holiness Foundations* (Alexandria: Crest Books, 2016).

[460] Henry Gariepy, *Christianity in Action: The International History of the Salvation Army* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 7.

[461] William Booth, *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (London: International Headquarters, 1890), 17-23.

[462] Ibid., 17.

[463] See https://www.quakersintheworld.org/quakers-in-action/270/George-Cadbury.

[464] John Pollock, *Shaftesbury: The Poor Man's Earl* (Oxford: Lion Publishing, 1985).

that some of its people. Those living in permanent poverty found a champion in William Booth and, in them, the Booths found a focus for their ministry that would eventually translate into a movement spanning the globe. By the year 2022, TSA would be working in 132 countries around the world.[465]

The Booths original work in the East End of Victorian London operated under the moniker, "The Christian Volunteers," and then, "The Christian Mission." Doctrines, rules, and conference minutes of the mission appear as early as 1870. "The Christian Mission-Deed of Constitution" dates back to 1878.[466] In it, Booth describes the purpose of the mission societies as providing opportunities for religious fellowship, and to bring under the influence of the gospel, those who were not in the habit of attending church. To this end, The Christian Mission was to preach in the open air, as well as in other social contexts such as tents, theatres and music halls. Two years later in 1880, by adding an Endorsement to the deed, the Booths transitioned the identity of "The Christian Mission" into "The Salvation Army." In consultation with close advisor, George Scott Railton, and eldest son, Bramwell Booth, and with the stroke of a pen, a mission group of volunteers for Christ became an army of soldiers for Christ.[467] Now, with a view to extending its operations, there was little sense in TSA of ever being off-duty—deployment could come at any time and to anywhere in the world—and a regulated, organised, and self-disciplined fighting force against evil was seen as the worthy goal of Salvationist identity.[468] The Army was soon to put in place further symbols, systems, and structures that reflected the military metaphor underpinning its new direction. William Booth explained the Army's self-understanding thus,

> We are a salvation people – this is our specialty – getting saved and keeping saved, and then getting somebody else saved, and then getting ourselves saved more and more, until full salvation on earth makes the heaven within, which is finally perfected by the full salvation without, on the other side of the river.[469]

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[465] The General of The Salvation Army, 38.
[466] John Larsson, *1929: A Crisis That Shaped the Salvation Army's Future* (London: Salvation Books, 2009), 347-52.
[467] *Orders and Regulations for Officers of the Salvation Army* (London: International Headquarters, 1997), 50. Regarding the present Constitution, on 1 August 1980, "The Salvation Army Act 1980" came into force. Earlier Deed Polls and the previous Acts (1931, 1965, and 1968) were revoked or repealed with the principal terms of The Salvation Army's Constitution now contained in the one document.
[468] Taylor, 71.
[469] William Booth, *Salvation Soldiery: A Series of Addresses on the Requirements of Jesus Christ's Service* (London: Salvation Army International, 1890), 15.

In terms of this thesis, it can be said that if the founding vision of TSA included a passion for providing opportunities for religious fellowship, social reform, and enabling the saving of individual souls, then there is historical precedent for attention to salvific ministries that attend to the individual, the faith community, and broader society. People living with complex disabilities, their families, their pastors, and the church and societal structures that support them, all fall within this remit. They are communal beings, and individual souls, like all others, whose inclusion, welfare, and salvation is therefore a matter of extreme import to all Salvationist endeavour. Booth declared that getting people saved was the Army's specialty. The character, parameters, and tensions inherent in that claim will be discussed later in the chapter. Catherine's preaching called for an aggressive approach to this saving of souls. She challenged, "Real Christianity is, in its very nature and essence, aggressive."[470] Jarring as the word aggressive might sound to contemporary ears, essentially her continuing call is to a proactive orientation towards mission.

5.3 The Military Metaphor Unfolds

William and Catherine Booth's Army emerged in the age of British Imperialism. In the face of the Crimean War (1853–56), the Indian Rebellion (1857–58), and concern over the possibility of a French invasion, local attitudes towards British Soldiers moved from toleration to respect.[471] Andrew Eason suggests that, while drawing conclusions regarding TSA's contribution to imperialism requires a nuanced approach, there is little doubt that it drew on the popular militaristic milieu of its context.[472] The systems and symbolism of the military metaphor enabled early Army pioneers to structure TSA in specific ways. Uniforms, flags, music, and printed communications such as *War Cry,* made Salvationists visible on the street and united around a common purpose and shared identity.

The mission of TSA could not have been enacted without mobilised soldiers. It is difficult to ascertain how many of these soldiers ministered while living with a disability. Marian Booth, the sixth child born to Catherine and William, certainly did. Experiencing seizures at 11 months of age, some degree of brain trauma resulted in subsequent intellectual disability. Her soldiership was witnessed by the public wearing

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[470] Booth, 163.
[471] Andrew M. Eason, "Religion in an Age of Empire: The Salvation Army and British Imperialism, 1878–1914," *Journal of Religious History* 45, no. 1 (March 2021): 94.
[472] Ibid., 95.

of her Army uniform, indicating that disability was not seen as a barrier to belonging in TSA.[473] Having said that, Catherine's reflections regarding her daughter do indicate some attitudes reflective of her Victorian context, and her explication on the "useful" aspects of Marian's subsequent ministry indicates a degree of utilitarianism.[474]

Formalisation of the process of enrolling soldiers occurred in 1882, with the requirement that each sign the *Articles of War* (now known as *The Soldier's Covenant*).[475] Again, statistics indicating how many people with disabilities signed these articles of war are not available. I have argued elsewhere that these articles require a significant degree of cognitive processing and are therefore, arguably, at least in their current state, beyond the comprehension of some people living with intellectual impairment.[476] To what degree a potential soldier must demonstrate comprehension of the articles is not clearly delineated. Both the urgency of the mission to the disenfranchised, and the sense of waging a war against sin in all its dimensions, contributed to the development of a strong narrative opposed to nominalism within the context of the Army. That is, soldiers were charged with actually doing something to support and ease the burdens of their neighbours. Underpinning this approach was an understanding of all humanity as created in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27). Adoption into the Kingdom of God brought with it responsibility towards one's brothers and sisters in Christ (John 13:34-35). Sitting in a comfortable pew, while others remained disenfranchised, found no traction in Booth's early Army.

Foot soldiers needed leaders and attention turned to the more formal training of leadership in 1879-80. In 1880, a training establishment for 30 women opened in London. Similar training options opened for men. No statistics are available to indicate how many people with disabilities were accepted into these formal training settings. The training period subsequently expanded from 6 to 9 months before newly commissioned officers were sent to outposts across the world.[477] The leadership structure of TSA also found its origins within the military metaphor. A hierarchy of ranks, reflective of the military metaphor and the imperialism of the time, was set in place for full-time leaders.

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[473] Coralie M. Bridle, "What Must I Think to Be Saved? A Study of Cognitive Impairment, Conversion and Citizenship in the Salvation Army" (Master's Thesis, Laidlaw Graduate School, 2016), 49-52.

[474] *The Diary and the Reminiscences of Catherine Booth* (Brisbane: Camp Hill Productions, 2005), 94. Catherine, writing about her daughter Marian, noted, "She can manage a baby, educate a child, or make the little ones generally comprehend and accept salvation. In this work she bids fair to be, if spared, very useful."

[475] See Appendix F.

[476] Bridle.

[477] Gariepy, 20.

"Orders and Regulations" soon emerged for both soldiers and commissioned officers. Broadly speaking, orders and regulations covered topics as diverse as conditions for membership in the Salvation Army, how to conduct oneself as a soldier or officer and matters of health and hygiene.

As already noted, a formal constitution had been implemented in 1878, which registered the change of name from "The Christian Mission" to "The Salvation Army," soon after. The deed outlined the 11 doctrines of the Army, while also naming William Booth as the General. In so doing, full autocratic control of the movement moved into his hands. His succession plan, namely to pass the leadership mantle to whomever he, as General, chose as his successor, would reach a point of contest in 1929 when, in the face of General Bramwell Booth's ill-health, the first High Council of TSA would elect Commissioner Edgar J. Higgins as the third General. Constitutional reforms followed, which passed into English law as "The Salvation Army Act" of 1931. The three major reforms of the Act ensured that future Generals would be elected, their retirement age was fixed, and all properties and capital assets of TSA would be held by a trustee company rather than by the General him/herself.[478] The limits of an autocracy, if not the difficulties associated with a hierarchical system, found some safeguards within these measures.

To manage the outreach and work of The Salvation Army, national, regional and local boundaries were established, drawing yet again on the organising principal of the military metaphor that Booth and his close advisers had seized upon. In this instance, territories, divisions, and corps emerged and, to this day, provide the hierarchical, communication, and organisational management structure of TSA. In 1878, the Army consisted of 57 stations (later named "corps").[479] By 1887, the Army had expanded to 5,684 officers and 2,262 corps.[480] In the year 2022, this had increased to 16,993 active officers, 330 auxiliary captains, and 14,597 corps, outposts or recovery churches around the world.[481] Each corps was understood as an Army operational setting in which preaching, fellowship, worship, and support for broader societal engagement was facilitated for, and by, its membership. William Booth, in one of his messages to soldiers, noted that the Army's Anti-Suicide Bureau engaged with 50 men and women who had reported their inclination towards suicide as a result of having no friends and

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[478] The General of The Salvation Army, 21.
[479] Gariepy, 17.
[480] Wiggins, 184.
[481] The General of The Salvation Army, 40.

feeling lonely. Booth called for a deeper "heart union" with people and saw the corps setting as a place where this should happen. He counselled,

> Yet a Corps ought to be, to all intents and purposes, a real spiritual family. Every Soldier on its Roll should regard his Comrades as brothers and sisters, not only in name but in practice.[482]

Orders and Regulations issued in 1878 encouraged the corps officer to gather together groups of 20 or so converts and, after explaining the history, doctrine and systems of the Army, to enrol them. The enrolment signalled co-operation with the Officer to go about calling the village occupants to salvation.[483] It must be noted that there was a degree of fluidity to the "settled" nature of these corps settings. Arch Wiggins, for example, notes that corps sprung up quickly in the towns and cities between 1886 and 1904;[484] however, they disappeared again just as quickly. Nevertheless, it was in these settings that Booth's converts were to find a place of welcome, fellowship, ministry preparation, discipleship and holiness teaching. Subsequently, for the purposes of this current project, it is the corps setting that will be examined in relation to people with complex disabilities.

5.4 The Quest for a Place of Belonging

William and Catherine Booth could not settle, or find what we might now call, "a place of belonging," for either themselves or their converts, within the mainstream churches of their day. The reasons for this broadly reflect stylistic disconnections between the new converts and the more formal expression of religious fellowship represented by middle class churches and their clergy.[485] While Booth had no intention to set up another denomination, his converts were not wanted by the existing church and the means of obstruction were quite deliberate in some settings. For example, some Methodist churches introduced "pew rents," as a means of erecting barriers against admission for the poor.[486]

The Booths' converts, in the main, came directly from the streets and beer tents of darkest England. They were unkempt and uncouth and were not easily acclimatised to

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[482] Booth, *The Founder's Messages to Soldiers: During Years 1907–1908*, 6.
[483] Robert Sandall, *The History of the Salvation Army: 1878–1886*, vol. II (London: Thomas Nelson, 1950), 53.
[484] Wiggins, 184.
[485] The Salvation Army was not the only evangelistic movement taking on a militaristic identity (e.g., The Church Army, Boys and Girls Brigades, the Rally movement in New Zealand).
[486] Gariepy, 8.

the more refined nature of the typical church setting. While William and Catherine advised their converts to pursue church attendance after their conversion, stigma associated with their previous lifestyle, coupled with the undeniable class system operational within English society, made this difficult. Allegiance to William Booth grew amongst his convert constituency and religious services were hosted in establishments as varied as sheds attached to a pigsty and bowling alleys.[487]

The Salvation Army and its membership did not experience a universal sense of welcome in the homes or on the streets of London. Persecution in various forms would follow the movement for years.[488] "Skeleton Armies" emerged in the early 1880s, that mocked and mimicked the insignia and message of the Army. While the opposition came from all spheres of society, Henry Gariepy highlights a significant unifying thread —the perceived threat arising from anything, or anyone, operating outside the norm. He writes,

> The pattern of violence that stalked Booth's Army for thirty years was in the centuries-old tradition of opposition to anything deviating from the norm.[489]

Operating outside preconceived or socially delineated "norms" is a difficult space to inhabit. While the opposition to members and the institution of TSA described above does not speak directly to the situation of people living with complex disability today, it does highlight the experience of isolation and alienation that accompanies people who live outside those preconceived, or socially delineated, "norms." Disturbance to patterns of being and behaviour deemed normative causes individual and structural unrest.

The Booths and TSA became a thorn in the side of both Victorian culture and the church establishment. Speaking in the face of the perceived norms of the day, the Army challenged systems and structures that it argued were contributing to the ongoing marginalisation of the submerged tenth. With the support of a quasi-military entity, this vulnerable group became more empowered, visible and vocal. By way of street meetings, public campaigns and local marches, the Army was unafraid to challenge the normative assumptions about what church should look like, who it should include, and how it should go about its gospel business. Bramwell Booth signalled,

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[487] Green, 160.
[488] Gariepy, 29.
[489] Ibid.

> We were fighting for freedom to proclaim the same Saviour whom they honoured. We were a menace to the 'comfortable' worship of the day…Ours was a practical faith. It appealed to the common mass. It offered a spiritual charter to the ecclesiastically disenfranchised. It gave its message through the mouths of quite 'vulgar' people – mechanics, domestic servants, factory girls, farm labourers.[490]

Therefore, it can be argued that the early Salvation Army was prepared to operate outside the perceived conventions of what church should look like, how it should operate and whom it should incorporate. It challenged the norms of the day arguing, in word and deed, that the ecclesiastically disenfranchised must have a place at the table (Luke 14:12-14).

5.5 Soup, Soap and Salvation

During the years 1870–1874, the then Christian Mission set up soup kitchens to feed the poor. Nourishing food was provided at a small cost to the poor.[491] That is, TSA was not operating a charity model of support. While the kitchens themselves did not stay open beyond 1874, due to insufficient funds, the notion of feeding a person, enabling them to clean themselves up, and then attending to the person's soul, underpinned the approach of the early Army towards social engagement.

A direct quote from William Booth regarding soup, soap and salvation is not on record. However, indications of its use can be established as early as 1884. Later, in an interview in 1927 between Bandmaster Emil Soderstrom and John Philip Souza in Chicago, Souza recalled a conversation with General Booth in which he reportedly said, "When The Army picked up a man they first offered him Soup, then Soap, and finally Salvation."[492] The Skeleton Armies mentioned previously were both vocal and visual in their opposition to the impact that TSA was having on the streets and in their pubs. For example, TSA's slogan of "Soup, Soap, and Salvation" was met with a skeleton army banner calling society towards "Beef, Beer, and Bacca."[493] Slogans that capture the essence of a phenomenon, historical moment, or sociological reality have a way of imprinting themselves on human consciousness. In the context of this thesis, Booth's reference to soup, soap and salvation, is imprinted on contemporary minds and will be considered in more depth in Chapter 6.

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[490] Ibid., 31.

[491] Green, 247.

[492] See https://archives.salvationarmy.org.nz/sites/default/files/files/Bfile_fieldAtype/soup_soap_and_salvation_-_research_paper_july_2021.pdf , 8.

[493] Ibid., 7.

5.6 Challenging Society on Behalf of the Powerless

The social work of TSA, while existing prior to 1890, as noted in the examples above, came into more clarity and focus with the publication of William Booth's *Darkest England Scheme.*[494] The inclination and capacity of the early Salvation Army to challenge and address social alienation can be attested to by numerous examples. One example is the "Purity Campaign," which occurred during the early to mid-1880s and the other is the campaign to eliminate toxic matchstick production. Both campaigns centred around addressing social structures, societal attitudes, and working conditions, which directly undermined any sense of abundant life for England's submerged tenth.

Organised rescue homes for young women trying to escape a life of prostitution emerged in the Army's narrative around 1881. This followed the practical response of the Converts Sergeant at Whitechapel Corps, Mrs Cottrill, to a young country girl lured into working in a London brothel. Beneath the veneer of respectability, that covered Victorian society, lurked an alarming lack of protections for its most vulnerable citizens—poor young females. Prostitution was common in Victorian England and girls as young as 12 found themselves sold into prostitution by poverty-stricken parents.[495] While attention was subsequently paid to procuring rescue homes, TSA joined by sympathetic journalist W.T. Stead and Catherine Booth, were about to wage war on the systems and structures that facilitated this sinister trade.

In 1875, the age of consent was 13 years. Recommendations by the House of Lords to raise it failed three times in the House of Commons, during the years 1875 to 1885.[496] This proved unacceptable to the Booths and their friends. A plan was devised and implemented to prove how easily entrapment occurred.[497] Public exposure of this criminal behaviour occurred through a series of articles which appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette*.[498] The first article by W. T. Stead, entitled "The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon," appeared on 6 July 1884. Public meetings were held to maintain pressure on members of Parliament who had failed to protect the rights and well-being of their young female population. Catherine Booth lobbied the Prime Minister and Queen Victoria. TSA presented a petition to the House which carried 393,000 signatures. On

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[494] Booth, *In Darkest England and the Way Out*.
[495] Green, 248.
[496] Ibid., 250.
[497] Ibid., 247-65. See Green for a wider perspective on the details related to this public campaign.
[498] Robert Sandall, *The History of the Salvation Army: 1883–1953 Social Reform and Welfare Work*, vol. III (London: Thomas Nelson, 1955), 32.

14 August 1885, the bill finally carried and the age of consent was raised to 16 years. While this example does not directly reflect the experience of people living with a complex disability, it does highlight the proactive orientation of TSA towards governments, social structures, and societal attitudes, that undermine the well-being, flourishing, protection, and human rights of vulnerable people.

The second example of socio-political intervention by TSA involved working conditions in the factories of Victorian England. These were characterised by low wages, long hours and heavy workloads. Such were the conditions for the young women employed by the Bryant and May Match Factory in East London.[499] During this period of time, social awareness regarding factory working conditions was beginning to emerge. Labour disputes, related to employment conditions and the undercutting of wages, highlighted the developing activism of the day. In 1888, the "Matchwomen's Strike" alerted the public in general, and TSA in particular, to both the poor working conditions and the health consequences of working with the poisonous white phosphorous associated with making matchsticks. Exposure to the substance led to a debilitating condition known as "Phossy Jaw." An article in the "Darkest England Gazette" decried the pursuit of profit over the well-being of workers.[500] Women on the production line in these factories suffered baldness and necrotic bone decay with devastating consequences.[501]

In this instance, and inspired by Frank Smith, TSA moved to provide an alternative source of employment and an alternative product—both of which were intended to safeguard the well-being of the vulnerable workers. Produced and marketed as "Lights in Darkest England," the factory, and subsequent consumer campaign, sought to encourage all Salvationists to be socially aware and committed to practical support in the form of purchasing these safe matches rather than the cheaper, but lethal, alternatives. Over time, the campaign met with diminishing returns. In truth, then, as now, the financial competition afforded by mass production ultimately proved insurmountable for the Army. However, in this example and the earlier purity campaign, Salvationists were encouraged to protest and dismantle systems that shackled others. If TSA were zealous advocates for vulnerable young women, and working

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[499] See https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/about-us/international-heritage-centre/international-heritage-centre-blog/matches-and-morals.

[500] The Salvation Army, "Death in the Phosphorus," *The Darkest England Gazette*, November 18, 1893.

[501] See https://story.salvationarmy.org.

women whose labour led to ill-health, could they be zealous advocates for disabled people in the 21st century?

It is prudent to note that the pursuit of these socially transformative initiatives was a collaborative effort and also that they caused William Booth some concern. From these early days, there emerged a tension around the focus of the Army's core business. That is, should the Army focus on saving souls, or spend time and money on mounting social campaigns?[502] A shift in Booth's perspective is detected, by some scholars, after the death of his wife Catherine in October 1890 and with the publishing of his book, *In Darkest England and the Way Out,* the same year.[503] The essence of the shift can be described as a move from an individual responsibility perspective—that is, a total focus on personal sin and salvation—to a more systems and structures responsibility perspective.[504] The Army began to assert that poor personal choices flowed as a direct result of systemic and structural indifference to the humanity of people in the slums of England. From this point on, work in the sociological, economic and political realms, alongside the individual, became a bifocal feature of Salvation Army ministry.

5.7 The Wesleyan Influence

As noted earlier, William Booth initially began his ministry within the Methodist New Connexion. The influence on the Booths, of John Wesley, in particular, and Methodism in general, is well established. It must also be noted that William and Catherine owed a debt of personal and professional formation to the preaching and teaching of holiness revivalists such as James Caughey, Charles Finney and Phoebe Palmer. While they also influenced the development of the Booths' doctrinal and theological perspectives, it was John Wesley who loomed large in the Booths' formation and eventual missional outlook. William wrote, "I worshipped everything that bore the name of Methodist. To me there was one God, and John Wesley was his prophet."[505]

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[502] *The Letters of William and Catherine Booth* (Brisbane: Camp Hill, 2003), 364-65. William's concerns are shared in a letter to Catherine, " I am sure our work has materially suffered by our attention being taken from it to give the other; we may have been paid back to a certain extent, and in the long run much good may be done, but I thoroughly believe in "Salvation" being a panacea for the world's sins and sorrows, and that while there are other medicines that look in the same direction, the largest amount of good can be accomplished, with the least expenditure of time and money, by simply getting the people's souls saved and keeping them saved."

[503] Sandall, *The History of the Salvation Army: 1883–1953 Social Reform and Welfare Work,* 63-74.

[504] David Malcolm Bennett, ""In Darkest England": Whose Scheme Was It?," in *Darkness and Deliverance: 125 Years of the 'in Darkest England' Scheme*, ed. Matt Seaman (Nambour: Chaordic Creative, 2016), 49.

[505] Frederick De Latour Booth-Tucker, *The Life of Catherine Booth: The Mother of the Salvation Army,* vol. 1 (London: The Salvation Army, 1892), 52.

The Booths' ministry unfolded during the second evangelical awakening that occurred in the United States of America in 1858 and moved across the Atlantic to the United Kingdom in 1859. John Wesley's ministry began a century earlier during the first evangelical awakening that emerged in Germany, the British Isles, and the American colonies. The influences of his upbringing, membership of "the Holy Club" during his time at Oxford University, ordination in The Church of England, missionary journey to Georgia to preach to the indigenous peoples, and engagement with the Moravians, left him with a troubled soul that would eventually lead to his attempts to reform the Anglican Church.

John Wesley moved from what we might call a nominalist approach to his faith and ministry, following the series of events signalled above, which eventually led to his "heart-warming experience" at Aldersgate in 1738. A sense of personal divine witness, holy purpose and assurance followed. Subsequently, a preaching ministry unfolded that saw him traverse the English countryside on horseback, preaching an evangelical message of salvation and conversion to the poor. Responding to the invitation and the example of his old Oxford friend, George Whitefield, Wesley began to preach in the open air to the disenfranchised colliers of Bristol.[506]

The Methodist revival had begun, and Methodist "societies" formed throughout the country. Wesley, like the Booths, was not concerned with setting up a new denomination. To his mind, he and his societies were operating as a renewing influence within the Anglican Church. However, the Methodist societies proved to be the space where his converts found their experience of salvation more easily expressed and supported. As noted previously, these converts were poor and working class. Compassion for the poor would mark out Wesley's ministry. Howard Synder notes his personal and ministry orientation,

> …I love the poor, and in many of them find pure genuine grace unmixed with folly and affectation…If I might choose, I should still preach the gospel to the poor.[507]

He established a headquarters for his work at The Foundry, a remodelled building that included a chapel, meeting hall, dispensary, book room, free school and a shelter for widows. Interestingly, plain benches accommodated all of the attendees rather than the

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[506] Howard A. Snyder, *The Radical Wesley & Patterns for Church Renewal* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1980), 32-33.
[507] Ibid., 49.

standard church pews that, a century later, would be available to Booth's converts at an insurmountable rental. Further initiatives included the establishment of an apothecary for the distribution of free medicine, the purchase of houses for widows, and a small loans scheme for industrious converts trying to establish themselves in business.[508] Along with other reformers of the time, he also advocated for prison reform and the abolition of slavery. In reflecting on John Wesley's Methodism, Kenneth Carder notes the following orientation which, I suggest, holds valuable insight for contemporary ministry amongst people with complex disability,

> Methodism began as a movement *of* the poor, *for* the poor, *by* the poor, and *with* the poor. Failure to be in friendship and ministry with the poor, the imprisoned, and the vulnerable people of the world is a betrayal of the gospel as communicated through the Wesleyan tradition.[509]

As an ordained minister steeped in the Anglican tradition, Wesley did affirm an Arminian perspective particularly in the context of the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. The Booths would also draw on this understanding. Wesley argued that God *willed* the salvation of all of humanity and that humanity had sufficient freedom of will to choose or deny God's gift of divine grace. No-one therefore existed beyond the redemptive reach of the gospel.

In the believer, Wesley understood sanctification, or holiness, followed justification. That is, justification pardons the sinner and, in Christ, affords them a new standing before God. Sanctification meant that, in Christ, converts had a new nature. In this sense, forgiveness of sin *and* deliverance from sin became possible. Wesley's view on Christian perfection is made clearer in a letter written to Dorothy Furly, on 15 September 1762,

> Certainly sanctification (in the proper sense) is 'an instantaneous deliverance from all sin,' and includes 'an instantaneous power then given always to cleave to God.' Yet this sanctification (at least, in the lower degrees) does not include a power never to think an useless thought nor ever speak an useless word. I myself believe that such a perfection is inconsistent with living in a corruptible body; for this makes it impossible 'always to think right.' While we breathe we shall more or less mistake. If, therefore, Christian perfection implies this, we must not

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[508] Victor A. Shepherd, *Mercy Immense and Free: Essays on Wesley and Wesleyan Theology*, vol. 1 (Toronto: Clements Academic, 2010), 240.

[509] Kenneth L. Carder, "What Difference Does Knowing Wesley Make?," in *Rethinking Wesley's Theology for Contemporary Methodism*, ed. Randy L. Maddox (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 28.

> expect it till after Death. I want you to be all love. This is the perfection I believe and teach.[510]

The shape of that love is Jesus. For Wesley, holiness was a matter of both the heart and the life. That is, our inner intentions and dispositions match our outer actions and behaviours. One experiences a self-forgetful love of God and neighbour. Therefore, to love in the shape of Jesus is to bring alignment between thought and practice. Such an alignment renders one absorbed with doing God's will.[511]

Following the experience at Aldersgate, Wesley made a subtle shift in his approach to theology. While his training at Oxford and in the Anglican ministry ensured he was well versed in theological matters, Wesley's propositions sought to ensure that doctrine and the outworking of said doctrine were consistent. Thomas Langford notes that we are indebted to Wesley's theological method which resisted any severance between theory and practice.[512] Wesley's appeal to a religion of the heart, signalled his conviction of the experiential dimensions of a living faith. God gave power to enable the believer to cleave to Godself. A personal relationship with God was possible and human experience would always confirm biblical truth.

Wesley's organisation of his converts into societies and classes led to an active employment of laymen as preachers and ministry assistants. While he did not call them "ministers," in the sense of offering the sacraments, nonetheless, his converts were actively and enthusiastically engaged in ministry. This occurred during an age where the established church might be considered to have retreated into a somewhat bland existence concerned with church decorum and proper behaviour rather than religious zeal.[513] Wesley's instigation of societies and classes gave opportunity for all converts to witness to their experience, provide pastoral care and develop inner discipline—there were to be no pew warmers here either. In Wesley's schema, the laity were called to active and accountable ministry. Discipleship formation could not wait for the visit of the ordained minister. The universality of God's grace meant that all were called to participate in the mission of God, within certain somewhat fixed boundaries. Such perceptions carried weight with Catherine Booth, who a century later would affirm of TSA,

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[510] *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, vol. IV (London: The Epworth Press, 1931), 188.
[511] Shepherd, 240.
[512] Thomas A. Langford, "John Wesley and Theological Method," in *Rethinking Wesley's Theology for Contemporary Methodism*, ed. Randy L. Maddox (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1998), 47.
[513] Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 332.

> Yes, thank God, we are teaching the Churches that others besides clergymen, ministers, deacons and elders can be used for the salvation of men. The multitudes have too long been left to these. As a clergyman said to me the other day, "There are 35,000 souls in my parish, what can one do?" What indeed! Set the carpenters and the washerwomen onto them, saved and filled with the Spirit![514]

John Wesley did not personally separate from the Church of England prior to his death in 1791. However, the Methodist Church in America became a distinct denomination in 1784 and the English Methodists moved to separation from the Anglican Church, after the death of Wesley.[515] Movements, by their very nature, are dynamic entities. A century later, Methodism had evolved in directions beyond its origins. However, the Wesleyan legacy was to prove a powerful blueprint for the Booth ministry a century later.

5.8 The Holiness Revivalism Influence

The Booths were also indebted to the American holiness revivalism that occurred in the early to mid-19th century and subsequently gained traction throughout Britain. The holiness campaigns, preaching, and writings of James Caughey, Charles Finney and Phoebe Palmer, would all prove influential on William and Catherine and, subsequently on the theology and practice of TSA.

Itinerant American evangelist, James Caughey, visited Britain between 1841 and 1847. His teaching on Wesleyan holiness, along with his straightforward style, appealed to William Booth.[516] An influential aspect of Caughey's ministry was its non-sectarian approach—his evangelistic campaigns were organised without reference to the mainstream church and garnered criticism related to his revivalist techniques. Accusations of manipulation by use of decoy penitents and miraculous knowledge dogged the American Methodists. While some testified to his remarkable ministry, others were not so enamoured. Eventually, the Conference asked for him to be recalled and he returned to the States in 1847. Like reformers before and after him, Caughey came to know that disturbing the present was not a universally welcome strategy.

Phoebe Palmer, along with her husband Walter, were lay evangelists. Their ministry had begun in what became known as "Tuesday Holiness Meetings" in their home in New

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[514] Catherine Booth, *The Salvation Army in Relation to Church & State* (London: The Salvation Army International Headquarters, 1889), 75.

[515] Shelley, 340.

[516] George Scott Railton, *Twenty-One Years Salvation Army* (London: Salvation Army, 1886), 8.

York. In 1859, they began a speaking tour throughout England. It was Phoebe who took the leading role in terms of preaching. Her commitment to the ministry of women would lay the foundations for Catherine Booth's own public ministry and the Army's early commitment to the preaching and teaching ministry of women. Palmer's right to preach subsequently came under attack from an independent minister, The Reverend Arthur Augustus Rees of Sunderland.

In defence of Palmer, Catherine Booth would respond by producing a pamphlet, "Female Teaching" which defended the principle of female public ministry.[517] Phoebe Palmer moved holiness revivalism towards a new interpretation of Wesley's perfectionism. Wesley had noted entire sanctification as a second work of grace—a critical point in a journey towards growth. The Palmers were to hone in on the immediacy and completeness of this second blessing.[518] Employing "Altar Theology," the notion of the "shorter way," and the duty of testifying, or witnessing to one's reception of God's universal gift of atonement, were themes in Palmer's theology that would subsequently influence the Booths and TSA.

Charles Finney, eventual Professor at Oberlin College, engaged with Wesleyan theology after 10 years within a New York pastorate, where the need for holy living amongst his people exercised his mind. Introducing new measures of revivalism in America, he travelled to England in 1849 where his lectures were to influence William and Catherine Booth who later incorporated such measures as the penitent form into the life and practice of TSA. Finney's work and writing on holy living, the baptism and work of the Spirit, and consecration of the human will, were features of a slightly different understanding of Christian holiness than that espoused by John Wesley. A distinction emerged here between a Wesleyan understanding of human moral ability as a gift of God's prevenient grace and the Holy Spirit's regenerating power in the believer's heart, and Finney's understanding of the Spirit's role in moral persuasion or changing the intention of the will. That is, for Finney, the focus of Christian holiness was the human will. Human freedom and human responsibility were tethered. Desiring holiness was insufficient—sanctification required a deliberate consecration of the will. The sanctifying baptism of the Holy Spirit, received by faith, empowered the believer to

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[517] Green, 125.
[518] Rightmire, 111-13.

live a holy life in the present—thus, moral reform was possible in the present.[519] Charles Finney's autobiography was recommended reading for early Salvationists.[520]

For the Booths, spiritual restoration and social renewal went hand in hand. While noting that the holiness revivalism that the Booths espoused held strong threads of an individualistic, soul-saving and personal-discipline focus, David Taylor helpfully notes the more global characteristics of the approach, writing,

> Holiness revivalism is noted for an emphasis upon social justice, upon the dignity of human beings, whether slaves requiring emancipation, women requiring affirmation in Christian ministry and leadership or homeless alcoholics requiring acceptance, love and rehabilitation.[521]

Here, we note a further thread in Army foundations that might prove efficacious for people living with complex disability. That is, the holiness message that underpins its identity speaks to emancipation in this life as well as the next. The dignity of human beings, espoused in holiness teaching, is inclusive of all human beings. The perfect love of which I spoke earlier is love that moves out into action. Perfect love is to act for the benefit of the other. Therefore, it can be said that there is historical precedent within TSA for a pursuit of measures that bring people with disability beyond a submerged position within the church and broader society. Further, ministry was not the purview of a select few. In pursuing the right of women to preach and the exercise of redemptive ministry through the voice of the laity *and* the ordained—all of these holiness revivalist threads potentially empower the voice and ministry of those living with a disability. The offering of a sanctified life, not a "normative" body, is the condition of ministry.

5.9 Salvation Army Doctrine

It was mentioned earlier that slogans and pithy summaries often lead more easily to the embedding of knowledge into human thought and practice. The Army described in the opening pages of this chapter did not lend itself to a prolonged contemplation and compilation of a novel doctrinal stance. In the early days of the Christian Revival Society, seven "Articles of Faith," along with a "Bond of Agreement," outlined the belief system of the mission. Later, when converts were noted as not all returning to

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[519] Ibid., 106-07.

[520] Harold Hill, *Saved to Save and Saved to Serve: Perspectives on Salvation Army History* (Eugene: Resource Publications, 2017), 62.

[521] Taylor, 262.

wider church bodies, further articles were added that spoke to Christian life after conversion.

The Deed of the Christian Mission, noted earlier, included 10 statements of belief by 1870 and, around 1873, the 11th was added.[522] These 11 statements then transferred into the framework of salvationist doctrinal understanding that persists to the current day.[523] Much of the content and contours of these doctrinal positions is drawn from the Methodist New Connexion in which William and Catherine had previously served.[524] While the doctrines have not changed in substance from that time, various preamble, summary, and commentary statements to cover earlier omissions have appeared in subsequent editions.[525] The current edition has embraced stylistic changes that are deemed more "user-friendly," but problematically for people with complex or other disabilities, there are no "easy-read" supporting documents.[526]

In the context of this current thesis, two points need to be made in regard to the doctrinal understanding of TSA. First, Doctrine 1 highlights that scripture holds a foundational place within this evangelical tradition. This is not to say that it necessarily holds a fundamentalist, or literalist, view of scripture. Just as Wesley understood scripture as the primary, but not sole, source of religious authority, so Booth argued that scripture was the highest and fullest, but not sole, source of understanding given to humanity. Further, while repudiating notions of scriptural inerrancy and verbal inspiration, Booth noted that scripture contained what God wanted people to know about Godself and the transformational trajectory of the whole story of redemption. For Booth, the most effective translations of scripture were those that moved beyond stiff or ancient language towards contemporary and understandable forms of speech. As Harold Hill beautifully summarises, "He believed its most effective translation was into lives well lived."[527]

Secondly, while other doctrines obviously feature in the Army's tradition and understanding, Salvation and Holiness form its core convictions. The "whosoever," of salvation noted in Doctrine 6, the dynamism and Triune nature of that salvation in Doctrine 7 and the all-encompassing character of sanctification noted in Doctrine 10,

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[522] Hill, 161.
[523] See Appendix E.
[524] John Rhemick, *A New People of God* (Des Plaines: Salvation Army, 1984), 30-34.
[525] Hill, 165-69.
[526] *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine*.
[527] Hill, 165.

together underscore the boundless nature of God's salvation and the possibility of individual and corporate holy living. These doctrinal statements are inclusive in nature. They open vistas of possibility and affirmation for those living with complex disability. Scripture documents God's concern for the redemption of all of God's creation. It acknowledges the full range of human experience and draws us towards transformation. Writing about the doctrine of holiness as an essential part of God's redemptive plan for humankind, Frederick Coutts notes,

> Rightly understood it is the one serious attempt which believers may make (as God shall help them) to translate the spirit of Jesus into a recognizable pattern of Christian behaviour.[528]

In Christ, God's plan of salvation is for the whole world, the disabled or fleetingly non-disabled, the weak and the strong. The life of holiness, empowered and enabled by the Holy Spirit, beckons every believer to a life well lived. People who experience disability are capable of translating the spirit of Jesus into a pattern of behaviour. The question then becomes—to what extent does TSA and its corps membership recognise, honour and nurture a capacity for holy living in people living with complex disability?

5.10 The Salvation Army Arrives in New Zealand

The global orientation of TSA towards mission saw its personnel and ministry reach *Aotearoa* (New Zealand) in 1883. In response to a letter from Miss Arabella Valpy, William Booth sent Captain George Pollard and Lieutenant Edward Wright from England to Dunedin, New Zealand, to commence the Army's work. Economic depression and social unrest formed the backdrop to their arrival.[529] By the end of their first year, 10 corps had been established throughout New Zealand. A congress held in Dunedin, at Christmas in that first year, witnessed 30 officers and between 500 and 600 soldiers.[530] In the following year, the social work of the Army began in earnest with the establishment of the Prison Gate Brigade and Rescue Homes for women. As records indicate, 5 years after its commencement in New Zealand, The Salvation Army had established 82 corps,[531] 100 outposts, four rescue homes for women, a hospital for

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[528] Frederick Coutts, *The Call to Holiness* (London: Salvationist Publishing and Supplies, 1964), 1.

[529] See https://archives.salvationarmy.org.nz/sites/default/files/uploads/archives/a_brief_illustrated_history_of_the_salvation_army_in_new_zealand_fiji_tonga.pdf.

[530] Sandall, *The History of the Salvation Army: 1878–1886*, 293.

[531] As of July 26th, 2021, there are 114 active Corps and Recovery Churches within New Zealand.

unmarried mothers, and the Prison Gate Homes.[532] Annette Paul, an officer who survived the sinking of the *SS Wairarapa* off Great Barrier Island in 1891, gave land in Cuba Street, Wellington, for the building of one of the aforementioned rescue homes.[533] The Salvation Army's Holiness evangelist, Samuel Logan Brengle, commenced a campaign in Christchurch in 1910 which resulted in 800 further converts. The TSA in NZ was growing, and administratively it became a territory separate to Australia in 1912.[534]

All of this work occurred in the context of a land inhabited and cared for by its first people—the Māori. In 1840, the Māori peoples, represented by many of their tribal chiefs, had signed *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* (The Treaty of Waitangi),[535] along with representatives of Queen Victoria and the British Empire. The Treaty was understood by Māori to be a covenantal type of agreement which enabled non-Māori to settle in New Zealand in a way that would be beneficial to both peoples. Regrettably, Māori dispossession, in terms of land, language and cultural identity, were to follow. For the purpose of this study, it is important to note that, although coming to New Zealand was with European settlers largely in mind, there were successful attempts to engage Māori in the mission of TSA as early as the 1890s.[536] That ministry has ebbed and flowed over the ensuing years reaching a renewed sense of urgency, direction and self-determination in recent years. For example, a new "Māori Ministry Strategic Plan,"[537] launched in 2015, along with The Salvation Army's Bicultural Statement,[538] echoing the Treaty themes of partnership, protection and participation, reflect TSA's commitment to a collaborative journey into the future.

5.11 Te Ope Whakaora

Lt Col Ian Hutson, currently Director of Māori Ministries (and SPPU),[539] writes that, "*Te Ope Whakaora*—the Army that brings life—is a transliteration for The Salvation

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[532] See https://archives.salvationarmy.org.nz/sites/default/files/uploads/archives/a_brief_illustrated_history_of_the_salvation_army_in_new_zealand_fiji_tonga.pdf.

[533] Wiggins, 141.

[534] Arch Wiggins, *The History of the Salvation Army: 1904–1914*, vol. V (London: Thomas Nelson, 1968), 130.

[535] Archives New Zealand, "Te Tiriti O Waitangi," accessed March 15, 2023. https://www.archives.govt.nz/discover-our-stories/the-treaty-of-waitangi.

[536] See https://archives.salvationarmy.org.nz/article/holdaway-pioneer-ministry-m%C4%81ori-new-zealand.

[537] See https://maori.salvationarmy.org.nz/our-strategic-plan.

[538] See https://maori.salvationarmy.org.nz/article/salvation-army-new-zealand-bicultural-statement.

[539] SPPU: The Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit of The Salvation Army in New Zealand.

Army in the Māori language."[540] The phrase first appeared in print in an article in the *War Cry* on 26 October 1889,[541] and on the cover of the first Māori songbook produced in 1891. Cap-bands bearing the phrase *Te Ope Whakaora* were made available in 1892.[542] There have been limited references to the phrase over ensuing years. However, the last decade has witnessed a reclaiming of the phrase in both the context of Māori ministries and by TSA in its branding and strategic planning.[543]

I need to acknowledge a degree of tension as researcher at this point. On the one hand, I seek to ensure that this project is not a work of "re-colonisation" and, on the other, this nomenclature, *Te Ope Whakaora*, appears pivotal to the Army's historical and contemporary self-identity. The phrase appears in the 2016-2019 Strategic Plan for the New Zealand, Fiji, Tonga, and Samoa Territory of TSA and in corporate television advertising during the winter of 2021. In light of this fact, I proceed from an understanding that the phrase opens the way for an investigation into how the Army brings life in the context of Māori ministries, but also to all parts of Salvation Army life in this territory. To consider how TSA brings life in the context of complex disability is an extension of that claim.

5.12 The International Context

I have examined some of the historical threads that defined the emergence and eventual ethos, character and doctrine of The Salvation Army. This quasi-military organisation, that emerged from Victorian England, remains a visible, if more socially accepted, presence on the international and national scene. Its doctrines and church polity remain unchanged, its hierarchical and organisational structures have met with some tinkering, but largely remain unaltered. Its reputation, in broader society, remains generally, if not exclusively, positive as a source for social good. Its recognition as a movement steeped in the Wesleyan holiness tradition is not universally understood. The ambiguities and tensions embedded in its bifocal orientation to evangelism and welfare continue to unfold.[544]

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[540] Ian Hutson, "An Army That Brings Life: A National Covenant Unites the People of New Zealand," *The Officer*, Jan-Mar, 2021, 32.
[541] *War Cry.*
[542] I am indebted to Selwyn Bracegirdle, of the Heritage & Archives Centre based in Wellington, for these research details. See https://archives.salvationarmy.org.nz.
[543] See https://www.salvationarmy.org.nz/about-us/leadership-and-structure/structure-symbols-and-terminology.
[544] Harold Hill, "Out of Darkest England: The Effect of the *in Darkest England* Scheme on the Salvation Army," in *Darkness and Deliverance: 125 Years of the 'in Darkest England' Scheme,* ed. Matthew Seaman (Nambour: Chaordic Creative, 2016), 87.

Statistically, its worldwide membership might be said to be in no more than a holding pattern. For example, international statistics note a small increase in soldiers from 1,212,181 in 2018 to 1,231,838 in 2020. Active and retired officer ranks moved from 26,753 to 27,177 through the same time period.[545] The number of corps or recovery church settings increased marginally from 14,528 in 2018 to 14,588 in 2020. The number of corps-based community development programmes has increased from 2,735 programmes catering to 810,019 beneficiaries or clients in 2018, to 7,124 programmes involving 1,783,055 people in 2020. The Salvation Army does not collect identifying data, such as gender, age or disability, so it is not possible to signal how many people attending The Salvation Army identify as living with a disability. While statistics are always valuable in a general sense, they only ever tell part of an organisational story. In the case of mission impact with people with complex disability, little can be claimed.

In order to serve the present age, it must continually be asked if TSA is fit for purpose generally and, more specifically, if it is a place that brings fullness of life for people with complex disabilities. While mission statements and slogans do not make it so, there are foundations within its missional and “positional statements” that are cause for hope in the context of complex disability. The current International Mission Statement of The Salvation Army reads,

> The Salvation Army, an international movement, is an evangelical part of the universal Christian Church. Its message is based on the Bible. Its ministry is motivated by the love of God. Its mission is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in his name without discrimination.[546]

Obviously, within this statement, there is no direct commentary on the global situation that faces people with disability in a contemporary context. Some of the parameters of that situation were noted in Chapter 1. However, this mission statement proposes TSA is concerned with meeting human need. In the context of potentially vulnerable people, those living with complex disability rightly, although frustratingly, claim a space. The human needs of the complexly disabled require personal, communal, corporate and structural attention. Such attention falls within the remit of meeting human needs and, therefore, within the purview of this mission statement.

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[545] See https://www.salvationarmy.org/ihq/statistics.

[546] See https://www.salvationarmy.org/ihq/Mission.

The International "One Vision," focus, which highlights attentiveness to One Army, One Mission and One Message, signals a commitment to "stand for and serve the marginalised."[547] (Appendix G) While an Army has a duty towards strategic deployment of forces and advancing its mission, defence and protection also form part of its responsibility. Further, under the call to one message, the Army has committed to "evangelise and disciple effectively," along with "providing quality teaching resources." Such statements are further sources of hope for the person with complex disability in the Army context. While the knowledge and skills to do the above, in the context of disability, are not necessarily currently present, the commitment in principle is clearly enunciated.

In 2007, TSA inaugurated a new body to engage internationally and locally with social justice issues. The "International Social Justice Commission" is TSA's official representative at the United Nations, where TSA has been an affiliated non-governmental member since its inception.[548] The work of the ISJC in this arena occurs within the United Nations Economic and Social Council. Sustainable economic, social, and environmental development form the focus of ECOSOC's work. The ISJC seeks to bring insight and lived experience into these international conversations. The central focus of the Army's work in this context has been in the area of poverty and human trafficking. There has been no overt emphasis given to the fraught situations which many of the world's disabled population experience, other than the generic call to improve the situation of the world's poorest people by way of international and national commitment to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals road-mapped in 2015.[549]

A more explicit exploration of TSA's engagement with matters related to disability is noted in the October 2020 publication of its "International Positional Statement on Disabilities."[550] (see Appendix G) Formulated by the "International Moral and Social Issues Council," in consultation with people living with various disabilities, this document highlights pertinent biblical and theological foundations for the Army's understanding and engagement with disability issues. Further to that, it outlines a commitment to pursue a more robust agenda in the future. However, it must be noted that TSA's engagement with disabled people has a strong historical and contemporary legacy as noted below.

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[547] See https://www.salvationarmy.org/ihq/vision.

[548] See https://www.salvationarmy.org/isjc/ISJCUN.

[549] Personal correspondence from Major Victoria Edmonds, TSA's Senior UN Representative.

[550] See https://www.salvationarmy.org/isjc/ips.

Internationally, TSA continues to be involved in faith-based health ministry around the world.[551] With reference to some of the specific work associated with people with disabilities, TSA has been operating “Matumaini,” a primary aged boarding school in Tanzania for more than 20 years. The school educates and safeguards the well-being of disabled children and those living with Albinism.[552] On another continent, in Kalimpong, India, the “Mary Scott Home & School for the Blind,” was founded in 1940. In 2018, the setting was home to 37 blind or partially sighted children. It continued to provide education for its children through the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic, providing printed braille study guides for children forced to return home and those still resident at the school.[553] In Savar, Bangladesh, “The Integrated Children’s Center,” has been formed by combining a former girls home and a home for visually impaired boys into one centre. The centre operates a primary school and hostel which caters to visually impaired and special needs students.[554]

In Kingston, Jamaica, the “School for the Blind and Visually Impaired” has been providing educational opportunities for blind children since 1927.[555] With capacity for 130 children, the school works with children who are blind and also living with epilepsy, cerebral palsy and autism. Further afield, in the United Kingdom, the “Steps to Work” programme and training hub based in Liverpool offers education and work placement opportunities to 18- to 25-year-olds who experience barriers such as learning difficulties.[556] Finally, in Meleka, Malaysia, the “Hopehaven Centre” provides education and day care programmes for up to 80 children and young adults living with a range of disabilities.[557]

While not indicative of co-ordinated, international organisational policy, publications from around the world bear witness to awareness of disability issues and the appointment of officers to specific roles. For example, a report in the Army publication

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[551] Pallant, *Keeping Faith in Faith-Based Organizations: A Practical Theology of Salvation Army Health Ministry*.
[552] The Salvation Army, "Matumaini Primary School," The Salvation Army, accessed June 23, 2023. https://www.salvationarmy.org/tanzania/Matumainiprimary.
[553] The Salvation Army, "The Salvation Army Promotes Value of Persons with Disabilities on International Day of Recognition," International Headquarters, accessed June 23, 2023. https://www.salvationarmy.org/ihq/news/inr041220.
[554] The Salvation Army, "Integrated Children’s Center, Savar," The Salvation Army, accessed June 22, 2023. https://migration.salvationarmy.org/bangladesh/104-07.
[555] The Salvation Army, "Sashana, the Caribbean," International Headquarters, accessed June 22, 2023. https://www.salvationarmy.org/ihq/iwd23-sashana-caribbean.
[556] See https://www.salvationarmy.org.nz/news/salvation-army-promotes-value-persons-disabilities-international-day-recognition.
[557] The Salvation Army, "Special Needs," The Salvation Army, accessed June 23, 2023. https://www.salvationarmy.org/malaysia/specialneeds.

"All the World" in 1951, describes ministry with young people living with epilepsy and other [crippled] children at the "Trestle Glen Camp School for Epileptics" in Oregon.[558] In a further example, a report from 1973 notes the engagement of Major Gudrun Myhre (Secretary, at the time, for TSA's work with deaf and blind people in Norway), with an elderly woman attending a rally for blind people. The report also notes a camp for deaf young people.[559] From ministry at local camps, to individual testimonies and visitation reports, through to more formal support networks such as "Salvation Army Fellowship of Endeavour" (SAFE) in the United Kingdom[560]—TSA is witnessed through history as concerned with the well-being of disabled people. Whether that concern has resulted in measurable, sustainable and organisational strategies that ensure consistency of support towards fullness of life for people with complex disabilities is not clear.

5.13 The New Zealand Contemporary Context

Moving to the New Zealand context, we note some broadening of TSA's International Mission Statement with specific reference to caring for people, transforming lives, and reforming society,

> The Salvation Army is an international movement and an evangelical branch of the Christian Church, which expresses its ministry through a balance of spiritual and social programmes. In its founding it was mobilised by God, and in its continuance is totally dependent on God for the power to fulfil its calling. Everything it does is as an offering to the glory of God and for the worship and adoration of God's name.
>
> The mission of The Salvation Army in New Zealand, Fiji, Tonga and Samoa is:
>
> **Caring for people:** Salvationists follow the example of Jesus by identifying with the needy, standing alongside them and caring for people in all situations.
>
> **Transforming lives:** Salvationists believe that God can transform people and that the resulting wholeness is experienced through belief in Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit. This transformation is evidenced in discipleship and commitment.

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[558] The Salvation Army, "Ministry to Crippled Children," *All the World*, January, 1951, 152-53.
[559] The Salvation Army, "The Courage of the Disabled," *All the World*, January, 1973, 168-71.
[560] The Salvation Army, "Enabled," The Salvation Army UK, accessed June 23, 2023. https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/inclusive/enabled.

> **Reforming society:** Salvationists seek to express the love and power of God in the community. This calls for the challenging of manifestations of evil, injustice and oppression, and for steps aimed at their elimination.[561]

Again, that statement notes an overt commitment to come alongside the marginalised to facilitate the potential discipleship journey of all people, and to work against societal and political systems that might lead to any forms of injustice and oppression. At the time of writing, TSA in New Zealand does not have a specific positional statement regarding disability. Any questions on its position would therefore fall under the remit of the "International Positional Statement," until a local iteration was formulated.

Other mechanisms, such as the implementation of a "Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit" in 2010, indicate the potential for research and advocacy on behalf of people living with disability. Dedicated to the eradication of poverty in New Zealand, the unit advocates for the poor by engaging with government ministers, analysing and making submissions on bills before the New Zealand parliament and liaison with key personnel in other sectors of New Zealand society with similar goals. This unit, among other local initiatives, produces the "State of the Nation Report,"[562] focused on social outcomes for poor and disenfranchised groups in the New Zealand context. While disability has not been a specific emphasis to this point in time, poverty, housing, health, finance and employment indicators for people with disabilities would suggest that such a focus is important and necessary moving forward.

The 2019-2020 annual report of the New Zealand territory was entitled, "The Fullness of Life: Annual Report."[563] Throughout the document, attention is paid to the services that TSA provides in the community, as well as its identity as a church. Financial mentoring, food parcels, prison chaplaincy, transitional housing, addiction services, and low-interest loans all feature in the document. No mention of advocacy, or active engagement, amongst people with disability is identified.

The territory has introduced and followed a number of "Strategic Plans" over the past 15 years.[564] Launched in 2021, the current iteration is entitled *He Waka Eke Noa* (One

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[561] See https://www.salvationarmy.org.nz/about-us/mission-statement.

[562] See https://www.salvationarmy.org.nz/article/disturbed-present-better-future.

[563] See https://www.salvationarmy.org.nz/sites/default/files/files/%5Bfile_field%3Atype%5D/tsa-annual-report-20-web.pdf.

[564] The first of these was the "Territorial Strategic Mission Plan" launched in 2005.

Waka. All of Us Together).[565] Derived from a Māori proverb encapsulating a commitment to work in unity and leave no-one behind, the strategy calls for increased mission impact and mechanisms to ensure that TSA is a great place for people to belong, work, worship and serve. It also highlights a commitment to long-term sustainability across the Army's work in New Zealand, Fiji, Tonga and Samoa.

This strategy does not deny the reality of the ongoing tension of the bifocal nature of TSA, mentioned earlier. For example, while social services grow, faith-based congregational units decrease and struggle to source leadership and financial stability. Does this indicate a slow but steady move towards the situation that William and Catherine Booth experienced 150 years ago—potential converts with no faith-based setting in which they can experience fellowship, teaching, community and support? This potential lack of a place to belong, engage and worship, would reshape the Army's self-identity in profound ways. For example, the Holiness tradition that undergirds TSA, expressed in personal and corporate holy living, can undoubtedly be lived out in a variety of settings. However, it cannot be taught, nurtured, examined, witnessed to, or contextualised in a vacuum. For that, one needs dynamic participation within a congregation. Rethinking TSA's mission model would appear to be critical in terms of its long-term viability. As Taylor notes,

> The Salvationist lack of theological reflection upon this sociological form has ironically left it vulnerable to the sacralization of its human structure, in which it ultimately finds it almost impossible to contemplate that this form, adopted for its mobility and flexibility on the pilgrim journey, might prove obsolete at some point along the changing terrain of that journey.[566]

The call to unity, along with the call to leave no-one behind, embedded in *He Waka Eke Noa*, is a helpful metaphor, but the imagery of the *waka* has limits. For example, there is no sense of universal design in the image of a *waka*. People who utilise walking frames or wheelchairs would find little embedded here that indicates attention to notions of accessibility. Pictures are powerful. A written commitment to ensuring that people find a sense of belonging within TSA signals hope for a person with complex disability but, in this instance, such a person is missing within the imagery. Further, the territorial

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[565] The Salvation Army, "Territorial Strategy 2021: He Waka Eke Noa," The Salvation Army, accessed December 6, 2021. https://intranet.sarmy.net.nz/strategic-mission-plan/mp/he-waka-eke-noa-one-waka-all-of-us-together.

[566] Taylor, 147.

initiative goals appear to place recruitment, retention, lifting-capability and staff personal-development plans, higher on the agenda than the notion of inclusion itself.[567]

It is encouraging to note that scoping surveys are intended to research whether people feel they can bring their whole selves to TSA. However, a note of caution is signalled by the phrase, “We will finish clarifying our desired mission outcomes.”[568] Tension occurs at the point of asking who is doing the clarification of those outcomes and by what measures are they classified as “desired?” A further point of tension occurs as we consider whether or not people living with a complex disability are part of the consultative group on TSA’s mission outcomes. At the time of writing, the strategy document does identify how territorial headquarters will respond with specific projects that support the mission imperatives. It is also noted that further embedding of the strategy is expected at a local level. However, it is not possible to evaluate to what extent that is occurring and what, if any, nuances to the overall strategy are transpiring at a local level. In other words, have people on the ground actually bought into the plan, or are people, non-disabled and disabled, already being left behind?[569]

5.14 Conclusion

This thesis began noting Catherine Booth’s maxim that to improve future outcomes it is necessary to disturb present practice. An examination of the historical and contemporary practice of TSA has highlighted key foundations in its approach to ministry and mission. In regard to people who live with complex disability, some causes for hope within these practices have been identified while, in other contexts, it has been noted that TSA has not actively engaged or proactively considered mission to—and with—the disabled community. While a framework of theoretical support might be traced in the Army’s historical narrative, we turn now to consider the actual experience of people who live with complex disability and attend Salvation Army corps in New Zealand.

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[567] The Salvation Army, "Territorial Strategy 2021: He Waka Eke Noa."

[568] Ibid.

[569] It is acknowledged that during the time of writing the development of an inclusion strategy for the territory has been initiated by way of consultation with minority groups identified as ethnic, gender equality, same sex attracted and disability.

Chapter 6 – Listening to Personal Experience

I think that we welcomed her right, but she wasn't appreciated, and some people are very vocal in their non-appreciation, which is sad. (Jessica)

6.1 Introduction

The Salvation Army in New Zealand self-identifies as, "The Army that Brings Life." This notion can be understood in both theological and sociological senses. As noted in the previous chapter, the Booth ministry was holistic in the sense of *life* incorporating soup, soap and salvation. Understood theologically, this *life* that TSA brings might be understood as life in the power and presence of the creating God, the salvific ministry of the incarnate Son and the present indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Sociologically, it might be understood as *life* enabled by attitudes, environments, relationships, systems and structures that contribute to a sense of individual and communal well-being.

As was noted in Chapter 1, there is some disconnection between how the church believes it brings *life* and supports those who live with complex disability, and the lived experience of those who encounter the disconnection. It is to those who actually encounter the disconnection that our attention now turns. In doing so, this chapter is concerned with Stage 2 of the PTRM—applying qualitative research methods in order to discover and understand what is going on culturally and contextually for people with complex disabilities attending Salvation Army congregations in New Zealand.

6.2 Stories about Complex Disability

Braun and Clarke note that, in an ideal qualitative interview, researcher and participant work together. While the researcher prepares a series of open-ended questions to guide the interview, the order and exact wording of the questions may develop in response to the participant's account.[570] The guiding questions for these interviews (see Appendix D), were framed to enable participants to consider a wide range of possible theological and sociological responses from their own story of disability and their personal experience within Salvation Army congregations.

As noted in Chapters 1 and 4, a key aspect of the research design was to ensure that the voices of the people living with complex disability were heard from within the academic conventions required by this project. As the researcher, I also note my

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[570] Braun and Clarke, *Successful Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide for Beginners*, 78.

commitment to ensuring that the rigorous work of analysis applied to the primary data did not drown out the voices providing that data. The use of chapter epigraphs and direct quotations throughout Chapters 6 and 7 is one way in which I have honoured that commitment. Throughout the chapter, pseudonyms have been used. Individuals living with a complex disability are identified as Ann, Bob, Charles, Harry and Ian. Participants who were parents, or siblings, of a person with complex disability are identified as Donna, Ethan and Eve, Fred and Fiona, Greg and Jessica. Reference to, or verbatim quotes from, the participants are identified with their pseudonym and the transcription page number.

