

Tracing Pentecostal Pastoral Care

A Quantitative Study among Pentecostal Pastors in Norway

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ABSTRACT

Throughout history, pastoral care¹ has been central to the church's diaconal mission. Nevertheless, there is limited empirical research on Pentecostal pastoral care in the Norwegian context. This study examines how pastoral care is understood and practiced among Pentecostal pastors in Norway. The study is based on a survey of 66 pastors in the Pentecostal Movement in Norway, in which selected questions were drawn from a previous study of pastoral care in the Church of Norway, supplemented by newly developed questions and open-ended responses. The results are compared with published findings from the Church of Norway and analyzed descriptively through qualitative content analysis. The analysis determines that Pentecostal pastoral care has a threefold practice, emphasizing listening and empathy, guidance and counsel, and spiritual support and intercessory prayer. Compared with studies of mainline church contexts, the practice appears more explicitly faith-oriented, with a clearer thematic profile shaped by faith, growth, healing, and interpretation. The article concludes that Pentecostal pastoral care may be considered a *trialogical practice*, in which pastoral care is understood as open to the presence and work of the Holy Spirit while also raising the need for ethical reflection on pneumatological boldness, pastoral responsibility, and care-seeker autonomy.

Keywords: Pentecostal Movement, pastoral care, practical theology, Pentecostal theology, ecclesiology.

INTRODUCTION

¹ In this article, the term *pastoral care* is deliberately used as a broad concept. English-language literature distinguishes between several related terms, including *pastoral care*, *pastoral counseling*, *soul care*, *care of souls*, *Christian counseling*, *pastoral psychotherapy*, *pastoral care and counseling*, and *biblical counseling*. In the Scandinavian context, however, the Norwegian *sjelesorg*, Swedish *själavård*, and Danish *sjalesorg* gather a broader range of meanings and practices, all building on the German *Seelsorge*, meaning “care of souls” or “care for the soul” (Okkenhaug, 2002, p. 7). Here, *pastoral care* is used as the closest and most inclusive English equivalent.

The church has a long tradition of diaconal work toward people in need. The church's healing ministry has held a central place for generations, with prayer, care for the sick, and pastoral care being important parts of the church's diaconal mission. Pastoral care has accompanied the church from its inception (Grevbo, 2006, p. 22), and throughout church history, it has appeared in countless forms. As an academic field, pastoral care has been the subject of extensive theological reflection and empirical studies in Lutheran contexts. In the Norwegian Pentecostal context, however, pastoral care has, to a limited extent, been the subject of systematic research. This study investigates Pentecostal pastors' understanding and practice and compares the findings with the study of pastoral care practice in the Church of Norway by Grung et al. (2016). The research question is therefore: *How is pastoral care practiced and understood among Pentecostal pastors in Norway, and what pastoral care profile emerges when compared with pastoral care practice in the Church of Norway?*

PENTECOSTALISM

While the Pentecostal Movement in Norway is considered the second largest Protestant denomination in the country, it may be more precisely described as a movement of independent churches with approximately 40,000 members (Statistics Norway, 2025). The Pentecostal-charismatic movement originated in the Azusa Street Revival in the early twentieth century. Revival Christianity was characterized by preaching on conversion and the personal experience of God. Singing, testimony, Spirit baptism, speaking in tongues, and eschatological preaching held strong positions. However, systematic theology and its documentation were less prominent. For the first Pentecostals, loose forms and free organization were important. With roots in the Holiness movement, they rejected formalized rituals and emphasized the fullness of the Spirit and the leading of the Spirit. Pentecostalism, as one of the fastest-growing movements within Christianity, seeks to preserve biblical teaching while allowing the Spirit of God to affect the lives of believers. Pentecostal theology seeks to integrate spiritual experiences with biblical doctrine and aims to bring people closer to God and His purpose for the world (Anderson, 2004; Hollenweger, 1986, 1997; Sørensen & Waldemar, 2023).

