Chaplaincy Transitioning Covid-19 in the South African Mining Sector

Dr Mmamajoro Phalatsi-Shilubana
Research Institute for Theology and Religion (RITR)
College of Human Sciences (CHS), University of South Africa (UNISA)
Email: phalams@unisa.ac.za
Orcid: https://orcid.org/0009-0000-6941-1754

Abstract

Chaplaincy or pastoral care as a model of emotional, social, and spiritual support continues to be offered to both religious and non-religious communities. Although its inclusive nature appears to have diminished in recent years, it became very apparent during the Covid-19 pandemic when it became accessible to both religious and non-religious individuals. While there is extensive research highlighting the value of pastoral care during the Covid-19 crisis, little appears to have addressed its impact and character on the mining sector in general, but particularly the South African mining sector. During the Covid-19 scare in 2020, chaplains provided ongoing emotional, social and spiritual support to frontline workers in other professional fields in general, and to all workers working in the mining sector in particular. While many of the miners who benefited from this facility belonged to religious communities, some were clearly non-religious. Combining literature reviews and case study methods, this paper underscores the value of pastoral care in the mining sector, particularly its availability to South African miners who have had to isolate after testing positive for Covid-19 in 2020. In essence, this will not only underscore the presence of chaplaincy in the mining industry during Covid-19, but also explicitly define the value of inclusive chaplaincy in relation to and beyond the context of pandemics such as Covid-19.

Keywords: Chaplaincy, Pastoral Care, Covid-19 Pandemic, Isolation Sites, Mining Sector.

Introduction

Chaplaincy or pastoral care as it were, can be described as emotional, social, and spiritual support that is often offered by religious practitioners to both religious and non-religious communities. Although this practice has its roots in the religious sphere, in its contemporary manifestations it is distinguished from pastoral ministry that is often tied to a particular belief system. In other words, the practice of chaplaincy or pastoral care has evolved over the years from an exclusive practice to a more inclusive practice, encompassing both multi-religious and non-religious people equally. Pastoral care in the sense of chaplaincy has a more humanistic approach as it aims to provide spiritual support and comfort to inclusive communities made up of both religious and non-religious communities. Although chaplaincy and pastoral care overlap in the sense that they provide spiritual support and counselling, in a narrower sense they are differentiated by their context and target audience. Notably, with their sometimes-vague character, both these concepts have always been the subject of constant study, on the one hand in relation to pastoral ministry and on the other hand in relation to sectoral or institutional settings.

While pastoral care has direct links to a range of religious or belief communities such as churches, chaplaincy includes non-religious institutional settings such as correctional facilities, the military and other areas of employment. Although broad in scope, chaplaincy services centre on the intellectual,

emotional, social, interpersonal, and spiritual dimensions of life and they seek to assist personal awareness, understanding, growth and integration (Holm, 2009:7). Roberts and Dunlop (2022) assert that chaplaincy is seen as providing the freedom to engage with people in their everyday lives, to listen to their experience and concerns and to respond flexibly and appropriately (Roberts and Dunlop, 2022:85). Holm (2009) further argues that chaplaincy is typically provided by people of faith from major world religions, particularly Christianity, and that people with interfaith viewpoints or less formalised religious/spiritual perspectives can also provide pastoral care (Holm, 2009:7-8).

Chaplaincy or pastoral care as it were, has been an important topic for decades, drawing sustained efforts in the academic field. Therefore, the literature on this topic, whether from the broad perspective of pastoral care or the narrow definition of chaplaincy, remains abundant and easily accessible. Pioneering work on what both chaplaincy and pastoral care might mean was done by scholars such as Harding et al. (2008), VandeCreek and Burton (2001), VandeCreek and Lucas (2014) and many others. These phenomena are discussed in a certain overlapping manner in the literature, without any explicit intention to differentiate them in so many words. In other words, while it is undeniable that both chaplaincy and spiritual care are equally forms of spiritual support, the literature rarely distinguishes between them depending on their respective focus and context. It should be recognised, however, that very few scholars such as O'Connor (2003) have made commendable attempts to distinguish, so to speak, between pastoral care as underlining ecclesiastical ministry and pastoral care as underlining professional pastoral counselling (O'Connor, 2003:3-14). The two concepts have been interchangeably used and were never considered as different. Building on this limited classificatory literature, this essay will first attempt to describe the broad meaning of pastoral care and consequently narrow the definition to chaplaincy. While this may seem like the primary obsession, the ultimate intention is to apply nuanced definitions of chaplaincy and pastoral care in the mining context, particularly in its manifestation during Covid-19 in South Africa. In other words, this article firstly, but subordinately or tangentially, distinguishes between chaplaincy and pastoral care, while secondly, but primarily, it describes the manifestation of pastoral care in the South African mining industry during Covid-19.

During the height of the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa, chaplains in the mining sector, as well as in various other sectors, provided consistent emotional, social and spiritual support to miners. While many of the miners who benefited from this facility belonged to religious communities, some were clearly non-religious. Combining literature reviews and observations this paper underscores the value of pastoral care in the mining sector, particularly its availability to South African miners who had to isolate after testing positive for Covid-19 in 2020. It is worth noting that not much was recorded on the role of chaplaincy specifically in the mining industry within South Africa, thus presenting as a limitation to the study. To execute this, firstly, this paper will briefly discuss pastoral care in relation to or in comparison to chaplaincy. Second, it will discuss both the inclusive and non-inclusive character of this service. Third, it highlights the presence of chaplaincy in the mining sector in countries such as Australia and Canada, and a distinction is made between the presence in these countries and in South Africa. Finally, this paper highlights the role played by chaplaincy during the Covid-19 pandemic in the mining industry internationally and specifically in South Africa.

