

Diakonia and Diaconal Church

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Abstract

What are the authentic features of a diaconal ecclesia in contexts of crises, such as the coronavirus pandemic? In the South African context, the response of the church has been both positive and negative. During this period of the coronavirus outbreak, the church has been visible and pastoral in Holy Week, and especially during Easter. After Holy Easter, the visibility of the church gave way to non-governmental organisations, social responsibility organisations, government social development agencies, and other government departments. These institutions and organisations emerged as active, practical, and concrete sources of hope because they provided the immediate and tangible needs of the people, including food, shelter, medical care, and psychological support. This research investigates the gap in the church as liturgical movement and service oriented. This elicits the question, what is the church in times of crisis? On the assumption that the church is diaconal, what kind of diaconal ecclesia is suited for times of crisis, like the coronavirus pandemic in South Africa? To understand the main arguments and perspectives of the two modes of church, service and liturgy, the author will review literature with a specific focus on the ecumenical church. In addition, a conceptual analysis of the main terminologies and its effects on the development of notions of church will also be conducted. The modes of church will be interpreted through the lens of catholicity to formulate a diaconal ecclesia with distinctive features for times of crisis such as the current pandemic.

Key words: diakonia, diaconal church, coronavirus, liturgy, service, catholicity, wholemaking, ecclesia

1. Introduction

What are the authentic features of a diaconal ecclesia in contexts of crisis? The current coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) has wreaked havoc across the globe causing immense suffering and upheaval in almost every nation of the world. The crisis is unprecedented in terms of its suddenness, virulence, infectiousness, and global reach – the effects of which will be with creation for generations to come. Meylahn suggests that COVID-19 is merely a resurgence of a crisis that has been present in other forms. He contends that this crisis has been there since the financial crisis (2018). According to Varoufakis (2020), “The crisis has probably always been

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there, as it is the crisis of the symbolic (real) to which the symbolic and the imagination continually respond by seeking effective defences. The symbolic is always in crisis; it perpetually needs to re-create itself as a defence against the believed real of the symbolic" (2020:1).

In South Africa, the government has been swift in its response. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has singled out the South African government on more than one occasion for its comprehensive and drastic response to the pandemic. The South African president has been praised for his decisive leadership and far-reaching action to slow down the spread of the virus. This sentiment is expressed in theological documents such as that of the World Council of Churches (WCC). The WCC confirms that, "The role of the local congregation in diaconal work is to speak in situations of crisis for the needs of the whole community and not on specific interests. Local congregations have a certain power and can give safety and raise issues. Governments and local authorities recognise churches and specialised ministries as important forces and part of civil society" (2014:160).

During this period of the coronavirus outbreak, the church has been clearly visible and pastoral in Holy Week, and especially during Easter. The amount of Christian worship services on the state-owned television channels has been unprecedented in the democratic era. The relationship between church and state, symbolically depicted during Easter when the state president actively participated in a worship service with the Archbishop of the Anglican Church in southern Africa, was a sign of the high regard that the state has for the church. The church provided new and contextual liturgical resources. Meylahn (2020:1) asserts that, "The church's response, specifically taking various social media into consideration, could be interpreted as a typically state church response: do as the government says but add a little mercy and charity, and that would be your Christian responsibility." During a crisis, it is worthwhile to be aware of the different models of church–state relationship. The doctrine of the "Two Kingdoms" or the "Two Governments" (Lutheran), the Natural Law model (Roman Catholic), and the Political model (Protestant), influence the involvement of Christians in societal issues and concerns (Dietrich, 2014:42).

The visibility of the church soon disappeared after Holy Easter. Non-governmental organisations, social responsibility organisations, government social development agencies, and other government departments emerged as active, practical, and concrete sources of hope because they provided the immediate and tangible needs of the people, including food, shelter, medical care, and psychological support.