One of the foremost authorities on Pentecostalism, Walter Hollenweger, argues that the first 10 years of the Pentecostal revival represent the core, and not merely the beginning, of the movement (Hollenweger, 1986). Early Pentecostal spirituality has therefore become normative for the entire Pentecostal tradition (Hollenweger, 1997). Consequently, the development of Pentecostal faith and practice has largely been rooted in the early years of the Pentecostal revival. A central concept within the Pentecostal movement is *Pentecostal faith and practice*, which expresses the connection between Pentecostal belief and spirituality. It is not primarily about written dogmas but about how faith is practiced. This understanding has roots in the Wesleyan Holiness movement, with its emphasis on both the preaching and the experience of the fivefold gospel: Jesus as Savior, Healer, Sanctifier, Spirit Baptizer, and Coming King (Land, 2010). Land specifies, however, that the primary aim of Pentecostal spirituality was not to accumulate isolated experiences, even though the experiential dimension was strongly emphasized. Rather, the main goal was to experience life as part of the biblical drama and to participate in God's history of salvation. As Land expresses, "This spirituality is Christocentric precisely because it is pneumatic; its 'fivefold gospel' is focused on Christ because of its starting point in the Holy Spirit" (Land, 2010, p. 23).

The first Pentecostals in the Azusa Street Revival strongly emphasized the personal involvement of the Holy Spirit in the believer through individual experience. Central to this belief were personal conversion and the individual search for a touch from the Holy Spirit, which often led to so-called altar calls. In most cases, this practice involved moving to the

front bench, kneeling down, and receiving help to “pray through” the challenges one was facing. Pentecostals regularly encouraged people to bring all their needs to the altar, “where the waters of healing flow” (Vining & Decker, 1996). Such altar practices may be understood as important arenas of pastoral care, although pastoral care was to a lesser extent developed as an independent and systematized practice. Pastoral care was therefore often integrated into intercessory prayer, altar practice, and the charismatic life of the congregation rather than organized as a distinct academic field within Pentecostal churches.

Pastoral Care in the Pentecostal-Charismatic Tradition

Mathew (2020) demonstrates how American Pentecostal pastoral care has developed from a strong focus on conversion to a broader understanding of care for spiritual needs. He notes that the pastor’s caregiving function received increased attention in Christian contexts in the United States from the 1950s onward, and that systematic training gradually became part of theological studies. This aspect, however, applied only moderately among Pentecostals. Although many Pentecostal pastors offered pastoral care, most had limited training in the field, and Bible schools and institutes provided little teaching in pastoral care. Only from the 1990s onward did pastoral care receive increased attention in Pentecostal contexts. This delay has contributed to a lack of comprehensive theological understanding and scholarly material on Pentecostal pastoral care (Vining & Decker, 1996; Mathew, 2020; Decker et al., 2021). However, in recent years, the topic has received greater attention, and several scholars have explored the theological aspects of Pentecostal pastoral care (Buker, 2021, 2022; Cartledge, 2001; Decker, 1996, 1997; Decker et al., 2021, 2022; Engelbret, 2019; French, 2017, 2019, 2021, 2022; Mathew, 2020; McMahan, 1995; Parker, 2014, 2016; Serrano, 2003; Vining & Decker, 1996).

In the Scandinavian context, there is limited academic research that directly addresses pastoral care in Pentecostal-charismatic communities. Hence, Norwegian descriptions must largely be drawn from practice-oriented sources, interviews, popular academic contributions, and broader studies of Pentecostal spirituality. Although such sources cannot replace empirical research on pastoral care, they nevertheless provide insight into how pastoral care practices have historically been understood and exercised within the movement. Tunhav’s (2020) study of Swedish Pentecostal spirituality, for example, shows that contemporary Nordic Pentecostal communities are still characterized by continuity with the early Pentecostal movement through Jesus-centeredness, the authority of the Bible, the local church as a relational community, the significance of prayer, expectation of divine healing, and longing for God. Although this study is not of pastoral care, it helps to situate pastoral care within a broader Nordic Pentecostal context of practice and spirituality.