Pastoral Care

According to Ağılkaya-Şahin (2016), pastoral care is widely accepted as an encounter and relationship in which both the context of religious and church content are clear. The pastoral counsellor, who is generally a member of the clergy, represents the church. The religious dimension is the ultimate concern in the relationship (Ağılkaya-Şahin, 2016:71). Magezi (2016) further notes that pastoral care has been consistently concerned with the caring ministry of religious communities (Magezi, 2016:1). Chisale and Buffel (2014:297) describe the purpose of pastoral care as the Christian response to the needs of all members of God's community, so that all will enjoy a full and abundant life. This is also mentioned by Magezi (2019) who notes that the total human being (soul – Hebrew *nephesh*) and his or her needs for care and cure (healing) is the central concern of pastoral

care (Magezi, 2019:2). Louw's (2015) assertion seems to align with Magezi (2019) as he writes that the term *cura animarum* describes a very special process of caring: caring for human life because it is created by God, belongs to God and is saved by God in Christ (Louw, 2015:53). Lartey (2003:21) defines pastoral care as "… helping acts done by a representative Christian person, directed toward the healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling of a troubled person, whose troubles arise in context of ultimate meaning and concerns." In addition, Lartey (2003) mentions five essential features of a definition of pastoral care that attempts to be intercultural in its nature and scope, as follows (Lartey, 2003:26):

1. *Pastoral care is an expression of human concern through activities*:
   This means that in pastoral care, deep concern about what it is to be human is expressed. Pastoral caregivers have a concern for more than what can be seen on the surface, about human persons, as well as what may lie deeply buried within them. This concern is expressed in activity.

2. *Pastoral carers recognise transcendence*:
   This refers to the realisation that there is more to life than often meets the eye. They have an awareness that power, grace and goodness are often not found in the obvious places. They recognise that there is a mysteriousness about life which is not reducible to sociological, psychological or physiological analyses and explanations, important though these may be.

3. *Pastoral care entails multivariate forms of communication*:
   Non-verbal communication is recognised as a powerful mode of communication, perhaps even of greater significance than the verbal. The forms of communication present in any given society are explored to determine their value within the society for caring interaction.

4. *The motive is love*:
   In intercultural pastoral care, love is both the motivation and the motive force, recognising the love of God as crucial and basic for and in the created world.

5. *Pastoral care aims at prevention and fostering*:
   In this instance, pastoral care aims at preventing distress where possible, by creative anticipation and sensitive, non-intrusive awareness-building.

The above five elements encompass the essence of what pastoral care is about in an intercultural setting. The concern is shown through activity, not through words only, amongst other things, and the importance of communication as well as the motive which is love. The five statements above also show that pastoral care is not, or should not be, only reactive, but where possible proactive in ensuring that problems do not become uncontrollable. The next two sections attempt to highlight the two distinct phases of pastoral care as it progressed from non-inclusive to inclusive practice.

Non-inclusive Pastoral Care

The non-inclusivity of pastoral care as a ministry is not without reason. For many it has always been perceived as a service rendered for the Christian community and the religious during their time of need. Pastoral care is widely accepted as an encounter and relationship in which both the context of church and religious content are clear. The pastoral counsellor, who is generally a clergy member, represents the church (Ağılkaya-Şahin, 2016:71). This perspective implies that those who are not religious are not catered as they are not part of the church and may not recognise the authority of the Pastor giving the care and the necessary healing above.

This exclusivity is further highlighted in part by Magezi (2019) who mentions that *Cura animarum* as care for the whole person is from a specifically Christian spiritual perspective (Magezi, 2019:1). This notion of pastoral care, according to Ağılkaya-Şahin (2016), is the broadest meaning of pastoral care

and comprises all acts that lead to the salvation of the soul which are performed in the name of God (Ağılkaya-Şahin, 2016:70). The emphasis on religiosity and God may not resonate with those who do not conform to the notion of God as a supreme Being with the ability to heal, restore and most importantly love unconditionally. Ağılkaya-Şahin (2016) writes that: "God is the first pastoral counselor, and the New Testament recommends pastoral care in many verses. God performs acts of care by means of His worldly representatives: first being Jesus Christ, then his apostles, the church, clerics, and finally, all Christian believers" (Ağılkaya-Şahin, 2016:73). Ağılkaya-Şahin (2016) further writes that in Christian belief, God is recognised as love. By virtue of this love, God approaches people, cares for them, opens Himself to them, and consoles them in difficult times (Ağılkaya-Şahin, 2016:74).

Harding et al (2008) notes that Grossoehme (1999) defines pastoral care as: "the formation of relationships with persons of all ages that communicate (both with and without words) and bask in knowing one's self to be a child of God, so that all persons are enabled to live through their life experiences and to understand them in terms of their faith' (Harding et al, 2008:112). Knowing God and ability to relate to Him as a supreme being is critical and is emphasised in providing care to those in need of the service. The word of God as written in the Bible, and in prayers are in most instances part of the process when providing pastoral care.

