

# **“An old story in a new city - pioneering in the polder”**

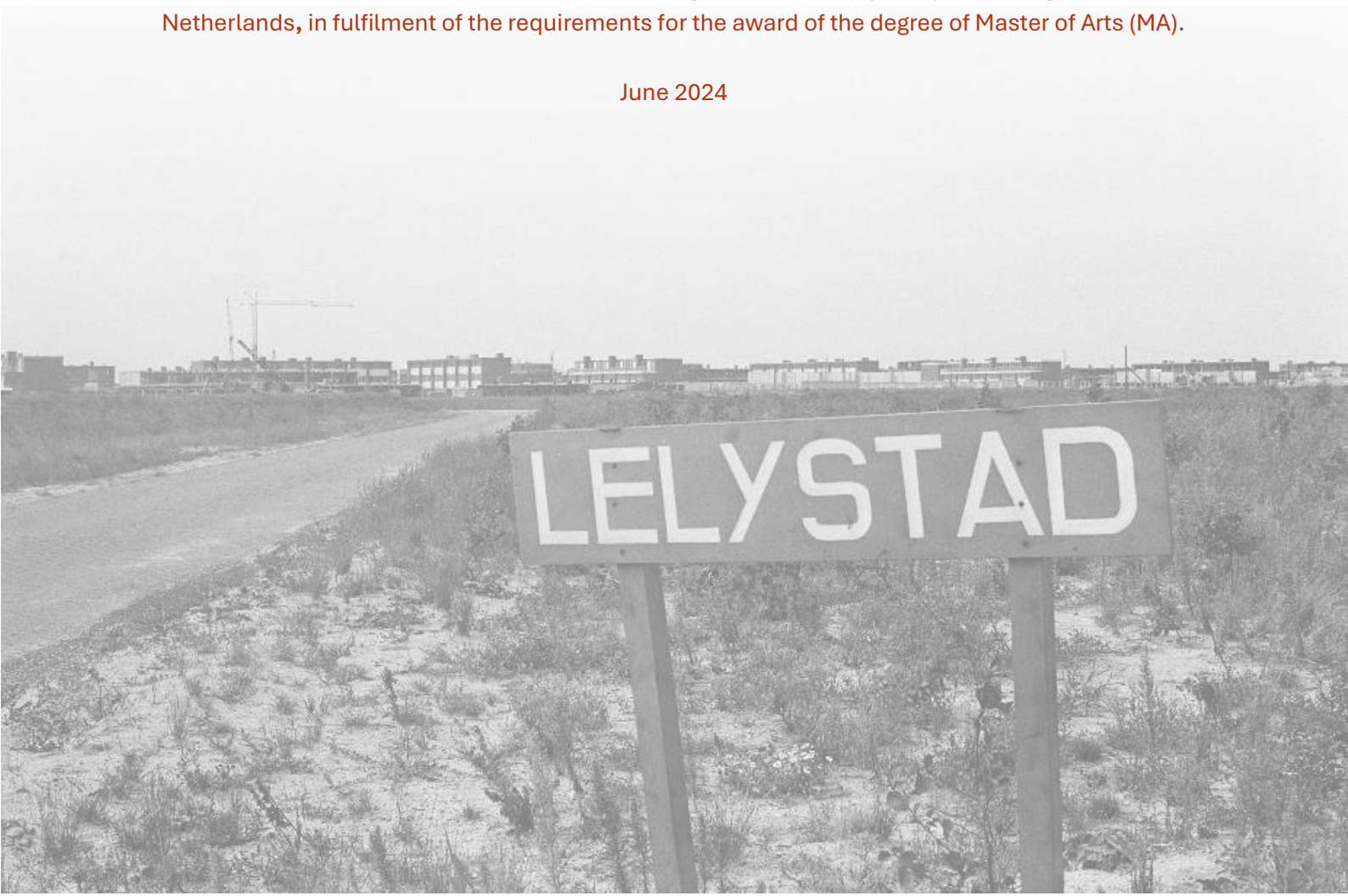
*A research about how a pioneer church in Lelystad in a social diverse setting connects with God and local residents*

Presented by

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A thesis submitted at the **Protestant Theological University (PThU)** in Groningen, The Netherlands, in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Arts (MA).

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*(The picture on the front page shows “De Zuiderzeewijk” under construction, as the first residential area in Lelystad; picture by Erik Koch, Nationaal Archief, 1967)*

## Abstract

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In many countries, especially in the West, Christianity seems to be losing ground. For this reason, many churches have begun to experiment with more contextualised ways of being church. In the Netherlands, the Protestant Church started with “pioneer churches”. For example in "De Zuiderzeewijk" in Lelystad, where a pioneer church was started in September 2022. The neighbourhood has one of the lowest average gross annual incomes per inhabitant in the country and is known for its social diversity and social problems. In the first phase of their development, the pioneers want to move from doing and listening to *loving and serving*, according to the *servicing-first journey*. In order to connect with local residents and eventually build a Christian community, it is important to gain a better understanding of the needs of local residents and the characteristics of the neighbourhood. How can this pioneer church *be with* God and *be with* local residents? The method used in this research is participatory action research. During this research, four sub questions were answered based on qualitative data. Results show that the neighbourhood is culturally diverse, with people from different countries and parts of the world, as well as religious backgrounds. It is also evident that local residents have experienced a lot of disappointment. Sometimes they seem to be passive or indifferent. The members of the pioneer church struggle with their approach to these residents.

Conclusions of this research are that team members have the intention to work according *being with*. This is visible when they speak in general about situations. When explaining more specific situations, their use of language reveals *working for*. This was also visible in the participant observations. **A second conclusion** is that a tension between the ideas of Wells and Moynagh is visible. This is also visible between pioneer and team members, and between local residents and team members. Soteriological alignment can help overcome these tensions. **A third conclusion** is that if Wells' *being with* is valued by local residents and perhaps by people in general, this has consequences for the future design of pioneering in the Netherlands. It is suggested that the method of IZB-impact can be enriched with ideas of *being with*, because it fits the needs of local residents. A second issue in this working method is the position and composition of the pioneer team. **A fourth conclusion** is that growth is already visible in two elements (missional, contextual). Two other elements (formational and ecclesial) have room for development. **A final conclusion** is that four circles of a *servicing first-journey* must be fulfilled before start organising Sunday celebrations. Before church takes shape, *listening* and *loving and serving* are in full progress. *Building community* is growing, and *exploring discipleship* is not visible yet. (456 words)

### Key words

New ecclesial communities, being with, servicing-first journey, loving and serving, social diversity

### Word count

24,197 words (maximum between 15,000 and 25,000 words, excluding table of contents, bibliography and appendices)

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*“Ik wil jou van harte dienen en als Christus voor je zijn.  
Bid dat ik genade vind, dat jij het ook voor mij kunt zijn.*

*Wij zijn onderweg als pelgrims, vinden bij elkaar houvast.  
Naast elkaar als broers en zusters, dragen wij elkaanders last.”*

(Opwekking 378)

This text comes from a song about serving others and *being with* each other on our journey through life, not an unequal way of serving, but one based on respect, equality and solidarity. Through this, says the author, Christ becomes visible. This text is a motto for this thesis.

## 1. Introduction and background

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Due to various social changes in the last sixty years (individualisation, pluralism, the rise of religious alternatives), the traditional churches seem to be losing ground. It seems as if Christianity in general is losing its appeal to its environment. In many countries, especially in the West, this development is recognised. At the beginning of the 21st century, several churches began to experiment with more contemporary and contextualised forms of church communities in an attempt to be attractive to their environment again. Examples include the Church of England's “Fresh Expressions of Church” and the “HeartEdge”-movement in the United Kingdom.

### 1.1. Initiatives of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands

Also several experiments with new ways of being church have been started in the Netherlands over the past two decades. A clear example are the so-called pioneer churches of the Protestant Church (PKN). Since 2004, the program for pioneer churches became a major priority of the PKN. Between 2010 and 2015, the pioneer approach evolved from classical church planting (focused on Sunday services) to more contextualised forms of starting new ecclesial communities<sup>1</sup>. These pioneer churches can be attractive for neighbourhoods where there is (no longer) a church community. These congregations can be attractive to people if church representatives tend to listen carefully to the explicit and implicit needs of the people around them<sup>2</sup>. It is funded and has led to more than 100 pioneer churches over the country<sup>3</sup>. According to Verburg-Janssen, pioneer churches are characterised by the fact that they are visible and open in the midst of everyday life, and it is these ordinary situations in everyday life that are valuable. The place and the opportunity for an open and deep encounter remain present, whatever the form of the relationship between these different participants<sup>4</sup>. Verburg-Janssen describes the added value of maintaining places where people can be themselves and where they can be present as often as possible. By creating a place that remains present no matter what, a place of God is created<sup>5</sup>. If the aim is to create a new (ecclesial) community in which participants can feel at home, it is important to gain insight into the elements that make it meaningful for the target group to commit to an initiative in which faith plays a role.

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<sup>1</sup> Marten van der Meulen, and Martijn Vellekoop, “*The Impact of the Emerging Church on the Protestant Church in the Netherlands*,” *International Review of Mission* 108, no. 2 (John Wiley and Sons Ltd., 2019), 316

<sup>2</sup> Erik Verwoerd and Martijn Vellekoop. “*Pionieren Verkennen, vanuit de Protestantse Kerk in Nederland*” (Utrecht: Protestantse Kerk in Nederland, 2018), 3

<sup>3</sup> Van der Meulen and Vellekoop, “*The Impact of the Emerging Church on the Protestant Church in the Netherlands*,” 316

<sup>4</sup> Marinka Verburg-Janssen. “*Rondom de ruimte van het begin*” (Uitgeverij Eburon, 2024), 284

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 285

The IZB (a Dutch organisation for domestic mission, part of the PKN) has developed the "IZB Impact" programme. This programme is a response to the developments mentioned at the start of this introduction. IZB Impact works with two specific developments in mind. The first is that fewer Dutch people (no longer) have anything with the church. This calls for reflection on why this is the case and what the Gospel has to say today. The second is that the Gospel is at a great distance from the world of more and more Dutch people<sup>6</sup>. The church therefore has a high threshold. One response to this are the pioneer churches. These churches look for creative ways to give people the opportunity to discover what it means to follow Jesus through language and other forms that suit the world of a particular group of people. In this way, new faith communities can gradually emerge<sup>7</sup>. IZB works on the basis of five principles that are central to the development of any new church community. These five are "Jesus Christ at the centre", "Prayer does the work", "Fourfold listening", "Building community" and "Growing to maturity"<sup>8</sup>.

## 1.2. "Het Zuiderlicht" in Lelystad – Pioneering in the Polder

In "De Zuiderzeewijk" in Lelystad, in the centre of the Netherlands, a pioneer church called "Het Zuiderlicht" has started in September 2022, with the support of the IZB, based on the desire of a local PKN church to "bring people to Jesus"<sup>9</sup>. "Het Zuiderlicht" started with the support of a local church<sup>10</sup> from another part of the city. The pioneer church is a composition of all kinds of activities that have been organised by a local church for the past years. In recent years, this local church, has been organising activities for children and women in the neighbourhood's community centre. They also started distributing potatoes to local residents. These different activities are known to local residents through informal networks. The church decided to combine these separate activities by starting a pioneer church. Therefore, from September 2022, Het Zuiderlicht employed a pioneer two days a week to develop the pioneer church in such a way that it is recognised as an ecclesial community<sup>11</sup> through specific activities with a view to community building, location and recognisable expressions. The pioneer and his team members are all committed Christians. At the moment, the team members organise a variety of activities, such as a children's Bible club every Saturday, a monthly potato distribution on Saturday, assistance with homework every Thursday afternoon, a walk-in morning on Thursday, a women's morning on Friday, as well as the more incidental activities they do for local residents, such as looking after a family whose mother has health problems<sup>12</sup>. These activities try to take into account the specific characteristics of the neighbourhood. At the moment, questions are being asked about possible next steps that the pioneer church can take, and what would be a wise next step given the characteristics of the neighbourhood. For example, team members are thinking about organising Sunday services. Questions arise about which target group to focus on, what a service should look like, how long it should last and what elements are important in such a service. As a substrate there is the more implicit question of what the soteriology of this pioneer church should be in order to be meaningful to the people of the neighbourhood.

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<sup>6</sup> See for example: <https://www.scp.nl/actueel/nieuws/2022/03/24/ontkerkelijking-leidt-tot-nieuwe-verhoudingen-in-de-samenleving>.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.izb.nl/impact/wat-is-impact>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.izb.nl/impact/uitgangspunten>

<sup>9</sup> Rutger Mauritz, *Pioniersplan Zuiderzeewijk* (Lelystad: HGL, 2020), 2: "Wij willen graag mensen in de Zuiderzeewijk bij Jezus brengen. We willen samen met hen zoeken naar wie God is en met een open mind en op een eenvoudige manier met hen over God spreken."

<sup>10</sup> This is church centre "Het Lichtschip", member of the PKN

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.izb.nl/blog/2023/03/07/>

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Peter on December 7, 2023 (available on request)

The impression of the pioneer is that this neighbourhood is characterised by pluralism, individualism and poverty. In the city, this neighbourhood has a rather negative image<sup>13</sup>.

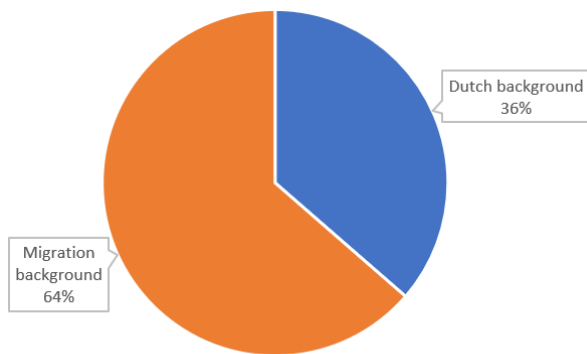


Figure 1.1.: backgrounds of local residents in “De Zuiderzeewijk”

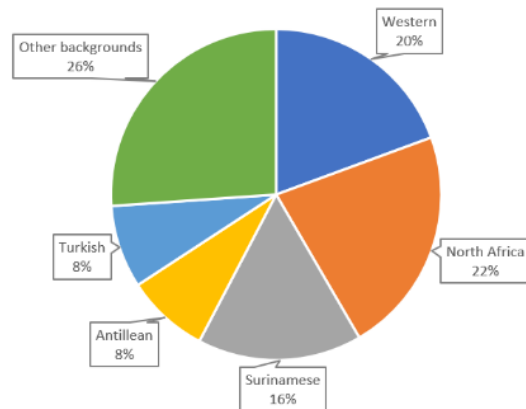


Figure 1.2.: migration backgrounds of local residents in “De Zuiderzeewijk”

Based on government figures, the neighbourhood's statistics show an increase in social diversity and a growth in the number of inhabitants over the last ten years. At the moment, 98% of the houses are occupied<sup>14</sup>. 63% of the local population has a migrant background: 20% have a Western background, 22% come from North Africa, 16% are Surinamese, 8% are Antillean, 8% are Turkish and 26% have other backgrounds (see figures 1.1. and 1.2.)<sup>15</sup>. Based on this perspective, “De Zuiderzeewijk” can be seen as a socially diverse neighbourhood. The average gross annual income in the neighbourhood is € 19,300 per inhabitant. This puts “De Zuiderzeewijk” in the top-5 of the neighbourhoods with the lowest per capita income in the Netherlands<sup>16</sup>. For these reasons, it is part of the “Nationaal Programma Leefbaarheid en Veiligheid” (NPVL; National Programme for Livability and Safety), which involves twenty vulnerable neighbourhoods in the country<sup>17</sup>. The diversity regarding income is low. Other factors relating to the social situation (see table 1.1.) in “De Zuiderzeewijk” are that 59% of residents feel lonely (47% for the Netherlands in general), 21% of residents have one or more physical disabilities (15% for the Netherlands), 72% of residents have a moderate to high risk of depression (53% for the Netherlands), 29% of residents have difficulties making ends meet (14% for the Netherlands). The age distribution in De Zuiderzeewijk is comparable to the age structure in the Netherlands in general.

Table 1.1.: Factors regarding the social situation in “De Zuiderzeewijk”

	De Zuiderzeewijk	Netherlands	Difference
Feel lonely	59%	47%	12%
One or more physical disabilities	21%	15%	6%
A moderate to high risk on depression	72%	53%	19%
Difficulties in making ends meet	29%	14%	15%

<sup>13</sup> Personal communication with pioneer Peter on December 13<sup>th</sup> 2022 (available on request).

<sup>14</sup> “Alle Cijfers Zuiderzeelaan Waddenlaan Lelystad,” Alle Cijfers, last modified February 10, 2024, <https://allecijfers.nl/buurt/zuiderzeelaan-waddenlaan-lelystad/>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> “Alle Cijfers hoogste en laagste inkomen per wijk in Nederland,” Alle Cijfers, last modified February, 10, 2024 <https://allecijfers.nl/ranglijst/hoogste-en-laagste-inkomen-per-wijk-in-nederland/#tablerow>.

<sup>17</sup> See for example: <https://nos.nl/artikel/2514635-zorgen-over-toekomst-van-probleemwijken-onorthodoxe-maatregelen-nodig>



“Het Zuiderlicht” is founded on PKN's<sup>18</sup> ideas about pioneering and works according to the principles of IZB impact and a serving-first journey (see section 3.2). De Reuver (as general secretary of the PKN) writes in “Van U is de toekomst<sup>19</sup>” that the development of a community can vary according to the needs of the environment. The characteristics of such an environment correspond to the mission of a church community. A second document, “Mozaïek van Kerkplekken<sup>20</sup>”, shows that current ways of being church are not sufficient because of changes in society. New contextualisations of the gospel are needed. De Reuver and Vellekoop write of a balance between the restoration of relationship with God through the reconciling work of Christ and a new world of peace and justice.