6.3 Overview

As noted in the methodology chapter, four sets of people contributed to the primary data collected in this project: 1) persons with a complex disability, 2) parents or siblings of a person with complex disability, 3) pastoral officers of Salvation Army congregations in New Zealand, and 4) Salvation Army mission support personnel from media, training, divisional and children’s settings. Data from the first two groups were gained from individual in-depth interviews conducted by the researcher. The findings from these interviews are presented in the current chapter. Data from the second two groups were gained from two separate focus groups hosted by the researcher in person, or via an online video meeting. The findings from the focus groups are presented in Chapter 7.

Prior to presenting the key findings within each of these contexts, I note the following brief overview of the data analysis. First, across all four data sets, no participant characterised the notion or reality of disability as a disaster. This finding has implications for how TSA brings life in the context of personal experiences of complex disability. Certainly, hardships or difficulties associated with impairment were noted. Disabled participants expressed that they wanted to live ordinary lives. For example, Charles, a person living with cerebral palsy, noted his commitment to simply living the life he believed God had given him to live (Charles p.7).

Secondly, parents or siblings of people with complex disabilities acknowledged the chronic nature of disability, along with the unseen and unrelenting routines associated with their family member. This reality has implications for how TSA brings life, in the pastoral sense, for the whole family unit. Greg volunteered his experience as the father of a disabled daughter,

> You’re up at all hours of the night, or you know, whatever. For two years, we slept in different rooms because one of us had to be in with Grace, but nobody sees that, …what you go through is crazy, so when you have good days you enjoy them (Greg p.8).

Thirdly, pastoral officers and mission support staff acknowledged their lack of awareness, skill and formal training in the area of disability. They articulated a desire to know and understand. This reality has educational implications for future training and management upskilling across TSA. For example, Kirsten observed the following,

> So, in college [Salvation Army Training College] I chose to do one of my inquiries on disability and the church, but that was a choice to do that. But there was no specific training (Kirsten p.19).

Finally, across all data sets, the data highlighted an improvised and uncoordinated approach from TSA towards support of people with complex disabilities and/or their families in local congregations. This has organisational implications for governance systems and structures across TSA in New Zealand. For example, in regard to streamlining disability ministry, Linda highlighted a tendency in TSA to respond in the moment rather than to plan ahead (Linda p.15). In contrast, Ian lamented a zealous approach to paperwork, noting that volunteering at the local corps was attended by “filling out screeds of paper (Ian p.30).” A tension is noted here in that policies and systems designed to streamline ministry, maintain health and safety guidelines and uphold policies related to personnel, may require constant review to ensure that they do not result in stifled approaches to inclusive ministry.

In summary, the commentary from the research participants that follows has implications beyond the contexts from which it arose. The commentary has personal, pastoral, educational and organisational ramifications for an Army seeking to bring fullness of life to its constituency in New Zealand and beyond the immediate context.

6.4 Summary Table: Themes One to Four

Table 1 provides an overview of the themes identified from the rich data provided by the individual and familial research participants. The themes and sub-themes are presented throughout the chapter with some accompanying analytic commentary. However, more comprehensive discussion of the themes occurs later in the thesis.

The first theme was identified from data provided exclusively by individuals with a complex disability. The theme therefore reflects the voice of people directly experiencing life with a complex disability. Themes two, three and four were constructed from data provided by either the individual, or parents/sibling of a person living with complex disability. A further two themes were supported by data from the two focus group discussions and are documented in Chapter 7.

In the current chapter, I have outlined the findings and subsequent themes developed from the participants interviews and then provided summative statements. In Chapter 7, I have reversed that order, presenting summative statements first and then the findings and themes developed from the focus group discussions.

As discussed in Chapter 4, practical theology and the chosen methodology of PTRM enables the research to engage with accounts of practice as they arise in the qualitative enquiry conducted with participants meeting the recruitment criteria. While six themes are identified from within these data sets, further iterative reading of the data could result in further themes. However, those that are distinguished here constitute significant importance to the ongoing faithful practice of TSA in relation to people living with complex disability.

Table 1. Themes One to Four.

Theme 1a	**Theme 1b**	**Theme 2**	**Theme 3**	**Theme 4**
Disability Itself is Not a Disaster. How People Respond Can Make Disability Difficult.	Disability Itself is Not a Disaster. ***How People Respond Can Make Disability Difficult.***	***Inclusion that Liberates.*** Authentic Inclusion involves Literal & Metaphorical Space.	***Taking Tea With Me.*** Supporting People with Complex Disabilities takes Time, Presence & Active Appreciation.	***Familiarity & Long Term Fatigue.*** Complex Disability is Chronic in Nature. Support Routines are often Unobserved and Unrelenting.
Data Set (I)	**Data Set(I)**	**Data Set(I)**	**Data Set(I)**	**Data Set(I)**
Persons with a Complex Disability.	Persons with a Complex Disability.	Person with a Complex Disability and/or Parents or Siblings.	Person with a Complex Disability and/or Parents or Siblings.	Parents or Siblings of a Person with a Complex Disability.
Sub Themes	**Sub Themes**	**Sub Themes**	**Sub Themes**	**Sub Themes**
Pursuing an Ordinary Life.	Capability & Self-Determination.	Attitudes that Create Space.	Active Appreciation.	Chronic Means Constant.
Flexible Approaches to the Contours of Life.	Management of Congregational Settings.	Actions that Facilitate Space.	Place-Cards at the Table.	Sitting Pretty.
A Commitment to Doing Something Meaningful.	Relational Instability.	Space on the “Parade Ground” or “Battle Ground?”	Transitions Across Chronology.	Allied Support: Friend & Foe.

Data Sets: (I) refers to Interviews with participants.

6.5 Individual Participant Contexts

As would be expected, the broader contours of the disabled participants' individual lives were varied. For example, some received disability benefits, some worked as volunteers and some were in paid employment. Participants lived in their own homes, or with extended family and some lived with flatmates in support homes.

6.6 Theme One (a): Disability Itself is Not a Disaster

For people living with a complex disability, the disability itself is not a disaster.[571] How people respond to the individual has the capacity to make disability more difficult. Therefore, in order to support individuals living with disability in Salvation Army congregations, all stakeholders need to disassociate disability from the notion of disaster. The two clauses of this theme are considered separately. Three further sub-themes under each clause scaffold the theme. In the first instance these are 1) pursuing an ordinary life, 2) flexible approaches to the contours of life, and 3) a commitment to doing something meaningful.

6.6.1 Pursuing an Ordinary Life

A thread common to all five participants in this section of the research was the absence of any stated desire to be released from their disability. They simply wanted to live an ordinary life. For example, instead of equating his disability with any sense of doom or disaster, Harry underlined this orientation by noting that, with appropriate supports in place, his life and independence were being facilitated (Harry p.13). Charles's definitive statement also underlined this position,

> I wouldn't trade places with any able-bodied person this side of glory, because God has raised me up for such a time as this… (Charles p.7).

6.6.1.1 Necessary Accommodations

Rather than a preoccupation with a perceived precariousness to their lives, participants related examples of the accommodations necessary to pursue an ordinary life. For example, Ann described her life as good but different to others. She acknowledged her desire to drive a car, or hold down a fulltime job, but had come to a place of peace regarding the boundaries of her life (Ann p.26). In this sense, disability—rather than

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[571] In using the word "disaster" I signal my awareness of its potentially pejorative undertone. In using the word, I am proposing that a strong counter-cultural narrative runs through this dataset. Similarly to earlier medical and sociological research that coined the phrase "Disability is not a Disease," this theme positions itself in direct contrast to societal narratives that imply disability is a personal, societal, economic, political or family disaster.

being a disaster—was simply something to be managed within the broader context of life. She noted that activities of daily living took more planning and time to accomplish. Her plea was for people to just recognise the following,

> …everything I do is tiring. I start the day with less energy than everyone else. I go through the day with less energy than everyone else… (Ann p.25).

Some participants noted that the pursuit of an ordinary life had found accomplices within the family unit. There was a range of commentary that indicated different stresses throughout the unfolding of their lives. For example, Ian thought the difficulty associated with his birth had been hard on his mother. Much of the early story of his life was clothed in mystery (Ian p.8). However, the extended family unit, supportive rural community and some natural talents enabled him to pursue an ordinary life. In a further example of family support facilitating the pursuit of an ordinary life, Bob's mother was present in the interview to assist the telling of his story. During the interview with Charles, his father unexpectedly popped in to visit him in the support house in which he lived.

The participants also reported a variety of living situations that reflected the pursuit of an ordinary life. Harry and Ann were both living in flatting situations. Harry lived with two other friends in a flat, with oversight from a support worker. Ann oversaw the financial management in her flat. Bob lived at home as part of his extended family and had his own daily routine, some of which was overseen by support workers. Ian was married and shared his life with a loving wife. Together, they were navigating his wife's illness. Such living circumstances indicate the wide variety of accommodations that can be made to facilitate independence while negotiating life with a complex disability.

Different hobbies and interests amongst the participants also indicated the attention given to the pursuit of an ordinary life. From building relationships to computer games; artistic pursuits, to connecting to the wider world through email; physical activity, to engagement with animals and music—the participants had all directed their attention towards building lives that were rich in meaning and activity.

6.6.2 Flexible Approaches to the Contours of Life

The data also underlined the need for a flexible approach to the changing contours of an ordinary life. For example, Charles and Ian noted that with the passing of time, issues associated with pain, mobility and anxiety had emerged. Charles noted the development and effects of scoliosis as he had aged (Charles p.3). However, as Ian proposed, it was not the disability itself that was problematic, but that his body was reacting to the disability in certain ways as it aged (Ian p.28). This sense of flexibility towards the changing dynamics of life was underlined by Harry when he simply stated,

> Yeah, cos you don't choose to have a disability. You just kind of have to cope with it (Harry p.18).

6.6.2.1 Matter of Fact

Along with a sense of flexibility, the participants responses underlined a sense of "matter of fact-ness" regarding the specific contours of their lives. Bob, without hesitation, noted, "I have cerebral palsy and I was born like that—from beginning to end (Bob p.13)." From there his conversation simply transitioned into seemingly more significant areas of his life—his girlfriend, enjoyment of music, weekly routines and favourite pet. Charles also described his cerebral palsy in matter-of-fact terms, simply noting that some of the aspects of his disability required more attention than did others (Charles p.3). Ann was similarly matter of fact in describing her traumatic brain injury. She mentioned the area of her brain affected and the circumstances leading to the injury. With a wry sense of humour, her parting advice for everyone was to be careful riding bikes and to always wear a helmet (Ann p.42).

6.6.2.2 Adaptation

The capacity to adapt was a further feature of this flexible approach to life and its changing contours. For example, participants noted changes of employment, homes, corps settings, caregivers and geographical locations throughout their lives. This capacity to adapt in each new scenario underlined their ongoing commitment to living ordinary lives in the midst of change. Disability was not a disaster, it simply called for a willingness to adapt.

6.6.3 A Commitment to Doing Something Meaningful

Common to each participant, irrespective of their employment, or home situation, was the openly expressed predilection to "do something," in both church and wider community settings. Such inclinations further undermine any latent perception of disability being a disaster. That is, the disability possibly altered the contours of how the participants might contribute to society, but said disability did not dissipate the drive to find ways to participate meaningfully in the community. This was not work in a simply utilitarian sense but conveyed a sense of service towards the ongoing mission of God.

For example, Ann described a sense of peace associated with doing something in the corps that she thought God wanted her to do (Ann p.27).

6.6.3.1 Rhythms and Collaboration

Other participants noted that work gave a sense of rhythm to their lives and/or amplified their opportunity to collaborate with other people. Bob noted his collaboration with a youth worker in the Friday night youth events, in which Bob set up his laptop and together they ran the music for the evenings (Bob p.15). Ann and Harry both volunteered in their local Salvation Army foodbanks. Ann commented at length, while also demonstrating an awareness of thin notions of welcome. She contended,

> And fitting in is more than just feeling welcome, its feeling like you are a part of something. I think it's really important for everyone to feel like they're a part of something that's bigger than themselves. (Ann p.41).

Further commentary highlighting the significance of finding meaningful avenues of service and work in the church and community centred around participants' appreciation of creation, the arts and personal artistic expression. In this sense, disability was still not a disaster and did not dissolve an appreciation for the creative aspects of individual and corporate life. For Ian, access to the natural environment, or God's external creation, was identified as sometimes more spiritually and physically therapeutic than attendance at a formal indoor service (Ian p.18).

6.6.3.2 Music and the Arts

For other participants, music played a central role in bringing personal pleasure and facilitating an avenue for expression beyond words. Playing an instrument had enabled Ann to join with other young people in a music team (Ann p.12). For Bob, naming a family pet after a favourite musician and spending time with the animal had linked his appreciation of both music and the pet, and contributed to his sense of peace and happiness (Bob p.45). In reference to broader artistic expression, Ann had created original artworks that hung on the corps building walls and had also collaborated with the Corps Officer in presenting a duet with guitar and saxophone at a corps event (Ann p.20). Bob had prepared digital media presentations and a montage for a youth event, noting the personal cost involved, “Oh boy, it took a long time (Bob p.31).” Charles had also developed his computer skills to enable him to make Christmas cards and contribute to the mission of the corps (Charles p.9).

The examples noted above serve to illustrate that, in their personal experience, disability had not been equated with disaster. The participants were pursuing ordinary lives, adjusting to the evolving contours of their lives, and remained committed to the pursuit of meaningful contributions to the broader church and societal settings. In this sense TSA itself became a vehicle for the individuals to live out their desire to do something as an expression of their personhood and their calling to serve others—a pivotal point of the gospel message.

6.7 Theme One (b): How People Respond can Make Disability Difficult

Disability itself is not a disaster. However, this research also indicated that disability could *become* difficult when the construct of disability and the person living with the disability were morphed into one misunderstood entity. While a sense of contentment was evident, in terms of embodying their individual disabilities, participants noted that a lack of support in the facilitation of an ordinary life had the capacity for rendering disability more difficult. Three sub-themes identified under this second clause of theme one were identified as 1) capability and self-determination, 2) management of congregational settings and 3) relational instability. Perceptions of disability as synonymous with disaster were capable of isolating the person with a complex disability, casting them as inherently different, or labelling them as non-contributing members of society. Ian recalled his schooldays,

> I was different and anybody who’s different in high school, you get bullied, you get a real hard time and I did (Ian p.11).

6.7.1 Capability and Self-Determination

The notions of capability and self-determination were noted as areas in which responses to disability could become difficult for the individual, particularly in relation to visibility and invisibility and experiences of embarrassment, pain or frustration.

6.7.1.1 Visibility and Invisibility

The data indicated a tension around the concept of visibility. This unfolded in two directions. First, Ann noted that her life was made more difficult because her disability was not always immediately obvious (Ann p.36). At times, this visibility/invisibility tension had resulted in unrealistic expectations from herself, but more commonly from external sources in positions of supportive power. That is, agencies charged with facilitation of an ordinary life had left her feeling frustrated, powerless or ignored (Ann p.37).

Secondly, those with more noticeable disabilities highlighted the tension felt in response to the different ways they were witnessed as a person with a complex disability—the furtive glance or the invasive stare. Both responses underlined the visibility/invisibility tension that conflates disability with personhood. The wheelchair was witnessed, rather than the person using the wheelchair, and that could make disability difficult. Ann noted this tension (Ann pp.37–38), while Charles and Ian underlined its personal impact in social situations. Ian noted that his wheelchair made him more noticeable and at times he felt quite exposed (Ian p.26). Charles recalled the numbing effect of people staring through him, rather than making eye contact with him (Charles p.6).

6.7.1.2 Embarrassment, Pain and Frustration

Embarrassment, pain and frustration marked the feelings of participants whose capability had not been recognised. First, Bob lamented that people's engagement with him was not always age-appropriate and that it was embarrassing for him. He recalled, "Some people talk to me like a baby (Bob p.21)." In direct contrast to this misguided approach to Bob, his self-determination and capability were further underlined by his decision to change his name as a 20-year-old, along with happily sharing details about his girlfriend during the course of the interview (Bob p.14 &18). Secondly, Charles recalled the pain associated with his exclusion from a public service activity associated with TSA that brought him much joy. At its core, the exclusion reflected a supposition that Charles did not have the personal capacity to choose to participate of his own volition (Charles p.8). Thirdly, in the context of the corps setting, Ian noted his frustration regarding being asked to consult on matters related to disability and then finding those recommendations were not acted upon. The ensuing results made managing a disability in the corps building space more difficult and he was "disappointed" with the process and the results (Ian p.21).

To summarise, capability comes in many forms. As noted earlier, the participants involved in this study worked in foodbanks, were self-employed, were single or in relationships and pursued various interests and skills. That is, these people, each living with complex disabilities, were experts in negotiating disability *but* were also experts in fields wider than disability itself.

6.7.2 Management of Congregational Settings

Management of the congregational setting also had the potential to render disability more difficult. From a lack of attention to various sensory issues, length of services and the largely oral tradition, participants noted how these unchallenged norms carried the potential to make attendance and participation difficult for them. Ian described the arduousness associated with trying to follow and understand complex sermon threads,

> And sometimes in the meeting I find doctrine a bit hard to understand, and when you struggle to understand what's being preached to you, it's like trying to sift out water from dirt when you're sitting in mud (Ian p.19).

Ann highlighted that while her church setting was "friendly," the noise and lighting would make it difficult for some to stay in the space (Ann p.39). Charles described an experience of a Salvation Army service in which the music was so loud that he declared, "I was lucky to leave with my hearing intact (Charles p.6)." Bob's story of having his wallet stolen by someone visiting the church underlined the potential vulnerability of people who physically cannot respond quickly to the behaviour of others sharing the same space. Advocacy, in the form of family or friends, becomes essential as Bob attested: "Dad went straight after the guy and said, 'You got his wallet?' Dad sorted him out (Bob p.25)." While the story underlines a degree of diminished agency, it also underscores our interdependence.

6.7.2.1 Access to Platforms and Facilities in Army Halls

Despite adherence to building code requirements in regard to accessible parking and entrances, along with largely adequate bathroom facilities, the participants who used wheelchairs described issues with access to the platform. The unspoken message inherent in this architecture was that they would not be accessing it without causing major disruption. Similarly, access out of auditorium spaces to reach bathrooms easily—and without drawing unwanted attention to themselves—were areas for improvement in some of the congregational settings. For example, Bob noted that in trying to access a bathroom during a service he would "have to go all the way across the front, past everyone (Bob p.27)." Such congregational settings made living with a disability more difficult.

6.7.3 Relational Instability

Relational instability also had the potential to make living with a disability difficult. Managing and sustaining supportive relationships was seen as essential by the participants but also the context in which disappointment could be their reality. For example, Ian described his current experience of the local congregation,

> They’re welcoming, they meet you at the door, they do all the pleasantries, they give you the War Cry or whatever, but that’s where it finishes (Ian p.19).

In contrast, Ann’s story below, highlights the notion of relational reciprocity in which people are noticed and missed in their absence. Ann relayed the story of meeting a woman when she first attended the corps who introduced herself and continued to check in with Ann regularly. Ann had noticed the woman’s absence from the congregation for a while and greeted her enthusiastically on her return noting,

> She said that was really nice – but she does the same things for me. When I turn up she’s always happy to see me. She always wants to know how I am. Yeah it’s really cool (Ann p.15).

6.7.3.1 Changes in Leadership or Corps

Changes in corps leadership styles, or the closure of corps, led to alterations in relationships. Charles and Ian both described good relationships developing with some of their pastoral officers but noted that with changes in corps leadership styles, or the closing of corps, their sense of support had altered. Charles, demonstrating a keen sense of humour, described laughing all the way to the Army as his support person escorted his wheelchair like a race car down the street. When the corps closed he lost that experience. The new corps was further away and he subsequently travelled in a van. The corps closure meant a change of venue, but he had found a new place of belonging describing the next corps as “the friendliest corps in the country (Charles p.5).”

6.7.3.2 Paced Relationship Building

Relationships develop at different paces. Harry and Ann both reported slow but progressive movement towards meeting new people, establishing relationships and feeling accepted in their corps settings. Harry described moving cities and found the officers in the new city welcoming him into “one big family (Harry p.10).” Ann described her initial anxiety on attending her corps. She noted that working in the foodbank and building a relationship with the officer had helped her settle into the congregation and build a network of friendships (Ann p.13). Ann, Charles and Ian all observed that their experiences of a smaller corps setting had facilitated a stronger sense of family and connection. Larger settings heightened their anxiety and feelings of exclusion.

6.7.3.3 Pastoral Approaches

In some cases, the different approach of pastoral officers led to more or less relational stability. For example, Ian described his ideal pastoral officer as flexible and relatable (Ian p.31). While Bob noted a supportive relationship with a youth leader in TSA, his positive comments regarding a different church setting perhaps indicated some limits to how comfortable, or settled, he found himself in his current context. In describing this alternative church as “amazing,” closer questioning revealed that the technical production might have been the main drawcard (Bob p.29). Alternatively, Bob may have been tentatively moving away from the site where he has worshipped since childhood—thereby, again demonstrating his capacity for self-determination and independence.

6.7.3.4 The Power of Invitation

Relational stability can be compromised if relationships only occur in one area of life. Harry described his experience of TSA as akin to being part of a family (a notion also expressed by Ann and Charles). However, later comments in the interview underlined a possible limit to relational stability within the wider congregation. When asked about socialising with other corps members, he simply stated, “Like I don’t really get invites (Harry p.10).” As already noted, Harry worked in the corps foodbank and regularly attended the Sunday services. His comments here may indicate a subtle relational discrepancy—he was included in a *work* setting of TSA but not in the private lives of the congregation.

6.7.3.5 The Pastoral Officer as Point Person

Most of the individual participants referenced the positive and/or negative influence of the pastoral officers in their corps settings. Bob and Ann mentioned making friends within the corps. Charles, Harry and Ian made no specific reference to congregational friendships. Two observations can be made at this point. First, the role of the pastor as setting the tone and context for relational stability is significant for people with complex disabilities. Secondly, the data might indicate a gap in the intentional pursuit of relationship-building amongst members of the wider congregational setting.

In summary, theme one highlighted that disability itself is not a disaster but could *become* more difficult when the construct of disability and the person living with the disability were morphed into one misunderstood entity. Narrow understandings of self-determination and capability, unsuitable congregational settings, and relational instability all had the potential for making disability more difficult. An Army that brings life is an Army that recognises disability is not a disaster and contributes positively to the ordinary lives being lived within its congregations.

6.8 Theme Two: Inclusion that Liberates

Authentic inclusion liberates the individual with a complex disability to securely occupy a literal and metaphorical space in the ongoing life of the congregation.[572] As the participants in this research project attested, the space of inclusion is multidimensional. Therefore, in order to support individuals living with disability in Salvation Army congregations, all stakeholders need an understanding of inclusion that is multidimensional. Analysis of the primary data indicated that support for people with complex disabilities is found in 1) attitudes that create space, 2) actions that facilitate access, and 3) a "battleground" versus "parade-ground" understanding of Salvation Army mission.

6.8.1 Attitudes that Create Space

As noted earlier in this project, perceptions of welcome in the church are not necessarily aligned with the reality experienced by those with a complex disability. Ian noted a difference between welcoming and inclusion—inclusion is a movement that needs to occur beyond the corps threshold. That is, attitudes that created metaphorical space moved beyond a simple, if sincere, welcome at the doorstep to actively inviting people into the community.

6.8.1.1 Negotiating Space Safely

The research indicated that attitudes that created literal and metaphorical space included a willingness to acknowledge that different modes of being/positioning in the church environment require different attention. Ann's story reflects an unfolding process in which the attitudes displayed towards her enabled her to negotiate coming into a new space safely. She noted,

> When I first came in I used to sit right at the edge and wait for the service to finish, and then just bugger off. Cos, I struggled with social anxiety for a large number of years (Ann p.13).

Space-giving attitudes from the officer, and in the offer of opportunities for work and creative expression, enabled Ann to negotiate a place of belonging on her own terms.

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[572] By "metaphorical space" I mean attention to creating figurative space. Metaphorical space moves beyond paying attention to the mechanics of a physical environment and attends to attitudes of heart and mind that are willing to adapt and learn.

Later, instead of sitting on the edge, she noted her repositioning with a group of friends (Ann p.17). In contrast, Charles had a space specifically set aside for him in the corps building. In describing it warmly as his own corner, he indicated that this saving of a space specifically for him spoke of literal belonging to him. These two individuals were met with two alternative approaches that ensured the spaces made for them were suited to their individual preferences.

6.8.1.2 Embracing Difference

Attitudes that created space included a willingness to actively embrace difference. The data demonstrated a spectrum of experience in this regard. Harry and Ann both expressed that they felt the corps had become like family for them. In contrast, Fiona's experience with her son, Floyd, had not always been positive. She noted,

> …so it always comes back to people's attitudes, and as far as I'm concerned the Army is not inclusive of disabled people (Fiona p.17).

Whether Fiona was speaking in a local or more global Salvation Army sense was not clearly defined. Throughout her interview, there were acknowledgements of individual people who had made an effort to pursue authentic inclusion but, overall, her experience of attitudinal inclusion appeared to leave her with concerns.

6.8.1.3 Eroding of Space in Formal Settings

Long-established corps, where tradition was an established value, sometimes eroded space for disabled people. Ian noted that negative attitudes tended to be more visible in these more formal settings. Attitudes that closed up space in these settings were those that communicated the message that disabled people needed to abide by the conventions already established for the space. Quietness was one such convention (Ian p.16). Parents and siblings also appeared attuned to the subtle or sometimes overt rejection of difference, noise, or behaviour deemed inappropriate, such as walking around during services. Donna noted her perception that a general rule seemed to percolate below the surface that called for maintaining worship conventions, along with alerting parents when said conventions were not met (Donna p.11). In contrast, Jessica applauded the attitude of some pastoral officers towards her sister Joan, noting that,

> [Joan] does get quite loud when she's in church and she will acknowledge something that she likes, you know, quite loudly, and definitely some officers appreciate that quite well (Jessica p.13).

6.8.1.4 Proactive Inclusion

A further attitude that created space for the participants was that of a proactive orientation toward inclusion. This was an attitude that mitigated against last-minute efforts to accommodate persons with disability. There is a subtle dehumanisation attached to moving furniture or events to simply accommodate an unconsidered need, rather than occupying a space in which universal design concepts acknowledge the needs of everyone from the outset. For example, Bob recalled that the upstairs space, where youth events were usually held, does not have disability access. Sometimes, the organisers remembered this issue and took gear downstairs but occasionally he had not been able to join in (Bob p.28). Donna noted her disappointment that fear of the unknown held people back from proactively offering to take her son out. Assumptions were made about how difficult that might be, rather than proactive enquiries to determine the possibilities (Donna p.20).

Eve and Ethan commented on proactive approaches from a different angle. Eve noted the corps was welcoming on a Sunday but no follow-up phone calls occurred during the week (Eve p.22) Acknowledging the deep congregational acceptance of their son and the acceptance of the family unit as part of the congregation, Ethan concurred with his wife that this acceptance had not necessarily translated into proactive or supportive activity beyond the Sunday service. He reflected,

> We've never had any bad feedback, any criticism, bad smirky faces, or anything like that. So, it's more than a superficial acceptance… they don't necessarily proactively go out of their way to help and all that sort of carry-on (Ethan p.24).

6.8.1.5 Avoiding Minimalist Measures

On a tangential line, an attitude of 'minimalist accommodation' could also be detrimental to the well-being of people living with disabilities. Interestingly, the data supporting this observation came primarily from parents or siblings of disabled people. Donna reflected on a season in the corps when her son contributed by praying in the service. His wording was not easily understood by members of the congregation. Sadly, the whispers of discontent grew louder, some people became impatient and her son stopped participating (Donna p.10). Rather than celebrating a unique contribution and voice in their midst, the congregation in voicing their complaints voted for homogeneity. Fred also lamented the fact that people wanted his son to respond to them in a certain way, rather than celebrating Floyd's unique communication strategies. He commented,

> …so I don’t want people to give up a heap for Floyd but I do want to say that for them to accept that Floyd is part [of the corps], and realise that Floyd can’t for himself accept what he should be giving to them – that he should be returning the favour to them, but he can’t (Fred p.15).

6.8.1.6 Avoiding Homogeneity

This latent attitude towards worship and expression, dictating that everyone should conform to pre-determined patterns, undermined the unique personhood of the research participants. Recalling the notion of fitting square pegs into round holes, Ian emphasised individual uniqueness. He proposed that attitudes that called on disabled people to make adjustments, to ensure they fitted round holes, did not recognise that the holes themselves were irrelevant (Ian p.11). Ann underlined this notion in her reflection on the compassion of Jesus. While valuing his compassion, she highlighted that Jesus did not actually live with a disability. In other words, her experience of disability was unique to her. Reflecting on the compassionate attitude of the church, she noted,

> There’s these people that have this massive amount of compassion, who would go to the ends of the earth to help you, but they don’t quite understand how difficult it can be just to get out of bed (Ann p.25).

6.8.2 Actions that Facilitate Space

Space that is inclusive—both literally and metaphorically—requires attention to actions as well as attitudes. The data highlighted that actions that facilitated access and inclusion for people living with complex disability centred around personal interventions and corporate responses. It also included attention towards the overall “vibe” of the place (Donna p.11).

6.8.2.1 Buildings that are Accessible

Actions that spoke access included attention to detail in relation to the structure and amenities within the buildings. Not all participants felt the buildings were fully accessible. For example, Eve noted the limits of the changing facilities in the local corps (Eve p.23) and Ann recalled potential difficulty with access to quieter spaces upstairs in their building, which were only accessible via a staircase (Ann p.39). Greg noted that the two disabled carparks at his corps, usually taken by elderly congregants (an observation also noted by Fred), were inadequate and meant that he had to park to the rear of the building and subsequently bring his disabled daughter to the front entrance (Greg p.9).

Some critique in terms of willingness to spend money on upgrading facilities came from Ian, who described the Army “as cheap as chips (Ian p.21).” Greg noted that having more than two disability carparks would alter the zoning status on the building. He also noted a perceived reluctance from TSA to build another ramp at the rear of the building, which would facilitate two disability-accessible points of egress from the building (p.9). Such actions mirror the minimalist attitude noted earlier. In contrast, Eve recounted how the officer tried to ensure that the building amenities fitted the needs of her son, while also highlighting the tension inherent in making provision for people with disabilities without causing them unwanted focus. She recalled,

> That’s something I never took up because I didn’t want us… I didn’t want us to stand out. I wanted to be part of the Corps family without standing out (Eve p.22).

6.8.2.2 Access to Worship

Some of the participants noted that different actions were necessary in making it possible for them to access the act of worship. A range of opinions and experiences regarding the content of worship services was highlighted. Actions that facilitated greater access included attention to multi-sensory worship and opportunities to do something within the service. For example, enabling opportunities to move about in the hall was an action identified as opening literal and metaphorical space. Greg noted that space had actively been removed from someone with Down Syndrome in their congregation who stood up and moved enthusiastically every time the music started. Greg lamented the response and attendant lack of liberation (Greg p.11). Donna also noted that seating in their hall was too high and narrow for most people living with Down Syndrome. Being unable to plant their feet on solid ground led to increases in issues of balance (Donna p.11).

6.8.2.3 Attention to the Senses in Worship

In relation to various bodily senses, different issues emerged in the interviews. For example, Charles could not cope with the loudness of some services (Charles p.6). In contrast, Bob liked the effect of the music team’s sound bouncing off the walls (Bob p.19). Fiona confirmed that their son could not cope with strobe lighting (Fiona p.22). Ann also had difficulty with bright lights, which she noted could lead to migraine headaches (Ann p.39). These issues ultimately reflected the need for individual congregations to check in with their disabled brothers and sisters to determine actions that could facilitate greater comfort and participation.

The length of services and content delivery style were further areas in which actions that facilitated space for people with complex disability required reassessment. Donna echoed other participants such as Ann and Ian when she noted,

> It’s really quite restrictive if we only have auditory information coming at us…But to facilitate inclusion we need to consider these [other] tools - consider the different use of senses and how we can assist their use to engage with everything in our gatherings (Donna p.12).

Ann noted both the length of service and, like Ian, queried the length of time that was appropriate for delivering a sermon that was accessible (Ann pp.38–39). Similarly, Eve reflected that long services were not conducive to promoting access for everyone. She stated,

> And when you sit in our church, quite honestly, I don’t think it matters who the ministers have been over the years, you get a lot of people, old and young, that say the service has gone on for too long. We just want to go home (Eve p.22).

6.8.2.4 Helping versus Sympathy

In contrast to the limiting actions noted above, congregational action that helped Donna (p.8) and Eve (p.23) stay connected and experience much-needed fellowship during the week was access to home groups. The opportunity to have a group hosted in their own homes was considered very helpful. In light of difficulties with settling or feeding their sons, or the stress associated with organising child minders, having people come to their house made it possible to continue in community.

Discussion around the notion of “help” was highlighted by several participants. Comments noted earlier by Ethan reflected this reality and Fred also alluded to it, noting, “it’s not actually sympathy that you need, it’s help (Fred p.26)”. Echoing comments noted earlier by Donna, Jessica also bravely voiced her truth in regard to needing help in the form of a break from her sister (Jessica p.24). In this sense, help was understood as action that facilitated metaphorical access—to be part of the community, people needed help. Sympathy carried limited currency in facilitating space for people with complex disabilities.

Lack of access to pastoral support also caused concern for the participants. Fiona acknowledged the pain associated with being in one corps for most of their lives and the lack of active support in terms of pastoral visiting at home, or during various hospitalisations. To her recollection, no youth workers had visited and only one officer had ever had some one-on-one time with Floyd in his flat. This begs the question how can effective pastoral care be facilitated if people with complex disabilities are only noticed or engaged with on a Sunday?

6.8.2.5 Siblings

Giving attention to the needs of siblings in families with disabled people was identified as a helpful action. Donna, Eve, Fred and Greg all identified that helping with the care of other siblings was a concrete action that spoke access to them as a family unit. The effects on siblings of living with a disabled sibling was not a specific point of enquiry in this research. However, responses from parents in the research indicated that the effects were numerous and ranged from helping their children become more compassionate and sensitive to the needs of others (Donna p.6, Greg p.13), through to the perceived detrimental effects noted below. In some instances, they felt their other children had carried weighty experiences and anxieties that inclusion and support by the wider faith community may have mitigated. Action that facilitated access was to recognise and respond appropriately to the fact that disability affects the whole family unit in some way. Ian noted,

> Because it’s not just for me as an individual. When you’ve got somebody in your family, the whole family’s affected (Ian p.25).

Siblings within the family unit were affected and parents acknowledged that actions from extended family, pastors and congregations had the power to offset some of those effects. It was recognised in the interview conversations that parental care of the disabled child in the family was, at times, so all-consuming that attention was deflected from the siblings in the family. For example, Ethan and Fred both noted that their child’s siblings had lost sleep and were constantly confronted with the vulnerability of the disabled sibling (Ethan p.32, Fred p.27). Actions that would have facilitated space for the siblings in these settings was proactive and concrete engagement with them directly by wider family and congregational members.

6.8.2.6 Siblings as Child-Minders

A further action that hampered authentic inclusion for the disabled child and their siblings in the faith community was being cast into the role of temporary child-minder during Sunday School or worship services (Fiona p.16). Rather than consider how this particular child might be discipled within the setting, the disabled child was simply left to the sibling’s care. In this sense, access to the community was denied for both children. Greg noted,

> But what we found is when the kids went out they didn't know what to do with Grace and basically gave her to my younger daughter to look after, so my younger daughter felt she wasn't getting anything out of children's ministries or having fun or anything - she was basically babysitting Grace (Greg p.7).

This type of action did not create literal or metaphorical space for either child. First, the disabled child did not experience a genuine welcome or confirmation of being worthy of leadership planning and consideration. Secondly, the sibling was not enabled to move into any sense of personhood beyond that of being sibling to a disabled person.

6.8.3 Space on the Parade-Ground or Battle-Ground

While some of the attitudes and actions noted earlier contributed to opening up literal and metaphorical space for people with disabilities, the participants' commentary highlighted that some Army spaces were curated from within a particular understanding of TSA. If it is to be an Army that brings life, the commentary highlighted that TSA should be more concerned with a "Battle-Ground" approach to inclusion rather than a "Parade-Ground" approach. Battle-grounds are intense and messy. Parade-grounds are ceremonial, carefully orchestrated and celebrate uniformity. In this sense, participants thought TSA should be more concerned with the inclusive ministry of a battle-ground than the curated optics of a parade-ground.[573]

To borrow further from the military metaphor, attending to operational duties was deemed more efficacious than attending to ceremonial duties. Charles's story, noted earlier, underlined this difference. Here, TSA seemed more swayed by the voice from outside the faith community and assumptions based on appearances, rather than pursuing its active solidarity alongside Charles, one of its soldiers. In a phrase that encapsulates the meaning of parade-ground army, Charles lamented,

> Still I feel the Army are putting image before certain people groups (Charles p.9).

Similarly, Ian believed that William Booth's original critique of the established church (reviewed in Chapter 5), was being played out again in Salvationist congregations in relation to disabled people who did not quite fit in (Ian p.30). However, he also challenged that the mission of the Salvation Army had been subsumed under the demands of running foodbanks (Ian p.32). Two observations can be made at this point.

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[573] I am indebted to General Lyndon Buckingham and Commissioner Bronwyn Buckingham for the origin of these distinctions during personal conversations in 2019.

First, one could say that the foodbanks of today equate to William Booth's soup kitchens of history. Secondly, if Ian meant that attention was taken away from pastoral ministry by the administrative demands of such endeavours, then a case could be made for attention to this perceived imbalance.

6.8.3.1 Visible Signs of Belonging

The military metaphor that underpins TSA was discussed comprehensively in the previous chapter. In regard to this research, the notion of a continuum of thought and expression is helpful again. There were participants who self-identified as friends of TSA, others as adherents and the remaining as soldiers. Some had been associated with TSA all their lives and others had come into TSA by way of marriage or invitation by a friend. The opportunity to become part of TSA's recognised constituency was identified as important to some and less important to others. For example, Harry, who was enrolled at 18 years of age, found soldiership opened up greater involvement in the life of the corps (p.14). In contrast, having been offered the opportunity to pursue soldiership, Bob summed up his feelings with the phrase, "mweh" interpreted as "whatever" with a shrug (p.63).

For some participants, inclusive space did encompass the opportunity to be overtly identified as a Salvationist by the wearing of a uniform or Salvation Army tee-shirt, commonly described as "witness wear." Analysis of the data showed that uniform-wearing was associated with a sense of belonging and kinship, or as an identity marker associated with their work situation. For example, reflecting on his journey towards the space of soldiership, Harry noted,

> Back then it meant I was a bit more involved in the church as a member and today it's kind of meant that I've found my place in the church (Harry p.14).

For Ann, the space of adherent and publicly wearing witness wear had opened up a space of responsibility. She recalled,

> I wear the embroidered shirts when I'm doing the foodbank…I just have to be careful what I do when I'm wearing it [referring to vaping] (Ann p.18).

For others, such as Bob, the uniform was seen as restrictive (Bob p.62). In the case of Ian, the uniform had become associated with negative imagery associated with a preference for a parade-ground rather than a battle-ground Army. Ian's critique focused on uniformed leadership being out of touch with what might be called troops on the ground (Ian p.29), while Greg's critique touched on a particular facet of parade-ground versus battle-ground army mentality—certain troops getting more supplies than others. He lamented,

> The one thing that probably disappoints is – like what you see. I know in the Salvation Army, if you're not in the 'in group' then you're out, okay. I've seen people in the 'in group' where the mother might be sick so suddenly you might be getting meals, they're getting their house cleaned, they're getting all sorts. Well, Grace spent a hell of a lot of time, sorry, in hospital, and we got nothing (Greg p.7).

6.8.3.2 Pastoral Tone and Corporate Tone

The approach of officer leaders (pastors) towards participants also signalled space on the battle-ground or the limiting nature of the parade-ground. While noting that officers are representatives of the broader establishment, the analysis highlighted that their personal interactions with the participants facilitated movement towards faith, expressed through the institution of TSA, or opened up distance, leading to some frustration or disappointment. That is, the approach of the officer was pivotal in both building personal relationships and setting the corporate tone. Ian noted a parade-ground tone associated with officers more concerned with Army protocols, doctrinal stances and worship-service etiquette than the lived realities of their congregants (Ian p.25).

In contrast to Ian's experience, Ann noted ways in which her pastoral officer had supported her in the wider vistas, or battlegrounds, of her life, by organising counsellors and support personnel (Ann p.36). Jessica described going to TSA in a provincial town simply because she enjoyed it. This enjoyment had been fuelled by the way in which the expression of Salvationism was not limited to the parade-ground of Sunday services. She described times when her experience had been that the troops were actually in the trenches with her and her disabled sibling (Jessica p.11).

6.8.3.3 An Army in Transition

Observations regarding changing traditions in TSA highlighted some areas of tension. For example, Fred and Fiona, who had attended TSA all their lives, noted a sense of displacement for them and their disabled son as TSA transitioned into new ministry priorities and patterns. They questioned whether belonging was understood to include those already in the fellowship and those currently external to it (Fred and Fiona p.15). This led them to feeling displaced in an environment they considered to be their spiritual home. Their commentary reflected an age-old tension within faith communities between longstanding membership and new membership, and the perception of accommodation and adjustment of space only being made in one direction (Fred p.15). In this case, they felt the longstanding disabled member of the community was not afforded the same grace as the newcomer.

While it was not possible to research this accommodation dynamic further in the context of this research, Fred and Fiona's comments did highlight the non-inclusive tension that circulates around some forms of dysfunction. In short, some types of disability are more acceptable to the public and in the church. Somewhat veiled within these reflections was also a query about loving people into the kingdom and continuing to love and care for those who are already within the kingdom (Fred p.38). In this case, attitudes, actions and parade-ground notions of TSA coalesced to close up the space of inclusion. Fred and Fiona commented about a specific example with their son, Floyd,

> He [Floyd] was just too loud out there and people didn't know how to handle it, whereas you've got other people who are "not disabled," but shall we say dependent members of the assembly who come for the cup of tea, who are just as loud and possibly more obnoxious and more dangerous, who are welcomed with open arms…cos we're reaching out to them…Because we're loving them (Fred & Fiona pp.13–14).

In summary, theme two highlighted that authentic inclusion that liberates people with complex disabilities, involves attention to literal and metaphorical space. Attitudes and actions that facilitated that space were varied and, at times, reflected a particular interpretation of TSA's approach to mission—battle-ground or parade-ground. An Army that brings life is an Army that recognises that authentic inclusion involves making literal and metaphorical space for disabled people.

6.9 Theme Three: Taking Tea with Me

Supporting people with complex disabilities takes time, presence and active appreciation. Such attentive appreciation occurs in the context of lingering over a cup of tea with people. Therefore, in order to support individuals with disability and their families in Salvation Army congregations, all stakeholders need to develop the capacity to linger with and actively appreciate disabled people. Analysis of the primary data indicated three sub-themes in this section. Support in the context of complex disability was found in 1) active appreciation, 2) having a place-card at the table, and 3) in the acknowledgement that life-stage transitions can move across chronology for people with disability. That is, human development is not always linear in nature.

6.9.1 Active Appreciation

There is an observable distinction between sharing life together and what might be described as the fleeting, easy, or non-costly task of welcoming people with disabilities into congregations with a smile, an automatic door and the proffer of a *War Cry* magazine. Such responses reflect the non-inclusive actions described by Ian earlier. In this research the theme, “taking tea with me” underscored a sometimes subtle and sometimes overt lack of active appreciation for the disabled person and/or their families.

Lack of active appreciation manifested itself in a reluctance to tarry with the person who lived with a complex disability. Having or providing a cup of tea has long been part of TSA cultural identity. The unwillingness to tarry and *take tea* underscored a lack of genuine appreciation for the company, perspective and relational nature of the person with a complex disability. For example Jessica noted her experience with her sister during the cup of tea served after Sunday services,

> … so I sit Joan at a table and I go and get her drinks, but very few people come and sit at that table with her (Jessica p.14).

In this space, the person with a disability, rather than being someone whose company was actively sought out and supported, was left to take tea on their own, or only with their direct family members. This lack of fellowship illuminated the distinction between easy welcome and active appreciation. To form lasting and mutually beneficial friendships, it is necessary to linger over the teapot, be that in the Army hall or in someone’s home.

Dismissive, impatient, or intolerant responses within the congregational setting sat in opposition to active appreciation of the disabled person and/or the family unit. Some of these responses were overt in nature and some more subtle. Fred noted a spectrum in play regarding levels of active appreciation towards his son. He noted that some people lingered, listened and were responsive towards his son, while others found it too difficult and backed away, disappearing from him quickly (Fred p.13). Greg’s comments highlighted a tendency in congregations for the disabled person to be enquired about by proxy. That is, instead of approaching them for direct engagement, parents or siblings were used as the conduit for concern or engagement. In Greg’s estimation, active appreciation of Grace did not have to equate with fully understanding everything about Grace.

> And there's a lot of people in the community that we serve that know Grace and are forever asking questions, about how's Grace and all that, but do they truly understand Grace? Probably not, but do they need to, at the end of the day? (Greg p.18).

Jessica's observations highlighted the chasm existing between toleration and active appreciation. She described the difference in her personal response and that of other congregational members towards a new woman with a disabled child in their setting. The mother was somewhat laid-back with her feet up on the seats. Jessica interpreted this as a sign of her feeling at home and comfortable in the space. Sadly, other congregants became actively non-appreciative of her presence (Jessica p.19).

6.9.1.1 Costly Engagement

Taking this notion of active appreciation one step further, Fred observed that some disabilities appeared easier to accommodate in the congregation than others (Fred p.12). His observation included the suspicion that congregations might subtly congratulate themselves on their disability inclusiveness when it had in fact cost them little in terms of self-investment. For example, Fred described his disabled son as socially aggressive. He explained this as meaning Floyd had limited understanding of personal space and conversational etiquette (Fred p.12). In this sense, Floyd might be perceived as more personally costly to include for other members of the faith community, than a person who quietly occupied a wheelchair. In Fred and Fiona's experience, if the disabled person was loud, or stood out in a crowd, there was less appreciation of their company and personhood (Fred & Fiona p.13).

6.9.1.2 Friendship Norms

A lack of general fellowship within homes also underlined this lack of active appreciation. It also spoke to the lack of friendship norms. So, we had Harry not receiving invites, as noted earlier. Fred noted his son's need for physical friendship, in an age of digital communication in which his disabilities made that manner of relating impossible for him (Fred p.31). Greg noted that they had lost friends because those friends were unable to appreciate the demands involved in raising a child with disabilities (Greg p.9). Ethan described this lack of active appreciation as one in which they eventually felt forgotten about (Ethan p.45). Tinged with grief, these comments highlighted the results of a non-appreciative stance towards people with disabilities and their wider family units.

Aside from the usual social conventions of greeting and farewell, the research indicated a lack of active movement towards the person with the disability and/or their families. While present at worship settings, the person with a complex disability and their families found themselves on the margins of, or totally absent from, the social lives of other congregants. In contrast, active appreciation involved simple gestures and taking the time to visit with and get to know people. For example, having noted that people did not visit them at home, Greg commented,

> If people just turned up with certain things, just occasionally, that would be a relief on my wife, you know, and it'd be like, people visiting to see how everybody was going, you know, and probably getting to know us a bit better in that way…just treat us like normal families (Greg p.14).

Thus active appreciation involved a willingness to move towards sustained engagement and exchange with disabled people. Its ultimate goal might be understood as the establishment of life-sustaining friendships and support structures in which the disabled person was fully and actively appreciated for themselves.

6.9.2 Place-Cards at the Table

A further dimension of this theme "taking tea with me," centred around the notion of place-cards at the table. Place-cards at a table indicate meticulous attention to detail. Noting a personal example, 10 years ago my husband and I attended an out-of-town family wedding. Circumstances were such that our son was unable to attend. The bridal party were aware of this situation. When we reached the wedding reception, a place-card with Samuel's name was present, alongside ours, on the table. The place-card on the table was a concrete expression of an orientation towards inclusion even in physical absentia.

The research participants noted a variety of responses that highlighted a place-card on the table orientation to themselves or their relatives within the church setting. Place-card activity indicated that forethought and time had gone into making the person feel supported and included from the outset. Non-minimalist attitudes and actions that facilitated inclusion have already been signalled in this research. The place-card orientation spoke to an agenda of preparedness and judicious provision. For example, rather than moving chairs to accommodate a wheelchair as the person wheeling it arrives, universal access had already been established in *some* settings with wide automatic doors, suitable bathrooms and accessible routes through auditoriums.

6.9.2.1 Valued Voices

Having a place-card at the table also meant that one’s voice was valued at the table. Experiences of this type of inclusion varied. Invitations to participate in services were acknowledged but were sometimes dependent on the attitude/experience of officers and/or congregants. For example, Ann was invited to be part of the music team and Harry had been publicly interviewed by the officer about his disability (Harry p.12). Having tried other churches, Harry had found that TSA fitted his personality (Harry p.7). In contrast to Ian’s difficult experience with lack of follow-through on the building access suggestions noted earlier, he had been invited to share his experience on a Disability Awareness Sunday. He did think that this opportunity at the table resulted in greater awareness for the congregation regarding what it was like to live with complex disability (p.25).

In contrast to this positive response, Ethan expressed concern over perceived responses to the sharing of his testimony regarding their family journey with a disabled son. The observation was made that, while an initial emotive response to the story was evident within the congregation, it did not result in long-lasting place-cards at the table. He commented that, subsequent to the initial response, nothing had changed in the congregational responses towards them (Ethan p.47).

For Fred, a place-card at the table meant ensuring ongoing freedom for their disabled son. In relation to worship, this meant that he wanted his son to be free to worship as himself (Fred p.25). Not all place-cards need to be scripted the same. A place-card also meant that Floyd was recognised as a person in his own right. Fiona noted the tendency to talk over disabled people, or about them, rather than directly to them (Fiona p.29). Making assumptions about capacity and comprehension were irrelevant in that every person deserved the dignity of being addressed directly.

6.9.2.2 Noticing Absence

Place-cards at the table also ensured that people were missed when they were not present on Sundays or at other events. In other words, to be truly included meant that a gap was noticed when they were not present. For the disabled person, this attention to noticing their absence translated into an assurance that even if they were unable to attend a service, their place in the community still existed. Ann spoke of being missed and welcoming others who had been missing and the happiness that this brought to them both (Ann p.15). Charles’s corner in the hall also spoke to this care around place-cards (Charles p.5). Fred highlighted how members of the congregation enquired after Fiona and Floyd, indicating that they had noticed their absence (Fred p.13).

Absence from the community highlighted a further difficulty for some of the parents. In essence, the commentary centred around the difference that living with a disability, or a child/sibling with a disability, made to their ability to attend some of the social settings they once would have participated in. Trying to maintain a place-card while also attending to the specific needs encountered by, or with, their loved one was sometimes difficult to navigate. For example, Greg noted,

> Just little things like we can't be ready in 5 minutes, we can't be there, and there's certain things that we just can't do. There's certain things that because of her health, especially in winter time, we can't come out and watch a movie at night time because we're risking Grace's health and we're the ones who will suffer because we'll be the ones up all night later on (Greg p.13).

On the other hand, sometimes assumptions were made that they would not attend certain events and so invitations were not issued at all—effectively removing any place-cards. Such actions imparted a sense of abandonment, isolation and sadness (Ethan p.44).

6.9.2.3 Resistance to Blaming

Overall, the research participants were consistent in a reluctance to blame congregants or family members for not understanding their day-to-day lives. However, that did not translate into wanting anything less than lovingly curated place-cards for their children or siblings. Jessica simply acknowledged that people did not understand their situation. There was a hint of resignation within her comments (Jessica p.25). In some instances, disappointment was expressed over the lack of place-cards from extended family members. For example, Ethan acknowledged that extended family had their own lives to live but that in some cases it felt like place-cards for their family had been reduced (Ethan p.42).

Place-cards were not understood as establishing a place at the centre of everything. The three fathers in the research noted that they did not want to be centre stage in the life of the corps. For example, Fred commented that he did not want to attend a church that opened and shut solely around the needs of his son (Fred p.14). Similarly, Greg did not want all corps programmes revolving around their daughter's needs (Greg p.7). However, neither did they want their children or spouses forgotten. Attention to the careful guardianship of place-cards could help to honour all who belonged to the community.

6.9.3 Transitions Across Chronology

A further aspect of "taking tea" with disabled people was taking the time to learn that transitioning through patterns of social engagement, language development and behaviour norms is not necessarily a linear process for a person with a complex disability. In other words, their development, actions and understanding might not follow perceived norms for their chronological age. Rather than understanding this negatively, disabled children might be said to transition across chronology. In doing so, the parents noticed their disabled family members navigating across paths and patterns of development and engagement or even forging new ones.

Parents and siblings in this research noted that congregants and wider family members lacked understanding in this area of transitioning across the lifespan in a manner different to other people. In some cases, unhelpful assumptions followed and people were observed as not always adapting their expectations. For example, in regard to his son, Fred's simple but profound plea was, "Please just accept him for how he is (Fred p.15)."

6.9.3.1 Childhood to Adulthood

Assumptions about normalised patterns of age transition resulted in unhelpful responses. Two mothers highlighted that the transition from childhood to teenage years, or adulthood, proved difficult for people to navigate. Donna noted that disability was somehow deemed more acceptable, understandable and manageable, when her son was a child (Donna p.9). Fiona noted, "It's fine while they're little, while they're kids (Fiona p.11)." However, now that he was older and able to "bail people up," or socially engage in a different way, a degree of "prejudice" had begun to show in people's responses towards him. Donna's experience was similar. She noted that people who had known him all his life, did not know how to engage with her son as an adult. Things became more difficult as Dave moved from junior programmes through into adulthood. It was harder to define his place of belonging in the corps. She lamented a pull towards homogeneity, noting the continuity of his personhood, as against congregational expectations that he communicate in the same manner as other adults,

> Yes, there is sort of an expectation that they will be like all other adults, when their intellectual response to things is not at that level,

> making it difficult, and yet in some other ways they're exactly the same (Donna p.18).

6.9.3.2 Children of the Regiment

Tangential to the battle-ground/parade-ground Army noted earlier, the data also reflected an underlying discourse around being "a child of the regiment (Fred p.26)." That is, any long-term attendance at a Salvation Army congregational setting aligned with a narrative centred around what Fiona described as expectations. Fiona and Fred both observed a willingness to extend inclusive hospitality towards disruptive persons on the margins of the faith community, but the perception persisted that their son, who had been present in the congregation most of his life was "expected to behave properly (Fiona p.25)." Accommodations were made for newcomers but not for long-term members of the faith community who journeyed through life as adults with a non-symmetrical intellectual age.

These transitions across—rather than through—chronology were also noted in how the church building was set up and how services were conducted. For example, Donna noted that children and adults with Down Syndrome wanted something to do, might need to wander, and found it difficult to sit on church pews (Donna p.13). The largely oral nature of sharing any teaching meant that the use of wider sensory engagement was curtailed. For people with complex disabilities, attention to opportunities for movement, participation and sensory involvement, occurred across the ageing process. That is, people with complex disabilities did not grow out of an appreciation for these ways of engaging in worship.

6.9.3.3 Facilitating Discipleship

Attending to patterns of transitioning across chronology meant more than the inclusive attitudes and actions that have already been noted. Here, the data analysis indicated that understanding non-linear transitioning was a critical aspect of how the participants were enabled to learn and grow in their discipleship. To consign all people to oral presentations, to make everyone sit in the same way, or to restrict space for someone to pace or move, was to deny them access to their own worship experience. In this sense, Donna's son praying (Donna p.10), Fred's son conducting the band (Fred p.19) and Jessica's sister audibly responding to the preaching (Jessica p.13), were all examples of movement across chronology that aided their disabled kin to actually worship in spirit and in truth.

6.9.3.4 Dependent Adults in the Home

The data further highlighted some of the specific pressures that the absence of linear chronological transitions had on parents or siblings. Many parents faced parenthood assuming a naturally occurring progression that would see their child achieve medically and socially delineated milestones, gain physical and decision-making independence, and leave home to pursue their own career and life goals. A variety of social norms were side-lined by having a dependent older adolescent or adult remaining in the household. For example, Ethan and Eve noted the ongoing impacts on their marriage (Ethan p.49), Fred and Fiona discussed the issues associated with setting up their son in a semi-independent flat (Fred & Fiona pp.9–10), and Jessica reflected on the careful navigation required to ensure she was receiving enough respite time for herself (Jessica p.24). While the task of parenting is never completed in one sense, there is usually some sense of letting up or letting go. For those who parented, or supported a person with complex disability, the boundaries of letting up or letting go were more obscure. The journey was sometimes circuitous, rather than linear, and was therefore potentially more difficult to navigate.

In summary, taking tea with someone opened a space generally inaccessible in other forms of social interaction. It indicated a willingness to still oneself, to pause and disconnect from other demands, to be present with the one sharing the table and the tea. Pausing to share a cup of tea moved beyond political correctness, or minimalistic adherence to scriptural hospitality imperatives. Pastors and congregations that took the time to have tea with persons, parents, or siblings of those with complex disability potentially broadened their own ministry settings and embodied the fellowship imperative in supporting people with complex disabilities. Taking tea was an opportunity that led beyond nominal notions of welcome towards radically active appreciation, place-cards at the table and an understanding of the opportunities inherent in transitions across chronology. An Army that brings life is an Army that recognises that supporting people with complex disabilities takes time, presence and active appreciation.

6.10 Theme Four: Familiarity and Fatigue

Complex disability is chronic in nature. Routines associated with supporting people with complex disabilities are often unobserved and unrelenting. Because of the chronic nature of these disabilities, a sense of long-term familiarity with the person and/or their family potentially led to increased invisibility. An experience of fatigue was also noted in individual and parental/sibling interviews. Therefore, in order to support individuals with disability and their families in Salvation Army congregations, all stakeholders need to develop an understanding of the chronic nature along with the isolating and unrelenting routines characteristic of living with a complex disability. Analysis of the data indicated that support in this context was found in an awareness that 1) chronic means constant, 2) sitting pretty belied the effort involved in public appearances, and 3) long-term disability necessitated navigating relationships with allied support service personnel who could be experienced as allies or foes.

6.10.1 Chronic Means Constant

We have already noted reactions to living with a disability from individual participants whose overwhelming response was that disability itself was not a disaster. However, the nature of their disabilities was chronic, which meant constant attention towards the adaptations necessary to pursue an ordinary life. Charles noted that he would not change his situation, Harry noted that with the right support he was just getting on with life, Ian noted that with the passing of time his body was experiencing more fatigue and Bob acknowledged that people’s responses to him were not always age appropriate. His disability might be said to be chronic but it had not rendered him child-like for the term of his natural life. Ann reiterated the chronic nature of her disability and the constant attention needed to ensure that she had the daily capacity to manage her fatigue (Ann p.24).

Parents and siblings also experienced the chronic nature of the disability. In relation to living with and supporting a relative with a complex disability, the responses from parents and siblings ranged from positive notions such as the slowing down of life’s pace, observing increased compassion and flexibility in the siblings living in the same household and embracing different ways of looking at the world. More difficult impacts included a less spontaneous approach to life, ongoing financial pressures and the chronic nature of dealing with, or educating against, negative assumptions made about their disabled relatives. Such experiences added to the burden of overall fatigue.

In a manner similar to that noted with the individuals living with complex disability, none of the relatives associated with this research articulated a desire for their relative to be other than who they were. However, a consistent thread in their responses was a desire for the community around them to understand the chronic, unobserved and unrelenting nature of the routines associated with their relatives and to support them in the rendering of that care. For example, Donna, while acknowledging the perceived complexities associated with caring for her son, noted,

> I dream of the day where people would just feel confident that it would be okay just to take him and they would work it out (Donna p.21).