Inclusive Pastoral Care

In the diverse world in which we live, pastoral care cannot afford to be for a specific group of people only, in this instance the religious. The professional field of pastoral care is undergoing a seismic shift in both its identity and its practice. This shift, experienced particularly in the field of professional chaplaincy according to Thorstenson (2012), is moving beyond the traditional, religion-based model of *presence,* which drew primarily from traditional Judeo-Christian sources to a humanist-based and holistic model (Thorstenson, 2012:1). This is especially true as the love of God is not for the few but for all and especially the wounded and those in need of healing irrespective of whether they are religious or not. This notion is further mentioned by Schuhmann and Damen (2018) who also note that pastoral care is no longer exclusively associated with specific religious traditions and communities (Schuhmann & Damen, 2018:405). Thorstenson, (2012) mentions that it is becoming a field that seeks to transcend escalating social and religious complexities and barriers to community while tending more effectively to the well-being and resilience of the individual (Thorstenson, 2012:1). This move towards an inclusive pastoral care is not a new phenomenon. Carey and Davoren (2008) note that during the 20th century, various theologians and religious leaders strongly advocated for an inter-faith theology that would encourage a pragmatic and reciprocal pastoral care relationship between people of different religions (Carey and Davoren, 2008:21). This precisely because pastoral care is one of the places where the humanizing vision of Christianity comes into sharp and practical focus (Pattison, 2008:9). Schuhmann and Damen (2018), assert that the boundaries between religious communities are hazy since people generally draw from different religious traditions in their lives. This challenges a narrow understanding of pastoral care as taking place within separate religious communities and traditions (Schuhmann & Damen, 2018:406).

Wright (1996) asserts that since pastoral care is about helping people to know love, both as something to be received and as something to give, it doesn't shut off pastoral care as the special preserve for the few, and without any relationship to what else is going on both in the society and the church. He further highlights the fact that it doesn't distinguish too sharply between those whose motivation is exclusively Christian and those who do not in any sense share a Christian commitment (Wright, 1996:2). The pastoral counsellor approaches counsellees through communication that is marked with love and empathy. Certainly, such a relationship with God cannot be forced or imposed on the counsellee. This kind of communication and relationship may exist between God and the pastoral counsellor, but this does not mean that the counsellee can be forced to be part of this relationship (Ağılkaya-Şahin, 2016:74). People across different spheres of life, especially when facing life threatening situations, do need pastoral care of some sort or other. Henderson, et al (2023)

note that newer studies demonstrate that the spiritual needs for chaplain care are indeed strong across patient populations, even in non-religious patients. They further refer to the study by Gad et al (2022) at a non-faith-based academic hospital in Toledo that found that patients with no religious identity (self-identified as atheist, agnostic, or no religion) were just as likely to want a religious/spiritual conversation initiated by their healthcare provider as religious respondents (Henderson, et al, 2023:82). The findings by Henderson, et al (2023) in their own study supported the above too by noting that they found a strong desire for spiritual care services across all respondents, regardless of their self-reported levels of extrinsic religiosity (Henderson, et al, 2023:86).

While chaplains do not have the automatic right to minister to people of other religious faiths, they do have an obligation to respond equally to the needs of people of any faith and to ensure that people of all religious/spiritual beliefs have the right of access to religious/spiritual care (Carey & Davoren, 2008:22). At the end, every person, whether religious on non-religious, has the right to choose to accept pastoral care or to reject it. Pattison (2008) mentions that if Christians are not willing to listen to those within and outside the churches carefully and attentively, it is unlikely that they are going to discern where God is working anyway, let alone recruit more members or turn converts into true disciples. He further notes that if properly undertaken, pastoral care is itself an essential part of God's mission to the world — and to Christian religiosity (Pattison, 2008:9).

Pastoral Care And Chaplaincy

Despite the ambiguity, there seems to be a significant small difference between what is meant by pastoral care in the ecclesiastical sense and pastoral care in a sense of chaplaincy in the secular context. This is because, all too often, some academic scholars themselves do little to show the difference between the narrow meaning of pastoral care and chaplaincy, understandably so for the simple reason that the former informed the latter. In other words, in the pastoral literature, intentionally or unintentionally, much less distinction is made between when this practice takes place in a pastoral context and when it takes place in a secular context. To this end, the next two sections intentionally present the chaplain as a certified member of the clergy appointed within a non-religious organisation to provide spiritual care to all individuals or employees of that sector. On the other hand, a pastoral caregiver is equally portrayed as an ordained member of the clergy but providing spiritual care only to a particular religious organisation or to members of a particular church. Unlike in the above sections discussing pastoral care inclusive and non-inclusive characters, the next sections are more deliberate on aligning chaplaincy with various secular institutional settings. These secular institutional bodies include, but are not limited to, the police and military organisations, correctional facilities, and many other government-aligned sectors. This is presented in this way to initiate the discussion of pastoral care and chaplaincy, or lack thereof, in the mining context.

Little (2010) asserts that Christian pastoral care is integral to the mission and ministry of the church and is an aspect of all church activities, whether or not it is the primary focus. He further notes that its functions include economic, physical, psychological, social and spiritual support. Therefore, it requires a range of knowledge and ability from simple practical care through counselling to advocacy of a social or political nature (Little, 2010:1). In addition to the required knowledge, relations are important in pastoral care. Leimgruber (2022) highlights that in pastoral care relationships are inherently vulnerate, and pastoral care workers as professionally acting, professionally trained, and professionally supervised agents must have the prerequisites to correctly carry out the tasks assigned to them (Leimgruber, 2022:11). This is critical as according to Leimgruber (2022), every pastoral caregiver has the power to harm others within pastoral care relationships. It is a complex relationship in which pastoral caregivers should know how to act professionally and justifiably, as parts of their professional activity (Leimgruber, 2022:4).

