

**Mancosa**

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

**Research Data**

**by**

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# Pilot Study Interview Transcriptions

## Pilot Interview 1

**Carin (pseudonym)**

06 April 2009      10:00

39 years      School secretary

**Please describe the background of your connection to the congregation.**

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

**Part 1: Attitude towards change in the congregation**

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

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

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

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

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

## **Part 2: Discovering the Positive Core of the congregation**

### **3. What do you value most about the congregation?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*I am positive about this development in the congregation.*

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

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

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

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

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

## Pilot Interview 2

**Abraham (pseudonym)**

06 April 2009      15:00

57 years    Department of Education

**Please describe the background of your connection to the congregation.**

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

**Part 1: Attitude towards change in the congregation**

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

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

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

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

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

## **Part 2: Discovering the Positive Core of the congregation**

### **3. What do you value most about the congregation?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



# **Research Study Interview Transcriptions**

## **Interview 3**

**Retha (pseudonym)**

22 April 2009      11:00

69 years      Retired teacher

**Please describe the background of your connection to the congregation.**

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

**Part 1: Attitude towards change in the congregation**

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Will you be against an involvement in the community?**

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

## **Part 2: Discovering the Positive Core of the congregation**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*I think that is possible.*

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

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

## Interview 4

**Herbert (pseudonym)**

22 April 2009      17:00

46 years Chartered Accountant

**Please describe the background of your connection to the congregation.**

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

**Part 1: Attitude towards change in the congregation**

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

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

**Why would you have been "uneasy" previously?**

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

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

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

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

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

## **Part 2: Discovering the Positive Core of the congregation**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*It is one way of demonstrating our values and beliefs.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



## Interview 5

**Ester (pseudonym)**

22 April 2009      18:00

40 years    Housewife

**Please describe the background of your connection to the congregation.**

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

**Part 1: Attitude towards change in the congregation**

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Part 2: Discovering the Positive Core of the congregation**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Interview 6

**Nico (pseudonym)**

24 April 2009 18:00

67 years Manager/Accountant

**Please describe the background of your connection to the congregation.**

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

**Part 1: Attitude towards change in the congregation**

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Part 2: Discovering the Positive Core of the congregation**

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

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

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

### **Any impact on the moral values of the community?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*I will be proud of my congregation.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



## Interview 7

**Rhona (pseudonym)**

24 April 2009      19:00

61 years Housewife

**Please describe the background of your connection to the congregation.**

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

**Part 1: Attitude towards change in the congregation**

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

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

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

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

## **Part 2: Discovering the Positive Core of the congregation**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Interview 8

**Janine (pseudonym)**

27 April 2009      16:00

45 years    Business owner

**Please describe the background of your connection to the congregation.**

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

**Part 1: Attitude towards change in the congregation**

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

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

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

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

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

*I am all for it!*

**Why?**

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

## **Part 2: Discovering the Positive Core of the congregation**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Yes!*

**Why do you feel positive about this?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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