6.10.1.1 Perseverance and Organisational Consistency

The chronic nature of complex disability necessitated an aptitude for perseverance and organisational consistency from the relative supporting the person with the disability. Participants noted how structured their lives had to be. For example, in describing her work and home life, Jessica underlined how finely tuned the routines are that enabled both her life, and that of her sister, to unfold safely and satisfyingly. No matter how late her own evening work shift ended, she still had to be up to get Joan organised (Jessica p.11). Events such as the lockdowns associated with the COVID-19 pandemic underscored how all-encompassing the care associated with complex disabilities can be. The week of our interview, Jessica had her sister attending an out-of-home day programme for the first time in 3 months (Jessica p.25).

A complex disability occurs persistently across the lifespan. Therefore, the emotional, spiritual and physical resources of people with disabilities and their relatives was constantly subject to the possibility of depletion. Greg noted that living with a person with a complex disability is “24/7” in nature and that, for him as Grace’s parent, staying in bed until 6.30am was a “sleep-in (Greg p.13).” Participants noted that the typical means of replenishment, such as holidays, date nights, uninterrupted sleep, regular access to worship or home group settings, were fraught with organisational and emotional difficulty. In some instances, participants noted that their lack of attendance at social events was interpreted as being antisocial (Greg p.9). In fact, carer access, health concerns, or event suitability were the leading causes for a narrowed social life. Linked to this lack of attendance at corps or social events, Eve acknowledged that the chronic nature of her son’s loud seizures meant that they had become more withdrawn and reclusive (Eve pp.20–21).

6.10.1.2 Care Plans and Life plans

One further way in which the chronic nature of complex disability affected the relatives was the constant revisiting of care plans, goal setting, integration strategies, and attention to future-proofing for their relatives. Donna noted how overwhelming it was having various agencies visit after the birth of their son (Donna p.5). The person with a complex disability required this type of ongoing professional input, but the relatives were constantly called on to revisit the initial trauma, advocate for the person, all while welcoming more strangers into their private lives and residential spaces. A further impact of this continuing advocacy and the ongoing need to teach everybody else how to deal with your child, as Donna noted, was that any call to help with disability advocacy within, or beyond, the church setting just added to a chronic shortage of energy reserves (Donna p.15).

Most of the participants became visibly emotional at some point within the interview process while reflecting on various experiences with their loved one. Points of ongoing tension were held between the love and responsibility felt towards the relative, the desire to be involved in supportive and safe practices, the cost to their own life agenda and the realisation that “chronic” (disability) means for the term of *each* person’s natural life. Greg summarised this point when he observed,

> Actually, we can’t just leave her and say play with your friend, you know, give us that five minutes out, you know. You don’t have that. One of us has to be with her 24/7 (Greg p.14).

6.10.2 Sitting Pretty

The arduous routines sometimes associated with living with a complex disability were often unobserved by those outside the immediate relationship. Or, in another sense, people had become so familiar with the image of the disabled person sitting pretty in their midst that they failed to really see them. The notion of “sitting pretty” belied the effort sometimes involved in being out in public. For example, Greg noted,

> To be fair, I don’t think people understand what it’s like to have a special needs child and I think you know, that sometimes they see people come in here in a wheelchair and they think, ‘Oh yeah, they’re happy.’ But they don’t know what’s involved 24/7 (Greg p.8).

Greg also remembered the surprise of his pastor on learning of the ongoing requirement for nappies and specialist feeding in their lives (Greg p.9). Other participants noted that while they might arrive in the church setting with their relative tidily dressed or sitting comfortably in their wheelchair, the community had no idea of the efforts or processes involved in making that happen. Ann spoke of the effort involved in simply organising herself to get out of the house in the morning (Ann p.25). Fred noted the progression in difficulty over a number of years that now resulted in his wife mostly staying home with their son (Fred p.10).

6.10.2.1 Managing Privacy – Asking for Help

Related to this notion of sitting pretty, was the tension inherent in maintaining people's privacy balanced with being open about the specific demands they were dealing with. Some spoke of the continuous attention required to attend to toileting and feeding issues while Eve noted their own turn towards reclusive postures instead of being more honest and asking for assistance where they needed it (Eve p.21). This assistance was generally about wider avenues of support, rather than tasks specifically associated with the disabled person. Issues such as managing medication, feeding, seizure control and safe transferring practices, meant that caregivers had developed a high level of skill. Families were not asking for that kind of support from congregations (Fred and Floyd p.27, Ethan and Eve p.32). Instead, the call was for recognition of the demands involved and the employment of imaginative support practices that enabled the whole family to flourish and/or take time out. As an example, perhaps a congregational member could have taken Greg's place in the outing noted below, or sat with Floyd at home so that his parents could attend church together on occasion. Greg recalled,

> So yeah, as I said, like going to the beach, it's not an everyday thing for us but we do go, but we can't go as a, like we'll do certain things as a family, but then I've got to split off with Grace because she'll only last so much. So, then I get my wife and my kids to go and do windsurfing or whatever, swimming, and I'll just walk Grace around doing something else, so things as a family are very little (Greg p.13).

6.10.2.2 Respite Care

Participants also reflected on a sense of loss and/or guilt associated with using respite services. On the one hand, they knew they needed it but they did not want to need it (Jessica p.24). For some, respite had been difficult to negotiate. For example, Greg and his wife did not want to leave Grace with other people. They tried young people as support helpers in their home, then older people and then a professional respite facility which their daughter only seemed to tolerate for a few days (Greg p.5). Others such as Fred and Fiona had set up a home on their property, which their son rented from them. Included in the house was capacity for respite services offered to other members of the congregation and community. This enabled them to directly employ people they could trust with the care of their son and others (Fiona p.23).

For participants who had relatives with significant impairments, particularly related to language development, the high degree of trust required in the carer's aptitude and attitudes, was a further source of unobserved tension (Fiona p.24). In Bob's case, he was bitten by another resident while in respite care—a traumatic and desperate experience for him and his parents (Bob pp.64–65). So, while the casual onlooker might see respite as a holiday for the relative, issues around the actual physical organisation of such time out, coupled with the demand for high degrees of trust in the provider, overlaid respite with a degree of unrelieved tension resulting in more fatigue.

6.10.2.3 Multiple Seasons of Stress

The routines associated with supporting a relative with complex disability were relentless in nature. Participants observed that, while other people might have a season of illness or difficulty and receive prayerful and/or practical support, their season of difficulty, or the effects of the original season, were ongoing. Eve pondered how long they could expect people in the family or congregation to keep praying, visiting or delivering meals (Eve p.21). This ongoing new reality meant there were significant adjustments to be made in the way the household functioned as a whole. These adjustments become routinised in ways that gave structure to the family unit, but their relentless nature also placed constraints on the overall life of the family, as has already been noted.

Participants also noted a variety of experiences associated with the familiarity inherent in long-term participation in a corps setting. A degree of response fatigue was noted at this juncture. That is, participant experiences reflected a tendency, in familial and congregational life, for people to respond well in moments of crisis, such as an initial diagnosis or accident, but noted that ongoing support diminished over time. For some, the support seemed entirely absent. Reflecting on her experience with Floyd, Fiona noted that they had numerous hospital admissions, particularly during his first year of life. The corps in which they worshipped had a hospital visiting team—but no-one ever made it to see her or Floyd (Fiona p.18). Sadness and a sense of loneliness appear to frame those memories.

6.10.3 Allied Support: Friend and Foe

In order to manage the chronic, unobserved and relentless nature of the routines associated with living with a complex disability, participants also reflected on the place of professional, allied health support services. Simply stated, experiences of allied health support services varied. For some participants, such services played a crucial role in empowering them to live ordinary lives, while others experienced ongoing tension, disappointment, or frustration associated with negotiating support services. For example, Harry noted the positive impact of his support worker towards maintaining his independence (Harry p.6), while Ann firmly noted the lack of assistance from some care agencies (Ann p.37). Bob's experience of being left unattended in a van, without air-conditioning, highlighted the issue of trust that was touched on earlier. In this case, professional allied support disappointed him when he felt his safety had been directly compromised by their action (Bob p.68).[574]

6.10.3.1 Lived Experience and Professional Opinion

A feeling of being overwhelmed can initially accompany a disability diagnosis. This has already been noted in Donna's story (Donna p.5). Further to this sense of being overwhelmed was the expression of frustration that was sometimes concomitant with service provision. Fiona reeled from engagement with support personnel who, having obviously not read files properly before engaging with the family, dismissed her rights as a mother in communication regarding her adult son, whose comprehension level had been estimated as that of a 6- to 7-year-old (Fiona p.9). A tension was acknowledged between knowledge gained in 24/7 lived experience and that gained by professionals supporting individuals and families operating within the disability paradigm. On the one hand, Eve had been told that "parents know best" by allied support people but her lived experience had resulted in the conflicts noted below,

> So, we had a lot of conflicts and we've had a lot of conflicts with professionals actually sticking by the book of what they've been taught and not actually prepared to consider other options that we believed weren't harmful to his health. They were certainly worth a try when they weren't giving us any better suggestions (Eve p.16).

6.10.3.2 Supportive Families as Allies

The role of supportive family in this context was also highlighted by the research participants. For example, Greg noted that they managed because of a supportive family (Greg p.12). Eve and Ethan noted that it was important to work out with family, such as their own ageing parents, what support activities were appropriate in the case of vulnerable persons. Eve acknowledged that, similarly to the trust issues noted earlier with respite services, it had taken time for her to trust her son's care to family members (Eve p.31). In some cases, disappointment over the level of support by close family was acknowledged (Ethan p.43). So, a tension existed within a tension—wanting and

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[574] When this experience was disclosed during the interview process, I spoke to my supervisors who guided me to advise Bob of his rights and provide access details for the Health and Disability Commission's complaint process.

needing support, letting go sufficiently to receive the support and managing the disappointment when support did not eventuate.

In summary, the chronic, unobserved and unrelenting routines associated with living with complex disability were framed within the notions of familiarity and fatigue. To offset this familiarity and fatigue, some mechanism within the pastoral care life of the faith community is required that recognises that people with complex disabilities and their relatives require ongoing support. To be an Army that brings life is to be an Army that recognises that routines associated with complex disability are chronic, unobserved and relentless in nature.

6.11 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the findings from interviews with five people with complex disability and seven family members of people with complex disabilities in TSA. Data analysis has revealed four themes across this data set. The themes and sub-themes have been presented throughout the chapter with some accompanying analytic commentary. Further comprehensive discussion of these four themes occurs later in the thesis.

Theme one highlighted that disability itself is not a disaster but that how people respond could make it more difficult. Theme two noted that authentic inclusion involves literal and metaphorical space. The third theme confirmed that supporting people with complex disabilities takes time, presence and active appreciation. Finally, theme four noted that complex disability is chronic in nature. Routines associated with support are often unobserved and relentless. In order to be an Army that brings life, the findings of this chapter indicate that attention needs to be focused towards these four initial themes. In the following chapter, consideration is given to the findings from the two focus groups and findings directly linked to the organising thread of the thesis—fullness of life.

Chapter 7 – Listening to Pastors and Mission Support Staff

Above all people do need friends, to be asking after them, and to know what they're interested in – just basic things like that. (Donna)

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the research findings from interviews with five individuals living with complex disability and five interviews with parents or siblings of disabled people in Salvation Army congregations. Four themes, with associated sub-themes, have already been noted. The current chapter continues with Stage 2 of the Practical Theological Reflection Model (PTRM), employing focus group discussions as a means to wider dialogue across the constituency of TSA. Attention now turns to the findings obtained from two such discussions, one held with pastoral officers and one with mission support personnel.

In the first section of this chapter, two themes are presented. As in the previous chapter, the themes and sub-themes are outlined with some accompanying analytic commentary. More detailed discussion of the themes occurs later in the thesis. In the second section of this chapter, direct consideration is given to findings across all four data sets related to the organising motif of this research—fullness of life (John 10:10b) and TSA's claim to be, "The Army that Brings Life."

7.2 Focus Group Discussions

The first focus group was conducted in person with corps officers who minister in a pastoral sense in local congregations within the Auckland metropolitan area. Commentary from members of this focus group discussion all have pseudonyms beginning with the letter 'K.' The second focus group was conducted online, via Zoom, with mission support staff from areas including training, media, chaplaincy and children's ministries. Participants in this focus group were located across New Zealand. Commentary from members of this focus group discussion all have pseudonyms beginning with the letter "L."

The overarching goal for the focus groups was a full and frank discussion about disability in the context of the experience of the congregational officers or mission support personnel, to that point in time. There was no desire or requirement to reach consensus within the groups. Some participants acknowledged limited engagement with people with complex disabilities while some reported experience in the disability sector prior to becoming Salvation Army officers or staff members. Participants were advised that the discussion was focused on their personal opinions—not as representative of the corps or departments in which they worked.

While the interviewer guided the discussion with a prepared set of questions, the discussion ebbed and flowed with participants responding both to each other and to the questions posed by the researcher. In general terms, the discussion centred around participants' perceptions of disability, their theological views of disability and the responsibilities they perceived they had towards people with disabilities. Subsequent analysis of the discussion resulted in one theme from each discussion group.

It was noted earlier that one of the goals of this research was to determine if there was any level of resonance, disconnection or dissonance between how the person with the disability and TSA personnel understood matters related to disability. Neither of the focus group discussions uncovered any significant areas of dissonance or disconnection between Army personnel and the individual participants interviewed earlier. This may have been a result of the self-selecting process involved in focus group participation—that is, those involved in the discussion already had an underlying interest, experience of, or preference for engagement on matters of disability inclusion, resulting in data that were largely resonant with data collected in the interview process.

7.3 Summary Table: Themes Five and Six

The summary table below provides an overview of the themes identified from the rich data provided by the participants in the two focus group discussions. Theme five was developed from the discussion data provided by pastoral corps officers. Theme six was constructed from the discussion data provided by mission support personnel across TSA. Three sub-themes are noted under each major theme.

Table 2. Themes Five and Six.

Theme 5	**Theme 6**
Well-Intentioned but Inconsistent. Support by Salvation Army Pastors is Well-Intentioned but Lacks a Framework to Ensure Consistency.	***Out of Sight, Out of Mind.*** The Salvation Army has not yet recognised People with Complex Disabilities as a Missional Priority or Partner.
Data Set(F/G)	**Data Set(F/G)**
Congregational Pastors in TSA (NZ).	Mission Support Staff in TSA (NZ).
Sub Themes	**Sub Themes**
Disability as a State of Being – Not a Label.	Moving Towards Awareness – Not a Singular Approach.
Building Relationships – Not a Programme.	Training Towards Collaboration – Not a Diagnosis.
Preaching Towards Transformation – Not a Target Group.	Empowering Individualised Discipleship – Not a Unilateral Pattern.

Data Sets: (F/G) refers to focus group discussions.

7.4 Theme Five: Well-Intentioned but Inconsistent

Support by Salvation Army officers towards people living with complex disabilities in local congregations was well-intentioned but lacked a framework to ensure consistency. Therefore, in order to support individuals living with disability in Salvation Army congregations, corps officers need to pursue a framework that ensures consistency of supportive response and ministry with their disabled brothers and sisters. Such a framework was considered to involve three aspects noted as sub-themes: 1) understanding disability as a state of being, not a label; 2) building relationships, not a programme; and 3) preaching towards transformation, not a target group.

7.4.1 Disability as a State of Being – Not a Label

A reluctance to categorise people with disabilities materialised early in this discussion. While also honestly acknowledging feelings of frustration, sadness and admiration towards disabled people, the predominant discourse centred around disability understood as a state of being in the world. This state of being in the world might be noted as different from the next congregant, but as Kayla noted, “it’s just different, it doesn’t mean better or worse, it’s just different (Kayla p.7).”

In trying to characterise their theological views of disability, the pastoral officers reflected a range of understandings. Some recognised disability as evidence of the diversity in creation and others signalled that disability occurs in the world because currently all is not as God desires it to be. For example, the “fall,” described in Genesis 3 was directly referenced. Some recognised disability as a setting in which the paradox of God’s power was displayed through the experience of weakness (2 Cor 12:6-10). While all holding personal views, the pastoral officers found any such attempts to theologically categorise the experience of disability was of limited significance in their attempts to engage with people with complex disabilities. For example, Keith noted his reluctance to place people into categories at all, minimising his own opinions and judgements in favour of an inclusive approach to all people in his congregation contained in the phrase, “Hi, how are ya? Good to see you today (Keith p.8).” Kayla, in noting her intention to treat everybody the same, reflected, “They’re still people (Kayla p.7).” Some tension might be noted here in the notion of treating everyone the same—that is, different needs naturally call for different interventions. However, it is possible that Kayla’s use of the phrase reflects the biblical understanding that all people are created in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27). As such, Christians are called to love all people in equal measure (1 John 4:7-12).

Kane lamented the tendency to fall into an “us and them separation (Kane p.7).” This separation could occur in abstract discussions and also in day-to-day engagement with people with disabilities. The possibility of seeing a disability before seeing a person reinforced this separation. Two activities underscored this separation—placing the disabled on pedestals and pursuing “hand-wringingly supportive” measures (Kane p.7), or, conversely, dwelling on the perceived negative dimensions of living with a disability. Neither positions were considered constructive perspectives. Instead, the breadth of experience within the group acknowledged encounters with disabled congregants whose disabilities had led to a state of “living in bitterness (Katrina p.6),” or, in contrast, Kane noted, “I’ve engaged with disabled people who are obviously having a great life and a great time (Kane p.7).”

For the pastors in this discussion, the capacity to flourish in life was not considered dependent on the presence, or absence, of a physical or cognitive impairment. Participants noted that frustration with the circumstances of one’s life is an experience common to human beings. It is not unique to persons living with a complex disability. Kane observed that we all have the same options available to us, “I can either thrive and enjoy my experience of life or become very frustrated by it (Kane p.8).” One observation to make here is that the “same” options may not always be available to people living with disabilities. The source of said frustrations could be examined and pastors and congregations might need to become more active in helping to alleviate some of those frustrations. However, the good life, in the sense it was discussed in the focus group, was an understanding that disability itself simply reflected a way of being in the world. With the right supports in place, living with a disability carried as much capacity for human flourishing as any other way of being in the world.

7.4.2 Building Relationships – Not a Programme

In seeking to identify their primary responsibilities as corps officers engaging with people with disabilities, establishing life-sustaining relationships eclipsed the inauguration of specific programmes. While issues of safety, inclusion and removing barriers were mentioned in the discussion, Kane dismantled the “us and them” paradigm by proposing that he carried the same pastoral responsibilities for every member of the congregation (Kane p.8). Kirsten’s reflection highlighted an overarching responsibility that the group expressed towards those in their pastoral setting,

> I think it’s our responsibility to validate their relationship with God and nurture that and not disqualify it as, ‘not being,’ because it’s different from everyone else (Kirsten p.9).

Kayla summarised the components of that relationship-building process in the local congregation, noting,

> They come to our fellowship. They come to be with others. They come to know about God. They come to hear about God, and how they understand that is not for us to judge (Kayla p.7).

Modelling behaviour that dismantled potential barriers was also noted as a pastoral responsibility. While it was seen as important to pursue practical initiatives that dismantled barriers, Kane highlighted the need for an approach that valued people with disability as whole people, while avoiding condescension or minimising their capacity to contribute (Kane p.18). Kirsten related her experience of removing barriers for a young person with a traumatic brain injury attending “Kid’s Church” by buddying her up with someone prior to engaging in the setting (Kirsten p.9). The goal for Kirsten was to enable participation. Participation was only going to be facilitated if specific contextual barriers were actively anticipated and removed. She commented,

> I mean they’re simple things but we actually do have to go out of our way to remove barriers, not just assume they’ll find a way around it (Kirsten p.10).

In terms of active anticipation of barriers, Kate noted a level of responsibility towards her own time and self-management and then management of wider support networks within the congregation (Kate p.9). Kate’s comments highlighted that to treat everyone the same was not the definition of equality (see comments earlier). In her experience, particularly on a Sunday, pastoral conversations for some involved a 10-minute window, for others it was 2 minutes. She also highlighted the sense of overall responsibility she carried in terms of the safety of congregants who needed specific assistance. For example, the one-time absence of a congregant, who normally assisted a complexly disabled man in an electric wheelchair, resulted in him being left alone in the hall at the conclusion of the Sunday service. While noting this as a “terrible lesson” to her personally, she also commented on her responsibility to educate the wider church body so that broader relationships were established, enabling wider responsiveness (Kate p.10).

The issue of time was another factor noted by these pastors as critical to forming relationships. Keith noted that they only saw most of their congregants for approximately one and a half hours per week. Usually that setting was the church service when most people were pursuing “their best behaviour.” Insightfully, he queried, “What happens during the rest of the week (Keith p.8)?” This comment underlines some of the findings in Chapter 6 where participants noted the need for support that extended beyond a Sunday service focus.

The conversation also turned towards engagement with carers accompanying disabled people in a service. Kayla described her experience of carers as being invaluable, in terms of pastors or congregants, learning how to be with the person with the disability. However, it was also noted that unhelpful expectations might be placed on carers by other congregants. For example, Kayla also saw it as part of her responsibility to ensure that carers in the congregation knew they were not expected to keep the disabled person quiet or contained. Noise and movement were simply described as, “their way of participating (Kayla p.10),” in the service. There is a note of dissonance here between the open and receptive perspective of these pastors and the actual experience of individual and familial participants who, in Chapter 6, recalled times of alienation in worship services.

Stories emerged within the discussion that highlighted the power of knowing the narrative of someone’s life. Kayla relayed the story of a family who had joined their congregation, experienced a sense of being welcome and had stayed. The congregation, following the lead of the officers, got to know the mother and then the story of the young disabled man in the family. He would join in as the officer preached but, as

Kayla reflected, “it didn’t bother the corps family cos they knew his story (Kayla p.11).” As a congregation they fundraised to buy him a walking suit. Emotions ran high on the day he wore it to the corps and Kayla attributed this to the reality that the congregation “were journeying with them rather than keeping them at a distance (Kayla p.11).” Attention to the ongoing telling of these narratives might help to build deeper relationships across the generations within a congregation. Such attention to the power of story might guard against experiences such as that described by Ethan in the previous chapter, in which he expressed his perception of being forgotten.

7.4.3 Preaching Towards Transformation – Not a Target Group

In identifying their primary preaching responsibilities, the pastors highlighted preaching towards holistic transformation across the congregation, rather than preaching that was targeted at specific people groups. One of the key biblical themes highlighted in the discussion was “the gospel imperative of inclusion (Kane p.12).” Preaching based on biblical portraits in which the transformational agenda of God was lived out by those who appeared “weaker or lesser” were also considered helpful (Kane p.12). Underlying all attempts at inclusive preaching was an acknowledgement of the Holy Spirit’s power to interpret the gospel for every believer (Keith p.13).

Making the gospel accessible and preaching in a manner that captured the attention of all congregants, was acknowledged by the focus group participants as a responsibility and also as a source of tension. For example, some participants acknowledged a degree of personal questioning around the healing narratives of Jesus which, on the surface, might be thought to indicate that Jesus always physically healed people with disabilities. The officers were keen for people not to think that a lack of physical healing implied a lack of worthiness or some sense of wrongdoing. Kirsten acknowledged the potential difficulty of the healing narratives, particularly if they led someone to believe that disability was linked to a lack in their lives. She resonated with the story of Paul’s thorn in the flesh—seen as something that God allowed in his life and ultimately transformed for his glory (Kirsten p.13).

While not proposing that disability itself is a disaster (see Chapter 6), Kate noted that humanity as a whole was broken. She proposed that preaching towards that comprehensive brokenness could transform any lingering or narrow perceptions of who might be thought to be “more broken (Kate p.16).” Kate’s exploration of this notion aligns with TSA’s doctrinal position that humanity, in its wilful separation from God, experiences the consequences of that fractured relationship as diminished internal and external harmony.[575] Her comments serve to dismiss any perception that, in their disability, people with disabilities are more fractured than those who do not have a disability.

In reflecting on the example of Jesus, Kirsten commented that she was drawn to the gospel accounts where “Jesus notices people that everyone else overlooks (Kirsten p.13).” This attention to those who are commonly overlooked was held in tension with the realisation that a plethora of expectations, experiences and embodiments were present in the congregation each week. Khloe noted that it was difficult to cater to the variety of expectations about the preaching. Her final analysis concluded that no-one likes everything and that transformation occurred, both personally and within the fellowship, if those attending felt loved and accepted (Khloe p.15). Keith shared that he considered it part of his pastoral responsibility to simply ask people who were living with disabilities, “Hey, is this working for you? (Keith p.22).” His comments underline a helpful process to uncloak assumptions by directly checking in with people.

In summary, analysis of the findings from this focus group discussion indicated that pastoral officer support for people with complex disability in Salvation Army congregation was well-intentioned but lacking in a framework that might ensure consistency of support. The focus group collectively affirmed the importance of developing a framework to ensure improved future practice. Elements of building the necessary consistency included: 1) understanding disability as a state of being rather than a label; 2) attention to building relationships rather than new programmes; and 3) preaching towards transformation rather than a target group. To be an Army that brings life is to be an Army that provides a framework to ensure consistent and coordinated support for disabled people.

7.5 Theme Six: Out of Sight, Out of Mind

The Salvation Army in New Zealand has not yet recognised people living with complex disability as a missional priority or partner. People with disabilities are currently largely out of sight and therefore out of mind in the context of Salvation Army ministry and operations. Therefore, in order to support disabled individuals and/or their families, all pastoral officers, mission support staff and congregations need to recognise their disabled brethren as both a missional priority ***and*** as partners in the work of the great

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[575] *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine*, 110.

commission (Matt 28:19-20). In this second focus group discussion, three factors which would assist this process were identified as, 1) moving towards awareness about disability rather than taking a singular approach, 2) training towards collaboration rather than to specific diagnoses, and 3) empowering individualised discipleship rather than unilateral patterns.

7.5.1 Moving Towards Awareness – Not a Singular Approach

A willingness to consider the responsibilities of TSA towards people with complex disabilities, and beyond the corps setting, materialised early in this second focus group discussion. Framing much of the ensuing conversation was an acknowledgement of an overall lack of awareness of disability issues by mission support staff. This might also go some way to explaining the small number of participants in this focus group. For example, Lance noted,

> I'm just saying in large measure in my ministry, just by virtue of where I've been, the places I've been, the families I've interacted with, people with complex disabilities have been fairly anonymous to me. They have not been front and centre in my thinking (Lance p.9).

This lack of awareness highlighted three possibilities for the research participants. First, people with complex disabilities were actually absent from the congregations and wider structures of TSA, despite making up 24% of the New Zealand population. Secondly, they remained invisible due to intentional or accidental side-lining, or thirdly, they were perhaps present with an invisible disability.

The discussion then moved to the question of absenteeism from congregational life. Did people not attend church because of their disability or, as Lucy queried, did they not attend because "we don't understand, we don't provide (Lucy p.14)?" Again, the invisibility thread emerged in the discussion as Lucy reflected on her own corps experience noting, "they're not part of it, so we're not thinking about it (Lucy p.15)." Such observations underscored the dilemma noted in this theme title—out of sight, out of mind. Considering the diversity of experience and contexts, defining a singular approach to disability inclusion might be less effective than increasing overall awareness of disability across TSA.

The tension between reactive and proactive approaches to building awareness was noted in the discussion. Linda argued that, in her experience, rather than planning ahead, TSA tended to respond in the moment. She noted,

> So I think we react to ‘what turns up on our doorstep’ rather than being proactive around what we can provide (Linda p.15).

Rather than actively pursuing mission opportunities for people with disabilities, or creating space where people with disability might find a place of belonging and ministry opportunities, any engagement was haphazard in nature. Linda observed that it was more likely that people with disabilities found themselves part of the congregation by proxy—that is, by being part of a family group who were part of the congregation (Linda p.15). That is, missional activism was not directed towards the evangelisation of disabled people.

The issue of tokenism, as opposed to respectful awareness and ongoing engagement with people with complex disabilities, caused the participants concern. Under-representation of minority groups within any societal setting was identified as being far from unique. For example, reflections on previous experience with attempts to encourage corps to be more open to Māori, for example, highlighted the gap between building awareness and enacting inclusive environments. Quite starkly, Lance noted,

> We don’t have Māori in our congregations because we don’t make the environment, by and large, yes I’m making generalisations, the environment is not conducive to Māori coming and feeling welcome (Lance p.15).

Concern was also expressed regarding potentially tokenistic approaches that, for example, drew attention towards matters of disability only once a year during annual “Disability Awareness Week.” Lily noted that in trying to remedy such approaches and to build ongoing awareness, it was essential to seek more strategic representation, to engage in more dialogue within TSA community and to ensure that people with disabilities were engaged in those conversations (Lily p.19). In other words, an array of intentional interventions was necessary rather than any singular or isolated approaches.

Visual representation of disability was described as largely absent from the photographic record of Salvation Army life. Other participants argued that a very specific narrative was presented. In the first instance, Lily commented that a casual review of TSA event photographs from throughout New Zealand indicated that people with visible disabilities were not part of TSA’s photographic narrative. She lamented,

> It’s almost like at times we’ve got a kind of sanitised picture of what is happening around events and the things we do…But I’m just not sure we have a real narrative around disability in any way, shape, or form (Lily p.17).

The reasons for this could be more nuanced or even reflective of the three possibilities mentioned earlier. However, if people with disabilities were not seen as part of the Army narrative, then opportunities for building awareness amongst the Army constituency were minimised.

In contrast, Lucy unpacked a specific disability narrative associated with "Overseas Development" and "Child Sponsorship" programmes. While not necessarily produced in New Zealand, this offshore narrative did portray people with disabilities to a New Zealand Salvationist audience in a particular manner—usually associated with a power imbalance (Lucy p.18). Such power imbalances further obscure a legitimate picture of life with disability. Lucy noted the agenda associated with marketing,

> It's huge [marketing] because to help people we have to market in a way that appeals to the person who holds the power (Lucy p.18).

For Lesley, this narrative settled in an unhelpful place. She commented,

> So around the disability work that is happening overseas that features in our sponsoring opportunities, we make it better for the other which doesn't validate who other people are, but it says actually, 'you need fixing' (Lesley p.18).

A tension was noted here between seeking and providing much-needed financial resources and dehumanising people in the process. For Lucy, greater awareness was required to ensure that donations flowed from a place of embedded biblical understandings of personhood, inclusion and the mutuality implicit in sharing resources. While acknowledging that it was still happening in some fundraising campaigns, depicting disabled people as powerless and in need of *our assistance* was considered unhelpful (Lucy p.18).

Discussion within the group outlined further strategies to embroider increased disability awareness into the fabric of Army life. For example, providing forums for the thinking and writing of people with disabilities was noted as a way of identifying the disabled person as a mission partner. Lily contrasted this approach with the current tendency to simply reflect personal or editorial opinions about what was beneficial or appropriate (Lily p.16). Lucy highlighted the need for creating safe, inclusive and participatory spaces in which people were free to be their authentic selves (Lucy p.22). Linda spoke to the dynamics of full participation, noting,

> So it’s not just about can they get in the building, it’s actually, is participation in worship possible, is there opportunity for development and growth, whether its discipleship or whatever, are there opportunities to lead? It’s all of those aspects that we as an able-bodied person just take for granted (Linda pp.18–19).

Relationships are the context in which we become more aware of people. Relationships are also the context in which people become more visible. Lesley, drawing on her own experience, signalled her responsibility as a leader to develop her personal awareness so that she could challenge and speak to “people’s negative and limiting assumptions (Lesley p.21).” For her, building relationships with people living with disability was the key to doing this. That is, only after “coming to understand what life is for them,” could she allow that knowledge and experience to inform her wider leadership and relationships. She noted,

> In order to counter the big societal things – if you drill down, it comes back to relationships (Lesley p.22).

A synthesis across all four data sets can be noted here. All participant groups have identified the building of relationships as key to supporting people with complex disabilities and their families. To be an Army that brings life is to be an Army that builds relationships with all people within its congregations.

7.5.2 Training Towards Collaboration – Not a Diagnosis

A further aspect identified within the theme “Out of Sight, Out of Mind” was the importance of training towards collaboration, not training towards a specific diagnosis. Participants in the focus group acknowledged their lack of specific training in the area of disability prior to engaging in ministry opportunities. A lack of training suggests, even implicitly, that people with disabilities are not part of the community. The discussion also highlighted an awareness of the wide diversity of disabilities that mission support staff might encounter. In light of that diversity, movement towards training opportunities as a collaboration with disabled people and service agencies, rather than directed to a specific diagnosis, was thought to be more efficacious.

Reflecting on the overall lack of attention to training opportunities, Lucy reiterated the issues highlighted in the previous section—that is, if the disabled are not part of our congregations, they are easily forgotten. This in turn enabled attention and resources to go in other directions. If we do not witness people with complex disabilities in our congregational spaces, “we don’t see it as necessary to be providing opportunities to teach us about disabilities (Lucy p.14).” Further discussion later in the thesis highlights that the limitations noted here might be resolved with attention to improved data collection strategies. In other words, if the number of disabled people in congregations was counted, gaps in the constituency could be identified and/or appropriate resourcing requested and supplied for ongoing training requirements.

In relation to disability, participants in this focus group described a lack of personal formal training. Instead, they noted examples of learning from carers, or support people, rather than TSA itself, about how best to engage with specific individuals. Linda noted that more learning had occurred “on the job” than in formal settings or by design (Linda p.15). In a specific example, Lance reflected on time spent during “Out-Training” (a period of training in a corps or social setting prior to commissioning as an officer) in a Salvation Army centre (now closed), that supported people with intellectual disability. He noted that he had received no training on disability “as a big idea (Lance p.12),” prior to that experience.

In terms of training, Lucy highlighted a difference between “learning” and being “taught”—the implication being that formal teaching about disability needs to be embedded in real life (Lucy p.13). Consideration is given to this notion of contextual learning later in the thesis. At the time of the discussion, specific training programmes within the children and youth ministry arena, such as “Keeping Children Safe,” included strategies around vulnerable children. These may, or may not, involve specific reference to children with disability (Lucy p.13).

Linda described upskilling in the area of disability as something that needed to be on the Army’s radar (Linda p.14). She noted possibilities included TSA delivering content or enabling access to training outside TSA. Children workers, youth leaders and corps officers were identified as potentially benefiting from collaborative training as part of their ongoing ministry development process (Linda p.14). Discussion also highlighted questions around the officer training curriculum. While none of the participants were able to respond definitively regarding disability-related course content, reference was made to the opportunity afforded all cadets to pursue a self-directed learning enquiry, in which disability was one of the potential enquiry topics (Lance p.13).

The issue of collaborative training and moving TSA towards greater understanding of the lived experience of people with complex disability was further highlighted in a story shared by Lily. Reflecting on a long association with someone attending services and also working for TSA, Lily described the regular change of officers in these contexts as, “like watching a ticking time-bomb (Lily p.19).” Her concern centred on whether the next officer would have the time, skill, grace and patience to enable the individual to continue to feel safe, included and valued in her position. The implications of this model of leadership for building or undermining trust is also examined later in the thesis. An initial counter-argument might propose that responsibility for building trust, and safeguarding the stories of disabled people, ultimately rests with members of the congregation. For Lily, access to training and a willingness to understand and engage with personal stories were essential parts of ensuring that people with disabilities continued to feel valued as missional partners in TSA. Her comments challenged the focus group to a personal and collective response,

> But it’s actually knowing that we all have to apply it, and we all have to be open and ready to have this conversation and to go the extra mile (Lily p.19).

7.5.3 Empowering Individualised Discipleship – Not a Unilateral Pattern of Discipleship

The final aspect of the theme, “Out of Sight, Out of Mind,” identified a call for empowering individualised discipleship as opposed to dictating unilateral patterns. Linda noted that, while building access was an area where compliance was essential, greater attention needed to be paid to how people with disabilities “connect with all the different aspects of what church is (Linda p.18).” Connecting with different aspects of church life was a further way in which people with disabilities could become more empowered and visible.

Noting that non-disabled people take access to the various aspects of church life for granted, Linda suggested that empowerment and increased visibility involved the aspects noted earlier, but also included the topic of discipleship. The unique possibilities and potential contributions embodied by every individual indicated that unilateral patterns of discipleship were not considered helpful. For example, soldiership membership in TSA officially requires attending education classes that examine the history and doctrines of TSA and the signing of a covenant document. Whether this unilateral pattern could be expanded to encompass people with varied cognitive capacity is considered later in the thesis.

The focus group noted that focusing on the individual’s disability led to an incapacity to see and access numerous skills, gifts and talents. As the pastors noted earlier, if you see disability first, you can miss the person beyond the disability. Linda reinforced this observation by noting,

> When I think of a number of people I have encountered over time, whilst there are physically some things that they may not be able to do, actually if you gave them opportunities they have skills and giftings and talents that we just don't even access. They don't get an opportunity to use them, as part of the body of Christ, because we don't see them as having something to bring to the table in a lot of cases (Linda p.19).

Also highlighted in the discussion was the reality that communication styles differ between people. All people process and relay thought content at an individual pace and in a unique form. Failure to accommodate that, as Linda noted in her experience with a young woman with cerebral palsy, resulted in a loss to the entire body of Christ. The congregation simply did not give her the time she needed to express herself (Linda p.19). In other words, the young woman was not invited to be a partner in the mission.

Facilitating effective discipleship, and/or transitions into "adherent membership" or soldiership in TSA, was described as an area of tension. Participants honestly expressed some confusion regarding how to make that happen effectively for people with complex disabilities. For example, Lance acknowledged a need to engage in a process of personal reflection, intended to move him towards more understanding, before he grappled with how to do discipleship in the context of disability (Lance p.23).

Participation in the focus group discussion led Linda to begin asking herself questions about the processes and comprehension dynamics involved in the discipleship journey in TSA. For example, when inviting people with complex disabilities into soldiership, Linda queried how one might open up that space for someone whose comprehension might not align with how things are scripted in "Orders and Regulations" (the official principles and procedures for TSA) (Linda p.21). Her observations landed with an acknowledgement that some people she journeyed with in her home corps, whose cognitive understanding about soldiership was probably very different to her own, had rightly found a place of belonging and identity as soldiers in TSA (Linda p.21).

Lance noted that if people in positions of power within TSA have no understanding or awareness of disability, then a whole group of people are potentially disenfranchised and are not acknowledged as a missional priority. This lack of awareness subsequently leads to exclusion from ministry in the body of Christ (Lance p.24). Assumptions about disability could also minimise access to discipleship. In order for people with complex disability to investigate and move towards those discipleship pathways, people in positions of power needed to remove barriers.

The discussion reflected that if the people who determined mission priorities, drew up mission statements and allocated resources had no awareness or concern over the discipleship journey of people living with disability, then they would remain absent from congregations or become marginalised at the very least. Further, they would not be recognised for their capacity to contribute as partners in the mission activity of TSA. Reflecting on this tension, Lance observed,

> If it [deep access] means the ability to shape the future, to have the power, or contribute to the structures that determine the shape of things, then minorities of any kind, just get completely left behind (Lance p.24).

In summary, analysis of the findings indicate that TSA in New Zealand has not yet recognised people with complex disabilities as a missional priority and partner. Strategies that might assist TSA moving forward include: 1) moving towards greater disability awareness, rather than a singular approach; 2) training towards collaboration rather than a diagnosis; and 3) empowering individualised discipleship, not a unilateral pattern. To be an Army that brings life is to be an Army that leaves no-one behind.

7.6 Fullness of Life in the Present and the Future

TSA’s claim to be “The Army that Brings Life,” is linked to the promise of abundant life found in the person of Jesus Christ (John 10:10b). It was noted in Chapter 1 that the experience of “fullness of life” exists as an organisational motif, or thread, throughout this research. Question 2 of the project asks, “What does the biblical notion ‘life to the full’ mean to people with complex disabilities in TSA?” The dimensions of that understanding were explored in both the interview and focus group sessions. The six themes identified earlier enunciate ways in which fullness of life is facilitated or curtailed in the lived experience of the participants. It is noted again that the findings and analysis indicated here will be further examined in later chapters of the thesis.

With specific reference to the organising motif, two distinct understandings of fullness of life were detected across the data sets. First, fullness of life was understood as a paradigm applicable in the present. Secondly, fullness of life was understood as a paradigm ultimately realised in the future. Across these paradigms, fullness of life was noted as available in the person of Jesus Christ and as mediated by the loving interactions and relationships within a person's day-to-day life. Ian's response characterises this juxtaposition of understanding,

> Fullness of life, to me, is a personal relationship with my Father. It's quite simple. Also, to be a part of our community and be looked upon as an equal, to be cared for, loved and protected (Ian p.23).

In contrast, some participants referenced fullness of life in a singular dimension—either in relation to their life in Christ, or in personal relationships across their daily experience of life. For example, Charles expressed his understanding of fullness of life as having his life fully aligned with the purposes of God (p.7). Ann expressed her interpretation as being in a "well space" (non-self-harming) and not having to worry about tomorrow (p.27 & 34). She further expressed her understanding as,

> Yeah and so abundant life would be basically what I have now. I have a full life. Like it looks different to other people's lives but it works for me. Cos, I have things that I do, I'm involved in the community, I have friends, I have hobbies. I have sleep. Sleep is great (Ann p.34).

The diagram below highlights this "fullness of life" metanarrative located as both the organisational thread of the research (John10:10b) and identified across the responses provided by the research participants in all four data sets.

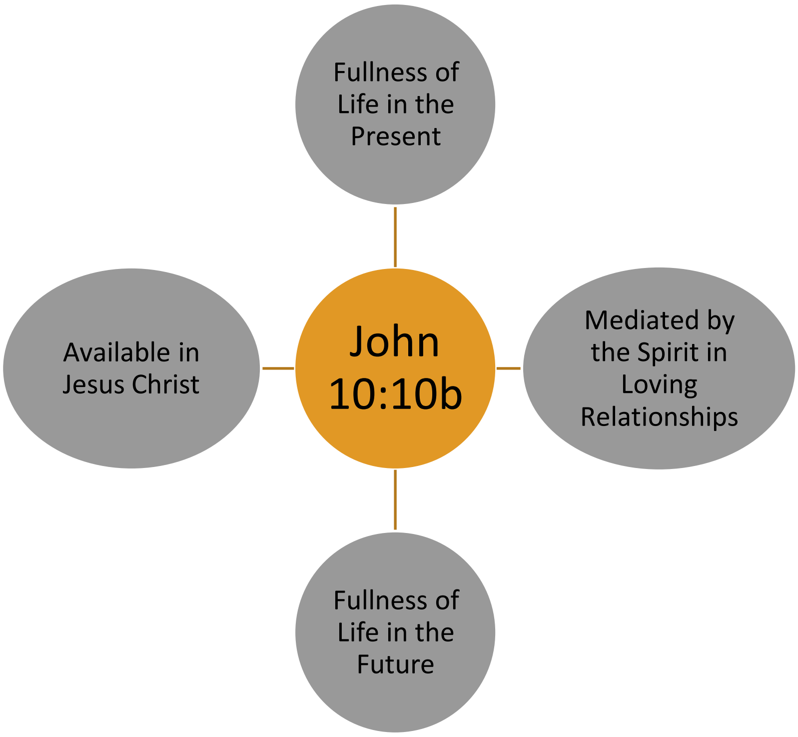

Figure 3. Fullness of Life.

7.6.1 Fullness of Life in the Present: Mediated through Loving Relationships

Across the four data sets and without exception, relationships were identified as a key aspect of experiencing fullness of life. The individual or familial participants identified romantic relationships (Bob p.17, Ian p.14), or pastoral and work relationships (Ann p.36, Charles p.7), while for others personal friendships and familial relationships were noted as essential to living an abundant life (Donna p.6, Greg p.15, Ethan p.19, Fred p.31). Harry simply stated, “I need people around me (p.15).” With the establishment of loving relationships, people with complex disabilities were then able to pursue or simply enjoy other factors they associated with fullness of life, such as love, peace, happiness, meaningful work and less medication.

Coherence was noted between the individual participant’s understanding and that of the focus group participants. Pastoral officers and mission support staff also underlined this attention to relationship development as key to bringing fullness of life. Keith highlighted it as directly related and dependent on an individual’s personal relationship and sense of identity in Christ (Keith p.17). Tying this relationality to interhuman relationality, Lucy proposed that supporting people through their own life journey and allowing them to be themselves was pivotal to the experience of fullness of life (Lucy p.22). Lucy also alluded to the advocacy role in empowering individuals with disabilities, noting that,

> … sometimes they need our help and our support to have that fullness of life because they are vulnerable in some respects (Lucy p.22).

However, a note of caution was highlighted by Lance who stated, “deciding what fullness of life looks like for someone else is fraught with all kinds of traps (Lance p.23).” Lily also acknowledged that her perceptions would be different from someone with a disability for whom fullness of life might mean a pain-free day (Lily p.24).[576]

7.6.1.1 Justice

Two fathers within the interview data set expressed concern for their disabled children in relation to the issue of justice or quality of life. In both instances, they proposed that there were limits imposed on an experience of fullness of life related to these factors. In the first instance, Fred lamented that his son had not experienced justice in this lifetime,

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[576] Lily’s observations here directly reflected the experience of one of the mothers in the research, who noted, “What abundant life is for Edwards is peace without being medicated. I mean that’s the one thing (Eve p.34).”

while also expressing hope that this lack of justice would be addressed in the life to come.

This call to justice carried three interlinking nuances. First, justice, in his understanding, appeared to relate to issues of marginalisation and misunderstanding, along with lack of support from agencies responsible for streamlining disability services in his son's daily life (p.33). Secondly, it related to Fred's understanding of his own ongoing responsibility before God as one caring for a dependent son. Finally, Fred's pursuit of justice carried the conviction that God will deal justly with Floyd as an individual as he continues his journey into eternal life. Fred explained, "But one day he will die and stand before God, and I'm relying on God to be just (p.33)." Therefore, fullness of life carries an impetus towards justice that plays out in life in the present and in the life to come.

7.6.1.2 Quality of Life

In the second instance, Ethan lamented a lack of quality of life for his son in this lifetime, while also expressing hope that this lack would be redressed during his experience of eternity with his son (p.35). Quality of life, in his understanding, appeared to relate to concrete ways in which his son Edward could not participate fully in the activities of daily living that his other children enjoyed. Coupled with this was the ongoing struggle associated with feeding and seizure management which left Edward and his parents exhausted. In contrast, Edward's mother Eve measured quality of life in terms of Edward's experience of happiness, peace and contentment. Eve had observed all three experiences in her son (p.36). Quality of life in this understanding appeared to relate to more intangible or transcendent measures.

In caring together for their son, these different understandings of quality of life had found a resting place in the notion of trust. Ethan and Eve had come to a point of trusting that their concrete care and ongoing advocacy for Edward had tangible results. They also trusted that his familiarity with happiness, peace and contentment were contributing to his abundant life in the present.

In relation to justice and quality of life, both of these fathers expressed their conviction that eternal life would bring the full realisation of abundant life for their disabled children. What the research participants thought that might look like is the subject of the next section.

7.6.2 Fullness of Life in the Future

In a Christian understanding, the abundant life promised in Christ will be fully realised in the future transformation of all things. Bob described his understanding of this transformation as one in which “I’ll have an unlimited life (p.51).” Asked to consider their primary pictures of resurrection life, the interview participants offered a spectrum of metaphorical and more literal perspectives. Eve and Ethan envisioned their son, who is unable to walk, as “running, leaping and praising God,” along with possessing the capacity to chat and talk (p.38).

In a contrasting understanding, Donna imagined her son still living with Down Syndrome in post-resurrection life, but that this would not limit him in anyway (p.19). For example, she proposed that rather than a change in her son’s style of communication, our transformation would mean that we would have the capacity to understand him (p.20). While fullness of life in the eschaton is examined more closely in the following chapter, it is briefly noted here that Donna’s comments align with the perspectives of theologian Amos Yong, who argues that some disabilities (Down Syndrome inclusive) are identity-constitutive.[577] In Yong’s schema, resurrection transforms bodies but equally significantly, “the world’s scale of values as a whole.”[578]

A degree of tension and emotion was palpable in interviews with parents or siblings of disabled people. There appeared to be an emotional toll associated with holding the notions of loss and hope together in their reflections on future fullness of life for their loved ones. In contrast, none of the individual participants appeared to find it emotionally difficult to imagine their life after death.

7.6.2.1 Approached with Caution

Some responses from the interview participants reflected a degree of caution in speculating on the parameters of fullness of life in their future. For example, reflecting on disabled bodies, Ann noted that from her understanding of scripture, “it says we get a new body, so we get a new body (p.32).” Having previously expressed enjoyment of the arts, when asked if she thought her saxophone and art figured in her eternal future, she simply stated, “Dunno (p.33),” and reiterated the biblical call not to worry about tomorrow. Charles noted directly, “We shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye

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[577] Yong, *The Bible, Disability, and the Church: A New Vision of the People of God*, 121.
[578] Ibid., 122.

(p.8).” Rather than proposing any specific hopes for eternal life, Harry described himself as feeling okay about his future because he believed in God (p.17).

The participants in the study all affirmed a belief in eternal life. However, their approach to the nature of disability, in a resurrection context, could be described as cautionary in nature. This approach, to embrace broad understandings of fullness of life as outlined in the text of scripture, may signal at least two things. In the first place, the participants may find sufficient evidence of hope in the broad promises of scripture that they are clear on the basics and unconcerned with details. This position aligns with commentary from the pastoral focus group. For example, Keith noted that whatever shape heaven takes, human beings are assured a future with God (p.17). Kate expanded this idea, noting that scripture is clear on the things that are necessary to know and that areas of limited understanding did not negate God’s promise of future fullness of life (p.18). Secondly, these findings may indicate that for people living with a complex disability, navigating life in the present can be sufficiently difficult that a preoccupation with the exact nature of future fullness of life simply lies beyond their area of interest, energy levels or, alternatively, is a profound expression of contentment and trust.

7.6.2.2 Approached with Anticipation

Some participants reflected a degree of anticipation. Harry found a sense of comfort in thinking about standing before God, gaining his reward in heaven and knowing there was somewhere he was going after his earthly death in which the effects of disability had been diminished (pp.16–18). Charles and Bob both anticipated their future life as one free of wheelchairs (Charles p.8, Bob p.51). Ann also concurred with this viewpoint (p.32). Ian anticipated a future free from disability and pain where his old body was no longer in service (p.26). In contrast to this perspective from Charles and Bob who currently used wheelchairs, one of the pastors commented that it might be an unfounded assumption that heavenly existence will witness the absence of wheelchairs. Commenting that what we currently perceive to be a disability might not be so in heaven, she asked, “Who says wheelchairs are not perfection (Kayla p.18)?” As the interview data indicate, while the distinct nature of eternal existence cannot be determined beyond the notion of God making all things right, the participants in this study did anticipate a future without the limits associated with disability.

Parents or siblings of people with complex disabilities brought slightly different nuances to the enquiry on fullness of life in the future. Notions such as conversation, freedom and total inclusion scaffolded their sense of anticipation. For example, Jessica imagined her sister being able to converse fluidly with God and others, while enjoying a body that was whole again (p.22). Greg pictured a transformation in his daughter that was framed as freedom—freedom to leave behind the difficulties associated with her current life, freedom to walk, giggle and communicate with family members who she had not yet met (pp.16–17). In light of her son's alternative ways of processing life in the present, Fiona expressed excitement at the prospect of seeing her son thrive in a post-resurrection context (p.35). Donna, who sees her son glowing in the presence of God, pictured him in that moment as being in the presence of the One who fully knows him (p.20).

In summary, these examples underline a sense of anticipation in which relatives of people with complex disabilities expect future transformation that brings freedom—freedom of interpersonal exchange, freedom of intrapersonal being and the freedom experienced in being fully known and loved.

7.7 Conclusion

In regard to disability, these expressions of caution and anticipation, along with the literal and metaphorical understandings of present and future fullness of life, reveal a wide variety of personal, familial, pastoral and mission support perspectives. Derived from biblical and theological sources, lived experience and personal expressions of hope, the rich interplay of ideas and beliefs expressed in these findings affirm traditional Christian representations of fullness of life. However, they also extend those traditional understandings and suggest new ways to interpret and experience the notion. As such, they prompt further discussion of the possible dimensions and embodiment of fullness of life for complexly disabled people in Salvation Army congregations. The following chapter turns to further critical reflection and discussion in an attempt to determine the theological significance of the qualitative data presented in Chapters 6 and 7.

Chapter 8 – Discussion

But in the whole of his life I have had one person at [the corps] *offer to have him one Sunday after the meeting.* (Fiona)

8.1 Introduction

In a sermon to Salvation Army soldiers, William Booth encouraged congregations to unearth the buried treasure that was momentarily obscured, but nonetheless resident, in their midst. He queried,

> Supposing you have only forty or fifty Soldiers, may there not be some slumbering gift that has not yet been brought into active service?[579]

People living with complex disability may not choose to call themselves buried treasure, or indeed “slumbering.” Their voices, brought to light in the previous two chapters, indicate a desire and capacity to contribute towards active service within TSA. Those voices also indicate a degree of slumber on the part of congregations and TSA at large, to recognise and facilitate those capacities and desires. The dimensions and goodness of these potential gifts of service are as manifold as the diversity and goodness embedded in creation itself (Gen 1:31).

The intention of the current chapter is to draw people in TSA out of the slumbering state noted above. The transition from slumber to attentiveness requires deliberate and sustained commitment to the contours of critical faithfulness in all facets of life and practice as Salvationists. These contours may be determined within the context of sustained theological reflection, or more specifically, direct attention to stage three of the Practical Theological Reflection Model (PTRM). The theological reflection is informed throughout by scripture and tradition. The overall aim of the chapter, is to note the theological significance of the implicit and explicit concerns embedded in the qualitative data presented in Chapters 6 and 7.[580] In doing so, the current chapter provides a secure cloth from which to consider the need and/or nature of any revised forms of practice for TSA in the final chapter of the thesis.

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[579] Booth, *The Founder’s Messages to Soldiers: During Years 1907–1908*, 37.

[580] Swinton and Mowat, 91.

8.2 Stage Three of PTRM: Theological Reflection

This chapter is structured in three broad sections. As noted in the abstract, the centre of the "collaborative model of support" I am proposing is Christological. The first section of the chapter therefore considers the resurrected Christ as the centre—the one whose life, death and resurrection is a collaboration within the Godhead itself. Secondly, as the research has occurred in the context of TSA, consideration is given to the role of the church in facilitating an experience of fullness of life for its membership. In these two sections of work a dialogue partner, theologian Jürgen Moltmann, is engaged. The third section of the chapter brings lived experience into focus. It discusses the theological implications of the themes identified from the research findings and how they contribute to my proposal for a collaborative model of support.

Having acknowledged my Wesleyan/Salvationist background, some explanation of my choice of Jürgen Moltmann as a dialogue partner is warranted. First, Moltmann argues that the promise of abundant life carries contemporary and eschatological implications. While his writings obviously predate this research, there are correlations and contradictions between his understanding of fullness of life and the understanding presented by the research participants. Secondly, Moltmann's theological engagement is wide-ranging and ecumenical in nature. A spirit of ecumenism is important to TSA.[581] Therefore, employing Moltmann's voice as one potentially able to expand TSA's understanding, is an embodied commitment to unity in diversity. Thirdly, Jürgen Moltmann's work has engaged the interest and critique of disability theologians. For example, his observations inform the seminal work of disability theologian and activist, Nancy Eiesland. She draws on Moltmann to demonstrate how Jesus as the "disabled God," forms the church as a communion of justice.[582] Thomas Reynolds also engages the work of Moltmann, as he crafts a theology of vulnerability that exposes the "cult of normalcy."[583]

8.3 Reviewing the Questions

The first question in this study asked how people with complex disability are supported in TSA congregations. The interviewee responses indicate a continuum of experience from good support at one end, a mixture of support and obstacles in the middle, and unsupportive actions and attitudes at the far end of the continuum. The second question

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[581] *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine*, 74, 258.
[582] Eiesland, 104.
[583] Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality*, 28.

examined what the notion “fullness of life” means to people living with complex disability. There are a range of theological, anthropological and sociological responses to the question, indicating the varied dimensions and possible interpretations of the notion. Finally the study asked what responses, approaches and practices from TSA, might best support this understanding in the future? The interviews and focus groups indicate that while a range of interventions are potentially helpful, attention to building relationships is pivotal.

8.4 The Issue of Disconnection

The qualitative data documented in the previous two chapters demonstrates that support for people living with complex disabilities within TSA, occurs in an uncoordinated and inconsistent basis. Individuals, pastors and congregations respond to who and what presents across the doorstep at any given time. This is not to suggest that a single, rigid or narrowly customised approach to supporting disabled people is appropriate. However, the research indicates that there is a lack of comprehensive and consistent engagement with matters related to disability within congregations, across local and national training settings and within the broader organisational structures and systems of TSA. Further, it was noted in Chapter 6 and indicated in the broader research landscape reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3, that there is a perceptual disconnect between what some members of TSA believe TSA delivers and what disabled people within TSA have experienced.

Critical analysis indicates that these gaps are compounded by a variety of disconnections between people with complex disabilities, the congregations in which they live out their faith, the pastors that lead the congregations and the support systems that undergird Salvationist ministry and mission. The disconnections, in the main, are not deliberate but they do mean that support for people with complex disabilities is compromised. In some instances, the disconnections reflect a lack of theological and/or biblical engagement with matters related to disability. In other instances, the disconnections are related to notions of invisibility, misunderstanding and minimal engagement with people with complex disabilities. Finally, the disconnections reflect a lack of sustained attention and action, on the part of the organisation, towards facilitating the participation and discipleship of disabled people. In essence, these disconnections cannot be addressed in isolation or by solitary individuals.

8.5 The Sub-Structure of TSA's Unconscious Bias

The historical development of TSA as a faith community was examined in Chapter 5. The orientation of TSA towards the marginalised, vulnerable or dispossessed was clearly demonstrated. TSA's ongoing concern and targeted programmes towards those caught in modern-day slavery, alcohol, drug and gambling addictions, food insecurity or homelessness, all underline this commitment to the pursuit of fullness of life for the marginalised. This thesis has also demonstrated that people living with a complex disability in New Zealand remain marginalised and vulnerable. Having acknowledged this, one is left to ponder why TSA as a movement within the church universal, has not previously pursued comprehensive inclusion strategies such as those outlined in the UNCRPD.

Having considered this apparent contradiction within TSA's self-understanding, I propose three possible explanations which I locate in the sub-structure of its unconscious bias. That is, I am proposing that these factors possibly have an indirect, or less obvious, influence on the formation of its missional priorities and outcomes. First, TSA's emphasis on personal salvation and doctrinal convictions in relation to holy living, may predispose it to a specific mind-set. Such a mind-set might note that vulnerability and marginalisation occurs in the context of personal choices leading to a life captive to dependency in one form or another. In this sense, TSA positions itself alongside those who cannot, in their own strength, break free from patterns of behaviour that effectively maintain the marginalisation and vulnerability. In contrast, people with complex disabilities cannot be "saved" from their disability. One cannot lift someone out of disability as one might attempt to lift someone out of addiction. As already noted, disability is not something to be fixed. So while disabled people are marginalised and vulnerable, this vulnerability occurs in a way not readily identified within the sub-structure of TSA's unconscious bias.

Secondly, this thesis has identified that part of TSA's mission is caring for people. It has a long and continuing commitment to homes, havens and hospitals dedicated to the care of vulnerable persons across the globe. While it is beyond the scope or desire of this work to offer critique of these institutions, it is possible that an underlying commitment to the notion of care embedded within a medical model of disability, continues to permeate TSA's operations in such settings. Therefore, it is also possible that TSA is influenced by an understanding of disability as something to be managed, cured, treated or avoided. Such an understanding has the potential to compromise the development of a theology of disability that recognises both the marginalisation of people with disabilities and our shared interdependence. While this thesis does not propose that caring for people is antithetical to the gospel, it does suggest that an emphasis on “caring for” can limit opportunities to pursue ministry with, and by, disabled people. In this way people with disabilities may be discerned as needing resources, rather than being identified as the slumbering resource that William Booth described.