Little (2010) writes that: "to perform this effective and responsible ministry, pastoral workers require a deep self-awareness and the necessary professional knowledge, skill and boundaries involved in

the mutuality of being what Frederic Greeves described as "shepherds who are also sheep" (Little, 2010:1). While the appropriate sharing of the faith is an aspect of pastoral care, both clergy and congregational members require a more profound propositional and practical knowledge on which to base their pastoral care for each other and those beyond the church membership (Little, 2010:5). Pastoral care recognises liturgy, ritual, confession, and traditional and contemporary Christian resources as beneficial components (Stone, 1996:12). Stone (1996) further writes that: "a sound theological perspective influences the whole warp and woof of pastoral care" (Stone, 1996:17). In addition to professional training, and standards, Harding et al (2008) assert that what is too often overlooked in discussing pastoral care is the function, meaning, and relationship of ordination and commissioning to pastoral care. Ordination is a sacrament — the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. In the Episcopal Church, it is the invocation of the Holy Spirit by those present, which passes through ordained bishops and priests to the one being ordained, transmitted through prayer and the laying on of hands (Harding et al, 2008:113). Other Christian denominations also speak of a transformation from a purely secular life before ordination to a new life afterward of service and responsibility to one's self, those served, and to God. By entering new life as an ordained person, through the power of the Holy Spirit, one is responsible to God — the absolute transcendent — and from this point of service and responsibility to others and to the divine, one is liberated from the normal constraints of time and space and becomes a vehicle of the divine or transcendent (Harding et al, 2008:114).

Pastoral caregivers who work in secular institutions provide care to religious and non-religious people alike, and in several Western societies, according to Schuhmann and Damen (2018) the term pastoral care is used in relation to non-religious (humanist) care (Schuhmann & Damen, 2018:405). Unlike in a parish where there are set things to do, "chaplaincy you go with the flow… you go where you are led almost" (Roberts & Dunlop, 2022:84). Mentioning (Ballard 2009) Roberts and Dunlop (2022) note that the parochial minister works mainly in, with and from the structures and culture of the church and reaches out to the community, but the chaplain, while having links with the institution, "is situated in the structures of the wider society which provides the matrix that shapes the job", Roberts and Dunlop (2022:81). The minister-parishioner encounter in a counselling chamber has as its larger setting the community of the church — a faith community. (Stone, 1996:17). A key characteristic of chaplaincy is that its primary context is the world rather than the institutional church and the defining characteristic of chaplains is that they are embedded in social structures (Roberts & Dunlop, 2022:80-81).

Roberts and Dunlop assert that chaplains are interesting people doing significant work in distinctive places (Roberts & Dunlop, 2022:2). They operate in a broadly secular public sphere in which religion is often kept at arm's length and sometimes viewed with suspicion (Roberts & Dunlop, 2022:2). Chaplains operate in some of the most significant institutions concerned, for example with education, health, justice and defence (Roberts & Dunlop, 2022:2; Roberts, 2017:218). Where the chaplain is based has a bearing on how he conducts his or her job. Corporate chaplaincy, the hiring of clergy to serve the spiritual, social, and emotional needs of employees in the workplace, is a growing phenomenon in the marketplace today (Miller & Ngunjiri, 2015:130). Chaplains can engage with those who are not church members and to address individual and social concerns from within the particular realities of everyday life (Roberts & Dunlop, 2022:83). Chaplains provide pastoral care to employees in the workplace, care that includes spiritual counselling, as well as help with family, addiction, immigration, and other issues that, though they take place outside of the workplace, affect employees performance at work (Miller & Ngunjiri, 2015:130). Roberts (2017) writes that Threlfall-Holmes (2011) assert the following: "from the point of view of the employing institution, the chaplain is there to provide certain professional services, whether as a pastoral carer, spiritual carer, an expert in faith and faiths or as an expert practitioner and guardian of a cultural tradition" (Roberts, 2017:220). Both the chaplain and pastoral carer provide care to humanity even though they may be operating from different environments with the chaplain functioning in more structured organisations and exposed to more diverse environments consisting of religious and non-religious people.

Chaplaincy In Mining Sector

The above sections have detailed what pastoral care and chaplaincy are, and even made a distinction between inclusive and non-inclusive pastoral care. An alignment was further made to indicate the role played by chaplains in the secular institutions. To the extent that there is an understanding or acknowledgment that chaplaincy or pastoral care, so to speak, is no longer just a service offered exclusively to religious members, this may not be a reality in all public institutions where this service may be required. In other words, although the literature has emphasised the importance of chaplaincy in providing emotional and spiritual support to organisational workers, there are still industries where this service is either only partially provided or not provided at all. Amongst the industries where this service is either absent or not offered at all is the mining industry, which amongst other things, employs large, diverse groups of people. While this may not be the case in every country in the world, there appears to be little, if any data, in South Africa to indicate the existence of this service in the mining sector. To illustrate this reality, the next two sections will first point to or highlight the presence of chaplaincy in the mining sector in countries such as Australia and Canada, and second its virtual presence in South Africa. In other words, while the next few sections do not attempt to deny the existence of chaplaincy in the South African mining sector, a distinction is made between South Africa and the countries mentioned above.

Chaplains visit the whole range of organisations that operate in the UK. They visit centralised workplaces, such as steel mills and large insurance company offices. They work in distributed organisations (for example, within the British Rail network, the London underground and police services). Primary and extractive industries, such as coal mining, are well served, as is manufacturing on a large and small scale, and service organisations in all sectors — including the retailing, tourism, transport, and accommodation industries (Elkin, 1992:17). The variety of organisations go beyond the traditional organisations that chaplains historically served which are hospitals, prisons and the army, for example. To provide effective service, Elkin (1992) notes that identifying with the enterprise, its technology and its problems is important if the chaplain is to be able to initiate contacts and show empathy. He further notes that chaplains frequently work shifts in the coal industry and spend time underground (Elkin, 1992:24).