### 1.3. Motives for research

In this initial phase of the pioneer church's development, the pioneer and other team members involved, would like to grow in *being with* during *loving and serving* based on Moynagh's concept in the *serving-first journey*<sup>21</sup>. In order to connect with residents and build community, it seems important to gain more insight into people's needs, the characteristics and social diversity of the neighbourhood. A confirmation of these characteristics was visible in a first conversation with pioneer Peter<sup>22</sup> and in several participant observations in the first half of 2023, during meetings of the children's Bible club and the subsequent distribution of potatoes. These moments show a beginning contact between the members of the pioneer church and a very diverse composition of local residents. This also raises questions about the nature, form and purpose of this contact. How can this pioneer church *be with God*<sup>23</sup> on the one hand, and *be with* the people of the neighbourhood on the other hand? For this reason it seems interesting to find out which social factors in the neighbourhood can positively stimulate the development of the pioneer church.

### 1.4. Structure of the thesis

These questions will be further developed in Chapter 2 when the research problem and question, the sub questions and the methodology are presented. Then, in Chapter 3, the theoretical concepts are explained in order to position the research. The methodology is then explained and the sub questions are answered. Based on these answers, chapter 9 gives a conclusion on the central question, a discussion and some recommendations. Finally, an epilogue is formulated.

### 1.5. Personal background

My personal background is that I was born in “De Zuiderzeewijk” at the end of the 1970s. At that time Lelystad was a small city and this neighbourhood was one of the few neighbourhoods in the city. I am aware, as part of my personal reflexivity<sup>24</sup> as a researcher, that this personal background may influence my opinions, interpretations and role during the data collection. Conversely, respondents

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<sup>18</sup> René de Reuver and Martijn Vellekoop. *Mozaïek van Kerkplekken* (Utrecht: Dienstenorganisatie Protestantse Kerk, 2019); Protestantse Kerk in Nederland, “*Van U is de toekomst - Ontvankelijk en waakzaam leven van genade*” (Utrecht: Dienstenorganisatie Protestantse Kerk, 2020) and Erik Verwoerd and Martijn Vellekoop. “*Pionieren Verkennen, vanuit de Protestantse Kerk in Nederland*” (Utrecht: Protestantse Kerk in Nederland, 2018)

<sup>19</sup> De Reuver, “*Van U is de toekomst - Ontvankelijk en waakzaam leven van genade*” (Utrecht: Dienstenorganisatie Protestantse Kerk, 2020), 25.

<sup>20</sup> De Reuver, and Vellekoop, “*Mozaïek van Kerkplekken*”, 18.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 45

<sup>22</sup> Personal communication with pioneer Peter on December 13<sup>th</sup> 2022 (available on request).

<sup>23</sup> Samuel Wells, *A Nazaret Manifesto – Being With God* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2015), 31.

<sup>24</sup> Tone Stangeland Kaufman, “Practicing Reflexivity: Becoming Aware of One’s Default Mode and Developing an Epistemic Advantage.” in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Theology and Qualitative Research*, by K. Tveit and P. Ward (John Wiley & Sons, 2022), 112-113.

may be impressed by this research or my behaviour as a researcher. This may also influence the opinions of the respondents. Over the years the town grew and the population of the neighbourhood changed. Today I live in a town in the Dutch Bible Belt, not far from Lelystad. As a result, I may unintentionally understand situations differently than local residents do. With this introduction it is possible to present the research design.



*Figure 1.1: A picture of an average street in “De Zuiderzeewijk”*

## 2. Research problem and questions

In this section, the research problem, a central research question and supporting sub questions will be presented. These follow a sequential and logical structure.

### 2.1. Research problem

The research problem in this thesis is: I am studying the pioneer church "Het Zuiderlicht" in "De Zuiderzeewijk" in Lelystad, the Netherlands, because I want to understand how a pioneer church can develop *being with God* and local residents, in order to help future pioneers and pioneer churches to understand how to think about building a new ecclesial community in an initial phase of the development of the pioneer church.

### 2.2. Central research question and sub questions

Based on this research problem, the central research question of this study is as follows:

***How can a pioneer church grow in “being with” God and local residents in “De Zuiderzeewijk” in Lelystad, in the process of building a community?***

Sub questions, needed to support this central question, are:

1. Which elements, already present in the pioneer church, are crucial for growing in *being with* during *loving and serving* of local residents?
2. How does social diversity in “De Zuiderzeewijk” influence the wish of *being with* for a pioneer church?
3. What do local residents in “De Zuiderzeewijk” perceive as *being with* for a pioneer church?
4. What do the pioneer and the members of the pioneer team perceive as *being with God*?

In these questions, the central concept of *being with* refers to a definition in “A Nazareth Manifesto” written by Samuel Wells<sup>25</sup>, in which the author argues for a new way of engaging with people: no longer *working for* people, but *be with* people. The concept of *loving and serving* comes from a *serving-first journey* developed by Michael Moynagh<sup>26</sup>. A further orientation to these concepts will be given in the theoretical framework. For an explanation of *social diversity*, a definition of Betty Ezati<sup>27</sup> is used. More specifically, for sub question 2, the operationalisation of the verb “influence” will be that it makes different behaviour visible, based on social diversity. I am aware that a complete answer to the questions in this section might be beyond the scope of a Master's thesis; a more valid answer would require more systematic research and a longer period of time. For these reasons, the scope of the questions and results are relatively limited.

<sup>25</sup> Wells, *A Nazaret Manifesto – Being With God*, 31.

<sup>26</sup> Michael Moynagh and Phillip Harrold, *Church for Every Context* (London: SCM Press, 2012), chap. 11, Adobe ePub.

<sup>27</sup> Betty Akullu Ezati, "Social Diversity, Gender, Equity and Public Policy," in *Public Policy and Research in Africa*, ed. E.R. Aiyede and B. Muganda, (Kampala, Uganda: Makerere University, 2023), 183-211: social diversity means "the coexistence of different social groups within a given geopolitical environment. It is the differentiation of society into groups". Terms that Ezati uses as synonyms for social diversity are “plurality”, “multiculturalism” and “social differentiation”. In short, social diversity<sup>27</sup> refers to the differences seen in a given society in terms of religions, cultural backgrounds, social status, economic status and so on. Ezati and Woods (2003) also mention that the term "social diversity" has become shorthand for "diversity".

### 3. Theoretical framework

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In this chapter I will further explain the central concepts mentioned in the introduction and background. The first section describes (the development of) the mission of the church and gives a general exploration of *Missio Dei* as approach to mission. The second and third section describe traditional ways of thinking about the background of *pioneer churches*, a *serving-first journey* (with *listening* and *loving and serving* as part of the journey). The fourth section outlines an alternative in the concept of *being with*. The fifth and last section connects the given perspectives and provides a soil for further explanation of the research problem, research question and sub questions.

#### 3.1. Approaches to mission

A central concept in the field of missiology is *Missio Dei*. *Missio Dei* can be seen as an important concept for further exploration of the development of missional communities. Schreiter indicates that people who form and maintain places where people can be themselves, and where they can be present as often as they want, and where people can feel welcome and connect with each other, regardless of whether or not they belong to a faith community join *Missio Dei*<sup>28</sup>. *Missio Dei* means that it is God's purpose to redeem the whole of creation and that it is the role of the church to participate in this mission<sup>29</sup>. *Missio Dei*<sup>30</sup> is a crucial idea for many 21st century missionary Christians. Since the 1950s, “church was coming to understand that in any place it is a community sent by God. (...). Mission is founded on the mission of God in the world, rather than the church’s effort to extend itself.”<sup>31</sup> Through *Missio Dei* it became clear that the relationship between mission and church could be seen in a different way. God himself became more central to the concept of *Missio Dei*. Verburg-Jansen argues that *Missio Dei* gives pioneers a reason to be and remain present with people in order to discover together how to create a meaningful and viable social platform where faith is addressed<sup>32</sup>.

Different approaches will be further discussed in the next sections. A first approach sees mission as “*Gods evangelizing activity by means of the church.*”<sup>33</sup> A second approach, within the concept of *Missio Dei*, states that “church has its existence only in and through a sending activity of God, and thus almost automatically acquires a secondary and even instrumental character”<sup>34</sup>. A third approach emphasises the coming of the kingdom on earth. This states that the earth has a future, but at the same time we are not building that future. Mission in this approach is looking forward to the kingdom of God at the “end of time”. A fourth approach has an alternative soteriology than the first two approaches. Wells argues that the central problem of humanity is not mortality but isolation. God gives everything to be with us. Justice is about finding abundance in people. This is called *being with*.

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<sup>28</sup> Robert J. Schreiter, “Reconciliation and healing as a paradigm for mission,” *International Review of Mission*, 94 (2005), 74-83 in Verburg-Janssen, “*Rondom de ruimte van het begin*”, 285

<sup>29</sup> Tim Keller, *Centrum Kerk* (Franeker: Uitgeverij Van Wijnen, 2015), 225

<sup>30</sup> Stefan Paas, *Vrede op aarde - Over heil en redding in deze tijd* (Utrecht: Kok Boekencentrum Uitgevers, 2023), 257. Paas gives this definition of *Missio Dei*: mission is first and foremost God's mission and not ours.

<sup>31</sup> Darrell L. Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1998), chap.4. Adobe ePub.

<sup>32</sup> Verburg-Janssen, “*Rondom de ruimte van het begin*”, 285

<sup>33</sup> Annemiek de Jonge, *Als een madeliefje tussen de straatstenen* (Kampen: Theologische Universiteit, 2022), 86.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

### 3.2. A first, evangelical, approach of *Missio Dei* – Moynagh

Michael Moynagh can be seen as a representative of the first, more evangelical approach. The starting point of his vision is the development of new contextualised church communities. An example of these communities are the so-called “Fresh Expressions of Church” of the Church of England in the United Kingdom. Moynagh offers a four-word definition of these new communities. These are: *missional*, *contextual*, *formational* and *ecclesial*<sup>35</sup>. *Missional* means that through the Spirit a community of Christians is born, especially among people who normally do not attend church. *Contextual* means that churches seek to minister in their context and adapt to the circumstances of the people in that context. *Formational* means that leaders of new communities would like to make disciples. Finally, *ecclesial* means that leaders intend the new communities not to be stepping stones to existing churches, but to become a church for the people they reach. This community may be a new congregation of a local church or, if not part of a local church, a church in its own right<sup>36</sup>. In this sense, Moynagh uses Rowan Williams' explanation of a *mixed economy*. This means that “new ecclesial communities do not replace the existing church, but sit alongside it in relationships of mutual respect and support (...)”<sup>37</sup>.

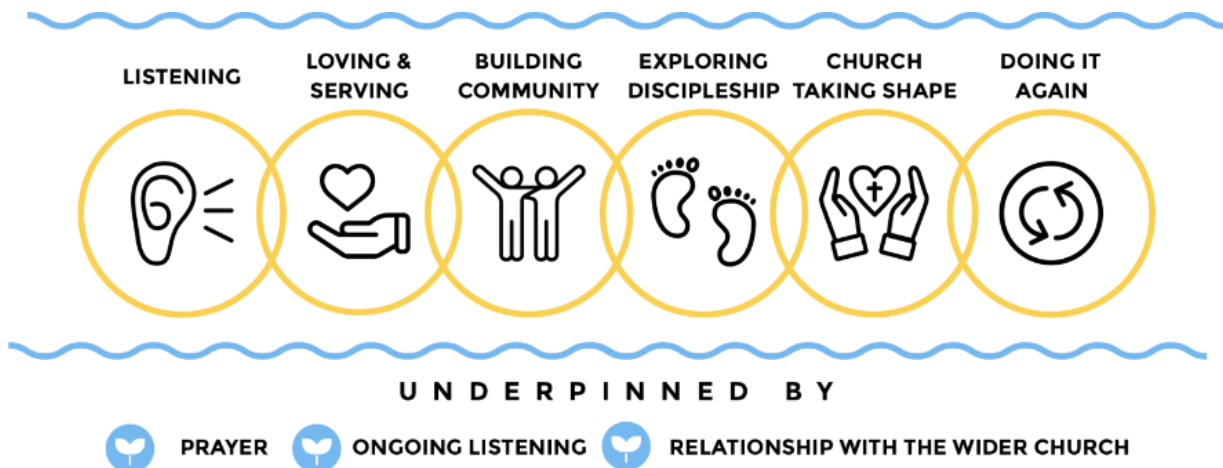


Figure 3.1.: A serving-first journey<sup>38</sup>

These new communities are launched according to a *serving-first journey* (see Figure 3.1). This framework, developed by Moynagh<sup>39</sup>, describes a “journey” of five circles for the development of a new ecclesial community. Two circles are *listening* and *loving and serving*<sup>40</sup>. These aim to listening to God and listening to local residents whom the new church wants to serve. *Loving and serving* is a next circle<sup>41</sup>. According to Moynagh, *loving and serving* is doing and showing acts of kindness, mercy and justice<sup>42</sup> and can take many forms, such as “creating a ‘third space’ in which people can hang out together offering an opportunity for people to share an interest”<sup>43</sup>. This circle is one of the first steps in shaping community. Then the church begins to serve and build loving relationships as Jesus did. *Loving and serving* generally involves acts of kindness among people whose lives are relatively comfortable in a materialistic sense, and acts of compassion among people on the margins of

<sup>35</sup> Michael Moynagh, *Church in Life* (London: SCM Press, 2017), 3

<sup>36</sup> Moynagh, *Church in Life*, 3

<sup>37</sup> Moynagh, *Church in Life*, 4

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 45

<sup>39</sup> Moynagh, *Church in Life*, 44-46

<sup>40</sup> Moynagh and Harrold. *Church for Every Context*, chap.11.

<sup>41</sup> Moynagh, *Church in Life*, 45

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 46

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 46

society<sup>44</sup>. As a next circle, *community building* happens when people form relationships in the context of a *loving and serving* initiative. Community can take many forms. Another circle, *building community*, suggests that a community emerges where residents begin to share their lives together. An emerging community can provide a solid basis for exploring discipleship and can give rise to a new church. The last two circles, *exploring discipleship* and *church taking shape*, are about exploring the Christian faith and becoming church<sup>45</sup>. Each circle may overlap with others, but each has its own value<sup>46</sup>. All circles are underpinned by prayer, ongoing listening and a relationship with the wider church. These circles can also be seen in the five assumptions of IZB impact, although there are subtle differences in language such as “growing to maturity” (IZB), as opposed to “church taking shape” (in a *loving-first journey*).

### 3.3. A second, ecumenical, approach of *Missio Dei* – Hoekendijk

Dutch missiologist Johannes Hoekendijk was a representative of the second, more ecumenical approach of *Missio Dei*, because “it is true that the context kingdom - apostolate - oikumene does not leave much room for the church. Ecclesiology does not fit here.”<sup>47</sup> Hoekendijk advocates a new vision of the apostolate<sup>48</sup> (with which he means “the proclamation of the kingdom to the world”), rediscovering what the Bible means by the proclamation of the gospel<sup>49</sup>. The only purpose of evangelisation is the establishment of *shalom* through the Messiah. By *shalom*, Hoekendijk means more than personal salvation, namely peace, integrity, community, harmony and justice, in short, a manifestation of hope<sup>50</sup>. According to Hoekendijk, this implies a new view of mission. Traditionally, the apostolate has been seen as a function of the church. His central thesis is therefore the opposite of this traditional thesis, namely that the church is a function of the apostolate, an instrument of God's redemptive action in the world: “Would it not be truer to make a complete turnover here, and say that this means: I believe in the church, which is a function of the apostolate, that is, an instrument of God's redemptive action in this world.”<sup>51</sup> In other words, the church is a means of establishing *shalom* in the world.

Others argue against this position, because the church cannot be a function of the apostolate, because a serving church is only possible if it is based on a strong inspiration<sup>52</sup>. Both Lesslie Newbigin<sup>53</sup> and Darrell Guder<sup>54</sup> developed a more balanced position between the two approaches

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Moynagh and Harrold. *Church for Every Context*, chap.11.

<sup>46</sup> Moynagh, *Church in Life*, 47.

<sup>47</sup> Johannes Christiaan Hoekendijk, *The Church Inside Out* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1966), 40.

<sup>48</sup> Hoekendijk, *The Church Inside Out*, 43

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 20

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 21-22

<sup>51</sup> Hoekendijk, *The Church Inside Out*, 24.

<sup>52</sup> Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christelijk geloof - een inleiding tot de geloofsleer* (Nijkerk: Uitgeverij Callenbach, 1973), 405. Three quotes: (1) "Deze puur-apostolaire benadering van de kerk is echter bij nader toezien niet houdbaar. Een dergelijke getuigende en dienende kerk is alleen denkbaar vanuit een zeer sterke inspiratie. Zij kan alleen geven naarmate zij zelf ontvangt.", (2) "Bovendien komt de eigen betekenis van de kerk als gemeenschap (en niet alleen als heraut en diaken) bij eerstgenoemde benadering niet tot haar recht, terwijl toch het apostolaat juist mede de inlijving in deze nieuwe gemeenschap beoogt" and (3) "Al deze overwegingen leiden tot de conclusie dat de apostolaire gerichtheid van de kerk gegrond is op haar gemeenschap, zowel met haar Heer als onderling."

<sup>53</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Washington: Ethics & Public Policy Center Inc., 1989), Adobe ePub.

<sup>54</sup> Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*.

within *Missio Dei*. Guder develops this position further, but tends to take a more traditional evangelistic perspective. He writes that because of cultural changes and a post-Christian society, the church has found a new mission field, the modern world in the West<sup>55</sup>.

Another critical counter-voice can be found in Erik Borgman, a Dutch Roman-Catholic systematic theologian. Although in his book “Waar blijft de kerk”<sup>56</sup> he argues for helping others in such a way that there is no difference between “helpers” and “people being helped”<sup>57</sup>, he quotes Pope Francis on the way people think about strategies (such as those just discussed) for evangelisation. Pope Francis argues that making plans or strategies is of secondary importance<sup>58</sup>. The Church is the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13-14). The Church does this primarily by witnessing to brotherly love, solidarity and sharing.