Thirdly, statistical data noted in Chapter 5 highlights that TSA as a denomination remains, at best, in a pattern of numerical stagnancy or, at worst, in a period of decline. The local corps setting faces significant challenges. These challenges encompass the obvious concerns associated with numerical decline such as a lack of leadership, financial constraints and sustainability concerns. However, less obviously is the navigation of our understanding of the place and mission of the local corps moving forward. Linked to this uncertainty about how to sustain local expressions of Salvationist community, lies a tension associated with a long-standing paradox in Salvationist mission—how to pursue an activist-type agenda directed towards social transformation while operating within the constraints of a hierarchical tradition. I suggest that within the milieu of these competing concerns, the vulnerability and marginalisation of people living with complex disability is not deliberately ignored, but is possibly forgotten. Such inattention is damaging. Further work on the role and nature of the local corps may well be necessary. However, within such work, I would suggest that the local corps, as the visible sign and expression of the universal Church, is the place where an activist agenda, with and on behalf of disabled people, needs with some urgency, to be re-remembered.

8.6 From Slumbering to Collaboration

Earlier, it was proposed that a series of disconnections exist between people with complex disabilities, the congregations in which they live out their faith, the pastors that lead the congregations and the support systems that undergird Salvationist ministry and mission. It was noted that these disconnections cannot be addressed by isolated individuals or outside of theological reflection that considers how they might be ameliorated. Drawing on the text of John 17:21-23, Bishop Efraim Tendero,[584] in conversation with Joseph Handley,[585] suggests that to fulfil the great commandment of

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[584] Bishop Efraim Tendero is the Secretary General and CEO of the World Evangelical Alliance.

[585] Joseph W. Handley Jnr, "The Great Collaboration: Catalyzing Disciple Making for the Global Church," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 47, no. 2 (2023).

Matthew 22:36-40 and the great commission of Matthew 28:16-20, the church needs to pursue a "Great Collaboration."[586] That is, the world comes to know God, in the person of Christ, as we abide in the Spirit and work together in a spirit of unity to dismantle the disconnections that exist between us. While Handley's work speaks directly to raising up collaborative church leaders, it is underpinned with a global concern for making disciples. It therefore echoes William Booth's challenge to become alert to the as yet unrecognised, or un-discipled, embodied gifts that make up TSA's congregations.

A commitment to collaboration also acknowledges the level of complexity involved in dismantling the disconnections noted earlier. Collaborative practice enables us to confirm or clarify more helpful approaches to ministry and inclusion. For example, Priscilla and Aquila collaborated together and helped clarify Apollo's understanding of the gospel (Acts 18: 24-26). Collaboration helps to hold both the church and the individual accountable for practices that build up the body of Christ. Collaboration is the antithesis of ego-driven ministry (Phil 2:3-4). In working together the church bears witness to its profession of love and unity.

Collaboration is also grounded in New Zealand's self-understanding as a country committed to the values of partnership, participation and protection embedded in *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*. As noted in Chapter Five, TSA affirms these collaborative values. If the collective calling of TSA is to serve God and others, then TSA is also called to provide opportunities for those who live with complex disabilities to do likewise. Embedding a "nothing without us" collaborative approach ensures that the policies and systems of TSA result in real time opportunities for service and ministry. As Steve Taylor notes,

> Innovation is not the mysterious pursuit of what is new and hip by a heroic leader but a set of collaborative, practical actions empowered by ancient wisdom. Change is both practical and possible.[587]

This notion of collaborative and practical action, drawing on ancient wisdom, frames the following section of work in which the collaborative practice of God, in Christ Jesus, is considered. In order to be an Army that brings life to people with complex disability and their families, I am proposing that TSA consider embracing a collaborative model of support. Individuals with complex disabilities, family and

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[586] Ibid., 104.

[587] Steve Taylor, *Built for Change: A Practical Theology of Innovation and Collaboration in Leadership* (Unley: MediaCom Education, 2016), 7.

support workers, fellow congregants, pastoral officers, mission support personnel and the administrative systems and structures of the Army, might collectively choose to embody such a model. The origin, imperative and impetus for such collaboration is Christological.

8.7 Jesus Christ — the Centre

Glimpses of the principle of collaboration are noted throughout the creation accounts. John Goldingay notes that the book of Genesis frames the beginning stages of God's redemptive plan for the world—a plan that reaches its conclusion in Revelation.[588] God deliberately and systematically calls creation into being throughout the first chapter of Genesis, culminating in the creation of humankind, called to live in collaboration with God and working in and with creation on God's behalf (Gen 1:26).[589] This Godhead, Trinitarian in nature and functionality, is directly involved in the creation of humankind.[590] Genesis 1 describes a God who commissions something good and continues to cares for and sustain all that has been created (Matt 3:16-17; Luke 22:42; John 14:16). Interdependency and mutuality underpin the co-inherence that exists between God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Throughout the story of scripture none is subsumed by the work or being of the other. This is collaboration ultimately beyond human understanding but, nonetheless, paradigmatic for the pursuit of collaboration.

Secondly, collaboration undergirds the manner in which humankind, male and female, are to work together to both care for each-other and care for the creation. A collaborative partnership is established (Gen 2:18). Goldingay suggests that on his own, Adam cannot meet the task of caring for the garden. He needs help beyond purely physical help and beyond what the animals might offer.[591] While the relationship between God and Adam has been harmonious, God recognises that Adam needs a peer.[592] Therefore, the principle of a supported life sits at the centre of this creative act.

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[588] John Goldingay, *Genesis*, *Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020), 1.

[589] Ibid., 36.

[590] Ibid., 35. Goldingay notes that the previous commissions in the creation accounts were introduced in the jussive, whereas this commission regarding the making of human beings appears in the cohortative—as something God must directly do. The use of the plural form, "in our image," indicative of the Trinitarian Father, Son and Spirit involved in the act of making, may also reflect the plural of majesty—ie the royal "we," indicating both authority and the boundary between God and humanity. C.f. Tremper Longman, *Genesis*, *The Story of God Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 36. Longman III suggests that early audiences would have understood the plural as referring to God and God's divine assembly.

[591] Goldingay, 62.

[592] Longman, 50.

From the dawn of creation, going it alone is deemed an inappropriate mechanism for human flourishing and well-being.

Throughout history, humankind has been invited into specific and ongoing collaborations with God. Covenants underline the life-bringing relationships that God has called human beings towards. Daniel Block notes that covenant in the bible is a theological rather than economic or political concept. He writes, "it [covenant] involves the infinite God and finite parties whom he invites to covenant relationship with himself, and these finite members are to treat each other as coequal beneficiaries of these covenants."[593] While the divine-human covenant is unequal in that human-beings are not God, there is no functional subordination between human beings. Collaboration within these covenants results in both the individual and the collective provision and protection of the Godhead (Gen 9,10,15; Exodus 19, 24; 2 Sam 7; Luke 22:14-23). As God's covenanted people, those who live with complex disability live under the provision and protection of God. They also exist within human communities that are called to work together in collaborative partnerships that align with God's covenantal promises of provision and protection.

Thirdly, the notion of collaboration is at work in the unfolding drama of disconnection from God that occurs in the third chapter of Genesis. What had been deemed good is undermined by a collaboration of created beings who choose to pursue their own agenda. In the tragedy of Genesis 3, as Block describes it, the man and woman together reject their vassal status by reaching for equal status with God.[594] The symmetry and harmony of the good creation is destroyed and all relationships subsequently become disturbed. What had been a close relationship between the Creator and human beings, is undermined by a process of deliberate hiding from the presence of God (Gen 3:8-10). Within the ensuing fractured relationships, the human beings are self-alienated—they face each other in shame and subsequently construct barriers between themselves and God.[595] Ultimately, this act of rebellion leads to a life outside the garden.[596]

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[593] Daniel I. Block, *Covenant: The Framework of God's Grand Plan of Redemption* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021), 2.

[594] Ibid., 53-54.

[595] Longman, 65.

[596] Goldingay, 83-84. Goldingay argues for an understanding of these events in Genesis 3 as an act of rebellion, rather than the more commonly employed metaphor of "fall." He notes that "fall" can imply a previously exalted status—rather than that of created beings yet to grow into maturity, or victimhood on the part of Adam and Eve—instead of a deliberate rebellion in which they chose to jump. While the language of "fall" is more well known in a Salvationist setting (see Doctrine 3, Appendix E), I think Goldingay's point is well made. The language of "fall" is more passive in nature than that of "rebellion."

To live outside the presence of God brings a vulnerability to human existence that can lead to power imbalances. Therefore checks and balances are required to ensure that individual agendas do not undermine the well-being of others. For example, to suggest that I alone know what is best for the person living with a complex disability, is fallacious. This is the human ego at work. Personal ego does not contribute to the flourishing of people. Accountability is the antidote. Such accountability recognises our covenantal responsibility towards God, and our comprehensive responsibility towards each other. A commitment to working together, in the light, life and presence of God, is the most holistic way to counteract the power imbalances to which humanity and the church are susceptible.[597]

Fourthly, Christ collaborates with the unfolding plan of redemption in that he empties himself of his divinity and takes on the form of a human being, subject to the joys and vulnerabilities inherent in such an embodiment (Phil 2:7). Christ is the God who draws near, who does not shy away from the uncertainties, vagaries and disappointments of human life. He is also the Christ who celebrates with family and friends (John 2:1-12), who attends to the voice of the marginalised (Luke 4:16-21), and extends hospitality to those whom polite society deems unworthy (Matt 22:9-10). Jesus gathers a team around himself—a small, collaborative group who witness and support his ministry (Matt 4:18-22; Luke 5:27; Luke 6:12-16). He teaches and trains them in the ways of the Kingdom and then sends them out in teams of two (Mark 6:7). Such a pattern ensures mutual accountability and mutual support. Ultimately, in his ascension, Christ becomes the collaborative link between the created and the Creator. He takes the lived experience of humanness deep into the Godhead and continues interceding for those he now calls friends (Rom 8:34; Heb 2:11, 7:25; 1 John 2:1).

Fifthly, in his healing ministry, Jesus Christ presents a collaborative approach to those who seek his help, rather than any arbitrary dispensation of advice or healing. For example, in the story of the bleeding woman he persists in trying to communicate with the woman (Mark 5:25-34). In asking, "who touched me," Jesus acknowledges the woman's effect on him and provides opportunity for encounter.[598] While his disciples

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[597] Eiesland, 67. For example, Eiesland notes that discrimination against disabled people continues within the church, against a backdrop of improved support garnered through the social movement for disability reform. In treating disabled people as the recipients of goodwill and benevolence, the church fails in its responsibility to model justice.

[598] Moss, in *The Bible and Disability: A Commentary*, 290-91. Moss notes that the woman pulls power out of the body of Jesus, thus underlining the porous nature of his body. Bodily porosity was considered a sign of sickliness and disease in a Greek and Roman understanding. In this sense, Moss argues, the body of Christ might be described as disabled.

blame the pressing crowd, Jesus continues to look around for the source of the touch. He has felt the transfer of power from himself but has not located the woman, who could have chosen the path of continued anonymity. In responding to Jesus with her declaration of faith, the woman traverses social boundaries, holiness codes and personal embarrassment.[599] In the story of the blind beggar, rather than making assumptions, Jesus directly asks, “What do you want me to do for you?” (Mark 10:51).[600] The outcome is a collaboration between the two, rather than the imposition of one’s agenda on the other. Jesus commends the faith of a group of friends who collaborate together to make an encounter with Jesus possible for their disabled friend (Mark 2:1-12).[601]

In the story of the chronically ill man beside the pool at Bethsaida, collaboration occurs to a point (John 5:1-15). As Jesus speaks to him, the man witnesses to his solitary helplessness in the face of his illness, or alternatively, as Jaime Clark-Soles comments, he presents a list of excuses and fails to clearly enunciate any desire to be healed.[602] Leon Morris notes that the man is focused on the curative properties of the disturbed water rather than on Jesus as healer.[603] However, Jesus takes the initiative and at this point the struggle to beat others into the healing waters is removed. Clark-Soles notes that in the context of disability the text is difficult.[604] There is no evidence that the healed man follows Christ into discipleship. Rather, he appears to escalate the controversy developing between Jesus and the religious authorities. What can be said is that Jesus deliberately initiates further collaboration by actively seeking him out in the temple and endeavouring to draw him towards fullness of life.

When Jesus encounters the man caught in the isolating grip of leprosy, the choice to collaborate with the vulnerable one is confronting in its breadth—Jesus chooses to reach out to physically touch the stigmatised and infectious one. As Green notes, Jesus is willing to move beyond social boundaries to minister the good news.[605] Such activity

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[599] Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, *The New International Commentary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 349.
[600] The story of Bartimaeus is considered in more depth later in the chapter.
[601] Solevåg, 40. In her consideration of this passage, Solevåg notes that Jesus forgives the man’s sin prior to healing his disability. She suggests the possibility that Jesus sees the human being in need of salvation, before seeing the man as paralytic—an example of the person-first perspective.
[602] Jaime Clark-Soles, "John, First-Third John, and Revelation," in *The Bible and Disability: A Commentary*, ed. Sarah J. Melcher, Mikeal C. Parsons, and Amos Yong, Studies in Religion, Theology, and Disability (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2017), 340.
[603] Morris, 269.
[604] Clark-Soles, in *The Bible and Disability: A Commentary*, 342-46. For example, Clark-Soles notes the function of the man as a “narrative prosthesis,” or a pawn in the unveiling of Christ’s power and identity. Further issues arise over the man’s lack of consent to the healing and the apparent linking of sin, in the form of poor moral character in this case, with disability.
[605] Green, 238.

both humanised and healed the disabled man and enabled him to return to his community (Luke 5:12).

Finally, the impetus for Christ's collaborative approach to his overall ministry is the love which exists within the Godhead itself.[606] This love expresses itself in the creative activity that initiates life and community. It is the love that sets in motion the redemption of a disconnected and disoriented humankind. It is the love embodied in the Christ who declares himself to be the healer of broken hearts and broken bodies. It is the love that lives out a message of serving others while also taking care of oneself (Luke 5:16). People with complex disability are called to serve under this same mantle of love. It is the love that embraces the sometimes difficult grace of receiving from others (John 13:1-17). Leon Morris notes that in this farewell discourse, where Christ washes the feet of the disciples, Peter, captive to his own self-will, is reluctant to let Christ perform this seemingly menial task.[607] However, Christ is teaching that serving others is the mark of the true disciple. People with complex disability are called to share in this service. Love and service are the identifiers of a church body whose purpose is to collaborate with the mission of Jesus in the world—to be a tangible sign of the collaboration between heaven and earth (Matt 28:18-20). The church, or in this case TSA, participate in this collaboration of love by making service and missional opportunities available to all.

8.7.1 Jesus Christ and Fullness of Life

In John 10:10, Jesus notes that while others come to steal, diminish, or corrupt life, his mission in the world is to bring fullness of life. The context and dimensions of this claim have important implications for people living with complex disability. As part of the wider shepherd discourse, this assurance from Jesus highlights the close connection between Christ as shepherd and the sheep, who know his name and respond to his care and protection. Interestingly, the threat to the sheep comes from unexpected quarters. The thieves identified here are misguided religious leaders. Having queried the healing of a blind man on the Sabbath in John 9, these leaders reveal an orientation towards form over function. Such an orientation echoes the battle-ground versus parade-ground Army noted in Chapter 6. That is, the rules of this particular faith community override the well-being of the man born blind. Christ's claim to bring fullness of life is set against the backdrop of this earlier conflict.

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[606] *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine*, 60. TSA affirms the Trinity as a 'community of being,' relating to one another in mutual love, thereby demonstrating the true nature of love.

[607] Morris, 549.

The conflict and the claim have implications for how TSA approaches mission in the New Zealand context. As their 2019–2020 Annual Report notes, “When we put our faith in God, there is fullness of life.”[608] That is, God’s governance brings fullness to all dimensions of life. In order to be an Army that brings life in the context of disability, Christ’s embodiment of this claim must take centre stage in TSA’s ministry, preaching and teaching. Equally, as a faith community, TSA must note the caution embedded in the wider narrative—in losing sight of Jesus, faith communities can get it wrong. If, as this research indicates, there are people in TSA who have suffered a lack of opportunity to serve and be served, then repentance and action are necessary. A church that does not respond, echoes the ambivalence embedded in the response of the chief priests and elders of the church towards Judas in Matthew 27:4, “…what is that to us? See to it yourself.” In effect the religious leaders tell Judas that his sin and his situation are his own problem.[609] Whether overt or implicit, such a response is the embodiment of negligence on the part of church leadership.

8.7.2 Jesus Christ and Incarnation

This next section of work considers the incarnation and the resurrection of Christ as two pivotal elements of his claim to bring fullness of life. In the incarnation Jesus fully aligns himself with the experience of human life and in the resurrection Jesus signals the telos of human experience. One cannot separate the Christ event from the comprehensive redemption and recovery plan initiated by the Godhead within the creation accounts.

Eden, gifted to humanity as a place of abundance, peace and relational fulfilment, hosts the tree of life at its centre (Gen 2:9). Rather than describing the original creation as perfect, Joel Estes proposes that the creation story highlights imperfection understood as a “process of becoming,”[610] and as “pain and loss.”[611] These understandings position themselves in contrast to any reductive notions of perfection sometimes ascribed to the experience of disability. That is, Estes suggests that all was not perfect (complete or whole) in the Garden of Eden before the rebellion. The animals were without name and Adam was lonely. When God invites Adam to name the animal’s and when God

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[608] The Salvation Army, *The Fullness of Life Annual Report 2019-2020* (Wellington: The Salvation Army, 2020), 1.

[609] David L. Turner, *Matthew*, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 649.

[610] Joel D. Estes, "Imperfection in Paradise: Reading Genesis 2 through the Lens of Disability and a Theology of Limits," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 38 (2016): 10.

[611] Ibid., 12.

fashions a partner from within Adam, God's creation can be described as dynamic. For Estes, the permissions and prohibitions of Genesis 2:16-17 signal possibility within limits. In the face of contemporary appeals to autonomy and independence, Estes notes, "Genesis locates pain and loss within Eden precisely because it is through these 'imperfections' that humans can experience a more perfect union based on differentiation, limitation and, companionship."[612]

Symbolising the life-giving presence and immortality available in God, the tree provides a picture of present and future fullness of life. To be in relationship with God brings fullness of life in the present. This means that people with complex disability are not called to wait for some far off solution to their loneliness, isolation or exclusion. While human relationality is subject to the vagaries of attitude, attention and intention, God's relationality is constantly present, without fault and loving in the presence of comprehensive knowing (Isa 43:1). The person with complex disability is fully witnessed.

The tree also represents future fullness of life—a life beyond the constraints and boundaries of the human condition that hold humanity to a time-bound, broken, and ultimately frail, existence. In Revelation 22:1-5, John's vision is of Eden restored—the tree of life, once forbidden to Adam and Eve, is now available to all. Gordon Fee notes that with no more curse the bible concludes with, "a restoration of the beginning…and a reversal of everything that went wrong in the fall."[613] The tree of life with its eternal nourishment and life-giving properties is made available to all.[614] This means that people living with complex disabilities, broken human relationships or fatigued bodies, will experience full and permanent transformation. The tree of life promises that fullness of life will pierce the mortal boundaries of our current life experience. In light of the work of the second Adam, humanity will find ultimate fulfilment in an unfettered life, mediated by the transformative presence of the light-bringing Lamb (Rev 22:1-5).

In his incarnation Christ bridges the earthly and heavenly spheres. Jesus, who is the fullness of God (Col 2:9-10), embodies the source of abundant life—a contemporary and eternal relationship with God. In choosing to dwell amongst humanity, Christ does not hover over the surface of what it means to be human (John 1:14). Rather his choice is to live and pattern the fullest expression of human life possible. Irenaeus considered

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[612] Ibid., 15.
[613] Gordon D. Fee, *Revelation, New Covenant Commentary Series* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade, 2011), 303.
[614] Ibid., 304.

this identification with humanity to be the central pillar of Christ's work. In recapitulation, or re-heading creation, Christ sums up in himself all that it is to be human.[615] Christ did not live that life removed from poverty, hardship or misunderstanding. Every person with a complex disability, finds in the incarnate Christ, an enduring endorsement of human embodiment along with an enduring first-hand witness to its potential and pain, glory and limits.

There is no sense of scarcity in the fullness of life Christ provides. The word "abundantly" *(perisson)* carries the sense of God's overflowing or abounding provision for humankind throughout its history.[616] Expansive and spacious access mark Christ's methodology. There are no hints of token measures or policies without potency. Christ, as shepherd, literally lays down his life in order to secure abundant life for his sheep (John 10:11). Paradoxically, Jesus secures enduring hope for the world by fully giving himself up. David McLachlan describes this as, "the fullest revelation of God's eternal character."[617] Christ's death makes it possible for all to cross into fullness of life in the present. His incarnational agenda is focused on actively demonstrating that fullness of life accompanies a willingness to live for the welfare of the other—to live a deeper life. The person living with a complex disability finds in Christ access to a deeper life along with limitless welfare guardianship.

A relationship of love sits at the heart of the incarnation. In fully loving the world, God sends, Christ comes, and the Spirit mediates. John 3:16 testifies to the breadth and spaciousness of this love. It is extravagant and boundless. Fullness of life is born out of this invitation into loving relationship in which we become fully and eternally alive.[618] This is quality of life par excellence. The mutuality inherent in this relationship defines its operational mechanisms. That is, it is in being loved, that humanity experiences fullness of life. It is in sharing love that humanity experiences fullness of life. It is in living in the power of love that humanity experiences fullness of life. Fullness of life is

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[615] "Irenaeus against Heresies," in *The Ante-Nicean Fathers: Translations of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 446. "But when He became incarnate, and was made man, He commenced afresh the long line of human beings, and furnished us, in a brief, comprehensive manner, with salvation; so that what we had lost in Adam—namely, to be according to the image and likeness of God—that we might recover in Christ Jesus."

[616] W. Bauder, "Fullness, Abound, Multitude, Fulfil, Make Room," in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 729.

[617] McLachlan, 82.

[618] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Living God and the Fullness of Life* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2015), 146. Moltmann writes, "Through the transforming power of divine love mortal life will come alive from within. The experience of God will become the experience of being loved and affirmed from all eternity. That is the fullness of life."

about doing life together within a paradigm of unconditional love. A person with a complex disability finds in Christ the embodiment of eternal love and the outworking of contextually embedded love.

8.7.3 Jesus Christ and Resurrection

The resurrection of Christ signals the definitive outcome for human beings in the fullness of life narrative (John11:25, 20:19-23). N.T. Wright describes the resurrection as the most complete form of event—it demonstrates both meaning and power.[619] The resurrection of Jesus reveals the real world—the world in which love is the key to fullness of life. The finality of death, disease and decay has been overturned. Moltmann notes, "With the resurrection of Jesus, the God-imbued, eternally young life appears in the midst of this history of death."[620] With Christ's resurrection the new creation has broken into the present creation. Samuel Logan Brengle writes,

> Eternity is not coming. Eternity is here. We are enwrapped by it. It arches over us as do the heavens above us. It enfolds us as does the atmosphere about us.[621]

Eternal life has begun. The apostle Paul suggests this in 2 Corinthians 5:17-18. Levison, reflecting on this text, signals that this new creation can be understood in the context of individual conversion, the creation of a new community—the church, and the transformation of the cosmos. He notes that Paul suggests a radical separation between old things and new things that encompasses more than just individual transformation.[622] All the promises inherent in a future restoration are brought forward, in some measure, into the present. That is, in the resurrection of Christ, the realm of our present life falls within the broader context of this radically altered reality. The believer with a complex disability finds in the resurrection of Christ assurance of continuity of personhood unburdened by uncooperative, depleted, tired or aging bodies. The resurrection of Christ is a sign of hope and also the crystallisation of the destiny of believers with complex disability.

Within the context of the post resurrection appearances, the nature of Christ's embodiment changes. The exact nature of that embodiment is ultimately unclear. Jesus

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[619] N. T. Wright, *History and Eschatology* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2019), 188.

[620] Moltmann, *The Living God and the Fullness of Life*, 146.

[621] Samuel Logan Brengle, *Resurrection Life and Power* (London: Salvationist Publishing and Supplies, 1953), 26.

[622] J. R. Levison, "Creation, New Creation, Paul," in *The I V P Dictionary of the New Testament: A One Volume Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*, ed. Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP, 2004), 249-50.

is simultaneously recognisable and yet different. Timothy Wall describes this not as a move from physicality to non-physicality but rather to supra-physicality.[623] Jesus appears and vanishes in ways which are both familiar and unfamiliar. He is recognised and unrecognised. The scars of his crucifixion remain—but the work of the crucifixion is complete. They testify to his sacrifice on behalf of humanity—but they also indicate a finished work. How, or if, they are paradigmatic for disability as part of resurrection life is to focus on issues ultimately beyond our knowing (1 Corinthians 15:51).[624]

Contemporary theological perspectives are diverse.[625] For example, Nancy Eiesland describes the post-resurrection body of Christ, the one that carries the wounds (or scars) of his crucifixion, as evidence of the compatibility of disability with resurrection life.[626] In a further perspective, Candida Moss draws on early Christian understandings of resurrection life framed around notions of identity, integrity, functionality and aesthetics.[627] Drawing on John 20:24-29, she argues that John deliberately uses a scar motif. The scars act as guarantor of Christ's identity and the reality of the resurrection. However, she also notes that these scars may act as a signal that imperfections of the body can be transformed without being erased.[628] Amos Yong proposes that a person living with Down Syndrome in this life, may experience future eschatological transformation and fullness of life, within the continuing context of Down Syndrome.[629] In this sense, disability shapes identity in a substantive rather than superficial way.

In contrast, Terrence Ehrman, who employs Thomistic anthropology to frame his arguments, proposes that while the marks of disability may remain in a post-resurrection

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[623] Timothy Wall, "Resurrection and the Natural Sciences: Some Theological Insights on Sanctification and Disability," *Science & Christian Belief* 27, no. 1 (2015): 43.

[624] John Swinton, "Who Is the God We Worship? Theologies of Disability; Challenges and New Possibilities," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 14, no. 2 (2010): 285. For example, Swinton notes that the scars of Jesus have traditionally been understood by the church as signs of hope and redemption. He proposes that the most that can be said about these post-resurrection marks on the body of Jesus is that they are "surprising." They are surprising in a manner similar to the surprising nature of all future resurrected bodies.

[625] Louise Gosbell, "Space, Place, and the Ordering of Materiality in Disability Theology: Locating Disability in the Resurrection and the Body of Christ," *Journal of Disability and Religion* 26, no. 2 (2022): 149-55. Gosbell provides a helpful review of some of these contemporary discussions located between "retention" and "elimination" views of disability in post-resurrection experience.

[626] Eiesland, 100.

[627] Candida R. Moss, *Divine Bodies: Resurrecting Perfection in the New Testament and Early Christianity* (London, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019).

[628] Ibid., 38.

[629] Yong, *Theology and Down Syndrome: Reimagining Disability in Late Modernity*, 259-92. C.f. Lisa D. Powell, "Disability and Resurrection: Eschatological Bodies, Identity, and Continuity," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 41, no. 1 (2021): 96. Powell affirms the dynamism of eschatological existence found in Yong's proposals. She pushes them further exploring a future in which impairment is not erased but encompasses an "undoing of ability," as all are incorporated into the body of Christ.

context, human beings abiding in Christ, become truly themselves. In this sense, a person may hope for healing, but such healing does not forgo numerical identity in post-resurrection life. Disability thus forms identity, but is not identical with identity.[630] The radical discontinuity of the resurrection means that we cannot overlay earth-bound conceptions of material transformation with metaphysical speculation. However, using N. T. Wright’s vernacular, there are “signposts” that enable us to navigate the ambiguity.[631]

In his post-resurrection appearances to the believers, Jesus demonstrates how they are fully known to him. His enquiries highlight that he is aware of what they each need to experience fullness of life. They are witnessed as individuals who struggle with different life experiences. For some the struggle is doubt, for others cowardice, and for others a preoccupation with temporal needs (John 20 & 21). The resurrected Christ sees and attends to each of these incursions into their life experience and restores what needs restoration in order for them to be fully human. Maja Whitaker touches on this theme when she notes that the new creation involves transformation of personal *and* societal limitations.[632] I would further argue that the parameters of that restoration do not conform to a unilateral pattern. Peter is not required to look, act, or be like Thomas, or vice-versa. Their identities have been formed in the context of their life experiences but, as noted earlier, their identity is found in Christ, as new creations. The promise of the resurrection is the freedom of being fully accepted for the persons we are in Christ. For the person living with a complex disability the resurrection of Jesus signals transformation into the likeness of Christ—not into a prescribed physical or cognitively uniform embodiment.

In John 11:25 Jesus links his identity as both the resurrection *and* the life. In the person of Christ, humankind’s future transformation is assured *and* glimpses of that reality should be witnessed in earthbound life. For example, in healing the blind man (John 9:1-38), and raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1- 44), Jesus emphasises that eternal life is also signalled in the transformation of the individual’s present circumstances. The resurrection, as sign of what is not yet fully realised, is grounds and imperative for continued attention to fullness of life experienced in the present. The

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[630] Terrence Ehrman C.S.C, "Disability and Resurrection Identity," *New Blackfriars* 96, no. 1066 (2015): 736-37.

[631] N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperOne, 2008).

[632] Maja I Whitaker, "Perfected yet Still Disabled? Continuity of Embodied Identity in Resurrection Life," *Stimulus* 26, no. 2 (2019): 22.

person with a complex disability finds in the resurrected Christ, one who also attends to quality of life in the present. This is not to say that difficulty, or indeed suffering, are dismissed from life, but rather that they are not the whole story. Nor should they be glossed over—Mary and Martha's grief regarding Lazarus is potent. When Mary and others weep over the loss, Jesus is disturbed and moved (John 11: 33-38).

This is not a movement towards pity. It is an acknowledgement that compassion is action that affords its own healing. Such convictions are echoed in the work of Brian Brock who challenges the church to move beyond conjecture about the future form of resurrection bodies, to focus on our mutual interdependency and the "revelatory capacity," contained within every human being.[633] For the person with a complex disability, none of life's circumstances are more powerful than the transformation of those circumstances signalled in the compassionate and risen Christ.

In relation to the organising rubric of this study, "fullness of life," the research data challenges the polarities of both an under or over-realised eschatology. Instead the notion fullness of life carries a broadness to it that embraces contemporary enactment of Kingdom principles *and* eschatological hope in the form of a future transformation in the pattern of the resurrected Christ. New Testament scholar Dwight Peterson, who lived with paraplegia, notes that the promises of Revelation 21 prompt humanity to wait in hope and to act in hope.[634] Such waiting in hope is not mindless towards the suffering and difficulty associated with life, but it is mindful of a Saviour who is infinitely trustworthy. Acting in hope means an ongoing commitment to praying, advocating, serving and working for justice. Peterson writes, "practising the presence of Christ calls for thoughtful and collaborative creativity."[635] Moving forward from this hope-filled centre—Jesus Christ—I now turn to consider fullness of life as understood by theologian Jürgen Moltmann.

8.7.4 Fullness of life and Jürgen Moltmann

Jürgen Moltmann provides a lens on fullness of life that is helpful in the context of disability. Operating with an ecumenical spirit, Moltmann's lifetime of systematic theological work has offered much insightful thinking to the world on themes as broad

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[633] Brock, *Wondrously Wounded: Theology, Disability, and the Body of Christ*, 53.
[634] Dwight N. Peterson, "Barriers, Boundaries, Limits: Revelation 21:1-4," *Ex Auditu* 21 (2005): 167.
[635] Ibid., 168.

as the suffering of God and the nature of hope and the resurrection.[636] In his book, *The Living God and the Fullness of Life,*[637] Moltmann summarises and clarifies his earlier work and notes that the truly fulfilled life is one lived in God and that in light of the resurrection, this fulfilled life begins in the present. These twin notions, fullness of life in Christ as a present and future reality, form the focal point of this thesis.

Moltmann argues that life lived in the modern world has been stripped of its luminosity and richness by its dismissive orientation towards God and associated notions of mystery and transcendence. Such a reductive orientation, he cautions, leads to a diminished existence. For example, in trying to reduce life's complexity into manageable simplicity we conjure up, "a world without mystery, a world devoid of surprises, a calculable world, a controlled world."[638] In the context of disability, Moltmann's thesis helpfully underlines that it is not disability itself that leads to a diminished life, but the living of that life closed to the fullness of life that the living God has revealed in the resurrection of Jesus. Thus disability itself is not a disaster. It does not necessarily lead to the experience of a diminished life.

In contrast to a diminished experience of life, Moltmann draws on the motif proposed by Athanasius, in which the resurrection of Christ, "makes of life a never-ending festival."[639] In this sense *festival* is not equated with *party,* although celebration is certainly part of it. Rather the proposal is that festivals anchor us as human beings. They ground us on the earth while linking us with the hope we find in Christ. They remind us of the past while showing us our future. Moltmann is clear that life as a never ending festival is not synonymous with a continuous festival. Rather, it is in the moving between everyday life and the celebration of festivals that life becomes dynamic, interesting and imbued with the divine.[640] In the context of living with a complex disability, Moltmann's proposals underscore the imperative of access to such anchoring and hope-filled occasions for all believers. That is, within the context of TSA, access to life-bringing worship, life-enriching fellowship, celebrations of membership and participation in events celebrating the Christian calendar, imbue the ordinary life of people with complex disability with the divine.

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[636] Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, trans. James W Leitch (New York: Harper & Row, 1993); Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, trans. R. A. Wilson and John Bowden (London: SCM, 1973); Jürgen Moltmann, *In the End – the Beginning*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 2004).
[637] Moltmann, *The Living God and the Fullness of Life*.
[638] Ibid., 17.
[639] Ibid., xi.
[640] Ibid., 196.

8.7.5 Fullness of Life: Love, Hope and Joy

For Moltmann, a sense of joy, wonder and meaning, emerges from a life that is open to and animated by the Spirit of God who awakens our senses. More specifically in Moltmann's argument—love itself awakens all the senses and hope opens our senses toward the future.[641] With these senses awakened, love draws us towards others and makes us able to enjoy life in spite of particular circumstances. In loving and being loved fresh energy for life is liberated in and through us. John Swinton makes a similar claim when he argues that for persons with cognitive disabilities, the love of God is mediated through loving temporal relationships.[642] Love and hope speak to the reality of living with a complex disability in individual and communal ways. Facing inward one finds oneself loved from all eternity, facing outwards one finds oneself loved and loving. Loving becomes the heart-beat of a full life.

Hope enables us to meet each new day with joy and anticipation and facilitates a strength of character in the face of adversity.[643] Hope in this sense is not a reductive notion that causes us to settle for crafting a wish list on how to change our circumstances. Instead it is a catalyst for greeting each day as an opportunity, a wide open vista that welcomes a spirit of enquiry and anticipation. As Moltmann notes, "Hope becomes realistic and reality hopeful."[644] As we live in God—the mundane and the majestic are co-located, celebrated and together lead to an experience of fullness of life.

The notion of joy is also helpful in the disability context. Moltmann is at pains not to underestimate the suffering and vulnerability that continues to abound in the world. His personal story attests to his familiarity with such a notion. However, he contends that in turning towards the, "wide space of God's joy,"[645] humanity in turn finds joy by coming alive from within. This joy exists beyond limited notions of happiness, or certain types of embodiment, but rather encapsulates a feeling about life that provides strength for living and the power to love and die.[646] Moltmann addresses the paradox inherent in the

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[641] Ibid., 168.

[642] John Swinton, "Restoring the Image: Spirituality, Faith, and Cognitive Disability," *Journal of Religion and Health* 36, no. 1 (1997): 25.

[643] Moltmann, *The Living God and the Fullness of Life*, 169.

[644] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 192.

[645] Moltmann, *The Living God and the Fullness of Life*, 87.

[646] Ibid., 88.

Christian faith described as a religion of joy, when at its centre we find the crucified Christ.[647]

Joy is an orientation towards life that lives in the tension of loss, confusion or disappointment, without being immobilised or annihilated by it. At the heart of this Christian religion of joy hangs a suffering Christ, who is remembered and celebrated in the light of his resurrection—a resurrection life that embraces and graces mortal life in the present.[648] This is the state of being that I observed in research participants. As I noted earlier, none of them wished to be rid of their particular embodiment, none of them described their lives as second rate and none of them portrayed a sense of vexation towards the circumstances of their lives. In short, they embodied Moltmann's notion of joy—the joy that imparts the strength to live well.

8.7.6 Fullness of Life: Being *and* Doing

Moltmann proposes that believers experience eternal life as real physical life.[649] Eternal life, given by God and set within this real physical life is perceived by the believer. This objective truth is subjectively absorbed into the fabric of one's life. The distinction between the divine and human nature remains, but God's justification of the human being brings new life. God's sanctification issues in a self-confidence born of the knowledge that we are loved and redeemed.[650] In a Salvationist understanding, this gracious work of the Holy Spirit makes discipleship and living the Christian life possible. Having brought us to new life, the Spirit's sanctifying work continues to transform us into a holy people.[651] In describing the resultant festive life, Moltmann moves to position joy as the meaning of human life—joy in God and joy in life. In claiming this, Moltmann dismisses existential questions such as, “Am I of any use?”[652] arguing that such questions miss the point that human beings do not have to justify their existence. Simply equating life with purpose and utility undermines the reality that existence is beautiful in and of itself. While it may carry problems, pain or difficulties—such experiences are “signs of life.”[653] Joy and meaning is found in life itself, not in

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[647] Ibid., 100. He notes, “Behind Golgotha there stands the sun of the world of the resurrection, because the crucified One has appeared on earth in the radiance of the eternal divine life, because in him the new eternal creation of the world begins.”

[648] Jürgen Moltmann, "Christianity: A Religion of Joy," in *Joy and Human Flourishing: Essays on Theology, Culture, and the Good Life*, ed. Miroslav Volf and Justin E. Crisp (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015).

[649] Moltmann, *The Living God and the Fullness of Life*, 74.

[650] Ibid., 75.

[651] *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine*, 191-96.

[652] Moltmann, *The Living God and the Fullness of Life*, 195.

[653] Ibid.

external activity or achievement. Such an understanding immunises the disabled individual against the need to prove their utility.

On the one hand this understanding is helpful in the context of complex disability. For example, it stands in opposition to the reductive arguments of Peter Singer, noted earlier.[654] Moltmann's observations underline that the human person does not have to *do* in order to *be.* While I agree with Moltmann's premise, I would suggest that he does not pay enough attention here to a broader theology of work. *Doing* as relational response and participation in the Kingdom of God is diametrically opposed to *doing* in a utilitarian sense. In a Salvationist understanding, the phrase "Kingdom of God" refers to the rule of God in human affairs. In Christ's resurrection and by the gift of the Spirit given to the world, the Kingdom reign of God has been inaugurated on earth.[655] Human beings are invited to work with God as that reign takes shape on earth.[656] Participants in this research consistently expressed a desire to move from mere presence in the church, to a place of participation. They expressed how important it was for them to have responsibilities, employment, assignments or mission opportunities in their faith communities. It is not in *doing* that personhood is established, but it is in *doing* that we participate in the ongoing creative work of the Kingdom.

The exact nature of the *doing* can be varied. Participants in this research noted numerous ways in which they serve the mission of God—voluntary work, worship contributions, support of corps and divisional ministry programmes. People with cognitive disability are not excluded from this creative engagement in the work of God's kingdom. Jill Harshaw effectively argues that people with profound cognitive disability contribute to the mission of God, in a prophetic sense and as marginalised persons, by their very presence in our midst.[657] They demonstrate what it is to be authentically human. She further notes, "there are grounds to believe that an encounter

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[654] Singer. C.f. Devan Joy Stahl, "A Christian Ontology of Genetic Disease and Disorder," *Journal of Disability & Religion* 19, no. 2 (2015): 122-24. Stahl provides a brief overview of Singer's argument alongside that of philosopher/bioethicist, Joseph F. Fletcher, who queries the "personhood" of those with IQ's below 40.

[655] Jeannine K. Brown and Kyle Roberts, *Matthew, The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2018), 277. Brown and Roberts note that the gospel of Matthew identifies this kingdom theme early (Matt 4:16), underlining that God's reign is becoming a reality in the person and ministry of Jesus. The rule of God is now present in history and has begun to dismantle earthly structures and systems.

[656] *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine*, 223-24.

[657] Harshaw, "Prophetic Voices, Silent Words: The Prophetic Role of Persons with Profound Intellectual Disabilities in Contemporary Christianity."

with them is an encounter with Jesus… in the meeting of them [the intellectually disabled] we find ourselves spending time with God."[658]

8.7.7 Fullness of Life: Suffering and Vulnerability

Moltmann's theology has faced external critique particularly in relation to his arguments regarding God's immutability, impassibility and vulnerability.[659] He proposes that the, "living God is experienced both actively and passively. God speaks and God listens. God acts and God suffers."[660] I concur with Moltmann's assessment that these notions are important for understanding how living life as a "never-ending festival," is possible in the midst of human suffering and vulnerability.

The notion of suffering in the context of complex disability is a contested one. Not all people living with a disability link disability with suffering. This research project identified that responses to disability lead to difficulty and potentially suffering—not the disability itself. However, I suggest that Moltmann, who tends to see God's identity as clarified in the cross and in God's participation with the world and its suffering, is helpful in the context of this tension. For example, Moltmann's argument on the immutability and impassibility of God is not to suggest that God can be changed by any force from outside of God's self. Rather it suggests that God can be moved with compassion from within Godself. In Jürgen Moltmann's schema, suffering is the counter-narrative to fullness of life, for it is in deeply knowing and deeply loving that we are exposed to deep loss and/or deep pain.[661]

It is the notion of solidarity, which Moltmann's assessments highlight, that is particularly compelling in the context of disability. While the disability itself may not cause suffering, the response of others can cause suffering. This suffering is typified by experiences such as rejection, loneliness, mis-understanding, attack or isolating practices. In this sense, and in the vernacular of Moltmann, we witness a God who is compassionate and suffers in solidarity with human beings through the death of Jesus Christ (Is 53:3-4).[662] A life of love cannot be experienced in the absence of suffering,

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[658] Ibid., 318.

[659] Moltmann, *The Living God and the Fullness of Life*, 35-39.

[660] Ibid., 41.

[661] Ibid., 99. He writes, "The more deeply love draws us into life, the more alive we become, but our experience of suffering is greater, too. The more alive life is, the more deadly for us is death. That is the dialectic of affirmed and loved life."

[662] Ibid., 40-43.

but this suffering has been fully taken up by the suffering of Christ on the cross.[663] The joy of the subsequent resurrection means that present fullness of life is possible and future fullness of salvation is assured. In the face of suffering, Christ's church is called to live in alignment and solidarity with those who journey life with complex disabilities (Gal 6:2). Moltmann notes,

> The name the church gives itself - the church of Jesus Christ - requires us to see Christ as the subject of his church and to bring the church's life into alignment with him. Thus ecclesiology can only be developed from Christology, as its consequence and in correspondence with it.[664]

Heeding this counsel from Moltmann and noting the apostle Paul's call in Galatians 6:2 to seek the welfare of all people and particularly those within the faith, it is to the setting of the church that our focus now turns.

8.8 The Church

Having proposed Christ as the centre of a collaborative approach, this work now examines the place of the church in bringing fullness of life. I noted earlier that a person with a complex disability finds in Christ the embodiment of eternal love and the outworking of contextually embedded love. For the Christian, the outworking of this contextually embedded love occurs within the church community understood as a setting within a broader setting. That is, the church exists for its members (Gal 6:10) *and* for those who live beyond its permeable edges (Matt 5:16).

The New Testament church, as noted in Acts 2:42-47, understood the theological and sociological task of the church. Ben Witherington notes that in this retrospective summary statement about the early church, Luke is describing the church at its best. Later in the book of Acts the difficulties associated with life in community are not ignored.[665] While the text is not prescriptive, it is indicative. Believers listened, pursued and responded to the teaching of the apostles *and* collaborated with each other. Witherington comments that verses 44-45 should be taken together. First, the believers were in harmony with one another and secondly, they liquidated assets as the need arose

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[663] John Swinton, *Raging with Compassion: Pastoral Responses to the Problem of Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 65. Swinton provides a helpful review of the difference between suffering and evil noting that, "Suffering is an inevitable, if tragic, consequence of living in the type of world we have and of being made in the image of a God who *is* suffering love." To love, according to Swinton, is to open oneself to fragility and vulnerability. C.f. Clifton, *Crippled Grace: Disability, Virtue Ethics, and the Good Life*, 29-47.

[664] Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 66.

[665] Ben Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 156-57.

to support fellow believers.[666] In other words, as Schnabel notes, their unity was not shallow, or utopian, but grounded in love and care that was practical.[667]

There is evidence here of targeted response and support. When they knew what their fellow believers needed in order to pursue fullness of life in the present, other believers actively chose to offer care and practical support. The outworking of their faith became influential in the wider context of the world beyond their homes and temples. Their love and care for each other became evident to the world beyond the permeable borders of their faith community. As Witherington notes, "Its presence and witness became infectious."[668] It is important to note the role of the church here. The church does not offer salvation to the world. Rather, having received God's salvation, it becomes the witness and proclaimer of that salvation, collaborating with God and each other in building communities that witness to the reception of God's grace and provision. William Booth noted,

> Love is a precious commodity; an active force for good. Love works miracles, and every Soldier on your Roll has a heart that can love.[669]

In collaboration with the Holy Spirit, TSA is tasked with providing such a setting—one defined by targeted support and compassionate responses that enable all people to love others and experience fullness of life.[670] Theologically this involves providing resources that enable people to come to a point of knowing the person of God, being the people of God, and doing the work of God (Dan 11:32). Sociologically, it involves paying attention to an active practice of compassionate care and concrete support. None of these developments occur in a vacuum or without effort. As human beings we are never an afterthought in the economy of God. Therefore, people with complex disabilities should never be an afterthought in the context of church practice.

8.8.1 The Church as Establishment and Movement

In Chapter 5, it was noted that John Wesley in the 18th century and then William Booth in the 19th century, had both become disenchanted with some of the attitudes and

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[666] Ibid., 162.

[667] Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 181-82.

[668] Witherington, 163.

[669] Booth, *The Founder's Messages to Soldiers: During Years 1907–1908*, 38.

[670] *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine*, 256. Along with its missional statements, TSA notes, "All people need a community where they can be at home and can find roots, place and belonging. It is the Church, and not a highly individualistic Christianity, that responds to these needs. We have no real identity other than as human beings in relationship to others."

practices of the churches in which they served. Chapter 5 also mapped the influence of Wesleyan theology on the subsequent development of Salvation Army doctrine and practice. In both cases, these men perceived a blinkered understanding of the role of the church.[671] In Booth and Wesley’s oinion, some had forgotten for whom the church existed and others had forgotten why the church existed. Both avenues of divergence led to the marginalisation of certain people groups—a situation that Wesley and Booth found reprehensible. The questions that this issue raises, across the span of different centuries, was how these churches had reached a point of losing sight of the purpose and function of the church itself and how to protect against such loss of vision in the future. For the purpose of this discussion, I now briefly consider the ecclesiology of John Wesley and Jürgen Moltmann.

It must be noted that Wesley’s letters clearly signal his ongoing allegiance to the Church of England and his adherence to the essentials of the church defined as unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity.[672] However, it is also pertinent to this discussion to note the subsequent expansion in Wesley’s understanding. He proposed that the church has a *functional* embodiment in the world. For example, Wesleyan theologian and historian, Albert C. Outler notes, “Significantly and at every point, Wesley defined the church as *act*, as mission, as the enterprise of saving and maturing souls in the Christian life.”[673]

Wesley’s developing understanding of the church as *movement* and *establishment* reflects the weaving together of two concepts of the church. Rather than one or the other, and as Wesley’s convictions appear to indicate, I suggest the TSA also essentially operates as *movement* and *establishment*.”[674] For example, to suggest that the hierarchical structures embedded in TSA do not echo threads of an establishment orientation is, I propose, naïve. However, as Smith notes, movement and establishment need not be mutually exclusive. He comments, “One is a reminder that the church is

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[671] Booth, *In Darkest England and the Way Out*, 271. Writing about his plan to support London’s submerged tenth, he warned, “If the cultured and the respectable and the orthodox and the established dignitaries and conventionalities of Society pass by on the other side we cannot follow their example.”
[672] David L. Smith, "Ecclesiology: The Church, God’s Redeemed People," in *A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology: Biblical, Systematic, and Practical*, ed. Charles W. Carter, R. Duane Thompson, and Charles R. Wilson (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1983), 590.
[673] Albert C. Outler, "Do Methodists Have a Doctrine of the Church?," in *The Doctrine of the Church*, ed. Dow Kirkpatrick (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1964), 19.
[674] *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine*, 267. A 2008 statement on the ecclesiology of TSA notes, “ Through the years Salvationism has moved on in its emerging self-perception, and in the perceptions of others, from being a para-church evangelistic revival movement…to being a Christian church with a permanent mission to the unsaved and marginalised.”

continually being formed by the Word of God, while the other emphasizes the continuous redemptive presence in the world."[675] Having said that, I suggest that any inclination to signal the importance of one understanding over and above the other, leads to the impoverishment to which Wesley and Booth both bore witness.

A fixed divide between the notion of church as only establishment or only movement, leads to a lack of safe space for individuals to live out their Christian life and practice. For those living with complex disabilities, the research findings indicate a desire to embody both understandings of the church. Participants highlighted a longing for establishment aspects such as historical heritage, signs, symbols and rituals associated with belonging to TSA—thus being part of an establishment symbolic of something bigger than themselves. They also underlined the necessity for an understanding of TSA as a movement in which they might participate in missional opportunities supported by a community of faith. Such communities of faith and fellowship facilitate the lifelong process of discipleship formation, fruit-bearing and learning the rhythms of grace (Matt 11:29).

TSA, particularly in the West, faces significant challenges. As congregations shrink, pastoral leadership for congregations diminishes, and financial constraints lead to local congregational closures, a fresh understanding of the church as *act* in the local community is necessary for people with complex disabilities and the wider community. Dean Pallant proposes that worshipping congregations are the settings in which formation and faithful practice are initiated and sustained. His analysis posits that an increasingly pervasive and individualistic perception of holiness, has unhelpfully resulted in more people opting out of corporate worship. Such conceptions result in a corresponding loss of commitment to the community of believers.[676] Life cannot be navigated or pursued in isolation (Prov. 27:17).[677] It is in the context of togetherness that we are formed into the likeness of God. It is in the context of the church, as establishment and movement, that we live out our responsibility towards each other.

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[675] Smith, in *A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology: Biblical, Systematic, and Practical*, 590.

[676] Pallant, *Keeping Faith in Faith-Based Organizations: A Practical Theology of Salvation Army Health Ministry*, 165-67.

[677] Dow, 127. Dow, in his consideration of an ethics of care for people with disabilities notes the dimensions of this radical relationality, "As human beings, our identities are shrouded in mystery, radically relationally composed in concert with one another and by God. We are always already *responsible* to one another. We are called *to* one another and *by* one another and are part of each other's stories in often-inexpressible ways."

8.8.2 The Church and Jürgen Moltmann

Broadly speaking, Jürgen Moltmann's doctrine of the church can be summarised as contextual, Christological, understood as a fellowship of equal persons (Trinitarian), a church for others, charismatic and a community of the Spirit. [678] As with the notion "fullness of life," I suggest that Moltmann's proposals regarding the church are helpful in responding to the question of how to support people with complex disabilities in Salvation Army congregations. His work is ecumenical and contextual in nature—lending itself to different ecclesiological settings and also to theological conversation across diverse contexts such as Eastern Orthodoxy, Catholic communities in Latin America and Pentecostalism.

Moltmann's doctrine of the church specifically positions its Christological foundations directed towards the lordship of Christ and the eschaton. That is, Moltmann understands the church as a community of the cross and as a messianic fellowship—a fellowship that points beyond itself towards the future kingdom reign of Christ. In remembering Jesus, he writes,

> In the light of the eschatological person of Christ, the church does not live from the past; it exists as a factor of present liberation, between remembrance of his history and hope of his kingdom.[679]

Moltmann warns that if this eschatological orientation is lost, the church is in danger of subscribing to "powerless historical recollection."[680] If its Christological orientation is lost then the church is in danger of being usurped by the hopes, aims and agendas of non-Christian movements.[681]

8.8.3 A Fellowship of Equal Persons

Participation and belonging in the church, for Moltmann, mirrors the nature of the Trinity. The church in this sense is a voluntary, open and free fellowship of friends. Drawing on the imagery of the messianic banquet (Luke 14:15-24), Moltmann argues that Christ's celebration of friendship, with disciples, tax-collectors and sinners, is

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[678] Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove, Il: Inter Varsity Press, 2002), 126-33.

[679] Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 75.

[680] Ibid.

[681] Stephen Judd, John Swinton, and Kara Martin, *Keeping Faith: How Christian Organisations Can Stay True to the Way of Jesus* (Sydney, Australia: Acorn Press, 2023). Judd, Swinton and Martin examine how faith-based organisations can stay true to a Christological orientation. Their work will be highlighted later in the thesis. While previous commentary highlights the contention that TSA recognises itself as a Christian church, it also acknowledges that some people see it as a charity. In this sense, such a discussion is warranted. C.f. *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine*, 267.

inclusive of those who are like me and those who are different.[682] It is a friendship that reaches out to those within the church and those who currently live beyond its immediate environs—it is not friendship that occurs only in the private sphere of church or personal life. This giving and receiving in friendship, in the pattern of Christ, is to show openness to others. He notes, "Open friendship prepares the ground for a friendly world."[683] This understanding of the church as a fellowship of equal persons, underlines a safe and inclusive space in which people with complex disabilities might find a place of belonging and, subsequently, opportunities for missional service.

8.8.4 A Church for Others

Moltmann challenges any introspection on the part of the church that is detached from how it understands itself in the context of its relationship with the trinitarian history of God's engagement with the world. He writes,

> The church cannot understand itself simply from itself alone. It can only truly comprehend its mission and its meaning, its roles and its functions in relations to others.

A living church, in Moltmann's schema is open. That is, a living church is open for God, open for human beings and open to the future of both.[684] Giving consideration to the effects of restlessness, confusion and transition noted as the church moved into a new millennium, he helpfully refers to the timeless nature of the church. In this sense, the church is, and remains, all about messianic liberation and the eschatological renewal of the world. This is not a static enterprise. Reformation within the church, is an adventure of, and with, the Holy Spirit who guides through the processes of unrest associated with such reformation, to bring internal and external renewal.[685] In this sense, we hear an echo of Catherine Booth's call to disturb the present, an activity that brings with it a sense of unrest. However, I suggest that such disturbances are necessary in order to participate in the timeless renewal of Christ's church. I also propose that the TSA in particular can boldly embrace a sense of anticipation, positivity and wonder, associated with this reframing of unrest and/or confusion. In such settings, it is possible to witness new creation. An openness to God's future for people with complex disability within TSA may well occasion individual and collective renewal.

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[682] Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 121.
[683] Ibid.
[684] Ibid., 2.
[685] Ibid., 3.

8.8.5 A Community of the Spirit

Moltmann clearly articulates an holistic pneumatology in which the Spirit of God is understood as the Spirit of Life. His reflections note that in confining the work of the Spirit solely to the work of redemption, we undermine the work of the Spirit in bodily life and nature. Such an orientation, according to Moltmann, has led to an over-emphasis on existing through this life, while waiting for the promise of a better future in the life to come.[686] The argument of this thesis has been that fullness of life is experienced both as a current reality and a future promise. The better future starts now. In contrast to the reductive notions of existing through life while waiting for a better future, Moltmann writes,

> To experience the power of the resurrection, and to have to do with this divine energy, does not lead to a non-sensuous and inward-turned spirituality, hostile to the body and detached from the world. It brings the new vitality of a love for life.[687]

Two further things warrant comment in relation to Moltmann's reflections on this community of the Spirit. First, he argues that human beings sanctify life through their very existence. Again we note, *being* takes precedence over *doing*. According to Moltmann, we do not sanctify life, "by what we make of our lives." Rather, to love and live in the Spirit, is to embrace the knowledge of our freedom, justification and affirmation, rather than hope in the sufficiency of our works.[688] This is good news for everyone, but more specifically for those whose disabilities are profoundly complex. Secondly, Moltmann describes the Holy Spirit as both the power of life and the space for living. That is, the Spirit is the broad space in which our life can grow.[689] This "space for living" refers to an expansion of the heart that experiences the vitality everywhere *and* enables life to unfold within us. Drawing on Job 36:16, he notes,

> So in the new life we experience the Spirit as a 'broad place' – as the free space for our freedom, as the living space for our lives, as the horizon inviting us to discover life.[690]

I suggest that these concepts of a "broad place," and a "space for living," are helpful notions in the context of complex disability. The research participants indicated the need for metaphorical and literal space within the context of the church. Literal and

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[686] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (Minneapolis Fortress Press, 2001), 8-9.
[687] Ibid., 9.
[688] Ibid., 176.
[689] Ibid., 177-79.
[690] Ibid., 178.

metaphorical restrictions, in relation to personhood or missional capability, do not align with these understandings of the freedom and space made available through the Spirit of Life. Rather, this “broad place” is one in which people with complex disabilities have the freedom to discover life and the space for living that life to the full.

8.8.6 The Church: A Union of Imperfect Collaborative Individuals

The apostle Paul’s writing in 1 Corinthians 12:12-31, is helpful for an understanding of the church as an imperfect union of collaborating individuals. Nancy Eiesland aptly describes the members of the church as representative of “an essential diversity, interrelated by necessity and often hating the very differences that make us indispensable to one another.”[691] Even more pointedly, Grant Macaskill, notes the vulnerability for disabled people within a church that mistakenly believes itself to be virtuous.[692] The body of Christ consists of many disparate parts joined together into one organising head, Christ Jesus. While it is one thing to intellectually acknowledge this unity in difference, it is another to actively move towards ensuring that none of these necessary parts are left in limbo. Speaking personally, this was graphically demonstrated for me on a Sunday morning, during a time of fellowship after the service. My son was sitting in his wheelchair, some distance from where I was engaged in conversation with a member of the congregation. Samuel, who cannot move his arms, sneezed several times. The sneezes were not “dry” in nature. I watched, with a warm heart, as a congregational member, unbidden by me, simply walked over to Samuel and cleaned up the results of his sneezes. Such collaboration between imperfect individuals ensures that no-one is left in limbo.

Three further reflections from Jürgen Moltmann are helpful in this context.[693] First, the charismatic nature of the church is a further point of focus in Moltmann’s work. In his reflections on the apostle Paul, he notes that Paul’s theology of weakness (2 Cor 12:9), means that he fully expects to find the weak and the strong, the able and disabled, the wise and the foolish within the church. While Moltmann’s discussion spans the patristic understanding of all humanity as assumed in Christ, he also posits that every handicap is an endowment.[694] In this sense, people with disabilities are a *charismata*, or gift, to the church. This understanding of the value of people with disabilities, reflects the

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[691] Eiesland, 109.

[692] Macaskill, 97.

[693] I acknowledge the limits/difficulty of the word “handicap” in these reflections. However, I suggest that they are not utilised in a derogatory sense and simply reflect the language of the time.

[694] Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, 192-93.

experience of family members interviewed in this research. Their commentary highlighted the gifts that were associated either directly with their loved one, or were reflected in their approach to living "life to the full."

Secondly, expanding on this theme, Moltmann underlines that the seemingly "strong and effective" can cause further difficulty for those who live with disabilities. He proposes that solitude and enforced lack of independence, are other ways in which the capability of disabled people can be undermined.[695] Such understanding further reflects themes identified in this research, namely that disability itself is not a disaster, but that the actions and attitudes of others can make it difficult. Thirdly, Moltmann proposes a reciprocity in the relationship between those in the church who live with disability and those who do not. He notes that service given by the "non-handicapped" to the "handicapped" is of no import if the "non-handicapped" have not previously perceived and received the ministry of the "handicapped." Such reflections speak to the call of this thesis to recognise the ministry of disabled people in our midst and to ensure that any ministry is reciprocal in nature. In a direct reflection of Paul's understanding of the full working of the body of Christ, Moltmann writes, "Congregations without any disabled members are disabled and disabling congregations."[696] Such commentary is a direct challenge to TSA in New Zealand, where anecdotal evidence would suggest that people with disabilities are not readily visible in local congregations.