Chaplains seek to encourage Christians and church people in the workplace and are also encouraged in return. In a small number of cases, they are involved in discussion groups of plant or within it (Elkin, 1992:24). The role of the chaplain has obviously evolved over the years. According to the writings of Smith (1952), relating to coal mines in America, the most important single thing the industrial chaplain was called upon to do was to evangelise the unconverted miner (Smith, 1952:510). The same author Smith (1952), also notes that the task of the industrial chaplain was much more comprehensive than that of the evangelist. For he had to become a pastor to the miner as well, bringing to him counsel and comfort and generally assisting in his spiritual growth and development (Smith, 1952:512-513). In addition to being an evangelist and a pastoral carer, Smith (1952) highlights the role of chaplaincy in emergency by relating the role that was played by Rev. William MacIntyre, organiser for Industrial Chaplaincies of the church of Scotland, in connection with the disaster at Knockshinnoch Castle Colliery where 128 men were entombed and where 13 men ultimately lost their lives. He notes that Mr. MacIntyre went at once to the pit and counselled there with the distraught families. The chaplain further arranged for prayers for the entombed men and special services that were held close to the disaster scene. This gesture is commendable and speaks to the heart of chaplaincy of being there with those who are distraught and in need of support, what is commonly referred to as presence. Smith (1952) acknowledges that the pastoral office of the coal town chaplain, however, included vastly more than the emergency services related to a mine disaster. They included, for example, definite responsibility for the development of Christian lay leaders amongst miners (Smith, 1952:513).

In reference to Australia, Ebert and Strehlow (2017) indicate that historically, chaplaincy was a Christian outreach ministry of ordained clergy associated with sites and professions where trauma is frequent; for example, military, prisons, emergency services and hospitals. Their role has been to reach out and be available as needed. Nowadays, priests and laymen of various faiths (or no faith) and training backgrounds, work as chaplains in several industries, including the mining sector (Ebert & Strehlow, 2017:118). The outcome of the study they (Ebert & Strehlow, 2017) conducted indicated that on-site chaplains employed a unique proactive outreach approach and provided a level of care that extended beyond the individual and the mine site, making this a highly effective support service that fills gaps that cannot be filled by other health service professions. Of importance is that the study showed that the chaplains' proactive approach effectively reduced well-identified barriers to seeking help related to a predominantly masculine mining culture. The findings showed chaplaincy services provided immediate interventions and acted as an effective intercessor when a person was experiencing personal or mental stress or a crisis. Furthermore, attending to pressures and mental distractions early reduced absent-mindedness and thus facilitated injury prevention (Ebert & Strehlow, 2017:121). Availability of chaplains in Australian mines can be traced back to the 1960s (Ebert & Strehlow, 2017:118). Chaplaincy is mentioned as one of the services that had an impact on long-distance commuting in mining which involves a cycle of working for extended periods away from the family home. This is along with other services such as access to health services as well as psychosocial support that was readily available either through telephone services, and visiting health professionals (Misan & Rudnik, 2015:26). In this instance, chaplaincy likely provided comfort to these employees who work away from home and with no access to their local clergy. Misan and Rudnik (2015) also mentions the following as the stressors associated with this work arrangement: shift work, long rosters, separation from friends and family, missing family events, isolation, and fatigue (Misan & Rudnik, 2015:1). The above clearly indicates how this service internationally has evolved over the years to remain relevant and to address the current challenges in the world of work including the mining industry.

South Africa's Mining Industry

Historically, South Africa's mining industry has been at the heart of the economy's development - given the country's competitive position as one of the most naturally resource-rich nations in the world (Antin, 2013:1). The industry is also one of the largest employers in the South Africa and the neighbouring countries. Masia and Pienaar (2011) note that the mining industry has been an important source of employment in South Africa since the early 1900s (Masia & Pienaar, 2011:1). According to Kennedy (1992), the Transvaal mineral discoveries of the 1880s attracted a large influx of Cornish, British, and 'colonial' miners, many of them Methodists. To minister to these mushrooming communities and the thousands of black workers in their midst, the London Wesleyan Missionary Committee sent several missionaries, ably led by the Rev. Owen Watkins and George Weavind, the director of the training institution for natives at Kilnerton, near Pretoria (Kennedy, 1992:204). Ambler and Crush (1992), as mentioned in Crush (1994), note that workers' cultural practices rooted in a rural world elsewhere and helped them to make sense of and cope with the stresses of mine life. These included the informal organisation which workers established, their beliefs and rituals, the songs, and stories which they told and sang, and their leisure activities, including drinking (Crush, 1994:315).

One response to 'the terrible and pressing necessity for bringing the Gospel to these natives, and ... the tribes of the distant interior' was to ordain Daniel Msimang and Mangena Mokone as 'Native Ministers' in March 1888. Town natives were more open to Christian influences than the 'mine boys' because of their *kholwa* background, longer periods of residence in Johannesburg, and occasional pressure from white employers to be baptised (Kennedy, 1992:205). In their sermons and testimonies to 'raw natives' in the compounds, black preachers shared similar social experiences, traditions, and reactions to the alienating world around them, and reinforced their message with vivid, sometimes amusing metaphors taken from rural and mining life (Kennedy, 1992:206). Crush (1994) notes that private fears of death and disablement in a brutal and unrelenting underground

environment were very real. These fears surfaced in the religious beliefs and practices of many miners. On the mines, faith was a necessity not an option, one of several strategies deployed by miners to ensure their own personal safety. Sometimes, for miners with some kind of mission background, prayer and supplication to the Christian God was sufficient insurance (Crush, 1994:318). The mining industry has played a key role in attracting foreign investment and creating leading global enterprises, and remains South Africa's most critically observed economic sector (Antin, 2013:1). Mining in South Africa is still one of the toughest and most hazardous occupations with incidences of accidents and sometimes deaths reported occasionally. Masia and Pienaar (2011) note that a strong focus on production characterises the mining industry (Masia & Pienaar, 2011:1). In the year 2022, according to the Department of Minerals and Energy, 49 fatalities were reported versus 74 in the year 2021 — this translates to 34% improvement in the number of fatalities year on year (Department of Minerals and Energy, 2023). The mine fatalities can mostly be because of non-compliance to the safety standards. Masia and Pienaar (2011) assert that high performance pressures and time constrains decrease the safety level of operations. Employees have strict targets to meet within specified timelines. These might encourage workers to take shortcuts and jeopardise safety (Masia & Pienaar, 2011:1).