### 3.4. A third approach: the coming of the Kingdom on earth – Paas

The soteriological basis (of these previous) representatives of *Missio Dei* is that people need to be saved from death. Based on this assumption, salvation means that eternal life comes through the death of Jesus Christ. In his recent book, “Vrede op Aarde”, Paas<sup>59</sup> argues that an alternative can be found between two other approaches, what he calls “het piëtistisch bekeringsdrama<sup>60</sup>” versus “volkschρισendom”. Paas calls his alternative the coming of the kingdom on earth. This approach (influenced by the ideas of Hoekendijk) emphasises that the earth has a future, but at the same time we are not building that future. Rather, mission in this approach is looking forward to the kingdom of God at the “end of time”, confident that whatever is done in the name of the Lord will somehow have a place in that Kingdom.

Paas also connects this approach to *Missio Dei*<sup>61</sup>. When it comes to the coming of the kingdom on earth, God himself is the first missionary. People are part of his plan, but God's plan of salvation does not revolve around us. People are called to discover where God is at work in the world, to be involved in it, and in this way to be connected to God and his kingdom. Mission becomes participation in God's mission. Paas uses an argument of Ruddick who describes that *Missio Dei* is the theological basis for mission teams in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Paas thinks that we only meet God in the domain of personal relationships. He writes that God's salvation is experienced precisely where loving connections arise or are restored – often unexpected and unlikely, as Jesus reached out to unlikely people<sup>62</sup>. In addition to this, Paas argues with Root that “God shows Himself in dead places (...) and that He saves us in these places.”, he writes that missionary communities are the most challenging ‘dead places’<sup>63</sup>. For this very reason, writes Paas, such communities are places where God may be expected and from which God's salvation becomes visible in the world.

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<sup>55</sup> Keller, *Centrum Kerk*, 229.

<sup>56</sup> Erik Borgman, *Waar blijft de kerk - Gedachten over opbouw in tijden van afbraak* (Baarn: Adveniat, 2015).

<sup>57</sup> Borgman, *Waar blijft de kerk - Gedachten over opbouw in tijden van afbraak*, 68-69.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>59</sup> Paas, *Vrede op aarde - Over heil en redding in deze tijd*, 339

<sup>60</sup> This is the idea that believing is only about the restoration between the individual's soul and God and that this individual experiences this. In Paas, *Vrede op aarde - Over heil en redding in deze tijd*, 63

<sup>61</sup> Paas, *Vrede op aarde - Over heil en redding in deze tijd*, 339

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 40-41: “Dat wil zeggen, Gods heil wordt juist daar ervaren waar liefdevolle verbindingen ontstaan of hersteld worden – vaak onverwacht en onwaarschijnlijk, zoals Jezus zich uitstrekke naar onwaarschijnlijke mensen.”

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 45

*Missio Dei* is the starting point for these teams that the world in which they work is God's world, and that God has been at work in that world before Christians have been active there. This creates a shift in thinking about contextualisation and the approach within *Missio Dei*: from a “lifeboat approach” to mission as a welcoming and restoring presence in God's world, and to practices that demonstrate and witness to that presence<sup>64</sup>. Paas writes that “the salvation of God is for everyone, and for that very reason it will constantly take on expressions that are heartening to some and alienating to others. It is in this way, through a never-ending stream of contextualizations, that a creative and abundant God makes himself known in the dizzying wealth of cultures<sup>65</sup>.” *Missio Dei* invites people to seek out and participate where God is at work and one of the effects of this change is a reappraisal of the world<sup>66</sup>. *Missio Dei* invites us to see where God is at work and to invite others to respond<sup>67</sup>. Conversation is a common way of doing justice to what it means to witness to the Gospel in our Western, democratic culture. Conversation builds relationships, because conversation cannot exist without honesty, patience and loyalty to others<sup>68</sup>. According to Paas, *Missio Dei* focuses on *shalom*<sup>69</sup> and a flourishing creation. This can only happen in community, along the path of justice and reconciliation. On this way of peace we receive peace.

### 3.5. A fourth approach: *Being with* – Wells

In his book “A Nazareth Manifesto - Being with God”, Wells offers, just as Paas, an alternative to the two soteriologies mentioned by Moynagh and Hoekendijk. Wells argues that the central problem of humanity is not mortality but isolation<sup>70</sup>. As a result, salvation is different. God gives everything to be with us. Justice, then, is about finding abundance: restoring relationships, developing talents, developing friendships, experiencing joy<sup>71</sup>. This is called *being with*. According to Wells, *being with* differs from three other, less-providing ways of connecting with others. These three are *working for* (an essential part of a healthy society. Leads to a growing number of independent people), *being for* (assumes that something needs to be done for a person, but someone else will do it) and *working with* (aims to gather as many stakeholders as possible, the client makes a crucial contribution). Wells advocates a way of life that goes beyond justice. “And the name of these practices that go beyond justice is church.” Church is where Christians experience the justice of God.

*Being with* is faithful to the New Testament, it fits with how church is experienced, it reflects the social nature of human beings, it is consistent with the discursive nature of practices, it resonates with communal and other relational conceptions of church, and finally it makes room for diversity. *Being with* begins, for example, with conversations with individual people about their experiences, dreams, talents and gifts. *Being with* is about being present, participating and being together<sup>72</sup>. The decision to be with someone requires a careful and well-secured process. Charity, especially when it comes from love, is about finding reciprocity between the giver and

<sup>64</sup> Paas, *Vrede op aarde - Over heil en redding in deze tijd*, 258

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 148: “Het heil van God is voor iedereen, en juist daarom zal het voortdurend uitdrukkingen aannemen die voor de een hartverwarmend zijn en voor de ander vervreemdend. Het is op die manier, via een nooit ophoudende stroom van contextualisaties, dat een creatieve en overvloedige God zichzelf kenbaar maakt in de duizelingwekkende rijkdom van culturen”

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 340

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 260

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 262.

<sup>69</sup> This explanation of *shalom* can be compared with Hoekendijk's explanation of *shalom*.

<sup>70</sup> Wells, *A Nazaret Manifesto – Being With God*, 46-48 and 55-60

<sup>71</sup> Wells, *A Nazaret Manifesto – Being With God*, 151. In Paas' explanation this can also be seen as an expression of *shalom*.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 277.



the receiver. Every form of *for* is based on a sincere *with*. Then reciprocity arises because each person is given space to discover his or her own abundance of gifts<sup>73</sup>.

Wells argues that *being with* makes visible what eternal life is, how people can live from the inexhaustible source of that eternal life, and how people can share in this abundance: "...the purpose of engagement is not to rescue the poor or restore their dignity but to elicit from them the creativity, abundance, and joy that is so deeply hidden by their current circumstances and for that joy to benefit not just themselves but oneself."<sup>74</sup> In Wells' vision, many contemporary communities *work for* rather than *be with*. This is tragic because it leaves talents unused, potential unfulfilled and traditional ways of *working for* end up deprive people. He argues that *being with* is about real presence, just as God is present in the world in Christ: "Jesus is the solidarity between us and God that makes those links tangible and visible and permanent and unbreakable."<sup>75</sup> Dependent people and communities are called "*symptoms of working for.*" *Working for* and *working with* are good ways to bring about change, but it is important that they are based on *being with* and that *being with* is the ultimate goal<sup>76</sup>. *Being with* should be the basis of *working for* and *working with*, otherwise they are just a method. Wells argues for a way of life that goes beyond justice. "*And the name of these practices that go beyond justice, is church*"<sup>77</sup>. Church is where Christians live out the justice of God.

### 3.6. Connections and tensions between different perspectives

In this section, the links and tensions between the different perspectives are shown by comparing the approaches of Moynagh, Hoekendijk, Paas and Wells. The themes ecclesiology and soteriology are mentioned interchangeably.

A first comparison, between the perspectives of **Moynagh and Hoekendijk**, shows that both authors find the positioning of their ideas in small communities, in Moynagh's words the New Ecclesial Communities. Both authors see the importance of adapting to modern society in their communities. However, Moynagh's ideas are grounded in ecclesiology and an evangelical soteriology, while Hoekendijk became famous with his phrase "church as a function of the apostolate", which can be defined as starting point of his ecclesiology. Hoekendijk's thinking about *shalom* is an alternative soteriology.

The perspectives of both **Moynagh and Paas** are grounded in the idea of *Missio Dei*, God's intention to redeem the whole of creation and a church that participates in that mission. Paas calls his approach the coming of the kingdom on earth and has a more ecumenical connotation, while Moynagh's ideas of pioneer churches, *a serving-first journey* and his more evangelical approach have an evangelical colour. A difference between the ideas of Paas and Moynagh is that Paas does address soteriology and also moves in the direction of Hoekendijk's ideas, namely with an emphasis on *shalom*, and thus also distances himself (somewhat) from evangelical soteriology. Paas thematises this and Moynagh leaves it unsaid.

The next comparison is between **Moynagh and Wells**. Moynagh's ideas differ from Wells' position, which presents an alternative based on the perspective of relationship as catalyst for

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 248.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 345.

eternal life and abundance, and more specifically, his concept of *being with*. Moynagh starts from an ecclesiology based on a classical soteriology. In his view, the church as community is central. Based on this, he presents *a serving first-journey* in which *listening, loving and serving* are positioned as the first circles. Wells argues that relationship between people is central and therefore advocates *being with*. In his view, this is reciprocal. So, compared to *a serving first-journey* where *listening and loving and serving* are more unidirectional from one person to another, *being with* promises to be bi-directional. *Being with* is the condition for discovering the richness of the other and of God. Tension between the perspectives of both authors can be found in their premises: ecclesiology (Moynagh) versus soteriology (Wells). Wells' theory stems more from his diaconal commitment and his background in ethics, than from a desire to develop the church (as Moynagh wishes).

The two approaches of **Hoekendijk and Paas** have many similarities, which is understandable because Paas based his concept of the coming of the kingdom on earth on Hoekendijk's more ecumenical approach. Both find meaning in the kingdom of God. However, a tension is visible in that Paas argues that small and missionary (church) communities are the place where God is to be found. On the other hand, tension can be found that for Hoekendijk the church is of secondary importance. For him, the apostolate is of primary importance.

A comparison between **Hoekendijk and Wells** can be seen in Hoekendijk's *shalom*, which could be the same as Wells' *being with*. Both authors mention "individual community" as the basis of their argument. Community, God's relationship with people and people's relationship with God, where church or "ecclesial community" is only an instrument<sup>78</sup>. I am aware that both authors start with the institution of the church in the background, Hoekendijk from his internship in the 1960s and Wells from his position as a pastor in a church in the centre of a metropolis. In addition, Hoekendijk's approach can be characterised as soteriological or eschatological, and Wells' approach is based on a theory of ethics.

A final comparison between the perspectives of **Paas and Wells** can be seen in the words that we only meet God in personal relationships. For Wells, in *being with*, salvation is transformed and made visible. Through *being with* we find richness in the other, relationships can be restored, talents can be developed and joy can be experienced. Paas writes of these personal relationships that the typical salvific action of God becomes visible where the world becomes personal. Like Wells, Paas sees that God's salvation is experienced where loving relationships are created or restored<sup>79</sup>. Paas' premise is missional communities and Wells's is more the individual level. Table 3.1. summarizes both the soteriological and the ecclesiological positions of the four authors and their approaches.

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<sup>78</sup> See section 3.3.

<sup>79</sup> Paas, *Vrede op aarde - Over heil en redding in deze tijd*, 40-41

Table 3.1.: Soteriological and ecclesiological positions of Moynagh, Hoekendijk, Paas and Wells

	Soteriology	Ecclesiology
Michael Mognagh	Evangelical	Church as community is
Johannes Hoekendijk	<i>Shalom</i> as alternative for soteriology	Church as a function of the apostolate
Stefan Paas	Ecumenical, emphasis on <i>shalom</i>	Missional communities
Samuel Wells	Being with	-

This theoretical exploration shows that there are different positions around ecclesiology and soteriology. These also play a role in my empirical research, which I will describe from Chapter 4 onwards.

### 3.7. Positioning of the research

From the explanation of the four approaches and their connections and tensions, it can be seen that Moynagh's approach already has its influence in the pioneer church, but Wells' approach seems to fit better in the neighbourhood, also because the team members want to develop mutual contact with local residents. For this reason I have chosen Wells' *being with* as the primary approach in this thesis, alongside *a serving first-journey* from Moynagh. The approaches of Paas and Hoekendijk are therefore used as critical (third and fourth) voices. This is also relevant because the combination of Moynagh's and Wells' ideas has not often been combined in pioneering churches, and almost no research has yet been done with both concepts, although it seems obvious that both authors are British and write about more or less the same topical issue. A recent example is Verburg-Janssen, who relates both concepts in her dissertation "Rondom de ruimte van het begin". In this dissertation the premise is Moynagh's *serving first-journey*. From this perspective, Verburg-Janssen discusses Wells' *being with*. The challenge is to discover where both concepts are visible, helpful and mutually reinforcing, but also to discover where both concepts are in tension. I will do this, at the request of the pioneer church, with *being with* as the premise, and I will add a *serving first journey* as a second perspective. So this is a variation of Verburg-Janssen's research. The next chapter describes the research design in more detail.

## 4. Methodology and methods

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This chapter, as a continuation of the previous chapter, discusses how I have designed and will conduct this research. It contains three themes: the research methodology, the methods used in this research, and remarks on contextuality and positionality. In Appendix A I declare that this thesis is original and the result of my own work.

### 4.1. Research Methodology

Based on the initial problem of the pioneer church (Chapter 1), the research problem, the research questions (Chapter 2) and the theoretical framework (Chapter 3), I have an explicit intention to involve practitioners such as the pioneer as well as other team members in carrying out this research.

“Participatory Action Research” is therefore the *methodology* to be followed in this research. According to Swinton and Mowat<sup>80</sup>, a methodology has to do with an overall approach to this particular area of theology, it implies a family of methods. This methodology can be described as constructivist in the sense that it focuses on understanding<sup>81</sup>. De Roest writes that action research “creates an opportunity to address a real community problem or a problem of a “community of practice”. Action research investigates issues related to these concerns and addresses them by planning and implementing a change, but at its heart are reflective practitioners who seek to assess the impact of their interventions. Reflection and action are in tension, each informing the other”<sup>82</sup>. He adds that participatory action research is described as “a process in which members of an oppressed group or community identify a common problem”<sup>83</sup>.

### 4.2. Methods

Methods are specific techniques used to collect and analyse data<sup>84</sup>. According to Conde-Frazier<sup>85</sup>, participatory action research uses a variety of methods, “such as oral histories, narrative inquiry (...). Interviews and oral histories deal directly with narrative. (...) they make permeable the boundaries of our life experiences.” In her view, oral histories carry the knowledge of the people. Therefore, participant observations and interviews will be used as method to answer each of the four sub questions in order to obtain empirical data. In addition to interviews, two focus group conversations will be organised. The research paradigm in this thesis can be seen as constructivist because the methodology and method focuses on understanding and meaning is constructed in the interaction between researcher and participant, according to Bunniss and Kelly<sup>86</sup>. An important side note is that the interviews are conducted in Dutch. For this reason, the quotes from the respondents that I use in this research will also be in Dutch, in order to retain the original meaning of the quote used.

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<sup>80</sup> John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, “*Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*” (London: SCM Press, 2016), 69.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 71

<sup>82</sup> Henk de Roest, *Collaborative Practical Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 196.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 69.

<sup>85</sup> Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, “Participatory Action Research,” in *Practical Theology*, by Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore (Malden, MA: Wiley&Sons, 2014), 238.

<sup>86</sup> Suzanne Bunniss and Diane R. Kelly, “Research paradigms in medical education research,” *Medical Education*, 44 (2010): 358-366. Used in Swinton and Mowat. *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 71.

#### 4.2.1. Participant observations

Yin writes that participant observation is a “method of generating data which entails the researcher immersing themselves in a research ‘setting’ or ‘site’ so that they can experience and observe at first hand a range of dimensions in and of that setting”<sup>87</sup>. Participant observations will take place during the moments when the researcher is present in the activities of the pioneer church. The observations will be used to supplement the interviews and conversations in order to answer the research questions, as well as to get a deeper impression of the way the pioneer church works and to get to know the local residents.

#### 4.2.2. Interviews

In order to cover all the sub questions, (qualitative) interviews are conducted with four people per question. Yin writes that the term qualitative interviewing usually refers to “in-depth, semi-structured or loosely structured forms of interviewing”<sup>88</sup>. Interviews for sub questions 1 and 4 will be conducted with four members of the pioneer church team. Interviews for sub questions 2 and 3 will be conducted with four local residents. The interviews for each pair of sub questions will be conducted together if possible. Appendices D and E give the interview questions for each sub question. Respondents signed an informed consent form in which they consented to the anonymous use of data from their interviews. Although the location of the pioneer church makes it possible to retrieve data, in this thesis the data has been applied as anonymously as possible. This was discussed with the respondents. An example of an interview question for sub question 1 is:

“How do these activities serve the local residents? In what does ‘loving and serving’ show itself?”<sup>89</sup>

An example of an interview question for residents (sub question 2) is:

“Can you give an example of how the various groups do/don't live together in the neighbourhood?”

Sub question 3 has an example after an explanation of *working for*, *working with*, *being for* and *being with*:

“How do you characterise the activities ‘Het Zuiderlicht’ does?”

An example is given for sub question 4:

“I understood/know/have seen that you did (supplemented by one example per respondent)..., can you tell something about that? Why did you do it this way? Do you organise this kind of activity more often?”

#### 4.2.3. Focus group conversations

Focus group conversations are usually “thought to involve a group assembled for the purposes of ascertaining views and opinions, or stimulating discussion on specific issues, in order to provide data. And usually group interaction is seen as the key mechanism to generate data”<sup>90</sup>. A focus group discussion will be conducted twice; for sub question 3, a discussion with local residents will be

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<sup>87</sup> Robert Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications; Design and Methods 6th edition* (Sage Publications, Inc.. 2017), 139

<sup>88</sup> Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications; Design and Methods 6th edition*, 109

<sup>89</sup> The quotes in chapter 4-8 have been translated from the Dutch language. This benefits readability. In doing so, I realise that a possible implicit message and connotation of the text has been lost.