There has been a gap in the church as liturgical movement and service oriented. One can also say that faith and work is separated at a time of crisis. This elicits the

question, what is the church in times of crisis? On the assumption that the church is diaconal, what kind of diaconal ecclesia is suited for times of crisis, like the coronavirus pandemic in South Africa? There are predominantly two modes of diaconal church – the church as liturgy and the church. To understand the main arguments and perspectives of the two modes of church, the author reviews literature with a specific focus on the ecumenical church. In addition, a conceptual analysis of the main terminologies and its effects on the development of notions of church will also be conducted. The modes of church will be interpreted through the lens of catholicity to formulate a diaconal ecclesia with distinctive features for times of crisis such as the current pandemic.

2. Diaconia

Christensen provides a succinct account of the use of diaconal ecclesiology, prefaced by a warning that, “From a church historian’s point of view the semantics of *diakonia* are not clear, nor is the concept of ‘diaconal ecclesiology’” (2019:41). The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) also shares the view that *diakonia* can be understood from different and varied perspectives and the term is not static in both its meaning and semantics. *Diakonia in context: Transformation, reconciliation, empowerment* as “a theological concept that points to the very identity and mission of the church. Another definition is its practical implication in the sense that diakonia is a call to action, as a response to challenges of human suffering, injustice and care for creation” (LWF, 2009:8). The WCC concurs with Christensen’s and the LWF’s views that concepts such as diakonia have diverse meanings. “... It was emphasised that the religious identity has changed in many places and there is an increased awareness of the mission of the churches in development and diakonia. However, a common understanding of the concepts should be encouraged and the role of WCC, the ACT [Action by Churches Together] Alliance, specialised ministries and the churches in general should be clearer and better documented” (WCC, 2014:157). In 2017 when the concept diakonia was widely discussed, it was mainly conceptualised as both who the church community is and what the members do. In other words, being and doing goes hand in hand as a continuum and not as binary opposites. Being and doing is also referred to as persons created in the image of God and their calling is to bring the whole of creation in communion with God. Another perspective of diakonia was the promotion and organisation of practical action for the alleviation of both systemic and personal injustices. This is the concrete and practical activity of churches to confront the suffering and poverty of the marginalised. This is also referred to as faith-based diakonia and rights-based diakonia (WCC, 2017:9).

Within the Bible and early Christian communities, diakonia was mainly social ministries that were associated with service, ministry, and any kind of calling exercised by a specialised ministerial function as designated to deacons and deaconesses. Within the Acts of the Apostles, the root of these words – service, ministry, or deacon/ness – is reserved for particular office bearers or functions. The election of the Seven in Acts 6 is a clear indication of the specialisation of the functions of diakonia, but also a distinction from the ministry of the Word, which the apostles were called to do. Christensen propounds that according to Thomas O'Meara, a designation such as deacon was not necessarily a sacred office but merely a function that is expressed through language. The church designed a language that could reveal its form of life (2019:43).

During the Protestant Reformation, there was a resurgence of the deacon and the service ministry of caring for the sick, visiting the widows and widowers, provision for the hungry, and looking after the poor. In Western Europe, diakonia was equal to caritative work by both male and female. During this period, diaconal work also took on a formal ministry as social workers and nurses. The issue was raised about the incorporation of this professional vocation into the ecclesia. The difficulty of incorporating professional service with the ecclesia is partly because the reformers aligned diakonia with mission either deliberately or incidentally (Christensen, 2019:49-50).

During the twentieth century, diakonia and diaconal ecclesiology has taken many diverse meanings and was used differently by different denominations. Within the Anglican Church, diakonia is part of the priestly orders and falls within the threefold orders of bishop, priest, and deacon. This order has recently been reinforced with the re-emergence of the permanent order of the diaconate. Within the Roman Catholic Church, *caritas* is associated with diakonia. Diakonia has also taken on meanings from words such as Ubuntu, empowerment, and care (Dietrich, 2019:13-27).

Crises such as the Industrial Revolution and the two world wars resulted in introspection by church members during the former century. The Life and Work movement that was carried forward from the Universal Conference of Life and Work that was held in Stockholm in 1925 resulted in the equation of “service in the world with being Church” (Christensen, 2019:50). This shift towards service as diaconal ecclesiology was evident in the change of the name of this movement to the ‘Universal Council for Life and Work’ with council pointing towards a prominent role for the church. The council was to become the WCC and the first general secretary, Willem Visser’t Hooft, propagated for diakonia ecclesiology (Christensen, 2019:50).