Working together and navigating the well-being of other people, does not come naturally to us as imperfect human beings. Tendencies towards self-preservation, self-reliance and selfishness undermine our capacity to see beyond our own needs. As noted earlier, Christians are sometimes guilty of looking back to the Garden of Eden and assuming that all was perfect before the unravelling work of rebellion began. However, loneliness, limits, and temptation were all present in the garden. These human experiences remain present in the church today. The research findings indicate that loneliness and anxiety form part of the experience of people living with complex disabilities in TSA. The challenge of the gospel is that being part of the church means we are charged with mitigating these experiences. The purpose of community is to share the load of living in a world of imperfection (Rom 12:9-15; Phil 2:4-5).

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[695] Ibid., 192.
[696] Ibid., 193.

Human beings fear what they do not recognise or understand—the church is an interactive, if imperfect, lesson in dealing with this disquiet. In few settings could one find a more diverse group of individuals attempting to live out their collective calling as brothers and sisters with a shared eternal, if not necessarily temporal, lineage. As Moltmann notes, this community is a "*unity in diversity* and *a diversity in unity*."[697] The church is not a place where particularity is dismissed as divisive or undesirable, but where particularity acknowledges who each individual is in their unique position as a child of God. Therefore, in matters of working towards understanding and the de-stigmatisation of people living with complex disability, the imperfect but redeemed people of God, are called to collaborate and lead the way.

8.9 Lived Experience

Having identified Jesus as the source and ultimate realisation of fullness of life, and the church, in the power of the Spirit, as the conduit for the experience of fullness of life—I continue considering the theological significance of the qualitative findings of this research. Six themes were developed from the data in this research. First, disability itself is not a disaster, but individual and community practices have the potential to render it difficult. Secondly, authentic inclusion embraces a literal and metaphorical creation of space for the person with a disability and their significant others. Thirdly, supporting people with disabilities requires a commitment of time, presence and active appreciation. Fourthly, complex disability is chronic in nature and the routines associated with supporting a person with complex disability are often unobserved and unrelenting. Two further themes were constructed from the focus group discussions. Fifthly, support for people with disabilities by TSA pastors is well intentioned but lacks a framework to ensure consistency. Finally, TSA has not yet recognised persons with disability as a missional priority or partner. All six themes underline the requirement for a collaborative commitment to new learning and praxis across the entire fabric of TSA as a faith community.

Complexly disabled participants and family members attending TSA had diverse experiences. Supportive practices occurred across a spectrum. Some people had found a place of supportive belonging in which they were called on to participate and contribute. Other people experienced TSA's welcome as nominal, inconsistent or reactive, rather than co-ordinated and purposeful. In this sense, these findings further contribute to our

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[697] Ibid.

understanding of the necessity to link theoretical frameworks to concrete expressions of support.

8.9.1 Disability Itself is Not a Disaster

The study demonstrated harmony across the four data sets in relation to disability understood as a state of being in the world, rather than as a disaster. That is, neither persons with complex disability, family members, corps officers, or mission support personnel in TSA considered there was anything inherently disastrous about living with a disability. However, the findings also demonstrated a difference in theological understanding between persons living with disability and some corps officers or mission support personnel, around the origin or purpose of disability. For some, disability simply reflected the diversity of God's good creation of human persons. For others, disability reflected the Arminian understanding that all is not as it should be in the world at this point in time. That is, until all of creation is fully transformed into the likeness of God, not all human thinking, action or embodiment, necessarily align with God's desires for the world.

The question of whether God chooses to create a person *with* a specific disabled embodiment, is one of the questions that lies at the heart of this variation in understanding. It also reflects the intrinsic/extrinsic disability identity dichotomy that I noted in Chapter 1. To argue from the position of Psalm 139:13, "For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb," indicates that God deliberately forms certain people with certain genetic variations such as Trisomy 21. Therefore the resulting embodiment can be said to reflect variation not abnormality.

What can then be said of those who were also formed according to the pattern of Psalm 139:13 and subsequently experience the trauma associated with a difficult birth process resulting in cerebral palsy, or a traumatic brain injury associated with an allergic reaction or car accident? It seems unlikely that "God made me this way," as Charles noted in his interview (see Chapter 6), can sit as a valid claim unless we are also claiming that God caused the oxygen deprivation associated with his cerebral palsy, or a rogue bee to fly past Jessica's sister at the most inopportune time.[698] The notion of

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[698] Raedorah C. Stewart, "Loop, Hook, Pull: Disabled by Design-Creating a Narrative Theology of Disability," *Theology Today* 77, no. 2 (2020): 180-81. Stewart relates the story of her early life, living with the shame associated with her stutter. An acquired brain injury at age 50 re-exacerbated the stutter. In her reflections on Psalm 139:13-14, she notes God as the Creator of her stutter and limited mobility-highlighting that notions of perfection, ability or beauty are false and that a disability reading of Psalm 139:13-14 indicates disabled people also reflect the *imago Dei*.

God’s providence is significant here. Rather than the notion of cause and effect – as in God made me this way—it might be helpful to consider that God has providentially permitted us to live out our lives in different embodiments. That is, God is with us in every stage of our embodiment as it unfolds across a lifetime.

Australian theologian, Shane Clifton, is helpful in this context.[699] As an adult, Clifton became quadriplegic after having a bicycle accident. His work concentrates on what it means to live well in the face of the challenges that life presents. While noting the frailty and vulnerability associated with disability, he also highlights its centrality in the human experience and seeks to determine how an understanding of happiness could transcend his disability. His work is a conversation between the virtue tradition, disability studies and Christian theology.

Clifton’s assessments of disability as gift[700] acknowledges a tension associated with this understanding. He notes,

> Disability does not always lead people closer to God or elicit personal and communal growth, and it is as capable of degrading a person as it is of elevating her.[701]

Pastors in the current research acknowledged witnessing similar outcomes. That is, in some cases, life with a disability had led to bitterness and withdrawal. To what extent this could be linked to unhelpful theodicies, or limited understanding of God’s providence, is unclear from the research. However, while acknowledging this reality, and noting the limits of theodicies that explain suffering in terms of greater good, sin, or moral and/or natural evil, Clifton considers the notions of primary and secondary causation. He comes to the conclusion that injuries such as his, reflect what it is to be a human being living on the earth. Disability, in this sense, is to be subject to the vulnerabilities of life. In his own words, his quadriplegia is the result of “dumb-luck and the constitution of the human neurological system and spine.”[702]

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[699] Clifton, *Crippled Grace: Disability, Virtue Ethics, and the Good Life*, 2-5.

[700] Moltmann, "Liberate Yourselves by Accepting One Another," in *Human Disability and the Service of God: Reassessing Religious Practice*, 119-21. Moltmann, in asking if every disability is also a gift, highlights the notion that the circumstance of disability is a gift of the Holy Spirit. That is, persons with disability gift the world with embodied knowledge about the suffering Christ and also with embodied knowledge about what it is to be fully human. Moltmann also draws on 1 Cor 7:17, in which each is called to live the life one has been gifted. Research participant, Charles, whose assertion “God made me this way,” speaks to his embrace of this text.

[701] Clifton, *Crippled Grace: Disability, Virtue Ethics, and the Good Life*, 36.

[702] Ibid., 38.

Clifton helpfully alerts us to the reality that disability simply underlines our biological existence.[703] That is, disability itself is not a disaster—it is part of our biological existence. Disability may pose genuine challenges that some disability scholars argue cannot be ignored.[704] For example, in Chapter 6, research participants noted concrete examples of how their disability impacted their lives.[705] However, participants spoke of disability as one facet of their lives. That is, while disability shaped their lives, it did not confer or deny their identity or personhood. In this sense, disability shapes the individual (and family), just as parenthood, or singleness, or work as a mathematician might shape an individual—disability itself does not confer or deny identity or personhood. In Christ, we are all new creations whose identity is found, and ultimately sustained, in the person of Jesus (Gal 3:26-29).

8.9.2 Inclusion that Liberates – "The Wide Space of God's Joy"

The research findings indicate that authentic inclusion includes both metaphorical and literal space. The theological implications of this finding are noted under the rubric introduced in Moltmann's work and noted earlier in the chapter—life lived in the wide space of God's joy. While attention to matters such as building accessibility are essential, inclusion that liberates a person with a complex disability attends to the experience of fullness of life in the widest dimensions of that life. The story of scripture underlines the nature of this wide space.

In the creation narrative we witness God creating a literal space, planet earth, for human beings to inhabit (Gen 1). The opening chapter of the bible stands at the beginning of a whole narrative in which God seeks to bring a message to all people in their own contexts.[706] John Goldingay notes its lack of reference to other supernatural beings or heaven, rather the account is concerned with the existence of the earth and those who subsequently live upon it.[707] In this unfolding narrative, humanity witnesses the creation of a relational space in which humankind is enabled to flourish. The space that God provides is a *wide space*. It is a nourishing, creative, abiding, bountiful, restorative and transformational space. When disobedience threatens to close the space—we find a forgiving space. God steps in with an act of restoration that is widely applied (Gen

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[703] Ibid., 40.
[704] Shakespeare, *Disability Rights and Wrongs Revisited*, 86.
[705] In the New Zealand context, the Disability Strategy, social model of disability and UNCRPD aims to tackle many of these social, political, cultural and legal challenges.
[706] Goldingay, 22.
[707] Ibid., 27.

3:21). This act of graciousness, in which God crafts clothes better suited to life outside the garden, is actively received by Adam and Eve as they move out to settle in a different space.[708] Significantly, God provides—humanity receives.

Later, in the New Testament we see the liberating love of God in the person of Jesus, the nerve centre that enervates the ministry of every corps, emphasising that there is space for all (John 3:16).[709] However, the shape of these literal and metaphorical spaces is not necessarily uniform in nature. Christ's creation of wide spaces are person-centric. We hear him asking the individual, "what do you want me to do for you?" (Mark 10:51) We witness Jesus broadening horizons and hanging out in uncomfortable spaces in order to bring fullness of life. For example, in Luke 19:1-10 Jesus engages Zacchaeus, a wealthy entrepreneur.[710] Joel Green notes that as a result of his toll-collecting work, Zacchaeus would have found himself despised and on the margins of society.[711] Green makes an interesting observation regarding the cause of Zacchaeus' inability to see Jesus. Rather than anything related to his stature, as some early English translations note, Green argues that because of the perceptions already held in relation to Zacchaeus, the crowd goes on to act as an obstacle to his desire to see Jesus.[712] Jesus sees him. Jesus vindicates him. The request of hospitality that Jesus subsequently makes, opens up wide space in which salvation comes to the person and home of Zacchaeus. In a further example we see Jesus opening up wide space for the Samaritan woman in John 4:1-39. Underpinning this encounter is a willingness to engage with those who are different from ourselves. Colin Kruse notes that Jesus persists with his encounter with the Samaritan woman, even in the face of her incredulity and the difficult dimensions of the ensuing conversation.[713] Again, the wide space that Jesus models in this conversation leads to her conversion and that of many in her local community.

The notion of wide space sits in contrast to notions of restrictive minimalism. In an age of excessive consumption, the notion of "minimalism"[714] has gained social traction in

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[708] Ibid., 82.

[709] Colin G. Kruse, *John*, vol. 4, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 124. Kruse notes that the word *world* in this text signifies humanity in general. Because of his love for humanity God gives his son in order to make eternal life available for all of humanity.

[710] Green, 668.

[711] Ibid., 669.

[712] Ibid., 670-71.

[713] Kruse, 158-59.

[714] Amber Martin-Woodhead, "Limited, Considered and Sustainable Consumption: The (Non) Consumption Practices of Uk Minimalists.," *Journal of Consumer Culture* 22, no. 4 (2022): 1012. Martin-Woodhead notes that minimalism is understood as the voluntary reduction of one's consumption and possessions to a bare minimum. It is a lifestyle movement that is predominant in the USA, Europe and Japan.

some settings.[715] In Chapter 6, Greg and Ian suggested that TSA may tend towards cost-saving approaches to building accessibility that could be seen as minimalist. I do not suggest that minimalism is inappropriate, especially in terms of the western tendency to define our personhood by how much merchandise we can accumulate. Sallie McFague's challenge to pursue restraint in the face of over-consumption, individualistic happiness, and a comfort mentality within the church, remains pertinent.[716] However, I would suggest that minimalism is inappropriate when it comes to creating wide space in our lives and congregations for persons living with disability. A minimalist approach does not align with the expansiveness of the gospel approach. In John 1:14, as Jesus takes on human form and chooses to dwell on earth with us, Kruse notes that the word *eskēnosēn* literally translates as "pitched a tent."[717] Jesus has come as far as it is possible to come and pitched a tent in order to be present with us. His actions are the antithesis of minimalism.

The attitudes of the research participants is significant here. None of them wanted centre-stage lives. In other words, they did not ask for corps life and TSA programmes to revolve exclusively around them. However, it is noteworthy that minimalist attitudes pervade their experience. One of the most damaging expressions of this minimalist mindset is the tendency to default to what is legally required. Compliance with legal obligations is not the same as expansive voluntary embrace. Accommodating legal specifications usually only involves faceless contractors making some building alterations. Attitudes that create space are those that accommodate the needs of others so that both might occupy the wide space of God's joy together. Personal preferences may require adjustment. For example—if someone needs sub-titles[718] over online worship services in order to participate more fully, other congregants might embrace sub-titles rather than calling them out as distracting.[719] Wide space attitudes mirror God's prior action in moving towards us and creating a space for us before we were

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[715] Jennifer E. Hausen, "Minimalist Life Orientations as a Dialogical Tool for Happiness," *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling* 47, no. 2 (2019): 168. Hausen examines the decision making processes involved in moving from a materialist to a minimalist lifestyle. She notes that minimalism, or simpler lifestyles, are considered to contribute to happiness and fulfilment.

[716] Sallie McFague, *Life Abundant: Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 115.

[717] Kruse, 63.

[718] Cheryl Green, "Saying 'Thank You' for Quality Closed Captions: A Promising Shift in Inviting Access," *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies* 10, no. 2 (2021): 247-48. In her work on closed captioning in the film industry, Green notes her conviction that accessibility is part of the art. It is not merely a compliance issue.

[719] During the Covid 19 Pandemic lockdowns in New Zealand, complaints were made to TSA team creating online Sunday worship content, naming the use of sub-titles as distracting (Personal correspondence).

born. It is about an intentional, forward thinking and ever adaptive approach to wide space creation.

Paying attention to what people need in order to flourish marks an attitudinal shift that takes them out of the orbit of "other" into the orbit of "us." We all need different things, at different times, and in different seasons of our lives, in order to flourish within the church and beyond its walls. Flexibility is an attitudinal posture that guards against constrictive rigidity. It recognises that experience with one disabled person at one point in my life, does not make me an expert on what "they" need. What a disabled person needs as a teenager will be the same *and* different to what they will need as an elderly congregant. In both cases to follow the pattern of Christ is a helpful starter—asking, witnessing and being with disabled people is the beginning of attitudinal wisdom.

Sorrow and pity can be misconstrued in the disability narrative. Pity is not an attitude that speaks of wide space to the person living with a complex disability. Pity is to perpetuate a perception that the disabled person would rather be other than they are—a false assumption that was examined in relation to Crip theory noted in Chapter 2. This research clearly indicated that none of the participants desired this. Such an attitude undermines and ultimately alienates. To pity another person speaks of an unrealised hierarchical orientation towards their experience of life. It also denies the reversals of which the gospel speaks (Matt 5:1-12). None of this is to say that an attitude of care and compassion is inappropriate. The proviso, however, is that attitudes of care and compassion are the gospel remit for all people and between all people everywhere and for all time. Minimalist attitudes look for ease and convenience over true acts of compassion. Reflecting on the disciples predilection for ease and convenience in Mark 8:1-4, Henri Nouwen writes,

> Compassion asks us to go where it hurts, to enter into the places of pain, to share in brokenness, fear, confusion and anguish. Compassion challenges us to cry out with those in misery, to mourn with those who are lonely, to weep with those in tears. Compassion requires us to be weak with the weak, vulnerable with the vulnerable, and powerless with the powerless. Compassion means full immersion in the condition of being human.[720]

While non-minimalist and compassionate attitudes are the foundation for creating wide spaces that include people beyond the welcome threshold, actions that facilitate space

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[720] Henri J.M. Nouwen, *You Are the Beloved: Daily Meditations for Spiritual Living* (London: John Murray Press, 2018), 244.

are multivariant in nature but united in purpose. They are tangible expressions of a commitment to embodied fullness of life for all. As such their presence, or absence in TSA congregation, speaks directly to a concern, or lack thereof, for sisters and brothers in Christ.

The notions of mutuality and expertise are also significant to the practice of facilitating wide space. First, all actions designed to facilitate wide space must flow from a place grounded in an understanding of our inherent mutuality. This is a coming together as one body and working together collaboratively to make the whole more reflective of the space God originally blessed us with. Secondly, we do not live as one-dimensional people. While the person actually living with a disability will be an expert in some areas of disability awareness, this does not mean it is the only arena in which they are an expert. To consult people with disabilities only in the context of their disabled persona, is to reduce them. It is also short-sighted pastoral practice. Leadership, mentoring, economics, hospitality, teaching, creative ministries and pastoral skills, to name a few, are not the sole preserve of the non-disabled. To invite people who live with disabilities onto leadership and pastoral care teams, financial boards, vision-casting forums, executive planning and management groups, is to engage in actions that deliver wide space.

Research participants noted in Chapter 6 and 7 that TSA can be reactive rather than proactive. A commitment to forward-planning is a potential counter-narrative. Usually there are ways in which previously constructed social spaces such as worship centres can be made more accessible for people with disability. To state that the presence of stairs, inadequate parking, or the lack of accessible toilets is a barrier to belonging is not to state anything new or indeed arguable. It is simply a statement of fact. Some measure of restoration comes with a commitment to not repeating, prolonging or entrenching these past mistakes. Forward planning is key to a restorative orientation. Further measures might include a commitment to the pursuit of universal design in new builds or alterations—for example, providing deaf loops.

Further actions that might facilitate space would be representation at governance level, a financial commitment to disability training for officers and congregational personnel, the employment of sign language interpreters and the comprehensive training of visual media teams on easy read product design and delivery. Continued commitment to the development and provision of online worship would also speak of intentional forward planning.[721] The COVID-19 pandemic has alerted faith communities to the positive impact that church online can have for those unable to leave their homes. However, a word of caution is noted in the work of Michael Walker, a Canadian man living with multiple disabilities, who signals the loss associated with diminished access to the physical touch and affirmation of others during the COVID-19 pandemic.[722] Further caution is signalled in a New Zealand qualitative study conducted with religious communities during the fourth COVID-19 lockdown.[723] Challenges for faith communities included the reassessment of worship services along with welfare and pastoral concerns for isolated congregants. Maintaining virtual connection was noted as helpful in areas such as maintaining home group connections and socialising. However, the study also noted that internet access is not universally available.[724] Therefore, any forward-planning on the part of TSA around the development of online worship tools and content would need to focus on working with disabled persons to circumvent exclusion in the digital space.[725]

Two specific images of military spaces were highlighted in this research. They were noted earlier as a “Parade-Ground Army” and a “Battle-Ground Army.” A parade-ground army, concerned with form over function, might be tempted to side-line, or ignore, those who do not conform to preconceived notions of battle capability or

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[721] Heidi A. Campbell and Stephen Garner, *Networked Theology: Negotiating Faith in Digital Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 88-89. Campbell and Garner provide a helpful and pastorally oriented overview on how faith communities can navigate faith, loving God and one’s neighbour in a networked world. They propose that the new neighbourhood expands further than the physical world into the digital world. As such, the digital world becomes a place where God can be encountered and in which the church must also faithfully live out its mission.

[722] Michael A. Walker, "Persistant Pain and Promised Perfection: The Significance of an Embodied Eschatology of Disability," *Journal of Disability & Religion* 27, no. 1 (2023): 117. C.f. Willem H. Oliver, "From in-Person to Online Worship," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 43, no. 1 (2022): 7, http://dx.doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v43i1.2404. Oliver considers the church in transition from pre-COVID patterns into a period of redeployment characterised by the move to online platforms. Consideration is given to arguments for the continuation of livestream services in the post-pandemic world. Two suggestions are concerning in my view—first, that online services mean that one can avoid congregants one does not wish to see and secondly, that online worship gives people a level of anonymity. I suggest that these suggestions are antithetical to a gospel of inclusion. Avoidance and anonymity speak directly to deliberate avoidance of building community.

[723] Theis Oxholm et al., "New Zealand Religious Community Responses to Covid-19 While under Level 4 Lockdown," *Journal of Religion and Health* 60 (2021).

[724] Ibid., 27.

[725] Gerard Goggin, Katie Ellis, and Wayne Hawkins, "Disability at the Centre of Digital Inclusion: Assessing a New Moment in Technology and Rights," *Communication Research and Practice* 5, no. 3 (2019): 297. Goggin et.al., note that societal inequality persists in regard to digital inclusion and disability rights. They propose that progress will only be made when digital inclusion and disability rights are placed at the centre of digital economic and policy plans, government initiatives and support agencies. Such commentary is a challenge to the TSA to ensure that disabled Salvationists are at the table when it comes to progressing TSA’s engagement with digital worship, communication, data-gathering and digital design and innovation in the faith setting.

preparedness. Beneath a preoccupation with form over function linger at least two unhelpful perceptions regarding disability. In the first instance, the research highlights occasions where people with disability were kept in background spaces (Charles in Chapter 6), or foreground spaces associated with gaining charitable responses (Lucy in Chapter 7). In the second instance, assumptions are made regarding the person's capability to join the battle of their own volition. Rather than challenging such assumptions—the parade-ground army colludes with a dismissive and undermining societal narrative.

Mission with, by, and towards people with complex disabilities must emphasise function over form. This is a call towards a collaboratively operational battle-ground Army. A battle-ground army is more concerned with all hands to the task rather than the look of the hands offered for service. In this sense, the *soap* mentioned in Chapters 5 and 6 becomes important. The Booths' concern with soap (as part of the "soup, soap and salvation" narrative), was about making people feel comfortable and accepted in the company of other comrades. Soap, understood in TSA as a metaphor of inclusion, cleans away any pretensions regarding the worthiness and capacity for exemplary service of one soldier over another. Further, the battle-ground army recognises and embraces the messiness inherent in pursuit of the mission. For the battle-ground army, mess does not equate with mayhem. It reflects an organising principle, *soap*, that brings everyone to the battle and facilitates their unique contribution to the overall strategy.

8.9.3 Taking Tea with Me

The current study shows that a response of "active appreciation" from congregational members in TSA is sometimes lacking towards people with complex disability. This response underlines a distinction between the well-recognised congregational protocols of "welcome" (such as those noted by Ian in Chapter 6), and the pursuit of active appreciation for disabled congregants. It highlights the gap between responses of toleration and responses of celebration. In this sense, *toleration* has sometimes replaced a sense of *active appreciation*. As noted in Chapter 6, Jessica made the distinction that her sister was not actually excluded from the faith community but that she was not *appreciated* within it. Others noted a sense of toleration provided their behaviour conformed in certain ways—shorter prayers in the case of Dave, quietness and social distancing in the case of Floyd. In contrast, Tom Reynolds suggests such disruptions are transformative for the church as they open up new ways of being together.[726] In his call to invoke “deep access,” a move beyond inclusion into deep communion, Reynolds suggests that such access comes via a “spirituality of attentiveness.”[727] He characterises this spirituality of attentiveness as; creating space for difference to dwell, listening to the stories of others, a willingness to respond and receive those stories in ways that might initially be confusing or disorientating. Reynolds calls for habits of care within the church that build mutual partnerships.

The findings in this research suggest that one of those habits might be understood as “active appreciation.” Active appreciation is the antithesis of toleration. It describes a state of heart that births a habit of care. The transformation that a response of appreciation for disabled people brings, necessarily results in embodied, consistent and practical engagement. In a primary sense, this is so because it is the way of Jesus. However, in a further sense, “active appreciation” names the orientation that Paul calls for between all of the parts that make up the body of Christ. Active appreciation is a notion that leads, in a non-instrumental way, towards the development of relationships that bring fullness of life.

Dean Pallant makes a distinction that is useful in this setting. In proposing that mission hospitals move towards a relational model of care engaging with local congregations, he notes the limiting effects of “instrumental” approaches to ministry.[728] By this he means that congregations sometimes want to *do* something about the circumstances of the poor or marginalised (an instrumental approach), rather than draw alongside people and develop relationships with them. This lack of commitment to forming deep personal relationships names a further difficulty noted by participants in this research—a lack of commitment to sitting with them and making time for sharing life and tea with them. In a direct contrast to the experience of Jessica, and her sister Joan, at a Salvation Army corps noted in Chapter 6, John Swinton notes that, “Jesus sat with those folks that society did not want to sit with.”[729]

In John 15:1-16, Jesus describes himself to his disciples as the true vine. In terms of a fruitful life, this allegory highlights the significance of abiding in Christ—rather than

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[726] Reynolds, "Invoking Deep Access: Disability Beyond Inclusion in the Church," 212-23.
[727] Ibid., 221.
[728] Pallant, *Keeping Faith in Faith-Based Organizations: A Practical Theology of Salvation Army Health Ministry*, 165.
[729] John Swinton, "Using Our Bodies Faithfully: Christian Friendship and the Life of Worship," *Journal of Disability & Religion* 19 (2015): 239.

appealing to our own efforts or achievements. Leon Morris notes that this passage sits as a counterpart to the Pauline description of the church as the body of Christ noted earlier in the thesis.[730] Critically, this is not a relationality born of mutuality. Christ has first loved and moved towards us. Having noted that Christ is the true vine, fruitfulness in the Christian life is dependent on continued abiding in Christ. As the words of Christ abide in the disciples, so their lives and prayers align more fully with the will and purposes of God. The context for the relationality that Christ proposes in these texts is one of love and obedience. (John 15:9-10) Jesus loves the disciples as the Father loves him. The extent of his love and obedience is vividly and achingly demonstrated on the cross. Morris notes that Jesus is speaking directly to his friends, when he tells them in verse 13, that love gives everything for others.[731] This is love that gives, in and from, fullness of self.

Jesus calls his disciples to continually live their lives within the expansiveness of that love and in obedience to God’s commands. In John 15:14, Jesus clearly defines his relationship status with the disciples when he says, “You are my friends if you do what I command.” Morris argues that, “friendship depends on common aims and outlook…The friends of Jesus are those who habitually obey him.”[732] A change in the status of the disciples is noted between verses 14 and 15. The move from servant, or slave, to friend, occurs in the context of knowing the business in which Jesus is engaged. He has poured out his knowledge of the Father, along with his heart and his life to the disciples. He has taken the initiative in disclosing himself and the Kingdom of God to them and inviting them to participate in his mission to bring fullness of life. To know his heart and his business, to participate in this mission to bring fullness of life, is to be called a friend of Jesus. John Swinton describes this transition to friendship—a transition from following, or simply knowing about Jesus—as a “radically new identity.”[733]

At least two implications can be drawn here for people who live with complex disabilities *and* the members of the congregations in which they worship. First, love and obedience are the prerequisites for being called a friend of Jesus, not a particular embodiment.[734] Safe and secure in this radically new identity as a friend of Jesus,

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[730] Morris, 592-600.
[731] Ibid., 599.
[732] Ibid.
[733] Swinton, "Using Our Bodies Faithfully: Christian Friendship and the Life of Worship," 237.
[734] Ibid., 234. For example, Swinton argues that God’s loving relating, which holds the body of Christ together, is not univocal.

people with disabilities already experience the promise and fruit of fullness of life in Christ. Human-to-human friendships can then be navigated out of this assured positionality. Secondly, as Gail O'Day notes, the gift of Christ's friendship, is given as an identity into which the original and subsequent disciples, are called to grow.[735] Christ's friendship makes human-to-human friendship possible. It also provides the model for pursuing human friendships based on loving others in the body of Christ. That is, friendships with and between people with disabilities, are birthed, guided and sustained in a context of "limitless love."[736]

Specific positioning and principles are at work in the development of Christlike friendships. For example, John Swinton notes that Jesus engages in a specific type of friendship—it is not friendship bound by narrow, or political, perceptions of equality. Rather, Jesus deliberately positions himself with the marginalised and those whom society has rejected. Secondly, he notes that the principle embodied in the friendships of Jesus is that of grace, rather than "a principle of likeness." That is, as we abide in Christ, this principle of grace draws us into relationships with those previously thought to be unlike ourselves and, as a consequence, rehumanises us all.[737] As we sit together, we notice the significance and similarity of those we earlier perceived to be different. Thirdly, Swinton suggests that by sitting with the marginalised, Jesus effectively alters the margins. That is, if Jesus is with the marginalised, those who are not with the marginalised are, effectively, now on the margins.[738] Finally, Swinton pushes further noting that a congregational body that does not build friendships with those who are perceived as different—in terms of needs, bodies, or life experience—may find itself marginalised from Jesus.[739] Thus, one could argue that those who do not choose to sit with Joan, identified earlier in this research, deny themselves the presence of God and inhibit their own spiritual development. I have suggested that friendship involves taking the time to linger over the teapot with the Joan. John Swinton beautifully describes what might be noticed when such a choice is made,

> When we learn to see the holiness of even the most broken body, we act differently; we function generously and gently. We become people who

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[735] Gail R. O'Day, "Jesus as Friend in the Gospel of John," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 58, no. 2 (2004): 152.
[736] Ibid.
[737] Swinton, "Using Our Bodies Faithfully: Christian Friendship and the Life of Worship," 239.
[738] Ibid., 240.
[739] Ibid.

> can be trusted with the welfare of others. We become not just servants to the disabled; we become friends: heart to heart, soul to soul.[740]

Non-disabled members of Salvation Army congregations have not been interviewed in the course of the research—so specific claims regarding why Joan may have been left to have tea on her own, cannot be made. However, the work of John Swinton suggests some possible reasons. He argues that a particular understanding of friendship pervades a western mindset. Birthed in Aristotelian notions of friendship as possible only between equals, Swinton highlights the limitations of a utilitarian understanding of friendship. In such an understanding, the goods of social and emotional exchange must remain in equilibrium, in order to maintain the friendship.[741] In this sense, any perceived disparity in social and emotional exchange, makes friendship difficult.[742] Swinton proposes that such an understanding of friendship has been engrained in society. Therefore, it is possible that congregants in TSA cannot imagine what friendship with Joan might actually look like. Nor, in Swinton's words, do people have the "relational sensitivities" to pursue creative and life-bringing responses to people who are different to themselves.[743] So in the case of relating with Joan, it might be said that the congregation, at one point in time, potentially lacked the imagination and/or the skill-base to build a friendship with Joan. Such historical events do not need to be repeated. They can be avoided if congregations embrace a willingness to linger over the teapot, actively appreciating all of the people in their presence and commit to growing as friends of Christ and each other.

The specific form of our relationality is also significant. Michael Mawson, drawing on the work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, proposes a commitment to seeing the other in front of oneself—as they actually are.[744] That is, if relationality is to result in grounded support for the disabled person in their current embodiment, caution is indicated at the nexus of ecclesial and biological being.[745] While affirming arguments for an understanding of personhood as relational, Mawson cautions that appeals to Trinitarian relationality, as a

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[740] Ibid., 237.

[741] Ibid., 238.

[742] Medi Ann Volpe, "Irresponsible Love: Rethinking Intellectual Disability, Humanity and the Church," *Modern Theology* 25, no. 3 (2009): 500-01. Volpe considers the theological anthropology of Reinders, Reynolds and Yong. She notes that the person with a disability challenges our assumptions about the "good, and goods of being human." As the "stranger par excellence" disabled persons are "the beloved of God."

[743] Swinton, "Using Our Bodies Faithfully: Christian Friendship and the Life of Worship," 238.

[744] Michael Mawson, "Creatures before God: Bonhoeffer, Disability and Theological Anthopology," in *Christ, Church and World: New Studies in Bonhoeffer's Theology and Ethics*, ed. Michael Mawson and Philip G. Ziegler (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 119-40.

[745] Ibid., 127.

model for human relationality, can obscure the creaturely and finite nature of human personhood. That is, any relational anthropology must maintain the distinction between Creator and creature.[746] Only in Christ, who demonstrates relationality as a grace and blessing, can limited and limiting human beings move beyond seeing the other as a disturbance, or someone to be controlled or managed. Mawson also notes ethical concerns raised by an emphasis on future ecstatic transformation that potentially idealises or abstracts the other. Instead, he calls for Christian friendship that attends to others in their "concrete givenness."[747] Therefore, taking tea with Joan, is part of non-abstract Christian friendship. It acknowledges Christ's presence within the limit witnessed in Joan and in the accompanying tea-drinker. Further, sharing the table with Joan enables both human beings present in that moment, united in Christ, to become more fully human.

Instrumental approaches to friendship are detrimental to individual and communal fullness of life. In particular, Lorraine Cuddleback helpfully signals the dangers of instrumental approaches to the development of friendships between disabled and non-disabled persons.[748] While her ethnographic work focuses more specifically on friendships between adults with intellectual disability, she cautions that a lack of reflection on the differences, risks and vulnerabilities of friendships can lead to the instrumentalisation of people with disabilities.[749] To counter this, Cuddleback, drawing on the work of Tom Reynolds, proposes that approaches to friendship must hold love and justice together.[750] For example, Tom Reynolds notes that human beings seek to find safe spaces in the world in which they can flourish. He describes love as the relational power that gives and receives such space and life. Love in this sense is not a skill one possesses but, in Reynold's vernacular, "a certain correlation between myself and someone else, a certain way we belong together."[751] Love renders us unable to remain indifferent to the flourishing of the other.

In noting that vulnerabilities are unequal, Reynolds argues that love must result in just practices, or love remains sentimental. He notes, "Love empowers genuine community

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[746] Ibid., 126.
[747] Ibid., 135.
[748] Lorraine Cuddleback, "Becoming Friends: Ethics in Friendship and in Doing Theology," *Journal of Moral Theology* 6, no. 2 (2017): 158-79.
[749] Ibid., 159. Cuddleback argues that friendship is risky and fraught with moral challenge. Her work challenges theologies that minimise or dismiss the notion of difference. Friendship with, and between, intellectually disabled people must consider the notion of justice as part of building healthy relationships.
[750] Ibid., 174.
[751] Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality*, 119.

and justice makes this community one in which equal regard among diverse subjects can prevail."[752] Thus, having a cup of tea with Joan on a Sunday morning is more than the activity of having a cup of tea with Joan. It is an acknowledgement of the correlation and belonging that exists between her and other members of the faith community. It is the way of love in Christ, a way that boldly asserts that being left alone to drink tea is not indicative of equal regard and is therefore unjust.

Establishing relationships with people who appear to be different can carry challenge.[753] I am suggesting that while acknowledging these challenges, friendship in accordance with the notion of taking tea, spending time and embracing active appreciation, essentially refers to a willingness to *be with* the disabled person. While conversation might be different, while previously held notions of the give and take of friendships may need to be altered, active appreciation means choosing to be in the company of the other, without any agenda and as members of the body of Christ, bringing fullness of life to both parties. This choice to be with a disabled person over a cup of tea, or in other contexts, speaks directly against isolationist practices that dehumanise people with complex disabilities. It also speaks to issues of latent power. That is, in being with someone whose way of being in the world is different to my own, I am undermining societal narratives that might position me as the more powerful person in the relationship. Being in the company of persons with disability is to actively learn new rhythms of giving and receiving.

8.9.4 Familiarity and Long-Term Fatigue

The research findings highlight that complex disability is chronic in nature. The routines associated with support of people with complex disabilities can be unobserved and relentless. The theological implications of this finding include congregational and leadership positionality that is humble, seeks to serve and works alongside those who live with or support persons with complex disability.

While some disabilities are intermittent, the findings here reflect the experience of people with enduring disabilities in TSA. However, the principles of support outlined below can be applied across other faith settings and regardless of the duration of the

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[752] Ibid., 130.

[753] Ibid., 120-21. Reynolds notes that "presence" is a mystery which at its heart is beyond our power to control, thus making us vulnerable. This vulnerability in the presence of another means that the relationship is risky, it calls for adjustments to personal worlds and challenges any position of indifference.

disability. Family members supporting people with complex disabilities, highlighted that long-term familiarity with the person and/or their family within the faith community, potentially led to increased invisibility. They also outlined a sense of ongoing fatigue associated with the chronic nature of complex disability. These results align with Stephanie Hubach's observations when she notes,

> The reality of experiencing disability as a *normal* part of life in an *abnormal* world is that disability brings difficulty. And one of the most challenging aspects of disability is the relentlessness of it. It just doesn't quit. You don't beat it. One cannot escape it.[754]

In Chapter 6, it was noted that supporting someone with a complex disability generated positive responses from parents and siblings—the slowing down of life's pace, observing increased compassion and flexibility in the siblings living in the same household and embracing different ways of looking at the world. More difficult impacts included a less spontaneous approach to life, ongoing financial pressures and the chronic nature of dealing with, or educating against, negative assumptions made about their disabled relatives. Such experiences added to the burden of overall fatigue. These findings have pastoral and practical implications for the comprehensive support of those journeying with disabled people. Complex disability is chronic in nature and occurs across the lifespan—supporting those who support disabled people must also occur across that lifespan.

In order to mitigate fatigue and familiarity, three aspects of Christ's positionality are important in framing supportive approaches. First, Jesus humbles himself on behalf of others and calls humanity to pursue relational unity (Phil 2:6-8). Secondly, he describes himself as one amongst us who serves (Luke 22:27). Thirdly, Christ invites human beings to work in tandem with him in order to navigate the difficulties associated with living vulnerable and fragile lives (Matt 11:28-30).

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul reminds his readers of the care, compassion and comfort received through their union with Christ Jesus. His plea is that Christ followers would be like-minded and pursue relationships with others that carry the same attitudes as Christ towards them (Phil 2:1-5). Paul then clearly articulates the nature of Christ's approach to relationship building (Phil 2:6-11). Christ takes on human likeness and humbles himself in order to advance the mission of God. Mark Keown describes these

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[754] Stephanie O. Hubach, *Same Lake Different Boat: Coming Alongside People Touched by Disability* (Philipsburg: P & R Publishing, 2006), 53.

verses as the theological centre of the letter and notes that true image-bearing centres around, “humility, sacrifice, service, selflessness and suffering—even to death.”[755] Paul urges believers to make this cruciform pattern the basis of their engagement with other members of the community.

Luke’s gospel outlines a further aspect of Christ’s positionality—serving. The Lukan account of Christ’s passion occurs across Luke 22 and 23. Joel Green notes that one of the driving motifs of Luke’s account is the conflict noted between those embracing the good news of the gospel and those who are actively seeking to obstruct it.[756] While these conflicts appear more obvious in the context of the religious leaders actively working to see Jesus arrested and crucified, Green notes that conflicts also appear between the agendas of Jesus and his own disciples. One of these is displayed in their discourse over status and honour.[757] In their debate over who is the most important person reclining at the Passover table, the disciples reveal their own betrayal of Christ. The message of self-giving, relayed in Luke 22:20 has, for the moment at least, passed them by. Green notes that Jesus redefines the nature of their forth-coming leadership in the church. Leadership in the Roman world occurred within a system of benefaction that ensured the wealthy stayed wealthy.[758] Acts of benefaction towards the marginalised occurred at the whim of the elite.[759] In contrast, the status of Jesus is ultimately witnessed in the shape of his service, “But I am among you as one who serves” (Luke 22:27). That is, he calls his disciples to ministry that is shaped by service and is beneficial to the needs of everyone—not just to those who may have the means to reciprocate.

Having patterned cruciform relationality and indicating the priority of serving one another, Christ also offers to help carry the burdens of human existence. In Matthew 11:28-29, a Saviour is depicted who recognises the weariness and burdens associated with being human. The expectations or demands of others can also be wearying. Joined to Jesus one finds rest—the type of rest that denounces excessive religious or self-imposed demands. Keener notes that the type of rest indicated in this passage sits in

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[755] Mark J. Keown, *Discovering the New Testament: An Introduction to Its Background, Theology, and Themes: The Pauline Letters*, vol. 2 (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021), 259-62.
[756] Green, 744.
[757] Ibid., 767.
[758] Craig S. Keener, *The I V P Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVaristy Press, 1993), 250. Keener notes that the practice of benefaction was widely praised and accepted in Greek circles. Benefaction involved the granting of favors from the “vantage point of power.” It reflected a use and approach to power that Christ was rejecting.
[759] Green, 768-69.

contrast to the list of Pharisaic sabbath rules in Matthew 12.[760] Jesus indicates that his life is the template for learning how to navigate our lives—not an arbitrary rulebook constructed by people who do not comprehend the mission of God to bring fullness of life. Finally, Jesus declares himself to be gentle. The one who brings fullness of life, offers it from a place of gentleness. In union with Christ, those who support people with complex disability find one willing to gently share the load of the difficult seasons of life.

Supporting people with disabilities brings joy and difficulty. Parents and siblings in this research indicate both positive and difficult experiences associated with supporting their loved ones. As mother and disability scholar, Laura MacGregor also highlights this spectrum of experience and calls on church communities to recognise and value stories of "caregiving chaos."[761] Parents or siblings in this research did not describe caregiving as chaotic but they did note the 24 hour/seven days a week nature of it. They also signalled lack of sleep, a heightened sense of vigilance in regard to medical issues, difficulties associated with feeding, financial pressures, reduced spontaneity and narrowed socialisation for themselves and their extended families.[762]

Contrary to what some of her fellow-congregants assumed, MacGregor has not found that the experience of caring for her complexly disabled child has endowed her with increased spiritual wisdom or strength. She describes her daily life as "chaotic and overwhelming"[763] and laments the capacity of the congregation to continually locate the Divine in her story, while she languishes in confusion and a sense of spiritual failure. Her story is a challenge to any sanitised perceptions of the challenges that caregiving may present.[764] Such perceptions do not contribute to an experience of fullness of life for the family members of disabled people in TSA. MacGregor's comments also highlight a tension between an ethic of care, as reviewed in Chapter 2, in which

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[760] Keener, *The I V P Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, 77.

[761] MacGregor, 124.

[762] Mandy Parks, "Living with Shattered Dreams: A Parent's Perspective," in *Supporting People with Intellectual Disabilities Experiencing Loss and Bereavement: Theory and Compassionate Practice*, ed. Sue Read (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2014), 209-12. Parks describes the effects that caring for her profoundly disabled daughter, Alicia, has had on her and the family. She describes Alicia as "a precious gift," but also notes the financial hardship, complexity of planning holidays, lack of spontaneity, the strain on her marriage and the day to day routines associated with caring for Alicia as "repetitive but exhausting."

[763] MacGregor, 125.

[764] Ibid., 126. MacGregor proposes that theologians, Jean Vanier and Henri Nouwen's stories of spiritual growth in the lives of caregivers, conforms to a narrative of triumph over suffering and effectively "colonized" the voices of caregiving mothers. She proposes that this focus on spiritual growth minimises the practical and challenging aspects of caregiving.

assumptions that disabled people might need more care than others was challenged and MacGregor's portrayal of the chaos associated with her life as a mother to a profoundly disabled child. I suggest that a middle ground between these two understandings is more helpful. My own observation is that caring for a disabled person is not better/easier or worse/harder than caring for anyone else—it is different. It is the "difference" itself that can be challenging, rather than the disability. This is particularly so if the need for ongoing adaption of caring strategies and support is navigated in isolation or with inadequate resources. Thus, congregations who know that experiences of financial pressure, lack of sleep, difficulty with feeding and narrowed opportunities for socialisation are the particular differences associated with caring for someone with a complex disability, become better positioned to off-set isolation or inadequate resourcing for their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Fatigue and satisfaction both describe the experience of care-giving participants in this research. MacGregor signals the disparity that occurs between stories of caregiving that emerge from part-time and/or paid carers and those providing lifelong caregiving to people with complex disabilities.[765] Participants in this research were all caring for family members across their lifespan and within home settings. Family and grief educator, Ted Bowman, notes that caregiver fatigue and caregiver satisfaction occur across a continuum. Fatigue occurs in the context of the daily demands, altered expectations, displaced dreams regarding family life and failing systems of support. Satisfaction occurs in the context of widened personal capabilities, compassion and capacities.[766] As noted by the participants in this research, the paradox of caregiving is that joy and peace can live side by side with fatigue and uncertainty. Fullness of life is found in holding the tension of the contrasting experiences while being supported by congregations that recognise and affirm the validity of both. (Rom 12:15) However, such affirmation must move beyond intellectual assent, or isolated existential contemplation on disability, to one of practical support.[767]

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[765] Ibid., 131-32. MacGregor notes, "Nouwen and Vanier's caregiving narratives were informed by privileges and power available to professional, academic, male caregivers that are often unavailable to mothers who provide a lifetime of uncelebrated, unpaid care to their child with intellectual disability. Their narrative of spiritual growth must not be a script universally assigned to all caregivers."

[766] Ted Bowman, "The Teeter/Totter of Caring Fatigue and Caring Satisfaction," in *Supporting People with Intellectual Disabilities Experiencing Loss and Bereavement: Theory and Compassionate Practice*, ed. Sue Read (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2014), 121.

[767] Erik W. Carter et al., "Community Conversations on Faith and Disability: Identifying New Practices, Postures, and Partners for Congregations.," *Pastoral Pyschology* 66 (2017): 590. In research based on community conversations in the USA with 175 faith community members with links to disability, Carter

In order to be an army that brings life, caring for caregivers is an essential element of TSA's ministry in the local congregation. Caregiving participants in this research indicate that at times they had felt forgotten by their congregations, particularly if they had been in those settings for extended periods of time. For example, Eve queried how long she could expect the caring responses from her congregation to continue. In contrast to dealing with an acute situation, chronic disabilities continue to present across a lifetime and, as such, carry the potential for chronic sorrow and distress. Ted Bowman comments further that carer isolation is one of the key factors in carer fatigue and burnout.[768] However, asking for help proves difficult for many carers. In such circumstances, congregations can help reframe requests for help away from any sense of self-centeredness or embarrassment on the part of the carer, towards the gathering and empowering of a team of support—abundant, grace-filled care within the context of community.

Siblings within the family unit also require the long-term attention of the faith community. In this research Donna, Eve, Fiona, Greg and Jessica all mention that help with the care of their disabled child, or other siblings in the household, or opportunities to access respite, would make their lives as a family unit easier. While the current research does not directly focus on the impact of being a sibling of someone living with a complex disability (Jessica and Joan were the only siblings in the study), the parent interviewees do refer to their own perceptions of how the siblings have been affected. Again, responses occurred across a spectrum from noting increased compassion and patience in the siblings, to experiences of frustration, sleeplessness and negative impacts on education.

Similarly, in their qualitative study on the impact of having a complexly disabled sibling in the Netherlands, Luijkx et al. note that the negative aspects reported by the siblings who were aged between 6-13 years old, are mostly associated with the practical consequences of the disability. For example, siblings comment about not being able to engage with their sibling in certain activities such as their favourite hobbies. Siblings also describe their feelings of dread and unease when their sibling had acute episodes such as seizures or hospitalisations. Siblings in the study note that respite for the

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et al. note the importance of fellowship and service opportunities within the congregation. However, the research also indicates the significance of external support that occurs beyond the traditional Sunday worship service and out of the church building.

[768] Bowman, in *Supporting People with Intellectual Disabilities Experiencing Loss and Bereavement: Theory and Compassionate Practice*, 126-27.

disabled sibling meant increased “private time with their parents.”[769] The space within this tension—of loving their siblings and acknowledging the need for continuous adaptation on their own part—is a further area in which targeted congregational support could help relieve the burden of fatigue on the whole family unit.

Fatigue was also associated with navigating allied support services. All three mothers in this research note the fatiguing impact of ongoing health assessments, providing for their maturing children, securing funding and negotiating ongoing care with allied support providers. This commentary from the parents highlights at least two tensions in which the faith community can support. First, there is the tension of the parent continually being called on to revisit the initial trauma associated with their child’s diagnosis and the marking of commonly held milestones that are possibly not going to be met. A more theologically helpful way to support this process is to stand alongside the parent in solidarity as the life of their child unfolds. To help a parent remember, hold and cherish this unique story, positions parents to celebrate what is, lament what is not and to carry both realities into a future that is curated by a loving God. The context in which this can occur is the congregation who can see beyond the opacity associated with long-term familiarity with families. God does not forget who we are, where we have been and where we are going. Fatigued parents may find rest in congregations that do not forget who they are, where they have been and where they are going.

The second tension associated with this fatigue relates to the parent/professional relationship. In this sense questions arise over where expertise lies in relation to caring or advocating for people with complex disabilities. Some of the disability activism reviewed in Chapter 2, highlights the way in which parental advocacy has shaped improved experiences of fullness of life for people with complex disabilities. In a further example Carey et.al note,

> They[parents] have contributed to building a vast system of services, driving market demand for therapies and treatments, raising awareness, demanding rights, and variously enforcing both segregation and integration. They are a political force to be reckoned with, and they have shaped history, policy, and the experience of disability.[770]

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[769] Jorien Luijkx, Annette A. J. van der Putten, and Caral Vlaskamp, "“I Love My Sister, but Sometimes I Don’t’: A Qualitative Study into the Experiences of Siblings of a Child with Profound and Multiple Disabilities," *Journal of Intellectual & Developmental Disability* 41, no. 4 (2016): 284-85.

[770] Allison C. Carey, Pamela Block, and Richard K. Scotch, *Allies and Obstacles: Disability Activism and Parents of Children with Disabilities* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2020), 24-25.

To state that parents are a “force to be reckoned with,” signals the complexity that exists in the parent/professional relationship. While they may appear to wield power in the lives of their children, Carey et al. also note that parents do not feel like they operate from a position of power.[771] Rather, they face bureaucratic, fiscal and political systems that are run by professionals disengaged with the day-to-day realities of supporting complexly disabled people. Parental advocacy and professional service delivery systems operate from different contexts and the space between these two contexts can generate ongoing fatigue for the parent. As parents age and service systems change, or cease to exist, the changing nature of life is unaccounted for and leaves parents further fatigued and stressed.[772] Carey et al. also note a point of tension between parents and disability activists. This tension centres around parents who assert expertise and authority in relation to their disabled child at the expense of the perceived autonomy and self-determination of the child.

The “Ashley Treatment” signalled in Chapter 2, would be a stark example of this tension. Ashley’s story is told via a blog set up by her parents.[773] Ashley, lives with static encephalopathy and global developmental delay. Her cognitive development is estimated to be that of a three-month-old. In consultation with paediatricians and endocrinologists, her parents developed a plan to attenuate her growth with hormone treatment, remove her uterus and breast buds at nine years of age—procedures which have subsequently become known as the “Ashley Treatment.” In essence the treatments ensure the child remains small enough to be managed by her parents and the surgeries eliminate potential menstrual complications/pain and the development of breast tissue. While such polarising treatments did not factor in the lives of participants in this research, such examples underline the difficult paths that parents are called to navigate.

Two “professional” responses to the Ashley Treatment underline this difficulty. In response to news of the treatment, the “Disability Rights and Education & Defence Fund” calls for modification of support systems rather than people. While they empathised with the parents, they describe the personal and physical autonomy of people with significant physical and intellectual disabilities as “sacrosanct.”[774] In

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[771] Ibid., 21.

[772] Ibid., 254.

[773] Ashley’s Parents, "Welcome to Ashley’s Blog: Dedicated to the Wellbeing of Pillow Angels," accessed June 21, 2023. http://www.pillowangel.org.

[774] Disability Rights Education and Defence Fund, "Modify the System, Not the Person," Disability Rights Education & Defence Fund, accessed June 20, 2023. https://dredf.org/public-policy/ethics/modify-the-system-not-the-person/.

contrast, Peter Singer while advocating the “best interest” principle, reduces the overall argument to one in which Ashley should not be left to experience suffering. He writes, “Beyond that, she is precious not so much for ***what*** she is, [emphasis mine] but because her parents and siblings love and care about her.”[775] While the broader ethical dimensions of this treatment are beyond the scope of this research, characterising Ashley as a “what,” dehumanises her as much as the surgical interventions deplored by the DREDF dehumanise her. Further, as Reimer rightly argues, in the midst of this recourse to medical intervention, Ashley is not recognised as the gift that she is—as she is.[776] Instead her particular embodiment becomes a problem to be solved or managed. Having said that, oversimplification of the arguments across these polarities does little to help Ashley, or her parents, into an experience of fullness of life. Instead, their story highlights the necessity of faith communities to provide congregational support that enables all people to fully live into their particular embodiment.

The relationship between parents and professionals requires grace-filled navigation. The mantra of disability activism, “nothing about us without us,” highlights a further dimension of the divided understanding that can exist between parents and professionals in the disability space. That dimension centres on exactly who the “us” represents.[777] That is, are parents or siblings of people with complex disabilities included in the “us”? The implicit assumption of the mantra is that disabled people, not parents or siblings, set the agenda. However, the perception of being considered an outsider in this most complex of caring relationships, is perhaps detrimental and fatigue-inducing to the parent. I suggest there is a sense here in which the parent can be left occupying a liminal or disorienting space which, in turn, may lead to entrenched positioning and difficult parent/professional relationships. In Chapter 2, Eve and Fiona both noted heightened tension associated with the approach taken by professional support agencies. While fellow congregants may not have the means to engage directly with some of these dynamics, understanding the associated tensions and the level of fatigue and/or distress it may result in, they are well-positioned to support the family member pursue grace-filled patterns of relationality. Further, rather than any positioning that siloes parents as

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[775] Peter Singer, "A Convenient Truth," Disability Rights Education & Defence Fund, accessed June 20, 2023. https://dredf.org/public-policy/ethics/a-convenient-truth/.

[776] Greig, 44. C.f. Clare, 156. Clare describes the sadness and rage that he felt on behalf of Ashley. He mourns for the, “legion of short-statured women, flat-chested women, intellectually and physically disabled, sterilized without their consent women.”

[777] Carey, Block, and Scotch, 247.

allies or obstacles, a focus on collaborative practice between parents and professionals, might limit this fatiguing experience of liminality.

8.9.5 Well-Intentioned but Inconsistent

The results of this study show that pastors within TSA are well-intentioned towards congregants living with complex disability and their families, but that support is compromised by the lack of an organising framework that might help to ensure consistency across the New Zealand territory. In Chapter 7, pastor participants noted that the majority of disability awareness they had was formed in the context of life experience, rather than from an overarching understanding of disability or specific Salvation Army policy. While the limits of isolated education on specific disabilities was acknowledged, the participants indicated that the support of people with complex disabilities was subsequently dependent on the personal experience of individual pastors. Therefore, efforts to ensure consistency across multiple congregational contexts within TSA requires the employment of a generalised framework that allows for particular contextual application. As noted by the research participants, the underpinning of such an organising framework includes attention to the pastoral responsibility of corps officers, a theological understanding of disability as a state of being, attention to relationship building and preaching informed by a theology of vulnerability and transformation.

Theological consideration of these pastoral responsibilities begins with the text of scripture. In Paul’s letter to the church at Ephesus, the office of “pastor” is noted as a gift of Christ to his church (Ep 4:11).[778] Some of the specific nuances of the gift that pastors are to the church are recorded in Luke’s summary in Acts 20. In this passage Luke relays the speech that Paul gives as he prepares to leave Miletus. Ben Witherington notes that in this address Paul draws attention to the consistency of his behaviour—Paul’s message and his manner of life are consistent.[779] In deliberately pointing this out, Paul indicates that contemporary and future pastors are charged with setting such an example in their ministry. That is, the church must witness a congruency between the message of the pastor and the manner in which they live out the message of the gospel.

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[778] Paul Beasley-Murray, "Paul as Pastor," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 654.
[779] Witherington, 616.

The apostle Paul notes that leaders following in his example are called by the Holy Spirit to enunciate the whole salvific plan of God, while simultaneously paying attention to the flock and to their own integrity as shepherd to those flocks.[780] Paul Beasley-Murray notes that in Acts 20:28, Luke indicates Paul's understanding of the pastoral office as that of caring for the congregation, with a specific focus on teaching and preaching.[781] Beasley-Murray also notes that Paul's understanding of pastoral ministry was bifocal—he cared for the individual well-being of his congregants as well as the overall corporate health of the congregation.[782] In order to do this Paul is noted as teaching in larger contexts *and* visiting/teaching within individual home churches. Thus care of congregational members and pastoral teaching takes place in both public and private contexts. Its goal is to bring all to a place of Christian maturity and fullness of life.

Pastors occupy a position of influence. Their preaching and teaching, along with their personal interaction with congregants within and beyond worship settings, collectively embodies the message of the gospel. In relation to disability, Erik Carter et al. note that pastors are influencers who help or hinder the culture and climate of the congregation.[783] They highlight several areas in which pastors could influence congregations towards richer support for disabled people.[784] Included in their findings are three specific areas that are also reflected in the concerns of pastors noted in Chapter 7 of this research. First, Carter et al. call for pastors to learn more about disability and to engage local congregational and community resources. Secondly, they signal the importance of preaching about disability that employs inclusive language and imagery and is delivered in wise ways. Thirdly, they encourage pastors to reach out proactively to the families who support disabled people.

A lack of training and disability awareness can compromise the effectiveness of corps leaders in TSA. Pastors in the current study acknowledged their lack of training and general disability awareness. Their experience was largely confined to learning on the job or in the context of having someone with a disability attend their corps. These

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[780] Ibid., 622.

[781] Beasley-Murray, in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 654.

[782] Ibid., 657.

[783] Carter et al., 588.

[784] Ibid. Carter et al. note that attendees at these community conversations also suggest that influencers consider ways to communicate that disruptions are alright, let go of 'one size fits all' approaches to congregational planning, avoid pity, normalise the notion of support and recognise that as influencers they serve as role models to others.

results align with the findings of Justin Radstake's qualitative research with pastors of Pentecostal churches in Ontario, Canada.[785] However, while recommendations can be made about how to intentionally upskill pastors, in Chapter 6 of this research Fiona makes a critical suggestion when she notes that people have got to want to know and understand about disability. In this sense, the first step towards improved support for disabled people from their pastors, is a commitment on the pastor's part to develop their own disability awareness and education. This is not to suggest that training should occur in isolation, or without access to disability expertise. However, training will only be effective when pursued by pastors whose own hearts are convinced that disabled people constitute part of the flock for whom they are responsible.[786]

Congregational leaders influence with their preaching and teaching. Reflecting on their preaching and teaching about disability, pastors in this research signalled attention to preaching the transformational agenda of God across the whole congregation rather than in specific reference to disability. Further commentary on preaching focused on the notion of inclusion and biblical narrative's highlighting God's power made manifest in weakness. As witnessed in the ministry of the apostle Paul, teaching and preaching from leaders whose message and manner of life are congruent, leads to the transformation of their congregants.

In his consideration of disability and the church, Lamar Hardwick suggests that preaching is a calling and an art form.[787] He proposes that this careful weaving together of words creates a tapestry of images which can move and inspire people to experience the divine. Hardwick suggests four fronts on which to pursue preaching and teaching that brings God's grace and love to the centre of congregational life.[788] First, he suggests preaching that encourages an honest appraisal of who is missing from the congregation. In this sense, the preaching becomes focussed on extending the boarders of the community This proposal is helpful in that it highlights a way to broaden the

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[785] Radstake, 95. Pastors in Radstake's study also note that they learnt about disability on the job rather than in any formal settings. The study noted that avenues into preparation for disability ministry were absent. Pastors noted they did not know where to begin in regard to learning about pastoring with disabled people.

[786] While I suggest the notion of a transformed heart, in line with Fiona's suggestion, I am also cognizant of the limits of this argument under the law. For example, if pastors discriminate against people with disabilities, the "state" of their heart is irrelevant if their actual behaviour contravenes the Human Rights Act. For this reason, TSA might consider the introduction of a specific "Disability Policy" for pastors within its local congregations.