<sup>90</sup> Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications; Design and Methods 6th edition*, 130

conducted as a logical next step after interviewing these residents<sup>91</sup>. For sub question 4, a focus group conversation will be conducted with team members as a logical next step to the interviews with the same target group<sup>92</sup>. An example of an interview question for the team members is:

*“How can you as a Christian community ‘be with’ God and the neighbourhood residents. In the interviews I have had, I hear many characteristics of the neighbourhood: culturally diverse, low incomes, addiction problems, mental and physical problems. In addition, I also hear that people have problems trusting or relying on others and sometimes low self-esteem. In what ways does (and would like to pass along each point concretely) ‘Het Zuiderlicht’ take these characteristics into account in its activities from the Christian perspective of the pioneer place? And where can this be improved?”*

The information from 1.2.1, 1.2.2 and 1.2.3 is summarised in Table 4.1, a schematic overview per sub question and its instruments.

Table 4.1.: Instruments per sub question

Sub question	Target group	Instruments
1	Four team members of the pioneer church	Four interviews and seven participant observations
2	Four local residents	Four interviews and seven participant observations
3	Four local residents	Four interviews, one focus group conversation, seven
4	Four team members of the pioneer church	Four interviews, one focus group conversation, seven

#### 4.2.4. Data analysis techniques

Analysis of all this qualitative data is done by deductive labeling. After this selection, an analysis is carried out and an answer is formulated. The analysis is based on the labels for each sub question as shown in Table 2. These labels are based on the theory discussed in Chapter 3, such as *being with* and social diversity. Two researchers will label the same data and talk to each other about notable elements in their results to ensure reliability (Krippendorff's inter-rater reliability<sup>93</sup>). Table 4.2 provides an overview of the labels used for each sub question. A data management plan for responsible data collection and storage is presented in Appendix B. Table 4.3. summarises all activities undertaken over time.

Table 4.2.: Labels used for every sub question

Sub question	Instruments	Labels
1	Interviews / participant	Growing in being with
2	Interviews / participant	Social diversity
3	Interviews / focus group conversation / participant	Being with
4	Interviews / focus group conversation / participant	Being with God

<sup>91</sup> see Appendix E

<sup>92</sup> see Appendix F

<sup>93</sup> K. Krippendorff, *Content analysis. An introduction to its methodology* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1980)

Table 4.3.: Overview of activities undertaken

Activity	Number	Dates/moments
Participant observations	9 (incl. 2 memo's)	<u>2022</u> : 13 December; <u>2023</u> : 18 March, 15 April, 13 May, 8 September, 16 December; <u>2024</u> : 20 January, 24
Interviews	8	<u>2023</u> : 7 December (Peter), 16 December (Caroline), <u>2024</u> : 20 January (Nienke), 22 January (Henk-Jan), 22 February (Dinie), 24 February (Willem and Klaartje), 8 March (Samira).
Focus group conversations	2	<u>2024</u> : 18 March (team members) and 25 May (local residents)

### 4.3. Contextuality and positionality

The influence of the local context on the research is that it does not focus on the background of the church, but on the needs of local residents. Based on this, the pioneer church will think about the way the gospel will be involved in the church community. I am aware that my position and presence as a researcher, the way I ask questions and my non-verbal behaviour during the data collection process will influence the way participants formulate their answers and their behaviour after the interview. I am also aware of the fact that I was born in “De Zuiderzeewijk”, which influences the way I approach the pioneer community. It might also influence the way I am treated by others. So the nature of this reality and knowledge (ontology and epistemology) is subjective, there is no ultimate truth in the data.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 71.

## 5. Crucial elements for growing in *being with* during *serving and loving* of local residents

This chapter describes crucial elements for growing in *being with* while *serving and loving* local residents (sub question 1). A survey of these elements is important for answering the central question because it gives an impression of elements that team members consider important for their contact with local residents. This chapter describes the results of these interviews. Where necessary, references to quotes are made.

During participant observations<sup>95</sup> of the distribution of potatoes, a first impression is that this situation is based on the characteristics of *working for*. Some friends of the pioneer church (or members of the mother church) who like to help are present, local residents wait in a long queue and sometimes grumble at each other and people get a coin in order to receive a bag of potatoes. Nevertheless, it is obvious that these activities have a potential for *being with*. This calls for further research.

### ***Distribution of potatoes - an impression***<sup>96</sup>

*On a trailer in front of the community centre are six pallets of potatoes (4 pallets) and onions (2 pallets), donated by a local farmer. A queue of people has formed behind the trailer. A diverse population is visible: North Africans, Surinamese, Dutch, Antilleans, Asians, Eastern Europeans, young, old, male, female. The general impression is one of cheerfulness and friendliness. Many people in the queue have a mobility scooter, walking frame or shopping trolley. People are invited for coffee or pancakes. Not everyone takes up this offer. People are given a bucket of potatoes (about 5 kilos) and half a bucket of onions in a bag. Flyers distributed in the neighbourhood at the beginning of the week informed people to bring a plastic bag for the potatoes. Not everyone did. During the distribution, team members talk with residents. Many residents ask if they are allowed to receive more than one bag of potatoes. This is not allowed, because it has to be shared. Not everyone agrees immediately: they are waiting for other family members, neighbours, etc. All kinds of stories are given as reason: people who are ill, with mobility problems, or a large family with a single mother who is (too) busy. Sometimes people say that they also share potatoes, or put them in sharing boxes in the neighbourhood. Others feel that one bag at most is justified. One lady ostentatiously tries to get in line a second time. One man says he will be eating from it for the next week and a half. Other people talk about the dish they are going to make with them, or how they have enjoyed these potatoes before. One resident says he shares his potatoes with neighbours who are ashamed to join the queue. Some other characteristics of the people in the queue are that some do not speak Dutch, one person takes the food with a phone to his ear. Someone also has earplugs in and does not respond to greetings or questions. Someone else, on the other hand, is very verbose about the possible spraying of the potatoes and the pests that might attack them, and gets "in the way" for minutes on end, according to another resident. After more than an hour, the trailer is empty and the potatoes and onions are shared. Some people are too late.*

<sup>95</sup> Participant observation including reflection on December 16<sup>th</sup> 2023 (available on request)

<sup>96</sup> Based on the participant observation of December 16<sup>th</sup> 2023 (available on request)





Figure 5.1.: Potato distribution on a Saturday morning

To this end, four team members were interviewed and several participant observations were done between December 2023 and February 2024. The four team members have different roles and responsibilities in the pioneer church, ranging from the pioneer himself to team members who just have one task. The team members vary in their years of involvement or experience in the pioneer church. An analysis of the (empirical) interview data is given below, based on (empirical) interview data. After the interviews, several quotes were labelled with *being with*.

*Loving and serving* is one of the first circles in a *serving-first journey*<sup>97</sup>. During one of the first meetings<sup>98</sup>, the pioneer mentioned that “Het Zuiderlicht” was still in a starting phase, with *listening* and *loving and serving* as the main focus, before being able to start a community. Within the definition of *loving and serving* it is clear from the data that the quotes labelled as *loving and serving* include all activities organised by the pioneer church, such as the children's Bible club, the potato distribution, homework help, women's mornings, walk-in mornings, as well as the more incidental

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<sup>97</sup> Moynagh, *Church in Life*, 45

<sup>98</sup> Personal communication with pioneer Peter on December 13<sup>th</sup> 2022 (available on request).

activities they do for local residents, such as caring for a family whose mother had health problems<sup>99</sup>. These details confirm the idea that the church is in the early stages of its development.

In a church community, as Wells wrote<sup>100</sup>, it is important to encourage expressions of *being with*, because *being with* is about being present, participating and being together. It is in *being with* that we see what eternal life is, how people can live from the inexhaustible source of this eternal life, and how people can share from abundance<sup>101</sup>. Therefore, it seems important to answer the question of which activities, already present in the pioneer church, are crucial to grow in being together. The following text gives an overview of the elements discussed in the interviews.

### Share life with each other!

“If you want to do something for the people in the neighbourhood, you have to get to know them better. Share life with them!” A statement made by one of the team members interviewed<sup>102</sup>, which fits the nature of this sub question. All the other respondents made more or less the same statement, each in their own way. For this sub question it is important to explore further what it means to “share life”, “be with them”, “get to know them”? What does it take? And how do you do it? In the interviews as well as in the observations, different answers emerge. The different respondents give a vision of their interactions with local residents, regardless of the way and form in which they are contacted. Peter<sup>103</sup> wants to connect with local residents:

“We want to build community and I think community is about sharing with each other, whether that is sharing love with each other or sharing life with each other.”

Caroline sees complications in getting to know people:

“There has been so much going on here in the neighbourhood for so many years, you can't really just come and do something. You have to get to know the people better first. And that is very complicated.”

Nienke sees that being loyal can be a solution:

“You just notice, contact is the most important thing, and a piece of loyalty. So yes, they do need to see your face often enough.”

In it, Peter, Caroline and Nienke point out that the relationship with local residents is about sharing life and love, and that this takes time. In addition, the respondents identify a number of other elements that are important when interacting with local residents, namely being able to offer something, connecting people with each other and connecting with what local residents find important:

“Above all, try to talk to each other and get in touch with each other. Because a lot of people live in this neighbourhood, but they have very little contact with each other, so this adds something to that.” (Nienke)

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<sup>99</sup> Interview with Peter on December 7, 2023

<sup>100</sup> Wells, *A Nazaret Manifesto – Being With God*, 14

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 144

<sup>102</sup> Interview with Peter on December 7, 2023

<sup>103</sup> For privacy reasons, I use fictitious names to indicate team members. Real names are available on request.

## Vulnerability and empathy

As a result of the principle of developing contact with the residents, it is crucial for the team members to look closely at the nature of the contact and always strive to be present in their personal attitude. Peter, Caroline, Nienke and Henk-Jan explain how this can be achieved, such as mutual respect and equality, and also see if it is possible to build bridges to other activities where residents can connect. Peter mentions respect as a foundation:

“I respect what he thinks and feels and experiences. And I give him my views”

Whereas Caroline thinks that vulnerability is important...

“When you share your story, so do they and when you make yourself vulnerable, they also make themselves vulnerable (...) you are just one of them”

...and empathy:

“But it does give that I understand more and more also what it is like to live with less money”

Nienke says that making links with other activities is crucial:

“So you lay bridges to other contact moments”

## Rethinking activities

This focus (“bruggetjes leggen naar andere contactmomenten”) can be applied to personal attitudes, but also to the way activities are organised. A number of activities, such as the women's group and the walk-in mornings, have, of course, guaranteed elements of *being with*. For example, Caroline says about the women's group:

“So it's not super-sized, (...), but so you can have a conversation with the group very easily.”

In a number of other activities, *being with* is less explicitly recognisable, but this could be achieved with a small adjustment. Henk-Jan tells:

“As we move towards organising a meal for neighbourhood residents, it would be quite possible for you to reach out a few times from your own church congregation, but that you would also prepare a meal with the people from the neighbourhood.”

In this sense, this was a crucial statement by Henk-Jan, because it reveals a movement from *being for* to *being with*. Nienke adds to this and calls it an exercise in rethinking, because:

“That does a rethinking, yes, you do want to start regulating yourself soon.”

It also requires vision, patience, an open attitude and a good idea of the demographics of the neighbourhood. Nienke gives the example of patience, patience and more patience. Henk-Jan says the same:

“Keep an open mind and do try to (...) create vision where you want to go.”

## An own location....or not?

The pioneer church currently rents some spaces in the local community centre. The advantage of this centre is that it is a central meeting place in the neighbourhood. Many people come together for language classes, sports and creative activities. In this way, the activities of the pioneer church are visible, but they are hardly distinguishable from other activities. Some of the interviewed team members talk about the desire to have their own place in the neighbourhood. For example, Peter says that a living room would be an important addition:

“That would be the best, because then you could set up a kind of living room in the neighbourhood that is just open daily.”

Caroline, who has been active in the neighbourhood for a long time, describes this as a dream of hers and her husband's once their children are no longer living at home. She links this to being in contact with the residents:

“Well, our dream would be to buy a house here, then live upstairs ourselves and have the walk-in downstairs. That seems great (...), because then you're really accessible to people.”

Henk-Jan sees other possibilities when you have your own place, because you can organise a different kind of activity.

“I think if you want to be more a place for the neighbourhood, you actually have to have another location. There you could also connect things to that (...) that could also include, for example, a clothing shop. You name it.”

### Care for each other as team members

With all these ambitions and ideas, it is also important for a team to be balanced and responsive to each other. This is the fifth category that is often mentioned by team members and is important to stimulate *being with*. The pioneer plan<sup>104</sup> mentions the value of getting to know each other as team members:

“We took ample time to get to know each other and get the concept of Pioneering clear, which was new to everyone. We also used Belbin to look at team roles and who we have in house and who we might be missing. We have a very diverse team in terms of age, background and skills. That's great, but it also takes time to bring each other into everything and grow as a team.”

The team meets every two weeks. This includes *being with* each other, eating together, exchanging ideas and having time to relax together. Henk-Jan emphasises that this is crucial for the pioneer church:

“What we do also just has to remain fun and that we remain enthusiastic as a team.”

So this can be seen as *being with* each other in order to *be with* local residents. Nienke says that a relaxing activity together as team members really helped with motivation.

“Recently, we had a volleyball tournament for a good cause. And we as Southern Lights also had a volleyball team. It was so much fun together, just playing volleyball!”

By getting to know each other well, the team sees each other's talents and gifts blossom. During the conversation with Nienke, it was discussed that everyone's gifts have a place in the organisation. It is also about blossoming spiritually and recognising each other's backgrounds.

“...that you complement each other (...) respect and recognise with each other just ‘spiritually’.”

### How to raise awareness of “Het Zuiderlicht”?

This awareness is (more) conducive to encouraging the pioneer church to involve relative outsiders, such as its own church members, but also surrounding communities that are open to cooperation. These are important for the motivation of the pioneer team and provide income and fame which also

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<sup>104</sup> Mauritz, *Pioniersplan Zuiderzeewijk*, 4

help to support the team members and the goals and vision of the pioneer church. Henk-Jan in particular speaks about this:

“We are looking at short-term projects with the municipalities around us. For example, we could say one time: now we have a lot of elderly people in the neighbourhood and they are struggling to keep up their gardens. This could be a one-off action in the neighbourhood where we involve young people.”

He also talks about the usefulness of fundraising, presentations and keeping the mother church involved.

“The tricky thing though is also of, how do you keep your congregation (...) involved in your pioneer church?”

One of the solutions is a regular presentation after a regular service. A website is also being developed as a calling card for the pioneer church:

“The IZB has now built a website. That costs a ‘certain amount’ (For privacy reasons, I do not mention this amount; GH) per year. Then again, there will be a QR code on that, so the IZB says we will just recoup it.”

### A Sunday celebration: an open Bible, singing, prayer and lunch together

All respondents mention a (future) Sunday celebration as necessary for *being with*. Peter says that they want to grow into a new ecclesial community that meets on Sundays<sup>105</sup>, preferably in their own space in the pioneer church. He is joined by other team members who have concrete ideas of how they would like to work with local residents. For example, Caroline says she would like to involve parents from the children's Bible club:

“Music that gives recognition and connects a bit more with their perception. Actually, you have roughly two groups in the neighbourhood, you have the immigrants and you have the former Amsterdammers. A lot of people from the Jordaan live here. And yes, you make them happy with André Hazes. A song like ‘give me your fear now’ then connects with their world.”

At the same time, she sees four important elements in the form of such a celebration, namely:

“The Bible open, singing and a meal together, as well as prayer.”

Nienke still sees points of interest in the form that suits the target group:

“I think we as a pioneer team are fine with all sides, as long as we follow the biblical sound. We also know that local residents have very different views on this. If you have a Roman Catholic background, and you're just used to being very serene, quiet, peaceful.... Or, you are an Antillean who makes as loud a noise as possible to praise God, that's also possible.”

Another point to consider is the target group:

“We want to do such a celebration. And quite a few people are open to that, but they are all Christian people. And so my question is, is that okay for non-Christian people?”

All these elements lead to an answer to this first sub question.

## 5.1. Answer to sub question 1

The sub question to be answered was "What elements, already present in the pioneer church, are crucial for growing in *being with* in *loving and serving* local residents? Based on the data above, an

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<sup>105</sup> Interview with Peter on December 7, 2023

answer is that the respondents mention several issues that can be categorised as crucial elements for growing in *being with*. Based on the analysis above, seven crucial elements can be distinguished, namely (1) relationship with local residents, (2) focus of team members, (3) organisation of activities by the pioneer church, (4) location of the pioneer church, (5) care for each other, (6) publicity and awareness, and (7) organisation of a Sunday celebration. The first three are directly related to being present and seem to express a desire on the part of the team members, while the last four are more conditional on the first three. Each of these elements is considered crucial by the team members interviewed.

According to Wells, *being with* must be the foundation upon which *working with* is built in order to offer more than just activities. *Loving and serving*<sup>106</sup> local residents begins with individual encounters, with genuine care and engagement with the stories and experiences of local residents, their dreams, wisdom and talents. This brings out an eighth element, reciprocity between giver and receiver, which is not explicitly mentioned by team members.



Figure 5.2: A banner welcoming local residents to an activity of “Het Zuiderlicht”

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<sup>106</sup> Moynagh, *Church in Life*, 45-47

## 6. The role of social diversity in *being with* for a pioneer church

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This chapter describes *the role of social diversity* in the wish of *being with* for a pioneer church (sub question 2). An answer to this question is important for answering the central question, because a description of *the role of social diversity* in the neighbourhood gives an impression of the local situation and its influence on local residents. This is valuable information for the design of the pioneer church. Looking at the cultural backgrounds in “De Zuiderzeewijk”, there is no dominant demographic group<sup>107</sup>. Based on figures 3.1. and 3.2. five groups can be identified. People with a Dutch background (36% of the total number of residents), people with a non-Dutch western background (12.5% of the total number of residents), people from North Africa and Turkey with a predominantly Islamic background (19%), people with a background from former Dutch colonies (e.g. Surinam and Antilles; 15%) and people with other backgrounds (16.5%). Each group has its own religious characteristics: Dutch people in the neighbourhood are often secularised, people with a non-Dutch western background often come from Eastern European countries and often have a more orthodox background. People with a Surinam or Antillean background often have a religious background and may be open to the Gospel<sup>108</sup>. People from an Islamic background are explicitly not open to the Gospel. A relatively large group have an “other” background.