Pastor and preacher David Østby (b. 1935), a central voice in the movement’s post-war history, provides a practice-oriented insight into the place of pastoral care in the Norwegian Pentecostal movement. Drawing on long experience, he states, “Whether a lay movement has had sufficient knowledge of the significance of pastoral care may be a question” (David Østby, personal communication, October 26, 2024). Østby indicates that pastoral care in the Pentecostal Movement in Norway has been marked by two trajectories. First, much pastoral care has occurred in connection with prayer circles and intercessory gatherings, such as in Filadelfiakirken Oslo [Philadelphia Church], where the gatherings created space for conversation, teaching, and intercessory prayer. Second, he describes a practice characterized by varying degrees of competence, noting that a conservative and sometimes legalistic approach has created challenges for some members: “We have lost friends because of an unloving and lack of respect for people.” These statements illustrate a tension within the Pentecostal pastoral care heritage: a rich tradition of prayer, presence, and congregational care,

combined with a need for greater reflection, professional competence, and respectful approaches.

A similar practice-oriented perspective is found in Marit Landrø, the Pentecostal Movement's first female pastor (1993), often described as a pioneer in Pentecostal pastoral care in Norway. Landrø describes pastoral care as "care for the whole person" and emphasizes the importance of a safe space where the care seeker can speak freely without being instructed or lectured. Moreover, she describes a movement from a more ad hoc practice toward greater professional awareness, expressing caution regarding religious language and legitimizing one's own judgments "in God's name" (Landrø, personal communication, June 28, 2024). She maintains the expectation of God's presence in pastoral care but describes the Spirit's contribution primarily as wisdom that may be expressed through the questions and process of the conversation. In an interview in the newspaper *Vårt Land*, she emphasizes this tension by indicating how the pastoral care room may include people, including leaders, who live with strong conflicts of loyalty and fear of consequences in congregational life and ministry. In this connection, she reflects that the movement may sometimes be "better at postulates than at reflection" (Larsen, 2021). While this too is primarily a practice-oriented testimony, it highlights the need for research into how pastoral care is understood and practiced today, particularly where theological norms, identity, and congregational consequences intersect.

Despite the absence of academic works on pastoral care in Pentecostal-charismatic communities in Norway, some popular academic publications offer insight into the field. One example is Ragnar Rudmoen's *Omsorg og sjelesorg* [Care and Pastoral Care], where pastoral care is described as help "on the spiritual level," and where the pastoral caregiver must listen to both the person seeking help and the Holy Spirit (Rudmoen, 2004, p. 17). This double listening is emphasized as a prerequisite for being able to meet the individual's needs. Another contribution comes from Ester Rolén, long-time leader of the Counseling Center at Filadelfiakirken Oslo, who in the handbook *En enkel samtale om det vanskelige* [A Simple Conversation about Difficult Matters] (2014) addresses topics such as heartbreak, self-image, exhaustion, relational problems, suicide, anxiety, and depression. These contributions are not research-based; however, they demonstrate that pastoral care has been thematized within the movement as practical care, conversation, intercessory prayer, and spiritual guidance.

A relevant academic contribution in the Norwegian context is Waldemar (2023), who explores the pastoral role in the Pentecostal Movement in Norway. Although pastoral care is not the main focus of the study, the findings reveal that pastors spend limited working time on pastoral care, while simultaneously expressing a desire to prioritize it. Therefore, there is therefore still a marked lack of scholarly research on Pentecostal pastoral care in the Norwegian context. Taken together, the literature and the practice-oriented sources demonstrate that pastoral care has been present in the Norwegian Pentecostal movement but often integrated into intercessory prayer, conversation, congregational life, and charismatic practice rather than developed as a distinct academic and professionalized field. To analyze what may be distinctive about Pentecostal pastoral care, this practice must be viewed in light of how pastoral care is otherwise described in Norwegian scholarly literature.

PASTORAL CARE IN THE NORWEGIAN CONTEXT

One way of describing pastoral care approaches is to distinguish between kerygmatic pastoral care, care seeker-centered pastoral care, and a middle position that Okkenhaug (2002) calls church-oriented faith and life assistance. Grevbo (2006) expands this notion by drawing a roadmap of the pastoral care field, in which he describes eight pastoral care traditions or main directions: kerygmatic, evangelical, charismatic, spiritual, ecclesial, analytical, therapeutic, and

socio-political. He places these on the same axis to make visible the different foundational ideas that carry the traditions. At one end is kerygmatic or proclamation-oriented pastoral care; at the other is the care seeker-centered approach, which to a greater extent builds on therapeutic and psychological perspectives. This may be read as an underlying tension between kerygma/theology on the one hand and therapy/psychology on the other.