The fear of losing life and fatalities is not the only challenge faced by the employees in the mining industry in South Africa today. HIV and Aids, Tuberculosis, and Silicosis are some of the health challenges faced by mine employees today. Schuhmann and Damen (2018) assert that "ultimate situations may also be desperate situations; we may fall fatally ill with no prospect of regaining health, or we may be the victim of violence and feel that there is no good left in the world". In these situations, they note that we cannot simply reorient towards our original visions of the good. We need to search for new visions of the good that have not lost all believability in these desperate or awe-inspiring situations (Schuhmann & Damen, 2018:409). In such situations, Schuhmann and Damen (2018) mention that the role of chaplains is probably most salient in 'ultimate' situations — situations of severe disorientation in which our usual visions of the good lose their believability (Schuhmann & Damen, 2018:408).

There might not be a clear record in literature of the mining industry in South Africa having Chaplaincy as part of the wellness programmes they would provide to the mine employees. However, calls for prayer during times of uncertainty and especially during loss of lives have been reported. For, example, in the case of Lilly Mine Disaster, in Mpumalanga (2016), the then-President of South Africa, President Jacob Zuma, during his State of the Nation Address speech called for prayers for the families. President Zuma called for prayers for the families of the three miners still trapped. He further mentioned: "The families are in deep pain and feel helpless in such an overwhelming situation," (Evans, 2016). *Govan Whittles* (2016) from the *Mail & Guardian* reported: "The sign of life from inside what used to be a lamp room rejuvenates rescue efforts and brings hope to the workers' families, who have been allocated a room in which to sleep and pray in one of the offices near the site". He (Whittles, 2016) quotes Elmond Mnisi, the father of one of the two women in the container as having said:

> As a pastor myself and an employee at this mine, I feel it is my responsibility to make sure the families don't give up hope. We pray together for the safety of our children and the operations of the rescue team while sitting inside that room. We've been treated very well by the company. I asked God to intervene and grant us a miracle (Govan Whittles 2016).

In relation to the Marikana massacre of August 2012, the Town Press (2019) ascribed the following to the Mine's spokesperson: "This has been a very humbling week for us as an organization. From Monday we have been having prayer sessions at all our shafts with employees recognizing the trauma that most of them went through, but in particular being with the families in prayer and ensuring that we assist them through the process of healing by having these prayer sessions and noting that they have to rehash the death of the family members, the colleagues that we lost on this day and standing with them to get them through this week," (Town Press, August 16, 2019). Generally, it is

a common practice in most mining operations that meetings and gatherings will in most instances be opened by prayer.

Events that are hosted by the mines are likely to have a Christian minister reading the Bible and praying as part of the official programme. This is reflected in part by Roberts and Dunlop (2022) who mention that increasing number of lay and ordained parish ministers engage with people's lived experiences through chaplaincy roles, but the work is often unquantified, lacks representation within the institution and lacks an articulate theological rationale for that representation (Roberts & Dunlop, 2022:81). Harding et al (2008) in reference to the secular institutions, where the chaplain's faith tradition may not apply to all, mentions LaRocca-Pitts (2006) who says "the chaplain first offers spiritual care to all and then pastoral care to those who invite it", Harding et al (2008:115). Thus, in most instances, spiritual care to all serves as an entry point to provide chaplaincy to those who indicate the need for such service.

Chaplaincy During Covid-19

As highlighted in previous sections of this paper, chaplaincy in the workplace has proven to be crucial in enabling employees to overcome the challenges they face in the workplace itself and beyond. This has even been highlighted based on the role that chaplaincy continues to play in the mining industry in countries such as Australia and Canada. Furthermore, the practical presence of chaplaincy services, or even lack thereof, in the South African mining sector demonstrates the importance of this service. In other words, both the virtual presence and absence of chaplaincy in the South African mining sector can, by any interpretation, indicate the importance of this service in such a working environment. Although there appears to be little data in South Africa to indicate the existence of the chaplaincy service in the mining sector doesn't in any way imply that under no circumstances is chaplaincy never needed in this sector. In fact, no crisis like the Covid-19 pandemic, either in South Africa or elsewhere in the world, has clearly demonstrated the importance of chaplaincy in sectors such as mining. The following sections explore the significant role that chaplaincy has played or could have played in the South African mining sector during the Covid-19 pandemic, as it has in many other industries. In other words, the next two sections will focus narrowly on the importance of chaplaincy in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, which in many ways encapsulates its importance in South Africa's mining sector.