First a story about a feeling I caught myself in, which illustrates the importance of *being with* a person from another culture. This story reminds me of the value of *being with* for a pioneer church. During one of the Saturday mornings, I had been given a variety of tasks to do. At a certain moment<sup>109</sup>, I met an elderly Moroccan man, who only speaks Arabic and French. The man asked me to come and sit next to him on one of the garden chairs. In (imperfect) French, a conversation ensued. A conversation about his late wife, his children who live in the neighbourhood, his grandchildren who speak Dutch and whom he does not understand, his son who works for the police in Casablanca. A superficial but very personal conversation. The man proudly showed pictures of his wife's grave, his son in a police cap and several young (grand)children. After about twenty minutes of conversation, I apologised for having to leave; he thanked me profusely for the time we had spent together and for the effort I had taken. And me? I just feel uncomfortable because I haven't done some of the tasks I had been given. On the other hand, without these tasks and activities I would not have met this man. This visualises a connection between *working for* and *being with*.

As explained in the chapter on methodology, I conducted an interview with four local residents<sup>110</sup>. This chapter describes the results of these encounters and gives a response to the sub question. Where necessary, references are made to quotes from the four interviews. A first characterisation of the four residents is that three of them have an entirely Dutch background. Samira<sup>111</sup> has a Dutch mother and a Moroccan father. Dinie has been married to a Turkish man. Nevertheless, I am aware of the fact that these residents together do not represent a balanced

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<sup>107</sup> “Alle Cijfers Zuiderzeelaan Waddenlaan Lelystad,” Alle Cijfers, last modified February 10, 2024, <https://allecijfers.nl/buurt/zuiderzeelaan-waddenlaan-lelystad/>

<sup>108</sup> A comparison can be made here with the work of Van der Meulen and Versantvoort who argue that religion still plays an important role in the social and economic divisions in Dutch society (publication forthcoming, based on personal communication by Van der Meulen).

<sup>109</sup> Participant observation of September 8<sup>th</sup> 2023.

<sup>110</sup> See Appendix D.

<sup>111</sup> For privacy reasons, I use fictitious names to indicate team members. Real names are available on request.

representation of the *population structure* of the neighbourhood, even though they do represent the *contact structure* of the pioneer church. Moreover, the religious background of these residents is more diverse. Willem (44 years old) is explicitly Christian, Samira (39) is not. Klaartje (63) was brought up as a Roman Catholic, Dinie (64) is interested in Christianity. To receive an answer to this question, several participant observations were done and between February 2024 and March 2024 these local residents were interviewed. These differ in their years of involvement or experience in the neighbourhood (Dinie lives 52 years in this neighbourhood, Klaartje 37 years, Samira 14 years and Willem 8 years).

Ezati writes that social diversity is “the coexistence of different social groups within a given geopolitical environment. It is the differentiation of society into groups.”<sup>112</sup> For the purpose of this sub question, I will focus on the *socio-cultural background* of the neighbourhood. Sub question 3 is more concerned with specifically the *social behaviour* of people. This will be discussed in more detail in chapter 7. In chapter 6, this social behaviour is part of an overarching theme. As a first observation, several participant observations<sup>113</sup> show that the background of the population varies over the activities. For example at the children’s Bible club:

“At the beginning of the celebration, 27 children were present, mostly children of European/Dutch, Surinamese, Antillean or African descent.”<sup>114</sup>

And the distribution of potatoes:

“This row shows a diverse population: North African, Surinamese, Dutch, Antillean, Asian, Eastern European, young, old, male, female.”<sup>115</sup>

The pioneer plan<sup>116</sup> also mentions this:

“It turns out, at the moment at the children's club, mainly children come from white Dutch or Surinamese background or black African descent. (...). We would like to reach their parents, and know by now, that these are mostly single mothers or with a husband, who is mostly away from home, at best to work. Most of the residents of this neighbourhood are low educated. (...). There are also many elderly people in the neighbourhood, who have lived there all their lives. They have their own little networks, but there is also a lot of loneliness among them.”

The participant observations<sup>117</sup> show for example that during the children's Bible club there are many children with a Surinamese, Antillean or African background and almost no Muslim children, whereas during the potato distribution and the walk-in on Thursday mornings<sup>118</sup> there are people with a Muslim, Dutch or Asian background. For further research, it seems important to see how this diversity plays a role in the development of the pioneer church (and their wish of *being with*) from the perspective of local residents. As a starting point, how do the four respondents describe the neighbourhood from this socio-cultural perspective?

As mentioned in the theoretical framework, the socio-cultural situation in “De Zuiderzeewijk” is characterised by the diverse cultural backgrounds of the inhabitants, a low average income, more than average feelings of loneliness, more than average people with physical disabilities, a relatively

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<sup>112</sup> Ezati, "Social Diversity, Gender, Equity and Public Policy", 184.

<sup>113</sup> For example as shown in the participant observation of March 18th, 2023.

<sup>114</sup> For example as shown in the participant observation of December 16<sup>th</sup> 2023.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Mauritz, *Pioniersplan Zuiderzeewijk*, 3

<sup>117</sup> This is visible in every participant observation

<sup>118</sup> Based on responses in an interview with pioneer Peter on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023



high risk of depression and an age structure comparable to that of Dutch society. Respondents say about this situation that:

“It's quite a bit of a deprived neighbourhood, I'll be honest, with people with a lot of problems.”  
(Dinie)

Just like Samira:

“The people living in this neighbourhood are often people with very high debts who are, for example, in debt restructuring. It really is a deprived neighbourhood. People have almost nothing. But don't know any better either.”

This is in line with Willem's observations:

“I really think it's a neighbourhood where there are really a lot of people who are lonely, and divorced. A lot of worries on their minds and pretty indifferent, a lot of people who haven't succeeded in life, to put it bluntly. It's really mixed, there are also people just like us with a family who also just do their ‘thing’.”

Dinie says about the *cultural* background of the neighbourhood:

“A lot of them come from Turkey and Bulgarian people are there and of those Eritreans, they are there yes, but I know a lot of them, and I did help those people a lot of times with things.”

Willem has also discovered this:

“I have the impression that certain parts of the neighbourhood are quite Moroccan. Not so much Surinamese... also a bit, Turkish also a bit, but most of it is Moroccan, but those Moroccan groups (...) they are a bit more together than the Dutch.”

Dinie sees that overcoming language barriers may help increasing contacts between local residents from different cultures:

“I myself was married to a Turkish man for a very long time and so I can understand a little bit of Turkish, and talk a little bit and so I (...) always come out of it with them. Yes, with each other.”

Samira also believes that the composition of the pioneer team should reflect the composition of the neighbourhood:

“That's what I miss. There is no diversity, and that that makes people from the neighbourhood also maybe think, ‘I'm not going there. There's that white person sitting there again’.”

Dinie also sees the negative effects from this on the contacts of local residents with members of the pioneer church:

“Some then say yes, but then when we go there, we don't know what to say because we can't express our things very well.”

Samira agrees with this in a more general sense:

“You feel something with people of your own culture, that.”

But she does not know whether members of “Het Zuiderlicht” are aware of these mechanisms. At least, she thinks the team is not cultural diverse<sup>119</sup>. This feeling of solidarity with people of one's own

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<sup>119</sup> See interview with Samira: “Dat is wat ik mis, want er is geen diversiteit, die is er niet en dat dat maakt dat de mensen uit de wijk ook misschien wel denken: ‘Ik ga er niet naartoe (...)’”

culture is valued as important in reaching out to local residents of different socio-cultural backgrounds.

“The language barrier piece can also help, as in: someone who speaks Arabic, someone who speaks Turkish, someone who... you know, that that makes people think, oh I naturally go there too.”

She also thinks that some activities do not reach the people in real need of food, because of feelings of shame:

“That with those potatoes.... You're not reaching the people you want to reach (...), because they're not going to stand in that line. They don't.”

Instead, she pleads for “connecting factors”, that may help overcoming barriers:

“I do think you have connecting factors and you can create those, but they are not there yet and I do think they need to do that to make sure that everyone, and that is going to be heard more as well, I think you need to do that more, I think you should indeed have a Surinamese lady in between, or indeed a Turkish lady making a Turkish dish.”

Samira also has a clear vision of how *being with* can be stimulated in this socially diverse environment:

“I want to have a place where I can have a cup of coffee or play a game of chess, or call it... that you can walk in there and just have a place there where there's just always someone who listens to you or wants to think with you.”

She also gives examples of this:

“Those lonely elderly people often do come to the potato distribution. Talk to them and ask if they would like to join the Bible club some time, for example.”

and

“..., why not let lonely elderly people make breakfasts (for children who don't get that at home; GH)?”

All this information leads to an answer to this sub question.

## 6.1. Answer to sub question 2

The sub question to be answered was "How does social diversity in “De Zuiderzeewijk” influence the of *being with* for a pioneer church? As mentioned in the analysis above, there is considerable diversity in “De Zuiderzeewijk”. The analysis focused on the *socio-cultural* background<sup>120</sup> of the local residents. This concept is supported by statistics<sup>121</sup>. The respondents colour these statistics with their experiences and stories.

With these characteristics of the neighbourhood in mind, an answer can be given to the sub-question. Firstly, respondents agreed with the socio-cultural diversity of the neighbourhood. At present, the pioneer church is actively building relationships with local residents<sup>122</sup>. It is clear that a target group that is difficult to reach from the perspective of “Het Zuiderlicht” are people from North

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<sup>120</sup> As written at the beginning of this chapter, sub question 3 will focus more on the social behaviour.

<sup>121</sup> “Alle Cijfers Zuiderzeelaan Waddenlaan Lelystad,” Alle Cijfers, last modified February 10, 2024, <https://allecijfers.nl/ buurt/zuiderzeelaan-waddenlaan-lelystad/>

<sup>122</sup> Participant observation of September 8<sup>th</sup> 2023 and based on responses in an interview with pioneer Peter on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Africa and Turkey, and more generally Muslims. They are only visible in certain activities. This has to do with their religious and cultural background. With a view to social diversity, the local population sees several focal points. The composition of the pioneer team should reflect the composition of the neighbourhood. If this is more present, residents with a non-Dutch background may feel less of a barrier to connecting with members or activities of “Het Zuiderlicht”. The same goes for language barriers. This feeling of solidarity with people of one's own culture is considered important. Some residents refer to this in a more general sense as “connecting factors”, which can help to overcome barriers. A connecting factor can be a place where people can meet and where someone is there to listen to you. A variation of this is to bring different groups together to meet each other.



*Figure 6.1: A bird's eye view of “De Zuiderzeewijk”*

## 7. The perception of local residents about *being with* for a pioneer church

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This chapter describes a response to the perception of the local community of *being with* God for a pioneer church (sub question 3). An answer to this question is important for answering the central question, because the perception of local residents (as subject in the central question) is crucial for the development of *being with* by the pioneer church in order to be recognised by local residents.

“Het Zuiderlicht” wants to develop activities that have the goal of *being with*. For this, it seems important to know how the residents perceive *being with* in the activities. Several participant observations<sup>123</sup> show that in at least two of the organised activities (children's bible club and potato distribution) team members of the pioneer church try to connect with local residents. For example, contact with the parents of the children attending the children's bible club, or the brief conversations during the food distribution, shows that there is a connection with local residents. The question is, what do local residents perceive as *being with* the pioneer church in "De Zuiderzeewijk"?

I experienced an example of this perception at one of the moments of potato distribution<sup>124</sup>. A lady on a scooter approached one of the team members. This local resident had made a handbag out of jeans fabric for each team member. Every month this lady comes to collect a bag of potatoes and is very content with that. She talked about her physical health problems and her limited income. Nevertheless, she says she wants to give something back. So she made these bags for the team members. Making these bags is her hobby. During her explanations about her hobby, I discovered her pride and enthusiasm about this hobby as well as the presentation of her talents. She lighted up when she talked about it. This attitude is at the root of *being with*: reciprocity, using talents, and a sparkle in a person's eye.

As explained in the methodology chapter, I have done an interview<sup>125</sup> with four local residents, Willem, Dinie, Klaartje and Samira, and one focus group discussion<sup>126</sup> on this topic with the same people. This chapter describes the results of these encounters and formulates a response to the sub question. Where necessary, references are made to quotes from the interviews and the focus group (Appendices R and T). In February 2024 and March 2024 four residents were interviewed and participant observations were made. An analysis of these (empirical) interview data is given in this chapter. The four residents have different connections to the pioneer church. They also differ in the number of years they have lived in the neighbourhood, but they are all able to explain their perceptions of *being with*.

In individual interviews with these local residents we looked for this meaning of *being with* for “Het Zuiderlicht”. Before answering this sub question, it was important to better understand the behavioural characteristics (in addition to the socio-cultural situation, as discussed in chapter 6) of the neighbourhood and how *being with* is embedded in the context of this neighbourhood. Willem begins his talk with a clear characterisation of the neighbourhood:

“I really think it's a neighbourhood where there are really a lot of people who are lonely, and divorced. A lot of worries on their minds and pretty indifferent, a lot of people who haven't

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<sup>123</sup> See for example participant observations of September 8<sup>th</sup> 2023, April 15<sup>th</sup> 2023, and May 13<sup>th</sup> 2023 (available on request)

<sup>124</sup> Participant observation of February 24<sup>th</sup> 2024 (available on request)

<sup>125</sup> See Appendix C

<sup>126</sup> See Appendix E

succeeded in life, to put it bluntly. It's really mixed, there are also people just like us with a family who also just do their 'thing'<sup>127</sup>.”

Samira explains that many people have had many disappointing experiences in their lives, such as making debts, having an addiction, having a depression or being denied parental rights<sup>128</sup>. People have little self-confidence and feel a deep distrust in other people. As a result, many people behave dependent and have a certain toughness:

“You very often see on the outside very tough people who are very proud, often still coming across as arrogant as if they know everything. I then persevere until it actually turns out that they are very soft-boiled eggs, so to speak. Just listening to their story, is actually me thinking yes, you know, everyone needs that, that very small piece of: I have been heard.”

Many people in the neighbourhood seem to be apathetic and passive about their personal situation, and there is a low level of solidarity between people, provoked by various causes, such as poverty or mental issues<sup>129</sup>. It is not clear which specific cultural groups show this social behaviour. It seems important for the pioneer church to acknowledge these three observations about social diversity. Dinie says she does not know if the pioneer church is aware of these characteristics. Willem would like to connect local residents with each other to increase solidarity and reduce people's apathy. Dinie's perspective is to help other people, based on a wider commitment than just the pioneer church. She sees no need for reciprocity in helping others. Willem adds that people have their pride and dignity. He says:

“I remember (...) saying: there is such a long queue for potatoes, we have to do something with that, it's like a wartime winter. That's no fun for those people either.”

Samira agrees and says about the impressive queue of people waiting for the potatoes to be distributed: “dat is waar mensen een probleem mee hebben.” In her opinion, this particular activity is not reaching the right people and needs to be better targeted. Samira sees that the children's bible club has as a clear goal to see and know local children and has this alignment with the principles of *being with*:

“The children's Bible club, they achieve a lot with that, because those children who are kicked out the door early in the morning, and are allowed to come in again in the evening. Those kids feel heard at the Bible club. So that is genuinely going very well.”

Klaartje is also of the opinion that young people between the ages of 15 and 25 should also have a voice:

“It's the youth who do shit around here. They don't really organise things for the youth between 15 and 25 here. Yes, they could do a bit more for that.”

In the focus group interview, she also adds a solution to this:

“So basically, they should just put up a building like that. Where they can chill out every night if necessary.”

Samira, for example, says there is only one way to contact people:

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<sup>127</sup> This quote was used earlier in chapter 6.

<sup>128</sup> Interview with Samira on March 8<sup>th</sup> 2024 (available on request).

<sup>129</sup> Interview with Samira on March 8<sup>th</sup> 2024 (available on request).

“That way is that it shows that you can be trusted, because the trust is often so damaged over the years they have had, (...) actually that trust is continuously damaged. And often you see that friendships don't work either.”

This fits with the principles of *being with*, as a foundation for people to flourish. Willem sees this too:

“Just offering something, a meal, conviviality, togetherness. Everyone has something, yes, that they are good at and can do their thing. (...) That people can also help each other. Not that we have to do it all.”

Willem adds that for “Het Zuiderlicht” it is important to develop that people feel equal and valued, and that they start to take initiatives when these conditions are met<sup>130</sup>.

“They have to have the idea of I can start making a difference myself. I think if someone has nothing to earn, they should understand that it is good to talk and have a click with others to come up with something to get out of the situation.”

Dinie adds that when an activity is organised, she always brings neighbours along:

“Goes very well and I pick them all up and they all go with me.” (See focus group observation with local residents)

Samira is in agreement with this:

“That bit of I can be there, I matter, that is what people often need.”

On the basis of this argument, Samira gives an impressive example of how to bring people together and allow them to flourish:

“For instance, I would also do something for that lonely elderly person. They often do come to the potato distribution. I would talk to them, and ask if they would like to help with the Bible club some time, for example. (...) Or: why not let lonely elderly people make breakfasts early in the morning (for children who don't get breakfast at home)?”

With this she argues that both generations get a connection, older people feel valued and children can learn a lot from the stories of these older people. From a more practical perspective, Dinie adds that “Het Zuiderlicht” should advertise its activities more in order to reach more people or to *be with* more local residents:

“People also often don't know what ‘Het Zuiderlicht’ is, because people ask me, what is ‘The Southern Lights’ and where is it located? It's also a bit in the back.”