Historically, kerygmatic or proclamation-oriented pastoral care practices held a prominent position throughout much of the twentieth century (Grevbo, 2006, p. 308) and understood pastoral care primarily as the communication of God's revelation to individuals. Over time, the field has been challenged and enriched through impulses from, among others, psychodynamic psychotherapy, systemic practice, and narrative therapy. In this development, care seeker-centered pastoral care emerged as an alternative, placing the care seeker—the person seeking help—at the center. This approach criticizes kerygmatic pastoral care for potentially overshadowing human existential experiences and subjective perceptions, therefore emphasizing listening, questioning, and exploring the individual's life situation. Additionally, the care seeker-centered model has also been criticized for being too therapeutically oriented and for losing some of its theological distinctiveness (Okkenhaug, 2002, p. 17). Between kerygmatic and care seeker-centered pastoral care, various middle positions can be found. Among these are models such as church-oriented faith and life assistance (Okkenhaug, 2002), viatoric pastoral care (Grevbo, 2018), and dialogical pastoral care (Stifoss-Hanssen et al., 2019). Although they have different emphases, they share a basic understanding of pastoral care as both relationally and theologically oriented. Extending this, Austad and Johannessen-Henry (2020) argue that the former “inner battlefield” between kerygma/theology and therapy/psychology has largely been abandoned in favor of a more integrative approach. Instead, forms of therapy and theology are now sought that can mutually complement and support one another in pastoral care practice.

Eide (2014) offers an interesting perspective on the pastoral care conversation. By highlighting the biblical text about the disciples who encountered Jesus on the road to Emmaus, he provides perspectives on what inspires and motivates Christian pastoral care using the concepts of understanding and deepening. Understanding involves how Jesus “involves himself in the conversation by showing interest in what they are talking about” (Eide, 2014, p. 11). Here, Eide cites the pastoral caregiver's ability to listen, be present, create safety, and establish a space that enables the care seeker to share from a wounded heart with a warm, engaged, and listening heart. The safe relationship is a prerequisite for the care seeker daring to speak about what lies hidden within. Alongside understanding, Eide uses the concept of deepening, which involves opening up the theological perspective. By placing the care seeker's experiences within a theological framework, one communicates a deeper understanding of life and God. Eide explains: “By giving a new interpretation (Greek: *hermeneusen*) of the event, he (Jesus) simultaneously communicates a deeper understanding of God. The deepening takes place through an interpretation of the Scriptures. He opened the Scriptures” (Eide, 2014, p. 12). The sum of presence and interpretation creates life and faith in the hearts of the Emmaus disciples. The safe and free pastoral care space thus provides an opportunity both for listening and for bringing the words of Scripture and the Christian faith into the dialogue. Eide describes this as a movement toward understanding and deepening. Therefore, the pastoral caregiver creates space to move toward acceptance and wonder in the encounter with the care seeker while also cautiously opening up for God's living word in people's lives. The word “movement” is central here: the pastoral caregiver must proceed at a necessarily slow pace to avoid becoming too directive or invasive in relation to the care seeker's narrative and life. Eide summarizes: “First he (the evangelist Luke) shows the disciples' feelings, their grief. Then he shows how Jesus listens his way toward how the sequence of events and meaning relate to one another. This is where the spiritual melting point lies” (Eide, 2014, p. 13).

Several studies have been conducted that are relevant to pastoral care in Norway. Grung et al. (2016) explain that priests and deacons in the Church of Norway have a considerable pastoral care practice. Pastoral care appears predominantly care seeker-centered and is available to more than only church members. The study shows that, among other factors, respondents often used terms such as conversation, listening, and presence when describing their role as pastoral caregivers. This view is shared by Stifoss-Hanssen et al. (2019), who explore priests' and deacons' views on pastoral care. They write, "There are many indications that the issue of kerygmatic versus care seeker-centered pastoral care has been left behind, as is evident from the responses of our respondents" (Stifoss-Hanssen et al., p. 89).