An important factor that arose during the twentieth century was the role of the laity within ecclesiology. By the mid-twentieth century, the church was equated with

diaconia as ministry. Hendrik Kraemer laid the foundation for this shift and in 1963 at the Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order in Montreal, it was accepted that “ministry is the responsibility of the whole body and not only of those who were ordained. The recovery is one of the most important facts of recent church history”² (Christensen, 2019:51).

This notion of diakonia finds theological roots in the Trinitarian theology and Christian theological anthropology. The 2013 Faith and Order text declares “the notion that the communion of baptised is a reflection of Trinitarian communion and exists for the sake of communion with all humans and the whole of creation” (Christensen, 2019:51).

Diakonia has also been closely described in relation with the Trinity. Knoetze correlates Balwick and Balwick’s four sequential stages of diakonia – covenant, grace, empowering, and intimacy – with the *missio Dei* as “the Father sending the Son, the Father and the Son sending Spirit and the Father, Son and Spirit sending the church” (2019:7). With regard to diakonia from a Trinitarian perspective, Knoetze asserts that the Father created and loves humanity unconditionally and this act is embedded in the covenant relation that humanity enjoys with the Father. With regard to Christ, Knoetze claims that the Son as deacon brings the sacrifice for salvation. The practical ministry of Jesus, which He performs in relation with the Father, is embedded in the healings, reconciliation, feeding, and other acts of inclusion into the community and in fellowship with God. The Holy empowers the powerless. “Empowerment as a theological concept refers to the biblical understanding that all people are created in God’s image with abilities and gifts, independent from the deceptive social situation” (Knoetze, 2019:158-159).

Diaconal ecclesiology is more functional than substantive. Although Knoetze tries to keep the agency of the church and the being of the church together, he obviously gives a greater value to diakonia as a function of the church. Church is understood in terms of anthropology. In this regard, Knoetze contends that, “Church is understood in its broadest form in the sense that church exists in different configurations as and how its members are involved, such as congregations, non-governmental organisations, families, schools, and businesses. Where the church’s members are, there the church is” (2019:160).

Despite the ambiguity of the concepts ‘diakonia’ and ‘diaconal ecclesiology,’ service, liturgy, and deacon remain three of the most used references for diakonia and the church. The functions of the early church have been liturgical and at times caritative. The liturgical function has been associated with deacons assisting the

² This quote cited by Christensen is taken from P.C. Rodger and L. Vischer (eds.), *The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order*, Faith and Order Paper No. 42 London: SCM, 1964, 62.

bishop at the Eucharist with intercessions at the altar and the dismissal. This part of the diakonia has a long history of institution. Deacons have been part of the three-fold ordained ministry of the church. Caritative functions have included both care for the marginalised and pastoral care for the needy. This function of the church is less institutional because it has a long history of both laity and ordained sharing equally in the vocation to care for the marginalised and needy.

The WCC, the LWF, and the Second Vatican Council's contribution to the resurgence of diakonia in the twentieth century has positioned diakonia as indispensable for ecclesiology. Despite these efforts, the churches have found it difficult to be diaconal ecclesia during times of crisis, such as the current coronavirus pandemic. The role of the ordained ministry and the centrality of sacramental ministry has thwarted the effectiveness of the church in times of crisis. To add to the effective role of the church during times of crisis, the author will interpret the diaconal ecclesia through the lens of catholicity.

3. Catholicity and Diakonia Ecclesia

The diaconal church has a rich history in Christian theology. Diaconal church is both about authentic worship of God revealed in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit by worshippers and of the scattering of the faithful for service in the world. The gathering of worshippers is an act of presenting the self before God and acknowledging God as Saviour. It is also an act of empowering or agency through the power of the Holy Spirit in the world.

Catholicity is a concept that is common to most churches. The term has, however, been under scrutiny according to Horan. "In recent years the notion *catholicity* has received renewed attention. Traditionally, the term has been associated in colloquial English with concepts such as 'universality' or 'all-encompassing' ... the correspondence and universal does not quite work when one examines the etymological roots of the word, especially within a theological context" (2019:4-5).