The respondents also talk about the Christian background and a more soteriological dimension of the pioneer church. Dinie, Willem and Samira are explicit about this:

“I also send people here, because sometimes people don't know what it's about either, but then they say: ‘Yes, we had a nice coffee’. ‘Did you also talk?’ ‘Yes, just about nice things’. ‘Then I think yes, but about what?’ Yes, I don't know what about, of course, but they didn't say anything about religion.” (Dinie)

With this, Dinie seems to say that visitors to the Thursday walk-in moment feel the need to talk about religious issues. Samira thinks differently, based on a more diverse perspective:

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<sup>130</sup> See this citation in the interview with Willem (available on request)

“I don't think it should matter what origin, what religion I have, I think everyone should be able to walk in there.”

Willem adds an explicitly Christian approach. He thinks it is important that people see the Holy Spirit in the activities and wants the team to work in dependence on God and the Holy Spirit.

“How can we work together with the Holy Spirit, by faith? When we gather, we are also aware of that, you pray for that, you are working on that. (...) And then it is important that you do not always want to impose your own will. That you are constantly working on the goal you have set. That you live towards it and that you go in dependence on God and the Holy Spirit.” (Willem)

More publicity is needed, says Dinie:

“People also often don't know what ‘The Southern Lights’ is, because people ask me, what is ‘Het Zuiderlicht’, they ask, and where is it?”

With all this information from local residents about *being with* for “Het Zuiderlicht”, an answer to this third question can be formulated.

### 7.1. Answer to sub question 3

The sub question to be answered was: "What do the residents of ‘De Zuiderzeewijk’ perceive as *being with* for a pioneer church?" During the interviews with the four respondents, several elements were discussed. Roughly speaking, they mentioned important characteristics of the neighbourhood that should be taken into account in order to *be with* residents as a pioneer church. These are that there is a lot of loneliness, apathy and people with a lot of disappointing experiences in their lives, such as debt, addiction, depression or being denied parental rights. People have little self-confidence and a deep mistrust of other people. As a result, many people are dependent and have a certain hardness. But people have their pride and dignity.

After this survey, they all gave an answer to the sub question. Local residents see *being with* for “Het Zuiderlicht” in situations like the children's bible club, where children who are not always welcome with their parents experience a situation where they feel valued. This corresponds to Wells' description of *being with*. This should also be the case with older people, young people between the ages of 15 and 25. Not many activities are organised for them in the neighbourhood. Many of these young people are a bad influence in the neighbourhood. "Het Zuiderlicht" will be able to develop the talents of these young people in activities that bring people of different ages together and in activities that encourage people to use their talents. A more practical addition was also made: in order to be with more local residents, it is necessary to be visible to local residents. This visibility can have different faces depending on the location: distinct from the community centre or not, both have their (dis)advantages.

The main conclusions are related to the different perspectives of the respondents on how and based on which principles the activities should be organised. This can be seen as the soteriology of the pioneer church. This raised some questions. Such as: What is the purpose of the activities organised by the pioneer team? What (implicit) soteriological perspectives does the church follow? How does this relate to the *missio Dei*? More specifically, do the team members want to save people from death, or do they want to make a connection with residents? These soteriological questions will be given more space in the final chapters of this thesis.



*Figure 7.1: A street scene in “De Zuiderzeewijk”*



## 8. The perception of the team members about *being with God* for a pioneer church

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This chapter describes a response to the pioneer and the team members' perception of *being with God* for a pioneer church (sub question 4). An answer to this question is important for answering the central question, because ultimately the pioneer team want to develop a Christian community, so in addition to *being with* local residents, a perception of how to *be with God* is crucial. As explained in the methodology chapter, I conducted an interview with team members and a focus group conversation with the same team member. Where appropriate, references to quotes from these interviews and focus group conversations<sup>131</sup> are added.

The pioneer team would like to be a servant presence in “De Zuiderzeewijk”, as a Christian community. The initial pioneer plan<sup>132</sup> states that

“We want to search with them for who God is and speak to them about God with an open mind (...). We want to do this by sharing our lives with them and standing beside them. No us-side relationship, but doing things together.”

### Ways of *being with God*

The pioneer adds that he does not want to “play church”<sup>133</sup>. On the other hand, Christian ideas are used as a starting point, such as the desire to serve others, to care for others as Jesus did, and to be moved by others<sup>134</sup>. Some local residents also explicitly refer to the Christian background of the pioneer church<sup>135</sup>. Talking to team members, I got the feeling that there is a tension here: between wanting the pioneer church to be explicitly Christian on the one hand, and being open to all on the other, and thus following the way of Jesus less in words and more in deeds. The pioneer plan also shows both sides. On the one hand the plan says:

“We are convinced, that the gospel gives people in the neighbourhood more hope and outlook and thus can encourage them to ‘build’ themselves, their family/children and the neighbourhood more.”

In this fragment it seems unclear what is meant by “het evangelie” (“the gospel”). Is it only the atoning blood of Christ's sacrifice, or also the new, atoning way of life, as Wells intended with *being with*? And on the other hand it says:

“We have our own place in the neighbourhood, where everyone is welcome for a cup of coffee, where children come after school for homework help and teenage girls come to chill for an hour.”

This also seems to be “good news” for local residents and the neighbourhood. What is the relationship between the two? It seems an interesting research to give words to this soteriology. For this reason, in December 2023 and January 2024, I interviewed four team members about how they perceived *being with God* for their pioneer church to be with God, and several participant observations were done. In March 2024, a focus group was conducted with the same team members (the pioneer and three team members) on the same question. The interviewed team members were

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<sup>131</sup> Transcripts of these interviews and conversations are available on request

<sup>132</sup> Mauritz, *Pioniersplan Zuiderzeewijk*, 2

<sup>133</sup> <https://www.izb.nl/blog/2023/03/07/>

<sup>134</sup> See focus group conversation of March 18<sup>th</sup> 2023 (available on request)

<sup>135</sup> For example, the interview with Dinie.

the same as for sub question 1. These team members also vary in their years of involvement or experience in the pioneer church. An analysis of the (empirical) data is given below. About *being with*, Wells writes that God is. It is not a matter of doing, but of being<sup>136</sup>. This is Wells' starting point, *to be with God*.

Peter, the pioneer, talks at length about an almost weekly meeting he has with a local resident during the walk-in moment on Thursday mornings. As there are no visitors other than this man, there is time for personal encounters, a cup of coffee together or a game of chess. They share a lot about their faith, with this particular visitor explaining that he is a Muslim and is now searching. Peter's response is:

“The moment I share my life with someone who I am not necessarily a Christian, I do feel that I have fellowship with that person in the same way. Me being a Christian is just woven into all my doings. But whether I'm talking to a Muslim or Buddhist or whatever, I believe we are that community of God with each other”.

Peter also points out that it is a "beautiful thing" that there are differences in faith and that it is not a problem for him if a person has a different faith. This is also evident in his view of *being with*, which is not about words, but about comparing *being with* others. He doesn't see much difference between them:

“Perhaps there is no such difference at all between ‘being with’ others and ‘being with God’. You see, ‘being with’ the other, that asks us to love Him above all else and our neighbour as ourselves. The moment I sit down next to that other person, that is also being with God.”

In this quote, the pioneer leaves room for different religious views in the encounter with others and seeks his Christian identity in the encounter with others by showing his behaviour. Other team members also leave room for different views and are more inclined to express the Christian character of the pioneering church in words. Nienke says this:

“I think that as a pioneer team, we are kind of fine with all sides, as long as we follow the biblical sound.”

During the focus group conversation, Caroline responds to the question of when the pioneer church is successful by saying that this is not the right question because:

“Because it's about (...) God becoming big in the neighbourhood. And yes, then that might be success, but I don't call that success or anything. (...). It is Your work and not our work.”

A similar perspective is shared by Henk-Jan:

“And that the people in the neighbourhood get something more together and if we can share a piece of the gospel there we will certainly not fail to do so, but that is directly not our first goal.”

He also says that the Gospel will not be given “with the potatoes” or as a condition for receiving potatoes, but to look for moments or entrances where it is possible to share the Gospel. Again, the question is: what is “sharing the Gospel”? Sometimes it is a search, and he feels guilty when he has not been able to say at least something about the Gospel. On the other hand, he says, it does not have to be a goal in itself. One of the other team members, Caroline, points out that she always starts the day in the pioneer church with prayer, and that through her

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<sup>136</sup> Wells, *A Nazaret Manifesto – Being With God*, 14.

actions the love of (the Christian) God can be shown to others in a consistent and recognisable way:

“I always pray ‘God, will you show Your love through me? So that's always my prayer that I really see the children and the women with those eyes full of love. I hope they very much see that you are in one piece. That you are what you say and what you do and everything that that is so.”

During the focus group conversation, she adds that visibility and relationship add to this love of God:

“And yet also being present a lot yourself, (...) that at some point they start to know you. That gives reliability and (...) a bond with people.”

During the interviews with the four team members, they were explicitly asked what they saw as *being with God* in the encounters around the pioneer church. They explained this in the interviews. Henk-Jan responds:

“Still your reliability, also a piece of love towards people. Just being there. Yes, and not wanting to make it special. Sometimes those moments come along naturally and (...) you take them in dependence on God and give the Spirit space to do his work.”

Nienke adds that she sees *being with God* through the activities of the pioneer church:

“I see *Being with God* through a lot of things. As a certain blessing we experience at work. If we see where we started and that you now have a number of activities and that people now come (...). We do see the hand of God in that that he blesses this, that people come, that you get notoriety and that you also get the strength to do it every time.”

She also sees the presence of the Holy Spirit in this:

“I also find that we get quite a lot of openings, take for instance the handing out of potatoes. That we have so much enthusiasm, sometimes you just have a chat or you can give someone a wink or a pat on the back. That's how I experience it.”

Peter also emphasises that he does this work because of his religious background and that he has no choice but to live this way:

“The drive I have to do this work, a drive I don't have from myself. That passion is there because I really want it myself, but I also believe that it is something that God has given me. He simply put that in my heart and I can't escape that myself. And that is also why I love doing this, just to share your life with others, to stand beside others but also to share God with each other.”

These words from the pioneer show where his inspiration comes from. Other respondents, such as Caroline, share similar basic principles as the motivation for their involvement in “Het Zuiderlicht”. These principles are based on specific biblical texts...

“You gave me clothes when I was naked, you visited me in prison.... And that those people then ask, ‘but when did I do that?’ Yes, because you did that to one of them, you also did that to God. So that's how you have to look at the people around you.” (Caroline)

...or based on serving God:

“Our driving force though is really that my husband and I both love God and therefore we also love our fellow man and we actually do want to do something for God, not to earn anything, but to serve him in again showing others how nice it is to serve God.” (Nienke)

Other expressions make a connection with the experiences and backgrounds of individual team members in relation to their faith, from which they draw inspiration.

“I haven't always had it easy either. If you share that too, then you can also say who God is for you in that. It's not in the foreground at all, but it comes naturally.” (Caroline)

A central point that comes up more often is when the Christian faith is discussed in contact with local residents. This is what Peter and Nienke say about this central point:

“Actually, it's very fluid so to speak. I mean, I never felt like ‘Hey, he wants to impose something on me. Or the other way around’. But rather that you want to make it clear to each other of ‘here I stand’ and also ‘that's my limit’.” (Peter)

“Sometimes they ask: ‘How do you do that in your church or how do you look at it?’ and then I do tell them how we do it, and people, including Muslim women, find that very enriching... of the fact that we are also people who think about it like that. They have the idea that the average Dutchman just ‘lives on the fly’.” (Nienke)

Other responses show that it is not necessarily a conversation about faith, but rather about building community:

“The local resident I met is religious and has a certain connection to God. But that it is different from mine I don't really mind that much. In fact, I think it's something beautiful. (...) Maybe not the same God, but with God. And that, in turn, gives you that community. It's building that community, precisely because you are in a neighbourhood where there is so much diversity. It is also necessary in that way.” (Peter)

“Sharing things does become important at some point in a community, you do hope for a bit of openness.” (Nienke)

And that when it comes to building a community, building relationships and building trust is crucial:

“Yes, it is the basis of it anyway, they have to know you. (...) predictability is also a very important trait. And not promising what you cannot deliver.” (Nienke)

And Henk-Jan adds:

“But if people don't trust you, then you don't have to say anything about the Lord Jesus either, then you miss the boat with that too, then it's just a loose comment. So if people trust you, know how you are. Yes, then you do create support for that.”

Caroline believes that being trustworthy is about being yourself:

“Only by being real I think.”

## A Sunday celebration?

Based on these elements, the pioneer team is considering a visible way of *being with God* in the form of a Sunday celebration. The team members say they are thinking about a Sunday celebration. Henk-Jan says:

“I think a pioneer place could quite well emerge here, with Sunday services (...). Yes, I think ‘De Zuiderzeewijk’ is just ready for that.”

An important part of this process is how to involve local residents and find out what their needs are in relation to this Sunday celebration.

“I think we all agree that it should not be our celebration. We are doing it for the local residents and so how can you be of service?” (Nienke, during the focus group conversation)

An important consideration in the team's discussions is the diversity of the population structure:

“That's the tension we all experience, though. What attracts some will repel others and how do you combine that? Because if you have all Christian people... then it does become a bit of a Christian group. And will someone who has nothing to do with it still dare to enter? Things like that.” (Nienke, during the focus group conversation)

This diversity also influences the liturgy of this Sunday celebration.

“If you have a Roman Catholic background, and you're just used to being very serene, quiet, peaceful.... Or, you are an Antillean who needs to make as loud a noise as possible to praise God.” (Nienke)

In addition to this cultural aspect, Caroline also sees a clear structure to it:

“I think it's very important to open the Bible (...). And singing together is just very unifying, so I would like that too, and a piece with a meal with conversation with each other. And also prayer.”

All this information leads to an answer to this fourth sub question.

### 8.1. Answer to sub question 4

The sub question to be answered was: "What do the pioneer and the members of the pioneer team perceive as *being with God*? The general impression, as described in the analysis above, is that during the interviews and the focus group conversation, respondents described several ways in which they perceived *being with God*.

The first way is through contact with local residents. According to the pioneer and the pioneer team member, God shows himself in a relationship in which all parties are equal and can give something of themselves. This can be seen, for example, in the encounter between Peter and a local resident on a Thursday morning. A second way of *being with God*, as shown by the respondents, is visible in the motivation of the team members to do this work. Caroline, for example, shows that she is grounded in the Christian tradition as a prerequisite for *being with the people* in "De Zuiderzeewijk" with her story from Matthew 25 ("for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in"). A third way of *being with God* is through activities. Nienke says, both in the interview and in the focus group, that she feels blessed by the activities of the pioneer church. This has to do with being trustworthy, predictable and visible. And the delicate balance between *talking about* the gospel and *showing* the gospel. A fourth way of *being with God* is to be in contact with the other team members and to stimulate each other in a positive way to be, become and stay motivated and to sharpen each other. A final way of *being with God* is to organise Sunday celebrations. The team has its questions about how and for whom these moments should be organised. They already seem to have ideas about the liturgy.

## 9. Conclusion, methodological reflection and recommendations

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This concluding chapter is divided into four sections. First, a short summary of the answers to the sub questions is given. Based on this, a conclusion or answer to the central question is formulated. This is followed by a discussion of the methodological process and results. Finally, some recommendations for future research are given.

### 9.1. Summary of the answers on the sub questions

The answer to the first sub question (Chapter 5) was to distinguish eight crucial elements for growing in *being with* during *loving and serving* of local residents were distinguished. The first seven are: the relationship with local residents, the focus of the team members, the organisation of activities by the pioneer church, the location of the pioneer church, caring for each other, publicity and awareness, and organising a Sunday celebration. In general, each of these elements is identified as crucial by the team members interviewed. The first three are directly related to *being with*, while the other four are more dependent on the first three. A final category, reciprocity<sup>137</sup> between giver and receiver, was also identified as crucial, but could have a more explicit place in the pioneering church at this time. It is through this reciprocity that each person is given space to discover his or her own richness of gifts<sup>138</sup>.

The second sub question (Chapter 6) revealed how the social diversity of 'De Zuiderzeewijk' influences the wish of *being with* for “Het Zuiderlicht”. The first was that the composition of the pioneer team should reflect the composition of the neighbourhood, in such a way that non-Dutch residents feel free to associate themselves with members or activities of “Het Zuiderlicht”, this applies more specifically to language barriers and more generally to a feeling of solidarity with people of one's own culture. Some residents referred to this in a more general sense as “connecting factors”, which can help to overcome barriers. A connecting factor can be a place where people can meet and where someone is there to listen.

The answer to the third sub question in Chapter 7, about what local residents perceive as being with, was that a soteriological narrative also needed to be developed. There are many people in the neighbourhood who are lonely, apathetic and who have had many disappointing experiences in their lives, such as financial debt, addiction and depression. People have low self-confidence and a deep mistrust of other people. This needs to be articulated in order to organise activities and meetings that point to *being with* people based on these characteristics. This narrative can be based on involving local residents in a way that allows their talents to flourish. A second element of this narrative should be how openness to all people can be given a place in soteriology, based on explicitly articulated Christian notions of compassion, justice and love.

In Chapter 8, the fourth sub question revealed that the pioneer and his team members experience *being with God* in a number of ways. The first way was seen to be through contact with local residents. A second way of *being with God* was seen in the motivation of the team members to do this work. A third way of *being with God* was through the activities being carried out. A fourth way was in the contact with other team members and in the positive stimulation of each other. A fifth way of *being with God* was in organising Sunday celebrations for local residents.

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<sup>137</sup> Wells, *A Nazaret Manifesto – Being With God*, chap. 10

<sup>138</sup> Wells, *A Nazaret Manifesto – Being With God*, chap. 11

## 9.2. Conclusions

Based on the answers on these four sub questions and the theoretical framework (chapter 3), I will end with five conclusions.