[787] Lamar Hardwick, *Disability and the Church: A Vision for Diversity and Inclusion* (Downers Grove: IVP 2021), 113.

[788] Ibid., 113-18.

focus of congregations and impact the limited church attendance by disabled people that was noted in Chapter 3.

In the second instance, Hardwick proposes preaching that builds on notions of community, rather than charity. The focus here is preaching that alerts the congregation to the mutuality involved in true community. Such teaching signals that disabled people are not simply the recipients of acts of congregational charity. Instead, the significance of relationship development, as noted earlier in the current chapter, becomes the focus of congregational attention. Thirdly, Hardwick encourages preaching that does not diminish a person’s value. Drawing on the story of Paul’s thorn in the flesh, he notes that Paul was not restricted from living to his full potential.[789] One of the pastors in this study, Kirsten, also drew on this story in Chapter 6 to express her conviction that God uses all people and all of their life experiences to show his glory. Finally, Hardwick suggests that preaching about disability should reflect first-person perspectives. He argues that the church needs to see and understand God, faith and the bible, through the unique perspectives of disabled people. In this sense, preaching and teaching is a collaborative endeavour, led by a pastor open to the richness that disability perspectives bring to a congregational understanding of the mission of God to bring fullness of life.

Pastors of influence know their people. Paul Beasley-Murray notes that in Romans 16 Paul makes the effort to greet 27 people by name.[790] He knows their names and recalls the circumstances of his ministry with them. In order to ensure consistent ministry with people living with complex disabilities, corps leaders need to get to know them and their families. The likelihood of that occurring in the context of a two-hour worship setting on a Sunday is unlikely. The pastors in this study were aware of this, but made little comment on how they were implementing this awareness in their own contexts. For example, in Chapter 6, Keith specifically notes his concern over the welfare of congregants on the other six days of the week.

Whether or not the pastors in this research visited disabled persons or their families was not directly ascertained in the focus group setting. However, commentary from the individual and family participants in Chapter 6 indicates a continuum of experience

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[789] Adela Yarbro Collins, "Paul’s Disability: The Thorn in His Flesh," in *Disability Studies and Biblical Literature*, ed. Candida R Moss and Jeremy Schipper (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 173-74. Collins provides a selective history of various interpretations on the likely nature of Paul’s thorn in the flesh. While debate continues some consensus exists around the hypothesis by Max Krenkel that the thorn refers to seizures related to some form of epilepsy.

[790] Beasley-Murray, in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 657.

from no visitation through to helpful engagement from pastors. These results are consistent with Melinda Ault et al. who also note both positive and negative observations by parents in relation to church leaders.[791] In the study by Ault et al. some participants note prompt attendance to issues of inclusion while others note a lack of follow-up or responsiveness. Negative experiences include pastors who indicate a lack of regard for the personhood of disabled people. For example, actions that speak of this lack of regard include refusing to visit because the disabled child made them feel uncomfortable, or indicating an unwillingness to have a disabled person attend a conference because the pastor did not want to "babysit."[792] In this instance the message of the pastors and the manner of their engagement with disabled people demonstrates the incongruence which the apostle Paul warned against.

To be truly known is the unifying thread that leads towards inclusion and fullness of life. A theological understanding of disability holds that all human beings are known by a present, loving, relational and collaborative God. Therefore, in order to support people with complex disabilities in a consistent manner, pastors in TSA must seek to know their people, disabled and non-disabled, beyond the context of a Sunday service.[793]

8.9.6 Out of Sight, Out of Mind

The current study indicates that people living with complex disabilities have not yet been recognised as a missional priority or partner for TSA. As noted in Chapter 7, people with disabilities are currently largely out of sight and therefore out of mind in the context of Salvation Army ministry and operations. Therefore, in order to support disabled individuals and/or their families, pastoral officers, mission support staff and congregations need to recognise their disabled brethren as both a missional priority ***and*** as partners in the work of the great commission (Matt 28:19-20). The theological implications of this finding are considered under the rubric of TSA's understanding of "Saved to Save and Saved to Serve."[794] That is, as TSA partners with God in the great commission of making disciples, it's dual focus is to bring the message of salvation to

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[791] Ault, Collins, and Carter, 196-97.

[792] Ibid., 197.

[793] Shakespeare, *Disability Rights and Wrongs Revisited*, 203. Shakespeare draws on the 2009 New Zealand study by Millner and Kelly which found that while some mainstream settings were difficult for people with disabilities, the key factor associated with experiences of inclusion was related to being known in a particular context.

[794] Hill, *Saved to Save and Saved to Serve: Perspectives on Salvation Army History*, xiv. Hill uses this title for his historical and theological study of the international development of The Salvation Army. He notes the first half of the phrase as a William Booth autograph and suggests the second half describes an internal progression in William Booth's thinking and TSA's self-understanding. Thus salvation and service are both noted as the orientation of TSA's ministry in the world.

people who live with complex disability and then to embrace and equip them to serve as missional partners.

I noted earlier that disabled people do not need salvation from their disability. However, in unity with all other created beings, they do need access to the salvation offered in the life and work of Jesus. Having noted the full humanity and personhood of disabled people, it is also acknowledged that they are part of the humanity described by William Booth as living with “disordered dispositions and appetites.”[795] As such, they are as much a missional priority as any other human being.

If TSA is to be an army that brings life, then it needs to bring salvific life in the context of complex disability. That is, TSA must find effective ways to share the gospel of Jesus Christ and, by the Holy Spirit’s power, nurture new disciples. To begin that journey, TSA needs to actively seek out and share the gospel with those who live with disability. In Chapter 7, Linda noted that most disabled people that she had encountered in congregational settings were there by proxy—as part of an extended family—rather than as a result of active missional engagement. Following in the pattern of Jesus it is possible to trace his priority for actively seeking people out, sharing the transformative message of the gospel and securing their future participation in his mission (Luke 15, 19:1-10; John 4:1-26). In order to experience fullness of life, people with complex disabilities need to find within TSA the opportunity to be seen, to be saved and to serve together.

Two stories in the New Testament highlight different ways in which people came to the centre of Christ’s attention. In both instances, bystanders tried to limit access to Jesus. In both instances, bystanders were rebuked for limiting opportunities to his hospitality and salvific presence. In the first case, Matthew records that parents tried to bring their children to Jesus and instead found the disciples creating barriers (Matt 19:13-15). The journey of the disciples towards Jerusalem had been interrupted and they responded negatively towards those stalling their progress and seeking access to Jesus. Brown and Roberts note that it is ambiguous if the rebuke delivered by the disciples is directed towards those who brought the children or the youngsters themselves.[796] Whichever is

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[795] Booth, "Salvation for Both Worlds: A Retrospect," 2.

[796] Brown and Roberts, 178.

the case the subsequent reprimand by Jesus is unambiguous, “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them…” (Matt 19:14). The invitation is emphatic.[797]

The command to remove anything that might hinder their access is also clear. The response of Jesus brings the children directly into view. He underlines their value in the kingdom of God.[798] He also continues to educate his disciples regarding a central kingdom value—the kingdom of God belongs to those who are humble and those who seek out and support the marginalised.[799] Joel Green notes that children in the Greco-Roman world held little intrinsic value, were vulnerable to infanticide and abandonment and formed part of a social group generally overlooked in society.[800] Jesus is now asking his disciples to pause and look again. They are called to expand their vision, to see beyond their initial perception of these children as a burden, nuisance or distraction for Jesus. The disciples tried to limit access to him, while in pursuit of their own understanding of Christ’s agenda. Jesus sees the children and their caregivers. He calls for open access to his presence and blessing. The disciples are commanded to find a way to let the children come.

A second instance of misdirected bystander interference is recorded in Mark 10:46-52. 18:35-43. A blind beggar named Bartimaeus[801] (Mark 10:46) also tried to gain access to Jesus. Christ has continued his journey towards Jerusalem and as he approaches Jericho, Bartimaeus calls out to him. A set of bystanders tell him to be quiet. Joel Green notes that a man in Bartimaeus’ situation, dependent on almsgiving for his survival, would have occupied a marginal place in the lives of those who now constrain him to quietness.[802] Jesus stops, hears him and calls for Bartimaeus to be brought to him. In naming Jesus, “Son of David” (v.47) Bartimaeus already indicates a level of insight into the mission of Jesus beyond that of those who have dismissed him. Mark Strauss notes that at this point, Peter is the only person to have acknowledged Jesus as Messiah (Mark

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[797] Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2010), 711.

[798] Green, 651. In the Lukan account of this narrative, Luke 18:15-17, Joel Green notes that the wording of verse 17 masks an ellipsis. That is – in order to enter the kingdom of God, one must receive the kingdom of God as one receives a child – breaking down worldly norms and affording welcome and hospitality usually reserved for people of higher status.

[799] Brown and Roberts, 178. Brown and Roberts note that the motif of status reversal introduced in Matthew 18 continues in this story as it highlights the value of those with less societal status and privilege. The reversal introduces children as a model for the disciples to emulate.

[800] Green, 650-51.

[801] In Luke’s account of this story the blind beggar is not identified by name.

[802] Green, 663.

8:29).[803] Now a blind beggar demonstrates spiritual insight beyond the other disciples. Again the method of Jesus' engagement and subsequent ministry with Bartimaeus disrupts the societal norms held by the obstructive crowd. Bartimaeus simply refuses to present himself as "helpless and hopeless"[804] to those of seemingly superior status. Erin Rafferty helpfully suggests a further aspect of this story that speaks to the crowd of people who surround Bartimaeus and try to silence his appeal to Christ.[805] Having previously told him to be quiet, once the crowd see Jesus pause, listen and call for the man, their approach to him alters. They encourage Bartimaeus to move toward Jesus. Strauss notes that the crowd, responding to the authority of Jesus, turn from "obstacles to advocates."[806] Raffety suggests that in this movement the crowd is healed in their relationship towards Bartimaeus.[807] Having previously blocked access, the crowd then help facilitate his access to Jesus. Significantly, Jesus makes no assumption about what Bartimaeus needs. That is, no initial assumption is made by Jesus that restoration of physical sight is what Bartimaeus desires. Indeed he may simply have asked Jesus for money to support him in his poverty. Jesus opens up a dialogue which, in itself, acknowledges the inherent dignity of the man. Later in the story, as Raffety notes, both the miracle performed by Jesus *and* the faith expressed by Bartimaeus result in his joining the company of disciples. Bartimaeus now travels with them as a ministry partner.[808]

These two biblical stories highlight the significance of ministry priorities and partners in the mission agenda of Jesus. In both cases bystanders and/or disciples are rebuked for putting obstacles in the path of those seeking to gain access to the ministry and blessing of Jesus. In both cases, Jesus sees, or hears, those who desire to be included. He reverses any societal inclinations to exclude or minimise the contribution that, in these cases, children or blind men can make to the kingdom of God. Similarly, if TSA is to bring fullness of life in the context of complex disability, it needs to pause, to listen and to see.

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[803] Mark L. Strauss, *Mark, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2014), 469.
[804] Green, 664.
[805] Erin Raffety, "From Inclusion to Leadership: Disabled 'Misfitting' in Congregational Ministry," *Theology Today* 77, no. 2 (2020).
[806] Strauss, 471.
[807] Raffety, 201.
[808] Ibid., 204.

I noted in the previous section that to be effective, pastors in TSA need to know their people. In this section, I am suggesting that TSA as a faith organisation needs to pause—to take the time to see and listen to people with complex disability. In his engagement with the marginalised of London's East End, William Booth took the time to actually witness the lived experience of those who would subsequently find salvation under his ministry. Reflecting on 44 years of ministry in which he had sought to do the will of God in his own life, Booth notes his recognition of Christ's ongoing loving concern for the welfare of human beings. He wrote,

> The very first article in my creed, which I held with all the certainty of a direct revelation from heaven, was a belief in the self-sacrificing love of Christ to men, love which impelled Him continually to seek their welfare. And my new-born love to that same Saviour urged me continually to seek the fulfilment of His will with respect to the men and women around me.[809]

Booth describes his vision of shipwrecked human beings struggling in the sea of unbelief and alienation from God. He notes the task of pulling them onto safe ground. In this sense his first concern was their eternal salvation. However, Booth does not settle here and notes the expansion of his vision writing,

> But as time wore on, the earthly miseries connected with the condition of the people, began to force themselves more particularly on my notice. In the town in which I lived I ***saw*** [emphasis mine]…[810]

This, I suggest, is a critical development in Booth's subsequent mission orientation. He notices. Booth goes on to describe what he observes around him—the poverty, squalor and degradation in which people were living. He also notes responses of indifference, or proposed powerlessness and acquiescence to unjust laws, on the part of those who could have been helping. In the act of truly seeing the people living around him, Booth turns his attention to dismantling the indifference, proposed powerlessness and unjust legal or social systems that oppressed the marginalised of his age. In engaging with the people around him, Booth comes to understand salvation as liberation in the future but also as liberation in the present. He wrote, "Christ is the deliverer for time as truly as for eternity."[811]

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[809] Booth, "Salvation for Both Worlds: A Retrospect," 1.

[810] Ibid., 2. Emphasis mine.

[811] Ibid.

The salvific deliverance of Christ in this world and the next, is as applicable to people living with complex disability in New Zealand today as it was for those living in desperate circumstances in Victorian England. Chapter 2 of this research highlighted the poverty, under-employment and heightened levels of violence against disabled people in New Zealand. In order to be "The Army that Brings Life," TSA needs to commit to actually *seeing* them and holding them safely in mind as it progresses the discipling mission of Jesus Christ. In Chapter 7, Lily suggested that TSA lacks a narrative around the subject of disability. As such, it is possible that as an entity, TSA is uncertain of how people with complex disabilities come to a place of salvation and service within its ranks. If this is correct then, in the pattern of Christ and William Booth noted earlier, seeing and hearing from disabled people become the first steps towards constructing that missing narrative.[812] In pausing to see and listen to people with complex disabilities, TSA might identify new pathways that prioritise broader discipleship within its ranks.

The findings of this research also noted that TSA has not yet recognised people with complex disabilities as missional partners. Indeed there are indications in the responses from participants that the TSA does not always *think* about disabled people as missional partners. The experience of Charles, noted in Chapter 6, underlines this reality. In responding to a societal perception that Charles was being used as a drawcard to prompt increased financial support for TSA, it in fact undermined Charles' status as a disciple of Christ, serving his mission through the vehicle of TSA. Ian noted that being a missional partner within TSA meant more than being consulted only on matters of disability. In Chapter 7, Lucy reflecting on her own experience in corps settings noted that because people with disabilities were not visible, the congregation simply was not thinking about them. Not only are people with complex disabilities out of sight —they are out of mind.

Alongside the call for TSA to *see* disabled people and to actively pursue paths to discipleship, I suggest three aspects that are significant for drawing TSA's collective mind towards serving together in missional partnerships. The first is a call to renewed

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[812] Bridle. How people with complex disability might come to an experience of faith is reviewed in my earlier work. C.f. Swinton, "Restoring the Image: Spirituality, Faith, and Cognitive Disability," 25. Swinton posits that, "The absence of a certain level of cognitive capability does not exclude a person from the experiential spirituality made manifest in loving relationships." Thomas L. Boehm, "A Flourishing Quality of Life Amidst Disability," *Journal of Religion & Disability* 26, no. 4 (2022). Boehm argues that, "Limited cognitive capacity does not exclude people from exercising faith, receiving from God's hands, abiding in the reflection of God's face, or responding to God's gentle voice."

thinking in relation to those who live with disability. The second, in line with William Booth's exhortation at the beginning of this chapter, involves actively thinking about the "slumbering gifts" that at the present time may be side-lined from service in TSA. Finally, consideration is given to the responsibility of TSA to pursue "organisational faithfulness"[813] in respect to working alongside people with complex disabilities.

In his letter to the church at Rome, the apostle Paul urges his brothers and sisters in Christ to offer themselves as living sacrifices to the work of God's kingdom. He then addresses the matter of their thinking,

> Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12:2).

Douglas Moo notes that this second verse in the chapter is probably subordinate to the first, indicating that the true worship of sacrificial lives is deemed acceptable if it does not conform to the principles and practices of the current age.[814] Moo suggests that the present tense of the verb "transform," indicates that any transformation takes continuing effort. As Christians, Paul is indicating that our thinking must continually be shaped by the new life experienced in Christ across a lifetime.[815] Renewed thinking is a process. It is a process by which our thinking becomes more and more aligned with the will and way of God. Reference was made earlier to the difficulty that some people might have in perceiving what friendship with people with complex disabilities could look like. In a similar way, it is possible that TSA as an organisation and congregations within its oversight, may currently have difficulty perceiving what serving alongside disabled people could look like. However, attention to renewed thinking, in relation to the nature and perceived limits of disability, could lead to transformed service practice. It would also signal deeply counter-cultural thinking in regard to the place of disabled persons as ministry partners in the church.[816]

William Booth challenged his listeners to think about who among their number might yet be called into active service. In Chapter 6, Ann, Charles and Harry all expressed that

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[813] Judd, Swinton, and Martin, 15. Judd et al. note that "organisational faithfulness" impacts those within the organisation and those external to it.
[814] Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans, The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 754.
[815] Ibid., 756-57.
[816] McNair, 63. Jeff McNair's 2007 study into Christian social constructions of disability, conducted across 19 churches in the United States, notes that counter-cultural thinking in regard to disability is not always evident. Among his conclusions is a call to the church to, "clean up our own house."

having something meaningful to do within TSA, was important for their personal well-being. They also considered their participation as part of their service for God. The mission statement of the TSA in New Zealand (noted in Chapter 5), outlines a concern to care for people, transform lives and reform society. The non-disabled are not the only people who can, or should, participate in this mission. However, as noted in Jeff McNair's comments regarding counter-cultural thinking, it is possible that the church has assimilated some of the attitudes prevalent in wider society. Some of those attitudes are reflected in a 2012 qualitative study conducted in New Zealand with 106 employers, that considered employer attitudes to employing disabled people.[817] In the study, 87 percent of respondents agreed that low employment of disabled people was a moderate to serious issue. 48 percent of respondents noted that they did not have disabled people working in their organisation. The report notes,

> Many [employers] felt that staff would not be comfortable working alongside disabled people. Similarly many felt that their clients and customers would not be particularly comfortable dealing with disabled people.[818]

While the authors of the study note that respondents worked across a wide range of industries, 9% worked in not-for-profit or religious settings.[819] Interestingly, 34% of the study participants believed that stereotyping and discrimination were barriers to employment. General ignorance of disability and social stigma were signalled as contributors to this underemployment.[820] Finally, 78% of the participants believed that disabled people faced discrimination and 74% agreed that, "disabled people were an untapped resource."[821] Whether understood as an "untapped resource" or "slumbering gift," people with complex disabilities have capacities and capabilities that TSA and broader society will come to value if access to service opportunities is pursued. Supporting and empowering disabled people to partner in the mission of TSA—to care for people, transform lives and reform society—is possible with renewed minds that are continuously transformed by the Spirit of God.

As already noted, TSA is part of the worldwide church. It is also a charitable organisation whose responsibilities and example, I suggest, extend beyond the doors of

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[817] Alex Woodley and Nadine Metzger, *Employer Attitudes Towards Employing Disabled People* (New Zealand: 2012), https://www.odi.govt.nz/assets/Guidance-and-Resources-files/Employers-Research.pdf.
[818] Ibid., 6.
[819] Ibid., 11.
[820] Ibid., 22.
[821] Ibid., 25.

its local congregations. As the world watches, TSA must be found faithful in its practice. In this sense, corporate conduct and character must align with corporate rhetoric. In their work on developing a theology of organisational faithfulness, Stephen Judd et al. challenge faith-based organisations to consider how they treat the people who partner with them in the mission of the organisation. Thinking about people as those who reflect the *imago dei* rather than simply physical or financial assets or indeed liabilities, they note,

> If our God is one who values people above all creation, it follows that how people are treated within an organisation matters, whether it be their recruitment, remuneration, coaching, development, encouragement or discipline.[822]

Pursuing organisational faithfulness means that disabled people within TSA will find personnel who regard them in the same way that Christ does. As an organisation committed to salvation and service without discrimination, it will *see* people with complex disabilities and *serve* alongside them. Judd et al. also note that to counter a posture of over-confidence in the efficacy of current operations and to defend against any erosion in organisational faithfulness, individuals and leaders within the organisation need to remain alert. They propose that the slide towards faithlessness occurs in the wake of what Christians in the organisation choose to pay attention to and what they choose to ignore.[823] Jesus cautions the church to remove barriers to access, to pause and see and to renew our thinking. Some of the lived experience of people with complex disabilities attending Salvation Army congregations in New Zealand is now documented. It represents a spectrum of experience. Choosing to ignore it would be detrimental to individuals, families and the life and mission of TSA. Choosing to pay attention will indicate organisational faithfulness and lead to broader experiences of fullness of life for all.

8.10 Conclusion

In conclusion, the discussion throughout this chapter has demonstrated that comprehensive support for people with complex disabilities cannot occur without a collaborative approach grounded in the person of Jesus Christ, embedded in the life and work of the local Salvation Army congregation and drawing on the lived experience of disabled people and their families. In order to pursue fullness of life for all people

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[822] Judd, Swinton, and Martin, 102.
[823] Ibid., 114-15.

groups noted in the research and to redeem the inconsistent processes and practices currently in place, the following chapter presents a critically faithful and collaborative framework to guide TSA into the future. To be an Army that brings life in the context of complex disability is to be an Army that collaborates.

Chapter 9 – Embedding Redemptive Practices

People have got to want to know about disabilities. They've got to want to understand.
(Fiona)

9.1 Introduction

In the opening paragraphs of this thesis, readers were introduced to a classroom of primary school children who collaborated together in 1989 to create a quilt celebrating the birth of their teacher's first child. Personalised fabric squares were sewn together to present the combined narrative of the entity known as Room 1 & 2. Just as many squares made up that original quilt, so many words have been written in these pages. In one sense, they are worthless if they simply remain words on a page. Therefore, the goal of the thesis is to transform the words of the participants, other scholars and my research into a document that contributes to life in all its fullness.

The research began by asking three questions:

1. How are people with complex disabilities supported in Salvation Army congregations in New Zealand?
2. What does the biblical notion "fullness of life" mean to people with complex disabilities within TSA?
3. What action does TSA need to take in order to faithfully support the full participation and discipleship of people with complex disabilities in its congregations?

Having considered these questions throughout the research, this thesis argues that TSA's support is varied in its application and subsequent outcomes. While generally well-intentioned, support appears to occur in an improvised and uncoordinated manner, thereby limiting consistent and life-bringing support for people with complex disability.

In this final chapter, the six themes identified throughout the research are visually represented as a quilted framework that provides a potential focus for TSA's engagement with disabled people in the future. Like any quilt, it is made up of disparate parts intentionally stitched together to form a cohesive whole. The quilt and the text of this chapter draw together the characteristics and redemptive practices of a Salvation Army that might bring life in the context of complex disability. The chapter also highlights how redemptive practices might be embedded into the theological fabric and practice of Salvationist congregations throughout New Zealand and internationally.

This research has used Swinton and Mowat's "Practical Theological Reflection Model." In relation to disability, it has enabled consideration of the story of Christ and scripture. Salvationist history, practice and doctrine have been reviewed. Contemporary and contextual understandings of disability have been examined. The lived experience of people with complex disability has been documented. Movement through this model has led to the proposal of revised forms of practice. The result of these considerations is a critically faithful framework that positions Jesus Christ at the centre—as the One whose promise to bring present and future fullness of life extends to every believer. Christ's promise of fullness of life holds the fabric of the Christian life together.

The concept of collaboration forms the substructure out of which a God-honouring and abundant individual and collective life is enabled. No-one can experience fullness of life in a vacuum. Interdependency and mutuality are part of the creative and transformative plan of God. In order to be TSA that brings life, the themes identified in the framework ground this conceptual potential in contemporary lived experience within TSA in New Zealand. Finally, sections in the quilted framework highlight the individual, pastoral, educational and organisational implications of the study for redemptive Salvationist practice. All of these threads, drawn together, offer the conceptual potential to embody Catherine Booth's call to better the future.

9.2 Redemptive Practices

The notion of redemption requires some clarification at this point. In a biblical understanding a redeemer is one who brings deliverance from bondage and makes freedom possible. Through the text of scripture we note a God engaged in keeping promises, bringing salvation and achieving God's purposes for human beings.[824] The ultimate redemption of the earth and its inhabitants is signalled in both Isaiah 65:17-25 and Revelation 21 and 22. It is in the person of Jesus Christ that believers witness the divine intervention that brings this freedom and deliverance (Rom 3:24; Eph. 1:7). Redemption is not without cost. Christ laid down his life that humanity might experience the precious gift of present and future fullness of life. In the ongoing life and

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[824] *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine*, 10.

ministry of the church, believers are called to the pursuit of redemptive practices that bring freedom and deliverance for all people.

The historic and ongoing marginalisation of people with disabilities is a personal, communal and structural wrong that limits their experience of freedom. In a Christian understanding, such wrongs are labelled sin. While sin can be understood as idolatry and/or failure to believe and trust in God, it is also understood as a failure to love others as God desires. TSA further defines sin as any violation of the wholeness of people or communities.[825] Nancy Eiesland notes that injustice against people with disability is sin. She helpfully distinguishes that bodies are not "artifacts of sin"[826] thus addressing any tendency to conflate sin and disability. Sin, left unaddressed, causes ongoing corrosion to the individual—it hardens hearts and attitudes. Frances Young highlights this progression when she notes, "those who commit disability hate crimes are blind to the sin of their attitudes."[827] Just as it is unhelpful to move too quickly from the passion of the crucifixion of Christ to the ecstasy associated with his resurrection, so too it is unhelpful to propose a set of redemptive practices that do not speak to this underlying issue.

Throughout the centuries, the church is guilty of sin against its disabled brothers and sisters. At a minimum, if we dehumanise or neglect people, we sin against them. Rather than making distinctions about who has done what (Rom 3:23), it might be helpful to highlight three broad areas in which a posture of repentance might be applicable. Repentance, in the sense it is used here, refers to the deliberate act of turning away from previous harmful actions or attitudes and towards God's agenda for humankind.

The first broad area to consider is any ongoing claims of ignorance. People living with disabilities have been part of the story of humanity for a long time. The biblical narrative refers to people with disabilities. The emergence of the Disability Rights movement over the past 40 years, the formation of the UNCRPD in 2008, and increasing theological engagement with disability issues over a similar period, means the church has had ample opportunity to become informed. Some might mistakenly think that the experience of disability exists beyond their frame of reference. However, the church as a collective cannot claim such lack of experience. If the church is ignorant

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[825] Ibid., 112.
[826] Eiesland, 100.
[827] Young, 118.

of matters related to disability, it is, in Fiona's words noted above, a matter of choice. Engagement takes effort. Opportunities for better practice are easily located.

A desire to understand marks the first step in the effort to journey beyond this self-imposed or accidental ignorance. The work of Mary McClintock Fulkerson offers a helpful insight at this point.[828] In describing her experience at an interracial church in the USA, Mary notes the comments of attendees who claimed not to see colour, but only Christians, in their faith community.[829] Examining this notion of "colour blindness," Mary suggests that such claims have the potential to minimise a troubled history. That is, such positioning can lead to an implicit denial of racism. McClintock Fulkerson suggests that in the face of difference, there is an "obliviousness" that comes with being in the more powerful or dominant position.[830] While obliviousness as a form of not seeing may not be intentional, McClintock Fulkerson cautions it can lead to responses of disregard that signal fear and aversion. This type of obliviousness in relation to people with complex disability in local corps has the potential to increase the incidence of injustice. When it does, it also calls for a posture of repentance.

Secondly, tokenistic responses towards disabled persons and associated disability issues, are unhelpful at best and dehumanising at worst. Tokenism is described as, "the principal or practice of granting minimal concessions, esp. to minority or under-represented groups as a token gesture to appease radical demands, comply with legal requirements."[831] That is, tokenism reflects symbolic efforts rather than real change. Tokenism facilitates a veil of pseudo-support to emerge which is not grounded in long-term attitudinal change, activity or leadership opportunities. For example, in their literature survey focussed on locating mechanisms to support disabled people in leadership, Beckwith et al. signal that some inclusion is occurring. However, their research notes that often the roles given to people with disabilities are tokens, or symbolic gestures.[832] In this sense, tokenism is identified as symbolic inclusion rather than the pursuit of holistic efforts towards integration and participation. In regard to this research, Greg's story, noted in Chapter 6, highlights this pseudo-support. Two disability carparks at TSA hall appear to indicate inclusive practice. However, they are

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[828] Mary McClintock Fulkerson, "A Place to Appear: Ecclesiology as If Bodies Mattered," *Theology Today* 64, no. 2 (2007).
[829] Ibid., 162.
[830] Ibid., 164.
[831] *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 6 ed., s.v. "Tokenism."
[832] Ruthie-Marie Beckwith, Mark G. Friedman, and James W. Conroy, "Beyond Tokenism: People with Complex Needs in Leadership Roles: A Review of the Literature," *Inclusion* 4, no. 3 (2016): 137.

insufficient for the needs of the congregation. The lack of ramps and further disability parks at the rear of the building means that managing access for his disabled daughter is compromised. In this sense, two carparks are a token response because ultimately they do not attend to the supports that would make participation and integration more accessible for Greg and Grace.

Tokenistic approaches are cheap, easy and destructive towards both the giver and the receiver. In particular, they bind the recipient into further experiences of powerlessness. Tokenism traps the church into a cycle of random interventions that do not address the core issues related to inclusion and belonging. As noted in Chapter 3, it is necessary to move beyond a disability approach that presents glossy notions of inclusion while in reality only meeting minimal requirements such as disability parks or building ramps.[833] If we are doing only what the law demands—we have not truly understood a kingdom of God approach to those living with complex disability. Disability inclusion should not be tokenistic or random. Dislocated acts of diversity are not consistent with the comprehensive nature of a life poured out for others (Phil 2:6-7). The kingdom that Christ has ushered in, is one of limitless hospitality and participatory opportunities. There are no token gestures. There is no merely symbolic demonstration of inclusion.

Thirdly, as well as claims of ignorance and lapsing into tokenism, we must repent of our reluctance to embrace those whom we perceive to be different. Turning towards the person with a disability indicates an active posture that can be helpful. Turning towards Jesus and away from sin indicates leaving behind the old ways of knowing, being and doing. Similarly, turning towards disabled people indicates an intentionality to pursue more constructive ways of knowing, being and doing. Turning towards is an active orientation that seeks to witness and then embrace the other directly.

A commitment to figuratively embracing people with disabilities has significant implications.[834] To embrace is to gently move forward into the space of the other. Embrace is not invasion. It does not crash into fragile space uninvited or carrying its own agenda. To embrace is to commit to active listening and active support around a shared table. In the context of faith communities, authentic embrace carries three imperatives. In the first instance, it is the opportunity to help build the shared table. In the second instance, it is the opportunity to take a position at the table. Finally, it is the

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[833] Cork et al., in *The Routledge Handbook of Disability Activism,* 300.

[834] I employ the notion of "figurative embrace" deliberately. Issues of consent and vulnerability cannot be underestimated in relation to people with complex disability.

opportunity to lead from the table. Embrace that is anything less presents an unstable table. Such tables, where claims of ignorance, tokenism and lack of embrace preside, ultimately undermine the very essence of a shared table. At these tables, disabled people can become categorised, and ill-conceived capability dynamics can dominate the table. In contrast, well-crafted shared tables embrace new ways to build relationships, willingly share space in all its dimensions and are led by everyone around the table into new ways of being the church.

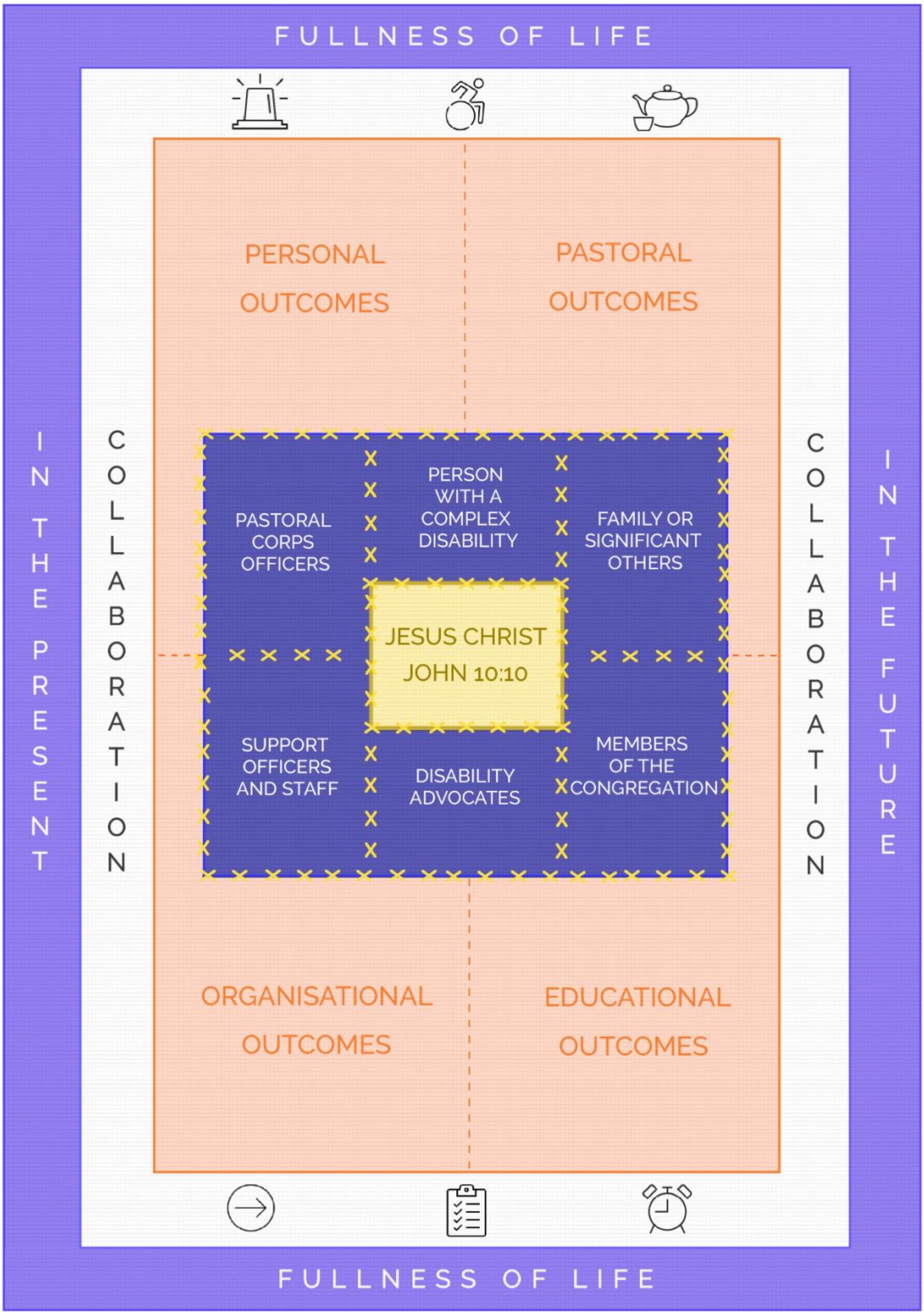

Figure 4. A Collaborative Framework for Future Practice.

9.3 A Collaborative Framework for Future Practice

Figure 4 is a visual representation of a quilt. This depicts a collaborative framework designed to support TSA to pursue revised forms of practice with congregants living with complex disability. In representing the framework as a quilt, the intention is threefold. First, the quilt constitutes a significant organising thread for the argument and findings of this thesis. Secondly, it is a visual and easily transferable pattern for use within and beyond TSA, in relation to the pursuit of fullness of life for disabled people in a faith community and beyond. Thirdly, as the researcher, the framing of this thesis around the creative and organic nature of stitching a quilt together piece by piece reflects the juxtaposition between my personal life journey and professional academic processes. Quilts reflect stories. Quilts impart the notions of warmth, safety and comfort. They also bear witness to the truths woven into them. The specific elements presented within this quilt are identified in brief below. The colours yellow, red and blue are significant in Salvationist understanding, however the colours chosen for this quilt utilise a colour palette that is accessible to people who live with colour blindness.[835] How the collaborative framework might be embedded into Salvationist life and practice is explained below.

This framework presents a Christian and theologically informed approach to supporting people with complex disabilities in a Salvation Army context. While it may be useful in other contexts, it is Christo-centric. It orientates all disability support, mission and ministry within TSA, through the person of Jesus Christ. As such, it sits in contrast to other models, such as the “Person-Centred Approach” reviewed in Chapter 3, which places the individual human being at the centre. In further contrast it considers life with a disability under the rubric of “fullness of life,” as opposed to Creamer’s model (also noted in Chapter 3) which examines disability within a framework of human limits, or Topher Endress’ “death-without-sting” model, which locates disability as an expression of union with Christ in the liminal stages between life and death.[836] In a further contrast, the current research has indicated where models that do not consider the “Christ event” have contributed to, or detracted from, fullness of life for disabled persons. Jeff McNair moves a step further to consider how disability ministry might be shaped by deliberately

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[835] In Salvationist symbolism, the colour blue represents the purity of God, red represents the redeeming blood of Christ, and yellow represents the fire of the Holy Spirit.

[836] Topher Endress, "Skin in the Game: Toward a Christological and Death-Focused Model of Disability," *Journal of Disability & Religion* 23, no. 3 (2019): 315.

combining two such models with a view to more “mature” models of ministry.[837] Finally, the current framework, developed in response to TSA’s moniker “The Army that Brings Life,” incorporates the experience of people within TSA who live with complex disability and attend Salvation Army congregations. In this sense it is discrete from frameworks that consider disability through a purely theoretical lens.

9.3.1 Faithful Practice from the Centre

Located at the yellow centre of the quilt we find faithful Salvationist practice born of hearts and minds redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ and empowered for mission by the Spirit of God. The origin, impetus and ongoing commission of Christ is to make disciples of all nations and all peoples (Matt 28:18-20). People with disabilities fall within this remit both as recipients of the calling and conduits of that universal commissioning. The text of John 10:10b, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full,” clearly signals God’s intention. As we are grafted into the living vine that is Jesus, the experience of present and future fullness of life is facilitated (John 15:5). These are not lives without difficulty, trauma or dissonance. These are lives that are carefully held, nourished and redeemed by the Creator of the world. In this context, every aspect of our being is fully present to our maker and redeemer.

9.3.2 Faithful Practice by the People

Surrounding the centrepiece, six blue squares are stitched together. They are linked to each other and also to the source of life in the centre by yellow thread. These six squares represent the stakeholders identified in this enquiry as critical to the ongoing well-being and support of disabled people worshipping in Salvation Army congregations in New Zealand. While the person living with a disability sits at the centre top, the framework suggests that, united and empowered by the Holy Spirit, the other five groups of people gather around the individual and work interdependently to provide support and stability for each other.

9.3.3 Faithful Practice Oriented Towards Outcomes

The orange squares represent four specific areas in which increased attention to these sectors will result in improved outcomes for people living with complex disability. The summaries in Chapters 6 and 7 highlighted that the findings have personal, pastoral, educational and organisational implications. Attention to improved outcomes in these

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[837] Jeff McNair, "Disability Studies Applied to Disability Ministry," *Review and Expositor* 113, no. 2 (2016): 166.

four sectors will help dismantle the inconsistency and limitations that currently compromise the potential for people with complex disabilities to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ and make their unique contribution to the body of Christ within TSA.

9.3.4 Faithful Practice Framed by Collaboration

Surrounding the orange squares sit collaboration panels. As noted in Chapter 8, collaborative approaches to life, support and ministry are fundamental to this framework. A specific example of collaboration in action can be observed in the context of the 2021 Paralympic Games. Before the commencement of the games, a new coalition of international organisations, led by the International Paralympic Committee and the International Disability Alliance, launched a campaign called "WeThe15."[838] This coalition of organisations included sports, arts, business, entertainment, human rights and policy makers. They came together in an effort to create work opportunities and address attitudinal and access issues for the 15% of the world's population who live with disability. Their tagline presents a key insight into the nature of effective collaboration. Supporting people with complex disability in TSA will require a commitment to embedding collaborative practice that is all-inclusive: #"WeTheSalvationArmy."

9.3.5 Faithful Practice Attending to Lived Experience

The six themes identified in the research are each highlighted by a small graphic embedded in the collaboration panel. Moving from top left in a clockwise direction, the graphics correspond to the themes noted here.

Theme one notes that disability itself is not a disaster but that how people respond can make it difficult. The second theme identifies that authentic inclusion involves literal and metaphorical space. Theme three clarifies that supporting people with complex disabilities takes time, presence and active appreciation. The fourth theme posits that complex disability is chronic in nature. Routines associated with support are often unobserved and unrelenting in nature. Theme five notes that support by Salvation Army pastors is well-intentioned but requires a framework to ensure consistency. Finally, theme six specifies that TSA in New Zealand has not yet recognised people with

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[838] WeThe15, "Wethe15: A Global Human Rights Movement for the 1.2 Billion Persons with Disabilities," International Paralympic Committee, accessed November 20, 2021. https://www.paralympic.org/news/wethe15-global-human-rights-movement-1-2-billion-persons-disabilities.

complex disabilities as a missional priority or partner. Short captions for the six themes are noted below, along with the accompanying graphic that appears on the quilt.

1. Disability is not a Disaster
2. Inclusion that Liberates
3. Taking Tea with Me
4. Familiarity and Fatigue
5. Well-Intentioned but Inconsistent
6. Out of Sight, Out of Mind

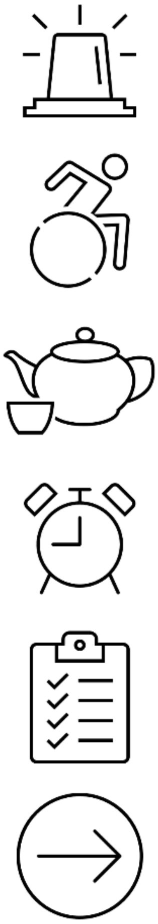

Figure 5. Themes.

9.3.6 Faithful Practice Organised Towards Fullness of Life

The quilt is edged with mauve panels that signal the organising motif of the research project (John 10:10b). These panels represent sustained attention to the fullness of life that Christ signals both in the present life and in the life to come. That is, the panels indicate a concern for the whole salvation available in Christ—that which brings the promise of future transformation in Christ’s likeness and that which ushers in the fullness available in our current embodiment through the contemporary ministry of the Spirit and the church. The TSA tagline, “The Army that Brings Life,” carries these twin conceptual imperatives. First, the Army is called to preach the fullness of life available through a relationship with Jesus Christ. Secondly, it is also called to be co-workers in making that fullness of life manifest in the everyday lives of disabled people currently attending its congregations.

In summary, this quilted framework is centred in the person of Jesus Christ and framed by his present and future promise of fullness of life in John 10:10b. Revised practice grounded in the notion of collaboration and cognisant of the six themes developed from engagement with the lived experience related here, will help to ensure improved personal, pastoral, educational and organisational outcomes for the person living with complex disability and those associated with their support.

9.4 Shaping Faithful Practice

Shaping faithful practice requires a commitment to personal and corporate integrity and ongoing vigilance. In the context of fullness of life, those pursuing faithful practice must remain alert to its fluidity in the face of diversity, different contexts and alternative experiences of life. For example, in Chapter 8, Sally McFague's "Ecological Economic Model"[839] explained a potential challenge to faith communities who are unconcerned with fullness of life experienced by marginalised people. McFague, noting that all models are interpretations rather than descriptions, clearly articulates her premise that abundant life is facilitated when the overarching goal is that all members of a community are enabled to flourish.[840]

As part of her argument, McFague highlights the individualised notions of the good life as understood in North America. Subsequently, feminist scholar Patricia Santos proposes that McFague's model is focused on a call for increased self-discipline and self-denial and fails to address the notion of compassion in the gospel narrative.[841] Santos argues for a compassion that is inward and outward focused—noting the weaknesses and strengths in both oneself and others, embracing a willingness to learn from the weakest members of the community and pursuing responses that are passionately directed towards the flourishing of all human beings. There is merit in the work of both scholars. McFague alerts the reader to the planetary and personal consequences of rampant individualism, while Santos reminds us that increased self-discipline, or self-denial, does not always translate into compassionate responses to those perceived to be other. Faithful practice that brings fullness of life to people with complex disability in TSA, may require a combination of all three.

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[839] McFague, *Life Abundant: Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril*, xii.

[840] Ibid., 105.

[841] Patricia H. Santos, "That All May Enjoy Abundant Life: A Theological Vision of Flourishing from the Margins," *Feminist Theology* 25, no. 3 (2017): 230.

9.4.1 “Active Seeing”

Santos proposes a three-fold process of “seeing”[842] (active engagement) that is continuously open to the diverse and different contexts that shape faithful practice in relation to the experience of abundant life.[843] Her arguments are drawn from the narratives of women observed on the margins of life in India. I suggest her categories are helpful in shaping faithful practice for TSA because they move individuals and congregations thoughtfully and responsibly towards the shared table noted earlier. I subsequently expand her process to consider how active engagement relates to improved personal, pastoral, educational and organisational outcomes for people living with complex disabilities in Salvation Army congregations.

Developing her own practical theological reflection process, Santos draws on Paulo Freire’s pedagogical praxis[844] coupled with the “Theological Action Research” cycle developed by Helen Cameron et al.[845] Santos’ work articulates a feminist theological process that calls for “Compassionate Connecting, Creative Conscientizing and Collaborative Capacitating.” The focus of her theological reflection is women on the margins of society in India.[846] The three elements of the process are explained in more detail below. I would suggest that the process holds merit but that the phrasing to describe the steps in the process make it more obscure than is necessary. I explore additional ways of understanding this process as it relates specifically to persons living with a complex disability. In short, the process of active engagement calls for continuous watchfulness and responsiveness to the lived experience of all persons. It involves a commitment to the pursuit of both internal and external dialogue.

First, in Santos’s schema, the theological process of “compassionate connecting” involves a movement towards the other on the margin. It calls for sensitive engagement, active listening, an empathic stance and a response of love that does not take over the life of the other, but facilitates personal agency and flourishing. Secondly, Santos describes “creative conscientizing” as calling people into a sense of fully knowing themselves, inclusive of limitations and moving towards growth and fullness of life.

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[842] I am aware of the visio-centric nature of this phrase. I submit that the principle noted here is helpful to the conversation but have added my own preference in brackets.

[843] Santos, 237.

[844] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed: 30th Anniversary Edition* (London: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2000), 79.

[845] Cameron et al., 27-29. Drawing on the Pastoral Cycle noted in Chapter 4, Action Research begins with the identification of a problem, imagines a possible solution, evaluates the solution as it is implemented and changes practice in light of the evaluation.

[846] Santos, 237.

Here, the individual is encouraged to think theologically about themselves in relation to Christ, others and the whole of creation. It is to consider the potential growth edges in one's life and to creatively and critically dig into them and act out of them so that loving and just responses flow.

Finally, Santos proposes "collaborative capacitating" that acknowledges and works out of the interconnected networks that make up our lives. She argues that "capacitating" opportunities to encourage discussion, networking and sharing of experience will facilitate greater fullness of life for all. In this instance, be it work towards eliminating dehumanising practises or attitudes that alienate or disenfranchise, collaborative action across sectors facilitates a wider experience of fullness of life. For Santos, it also underlines the possibilities contained within "shared spaces that integrate spirituality and activism, ritual and doctrine, joy and suffering, work and worship."[847]

9.4.2 Connection: Compassionate, Creative and Collaborative

While the three categories framed by Patricia Santos are helpful (compassionate connecting, creative conscientizing and collaborative capacitating), I suggest that the core thread in each of the categories is connection. Connection speaks to the dynamic of moving towards those isolated on the margins of the corps, wider church or society and establishing connections. Connection speaks to the dynamic of looking inward and honouring one's true self and one's connection to Christ. Connection speaks to the dynamic of forging and maintaining life-enhancing relationships. I suggest that vigilant attentiveness to the building of compassionate, creative and collaborative connections across the body of Christ, will help shape revised and faithful practice within TSA.

9.4.3 Compassionate Connection

Connection that is compassionate names the attitudes and actions highlighted in themes one to four of this research project. That is, faithful practice requires that we make literal and metaphorical space, take time to sit with disabled people, take tea with them and listen to them, acknowledge their inherent worth and dignity, hold their place-card at the table and recognise the difficulty and fatigue associated with their lives. Further, theme one highlights that disability itself is not a disaster but that there can be associated difficulties. Denying capability and agency is noted as one of those difficulties. It is not a compassionate response and it undermines connection.

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[847] Ibid.

While difficulty is not the sole preserve of people with disabilities, as part of the human experience the gospel notes that it requires a specific response. Christ's continuous response to personal or collective difficulty was to have compassion towards people (Matt 9:36;11:28-30;14:14;15:32; 20:34, Luke 7:13). The notion of personal responses of compassion, reflecting the compassion of God the Father, is embedded in Salvationist holiness understanding and the lyrics of General Albert Orsborn's familiar hymn, "Except I am moved with compassion, how dwelleth thy Spirit in me? In word and in deed burning love is my need; I know I can find this in thee."[848]

One of Catherine Booth's sermons, denouncing what she termed sham examples of compassion clothed as acts of benevolence conducted from a safe distance (similar to the random acts of diversity noted earlier), highlighted Christ's life-compassion. She preached,

> The scheme of Christ, with its aims and modes, as shown in the story of His life-compassion for the world. I contend that the compassion of Jesus stands out distinguished as of another kind from all the philanthropic plans which we have been considering.[849]

For Catherine Booth, Christ's compassion, salvific in orientation, moved beyond comfortable or solely random examples of helping people with difficult life situations. His compassion was marked by deep knowing of the one whom he sought to move alongside and was embodied in a willingness to lay down his life to ensure their experience of fullness of life.[850]

9.4.4 Creative Connection

Connection that is creative names attitudes and actions highlighted throughout themes one to three of this research. All of the participants in this research were content within their own embodiment. For example Charles claimed his life was the result of God's deliberate will and Ann expressed peace about the boundaries of her life. Their sense of self was intact. As noted in Chapter 6, the participants and their significant others did call for creative individual, pastoral, educational and organisational support that would enable them to live meaningful lives in the context of TSA. Some of the participants had found that in the processes of attending worship, making music, engaging in

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[848] The Salvation Army, *The Song Book of the Salvation Army* (London: International Headquarters of The Salvation Army, 2015), 214.

[849] Catherine Booth, "Sham Compassion and the Divine Love of Christ," in *Popular Christianity* (London: The Salvation Army Book Department, 1907), 72.

[850] Ibid., 80.

discipleship, forging relationships and pursuing employment or voluntary opportunities, they were able to identify themselves as whole people who were experiencing fullness of life. Further, opportunities to speak out, or witness to their experience of life in Christ as a disabled person, or to honestly acknowledge the journey of life with a disability is consistent with TSA's long call to bear witness to the work and witness of the Spirit in individual lives. For example, Salvationist holiness scholar, Samuel Logan Brengle, described a moment spent in prayer with a young woman whose conversion experience underscored the power of personal testimony. He wrote,

> There are two kinds of evidence, each of which seems to be necessary to get men to accept the truth and be saved. They are: the evidence we get from history, and the evidence we get from living men who tell about that of which they are conscious.[851]

Creativity is part of the nature of God. The universe, created out of "unformed raw material,"[852] by the will and hand of an imaginative and relational God, is marked by a desire to see humankind flourish (Ps 8). The creation is not static. The story of God's engagement with people, described throughout the text of scripture, continues to unfold in new and imaginative ways.[853] Salvationists are called into co-operation with that creativity. Just as God's imaginative orientation sustains and provides for a planetary system that supports and nourishes us, so the church is charged with bringing a creative lens to the support of the people in our context.

This creative connection is in play when pastors, youth workers, congregants and others bring a creative imagination to the pursuit of participation for people with complex disabilities. Creativity keeps us alert to possibilities. Creativity embraces the messy as well as the structured—allowing space for both to flourish. Participants in this research highlighted some concrete examples of where creative thinking might help promote inclusion: alternative seating options for those unable to sit on pews, invitations to move around in worship settings, talent nights that embrace an appreciation of different forms of artistic endeavour and investigation of individual interests or skills and matching those to service opportunities within the corps.

Creative connection calls for imaginations focused on how to pursue faith development and discipleship alongside those with complex disabilities. Benjamin Conner, in his

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[851] Samuel Logan Brengle, "Present-Day Witnesses to the Resurrection," in *Helps to Holiness* (London: Salvationist Publishing and Supplies, 1952), 87.
[852] Goldingay, 27.
[853] *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine*, 37-42.

faith work with adolescents with developmental disabilities, identifies six steps to guide ministry initiatives oriented towards full participation.[854] In step one, Conner notes that professionalism, in the sense of one’s faith and values, underscored by commitment and calling, are the precursors to enduring ministries. Also important is partnering with other professionals and working to keep oneself up to date in the disability field. Secondly, programmes need to establish a peer-buddy system. Such systems support the sharing of life essential to the building of reciprocal relationships. Thirdly, Conner suggests making hospitality the context of all programmes. Spaces that are hospitable, he counsels, are essential for the development of friendships.[855]

Drawing on the work of Brett Webb-Mitchell[856] to construct the fourth step, Conner notes the importance of building “gestured” practice. Gestures are kinaesthetic in nature. Here, the reliance on verbal communication is offset with the use of gestures that, once learned, become a type of unifying language. In the fifth stage, Conner proposes moving towards a proclamatory programme that does not rely solely on intellect as the means of God’s engagement with us. Instead, attention to our senses, emotions, intuitions and feelings become part of building a holistic communication environment. Finally, Conner posits that church structures should not engage “monolithic templates”[857] that must be applied to all settings in the same ways. For Conner, the way we organise ourselves within our church settings must reflect the diversity and creativity within those settings.

Under the fifth stage noted above, Conner argues for programmes in which people living with disabilities experience faith with all their senses. This call directly links to Donna’s reflections in Chapter 6 of the current research. She asked for settings in which her son could move, sit, gesture, smell and experience worship with all his senses. Conner describes such a process as being able to “feel faith,” “smell sanctification” and pursue “heavenly hosting” opportunities.[858] Feeling faith embraces creative ways to teach faith principles, such as trust exercises or use of such things as burning scented oils while prayers ascend (smelling sanctification). Heavenly hosting provides opportunity for people with disabilities to welcome others to worship, or make or serve food and to explore the embodied nature of Christ. Creative connections are forged in

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[854] Benjamin T. Conner, *Amplifying Our Witness: Giving Voice to Adolescents with Developmental Disabilities* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 74-92.
[855] Ibid., 79.
[856] Brett Webb-Mitchell, *Christly Gestures* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 96.
[857] Conner, 90.
[858] Ibid., 84-89.

the midst of such imaginative responses to the call for full inclusion in the life of the corps.

9.4.5 Collaborative Connection

Collaborative connection facilitates the communication, embodiment and delivery of a shared vision of fullness of life for people living with complex disability across the personal, familial and organisational sectors of the faith community. A lack of collaborative connection is witnessed in the final three themes of this research. These themes identified the fatigue and dislocation that families can experience within TSA settings, the well-intentioned but inconsistent delivery of support and the lack of a missional vision for prioritising and partnering with disabled people. In contrast to these experiences, TSA describes the church as a community embodying five distinctive orientations.[859]

First, TSA understands the church as a "community of reconciliation." In Christ, restoration has begun and the church bears witness to the reality that transformation of relationships is possible. Secondly, as a "continuing community," the church is charged with the ongoing proclamation and embodiment of the gospel from generation to generation. Thirdly, the "gathered community" is created for the purpose of sharing life together. Within the setting of the gathered community, congregants find fellowship, healing, nurture and equipping for ministry. Fourthly, as a "scattered community," the church membership looks beyond its own interests to the salvation and welfare of those beyond its immediate environment. Finally, as a "community renewed for the future," hope defines the present and future orientation of its people and practice.

TSA proposes the local corps as a place where division in human relationships has been replaced with community and connection. The networks of relationships provide a safety net in which everyone works together for the good of all. This is a community in which rich fellowship marks out safe spaces to be as we are and to collaborate with each other to bring into being the transformational agenda of God.[860] Collaborative connection is grounded in a shared vision of fullness of life that calls for deep engagement, mutual respect and intentional relationship development between all the groups noted in this research.

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[859] *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine*, 248-54.

[860] Ibid., 249.

In summary, in order to shape revised forms of practice, attention to connection that is compassionate, creative and collaborative will ensure that the whole framework presented here can move from faithful theory to faithful practice that brings fullness of life for those living with complex disability in Salvation Army congregations and beyond.

9.5 Moving Faithful Theory to Faithful Practice

As already noted, any proposed framework for supporting people with complex disability in Salvation Army congregations requires a commitment to a collaborative approach. The notion of collaboration acknowledges that multi-faceted issues require an approach that does not leave the problem-solving to a single entity or agency. In this context, we cannot expect either the individual with complex disability, an individual parent, an individual pastor, or a lone section, structure, or congregation, to act on their own to address the improvisation and uncoordinated approach to disability support that currently exists within TSA.

Barbara Gray's early work on the conditions that facilitate organisational collaboration in times of turbulence, or uncertainty, is helpful in this context.[861] Gray draws on the process-model of collaboration identified by J. E. McCann, which names three phases, namely Problem-Setting, Direction-Setting, and Structuring.[862] In the "Problem-Setting" phase, all of the stakeholders are identified and the issue that unites them is acknowledged and discussed. Significantly, for our purposes, this is also the stage that provides opportunity for stakeholders whose voices have been previously excluded, to find a platform. The notion of interdependence underpins the work of this phase. The second stage, "Direction-Setting," enables the stakeholders to identify shared values and their common purpose and goals. Articulating conceptions of a desired future also forms an important part of the work of this phase. The third stage, "Structuring," highlights the need for embedding processes that facilitate continued engagement. Ongoing stakeholder interactions need to be enabled through the creation of systematic mechanisms that ensure the capacity for continuous problem-solving and regulatory frameworks. That is—collaboration requires mechanisms that ensure longevity.

For persons living with complex disability in TSA, the process of collaboration noted above begins with a call to bring all the stakeholders together to acknowledge and

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[861] Barbara Gray, "Conditions Facilitating Interorganizational Collaboration," *Human Relations* 38, no. 10 (1985).

[862] Ibid., 916-17.

discuss the problem. The issue is uncoordinated support for people living with complex disability in Salvationist congregations. Rather than simply writing new top-down policy, revised practice might be initiated through local corps and/or divisional *hui* (a ceremonial gathering) for stakeholders to hear the voices that have previously been marginalised. Secondly, positive collaboration might facilitate a nationwide process whereby all stakeholders are enabled to describe their “fullness of life” vision for future Salvationist life and set new missional priorities for people with complex disability. Finally, collaborative practice might involve governance personnel and organisational lines of communication providing facility for ongoing review, the embedding of accountability networks and a dedicated disability ministry co-ordinator and/or team within TSA in New Zealand.

9.5.1 Faithful Practice and Personal Outcomes

A summary statement in Chapter 6 highlights that the research findings have implications for how TSA might bring life by improving personal, pastoral, educational and organisational outcomes for people living with complex disabilities in Army corps settings in New Zealand. We now turn to consider those outcome settings, beginning with the individual.

If, as this research proposes, disability is not in itself a disaster but responses to the person with disability, or misconceived understandings of the notion of disability itself, can make life with a disability more difficult, then revised forms of practice must arise from such an understanding. For example it makes living with a disability less difficult if we recognise that disability does not reflect a fallen, pitiable or sinful state. Rather, in relation to God the creator, humanity as a whole reflects such categories. Disability is not a category of living that requires forgiveness. Therefore, the individual living with a disability is simply one among many others seeking to live out a redeemed, purposeful, meaningful and God-honouring life.