The word 'universal' is laconically explained by Ong as using a compass to make a circle. The visible circle demarcates what is inside from what is outside. That which is inside is common around a central point. All those who are inside the circle are connected, united, and included. However, there are also those who are outside the circle. Universal, then, has a negativity and exclusivity. On the other hand, catholicity means 'through-the-whole' or 'throughout-the-whole.' The combination of *kata/kath*, meaning 'through or throughout', and *bolos*, meaning 'whole,' is more positive and inclusive. Ong rightly motivates his assertion by questioning why the Latin Church did not use the word *universalis*, which is part of their vernacular but borrowed the word *catholic* from the Greek term *katholikos* (Horan, 2019:4).

Describing Dulles' view of the difference between universality and catholicity, Horan asserts that universality is abstract and universal, while catholicity is a concrete term that is embedded in qualitative faith. Catholicity is particular, actual, embedded in lived experiences (Horan, 2019:5). This is a significant difference that relates to Christian theological anthropology, the theological traditions of what it means to be human, how humans relate to the rest of creation, and what diakonia entails.

Catholicity as hermeneutic is towards wholemaking. It looks beyond the self-evident assumptions of separateness, binaries, domination, exclusivity, and marginalisation because every being is connected in a process of wholemaking in God's creation. "A hermeneutic of catholicity takes as its starting point the presupposition of an evolutionary cosmos, which, originating from the one God who is Creator, seeks an ever-greater unity in its journey through salvation history back to the very same God ... Wholemaking is inherent to the creation because, although it may not always be visible to us from a quotidian perspective, God's intention remains the salvation of all creation-human and nonhuman alike" (Horan, 2019:6).

Catholicity viewed as wholemaking challenges the understanding of ourselves and the world supported by the doctrine of *imago Dei*, the Cappadocians, and the Hellenistic philosophical traditions that espoused essentialists and binary use of human nature. It also challenges the complementarity of Augustine, which was further developed by Thomas Aquinas. These doctrines contributed to domination of humans over the earth, domination of women by men, and the absolute uniqueness of human beings. It also challenges diakonia practices such as stewardship and charity. Wholemaking challenges diaconal ecclesiologies because the church is made up of humans and it is instituted by God for *missio Dei*.

4. Diaconal Ecclesiology as/and Service

The church has a long history of service in the world. The forms of service are manifold and include charitable work, pastoral work, relief, and institutional and systemic involvement. From the early church, issues of poverty, marginalisation, exclusion, domination, and oppression featured prominently in the mission of the church. The early church was generally concerned with the healing of the sick, care for the widows, and providing of the poor.

"At the very heart of the New Testament notion of church ... is the recognition of the communion of all believers with God and the Lord Jesus Christ and with each in the body of Christ ... The horizontal aspect of this communion takes shape in a unity marked by mutual care and solidarity ... The service for the sisters in the church and for individuals and humankind at large, following the example of Jesus

... is frequently expressed by the noun ... (diakonia) and its cognate verb ... (diakoneo)” (Adna, 2019:64).

Different words with diakonia roots are found in words such as service, ministry, or with reference to specific ministries, such as deacon or deaconess, which were used for the ministry of congregations. These words were used with reference to ministries attributed to all believers, specialised ministries by particular persons as well as to Christ (Christensen, 2019:42).

For Paul, diakonia is combined with koinonia – the new community of God (2 Corinthians 8:4). The communities of Corinth, Macedonia, Jerusalem, and others, are all united by diakonia. They share in the continuous mission of Jesus Christ. This mission is reflected in practical service of providing for the physical needs of the new communities. In addition to financial assistance, these needs include the provision of basic needs for the poor (the widows). The calling of the Seven in the ecclesia of Jerusalem was a significant symbolic turn in the early church. It was not a coincidence that the Seven were from a Greek background with Greek names. They represented the culture and socio-economic and cultural identities of the widows, and challenged the degree of under inclusivity of the church. “The installation of the seven, all of whom had Greek names and therefore probably represented the widows’ cultural and social environment, was not merely a practical matter in order to have things done. It was an act of securing the fundamental self-understanding of the church, for the well-being of the whole fellowship and for public witness” (IWE, 2009:28-29). Breed and Semanya illustrate the interconnectedness of diakonia with koinonia in 1 Peter 4:10. Peter addressed the congregation during a time of suffering and alienation. Paul declares that every person is called to serve the other. This address by Paul illustrates the gift of service that is exercised in the context of “participating together” (2015:7). The church is in both being and doing characterised by service.