Jakobsen and Jakobsen (2022) argue that deacons use ecclesial resources limitedly, and that these could beneficially be used more extensively. By ecclesial resources, they mean resources drawn from Christian faith and tradition, such as the use of the Bible, prayer, liturgies, faith practices, and conversations about God and faith. The study also states that none of the deacons are drawn toward a proclamation-oriented pastoral care nor use prayer or Bible reading as part of their pastoral care conversations. If the care seeker does not open up the perspective of faith themselves, the study reveals that the pastoral caregiver is cautious about entering this terrain.

Grung et al. (2016) argue for a necessary reorientation within the field of pastoral care. This reorientation concerns not only method but also how pastoral care is understood in light of changing ecclesial and societal conditions. In a more pluralized society, pastoral caregivers encounter people with varying degrees of church affiliation, different worldview frameworks, and diverse expectations of what pastoral care conversations should contain. Moreover, impulses from contextual theology, liberation theology, empirical practical theology, and therapeutic disciplines have challenged an understanding of pastoral care in which theological normativity alone defines the form and content of the conversation. Grung et al. therefore emphasize the importance of taking as the point of departure the concrete work that professional pastoral caregivers actually perform, and how they themselves describe their practice.

In this article, I seek to contribute to this reorientation by examining how pastoral care is understood and practiced in a Pentecostal context. If the field of pastoral care has to develop on the basis of empirical descriptions of actual practice, then practices outside mainline and institutional contexts should also be examined. The pastoral care of Pentecostal pastors provides an important comparative perspective here. The study can expose both overlap with established Norwegian models of pastoral care and distinctive features related to a more explicitly faith-oriented, congregationally based, and pneumatological understanding of pastoral care. In this way, Pentecostal perspectives may contribute new nuances to the discussion of what pastoral care is and how it is practiced in the Norwegian ecclesial context.

PENTECOSTAL PERSPECTIVES ON PASTORAL CARE

Because there is little empirical research on Pentecostal pastoral care in the Norwegian and Scandinavian context, this study uses two American contributions as constructive examples of how pastoral care may be understood theologically within a Pentecostal framework. These contributions were selected because they explicitly seek to develop models of pastoral care based on the presence, guidance, and work of the Holy Spirit. They are therefore not used as representative descriptions of all Pentecostal pastoral care but as analytical resources for identifying possible distinctive features of a Pentecostal understanding of pastoral care.

Mathew (2020) describes a *Spirit-Led Model of Pastoral Care*, in which pastoral care is understood as a practice shaped by biblical, theological, psychological, and pedagogical perspectives. The model rests on a basic belief that God acts in the world through actions directed toward reconciliation, restoration, healing, and hope. For Mathew, pastoral care is therefore not merely a conversation about human challenges but a practice in which the pastoral caregiver seeks to listen to God, understand God's will, help people live whole lives, and strengthen loyalty to Jesus Christ. The model illustrates how Pentecostal pastoral care may be understood as a practice in which human care and the expectation of God's active presence are held together.

Another constructive contribution is found in Decker et al. (2021), who develop a *Spirit-Centered Model of Counseling*, where pastoral care is understood as a holistic practice in which the Spirit is not merely a theological background assumption but an agent actively present in the conversation. The model builds on three basic assumptions: that the Holy Spirit permeates creation, that human beings can discern and participate in the Spirit's work, and that the Spirit's presence brings order to chaos and invites people into God's story. Therefore, Pentecostal pastoral care is connected to ontology, epistemology, and practice: the world is understood as open to the presence of the Spirit, the pastoral caregiver seeks to discern the Spirit's actions, and the care seeker's life story is interpreted in light of God's larger story of redemption.

Decker et al. concretize this model through practices that emphasize pneumatological imagination, triological relationship, narrative processing, and holistic care for the human being's spiritual, psychological, and bodily life. Particularly important is the understanding of the pastoral care space as triological: the pastoral caregiver and the care seeker do not meet merely in an interpersonal conversation but in a space where the Holy Spirit is understood as present and active. Moreover, the model emphasizes the significance of relational listening, respect, and tentative language. The contribution therefore demonstrates both the theological distinctiveness and the ethical vulnerability of Pentecostal pastoral care: while the expectation of the Spirit's presence may provide hope, direction, and spiritual depth, it also requires caution, discernment, and respect for the care seeker's own process.