The first conclusion is that the language of the team members interviewed reveal their preferences. The team members have received a call to “do something” in the neighbourhood, based on the pioneer plan which states that they want to “bring people to Jesus”<sup>139</sup>, which is to be appreciated. At certain points<sup>140</sup> in the interviews, it seems that *being with* is more obvious to the residents than to the team members. One reason for this assumption is that because of the characteristics of the team members (generally speaking: they do not live in the neighbourhood; they are members of other, more traditional churches; on average, their educational background is more theoretical), their starting position almost automatically elicits a *working for*-attitude.

In other words, the team members have the intention to work according to *being with*. This can be seen in the participant observations and statements where they speak in general terms about situations or a vision. When they talk about more specific situations, their use of language reveals a *working for*-attitude. This can be seen, for example, in quotes as “willen opbouwen”, “organiseren van”, “zelf regelen” and seeing all kinds of “projects” in the contact with people. The use of these quotes is in tension with the ideas about *being with* local residents. Although this can be in line with Wells’ statement<sup>141</sup>, who argues that *being with* must be the foundation underneath *working with* and *working for*, otherwise they are nothing more than a method. For the team members, he states that it is desirable to be aware of the fact that they have to make more effort (practically and mentally) to act according to the backgrounds of *being with*. From another point of view, the team members organise the pioneer church according to the circles of the *servicing-first journey*<sup>142</sup>, more specifically *listening, loving and serving*, and the initiative lies with the team members. This way of working can lead to conflicts with *being with*, where the initiative is more reciprocal.

As a second conclusion, the analysis, the answers and the summary of the sub questions show that it is more obvious to grow in *being with* when there is a soteriological alignment between the various actors. “Het Zuiderlicht” will be a new ecclesial community, not a carer or helper. For this to happen, the activities need to be thought through on the basis of what Paas calls a “thick soteriology<sup>143</sup>”, which means that the richness of biblical perspectives can be brought into conversation with the diversity of human experience<sup>144</sup>. At this point in time (first half of 2024), based on the results of the various sub questions, differences in soteriological views are visible. As discussed in Chapter 3, there is also a tension between the ideas of Moynagh and Wells. Moynagh discusses his ideas about planting a pioneer church based on a more evangelical soteriology<sup>145</sup>, whereas Wells presents being with based on a different soteriology. So there is a tension between the ideas of the two authors. This tension is also evident between the pioneer and the team

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<sup>139</sup> See section 3.1.

<sup>140</sup> For example in chapter 5 (Rethinking activities) where Henk-Jan, as team member, says: “Als we richting de organisatie van een maaltijd voor wijkbewoners gaan, zou je best een paar keer wat aan kunnen reiken vanuit je eigen kerkelijke gemeente, maar dat je dat ook met de mensen uit de wijk een maaltijd voor gaat bereiden.” and in chapter 7 where Samira, as local resident, says: “waarom laat je niet 's ochtends vroeg eenzame ouderen ontbijtjes maken (voor kinderen die thuis geen ontbijt krijgen)?”

<sup>141</sup> See as well the story in chapter 6 about an encounter I had with a Moroccan man.

<sup>142</sup> See section 3.2.

<sup>143</sup> Paas, *Vrede op aarde - Over heil en redding in deze tijd*, 377

<sup>144</sup> Paas, *Vrede op aarde - Over heil en redding in deze tijd*, 377

<sup>145</sup> See section 3.2.

members, and between the local residents and the team members. Both tensions will be discussed below. In chapter 8, which is devoted to sub question 4, there are several quotes that show these tensions.

The first tension in soteriology, between the pioneer and the team members, is that the pioneer tends to give space to other religions and to an encounter with these religions. The pioneer feels that when he has an equal relationship with a Muslim, for example, he believes that together they form a community of God. On the other hand, the team members have a more explicit view of the gospel as the ultimate truth. They may work from a more traditional evangelical soteriology, believing that the Christian narrative of learning from His serving love and being an image of God gives people more hope and a better perspective on life, based on their embedding in the conservative side of the PKN (Reformed Church). This way of thinking can build up their lives, their families and their neighbourhoods. These tensions may be recognised when thinking about designing or evaluating activities.

The second tension in soteriology, between local residents (as described above) and team members, is that local residents often have no religious background and struggle in their daily lives. Respondents say that many people have experiences of loneliness, addiction, lack of confidence and debt. They need to be heard, seen and acknowledged in their situation, rather than rejected or corrected. They are not helped by being told to be an image of a God they do not know. In this situation, a soteriology based on *being with* may fit the situation of many residents of “De Zuiderzeewijk”. This soteriology is contextualised<sup>146</sup> and has elements of relationship, reciprocity, a foundation for people to flourish, developing friendships, a *Missio Dei* message with an emphasis on justice and *shalom*<sup>147</sup> is more appropriate. This is in line with Wells who wrote: “Every person, in his own circumstances and skills, is able to give many gifts and talents. The power of a community is how it is able to see and use people’s talents<sup>148</sup>”. This combats indifference and victimisation and respects people's dignity and pride. Tensions between local residents and team members can be seen in quotes about how to reach people with specific needs, such as food or personal attention.

A third conclusion, based on elements of the previous conclusions, is that if Wells' *being with* is highly valued by the residents of "De Zuiderzeewijk" and perhaps by people in general, this may have implications for the future shape of pioneer churches in the Netherlands. The working method of IZB impact, as a member of the PKN, is based on a *serving-first journey*. Looking at the challenges faced by local residents and the themes that have emerged in the answers to the sub questions, it is suggested that the working method of IZB impact be edited or enriched with the ideas and backgrounds of *being with*, because this fits better with the needs of the local community.

A second aspect of the addition of *being with* in this working method is the position and composition of the pioneer team. As shown in the first conclusion, team members from outside the neighbourhood work according to different implicit soteriologies and most of them initially use *working for*-principles as a basis. It takes effort for them to work according to *being with*. On the other hand, the local residents have shown an explicit need for *being with*. This raises questions about the position and composition of the pioneer team. Ideas within the pioneer team should be more about *being with*. Changing the composition of the team may help. This may also require a reflection on soteriology with all stakeholders (pioneer, pioneer team and residents).

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<sup>146</sup> See section 3.3, about a “nooit ophoudende stroom van contextualisaties”.

<sup>147</sup> Hoekendijk, *The Church Inside Out*, 21-22

<sup>148</sup> McKnight and Block in Wells, *A Nazaret Manifesto – Being With God*, chap. 14



A fourth conclusion is that “Het Zuiderlicht” will find it difficult to grow in two elements of a definition of new ecclesial communities. Michael Moynagh offers this (four word) definition. They are *missional, contextual, formational* and *ecclesial*<sup>149</sup>. A pioneer church can grow in each of these four elements as it develops into a (new ecclesial) community. According to the responses of the team members and local residents interviewed, there is development in each of these four elements. This can be described as *missional*: as described in the answers to sub questions 2 and 3, the team is looking for target groups to prioritise *working with*, because of the high social diversity in the neighbourhood. In general, they are open to any group, but the team has not yet decided which group(s) to focus on. With regard to *contextual*, it is clear that the pioneer church tries to contextualise its activities (see sub questions 2 and 3) in relation to the social diversity in the neighbourhood and has developed ways of *being with* local residents (sub question 1). This fits in with Verburg-Janssen's words about the location of a pioneer church, that an added value is visible in maintaining places where people can be themselves and where they can be present as often as possible. By creating a place that remains present no matter what, a place of God is created<sup>150</sup>. *Formational* has more or less to do with the *exploring discipleship*-circle of the *serving-first journey*<sup>151</sup>. Interviews with team members show that there is no clear agreement on how to disciple local residents. This can be seen, for example, in sub question 4, where the analysis has led to four ways of *being with God* that members of the pioneer church see or do. This relates to the *ecclesial* in Moynagh's definition. The team members are united in their desire to become church for the people they are trying to reach. They differ in the approach they take. The general conclusion is that for the first two elements (*missional, contextual*) in the definition of a new ecclesial community, the sub questions show that growth is visible in the pioneer team's approach. For the last two elements (*formational and ecclesial*), it can be seen that there is a lot of space to develop these elements in order to grow in *being with* for the pioneer church in “De Zuiderzeewijk”.

A fifth and final conclusion is based on Moynagh's premise that four iterative circles of a *serving first-journey* lead to a pioneer church taking shape. At least, organising a Sunday celebration is a desire of the team members of “Het Zuiderlicht”<sup>152</sup>. Before this can be organised, the team values *listening* and *serving and loving* as of circles a *serving first-journey*. These two are explicitly visible in the conclusions of sub questions 1, 3 and 4<sup>153</sup>. A third circle, *building community*, is growing, and a fourth circle *exploring discipleship* is not yet visible, because the people interviewed are people who have a heart for “Het Zuiderlicht”, but only a limited number of them are Christians. At the moment, the first two circles are the focus of the team members. In these circles the “mixed economy”<sup>154</sup> has an explicit place, with an emphasis on the members of the mother church, who are relatively more active than local residents. The active role of local residents is seen as a balance between the involvement of both groups. The last two circles (*building community* and *exploring discipleship*) are still under-developed. There is an opportunity to develop these circles in order to grow in *being with*.

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<sup>149</sup> See section 3.2.

<sup>150</sup> Verburg-Janssen. “*Rondom de ruimte van het begin*”, 285 and see section 1.1.

<sup>151</sup> See section 3.2.

<sup>152</sup> See chapter 5 (“An own location...or not?”) and chapter 8 (“A Sunday Celebration?”)

<sup>153</sup> This is, for example, visible in the chapters with the pioneer team as respondents in statements like “We willen de gemeenschap opbouwen en ik denk dat gemeenschap gaat over delen met elkaar, of dat nu is liefde met elkaar delen of leven met elkaar delen.” (Peter). In the chapters with local residents as target group is a statement like “Ze moeten het idee hebben van ik kan zelf ook wat gaan betekenen. Ik denk dat als iemand niks te makken heeft, hij moet snappen dat het goed is om te praten en een klik te hebben met anderen om iets te verzinnen om uit de situatie te komen.” (Willem)

<sup>154</sup> See section 3.2.

The team is reluctant to take a next step in the process leading to a Sunday celebration<sup>155</sup>. This suggests that a *servicing first-journey* (or variations derived by the IZB) is seen as a roadmap rather than an iterative process. A side note to this conclusion is the assumption that a Sunday celebration is the ultimate goal of the pioneer church, and that this is part of *church takes shape in a servicing first-journey*. A soteriological nuance can be that church is also visible when people gather in the name of Jesus as “Het Zuiderlicht” already does.

With these conclusions, an answer can be given to the central question. The central question in this thesis was “**How can a pioneer church grow in ‘being with’ God and local residents in ‘De Zuiderzeewijk’ in Lelystad, in the process of building a community?**” This research was conducted between December 2023 and June 2024 in pioneer church “Het Zuiderlicht” in Lelystad. The answer to this question is that the team members have the intention to *be with God* and to *be with* local residents. Both variations of being with can be given more attention, with the articulation and synthesis of different views of both team members and local residents and the development of a soteriological vision (*being with God*), and the awareness that *being with* local residents has its complexities in the way people communicate about it, in its connection with the other three ways of contact with people, and in the design of activities. Wells *being with* is a useful correction to a *servicing first-journey* by Moynagh.

In the following sections, I reflect on the research methodology and make some recommendations for future research.

### 9.3. Methodological reflection

During the research process, several points for improvement were identified. Therefore, after the concluding section, it is important to take a critical look at the methodological process and results and to discuss some elements. Some situations to reflect on are:

In this research, members of a pioneer church with a lot of practical experience about the neighbourhood were interviewed. This was interesting because of their stories and vision on how to organise the pioneer church specifically in a neighbourhood like “De Zuiderzeewijk”. A conversation about specific theological concepts was therefore less interesting. In a future situation it might be helpful to interview a pioneer from a further developed pioneer church or a member of IZB impact to receive an impression of a more theological foundation.

This research was carried out in two phases. The research plan was written between February and June 2023, with a first contact between the pioneer church and me in November 2022. The research phase was carried out between December 2023 and May 2024, so after a break of six months. And in total, from start to finish the research had a duration of one year and a half. From a researcher's perspective, this one year and a half gave me the advantage of diligence and the opportunity to see the development of the pioneer church during this period. During this relatively long period, I was able to follow the development of the pioneer church, and it was “more than just a snapshot”. For a pioneer church in its infancy, this was a relatively long period during which pressing issues may have changed. This may have affected the results of my research.

When conducting the focus group interviews for sub question 4, the health situation of the pioneer does not allow him to participate in the interview with the team members. Due to this personal situation, this solution was unavoidable. This situation may have influenced the course of the conversations and therefore the respondents' answers during the conversations.

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<sup>155</sup> See chapter 5, “A Sunday celebration: an open Bible, singing, prayer and lunch together”

Finally, I would like to reflect on my own appearance as a researcher. As mentioned in section 1.6, I was born in “De Zuiderzeewijk” and have lived there for twenty years. During this time, some of the residents also suffered from their personal problems, and I still remember their stories, which could also apply to today's situation. During the research it became clear that I felt a tension with three specific roles I had: the role of “detached researcher”, “local resident and bearer of the history of the neighbourhood”, and “highly educated transient”. In good conscience, I have tried to pay attention to all three, with the (detached) role of researcher being the most present. But the other two cannot be forgotten.

#### 9.4. Recommendations for further research

In this final section, some recommendations for future research are made. These are:

The composition and history of the neighbourhood is very specific to “De Zuiderzeewijk”. In a relatively short period between 1967 and today, the neighbourhood has developed from a modern new housing estate to a disadvantaged neighbourhood in the context of a new city. Today, it has a wide variety of cultural backgrounds: former Amsterdam residents, people with a Muslim background, Antilleans, Eastern Europeans. This history is crucial for the development of the pioneer church and may not be representative for other pioneer initiatives.

In further research, it may be interesting to reflect more on the tensions between a *servicing first-journey* and *being with*. Both concepts have different foundations in missiology and ethics. Although both authors come from churches with strong roots in society, their views are different. This can be explored in further research.

For future research it might be interesting to reflect on the interpretation of a pioneer team. A *servicing first-journey* implicitly states that church takes shape *based on listening, loving and serving, building community and exploring discipleship*. So, according to Moynagh, you cannot speak about church, before this fifth circle, *church taking shape*, emerges. Wells writes that church is where Christians live out the justice of God. This may require further reflection.

Linked to the previous recommendation, also the composition of the team needs further reflection. If Wells writes that church is where Christians live out the justice of God, then one recommendation might be that local residents are involved in the team from the start. Also because local residents have a clear vision of *being with*.

In a further research it might be interesting to investigate what happens after a pioneer church (in cooperation with the pioneer, team members and local residents) has developed a clear soteriology which also describes a clear analysis of the local situation. Is this helpful for the development of the pioneer church? What is its actual development?

As a last recommendation, it might also be interesting to investigate, since there is no dominant target group, whether it is helpful to develop strategies to focus on the different socio-cultural groups as a basis for its activities.

After these conclusions, reflections and recommendations, this is a good place to express the hope that the results of this thesis may contribute to the development of new pioneer churches that can be a light in the neighbourhoods where they may be at work. Above all, I hope I have been allowed to contribute to the further development of ‘Het Zuiderlicht’, which, like many of their Flevoland predecessors, are developing a new and meaningful community.

Pioneering in the polder!

## 10. Epilogue

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At the end of 2020, two thoughts came together. On the one hand, I felt that I needed a new challenge in addition to my work as a teacher at a university of applied sciences. We were living in the midst of the Covid19 crisis. Everyone was working at home and there were not many opportunities for contact with others. On the other hand, there was a thought, or rather a desire, to deepen myself in the field of theology. The latter arose from the period from 2015 to 2018, when I worked more or less with my family as a missionary in Albania for an educational assignment with a Christian organisation. Of course, this assignment had to do with developing an educational vision, but we also had a lot of contact with Christians and the sharing of the Gospel was clearly present.

After many conversations with my wife, I started a (small) pre-master in September 2021 in an online environment. Unfortunately not much contact with other students, but flexibility in the working method. In that first year, all sorts of practical and systematic theological concepts were discussed in a nutshell. This fitted in perfectly with daily life at the time, a time of working from home and little other activity. After a year, I completed this pre-master's course. This allowed me to start the Master's phase of the international Master of Theology of the PThU in September 2022. My (personal) situation had changed: the Covid19 period was over and I had also changed jobs, now as an educational scientist at the Academy for Social Work & Theology at Viaa University of Applied Sciences. And a wonderful start to the Master's phase with a course on "Christian Communities", a subject that appealed to me enormously. Moreover, this happened through contact with inspiring teachers and motivated students from different countries. In other words, in an international context. A "nice hobby", as I called it at the time. This is also where my interest in researching pioneer churches began.

At the time of writing, I have been studying for almost three years. It has been a wonderful journey so far, learning a lot and meeting many talented and inspiring people. And... since September 2023 I have a new job, as team coordinator of the theology department at the same university. Although studying no longer feels like a "hobby", this new job is a position at a crossroads between my educational and theological backgrounds. And this research also fitted in with the social work background of many of my colleagues. All in all, I felt that I was being led in this direction.

I would like to thank all the professors I have met over the years and especially Dr Marten van der Meulen. Thank you for the coaching I received. I have always appreciated your critical, down-to-earth and humorous input. Thank you for everything, I really enjoyed it. I would also like to thank the team members of "Het Zuiderlicht". During this journey it was an honour to be your guest during Thursdays, Saturdays and our interviews. It was my intention to write about "Het Zuiderlicht" and "De Zuiderzeewijk" in a respectful way. Peter, Caroline, Nienke and Henk-Jan: thank you so much for the input you gave me to walk with you and also for the openness you had during the conversations we had together. Two situations are worth mentioning. At the end of May, two young people involved in "Het Zuiderlicht" were baptised, and at the end of June, a first Sunday celebration will be organized, after this long search. Two valuable revenues and something to be proud of.

My thanks also go to Samira, Klaartje, Dinie and Willem, thank you for our meetings, I really learned a lot from you. I would also like to thank Dr. Annemiek de Jonge. Your dissertation "Als een madeliefje tussen de straatstenen" was a perfect match for my research topic. And this academic year, I have been trusted to succeed you as team coordinator at Viaa. I feel grateful for that.