A number of critical points arise from diaconal ecclesiology as service when I apply a hermeneutic of catholicity. The ecclesia and mission are limited to a theological anthropology that is alienated and dominating. A diaconal ecclesiology of service is about service for humans at all cost. This raises the question of ‘who we are,’ which has come under renewed scrutiny from contemporary theological notions of the overemphasis of the absolute uniqueness of humans as found in the dominant theologies of creation and the image of God. In these notions, humans are separated from the rest of creation by virtue of them alone having the image of God and being holy. Catholicity is about the wholemaking of the whole cosmos towards the one Creator. This implies that not only humans are created by God and that not only humans are included in the salvation plan of God. While humans have

some uniqueness in relation to other living and non-living beings, the rest of creation also has uniqueness that distinguishes it from others. However, the uniqueness does not separate humans, other living or non-living beings from each other.

What this means for a diaconal ecclesiology is that service towards humans alone neglects the care and service for the rest of creation. Such a diaconal ecclesiology can also lead to the domination of the environment by humans. “Both Judeo-Christian tradition and the Greek-Roman tradition placed the human being in a central place in the universe” (Parbiala & Simango, 2014:331). The notion of the humans at the centre of the universe, which is held by both African, and Western worldviews leaves the cosmos at the mercy of humans. This perception of diaconal ecclesiology leads to a giver-receiver mode of diakonia that has come under serious scrutiny from contemporary rights-based diakonia paradigms.

The twentieth century diaconal ecclesiology as service has emphasised unity. Ecumenical movements, such as the WCC and the IWF, have revived diaconal ecclesiology for the unification of the church. Service has been the means of co-operation, ministry, prophetic ministry, and social development. This kind of unity, despite the successes, has been operating from the principle of ‘something negative.’ Those who are part of the inside group are separated from the outsiders. On the other hand, a hermeneutic of catholicity or wholeness uses diversity as its principle for healing and restoration. The diaconal ecclesiology as service presupposes ‘universal’ in abstract terms, but wholeness is about ‘qualitatively-wholeness.’ Wholeness is about concrete, particular realities, as they exist in the here and now.

Nordstokke, a renowned professor in Diaconal Studies, asserts that, “Catholic clearly correlates with unity, but with the intention of providing space for the wholeness of creation and human reality, acknowledging the gifts of diversity and particularities” (2019:36). Diaconal ecclesiology is more than service towards humans by humans. Humans are part of creation and not apart from the order that God created. Diaconal ecclesiology should share in the *missio Dei* of God in the wholeness of all creation towards God who created the whole of creation. In the next section, the author discusses the church and liturgy.

5. Diaconal Ecclesiology and Liturgy

The tension whether diakonia is service or liturgical has resulted in a number of divergences within the church. For example, should the diaconal ecclesiology be for deacons and deaconesses, is it a function or substance of the church, and is it doctrinal or ecumenical?

Liturgy has been synonymous with diakonia and diaconal ecclesiology. The office of a deacon epitomises diakonia in the New Testament. Christensen demonstrates how the Apostolic Fathers describe the deacons as primarily liturgical ministers

during gatherings of the ecclesia. The deacons described in the Didache indicate that the appointment of deacons is coupled with the Eucharist. Here is a clear indication that the deacon assisted the bishop at the celebration of the Eucharist. Christensen (2019:44) concludes that, “We can thus detect a strong link between the Eucharist as the focal point of congregational life and the essential work of the appointed ministers. Serving the congregation as a deacon is in this case primarily a matter of liturgy.” Like the Didache, Clement also places the liturgical role of deacons and bishops as essential for ecclesiology. Around the same time of the Didache and Clement (the year 100), Bishop Ignatius viewed the bishop, presbyter, and deacon as essential for the church. Christensen (2019:44-45) quotes a famous theological assumption of Bishop Ignatius to emphasise the diaconal ecclesiology as liturgy, “Without these the name of ‘Church’ is not given.”³ “Bishop Ignatius refers to deacons as his ‘fellow servants,’⁴ meaning that he and they are all working out God’s will in the church. Ignatius represents an ecclesiology that is defined by the clergy as liturgical agents that secure unity.”