Although the Covid-19 pandemic forced countries to shut down in 2020, most governments allowed the mining sector to continue operating, if not as usual, then with somewhat limited restrictions related to the containment of Covid-19 (Jowitt, 2020:34). However, in some countries such as Mexico, where the mining industry was forced to suspend operations on March 31, 2020, operations resumed on May 18, 2020 (Jowitt, 2020:34). The British-Australian multinational mining company Rio Tinto in Mongolia (a country in East Asia) was also forced to suspend non-essential operations due to government regulations relating to the containment of the Covid-19 spread (Laing 2020:581). For those countries that considered mining essential, mitigation approaches have also varied overtime as Covid-19 outbreaks are managed (Jowitt, 2020:34). According to Jowitt (2020), the different remedial measures taken by different governments meant that the impact of the crisis on the mining industry remained unclear (Jowitt, 2020:34). In addition to the governments' wide-ranging mitigations, mining companies also came up with domestic measures based on their own situations, including local Covid-19 outbreaks at individual operations, and logistical challenges (Jowitt, 2020:34).

Interestingly, Ihekweazu (2020) as mentioned in (Jowitt, 2020) notes that mining operations that have gone through recent epidemics are particularly well equipped to continue operating during this crisis. This is exemplified by West Africa, where knowledge of screening and isolation practices developed during the Ebola epidemic meant that individual mine sites and other businesses in this part of the world were better equipped to continue operations during the Covid-19 pandemic (Jowitt, 2020:34). Covid-19 mitigation approaches were naturally much harder to enact in underground labor-intensive mining situations relative to large and more mechanised or automated open-pit

environments (Jowitt, 2020:34). This crisis presented to company leaders an opportunity to rethink and reimagine 'business as usual'. As with the post-Second World War generation of business leaders, they had an opportunity to shape the way things would develop in the post-Covid-19 world. Whether or not they took it, that world would be different than the one before. 'The future is not what is used to be', means that they could not afford to assume that everything would go back to normal (Heslam, 2020:11). As lessons learned from previous periods of disasters, it stood to reason that much could be learned from the Covid-19 pandemic. Laing (2020) asserts that how these countries coped with such a crisis is a vital area for future research, to help build resilience to future pandemics. Beyond these short-term impacts there are likely to be medium and long-term impacts to individuals, companies and countries in, and related to, the mining sector from the Covid-19 pandemic Laing (2020:581).

Religious communities have been called upon to work with secular and political organisations to promote health (DeRossett et al. 2021:3162). Many chaplains noted that their role expanded during the pandemic, and they had increased visibility amongst staff colleagues (Tata, et al, 2021:26). Chaplains experienced 'fluidity in role' where they entered new areas for exercising ministry, such as presence at team meetings, inclusion in decision making in staff support/planning. These responses gave the impression that the chaplain's role with staff support and spiritual care was taken to a new level. Wearing 'scrubs', getting involved in practical care, 'getting my hands dirty', as well as showing willingness to be available and vulnerable, all contributed to effective teamwork and a high standard of chaplaincy presence where possible (Tata, et al, 2021:26).

For people to reach their greatest potential, the workplace must be an environment designed to promote health and well-being. Finding our way out of the coal mine will take time and concentrated effort (Schmidt, et al 2021:6). This is specially true in times of uncertainty. This is further noted by Schmidt, et al (2021) who mention that as the crisis grew, we identified the need to address the psychological needs of our workforce. We acted quickly to mobilise a Healthy Work and Wellness Steering Committee, which was a multidisciplinary group with members from nursing and medical staff, human resources, mission, wellness, and various other support departments. The steering team led the effort to identify the areas of greatest social, emotional, and spiritual needs and determine what our organisation could do to meet those needs in order to promote better health and well-being. The writers further mentioned the following: "Based on staff feedback, the multidisciplinary wellness steering committee worked with leaders in mental health, pastoral care and mission to develop interventions focusing on social, emotional and spiritual support" (Schmidt, et al 2021:6).

As was the practice during the lockdown in many other spheres of life, Schmidt et al (2021) note that in addition to the physical presence a spiritual support hotline was set up, along with recorded webinars led by a trained mental health expert (Schmidt, et al 2021:6). Through the pandemic, creative spiritual care became available to staff which created new understanding of the chaplain's role and spiritual support as a whole (Tata, et al, 2021: 27). "We know that a sense of belonging and inclusion is critical to ensure that all employees feel supported and believe they can thrive in our organisation. To do this we also need to shift the conventional thinking that wellness is only for those in certain roles or of certain socioeconomic statuses or certain races, or that all wellness interventions will work equally well for persons from diverse cultural backgrounds," (Schmidt, et al 2021:7-8).

South Africa's Response

The South African mining industry's response to Covid-19 was not unique to what happened globally. On 15 March, the Department of Cooperative Governance in the Government Gazette and in terms of the Disaster Management Act classified Covid-19 as a national Disaster (Kotze, 2020:396).

The declaration of the Act, according to the President of the Republic of South Africa, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, as recorded in Kotze (2020) was:

"… to enable us to have an integrated and coordinated disaster management mechanism that focus on preventing and reducing the outbreak of this virus, the urgent and drastic measures to manage the disease are legally justified as they would protect the people of our country and reduce the impact of the virus on our society and on our economy" (Kotze, 2020:396).

The South African government initially approached their underground-dominated and often labour-intensive mining industry the same way, closing operations in March 2020, but later changing this to only reduce mining capacity by 50% (Jowitt, 2020:34).

The government's stance was reiterated by the Mineral and Energy Resources Minister, Gwede Mantashe who mentioned that: "At the heart of our programmes is the protection of people's lives and livelihoods. When we agreed that mines should operate at reduced capacity, we highlighted the importance of protecting and saving the economic infrastructure beyond the lockdown period." The minister further emphasised that: "It is in the interest of mining operations to comply with the lockdown regulations. We are not going to put people at risk for production" (South African Government News Agency 2020). As a leading producer of metals and minerals, such as platinum, palladium, coal, gold and iron ore, South Africa's labour-intensive mining industry is a potential hotbed of infection amongst the thousands of miners who often work in confined spaces, with some living nearby in cramped accommodation. South Africa's Minerals Council said it was exploring what would be required to prevent permanent damage of the sector (Reuters, 2020).