These two contributions clarify several theological motifs that are particularly relevant for this study: the expectation of God's active presence, the significance of prayer and discernment, a holistic understanding of the human person, and a triological understanding of the pastoral care space. Combined with Norwegian literature on pastoral care, such perspectives may help clarify how Pentecostal pastoral care overlaps with established relational and theological models while adding a clearer pneumatological dimension.

DATA AND METHOD

In 2022, I conducted a survey using nettskjema.no, limited to lead pastors and associate pastors within the Pentecostal Movement in Norway. The invitation was distributed by the Pentecostal Movement in Norway on two occasions, and the survey was also presented at a gathering for ministry workers. A total of 66 Pentecostal pastors participated, of whom 11 were women (17%) and 55 were men (83%). Of the respondents, 46% reported having higher theological education, 35% had Bible school or equivalent training, while 19% had neither theological nor Bible school education.

The survey consisted of two parts, and the results from the first part are presented in “The Complex Pastoral Role” (Waldemar, 2023). This article is based on the part of the questionnaire that addressed pastoral care, which included questions drawn from Grung et al. (2016), newly developed questions with fixed response options, and two open-ended free-text questions. The questions from Grung et al. were used to enable a descriptive comparison with their study of pastoral care practice in the Church of Norway, which had 408 respondents and a response rate of 31%. In Grung et al., the questions were developed with reference to previous research in Sweden (DeMarinis, 2003) as well as scholarly insight and expertise within the research group. To my knowledge, there exists no information indicating that the questionnaire has been validated as a psychometric scale. In this study, the questions are therefore not used as a validated measurement instrument but as a basis for comparison in descriptive analysis.

The quantitative part mapped themes in pastoral care conversations, pastoral care approaches, and the use of ecclesial or spiritual resources. The response scale included “almost never,” “occasionally,” “fairly often,” and “very often.” Moreover, the responses were analyzed descriptively and individually, without sum scores, means, or composite indices. In parts of the analysis, “fairly often” and “very often” were combined to make relative frequency visible. The newly developed questions were formulated on the basis of the research question, literature in the field of pastoral care, and knowledge of Pentecostal practice. They were exploratory—not part of a validated scale—and no formal pilot study was conducted. Two open-ended free-text questions were asked: “What is pastoral care, as you understand it?” and “What is the aim of pastoral care?” The responses were analyzed using qualitative content analysis (Cavanagh, 1997; Berg & Lune, 2012) and through repeated reading, coding, and the development of thematic categories. The analysis was primarily inductive but informed by the research questions and key concepts within the field of pastoral care. I conducted the coding and analysis, and the full questionnaire is available as an appendix.

The study was not submitted to Sikt [Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research], as no directly personally identifiable information such as names, age, geographical location, or contact information was collected. The survey was anonymous, and it was therefore not possible to link responses to individual persons afterwards. Nevertheless, free-text responses in small ecclesial contexts may involve a risk of indirect identification. To safeguard anonymity, the material was analyzed and reported at group level. Quotations from free-text responses were used with caution, and information that could contribute to identification was omitted. Moreover, no links were presented between gender, church size, and individual statements.

One limitation of the study is the sample of 66 respondents, which is also discussed in “The Complex Pastoral Role.” The Pentecostal Movement in Norway comprises approximately 340 churches, organized as independent units within the lay movement. Therefore, no complete overview of all churches’ size, leadership structure, or pastoral staffing exists. Many smaller churches are led by a leading elder or an elders’ council, thus falling outside the scope of the study. Nevertheless, the sample is considered sufficient to present findings of relevance

and value, although generalization must be undertaken with caution and within the framework of the study's context.