The revival of the deacon and deaconess in the Protestant Reformation was a retreat to the caritative nature of diakonia. Luther and Calvin acknowledged the role of deacons. The latter, in particular, paid attention to the incorporation of women in ministry through the ‘widow’ concept of the New Testament. The Mennonites were probably the most successful to incorporate women in ministry through diakonia. The revival of diakonia was particularly successful in Germany during the nineteenth century. Evidence of the revival in Germany can be found in Friedrich Klönne’s article, *On the Revival of Deaconesses of the Old Church in the Female Associations* and Florence Nightingale’s text, *The Institution of Kaiserswerth on the Rhine, for the Practical Training of Deaconesses* (Christensen, 2019:48-49). These revivals did very little about the liturgical function of the diaconal ecclesiology. The diaconal ecclesiology as liturgy was replaced by the love for neighbour.

This trend about diakonia as service continued in the twentieth century. Service was embedded in political and social phenomena. These shifts in diakonia are evident in documents such as ‘Life and Work’ and the ‘Inter-church Aid and Service to Refugees at Les Rasses.’ These documents raised a number of issues that first surfaced during the New Testament diaconal church as liturgy (Christensen, 2019:50-51). The issues included the role of laity, the role of women, and the inclusivity of diakonia.

Despite the neglect of the diaconal ecclesiology and liturgy, liturgies such as the Orthodox liturgy demonstrate the centrality of liturgy for our understanding

³ Ignatius, 1912, ‘Letter to the Trallians 3,’ in *The Apostolic Fathers*, I, Loeb Classical Library, London: Heineman.

⁴ E.g. Ignatius, Letter to the Philadelphians 4.

of diakonia and diaconal ecclesiology. There are forty days between the feasts of the Transfiguration and Holy Cross, which is symbolic of the themes of the exodus and the appearance of our Lord on Mount Sinai. The forty days to Mount Sinai are the steps from the exodus towards the Cross. "Through this, the church is invited to understand the glory of God from the perspective of the Cross and to walk on the same path. Luke calls this path diakonia. In so doing, he puts the 'breaking of bread' at the centre of the church's life. The church, which learns in the Eucharistic gathering the meaning of exodus, commits itself to 'the pleasing deeds', and remembers all humanity, particularly the suffering ones, in a diaconal church that lives its liturgical Eucharist in the love it learned from the divine words and makes its way from glory to Cross" (Mrad, 2019:80-81).

The objective of a hermeneutic of wholeness or catholicity is not so much to interrogate and discredit the longstanding theological roots of what it means to be human, but to uncover what already exists. Wholeness is already part of the history of the church, although the church neglects to use the gifts of those at the margins. Catholicity rejects binaries that cause domination and alienation, such as deacon and deaconesses. The deaconess was neglected within the diaconal ecclesiology as liturgy because the role of the deaconess was overlooked by the patriarchal system of biblical and theological scholarship. Horan (2019:126) reminds us that, "Too often we assume that we know with certitude what it means to talk about human nature as if it corresponded to a static reality outside of our own hypothesising. We must recall always that we are social creatures that construct meaning and systems of symbolic significance." Feminist hermeneutics has successfully challenged the doctrinal and confessional absoluteness of some of the worse violations of women's rights – both in practice in diaconal ecclesiology and beliefs about anthropology and ecclesiology. Radford Reuther makes human experience and not male experience the starting point of her hermeneutical circle (1983:12). Ackermann asserts that Radford Reuther's approach is inclusive and that does not divert from her strongly propagating for the full humanity of women (2008:37-46).