In order to be proactive, and looking at global trends, Creamer (2020) reports that by early March, two weeks before the declaration of the state of disaster and before the first diagnosis in South Africa, member companies were operating in terms of a Minerals Council 10-point action plan. This involved, in brief, employee education, health worker readiness, use of masks, sanitisers and temperature monitors, proactive influenza vaccinations, dealing with immunocompromised employees, management of suspected cases or contacts of cases, provision for isolation of employees where required, travel advice, industry reporting, communication and monitoring (Creamer, 2020). This was not done in isolation, instead it was executed in close cooperation with member companies' occupational health experts and others, and in engagements through the Mine Health and Safety Council with experts from government and organised labour, it had been monitoring the situation closely since January and taking a range of actions.

Despite the anxiety and uncertainty during this time, quoting Mzila Mthenjane: Exxaro Resources executive head stakeholder relations, on the return to the mines by some workers (Creamer, 2020) writes:

"The level of morale has been surprisingly high, but I think it hasn't been without any effort on the part of employers and leaders to continue to communicate and I think more importantly, seeing how companies are going beyond just the leasing area in terms of looking after employees, but also looking after the communities where these employees come from. So, it's a combination of factors that is really encouraging employees to want to come back because I think they are really witnessing that companies are not only looking at profits, but also the health and welfare of employees and their families," (Creamer, 2020).

In addition, Mineral and Energy Resources Minister, Gwede Mantashe, emphasised that mineworkers must be tested for Covid-19, warning that failure to do this will put the lives of miners at risk (South African Government News Agency 2020).

South Africa is still the most unequal country in the world with a Gini-coefficient of 0.63. This translates, for instance, in 14% of South Africans living in informal settlements, without proper

housing, limited access to sanitation and water and an overall unemployment rate of 29% (Stiegler & Bouchard, 2020:696). The accommodation arrangements in most mines in South Africa are also such that most mine employees share common spaces such as bathrooms and the kitchen, and thus would not be able to fulfil the requirements to self-isolate and thus opted to be admitted to the mine facilities. This led to the introduction of isolation and quarantine sites to accommodate the mine employees who were infected and affected by the pandemic. These, however, whereas helpful in containing the pandemic, did not come easy to those who were subjected to them.

According to Stiegler and Bouchard (2020), when it came to self-isolation in general, those staying with families explained that their days were filled with family activities (once they had finished working/studying remotely), whereas those alone were getting bored and were more involved with anxiety inducing activities such as reading and watching the news throughout the day, and thinking about the situation (Stiegler & Bouchard, 2020:697). The facilities catered for the employees who were asymptomatic and those with mild disease. Both categories of isolated employees spent 14 days in the facility. Those who showed moderate to severe symptoms were admitted to nearby medical facilities. Each employee had their own separate room and bathroom. The facility also had medical personnel on duty 24 hours of the day who monitored the employees' well-being, health-wise, for example checking for the vitals and dispensing medicine where necessary. Furthermore, noting that the well-being goes beyond the physical wellness of the individual, services of psycho-social consultants who mostly were ordained pastors, were secured to cater for the emotional and spiritual needs of those in isolation. This proved to be a necessity and brought about relief during this time of uncertainty to others. Individual consultations and group sessions were undertaken compliant with the Covid-19 restrictions, including social distancing, the wearing of the full PPE and regular testing for the corona virus. Hove (2022) notes that pastoral presence brings comfort in times of despair as their presence represents one who comes to the other, as well as the presence of the church and God to the persons under their care. This proved to be the case in the South African context in the mining industry during the Covid-19 pandemic. Although chaplaincy played a small role in the bigger scheme of things, the impact that it made to the recipients was great. Chaplaincy helped many to make sense of their situation and afforded them the hope to face a new day. Employees' anxiety relating to the pandemic, fears of dying for those that had tested positive, and grief, were some of the challenges that these pastors had to help employees to deal with.

Conclusion

The paper focused on the understanding of pastoral care and chaplaincy both in conventional and non-conventional settings. It further highlighted the differences between inclusive and not inclusive pastoral care. The paper illustrated that chaplaincy has been part of many industries for many years, and how the focus has moved from being evangelical at one point as in the mining industry to being part of the wellness of the employees. The role played by chaplains in countries such as Australia and Canada within the mining industry was discussed. In addition, the non-defined role and sporadic use of religious leaders from the Christian background in South African mines was also discussed. From the literature mentioned in this paper, it is clear that their role was limited to crises relating to accidents and possible loss of life. This is in contrast with countries such as Australia and Canada where they play an integral role and have the necessary recognition.

The most important conclusion that can be drawn from this work is that chaplains have a critical role to play within the mining industry in South Africa as was seen during the Covid-19 pandemic. This paper discussed the role that chaplains played in the mines in South Africa working with employees that were in Isolation sites. The presence of chaplains proved that pastoral care can't afford to be non-inclusive. It highlighted that chaplaincy has a critical role to play beyond the Covid-19 pandemic and associated crises. This global crisis provided lessons that can be used going forward in relation to chaplaincy in the mining industry in South Africa. The fear of death and disablement are still very much the reality of many mine workers in South Africa considering the conditions they work in.

Restricting pastoral care to periods of crises denies the mining industry the benefits associated with wholeness of employees that can easily translate to prevention of incidences.

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