Three years of study would not be possible without a loving and stable home base. So I thank Charissa, my wonderful wife, and Judith and Tamar, my two beautiful daughters, for everything they

have given me over the past three years. I couldn't have done it without you. Although I promised not to study in the presence of our children, discussions about content and organisation were often present. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to study. I love you all! Last but not least, my gratitude goes to our Heavenly Father. Thank you Lord for your mercy and loving kindness.

In the near future, I hope to be able to contribute even more to Vaa's theology department in terms of experience and/or research. And most of all, I hope to spend more time with my wife and children. Starting with this summer holiday!



Figure 10.1: An invitation for an activity of “Het Zuiderlicht”

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## Appendices

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### Appendix A: Declaration Sheet

#### Declaration Sheet Master's Thesis

Name student: Geert Holwerda

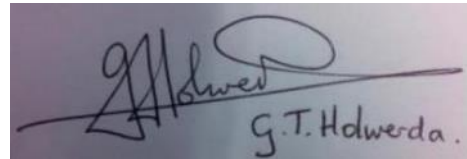
Title master's thesis: "An old story in a new city - pioneering in the polder" - A research about a pioneer church in Lelystad in a social diverse setting connects with God and local residents

#### DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby declare that the aforementioned master's thesis consists of original work. The thesis is the result of my own research and is written only by myself, unless stated otherwise. Where information and ideas have been taken from other sources, this is stated explicitly, completely and appropriately in the text or in the notes. A bibliography has been included.

Place, date:  
Elburg, The Netherlands, June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2024

Signature:

A photograph of a handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored surface. The signature is stylized and appears to read 'G.T. Holwerda'. Below the signature, the name 'G.T. Holwerda.' is printed in a smaller, sans-serif font.

#### DECLARATION OF CONSENT

I hereby agree that the aforementioned master's thesis will be made available for inclusion in the library collection after its approval and that the metadata will be made available to external organizations and/or published by the PThU.

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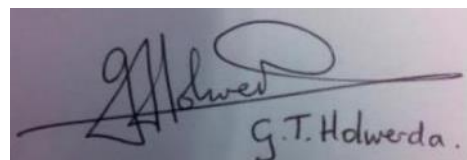
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Elburg, The Netherlands, June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2024

Signature:

A photograph of a handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored surface. The signature is stylized and appears to read 'G.T. Holwerda'. Below the signature, the name 'G.T. Holwerda.' is printed in a smaller, sans-serif font.



## Appendix B: Data management plan

> See explanation at the end of this document.

### 1. General information

NAME OF STUDENT: Geert Holwerda  
NAMES OF THESIS SUPERVISORS: Marten van der Meulen  
DATE: June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2024  
VERSION: 1

### 2. General information about research and subject of the thesis

(PROVISIONAL) TITLE OF THE RESEARCH / THESIS:

“An old story in a new city - pioneering in the polder” - A research about a pioneer church in Lelystad in a social diverse setting connects with God and local residents

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT AND METHOD(S):

In many Western countries Christianity loses attraction. For that reason, experiments started with more contextualized ways of church communities. For example in Lelystad where a pioneer church started in a district with a low average gross annual income, multiculturalism and social issues. The pioneer would like to elaborate from activities and listening, to serving, loving and building a community (according to the serving-first journey). For making connections to residents and building a community, it is important to get more insight in their needs and the characteristics of the district. How can this pioneer church *be with* God and the people of the district? It seems interesting which social factors positively stimulate the development of the pioneer church. The method used in this research is participatory action research. An answer to four sub questions will be given, supported through qualitative data.

TYPE OF RESEARCH DATA TO BE COLLECTED:

Qualitative data for each of the four sub questions

PERIOD IN WHICH THE DATA WILL BE COLLECTED:

December 2023 – June 2024

### 3. Technical aspects of the data storage

HARD- & SOFTWARE:

Laptop with a secured external drive / Microsoft programs such as *word* and *excel*, but also programs to record interviews and focus group conversations, such as *teams*

FILE FORMATS:

.doc, (word) .xls, (excel) .mp3/mp4 (audio)

SIZE OF THE DATA (ESTIMATELY IN MB/GB/TB):

1000 – 10000 MB

STORAGE OF DATA DURING CONDUCTION OF THE RESEARCH:

On a secured external drive

STORAGE OF DATA AFTER COMPLETION THE RESEARCH:

After completion personal and sensitive data will be deleted, other data will be stored on a computer

**4. Responsibilities**

MANAGEMENT OF THE DATA DURING CONDUCTION OF THE RESEARCH:

Stored in folders, and description with specific dates (YYMMDD)

MANAGEMENT OF THE DATA AFTER COMPLETION OF THE RESEARCH:

After completion personal and sensitive data will be deleted, other data will be stored on a computer

**5. Legal and ethical aspects**

OWNER OF THE DATA:

GT Holwerda

IS THE DATA PRIVACY SENSITIVE?: YES / ~~NO~~

Some data (like interviews and focus group conversations) is privacy sensitive

IF YES: HOW WILL YOU ARRANGE SAFE STORAGE AND CONSENT OF THE PERSONS AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED IN YOUR RESEARCH?

Files will be saved in a secured external drive. Before interviewing persons, I will ask explicit consent to record the conversations. They are also allowed, without reasons to withdraw from participation. In that situation, I will not use the data and will delete it.

**6. Other aspects**

-

=====

*(The following has to be filled in by the thesis supervisor:)*

Approved

Not approved, because: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

=====

## EXPLANATION

### *Ad 1 General*

Fill in the date on which you completed the data management plan and indicate which version, e.g. 1.0. During the research the research methods might be altered or unforeseen issues with regard to privacy sensitive data might arise. In that case you will need to update the corresponding paragraphs of the data management plan and the date and version number accordingly.

For a complete data management plan, you are required to fill in all the fields, even if that be with the term 'not applicable'.

### *Ad 2. General information on the research project and the subject of the thesis*

Describe briefly your research and what research methods will be used.

Describe the type of research data, like written sources (archives, literature), transcriptions, interviews (video or audio tapes), reports, surveys, (enquete resultaten), pictures.

You have also to mention the use of raw or secondary data.

### *Ad 3. Technical aspects*

Will specific hardware be used besides a pc/laptop? Will you use specific software for data analysis?

File formats can be: DOCX, TXT, XLSX, PDF, WAV, JPG.

The size of the files can be given in megabyte, gigabyte or terabyte. You can fill in an estimate size, since at the start of the research your exact data file size will not yet be known.

Save the data during your research at a good and safe storage. Privacy sensitive data can safely be stored on the Home-Directory of the VU. De H:disk is usually the most safe data storage location. Do not save privacy sensitive data in the cloud! Cloud services can only be used for saving standard data like scientific articles in PDF. Do not use USB-storage or your personal device for saving (privacy sensitive) data either. These might be stolen, get lost or get damaged.

Please note the importance of regularly saving the versions of your master thesis in a safe storage. After the research has been completed, the data used may be published as part of your master thesis, in an appendix. That holds mainly for small data collections which do not contain privacy sensitive information. (Anonymized) Data can be stored in separate files along with the thesis in the PThU library. Files with privacy sensitive data can be archived in a data storage specifically for that purpose, ArchStor/DarkStor, a facility of the VU. Arrangements can be made via the PThU library.

### *Ad 4. Responsibilities*

For the sake of the academic integrity it is important to describe in what manner the data will be safely saved and managed That is also important for the verifiability of the data. You can find the Dutch Conduct Code Academic Integrity here: [www.pthu.nl/Onderzoek-PThU/Academic\\_Integrity/](http://www.pthu.nl/Onderzoek-PThU/Academic_Integrity/) Describe who will manage the data during the research. In most cases this will be the student. If your thesis supervisor also can access the data, you must mention that. After completion of the research the management of the data should be transferred to the PThU library.

If you interview persons in the research, inform them how the (privacy sensitive) data will be managed and by whom.

### *Ad 5. Legal and ethical aspects*

Indicate who is (co-) owner of the data.

If you collect privacy sensitive data in the research process, it is necessary to very carefully manage the data once collected. Think about personal information like name, address, age, but also the Dutch Service Number (BSN), gender or religious beliefs. That must be done properly and safely. (See also Ad 3.) Make sure no data leaks occur. Inform the interviewees (or other concerned persons) how the data will be used. Ask them to fill in and sign an 'Informed consent form'. With that form they grant permission (consent) for collecting, storing and using the research data. Inform them that the collected data will be used only for your research.

Anonymize the data as extensively as possible.

*Ad 6. Other aspects*

Any aspects not covered by the other questions can be filled in here.

You can always consult your thesis supervisors about questions which are unclear or if you have doubts about the proper manner to collect and/or, store data. The staff members of the library can also offer advice.

PThU, Amsterdam/Groningen  
(form version: 20190703)

## Appendix C: Interview questions team members (SQ1 & SQ4)

- Intro over doelen en duur
  - Twee deelvragen om er achter te komen hoe jullie als pioniersteam er over denken
  - Meeste interviews duren tussen 40 en 50 minuten
- Wat is je rol binnen deze pioniersplek? 2
- Hoe lang ben je al betrokken? 2

*Deelvraag 1 (Welke elementen, al aanwezig in de pionierskerk, zijn cruciaal voor het groeien in “zijn met” tijdens “dienen en houden van” van wijkbewoners?)*

- Kun je vertellen welke activiteiten de pionierskerk organiseert?
- Hoe dienen deze activiteiten de wijkbewoners? Waarin toont zich het houden van?
- Op welke manier richten deze activiteiten zich op zijn met?
- Waar zit nog groei, als het gaat over “zijn met”?

*Deelvraag 4 (“Wat zien de betrokkenen bij de pionierskerk als “zijn met God?”)*

- *Beginnen vanuit een concreet voorbeeld:*
  - *Peter – gesprek met iemand die kwam koffiedrinken*
  - *Caroline – Kinderbijbelclub/vrouwenclub*
  - *Henk-Jan – Aardappelen*
  - *Nienke – Kinderbijbelclub/vrouwenclub*
- Ik begreep/weet/heb gezien dat je .... deed, kun je daar iets over vertellen? Waarom heb je het zo aangepakt? Organiseer je vaker dit soort activiteiten?
- Vier perspectieven van Wells benoemen (vanuit PPT). Wat zou jij het liefste doen?
- Ga je ook over Jezus vertellen? Waarom zou je dat doen?
- Ik (als onderzoeker) Ik kom being with op het spoor als ik ..... zie.
- *Vertellen over wat “zijn met God” is – Laat respondenten vertellen over hoe zij “met God zijn”. Hoe is dat in de pionierskerk zichtbaar? Hoe is dat bij anderen die betrokken zijn zichtbaar?*

## Appendix D: Interview questions local residents (SQ2 & SQ3)

*Deelvraag 2: Hoe speelt sociale diversiteit in “De Zuiderzeewijk” een rol in de wens van “zijn met” voor een pionierskerk?*

- Vertel eens hoe je in de wijk terecht bent gekomen?
- Hoe typeer je de wijk? Kun je hier een voorbeeld van geven?
- Kun je een voorbeeld geven van de diversiteit in de wijk? Vertel er eens over.
- Kun je een voorbeeld geven van hoe de diverse groepen wel/niet samenleven in de wijk?
- Op welke manier heb je contacten met al deze verschillende bevolkingsgroepen?
- Welke dingen doe jij in al deze diversiteit voor anderen? Kun je een voorbeeld geven?
- Hoe speelt dit een rol bij de activiteiten bij het Zuiderlicht?
- Op welke manier houden zij er rekening mee?

*Deelvraag 3: Wat zien wijkbewoners in ‘De Zuiderzeewijk’ als “zijn met” voor een pionierskerk?*

- Hoe ben je bij het Zuiderlicht betrokken geraakt? Wat spreekt je zo aan?
- Vertellen over “zijn met”
  - Werken voor
  - Werken met
  - Zijn voor
  - Zijn met
- Hoe typeer je de activiteiten die het Zuiderlicht doet? A, B, C of D?
- Wat doet het Zuiderlicht daarmee? Hoe komt dat terug in jullie activiteiten?
- Wat merk je daar persoonlijk van?
- Waar zou je nog op terug willen komen?

## Appendix E: Questions focus group conversation with local residents (SQ3)

SQ3: “Wat zien wijkbewoners in ‘De Zuiderzeewijk’ als “zijn met” voor een pionierskerk?”

- **Werken voor** – een dokter en een patiënt / iemands huis schilderen
- **Werken met** – werken met bijvoorbeeld vluchtelingen / samen met een oudere de tuin opknappen
- **Zijn voor** – geld geven aan anderen om mensen op te vangen / blogs schrijven over oneerlijke situaties
- **Zijn met** – luisteren naar anderen, kop koffie, die ander doet ook mee (elkaar helpen met klussen / elkaar tips geven over opvoeding kinderen).

*Hoe kun je als gemeenschap “zijn met” buurtbewoners? In de interviews die ik gedaan heb, hoor ik veel kenmerken van de wijk: verschillende culturen, mensen met diverse problemen, verschillende bevolkingsgroepen die soms wel en soms geen contact met elkaar hebben.*

1. Op welke manier houdt “Het Zuiderlicht” in zijn activiteiten rekening met deze kenmerken? En waar kan dit nog verbeterd worden? Welke ideeën heb je?

*In de interviews hoor ik duidelijk en soms minder duidelijk dat een eigen (ontmoetings)plek in de wijk wenselijk zou zijn. Ik hoor ook van sommige wijkbewoners dat het onderscheid tussen activiteiten van “Het Zuiderlicht” en andere organisaties niet altijd strikt gezien wordt. Sommigen hebben gesproken over een viering op zondag. Dit is allebei een vraag voor de toekomst.*

2. Kortom: kunnen jullie noemen wat wat jullie betreft belangrijke toekomstkeuzes zijn voor “Het Zuiderlicht” als het gaat over het ontmoeten van mensen?

*Een vraag over het doel van “Het Zuiderlicht”. Verschillende geïnterviewden geven aan dat het belangrijk is om in contact te komen met mensen en ook om mensen met elkaar in contact te brengen. In meerdere gesprekken hoor ik ook dat het goed zou zijn als “Het Zuiderlicht” open zou zijn voor iedereen: jong-oud, rijk-arm, gelovig-niet-gelovig, moslim, atheïst.*

3. Kortom: welk van deze elementen zijn wat jou betreft passend in het “verhaal” van het Zuiderlicht?
  - ➔ Hoe kan dit verhaal het beste voor het voetlicht worden gebracht?
  - ➔ Hoe past het laten floreren van mensen en oproepen van talent in dat verhaal?

Stellingen:

- Het is belangrijk dat “Het Zuiderlicht” er kan zijn voor elke inwoner van de Zuiderzeewijk
- “Het Zuiderlicht” is een succes als .....

## Appendix F: Data focus group conversation with team members (SQ4)

SQ4: “Wat zien de betrokkenen bij de pionierskerk als “zijn met God?”

*Ik heb dit onderzoek ingestoken vanuit “zijn met”. Hoe kun je als christelijke gemeenschap “zijn met” God en de buurtbewoners. In de interviews die ik gehad heb, hoor ik veel kenmerken van de wijk: cultureel divers, lage inkomens, verslavingsproblematieken, mentale en fysieke problemen. Daarbij hoor ik ook dat mensen problemen hebben met vertrouwen in of op anderen en er soms sprake is van een laag zelfbeeld.*

4. Op welke manier houdt (en graag elk punt concreet langsgaan) “Het Zuiderlicht” in zijn activiteiten rekening met deze kenmerken vanuit het Christelijke perspectief van de pioniersplek? En waar kan dit nog verbeterd worden? Welke suggesties zijn er?

*In de interviews hoor ik impliciet en expliciet dat een eigen plek in de wijk zeer wenselijk zou zijn. Jullie hebben dat allemaal op je eigen manier verwoord. Ik hoor bijvoorbeeld van sommige wijkbewoners dat het onderscheid tussen activiteiten van “Het Zuiderlicht” en andere organisaties niet altijd helder (of strikt) gezien wordt. Ook hoor ik zo nu en dan de wens tot het uitvoeren van zondagsvieringen. Kortom, beide zijn het stappen voor de toekomst. Sommigen van jullie hebben gesproken over hoe die viering er dan uit zou moeten zien, voor welke doelgroep en sommigen hebben geschetst wat hun droom is voor een eigen plek.*

5. Kortom: willen jullie beide opties verder onder woorden brengen? Hoe en waarom zouden er zondagse diensten gevierd kunnen worden (denk aan doelgroep, focus, hoe de dienst er uit kan zien) en hoe zou een wenselijke plek er uit kunnen zien en waarom?

*Een vraag over de soteriologie, of te wel het heil of de redding, relevantie van “Het Zuiderlicht”. Verschillende geïnterviewden geven aan dat het belangrijk is om in contact te komen met mensen en ook om mensen met elkaar in contact te brengen. Dit vertaal ik met om hen te leren kennen en een netwerk op te bouwen als nieuwe plek in de wijk. In meerdere gesprekken hoor ik ook dat het goed zou zijn als “Het Zuiderlicht” open zou zijn voor iedereen: jong-oud, rijk-arm, gelovig-niet-gelovig, moslim, atheïst.*

6. Hoe passen beide elementen (dus contact/verbinding en openstaan voor iedereen) in het Christelijke “verhaal” van de pioniersplek en (vervolg) hoe breng je dit verhaal voor het voetlicht?
  - ➔ Ook als het gaat over het soms negatieve zelfbeeld van de mensen dan past bij het Christelijke verhaal bijvoorbeeld het uitgangspunt van de mens die zondig is niet goed met de doelgroep.
  - ➔ Hoe past het benutten van talent in dat verhaal?

Stellingen:

- Ik zie de Heilige Geest werken in de activiteiten van onze pioniersplek
- Wij kunnen er zijn voor elke inwoner van de Zuiderzeewijk
- “Het Zuiderlicht” is een succes als .....