Diaconal ecclesiology as liturgy unites those who have common beliefs. Most liturgies unite those who are gathered in ritual and symbolic movements on specific times and in definitive spaces. This is unity that is based on 'the negative.' It unites those in the circle based on the exclusion of others. Liturgy excludes certain persons from communion because of the doctrinal or canonical prerequisites. For most part of the service, the laity are merely spectators of the liturgical acts and the ordained are regarded as the custodians of the liturgy. Such a notion of liturgy influences the understanding of ministry and church as we discovered in the early church. This kind of diaconal ecclesiology raised serious questions about the nature of diakonia for the most vulnerable groups of society, those who are not part

of the official church and the rest of creation, including the non-human and non-living beings.

6. Diaconal Ecclesiology as Creation

Diaconal ecclesiology as wholemaking has its starting point in God's salvation for the whole of creation. Horan (2019:6) asserts that, "Wholemaking is inherent to creation because, although it may not always be visible to us from a quotidian perspective, God's intention remains the salvation of all creation-human and non-human alike." The long history of the static doctrinal formulations that distorts the reciprocal and mutual relationship between humans and the rest of creation must be interrogated through the lens of wholemaking. Such an interrogation will uncover the distorted nature of humans that results in superiority, domination, and alienation. Wholemaking will also recover the uniqueness of humans that is not absolute and separate from creation, but shares uniqueness in the same particular manner as non-human and non-living beings.

Diakonia takes on a different form when creation is at the centre and not the human. Other parts of creation are viewed through a perspective of life-having and life-giving. The environment is not only for the consumption of humans, but is created by God and has dignity and worth. We find, for example, that in the Eucharist the wine and bread is life-giving and symbolically represents the body and blood of Christ. By partaking in the Eucharist, humans are made holy for Christ is holy.

Wholemaking presupposes that wholeness is present in the whole of creation and is a gift to all creation. The binaries of men and women – lay and ordained – pertaining to diakonia is discredited. Ministry through the lens of wholemaking is a gift from God bestowed on the faithful. Whereas the Protestant Reformation revived the diakonia, it steered diakonia in a different direction than the early church's models of 'The Body of Christ' or 'Gifts of The Holy Spirit.' Wholemaking is a dialectical retreat to the inclusivity of diakonia. The feminist movement through people like Radford Ruether "gives a comprehensive historical account between church as spirit-filled community and church as institution. The former model of church was characterised by charismatic ministry and the latter by the traditional leadership as found in the synagogue. By the late first century, the bishops as *pater familias* entrenched the patriarchal pattern of society in contrast to the earlier egalitarian model" (Klaasen, 2016:14-15).

Wholemaking also affirms the diakonia of the laypersons. In the patristic period, diakonia was a function of the laypersons. The Marcionite churches practice of discipleship of equals and the New Prophecy's Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit are two examples (Klaasen, 2016:16). When the deacon became an ecclesial order, as a result of the church's close association with the Roman Empire, ordination

excluded many laypersons from ministry. Diaconia is largely regarded as ministry outside of the liturgy and consequently undervalued. This phenomenon is clearly demonstrated in the present coronavirus crisis in South Africa.

Wholemaking bridges the gap between service and liturgy. Catholicity is not so much about essentials and universals, than it is about present realities and the particular. Liturgy and service forms a continuum. Liturgy is initiated within the communities. During worship, worshippers are empowered to exercise ministry that is relevant, life-giving, and wholemaking in their communities. Christensen (2019:47) asserts that, “A major focal point of the early church was the liturgical celebrations where the servants of the church were present. The tasks performed by deacons and deaconesses were manifold and reflect the fundamental diaconal ecclesiology of the early church, which was grounded in its liturgical life and visible in its social work.”

7. Conclusion

Diakonia and diaconal ecclesiology are complex concepts that have diverse meanings as illustrated by Christiansen’s historical perspectives of the two terms. The ecumenical movement, such as the WCC and the IWF, demonstrates the diversity of the many different modes of diaconia and diaconal ecclesiology that are described in their documents. In this paper, the author analysed the two dominant and earliest perspectives of service and liturgy through the lens of wholemaking. A number of limitations, such as binaries, static theological anthropologies, exclusivity, domination, and alienation were identified. A new way of diaconal ecclesiology was thus constructed. The pillars of such a diaconal ecclesiology for a time of crisis are God’s salvation for the whole of creation, the affirmation of the diaconia of the laypersons, and the continuum between liturgy and service.

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