Rosemarie Garland-Thomson laments the need that some people still have to rescue people with disabilities from a supposedly discredited identity.[863] Arguing that the boundaries between disabled and non-disabled are highly fluid throughout a lifetime, she notes that people simply enter into, and sometimes out of, disability as they travel through life. In dealing with her own narrative and the response of others to her

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[863] Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "Becoming Disabled," *The New York Times*, August 19, 2016, accessed November 28, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/21/opinion/sunday/becoming-disabled.html.

disability, Garland-Thomson has moved beyond saying, “I was born this way,” to now stating that she has a disability and openly identifying the accommodations she needs. Identifying her needs is a direct claim to a position of inclusion. It also employs the category I proposed earlier of “creative connection” that speaks to the intact self who is able to clearly enunciate necessary accommodations or advocate on behalf of the one who cannot. Improved personal outcomes for disabled people in Salvationist settings might well result from such an approach. Garland also highlights the collaborative approach required to ensure improved personal outcomes when she notes,

> Becoming disabled demands learning how to live effectively as a person with disabilities, not just living as a disabled person trying to become nondisabled. It also demands the awareness and cooperation of others who don’t experience these challenges.[864]

Deborah Beth Creamer’s proposals are also helpful in the context of reframing personal outcomes. Her “Limits Model of Disability,”[865] noted in Chapter 3, highlights that rather than something altogether other, disability is, or will be, a state common to all humankind. Limits are an unsurprising characteristic of life and an intrinsic part of being human. Disability is therefore simply part of being human. Vulnerability, fragility and death are on the horizon of life for all people (Heb. 9:27-28). The telos of earthly life is a shared experience in this sense. We all face the same ultimate outcome. We all need support to live well, within our limits. The difference lies in how we journey towards and beyond that outcome. Compassionate connection, noted earlier, names a way forward. If individuals living with disability are validated within this understanding, the personal difficulties noted in Chapter 6 may begin to diminish.

9.5.2 Faithful Practice and Pastoral Outcomes

In this research, individuals and parents or siblings of people with complex disabilities acknowledged the chronic nature of disability along with the unseen and unrelenting routines associated with their family member. This reality has implications for how TSA brings life, in the pastoral sense, for the whole family unit. Pastoral care practice in this sense includes but extends beyond the individual with a disability to those living alongside. It calls for an understanding of how disability affects parental and sibling relationships along with a call for pastoral care that attends to, but also extends beyond, crisis points in the disability journey.

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[864] Ibid.

[865] Creamer, *Disability and Christian Theology: Embodied Limits and Constructive Possibilities*.

Pastoral care, in the sense that I use it here, draws on the biblical understanding associated with a shepherd taking care of a potentially vulnerable flock (John 10:11; 21:15-17). The notion of care carries the dynamics noted earlier in regard to making connections with people. Pastorally attentive care draws on compassion, creativity and collaboration to journey alongside another person in loving concern for their spiritual, emotional and physical well-being.

Barbara McClure summarises that while pastoral care is not just a specific set of techniques, it calls for the practice of attentiveness. That is, “pastoral care is religious attention toward another.”[866] In McClure’s reflections, effective pastoral care also commits to the pursuit of theologically informed diagnosis and compassionate support. McClure notes the links between pastoral care and practical theology, writing that they both value human experience as a primary text in theological reflection.[867] My preference, as argued earlier, is to frame practical theology and pastoral care grounded in human experience, as corroborating text (Wesley) rather than primary text (scripture).

McClure’s summary of the history of pastoral care highlights the development, particularly over the past 80 years, of pastoral care drawing on insights from psychology, sociology and theology.[868] The goal across all disciplines and activities in which pastoral care is framed and delivered is the pursuit of relationships in which attentiveness brings people towards greater love, belonging and self-understanding. McClure’s reflections align with the claims identified in theme three of this research, namely that supporting people with disabilities and their families takes time, presence and active appreciation.

In Chapter 3, general reference was made to the pastoral care proposals of Anna Katherine Shurley.[869] She challenges faith communities to creative and collaborative imaginations that bring people with intellectual disabilities into partnership with other congregants to pursue flourishing for all.[870] Her organising premise is that effective, person-centred pastoral care flows from the development of pastoral friendships. Hans Reinders also notes the significance of forging authentic friendships and the mutuality involved in that process.[871] Both writers acknowledge that pursuing such friendships

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[866] Barbara McClure, "Pastoral Care," in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, ed. Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 269.
[867] Ibid., 273.
[868] Ibid., 272.
[869] Shurley.
[870] Ibid., 11.
[871] Reinders.

will inevitably unearth challenges. However, Shurley describes the pursuit of pastoral friendships as a calling that believers need to accept and work through together.[872]

This notion of pastoral care anchored in pastoral friendship is significant because it sits in contrast with the lived experience of some of the participants in the current research. Several participants in the current research reported a lack of friendship connections within the corps setting. Some participants described the actual loss of friendships in light of their journey with disability. Therefore, in order to be an Army that brings life, attention to the formation of pastoral friendships that embrace mutuality is one way in which the faith community can improve pastoral outcomes and bring fullness of life in the present.

According to Shurley, the nature of pastoral interaction is grounded in an understanding of our "God-ordained, co-humanity."[873] In this sense, Jesus Christ sits at the centre of all our relationships and by his Spirit makes human friendships possible. All subsequent interactions flow out of these divinely facilitated connections. For this reason and those noted earlier, Jesus Christ sits at the centre of the framework presented in this research. Connected to Christ as the centre, the friendship space becomes sacred space.[874]

Further, as Christ in the person of the Holy Spirit draws alongside as advocate, so effective pastoral care is effected by sitting alongside each other in this wide sacred space. *Paraklētos* (helper, intercessor, advocate), in the sense it is used in the New Testament, does not refer to a passive presence. As Brown notes, the advocate is sent in and brings active help.[875] Pastoral care does not occur from a literal or metaphorical distance. This understanding confirms the perspective presented by participants in this research who noted the importance of having home groups hosted in their own homes, the comfort experienced by having pastors or pastoral care members visit their homes and the affirmation felt when congregants noticed that a disabled person or family member was absent from corps settings. Therefore, attention given to in-home visitation, facilitating home group hosting opportunities and attentiveness to the attendance patterns of disabled congregants are some of the ways to improve pastoral outcomes.

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[872] Shurley, 104.
[873] Ibid., 84.
[874] Ibid., 94.
[875] *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 89.

9.5.3 Faithful Practice and Educational Outcomes

Turning now to improving educational outcomes, pastoral officers and training/management staff in TSA acknowledged their lack of awareness, skill and formal training in the area of disability. In the focus group settings, they articulated a desire to know and understand their disabled congregants as people and how to support them as members of their congregations. These data have implications for training possibilities in educational settings across the New Zealand context. They also carry implications for the teaching that is provided to our congregations in Sunday services, in home group settings and interactions during the week.

Training, in the sense that I use the term here, relates not simply to the acquisition of facts and figures related to different types of disabilities, or even what supports might prove helpful in specific settings. Instead, it relates primarily to a disposition and willingness to learn and be trained in ways that bring fullness of life to oneself and to those with whom we minister (2 Timothy 2:15). As we teach, organise, instruct, mentor, formulate programmes, learn and listen, we participate in the ongoing and unfolding righteousness of God. Training that is grounded in this desire to pursue and participate in God's righteousness, is grounded in a humility of spirit that acknowledges the limits of our own personal knowledge (Romans 12:3). Training that embraces an understanding of learning as ongoing participation in the righteousness of God might result in improved outcomes for pastoral and training/management staff across TSA.

Located in the United States of America, researchers Melinda Jones Ault, Belva C. Collins and Erik W. Carter considered children in faith communities, identifying factors that affect their participation. In the survey, completed by 416 parents or caregivers, knowledge about persons with disabilities in faith communities is identified as one of the research themes.[876] While noted as one of the smaller data sets in the study, it nonetheless highlights the impact that a lack of expertise, or knowledge, has on the participation of families with disabled children in faith communities.[877] A lack of knowledge about disabilities led to discomfort from people around their children, reduced interaction with their child, minimal understanding on how to facilitate participation and a paucity of awareness around the general characteristics of the child's disability. While this study refers to children, it highlights how a lack of training of the type noted above leads to poorer fullness of life outcomes for children and adults. When

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[876] Ault, Collins, and Carter, 192.

[877] Ibid., 203.

considered alongside the current study, there is cause for hope, in that the pastors and staff in this study clearly enunciated their desire to alleviate the range of outcomes noted in the American study. Training that seeks to mitigate against any sense of discomfort, lack of interaction and lack of participation by disabled people might lead towards improved outcomes for all congregants.

Teaching that has an overall aim of fostering a sense of belonging is a further notion that might lead to improved educational outcomes for people with disabilities. Rather than limiting our teaching focus to the conveying of information, teaching and education that highlights a sense of belonging reflects the interconnected nature of the learning that can occur across a faith community. In a further American study, researchers sought to identify what belonging meant and how it was experienced by disabled young people and their parents. In their mixed methods study of 500 families, Carter, Biggs and Boehm identified 10 dimensions to the experience of belonging.[878] As the study notes, belonging is experienced when people with disabilities are present, invited, welcomed, known, accepted, supported, cared for, befriended, needed and loved within their respective communities.[879]

There are corresponding responses from participants throughout the current research to the 10 dimensions of belonging noted in the Carter et al. study. For instance, in their dimension one, “present,” the attitudinal and access barriers noted in our second theme highlight the difficulties associated with being present in congregational life in TSA. Pastors and mission support staff also noted it as part of their responsibility to eliminate or minimise those barriers. Deeper exploration of these 10 dimensions of belonging and teaching, that flow from an understanding of the nuances of belonging, might provide a helpful backdrop for any training programmes developed within TSA.

Pastors in the current research also noted a lack of formal training in matters related to disability. Some had experience from previous employment opportunities but most noted that any wisdom they had gleaned was the result of informal ministry experience gathered throughout the course of their lives. In this sense, any framework they might be working from in reference to disability might be said to be inconsistent and uncoordinated across the ministry workforce. Training outcomes might be improved if attention was given to intentional “Contextual Education.” Drawing on the work of Don

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[878] Erik W. Carter, "The Absence of Asterisks: The Inclusive Church and Children with Disabilities," *Journal of Catholic Education* 23, no. 2 (2020): 171.
[879] Ibid., 172-81.

Browning, Emily Crick notes that contextual education encourages the learner to move in a cycle between immersion in ministerial practice, consideration of theory and back into practice.[880] The cycle introduces learners to the complexity of integrating theory and practice. For example, how does one cherish the gospel imperative to inclusion and face a congregation unwilling to pursue inclusive practice?

Contextual education also prompts the learner towards the continual practice of reflection[881]—a practice that connects with the process of "active seeing" (active engagement) noted earlier. In this way, pastors might find it possible to consistently analyse how their congregations are progressing towards inclusive practice and what obstacles still require dismantling. Contextual training opportunities might also enable pastors and congregants to witness other communities committed to disability-inclusive practice who are managing this process well. It could also open up avenues for ongoing support from allied disability professionals. Such opportunities are significant as participants in this research noted that they sometimes felt ill-equipped to manage the concerns of their disabled congregants and/or the needs of their families.

9.5.4 Faithful Practice and Organisational Outcomes

Finally, the data highlight an improvised and uncoordinated approach from TSA towards support of people with complex disabilities and/or their families in local congregations. It also identifies that TSA has not yet recognised inclusion of people living with complex disabilities as a missional priority nor their status as partners in mission. This has implications for governance systems and structures across TSA in New Zealand. To be an Army that brings life is to be an Army that has systems, structures and leadership in place that help to improve outcomes for people with complex disabilities across the organisation.

Systems and structures, while inanimate in one sense, also carry the power to facilitate or frustrate the mission of the organisation. In this case, some systems and structures within TSA in New Zealand have not proven to be wholly supportive towards people with disabilities. It must be acknowledged that systems and structures are initiated and maintained by people. Therefore, it is the personnel who initiate, manage and maintain those systems who ultimately hold the capacity for improving organisational outcomes.

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[880] Emily Click, "Contextual Education," in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, ed. Bonnie J. Miller McLemore (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 347.

[881] Ibid., 355.

Statistics noted earlier in this research indicate that people with disabilities experience exclusion from faith communities. TSA at this time has no system in place to measure how many disabled people attend their congregations. During the “Global Disability Summit” in February 2022, a common thread emerging from the summit was the need for systems that pursued disaggregated data across the disability sector. Conference speakers noted that to accurately identify trends and patterns, attention needs to be given to both data collection and disaggregation.[882]

Approximately 24 percent of the New Zealand population live with a disability.[883] It would be helpful to measure if Salvation Army congregations reflect that population range. Access to such data might offer concrete insight into the extent that TSA prioritises mission to disabled people. Such a database could also highlight the degree to which people with disability are employed, volunteer, serve or lead in congregational contexts. Improved access to data would enable trends and patterns to be more readily identified and subsequently lead to improved outcomes for congregants with disability. For example, a comprehensively maintained database could demonstrate the necessity of a long-term commitment to universal design, installation of hearing loops and ongoing development of online resources and worship events for disabled people.

Leadership within TSA as an organisation is another area in which the participants in this research highlight positive and negative experiences. Some note that the leadership sets the tone for how the wider community engages with disabled people. These data also correspond with that noted in the study conducted by Melinda Jones Ault et al. Parents in her study noted the importance of leaders who strategically championed inclusive practice and/or advocated more specifically for their children.[884]Conversely, an absence of engaged and informed leadership led to disappointment and frustration. Participants in the current study express concern that leadership in strategic roles, such as public relations or fundraising, are more concerned with donor-oriented outcomes than disability-inclusive practice. A disconnection between the missional objectives of the organisation is noted at this point. Therefore, improved organisational outcomes might be facilitated by a focused realignment of core values in relation to disability across the different structural settings of TSA. Specifically, such a realignment could position people with disabilities as partners in the mission rather than objects of charity.

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[882] GDS Secretariat, "Welcome to the Global Disability Summit," Global Disability Summit, accessed February 6, 2022. https://www.globaldisabilitysummit.org.

[883] NZ, "One in Four New Zealanders Identified as Disabled."

[884] Ault, Collins, and Carter, 205.

The "IPS on Persons with Disabilities" (Appendix G), in addition to consultation on disability-specific policy, notes a commitment to engage and actively consult with people with disabilities when developing and framing general policies across the TSA.[885] That is, people with disability are identified as co-workers and co-writers in the mission of TSA. Partnership requires collaborative practices around the shared table. Partnership also necessitates the deliberate resourcing of disability initiatives and the identification of pathways to inclusion. These pathways need to be obvious and accessible to everyone.

At present, TSA in New Zealand does not have a localised disability inclusion policy. It does not have a champion in the form of a disability inclusion leader, a taskforce, or a disability reference committee. At the time of writing, there are no official "Easy Read" documents available in relation to adherent membership or covenanted soldiership in TSA. The doctrines of TSA are not available in "Easy Read" formats. While localised settings might be able to adapt such documents, this speaks to an organisational gap in inclusive practice. Improved outcomes for people with complex disabilities might be afforded by organisational initiatives that formally pursue the re-writing of such documents under the guidance of a disability inclusion leader and/or reference group.

9.6 Effecting Change Within TSA

This thesis has established that there is need for revised forms of practice within TSA to include people with complex disability as both priority and partner. The issue now is to move us towards life-bringing forms of practice to ensure success.

Chapters 5 to 8 have utilised the PTRM to outline the biblical, historical, doctrinal and theological imperatives that call TSA to be "The Army that Brings Life." Briefly summarised, disabled people are created in the image of God and they are part of the worldwide body of Christ. They are called to participate in the mission of Jesus, while they partner with God and each other in the transformation of the whole creation. At the present time, this calling is not always fully facilitated by TSA in New Zealand. Further, disabled people do not always occupy safe or equitable space in contemporary New Zealand society. TSA has an historical and contemporary mandate to make hospitable, just and redemptive space for the marginalised of society as co-workers and co-heirs in the Kingdom of God.

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[885] The Salvation Army, *International Positional Statement: Disabilities* (London: International Headquarters, 2020), 6.

Within international faith-based organisations such as TSA, effecting institutional change can be perceived as a challenge. This research has already demonstrated that some change is necessary in order to fulfil TSA's belief systems and mandate. The research is a hope-filled marker point in the life and witness of TSA as a movement oriented towards the marginalised in society. It is hoped that greater organisational awareness of the narratives about people with disabilities, documented here, may result in long-lasting institutional metamorphosis. Ultimately, this is why it is vital that the stakeholders noted in the framework pursue interpersonal connections that are compassionate, creative and collaborative.

While this thesis has argued that claims of ignorance related to disability have a limited basis, it has also acknowledged that a lack of awareness and understanding is not necessarily deliberate. An understanding of the nature of grace is important at this point. While understood in one sense as the unmerited favour of God towards humankind, grace also speaks to human interactions framed by courtesy and goodwill. Grace must attend any response to perceived gaps between doctrine, belief and actual practice within a faith community. Inconsistency is not a new phenomenon in the human story. Grace is God's consistent response. For example, Amy Plantinga Pauw considers inconsistent practice and highlights the relationship between beliefs and practices as often shifting and dynamic. She cautions,

> Though the epistemic capital of a religious community can carry its doubting or theologically disinclined members along for a considerable time, the long-term viability of a community demands efforts at consistency between belief and practice.[886]

It is only in sitting at the table together in honesty and openness, as persons in communion with the living God, that systems and structures can be transformed and reflect the Spirit that underpins their very existence. To be an Army that brings life in the context of complex disability means that the individuals within the systems and structures must actively pursue greater disability awareness. Secondly, it requires the pursuit of consistency between subsequent understanding, belief and practice, in both personal and corporate contexts.

As an organisation, TSA has a positional statement on disability that posits a global commitment to acknowledge and address areas of concern (see Appendix G). Therefore,

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[886] Amy Plantinga Pauw, "Attending to the Gaps between Beliefs and Practices," in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, ed. Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), 45.

as a matter of public record, TSA has already declared its intention to improve disability practice. It was noted in Chapter 5 that the Army's history and current practice demonstrates a commitment to the care and welfare of people living with disabilities in many different contexts. Army hostels, havens and hospitals around the world continue to minister to and with disabled people.[887] Territories outside of New Zealand have developed inclusion policies, online seminar series to help train their people and have employed staff to coordinate best-practice references and resources.[888] However, in local congregations in New Zealand, this research has demonstrated that not everyone experiences consistent welcome, inclusion and belonging. Further precursors for effecting change in the future include greater awareness across the entire organisational structure of TSA, leaders committed to influencing the TSA constituency towards embodiment of its stated values and the ongoing consistency of its positive messaging regarding living with a disability.

Within any given congregation, people will have different attitudes towards people with disabilities. One of the research participants noted that to effect attitudinal change, people have to actually want to know about disabilities. Changing attitudes is a process. Dan Vander Plaats suggests that there are five stages to that process.[889] He classifies these stages as ignorance, pity, care, friendship and co-labourers. The first stage is identified as "Ignorance." Typical thinking in this stage posits disability as the result of sin, or evidence of God's incapacity to intervene and/or use people with a disability in Kingdom ministry. The second stage is characterised by responses of "Pity." At this point, people may feel sorry for people with disabilities, may be inspired to help them or may consider themselves lucky not to have disabilities themselves.

In the third stage of changing attitudes, we encounter the movement towards "Care." Here, disabled people are seen as God's image-bearers and therefore of value. People at

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[887] The General of The Salvation Army, 40.

[888] For example, at the time of writing, disability inclusion portfolios and programs are in place in the Australia (Joseph Pinkard), Canada-Bermuda (Major Shelley Kerr), United Kingdom and Ireland (Fellowship of Endeavour) and USA West Territory (Major Nancy Helms). It is also acknowledged that discussions around disability inclusion have begun in the NZFT&S Territory as part of a broader "inclusion" conversation. C.f. The Salvation Army, "How to Include Those with Autism in the Church," The Salvation Army accessed June 20, 2023. https://www.helpsharechange.org/videos/autism-and-the-church/; The Salvation Army, "Intercultural and Disability Inclusion Team," The Salvation Army, accessed June 20, 2023. https://my.salvos.org.au/intercultural-and-disability-inclusion-team/; The Salvation Army, "Enabled: Community Services," The Salvation Army, accessed June 16, 2023. https://www.salvationist.org.uk/faith/our-territory/territorial-directory/enabled; The Salvation Army, "Everyone Is Welcome at the Salvation Army," The Salvation Army, accessed June 20, 2023. https://broadviewvillage.ca.

[889] Dan Vander Plaats, "The 5 Stages: Changing Attitudes," Elim Christian Services, accessed February 8, 2023. https://www.the5stages.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/The5Stages_2014.pdf.

this stage of the process might consider ways in which they can help support them. The fourth stage of the process opens up the prospect of "Friendship." At this point in the journey of changing attitudes, we locate people who now have friends that are disabled and they recognise the ways in which their disabled friends contribute to their own lives. This stage is characterised by the active pursuit of relationship-building with people living with disability. In the final stage of the process, we find a commitment to the notion of "Co-Labourers." Attitudes have progressed in this stage to an understanding of ministry involving all God's people. Disabled and non-disabled work alongside each other to usher in the Kingdom reign of God.

The five-stage process of changing attitudes noted here is a potentially helpful tool to effect change within TSA. It could assist congregations and leadership personnel assess where people are in their journey of understanding disability. Following that assessment, mechanisms could be implemented to help them navigate their way through to the final stage where all people in the congregation and broader Salvation Army are fully recognised as co-labourers for the Kingdom of God.

9.7 How to Implement the Framework

The framework proposed in this thesis is one way in which TSA might address faith-based practices that bring fullness of life for people with complex disability. The framework reflects the theoretical research, the voices of the research participants and the reflexive practice of the researcher across the whole research process. Due to the rigorous qualitative methodology used, the findings are transferable (although not "generalisable" in a narrowly quantitative sense), especially in the evidence-based framework developed. The framework can be considered a useful starting point for pursuing revised forms of practice within TSA locally, internationally and across other faith communities.

Several possibilities exist for how the framework might be implemented. However, the framework itself does not exist in a vacuum. In various international and local settings, TSA has considered its response to the ministry of, and with, disabled brothers and sisters—or is intending to. For example, the IPS (Appendix G), is a helpful document to underpin any future conversations and policy decisions. Local iterations of context-specific statements are in place in settings as diverse as Australia, Canada and Bermuda, Zambia, the United Kingdom and Ireland, North America and Zambia. International conventions such as the UNCRPD also provide a unifying platform from which to initiate new conversations and documents.

In recent years, TSA has used "Faith-Based Facilitation (FBF)"[890] to enable constructive conversations around complex issues across its constituency. FBF involves a specific process and a group of tools that enable participants to pursue more biblically faithful decision-making. The process of deliberate and careful reflection between stakeholders has proven to be an efficacious mechanism in varied international settings across TSA.[891] In short, FBF makes space for people to pursue conversation around issues or subjects on which they may have settled views and to listen to others for whom experience of the issues may be different. The heart of the FBF process is the deepening of personal relationships which, in turn, makes it possible to listen and learn together.[892]

The process itself follows in the tradition of the Wesleyan quadrilateral noted earlier. It also employs a five-stage action-reflection process.[893] As Dean Pallant notes, the action-reflection process used in "Faith-Based Facilitation" actively acknowledges the guidance of the Bible, Tradition and the work of the Holy Spirit as the process unfolds.[894] The process moves from identifying an issue that needs deeper consideration, to then describing and analysing the issue. In the third stage, there is deliberate reflection and evaluation of the resulting conversation. Corresponding plans are made in stage four and, in the final stage, those plans are moved towards action. The conversations, steered by a skilled facilitator, empower participants to pursue a more comprehensive understanding of the issue. This leads to responses that reflect greater personal awareness, deeper relationality and the potential for "Kairos" moments in which deeper spiritual insight is possible.

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[890] Pallant, *Keeping Faith in Faith-Based Organizations: A Practical Theology of Salvation Army Health Ministry*, 172-75. Dean Pallant provides a brief history of the FBF process following his request of the "The Oxford Centre for Ecclesiology and Practical Theology" in 2009, to develop a facilitation resource. Adaptation by a group of Salvationist practitioners of the subsequent theological reflection model resulted in the development of "Faith-Based Facilitation."

[891] As a recent example, FBF was used to facilitate conversations amongst delegate Salvationists at "The Salvation Army International Symposium on Human Sexuality," hosted in Singapore July/August 2022. Only one Salvation Army territory was not represented at the symposium due to travel visa issues.

[892] The Salvation Army, "Building Deeper Relationships Using Faith-Based Facilitation," International Headquarters, accessed December 11, 2022. https://www.salvationarmy.org/fbf/home.

[893] The Salvation Army, "Faith-Based Facilitation: Process," International Headquarters, accessed December 11, 2022. https://www.salvationarmy.org/fbf/process.

[894] Pallant, *Keeping Faith in Faith-Based Organizations: A Practical Theology of Salvation Army Health Ministry*, 173.

Developing disability-specific FBF resources and hosting FBF conversations around the topic of disability throughout Salvation Army Commands and Territories holds the potential to broaden the understanding among the Army's constituency. It is also an opportunity for persons with disability to pursue collaborative partnerships in the development of such material. Preparation and presentation of such material might be considered solid preparatory ground for introducing the framework presented in this research to local contexts and, in time, to a wider audience.

Further opportunities to collaborate and implement the framework include the potential to develop a training module for use at "Booth College of Mission" (the officer training college) and/or the "Centre for Leadership Development." Pastoral officers and support staff in this research both indicated a lack of disability awareness training. While an understanding of all the nuances associated with living with disability would be beyond the scope, or purpose, of a single module in a training programme, the attendant collaborative framework provides a mechanism for shaping the content and parameters of new learning intended to embed faithful practice. Once developed, the training module could then be scaled to suit presentations at divisional and corps level.

The framework has been developed so that its content and meaning could be presented through a series of collaborative media support strategies. Again, the premise of partnership with persons with disability is critical to the efficacy of such strategies. Media support might include presenting the framework in a series of *War Cry* articles (the TSA's monthly magazine), along with the development and provision of specific content for Disability Awareness Sundays. Collaborative connections between people with disabilities and the producers of fundraising and sponsorship initiatives could also ensure that such material does not present disabled people in ways that are detrimental to their experience of fullness of life.

It was noted earlier that in collaborative endeavours, the longevity of any associated champion in a given project is not guaranteed. Therefore, to ensure the longevity of revised forms of practice, it is necessary to ensure that the implementation of this framework is not dependent on a single person or for a single season. Implementing revised forms of practice that lead to fullness of life for all people in Salvation Army congregations will require deliberate and sustained commitment to our legal, human rights and spiritual responsibilities.

9.8 Limitations

Some limitations, although not undermining the project, nonetheless must be acknowledged. First, the research sample size is relatively small. There are no statistical data on the number of people with complex disabilities who attend Salvation Army congregations. Therefore, no definitive conclusions about the potential for a larger sample size can be made. However, the sample size was sufficient for the methodology utilised in the research. Such lack of identifying data also constrained any attempt to employ co-design principles in the set-up of the research project. At the beginning of the project, the researcher intended to conduct eight in-depth interviews. Over the course of participant recruitment, that was expanded to accommodate 10 individuals who responded to the invitation. In two settings, a married couple presented for the interview, which meant a total of 12 voices are documented.

A further limitation of the research is the lack of diverse cultural representation in the interviews and in the focus group discussions. In both settings, participants were self-selecting and Pākehā (white settler New Zealanders). Participants were also required to be over 18 years of age so the research sample is restricted to an adult population.

While deliberate in the design of the project parameters, a further limitation of the research is that it is confined to congregational settings in TSA. Consequently, the research findings are not easily transferable to Salvation Army Community Ministries settings. A distinction is noted here between congregational or worship settings of TSA, and members of the public who access TSA’s Community Ministry programmes for assistance, such as food parcels and budgeting advice. Further, while sectors such as the Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit communicated with the researcher in regard to past and potential future policy engagement by TSA on the subject of disability in the New Zealand context, this research has not considered Salvation Army engagement with disability issues beyond its congregational settings.

As noted earlier, TSA territory in which this research was conducted is comprised of three other South Pacific nations, namely Fiji, Tonga and Samoa. The travel restrictions initially associated with financial costs, and subsequently with the COVID-19 pandemic, meant that no interviews or focus groups occurred outside of New Zealand. Therefore, one of the limitations of the study is that it does not represent wider congregational voices from within the territory as a whole.

In regard to the focus group discussions, only one was conducted with corps pastors. All of the participants were based within the wider Auckland metropolitan area. The pastoral officers were self-selecting so it could be argued that they already had an interest in the subject matter. More pastoral officers from locations outside of Auckland might have participated if a survey had been part of the research design.

Few people participated in the second focus group directed towards mission support staff. Therefore, a further limitation of the research is that this discussion was not as comprehensive in scope as was initially hoped. Invitations to participate had to be sent out twice. Anecdotal conversations indicated that potential participants considered that they did not know enough about disability to engage in the conversation. While the recruitment advertisements and participant information sheet clearly indicated that personal experience was not required, only five participants were present for this focus group. There was a lack of representation in areas such as youth ministry, creative ministries, governance and mission development settings.

9.9 Areas for Future Work

The results of this study add to the rapidly expanding field of Disability Theology noted in Chapter 3. It contributes new knowledge regarding the support, or lack thereof, for people with complex disabilities in a specific faith community known as The Salvation Army. It presents an original framework to help facilitate revised future practice. The results have also enabled the development of a broader understanding of the notion of "fullness of life." This research contributes unique insights into TSA's self-understanding and internal rhetoric on disability issues.

While this research project proposes a collaborative framework for how TSA might support people with disabilities within its congregations, further research can build on what has been established here. A natural progression of this work would be to engage directly with representative Māori voices, in order to locate participants, collect and analyse data in a way that honours the partnership implicit in *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* (The Treaty of Waitangi). A further progression would be to engage with congregations in the wider territory settings of Fiji, Tonga and Samoa. Subsequent analysis of data gathered in these locations might speak more comprehensively to differing cultural experiences of disability throughout TSA in the South Pacific. In terms of specific congregational input, a further progression of this work would be to engage with non-disabled congregants in order to compare and contrast the findings between the two data sets.

Family members in this research noted the significant attraction of children's ministries in TSA as a factor that drew them into the congregational setting in the first place. Further research could usefully explore how and why those settings were a positive experience for some families and, in contrast, what factors contribute to the negative experience of families such as that noted in the *War Cry* magazine article cited in Chapter 1. Research in this area could also identify processes and patterns that might lead to more successful transitions out of children's ministries into teenage and adult congregational settings.

The research parameters could also be broadened to consider different types of disability. For example, this study concentrates on support for people with complex disability in Salvationist congregations. Further investigation of the relationship between disability and mental health and/or supportive practice for people living with mental health disabilities and/or neurodiversity, would be a natural progression of this initial work.

The collaborative framework presented in this research is, at this stage, theoretical in nature. The thesis argues for revised forms of practice that move people beyond theory and into action. So, a further progression of this work in the future would be to pursue a piece of action research in which the framework is tested in the field. Assessment of its efficacy could be observed and documented across varied corps settings in the New Zealand, Fiji, Tonga and Samoa territory and beyond. The framework in its present format has universal application so there is also the potential for it to be used to provide consistency across broader Army service settings such as Community Ministries, or into programmes run for older people throughout TSA. Further studies should seek to identify the degree to which it is transferable in such locations.

While the majority of participants in this research were able to pursue membership within TSA to their own satisfaction, questions remain regarding the paths to belonging available in TSA for those with a complex disability that affects their cognition. A further progression of this initial work would be research that examines the core values, doctrines and key documentation associated with membership in TSA (documents such as those noted in Appendices E and F), with a view to production of easy read translations. Provision of easy read options might broaden access pathways and further research could determine the extent to which such provisions increase membership across TSA community.

9.10 Conclusion

As a work of practical theology, this research has highlighted the dynamic interplay between theory, history, theology and experience. It has shown that people with complex disabilities in Salvation Army congregations in New Zealand experience varying degrees of marginalisation. In seeking to faithfully connect the pastoral, practical and political, the work identifies revised practice imperatives for TSA moving forward.[895] The use of the PTRM has enabled consideration and synthesis of historical and contemporary practice, along with the overarching biblical, theological and doctrinal tradition of the church in general and TSA in particular. The methodology has also provided opportunity to document the lived experience and priorities of disabled people, their *whānau* (family) and personnel working in Army settings. As a consequence, the thesis is not simply presented as a theoretical conversation about living with a disability in the Kingdom of God. Rather, it actively embodies the call from disability activism to ensure that studies *about* disability are not dislocated *from* the people who identify as disabled.

The study set out to consider the efficacy of TSA's claim to be *Te Ope Whakaora,* "The Army that Brings Life." It has demonstrated that the "fullness of life," to which Jesus refers in John 10:10b has already been inaugurated in the person of Christ. Therefore, to bring life is to bring Jesus. The incarnation of Christ demonstrates a contextual and eschatological understanding of abundant life. Therefore, TSA is called to bring life in the present. It must also attend to preparing people for God's ultimate and transformative fulfilment of this promise. The local congregation is the context where much of this life is experienced, embedded and equipped.[896] This study has demonstrated that in the context of complex disability and within local Salvation Army corps settings, an understanding of disability and a provision of support towards an experience of fullness of life are not as robust and consistent as they might be. There is evidence of faithful practice in some settings. However, there is also evidence that some disabled people do not consider themselves, or their relatives, as either missional

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[895] Cameron, 14.

[896] *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine*, 315.

priorities or missional partners in the transformative agenda and work of TSA in New Zealand.

Underpinned by critical realist theory and using Braun and Clarke’s method of “Reflexive Thematic Analysis” in the qualitative section of the enquiry, six themes were identified. First, disability is not a disaster, but it can be made difficult by the misunderstanding of others. Secondly, authentic inclusion involves literal and metaphorical space. Thirdly, supporting people with complex disabilities takes time, presence and active appreciation. Fourthly, complex disability is chronic in nature. The routines associated with supporting disabled people are often unobserved and unrelenting. Fifthly, support by Salvation Army pastors is well-intentioned but lacks a framework to ensure consistency. The final theme notes that TSA has not yet recognised people with disabilities as a missional priority or partner. These themes and the sub-themes presented in the research, highlight areas in which a more comprehensive understanding of the notion of disability and the empowerment of people with disabilities are necessary.

The findings suggest that in order to be “The Army that Brings Life,” revised forms of practice are necessary. The framework outlined in this thesis, and presented in the form of a quilt, identifies how that revised practice might be shaped. It is a visual and easily transferable pattern for use within and beyond TSA. The framework consists of six main sections presented as faithful practice from the centre, faithful practice by the people, faithful practice oriented towards outcomes, faithful practice framed by collaboration, faithful practice attending to lived experience and faithful practice organised towards fullness of life in the present and the future.

This thesis began with the story of a young family attending TSA with two children who live with disabilities. Their experience was not a positive one. Participants who have contributed their stories to this research note a mixture of good and less helpful experiences. It is hoped that the findings, reflections and framework presented in this thesis help to ensure that other individuals and families experience fullness of life within the faith community of TSA in New Zealand and beyond.

Finally, scripture reminds us that practical wisdom is not the sole preserve of practical theologians or qualitative enquiries. Matthew 11:25 records Jesus as saying, “…I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.” Following a Sunday worship service in my home corps, a young boy, new to our congregation, approached me as I stood next to my son Samuel who was sitting in his wheelchair. The child paused for a moment looking us up and down and then simply stated, “How does he get that chair into the shower?” I smiled then; I smile today. This child spoke directly to the notion of seeing a person, before seeing a disability. To him, Sam would be needing a shower just like anybody else. The only difference was that we might need an alternative way to facilitate that outcome. Disability itself is not a disaster. How we respond to people who live with disabilities makes all the difference. Fullness of life is experienced in and through such wise encounters.

Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics Approval Letter

AUT
TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKAU RAU

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

Auckland University of Technology
D-88, Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142, NZ
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316
E: ethics@aut.ac.nz
www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

29 August 2019

Stephen Garner
Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Stephen

Re Ethics Application: **19/247 Experiencing fullness of life? People with complex disability in Salvation Army congregations in New Zealand**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 28 August 2022.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research and as approved by AUTEC in this application.
2. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using the EA2 form.
3. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using the EA3 form.
4. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form.
5. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
6. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
7. It is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management approval for access for your research from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted. When the research is undertaken outside New Zealand, you need to meet all ethical, legal, and locality obligations or requirements for those jurisdictions.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

For any enquiries please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz. The forms mentioned above are available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics

Yours sincerely,

Kate O'Connor
Executive Manager
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: cmbridle@yahoo.co.nz; Kate Diesfeld

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheets

Participant Information Sheet: Person with a Complex Disability (Easy Read Version)

Date Information Sheet Produced: August 29, 2019

Project Title

"Experiencing Fullness of Life? People with Complex Disabilities in Salvation Army Congregations in New Zealand."

An Introduction

My name is Coralie Bridle. I am a researcher from Auckland University of Technology and Laidlaw College.

My Study

I want to learn about how the Salvation Army church has supported you.

I want to find out what things have made you feel part of the church there.

I also want to find out what things have been difficult.

An Invitation

I would like to meet with you.

In this meeting I would listen to you talk about your experiences.

What I learn from you might help improve things for disabled people in the Salvation Army**.**

What do I need to do to take part?

Please read this sheet carefully, or ask someone to read it with you.

If you want to take part, Coralie will come and see you to explain the study.

If you want to, you can have someone with you to help you understand.

Then you will need to sign a consent form.

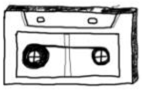
You do not have to take part if you do not want to.

What will happen during our meeting?

Coralie will come to your house or wherever you feel comfortable.

The meeting will take around 1.5 hours.

There will be time for introductions, talking, and rest breaks.



Coralie will record what you say, so that she can write it up and look at it later.

This means that your voice is recorded and we cannot remove your words afterwards.

You can turn off the recorder anytime.

You do not have to talk about anything you do not want to.

You can have a support person with you.

They will need to sign a form saying they will not talk about what you say.

Your real name will not be used in Coralie's notes.

Taking part is your choice.

Talking to Coralie is your choice.

Talk to you family, whanau, friends about this.

You are free to change your mind.

Once Coralie has written up her notes, she cannot remove your words.

What might be hard about taking part?

It might be hard to talk about when people have let you down.

It might be tiring to answer Coralie's questions.

What will make it easier?

You can take breaks whenever you need to.

Coralie will make sure you have support people to talk to.

This could be a support worker, a friend, a counsellor, or another person you prefer.

What are the good things about taking part?

You will get a chance to talk about your experiences.

You will have important information to share.

Your information may help other people.

What happens if I do not want to be part of the study?

Nothing bad will happen.

If you do not want to take part it is up to you.

No one can tell you that you have to take part in the study.

It would be great if you could let Coralie know if you would like to take part.

You can ring her on the telephone number below.

You can ask your family member, or support worker, to contact Coralie.

If you want to take part, she needs to know by October 9th.

Will I be paid for taking part in the study?

There is no payment for taking part in the study.

AUT and The Salvation Army have given Coralie some money to help with her study costs.

How will my privacy be protected?

Coralie will make sure that anything we report or tell others will not identify you.

Your name will be changed on the notes.

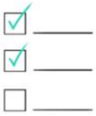
The notes will be locked away.

After 6 years, all of the notes will be carefully thrown away.

Only Coralie, her supervisors, and the person who types up the notes will hear, or read, what you say.

You can read the notes Coralie writes up.

You can ask her to change anything you want her to change.



Please keep this Information Sheet.

Please keep a copy of the Consent Form.

The only time I might tell anyone else what you have told me, is if I think someone might be in danger.

Will it cost me anything to be in this study?

It will not cost you any money to participate.

It will take up some of your time. (1.5 hours)

Coralie might also need to telephone you after the interview if she needs to check anything.

Will you tell me what you find?

Coralie will be happy to meet with you after the study to talk to you about what she found.

She can also send you a written summary.

She can also send you a video message about what she found.

Thank-you for thinking about taking part in this study.

Who do I contact if I want to know more about the research?

Coralie Bridle, [redacted] mobile phone [redacted]

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

If you have any worries about the project you can contact the supervisors:

Dr Stephen Garner, sgarner@laidlaw.ac.nz, phone (09) 8367800, ext. 855.
or

Prof Kate Diesfeld (JD), kate.diesfeld@aut.ac.nz, phone (09) 921 999 ext 7837.

Or if you have concerns about how the research is being conducted you can contact the Executive Secretary of AUTEC.

Kate O'Connor, ethics@aut.ac.nz, phone 09 921 9999 ext. 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Researcher Contact Details:

Coralie Bridle, [redacted] mobile phone [redacted]

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Dr Stephen Garner, sgarner@laidlaw.ac.nz, phone (09) 8367800, ext. 855.

Prof Kate Diesfeld (JD), kate.diesfeld@aut.ac.nz, phone (09) 921 999 ext 7837.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on August 29, 2019. AUTEC Reference number 19/247.

TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKAU RAU

Participant Information Sheet: Person with a Complex Disability.

Date Information Sheet Produced:

August 29, 2019.

Project Title

"Experiencing Fullness of Life? People with Complex Disabilities in Salvation Army Congregations in New Zealand."

An Invitation

You are invited to participate in a research project looking at the experiences of persons with complex disability who are part of Salvation Army congregations in New Zealand. This research project is for the completion of a Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD).

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can withdraw at any point prior to an interview you may have, or up to the point that the interview data has been analysed.

What is the purpose of this research?

To date there is little research into the experience of people with complex disabilities, or their significant others, within the church community of the Salvation Army in New Zealand. This study will examine to what extent the Salvation Army is a place of welcome, inclusion, and ministry for people with complex disabilities.

It is anticipated that the findings of the research might inform best practice, in relation to people living with complex disabilities, for the Salvation Army in the future.

The findings of this research may also be used for academic publications and presentations.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You have been identified by responding to the advertisement sent to your local Salvation Army congregation. You are being invited to participate because you are a person who lives with a complex disability and attends a Salvation Army church. To be part of this study you must be over 18 years, speak English, and have attended a Salvation Army church within the past 2 years. Advertisements for this study have been distributed via The Salvation Army Intranet by the Territorial Governance Board.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

If you are interested in taking part in the study or obtaining further information about the study you may contact:

Coralie Bridle, [redacted] or [redacted]

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been analysed, removal of your data will not be possible.

What will happen in this research?

If you choose to take part in the research this will involve a face to face interview with the researcher at a time and place convenient for you.

The interview will take approximately 90 minutes. Questions will be asked about your experiences within the Salvation Army, as a person with complex disabilities. In particular, you might be asked about how accessible the Salvation Army is, what are some of the barriers to belonging that you have encountered, what emotional, psychological or theological barriers you have experienced, and how might those barriers be diminished?

With your permission, the interview will be taped-recorded. The researcher may also take notes during the interview. The interviews will then be transcribed by a transcriber. You will be given a copy of the transcript to read and verify. The content of the interviews will later inform two focus group discussions.

What are the discomforts and risks?

It may be that the interview will bring up events or experiences that are upsetting for you. You may ask for the interview to either be ended at this point, or stopped and resumed at a later time.

AUT Health Counselling and Wellbeing is able to offer three free sessions of confidential counselling support for adult participants in an AUT research project. These sessions are only available for issues that have arisen directly as a result of participation in the research, and are not for other general counselling needs. To access these services, you will need to:

- drop into our centres at WB219 or AS104 or phone 921 9992 City Campus or 921 9998 North Shore campus to make an appointment. Appointments for South Campus can be made by calling 921 9992
- let the receptionist know that you are a research participant, and provide the title of my research and my name and contact details as given in this Information Sheet

You can find out more information about AUT counsellors and counselling on http://www.aut.ac.nz/being-a-student/current-postgraduates/your-health-and-wellbeing/counselling.

For people living outside Auckland, details of alternative services such as Lifeline will be provided.

You may become tired during the interview. If this happens, you can ask to stop and have a break or to continue the interview at a later date.

What are the benefits?

It is not anticipated that there are direct benefits for you if you choose to participate. It is hoped that by sharing your lived experience, along with the future dissemination of the findings of this study, that others may benefit in the future.

It will contribute to the Researchers PhD qualification.

It is anticipated that The Salvation Army in New Zealand and internationally, along with other faith communities, might benefit from the research findings.

How will my privacy be protected?

For the purpose of the interview, you will be asked to give another name that you will be known by during the interview, on the transcripts, and in any publications or conference presentations that are produced from the study's findings.

Only the researcher, the researcher's supervisors, and the transcriber, will have access to the interview tapes and the transcripts. Once interviews have been transcribed you will have an opportunity to review your transcript and make revisions. All copies of these will be kept in a locked filing cabinet for six years. After this time, they will be destroyed. Any material that may identify you will be deleted from the transcript.

There are exceptions to confidentiality where information provided indicates the potential of serious risk of harm to self or others. In the event of this happening, the researcher will notify both Supervisors, the Police and/ or the Health and Disability Commissioner.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

There is no anticipated cost other than your time. This is anticipated to be an interview of 90 minutes and possibly one to two follow-up/ clarification phone calls.

The researcher has received financial assistance towards her studies from an AUT Vice Chancellor's Scholarship and from The Salvation Army's "Strategic Mission Fund."

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You will have two weeks to consider this invitation and to discuss the project with family/whanau, or a friend prior to signing the consent form. Approximately two weeks after you have been sent this information form I will telephone you to ask if you wish to be part of the study or not. You may contact me before this time if you prefer.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

As a participant, you will receive a summary of the research findings. If you request it, you will be sent a copy of the full thesis. A link to the thesis will be provided via email.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns about this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisors:

Dr Stephen Garner, sgarner@laidlaw.ac.nz, phone (09) 8367800, ext. 855. **or**

Prof Kate Diesfeld (JD), kate.diesfeld@aut.ac.nz, phone (09) 921 999 ext 7837.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, Kate O'Connor, ethics@aut.ac.nz, phone (09) 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details:

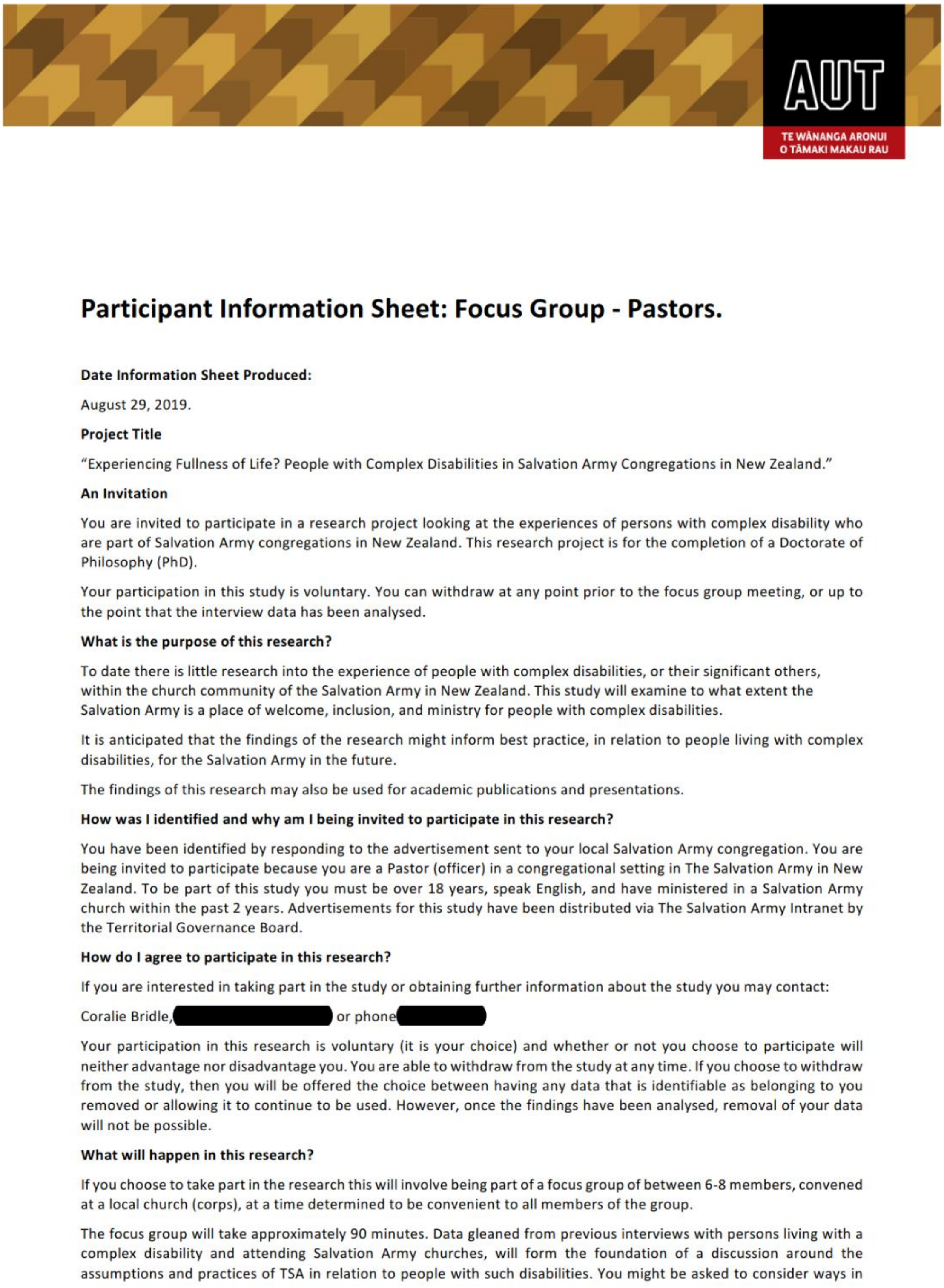
Coralie Bridle, [redacted] mobile [redacted]

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Dr Stephen Garner, sgarner@laidlaw.ac.nz, phone (09) 8367800, ext. 855.

Prof Kate Diesfeld (JD), kate.diesfeld@aut.ac.nz, phone (09) 921 999 ext 7837.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on August 29 2019, AUTEC Reference number 19/247.



Participant Information Sheet: Focus Group - Pastors.

Date Information Sheet Produced:

August 29, 2019.

Project Title

"Experiencing Fullness of Life? People with Complex Disabilities in Salvation Army Congregations in New Zealand."

An Invitation

You are invited to participate in a research project looking at the experiences of persons with complex disability who are part of Salvation Army congregations in New Zealand. This research project is for the completion of a Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD).

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can withdraw at any point prior to the focus group meeting, or up to the point that the interview data has been analysed.

What is the purpose of this research?

To date there is little research into the experience of people with complex disabilities, or their significant others, within the church community of the Salvation Army in New Zealand. This study will examine to what extent the Salvation Army is a place of welcome, inclusion, and ministry for people with complex disabilities.

It is anticipated that the findings of the research might inform best practice, in relation to people living with complex disabilities, for the Salvation Army in the future.

The findings of this research may also be used for academic publications and presentations.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You have been identified by responding to the advertisement sent to your local Salvation Army congregation. You are being invited to participate because you are a Pastor (officer) in a congregational setting in The Salvation Army in New Zealand. To be part of this study you must be over 18 years, speak English, and have ministered in a Salvation Army church within the past 2 years. Advertisements for this study have been distributed via The Salvation Army Intranet by the Territorial Governance Board.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

If you are interested in taking part in the study or obtaining further information about the study you may contact:

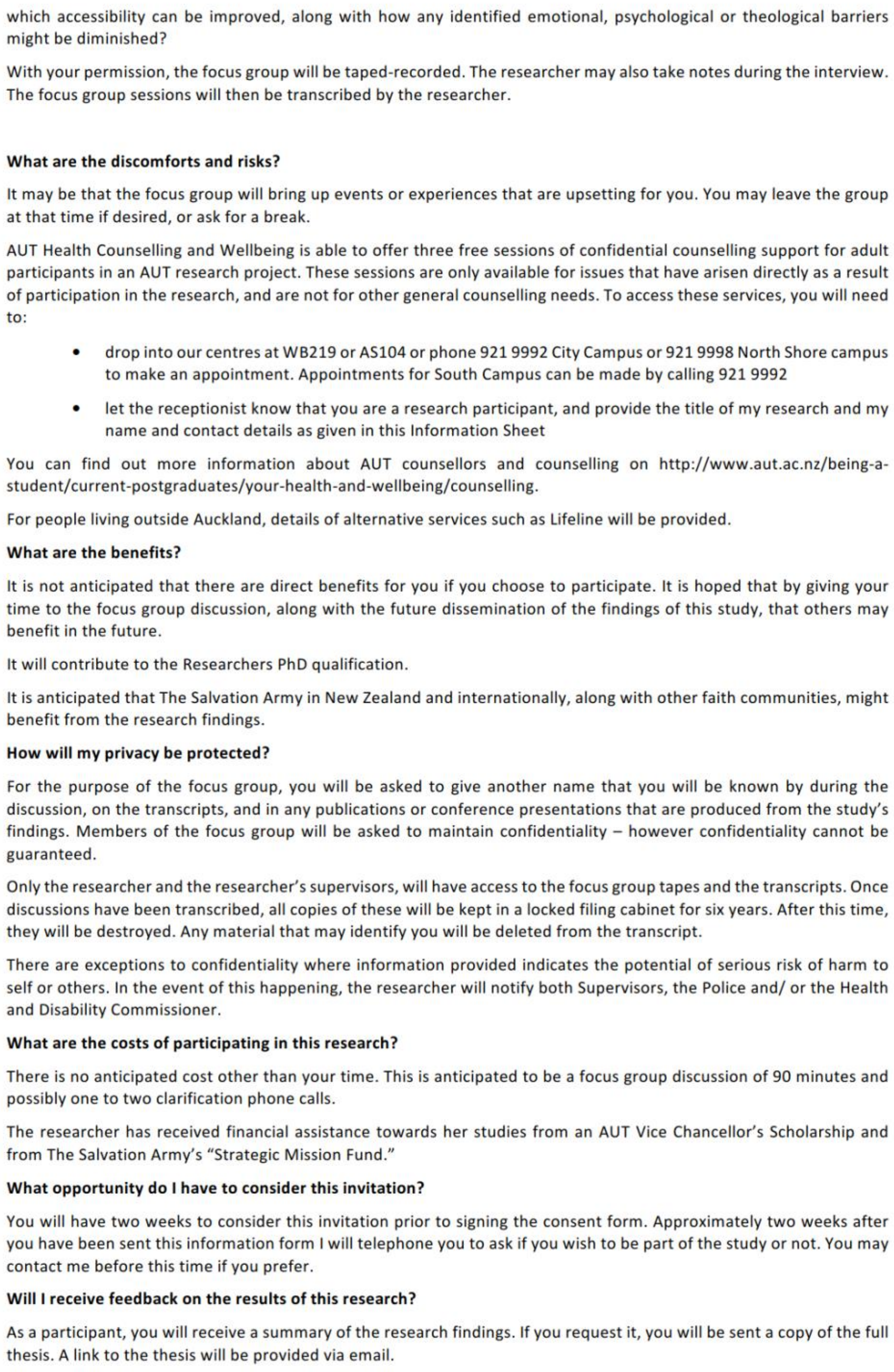
Coralie Bridle, [redacted] or phone [redacted]

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been analysed, removal of your data will not be possible.

What will happen in this research?

If you choose to take part in the research this will involve being part of a focus group of between 6-8 members, convened at a local church (corps), at a time determined to be convenient to all members of the group.

The focus group will take approximately 90 minutes. Data gleaned from previous interviews with persons living with a complex disability and attending Salvation Army churches, will form the foundation of a discussion around the assumptions and practices of TSA in relation to people with such disabilities. You might be asked to consider ways in



which accessibility can be improved, along with how any identified emotional, psychological or theological barriers might be diminished?

With your permission, the focus group will be taped-recorded. The researcher may also take notes during the interview. The focus group sessions will then be transcribed by the researcher.

What are the discomforts and risks?

It may be that the focus group will bring up events or experiences that are upsetting for you. You may leave the group at that time if desired, or ask for a break.

AUT Health Counselling and Wellbeing is able to offer three free sessions of confidential counselling support for adult participants in an AUT research project. These sessions are only available for issues that have arisen directly as a result of participation in the research, and are not for other general counselling needs. To access these services, you will need to:

- drop into our centres at WB219 or AS104 or phone 921 9992 City Campus or 921 9998 North Shore campus to make an appointment. Appointments for South Campus can be made by calling 921 9992
- let the receptionist know that you are a research participant, and provide the title of my research and my name and contact details as given in this Information Sheet

You can find out more information about AUT counsellors and counselling on http://www.aut.ac.nz/being-a-student/current-postgraduates/your-health-and-wellbeing/counselling.

For people living outside Auckland, details of alternative services such as Lifeline will be provided.

What are the benefits?

It is not anticipated that there are direct benefits for you if you choose to participate. It is hoped that by giving your time to the focus group discussion, along with the future dissemination of the findings of this study, that others may benefit in the future.

It will contribute to the Researchers PhD qualification.

It is anticipated that The Salvation Army in New Zealand and internationally, along with other faith communities, might benefit from the research findings.

How will my privacy be protected?

For the purpose of the focus group, you will be asked to give another name that you will be known by during the discussion, on the transcripts, and in any publications or conference presentations that are produced from the study's findings. Members of the focus group will be asked to maintain confidentiality – however confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

Only the researcher and the researcher's supervisors, will have access to the focus group tapes and the transcripts. Once discussions have been transcribed, all copies of these will be kept in a locked filing cabinet for six years. After this time, they will be destroyed. Any material that may identify you will be deleted from the transcript.

There are exceptions to confidentiality where information provided indicates the potential of serious risk of harm to self or others. In the event of this happening, the researcher will notify both Supervisors, the Police and/ or the Health and Disability Commissioner.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

There is no anticipated cost other than your time. This is anticipated to be a focus group discussion of 90 minutes and possibly one to two clarification phone calls.

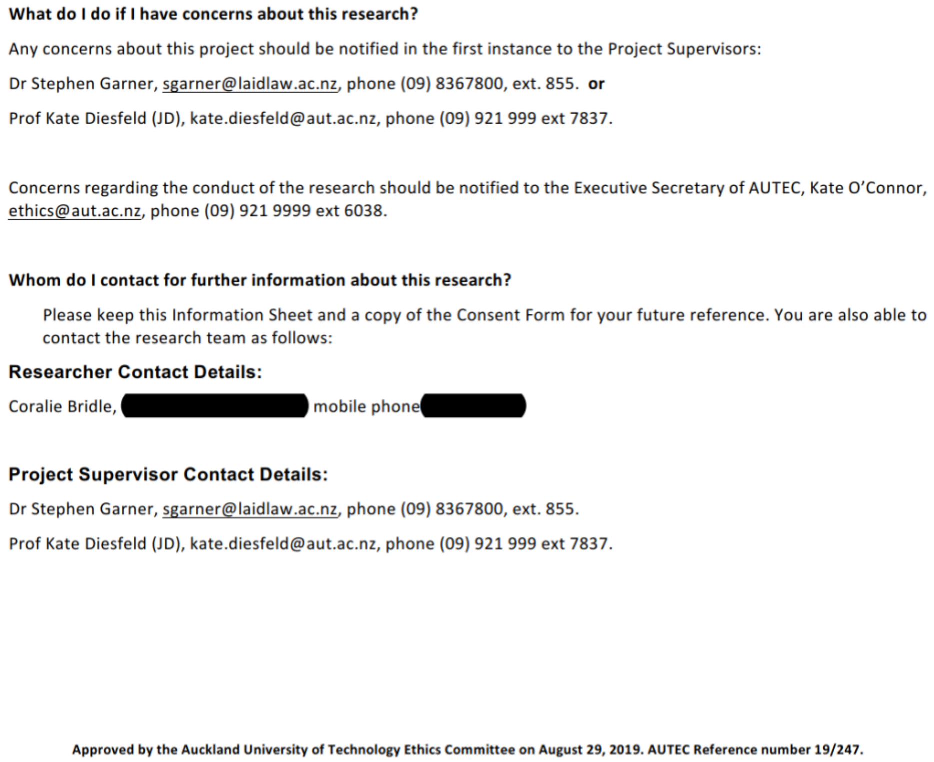
The researcher has received financial assistance towards her studies from an AUT Vice Chancellor's Scholarship and from The Salvation Army's "Strategic Mission Fund."

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You will have two weeks to consider this invitation prior to signing the consent form. Approximately two weeks after you have been sent this information form I will telephone you to ask if you wish to be part of the study or not. You may contact me before this time if you prefer.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

As a participant, you will receive a summary of the research findings. If you request it, you will be sent a copy of the full thesis. A link to the thesis will be provided via email.



What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns about this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisors:

Dr Stephen Garner, sgarner@laidlaw.ac.nz, phone (09) 8367800, ext. 855. **or**

Prof Kate Diesfeld (JD), kate.diesfeld@aut.ac.nz, phone (09) 921 999 ext 7837.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, Kate O'Connor, ethics@aut.ac.nz, phone (09) 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details:

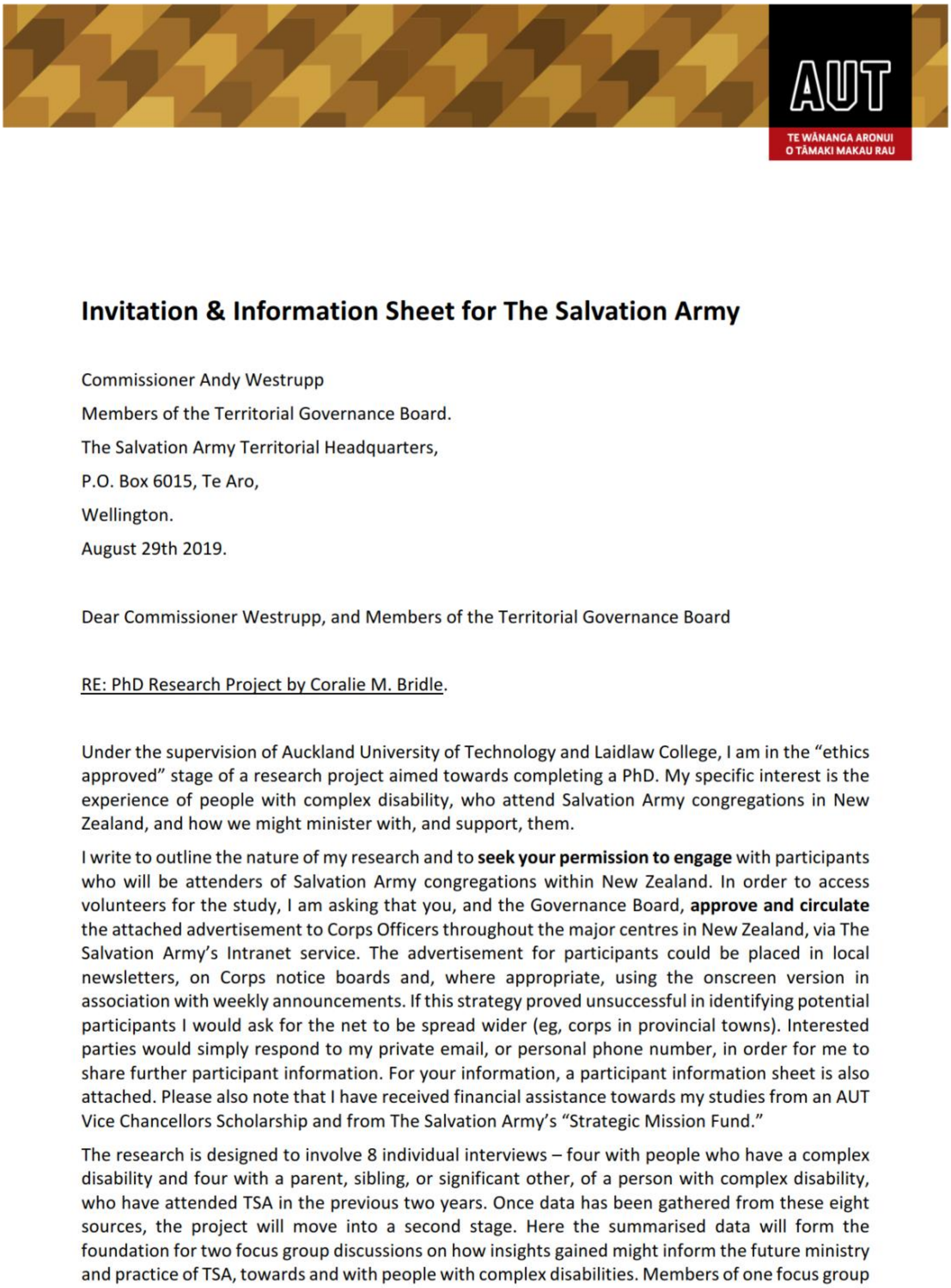
Coralie Bridle, [redacted] mobile phone [redacted]

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Dr Stephen Garner, sgarner@laidlaw.ac.nz, phone (09) 8367800, ext. 855.

Prof Kate Diesfeld (JD), kate.diesfeld@aut.ac.nz, phone (09) 921 999 ext 7837.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on August 29, 2019. AUTEC Reference number 19/247.



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Invitation & Information Sheet for The Salvation Army

Commissioner Andy Westrupp
Members of the Territorial Governance Board.
The Salvation Army Territorial Headquarters,
P.O. Box 6015, Te Aro,
Wellington.
August 29th 2019.

Dear Commissioner Westrupp, and Members of the Territorial Governance Board

RE: PhD Research Project by Coralie M. Bridle.

Under the supervision of Auckland University of Technology and Laidlaw College, I am in the "ethics approved" stage of a research project aimed towards completing a PhD. My specific interest is the experience of people with complex disability, who attend Salvation Army congregations in New Zealand, and how we might minister with, and support, them.

I write to outline the nature of my research and to **seek your permission to engage** with participants who will be attenders of Salvation Army congregations within New Zealand. In order to access volunteers for the study, I am asking that you, and the Governance Board, **approve and circulate** the attached advertisement to Corps Officers throughout the major centres in New Zealand, via The Salvation Army's Intranet service. The advertisement for participants could be placed in local newsletters, on Corps notice boards and, where appropriate, using the onscreen version in association with weekly announcements. If this strategy proved unsuccessful in identifying potential participants I would ask for the net to be spread wider (eg, corps in provincial towns). Interested parties would simply respond to my private email, or personal phone number, in order for me to share further participant information. For your information, a participant information sheet is also attached. Please also note that I have received financial assistance towards my studies from an AUT Vice Chancellors Scholarship and from The Salvation Army's "Strategic Mission Fund."

The research is designed to involve 8 individual interviews – four with people who have a complex disability and four with a parent, sibling, or significant other, of a person with complex disability, who have attended TSA in the previous two years. Once data has been gathered from these eight sources, the project will move into a second stage. Here the summarised data will form the foundation for two focus group discussions on how insights gained might inform the future ministry and practice of TSA, towards and with people with complex disabilities. Members of one focus group will be self-selected corps officers, and focus group two will be self-selected personnel from Booth College of Mission, leadership development, communication/media, and creative ministries/programme. Obviously, I need your **approval and circulation** to proceed with this half of the project as well.

What is the purpose of this research?

To date there is little research into the experience of people with complex disabilities, or their families, within the church community of the Salvation Army in New Zealand. Data outside The Salvation Army indicates that there can be a gap between church congregations' self-understanding as welcoming and inclusive, and the actual lived experience of people with disabilities. This study will examine to what extent the Salvation Army is a place of welcome, inclusion, and ministry for people with complex disabilities.

It is anticipated that the findings of the research might then inform best practice, in relation to people living with complex disabilities, for the Salvation Army in the future.

The findings of this research may also be used for academic publications and presentations.

What will happen in this research?

As already noted, I have attached a participant information sheet for your information, which includes details of potential risks and benefits of the research to individuals involved and comments regarding consent processes and confidentiality. I have also attached the proposed advertisement and individual consent forms.

I appreciate your consideration of this request and look forward to hearing from you with details regarding how and when I might proceed.

Kind Regards,

Coralie Bridle.

Researcher Contact Details: Coralie Bridle, [redacted] mobile phone [redacted]
[redacted]

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Dr Stephen Garner, sgarner@laidlaw.ac.nz, phone (09) 8367800, ext. 855.

Prof Kate Diesfeld (JD), kate.diesfeld@aut.ac.nz, phone (09) 921 999 ext 7837

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 29 August, 2019.

AUTEC Reference number 19/247.

Appendix C: Consent Forms

Participant's Signature: ....

Participant's Name: ....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

....

....

....

....

Date:..............................

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on August 29, 2019. AUTEC Reference number 19/247.

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

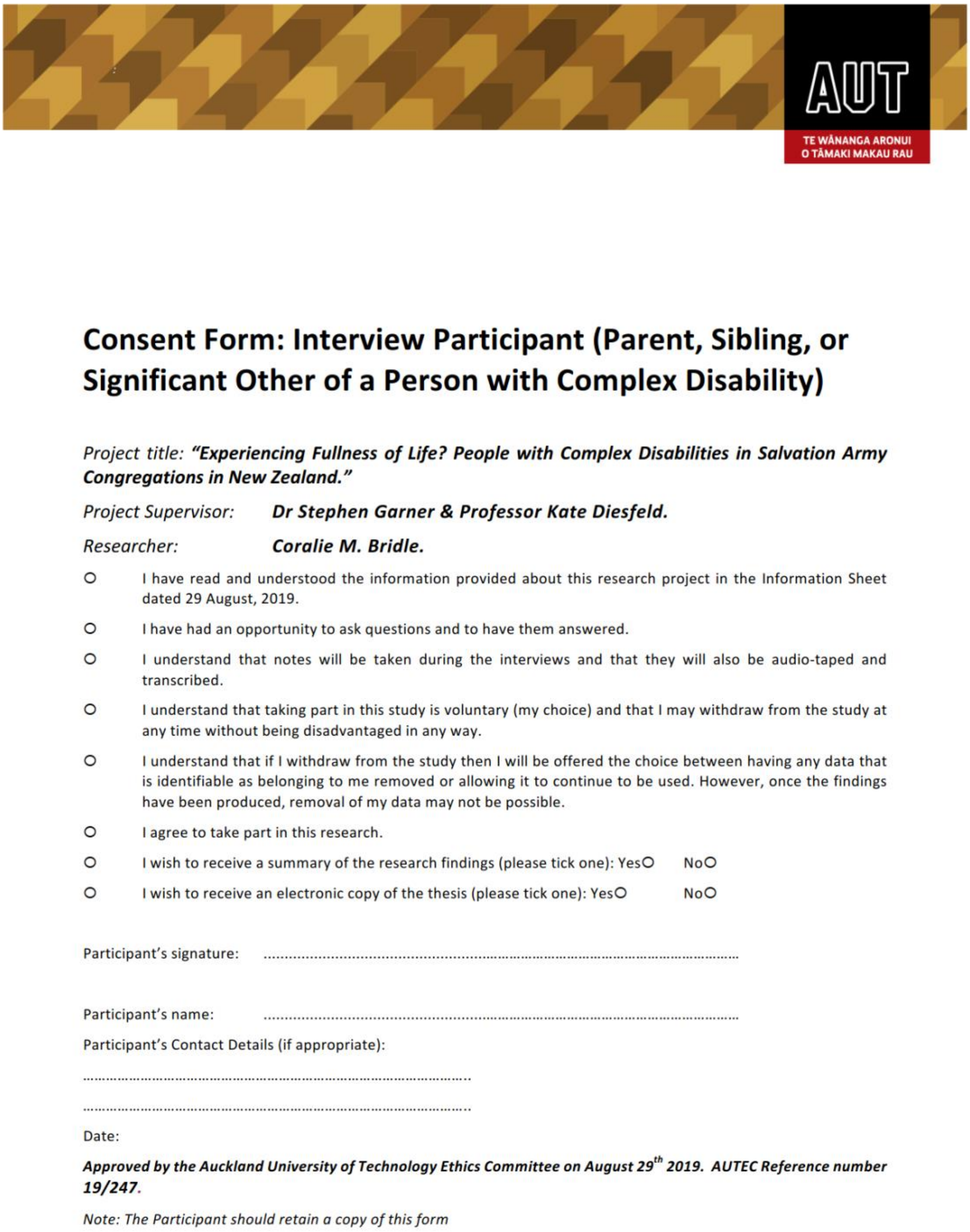
Consent Form: Interview Participant : Easy Read Version

Project Title: "Experiencing Fullness of Life? People with Complex Disabilities in Salvation Army Congregations in New Zealand."

Project Supervisors: Dr Stephen Garner & Prof Kate Diesfeld.

Researcher: Coralie M. Bridle.

- ○ I know what the study is about and have read the information sheet dated August 29th 2019.
- ○ I have asked any questions I needed to and have had them answered.
- ○ I know that the interviews will be recorded and notes taken which will be written up.
- ○ I know that I can change my mind about taking part at any time and it won't be held against me.
- ○ I know once the research is written up that what I said cannot be taken out.
- ○ I know that I can change my mind about particular things that I have shared but not after it is written up.
- ○ I want to talk to you.
- ○ I want to talk to you after the study is finished about what you find. (please tick one): Yes○ No○



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Consent Form: Interview Participant (Parent, Sibling, or Significant Other of a Person with Complex Disability)

Project title: ***"Experiencing Fullness of Life? People with Complex Disabilities in Salvation Army Congregations in New Zealand."***

Project Supervisor: ***Dr Stephen Garner & Professor Kate Diesfeld.***

Researcher: ***Coralie M. Bridle.***

○ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 29 August, 2019.

○ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.

○ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.

○ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.

○ I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.

○ I agree to take part in this research.

○ I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes○ No○

○ I wish to receive an electronic copy of the thesis (please tick one): Yes○ No○

Participant's signature: ....

Participant's name: ....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

………………………………………………………………………………………..

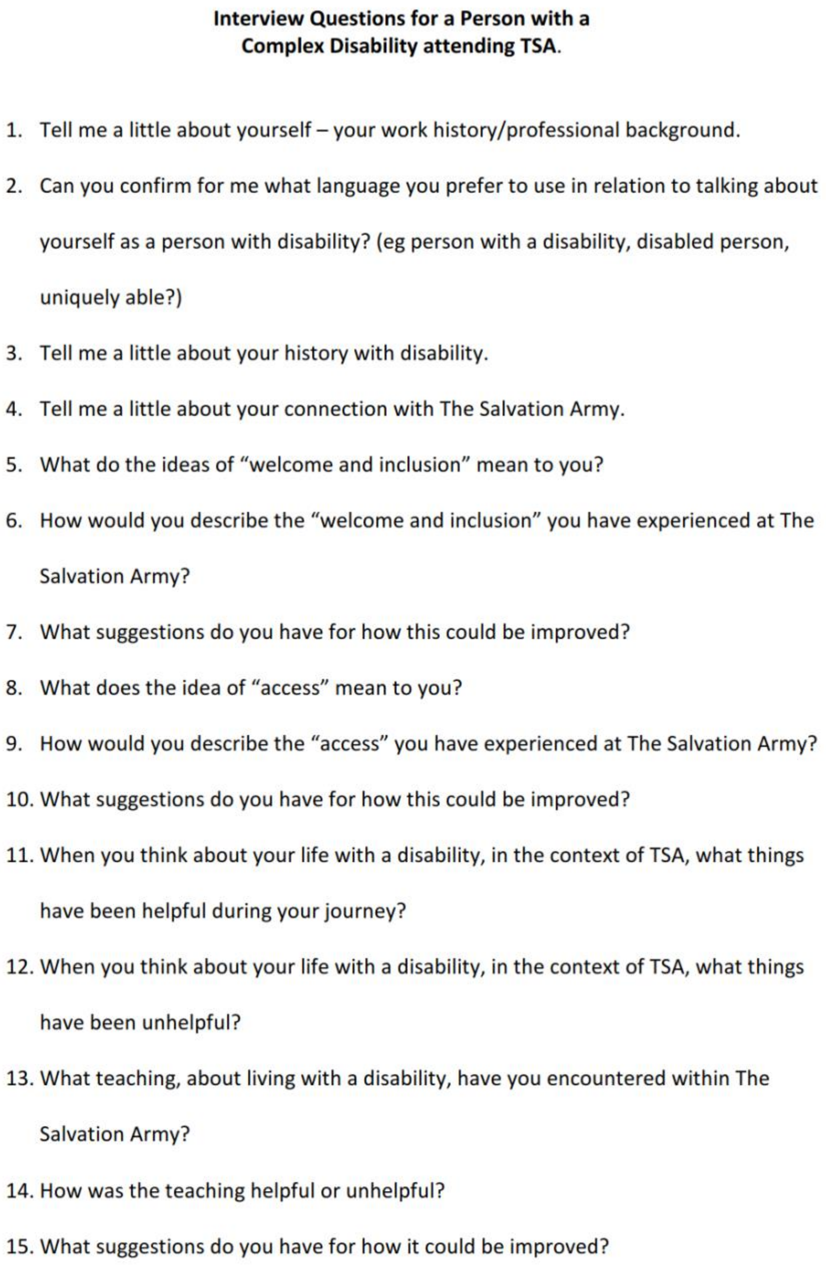
………………………………………………………………………………………..

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on August 29th 2019. AUTEC Reference number 19/247.

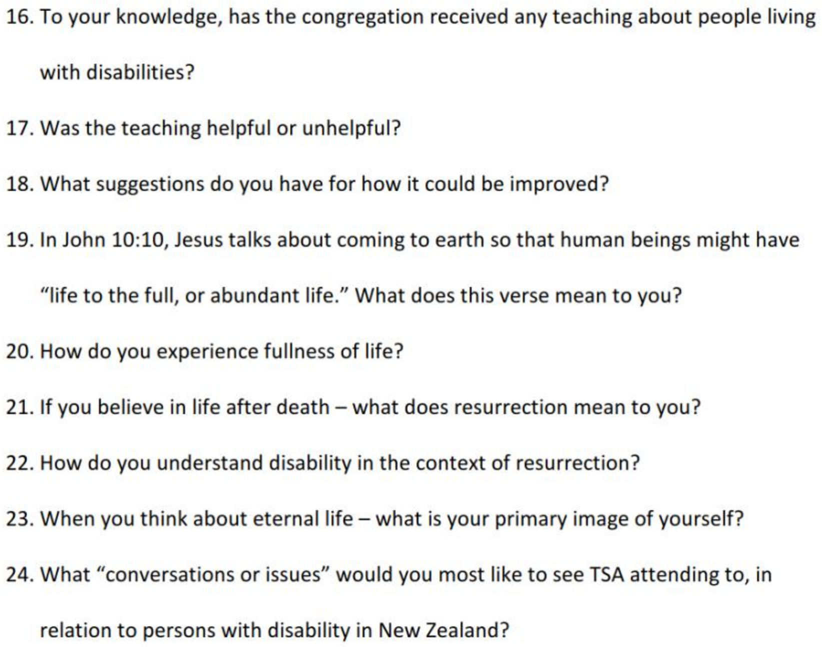
Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form

Appendix D: Interview Schedule

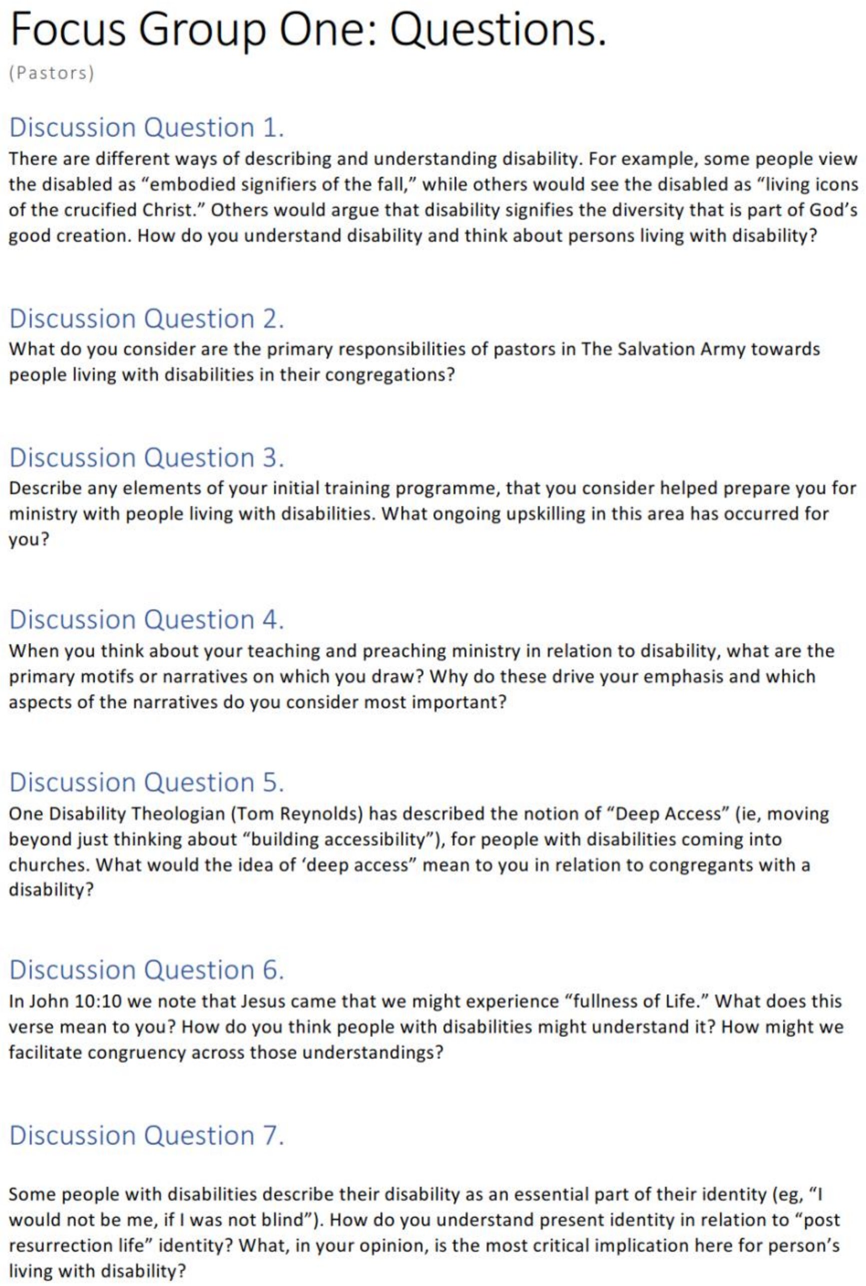


Interview Questions for a Person with a Complex Disability attending TSA.

1. Tell me a little about yourself – your work history/professional background.
2. Can you confirm for me what language you prefer to use in relation to talking about yourself as a person with disability? (eg person with a disability, disabled person, uniquely able?)
3. Tell me a little about your history with disability.
4. Tell me a little about your connection with The Salvation Army.
5. What do the ideas of "welcome and inclusion" mean to you?
6. How would you describe the "welcome and inclusion" you have experienced at The Salvation Army?
7. What suggestions do you have for how this could be improved?
8. What does the idea of "access" mean to you?
9. How would you describe the "access" you have experienced at The Salvation Army?
10. What suggestions do you have for how this could be improved?
11. When you think about your life with a disability, in the context of TSA, what things have been helpful during your journey?
12. When you think about your life with a disability, in the context of TSA, what things have been unhelpful?
13. What teaching, about living with a disability, have you encountered within The Salvation Army?
14. How was the teaching helpful or unhelpful?
15. What suggestions do you have for how it could be improved?



16. To your knowledge, has the congregation received any teaching about people living with disabilities?
17. Was the teaching helpful or unhelpful?
18. What suggestions do you have for how it could be improved?
19. In John 10:10, Jesus talks about coming to earth so that human beings might have "life to the full, or abundant life." What does this verse mean to you?
20. How do you experience fullness of life?
21. If you believe in life after death – what does resurrection mean to you?
22. How do you understand disability in the context of resurrection?
23. When you think about eternal life – what is your primary image of yourself?
24. What "conversations or issues" would you most like to see TSA attending to, in relation to persons with disability in New Zealand?



Focus Group One: Questions.

(Pastors)

Discussion Question 1.

There are different ways of describing and understanding disability. For example, some people view the disabled as “embodied signifiers of the fall,” while others would see the disabled as “living icons of the crucified Christ.” Others would argue that disability signifies the diversity that is part of God’s good creation. How do you understand disability and think about persons living with disability?

Discussion Question 2.

What do you consider are the primary responsibilities of pastors in The Salvation Army towards people living with disabilities in their congregations?

Discussion Question 3.

Describe any elements of your initial training programme, that you consider helped prepare you for ministry with people living with disabilities. What ongoing upskilling in this area has occurred for you?

Discussion Question 4.

When you think about your teaching and preaching ministry in relation to disability, what are the primary motifs or narratives on which you draw? Why do these drive your emphasis and which aspects of the narratives do you consider most important?

Discussion Question 5.

One Disability Theologian (Tom Reynolds) has described the notion of “Deep Access” (ie, moving beyond just thinking about “building accessibility”), for people with disabilities coming into churches. What would the idea of ‘deep access” mean to you in relation to congregants with a disability?

Discussion Question 6.

In John 10:10 we note that Jesus came that we might experience “fullness of Life.” What does this verse mean to you? How do you think people with disabilities might understand it? How might we facilitate congruency across those understandings?

Discussion Question 7.

Some people with disabilities describe their disability as an essential part of their identity (eg, “I would not be me, if I was not blind”). How do you understand present identity in relation to “post resurrection life” identity? What, in your opinion, is the most critical implication here for person’s living with disability?

Appendix E: The Salvation Army Doctrines

THE DOCTRINES OF THE SALVATION ARMY

1. We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, and that they only constitute the Divine rule of Christian faith and practice.
2. We believe that there is only one God, who is infinitely perfect, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things, and who is the only proper object of religious worship.
3. We believe that there are three persons in the Godhead – the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, undivided in essence and co-equal in power and glory.
4. We believe that in the person of Jesus Christ the Divine and human natures are united, so that He is truly and properly God and truly and properly man.
5. We believe that our first parents were created in a state of innocency, but by their disobedience they lost their purity and happiness, and that in consequence of their fall all men have become sinners, totally depraved, and as such are justly exposed to the wrath of God.
6. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has by His suffering and death made an atonement for the whole world so that whosoever will may be saved.
7. We believe that repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and regeneration by the Holy Spirit, are necessary to salvation.
8. We believe that we are justified by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and that he that believeth hath the witness in himself.
9. We believe that continuance in a state of salvation depends upon continued obedient faith in Christ.
10. We believe that it is the privilege of all believers to be wholly sanctified, and that their whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
11. We believe in the immortality of the soul; in the resurrection of the body; in the general judgment at the end of the world; in the eternal happiness of the righteousness; and in the endless punishment of the wicked.

Appendix F: The Salvation Army Covenants

SALVATION ARMY COVENANTS

Soldier's Covenant:

Having accepted Jesus Christ as my Saviour and Lord, and desiring to fulfil my membership in His Church on earth as a soldier of The Salvation Army, I now by God's grace enter into a sacred covenant. I believe and will live by the truths of the word of God expressed in The Salvation Army's eleven Articles of Faith:

We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God; and that they only constitute the Divine rule of Christian faith and practice.

We believe that there is only one God, who is infinitely perfect, the Creator, Preserver and Governor of all things, and who is the only proper object of religious worship. We believe that there are three persons in the Godhead – the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost – undivided in essence and co-equal in power and glory.

We believe that in the person of Jesus Christ the Divine and human natures are united, so that He is truly and properly God and truly and properly man.

We believe that our first parents were created in a state of innocency, but by their disobedience they lost their purity and happiness; and that in consequence of their fall all men have become sinners, totally depraved, and as such are justly exposed to the wrath of God.

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has, by His suffering and death, made an atonement for the whole world so that whosoever will may be saved.

We believe that repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and regeneration by the Holy Spirit are necessary to salvation.

We believe that we are justified by grace, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and that he that believeth hath the witness in himself.

We believe that continuance in a state of salvation depends upon continued obedient faith in Christ.

We believe that it is the privilege of all believers to be wholly sanctified, and that their whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We believe in the immortality of the soul, in the resurrection of the body, in the general judgment at the end of the world; in the eternal happiness of the righteous; and in the endless punishment of the wicked.

I will be responsive to the Holy Spirit's work and obedient to His leading in my life, growing in grace through worship, prayer, service and the reading of the Bible. I will make the values of the Kingdom of God and not the values of the world the standard for my life.

I will uphold Christian integrity in every area of my life, allowing nothing in thought, word or deed that is unworthy, unclean, untrue, profane, dishonest or immoral.

I will maintain Christian ideals in all my relationships with others, my family and neighbours, my colleagues and fellow Salvationists, those to whom and for whom I am responsible and the wider community.

I will uphold the sanctity of marriage and of family life. I will be a faithful steward of my time and gifts, my money and possessions, my body, my mind and my spirit, knowing that I am accountable to God.

I will abstain from alcoholic drink, tobacco, the non-medical use of addictive drugs, gambling, pornography, the occult and all else that could enslave the body or spirit. I will be faithful to the purposes for which God raised up The Salvation Army, sharing the good news of Jesus Christ, endeavouring to win others to Him, and in His name caring for the needy and the disadvantaged.

I will actively be involved as I am able, in the life, work, worship and witness of the corps, giving as large a proportion of my income as possible to support its ministries and the worldwide work of the Army.

I will be true to the principles and practices of The Salvation Army, loyal to its leaders, and I will show the spirit of Salvationism whether in time of popularity or persecution.

I now call upon all present to witness that I enter into this covenant and sign these article of war of my own free will, convinced that the love of Christ, who died and lives to save me, requires from me this devotion of my life to His service for the salvation of the whole world; and therefore do here declare my full determination, by God’s help, to be a true soldier of The Salvation Army.

Officer’s Covenant:

Called by God to proclaim the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as an officer of The Salvation Army, I bind myself to him in this solemn covenant:

To love and serve Him supremely all my days,
To live to win souls and make their salvation the first purpose of my life,
To care for the poor, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, love the unloved, and befriend those who have no friends,
To maintain the doctrines and principles of The Salvation Army, and, by God’s grace, to prove myself a worthy Officer.
Done in the strength of my Lord and Saviour, and in the presence of the Territorial Commander, Training College Officers and fellow Cadets.

Appendix G: The Salvation Army International Position Statement – Disabilities

International Positional Statement – Disabilities

STATEMENT OF POSITION

All people are made in the image of God and are of equal intrinsic value. Thus, The Salvation Army celebrates difference and seeks to treat all people with dignity and respect.

Many people around the world experience discrimination due to disabilities. The reality ranges from stigma or negative attitudes to deeply engrained and systemic exclusion. The Salvation Army's response is to go beyond minimum national legal requirements and to make it possible for persons with disabilities to be fully included and to flourish.

We know less of who God is and how God appears in the world when people with disabilities are excluded. Inclusion is beneficial for everyone. Diversity within our communities and congregations strengthens us and shapes our mission and ministry. The aim of all Salvationist practice is to ensure that we are a church that makes the embodied gospel accessible for all.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Disability is an historical, contemporary, cultural and global reality. It is estimated that approximately one billion people live with a disability.[1] People with disabilities continue to face oppression in terms of injustice, economic deprivation, abuse, stigmatisation and discrimination. In some contexts, women with disabilities are multiply disadvantaged, many children with disabilities do not attend school, and children with disabilities may die at four times the rate of others. In many parts of the world, disability legislation does not exist.[2]

The word 'disability' can be understood as an umbrella term that includes both personal impairments,[3] and the societal restrictions experienced by people living with a disability. In general, 'impairment' is understood in medical terms and 'disability' as an expression of the exclusion between people living with disabilities and wider society. Disability is thus not just a health problem. It is a complex phenomenon, reflecting the interaction between features of a person’s whole being (body and mind) and features of the society in which he or she lives.[4]

Numerous causes for the global reality of disability can be identified. These include, but are not limited to, accidents, poverty, injuries related to war and violence, pollution, cultural practices, birth defects, ageing and degenerative diseases. Addressing the difficulties faced by people with disabilities requires a combination of medical, social, environmental and cultural interventions.

Language plays a significant role in shaping narratives around disability, and there are differences regarding how people with disabilities self-identify. In seeking to communicate the depth of our desire for inclusion, The Salvation Army strives to use the term ‘persons with disabilities’, an example of ‘people-first’ language, intended to highlight personhood first rather than the condition of the person.[5]

Among others, three commonly understood models of disability help us understand and respond to the reality of disability. For example, the Medical Model organises disability around the themes of medical intervention, cure, rehabilitation services and personal limitation. The Social Model understands disability as limitation or disadvantage caused by societal structures and attitudes, while the Cultural Model highlights the interaction of various notions of disability within a given cultural setting. Meaning is then attributed to disability from within, or across cultural traditions. In some cultural settings people with disabilities are considered less than human, or are considered to be disabled because of evil spirits, curses or sins.[6]

Various international bodies are involved in the pursuit of improved outcomes for people living with disabilities. In 2008, the United Nations (UN) ‘Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities’ was ratified by 157 countries. Amongst other things it promotes respect for the inherent dignity of people with disabilities. In looking towards 2030 and addressing global challenges while seeking to ‘leave no-one behind,’ many of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals speak directly to the difficulties encountered by people living with disabilities.[7] The World Council of Churches also signals the marginalisation that people with disabilities experience within the church itself and calls for ‘A Church of All and for All’.[8]

GROUNDS FOR THE POSITION OF THE SALVATION ARMY

All human beings are created in God’s own image, uniquely reflecting God’s nature and character (Genesis 1:27-31). God’s creation is signified by diversity and that diversity is good (Genesis 1:31; Psalm 8). God loves and values every person, giving each one equal dignity and worth, and commanding us to love and value each other.

The Bible tells the story of a God who values those who are outcast, powerless and weak in the eyes of society. While reflecting the context of its day, scripture recognises the real experience of exclusion that can result from disability (Luke 17:11-19). The Bible acknowledges pain and hardship as a part of the human condition (e.g. in the Book of Job). Paul states that when we are weak, God makes us strong (2 Corinthians 12:9). Jesus showed compassion for people with disabilities (Mark 1:41, Matthew 9:20-25) and urged his followers to do likewise (Luke 14:12-14). He corrected the assumption that disability was caused by the sin of a person or their parents (John 9:1-3), and he challenged social stigma by touching and eating with the socially marginalised (Matthew 9:27-30; Luke 19:1-10). God’s creative intention is that we are fulfilled in community, living in relationship with God and each other. Paul described the community of the Church as a body, stating that ‘those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable’(1 Corinthians 12:22 NIV). The perceived weaker members help to shape our knowledge of God, and without them we are less. In order to know God more fully, everyone needs to be fully included. The gift of being is profound. It is only together with all the saints that we can comprehend the love of God (Ephesians 3:18).

In its international mission statement, The Salvation Army declares it will meet human needs in the name of Jesus ‘without discrimination’.[9] The Handbook of Doctrine describes the ideal of The Salvation Army’s third doctrine as ‘God-in-community who reaches out to create community. It is the very basis of the inclusive gospel. From its beginning, The Salvation Army has consistently proclaimed this gospel, calling people of all nations to respond to the love of God. We seek to include and welcome into the family of God those who feel themselves to be excluded from society.’[10] It is the aim of all Salvationist practice to create communities ‘which reflect the inclusiveness, genuine acceptance and mutual love of the triune God.’[11] It follows that we are not a complete church if people with disabilities are not among us.

PRACTICAL RESPONSES

The Salvation Army recognises the contribution of those actively engaged in addressing issues of ignorance, neglect or discrimination against people living with a disability. One of the primary desires of people living with observable or invisible disabilities is to be treated as ordinary human beings, created in God's image and called to dwell in mutually supportive communities. In most instances, to respond to this desire will require a collective shift in attitudes of both heart and mind. Such attitudes and responses can be promoted, modelled and taught, to a certain extent. The goal of any response should be to eliminate a dividing line between 'us' and 'them'. Drawing on its theological understanding of God's view of people with disabilities, The Salvation Army notes the following:

1. The Salvation Army recognises the breadth of international advocacy regarding the human rights of people with disabilities, and seeks to better contribute to that advocacy, particularly in regard to the elimination of poverty and discrimination towards people with disabilities.
2. The Salvation Army embraces, promotes and models an understanding of persons with disabilities as people created in the image of God, with a unique and invaluable contribution to make in all aspects of life in community.
3. The Salvation Army fosters reciprocal ministry rather than the temporarily able-bodied ministering to people with disabilities. We are stronger together when we integrate every person into every fibre of our worship and mission.
4. The Salvation Army seeks the engagement, consultation and active involvement of people with disability when developing and framing general Salvation Army policies, human resource policies, as well as those specific to disability.
5. The Salvation Army acknowledges that the following aspects and considerations in relation to disabilities are a necessary part of its ongoing commitment to enabling
all of God's children to flourish within the body of Christ:

- Raising awareness.
- Engaging in specific training
- Employing universal building design
- Embracing recognised 'best practice' communication preferences and initiatives.

6. The Salvation Army community is encouraged to have a greater understanding of the interdependence and mutuality inherent in supporting each other through

> the journey of life. We seek to respect the autonomy and self-determination of all people.

Endnotes

1. www.worldbank.org/en/topic/disability

2. www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/resources/factsheet-on-persons-with-disabilities.html

3. WHO, International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (Geneva WHO, 2001), 10. ‘Impairments are problems in body function or structure such as a significant deviation or loss.’

4. Article 1 of the ‘United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities’ states, ‘Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.’https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/ article-1-purpose.html

5. People-first language, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ People-first_language

6. United Nations Division for Social Policy Development Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Toolkit on Disability for Africa: Culture, Beliefs, and Disability, p.5. https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/disability/ Toolkit/Cultures-Beliefs-Disability.pdf

7. www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable- development-goals/, in particular #8 and #10

8. World Council of Churches, Gift of Being: Called to be a Church of All and for All, https://www.oikoumene.org/ en/resources/documents/central-committee/2016/the- gift-of-being; World Council of Churches, 14 October 2014 Churches to be more inclusive of persons with disabilities [press release] www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/ churches-to-be-more-inclusive-of-persons-with-disabilities

9. https://www.salvationarmy.org/ihq/Mission

10. The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine (2010), p. 75

11. Ibid, p. 76

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Brock, Brian, *Wondrously Wounded: Theology, Disability, and the Body of Christ,* Baylor University Press, Waco, Texas, 2019.

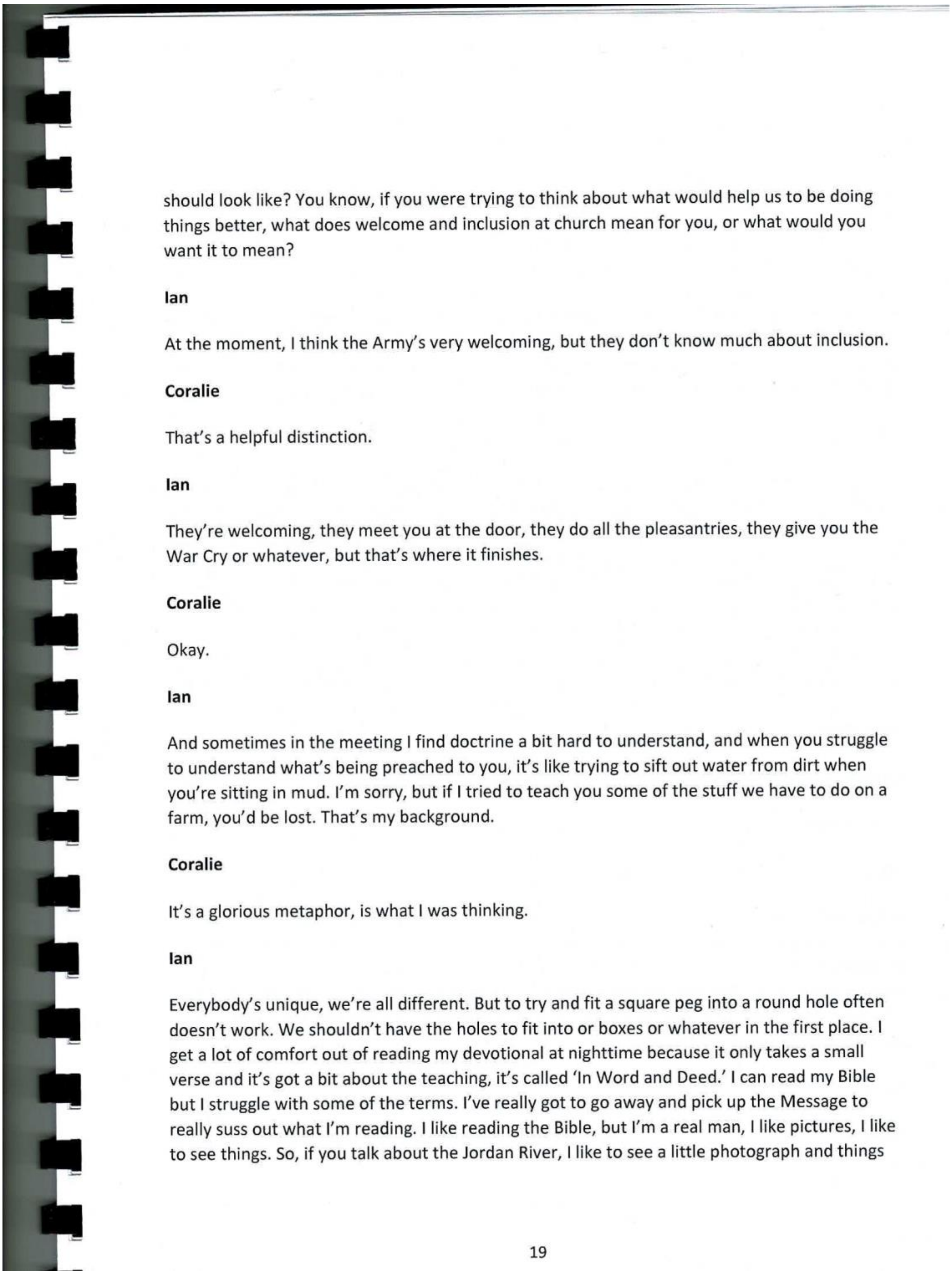
Shurley, Anna Katherine, *Pastoral Care and Intellectual Disability: A Person-Centered Approach,* Baylor University Press, Waco, Texas, 2017.

Solevåg, Anna Rebecca, *Negotiating the Disabled Body: Representations of Disability in Early Christian Texts,* SBL Press, Atlanta, Georgia, 2018.

Yong, Amos, *The Bible, Disability, and the Church: A New Vision of the People of God,*
Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2011.

DATE ISSUED: October 2020 (IHQ, London)

Appendix H: Audit Trail



should look like? You know, if you were trying to think about what would help us to be doing things better, what does welcome and inclusion at church mean for you, or what would you want it to mean?

Ian

At the moment, I think the Army's very welcoming, but they don't know much about inclusion.

Coralie

That's a helpful distinction.

Ian

They're welcoming, they meet you at the door, they do all the pleasantries, they give you the War Cry or whatever, but that's where it finishes.

Coralie

Okay.

Ian

And sometimes in the meeting I find doctrine a bit hard to understand, and when you struggle to understand what's being preached to you, it's like trying to sift out water from dirt when you're sitting in mud. I'm sorry, but if I tried to teach you some of the stuff we have to do on a farm, you'd be lost. That's my background.

Coralie

It's a glorious metaphor, is what I was thinking.

Ian

Everybody's unique, we're all different. But to try and fit a square peg into a round hole often doesn't work. We shouldn't have the holes to fit into or boxes or whatever in the first place. I get a lot of comfort out of reading my devotional at nighttime because it only takes a small verse and it's got a bit about the teaching, it's called 'In Word and Deed.' I can read my Bible but I struggle with some of the terms. I've really got to go away and pick up the Message to really suss out what I'm reading. I like reading the Bible, but I'm a real man, I like pictures, I like to see things. So, if you talk about the Jordan River, I like to see a little photograph and things saying about Grace because it's not just about Grace, but this is what we've been dealt with and this is our life, but there's certain things our kids probably missed out on because we couldn't do-because of Grace. There's certain things my kids have gained because of Grace.

Coralie

Can you just mention what some of those things are that they've gained?

Greg

Compassion, just basically understanding. They're all awesome kids when they meet other kids with needs, they can go and talk to them, they're not shy of talking to them. They're not shy of saying g'day. They're not shy where other people would stand back a bit, where, you know, even with Grace where other kids are looking at Grace and other parents say, 'don't look at them. Don't look at them', and like, they're not gonna bite, but my kids aren't- they're straight out there. They've all, over the years, had to help us look after Grace in certain ways, when she wasn't 100% they knew exactly what to grab for us.

So yeah, as I said, like going to the beach, it's not an everyday thing for us but we do go, but we can't go as a, like we'll do certain things as a family, but then I've gotta split off with Grace because she'll only last so much. So, then I get my wife and my kids to go and do windsurfing or whatever, swimming, and I'll just walk Grace around doing something else, so things as a family are very little. We can go to the movies now, we're starting to go to cafes a bit more, cos Grace used to walk past and knock everything over as we'd walk through, but over the years she's got better. So, it's little things like that. She got banned from one café because she knocked over water and broke a glass, but it was just, you know, it was just understanding that she was only just trying to push it over, push it aside, but she's lost hearing or her vision or something, something can't be in front of her, it's gotta have the space, so you know, she'll push that to the side, like this, so that's just understanding, but, you know, people don't, and that's cool, cos you don't expect everybody to understand.

Coralie

I hear you saying that you don't expect everyone to understand, but if there was anything that you wanted to get across in terms of being in a Salvation Army congregation, what message or teaching about living with a child with a disability would you want them to hear?

(Long Pause)

Greg

Probably that it's just 24/7. If I sleep until 6.30 or 7 o'clock in the morning you're getting a sleep in. Just little things like we can't be ready in 5 minutes, we can't be there, and there's certain things that we just can't do. There's certain things that because of her health, especially in winter time, we can't come out and watch a movie at night time because we're risking Grace's health and we're the ones who will suffer because we'll be the ones up all night later on. Yeah, so you're sorta like, people are like..., well Grace can't drink water like normal people, we've gotta put it through a mickey button. She can't eat normal food, you know, she'll eat certain foods.

Coralie

Kane

Yeah, it says there *(refers to the guidelines for discussion chart).*

CORALIE

Just reiterating, every comment is helpful. So, it's the same responsibilities? Is that what I heard you say? Its's the same responsibilities that you would have to all members of your congregation?

Kane

Mmm.

CORALIE

Any other comments?

Kate

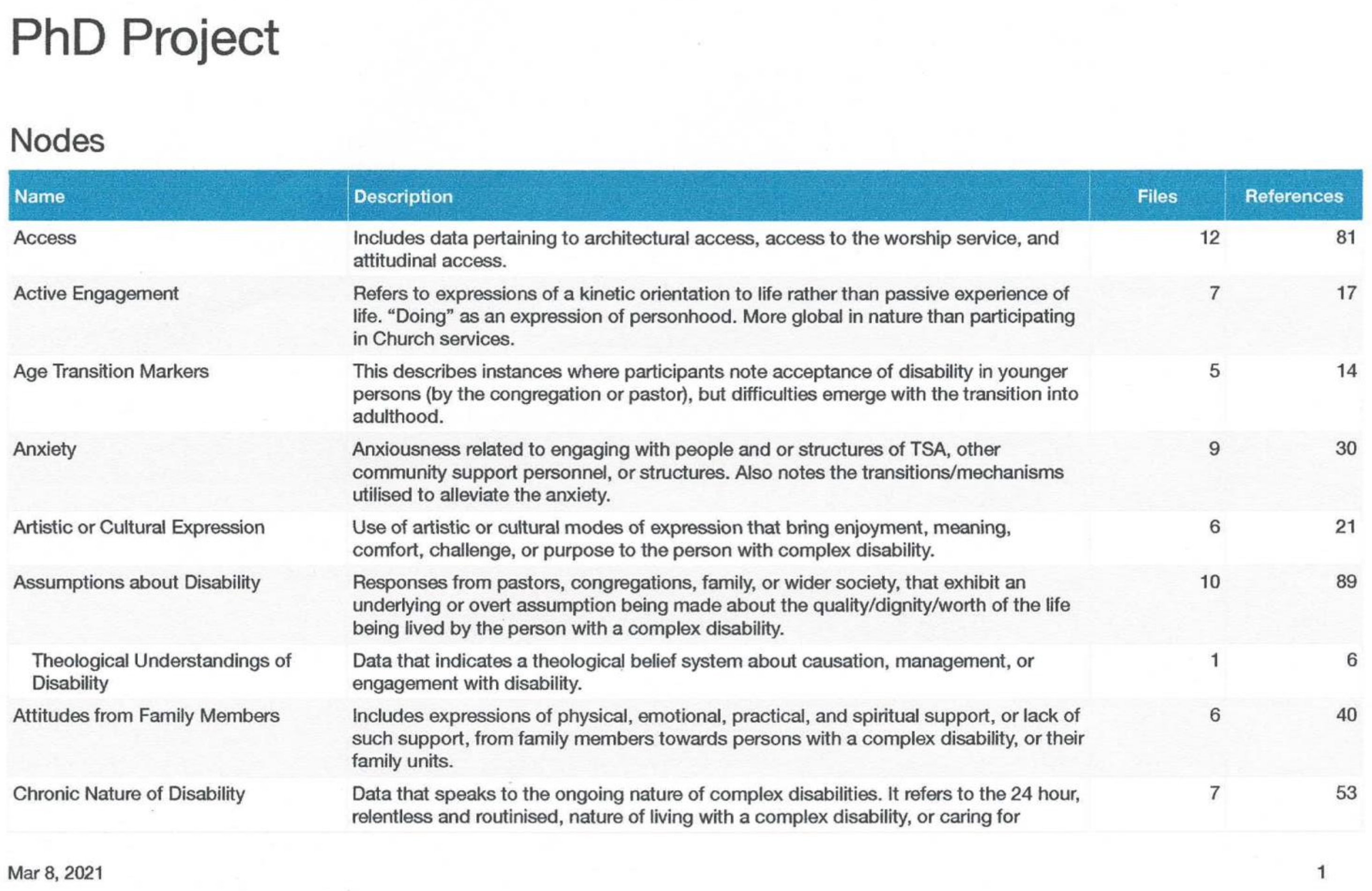
The 'however' of that, and I totally agree with those comments, is that for some, and I struggle too with the words, like disabled. I'm struggling with the words – I use it but I'm not so happy about using it. But some require a lot more time, patience and understanding than the remainder of the congregation. So, while we can treat everybody the same, which means some Sundays you miss some and other Sundays, you know, and the ones who are in your face get more time than the ones who are not. If we're talking extreme disability, that does take a lot more time, so I have found on occasions throughout my officership, that I needed to actually programme that time to go – 'I need ten minutes,' whereas I might only need two minutes and 'satisfy your need,' you know, as a leader. So, I do think that, and also I think there's an education for the rest of the people that needs to be done. So, I'll use an example known to you and I. One day ****** got left in the hall. So, there's always someone responsible for him but this Sunday, suddenly, where is he? And he was alone, cos he can't move and he has to be unplugged. So, that was a terrible lesson to me that actually you had to consciously be sure that the person is there, who has that responsibility. So, it's a greater conscious awareness, not just what other people have normally.

CORALIE

Any other...?

Kirsten

I think it's our responsibility to validate their relationship with God and nurture that and not disqualify it as, not being, because it's different from everyone else's, or anything like that. And I think it's our responsibility to do our absolute best to remove barriers. So, for example, we had a girl with a traumatic brain injury, so going to Kid's Church was a really stressful experience for her and the other kids and the parents. So, actually buddying her up with someone that was going to go with her, and look after her, was actually our responsibility to remove that barrier so she could still participate. Likewise, making sure that out doorways are



PhD Project

Nodes

Name	Description	Files	References
Access	Includes data pertaining to architectural access, access to the worship service, and attitudinal access.	12	81
Active Engagement	Refers to expressions of a kinetic orientation to life rather than passive experience of life. “Doing” as an expression of personhood. More global in nature than participating in Church services.	7	17
Age Transition Markers	This describes instances where participants note acceptance of disability in younger persons (by the congregation or pastor), but difficulties emerge with the transition into adulthood.	5	14
Anxiety	Anxiousness related to engaging with people and or structures of TSA, other community support personnel, or structures. Also notes the transitions/mechanisms utilised to alleviate the anxiety.	9	30
Artistic or Cultural Expression	Use of artistic or cultural modes of expression that bring enjoyment, meaning, comfort, challenge, or purpose to the person with complex disability.	6	21
Assumptions about Disability	Responses from pastors, congregations, family, or wider society, that exhibit an underlying or overt assumption being made about the quality/dignity/worth of the life being lived by the person with a complex disability.	10	89
Theological Understandings of Disability	Data that indicates a theological belief system about causation, management, or engagement with disability.	1	6
Attitudes from Family Members	Includes expressions of physical, emotional, practical, and spiritual support, or lack of such support, from family members towards persons with a complex disability, or their family units.	6	40
Chronic Nature of Disability	Data that speaks to the ongoing nature of complex disabilities. It refers to the 24 hour, relentless and routinised, nature of living with a complex disability, or caring for	7	53

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1

Name	Description	Files	References
Introduction to TSA	Relates to how participants came to associate with The Salvation Army. This includes being bought up in it from childhood, introduction by a friend or family member. Data that also signals length of association with TSA.	9	16
Invisible Disability	Refers to data from participants that reflects the positive and/or negative reactions, funding discrepancies, impact on managing their disability, or support systems available to persons whose disabilities are not readily observable.	6	12
Lack of Critique of TSA	Refers to overt expressions of contentment with how the participants have experienced TSA. (Note: opportunities given to suggest improvements/new strategies within the interview process)	2	4
Lack of Welcome or Inclusion	Refers to responses, attitudes, postures and actions that stigmatise, alienate, or marginalise the person with a complex disability in the church setting.	10	58
Language of Process	Language or insights that speak to beginning, middle, and end of a process the participants are engaged with.	10	36
Living an 'Ordinary Life'	Refers to the desire to participate in the usual/normative patterns and rhythms of human life.	6	25
Majority-Minority (Needs & Preferences)	Refers to commentary regarding the significance of the “needs & preferences” of the minority group (in this case the PWCD) over, or alongside, the “needs or preferences” of the majority group in the church setting.	4	6
Membership within TSA	Outlines the identifiers of “membership” within TSA. Includes references to ’volunteer,’ ‘adherent,’ or ‘soldiership.’ Data also includes references to use of identifiable clothing such as an Army teeshirt or uniform.	11	24
Normal	Refers to the understanding of “normal” as a socially constructed concept based on averages. Includes references with this understanding as opposed to expressions of desire by participants to “live an ordinary life.”	7	7
Not Sure	Sections of text that are thought to be significant by the researcher but are as yet not categorised.	2	2
Notions of Welcome	Highlights responses, attitudes, and actions, that express ‘welcome’ to persons with a complex disability.	11	42
Parade Ground Army	Reflections about the “look” of the Army rather than the ethos of an engaged Army.	6	15

Written Reflections on Interview Transcript 1: "Ann"

I was somewhat nervous coming into my first interview. I dressed in smart casual clothes and was well prepared with my files/paperwork and recording devices.

The Officer from the corps that Ann attends was instrumental in securing the interview. She drew Ann's attention to the ad and with Ann's permission she made the first approach to me. She provided Ann's phone number and email address and I then approached her directly.

When it came to the actual interview, the female officer provided an office space for us. She introduced me to Ann and then asked Ann if she wanted her to stay for the interview. Ann said that she felt fine on her own now that the initial introductions were done. Ann lives with some social anxiety.

The physical environment was helpful in that water was provided – there was a small coffee table between us and our comfortable chairs faced each-other.

Ann appeared to have a good understanding of the consent process and had read the PIS. She expressed that she was "happy to participate in any research really." She was very direct about her diagnosis and seemed to have a good understanding of both its specific nature and its impacts on her daily life. She was able to articulate her need for a break and what that what she needed within the break (some time to vape).

What do I notice from her interview:

1. Good **sense of self** – she described her own interests and hobbies before giving some small details about her family. Presents with a broadly arts based focus – saxophone and drawing. She also expressed interested in astronomy and space. In thinking about the interview, I note that I drew her on the music and art and didn't ask her anything further on her interest in space and astronomy.
2. Ann declares in this first paragraph that she volunteers at the foodbank. She articulates throughout the interview that **having somewhere to go**, and **having something to do**, is important for her. The notions of structure and routine emerge as important aspects of her life. (This is expressed in most other interviews as well – find out which ones and compare those who don't mention it))
3. Ann lives independently of her extended family. In noting that her parents live in different towns – I draw the conclusion here that they are separated. Ann lives in a flat with one other tenant. She described herself as the "head tenant." There was some degree of **"ownership/satisfaction/independence**" in this statement. It was followed up by comments regarding her paying all the rent and utilities and the flatmate, "...just pays me board."
4. **Disability Language**: In terms of negotiating how Ann describes her disability, reference to the use of "person first" or "disabled person" appeared of little significance to her. She stated "I just say I have brain damage."
5. **Understanding of the Injury in Participant's own words**: I note here that Ann's disability is as a result of being hit by a car when she was cycling as a ten & a half

year old child. She spoke of the event quite matter of factly, which could be as a result of years of processing the event or it could be as a result of the way she processes and speaks, in light of the brain injury. She describes the injury as, "orbital frontal lobe damage," measuring 4cm x 1cm x 1.5cms. A **specific medical label** is applied here by the participant herself.

6. There was an underlying edge of **humour**, for example, when she articulates that it could have been a "brains all over the road," type situation. Then later in the interview she laughs and gives the advice, "...be careful on bikes and always wear a helmet."
7. **Impacts of injury on daily living**: describes executive functioning as a **struggle** and also notes that she gets tired easily. The word **struggle** is also later used in association with, "organizing myself and doing basic adult tasks.
8. In order to attend to what she wants to do and achieve, **"planning"** becomes a significant issue in her life.
9. The issues of **"tiredness"** emerges throughout the interview as something that makes life difficult on an ongoing basis. (note Greg – its 24/7, Eric&Eve,? others)
10. **Introduction to The Salvation Army**: was actively looking for a church, read an article about a soldier from TSA, liked what she read and went to a corps near where she lived to check it out. "I liked it, so kept coming back." **Time at the corps** as of interview date: two and a half years. **Membership status**: Adherent. **Service/Engagement in the Corps**: Music team and Youth Group along with Foodbank.
11. **What does welcome look like**: "It feels like family here now." "...I know that when I come that people are always going to be happy to see me."
12. **Progression in the journey towards feeling welcome**, Ann used to sit on the edge of the congregation and then leave as soon as it finished, "I struggled with social anxiety." "When I first came I was very scared...but as I got more involved in the foodbank, I started to get to know the people better, and now I sit with a group of friends..." "I sit with people now." (p 16).
13. **Role of the Pastor:** Ann clearly articulates that the female pastor here has been good to her. (eg for Ann – the pastor has, "She's got me **involved** in a few things – so that's really cool.") But she also notes that previous pastors were helpful to. (more in here from later about how the pastor is helpful – what roles/responsibilities the pastor has taken on) *Off the top of my head I'm sensing that most, if not all, interviews refer to the pastor as pivotal in an initial stage of the welcome process.*
14. **Influence on "welcome" of other congregants**: Ann notes a woman from her early days at the corps who introduced herself to Ann. She (the congregant) was then away for some time. When she reappeared, Ann went to welcome her back to the Corps. **"Reciprocity of Welcome"** – note this also in Bob's interview in regard to the street people.
15. **Experiences of Non-Welcoming attitudes or postures.** Ann states that the corps is "very friendly" and feels like a family. She could not recall an instance of not feeling welcome. She did note that the congregation is small and thinks that might be influential Influence on welcome **congregational size as influence** on welcoming responses.

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