My own background in the Pentecostal tradition provides proximity to the language and practices of the material. However, it also entails a risk that experiences are interpreted through a Pentecostal conceptual framework. Concepts such as “the presence of the Spirit” and “trialogical pastoral care” are therefore used analytically to describe the Pentecostal pastors' own horizon of understanding, not to claim that corresponding experiences cannot be expressed differently in other ecclesial traditions.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

In the following analysis, findings are presented in relation to various aspects of Pentecostal pastoral care practice, including the scope of pastoral care, understandings of pastoral care, conversational methods, ecclesial tools, and the central themes discussed in pastoral care conversations. The comparison with the Church of Norway is based on published data from Grung et al. (2016). The analysis is therefore primarily descriptive and comparative. However, since individual-level data from that study are not available, no correlation analyses or tests of associations across the two datasets have been conducted. Where figures are compared, percentage distributions and means are used as indicators of thematic and practical patterns, not as a basis for statistical generalization.

The Scope of Pastoral Care Conversations

The findings show that pastoral care is more widespread among priests and deacons in the Church of Norway than among Pentecostal pastors. Whereas pastoral care constitutes a regular and integrated part of the work of priests and deacons, it appears to a lesser extent as a core task among Pentecostal pastors. This aspect is reflected both in the number of conversations conducted and in the assessment of the significance of pastoral care in ministry. The data show clear contrasts: 22% of Pentecostal pastors report that they have not had any pastoral care conversations during the past four weeks, compared with 5% of priests and deacons. Additionally, 24% of priests and deacons have had 10 or more conversations during the course of a month, while 1% of Pentecostal pastors report the same. The majority of Pentecostal pastors (87%) have had between zero and four conversations during the period, while this applies to 40% of priests and deacons. Perceptions of the significance of pastoral care also vary: 81% of priests and deacons assess pastoral care as moderately important or important in their work, compared with 43% of Pentecostal pastors. These differences indicate that pastoral care in the Church of Norway has a stronger institutional and theological anchoring as part of the office of priest and deacon, whereas pastoral care in Pentecostal churches appears more as a peripheral task.

Conversational Techniques in Pastoral Care

The study demonstrates that Pentecostal pastors practice counseling and explanation in pastoral care conversations to a significantly greater extent than priests and deacons. For instance, 38% of Pentecostal pastors report that they provide counseling fairly often, compared with 14% of priests and deacons. Regarding explanations, the difference is smaller but still clear (22% of Pentecostal pastors compared with 11% of priests and deacons). In the use of active listening and active questioning, however, there are only minor differences. Nearly all Pentecostal pastors use active listening regularly, and a majority also report frequent use of ques-

tioning—approximately at the same level as priests and deacons. Nevertheless, the groups differ somewhat more regarding persuasion. While most respondents in both groups report that they almost never use this tactic, 21% of Pentecostal pastors do so occasionally, compared with 6% of priests and deacons. These findings together indicate that pastors in Pentecostal churches assume a counseling and explanatory role in pastoral care more often and are somewhat more inclined to use persuasion than priests and deacons in the Church of Norway.

Ecclesial Tools in Pastoral Care

Pentecostal pastors use *expressive ecclesial tools* in the pastoral care space more than priests and deacons. These tools refer to active practices for expressing faith, such as specific and faith-filled intercessory prayer as well as active Bible reading in light of the care seeker's life, which corresponds with Pentecostal faith and practice. Grung et al. (2016) identify eight tools in pastoral care, including blessing, intercessory prayer (specific and general), Bible reading, the use of hymns or other literature, and confession of sin with or without a formal liturgical approach. When the findings from this study are compared with Grung et al., clear differences emerge. One example is blessing: almost half of the priests and deacons report using it regularly, while four out of five Pentecostal pastors rarely or never do so. Intercessory prayer shows the opposite pattern. More than eight out of 10 Pentecostal pastors report that they often use specific intercessory prayer, compared with only one third of priests and deacons. Bible reading also distinguishes the groups: approximately 40% of Pentecostal pastors actively use the Bible in conversations, while this applies to 14% of priests and deacons. Regarding more general intercessory prayer, the differences are less marked, while practices such as hymn singing and the use of other literature are significantly more widespread among priests and deacons. Taken together, the comparison demonstrates that priests and deacons in the Church of Norway tend to anchor pastoral care in liturgical and traditional forms, whereas Pentecostal pastors often use intercessory prayer and Bible reading as direct tools in the conversations. This finding reflects not only theological differences, but also different expectations regarding the content of pastoral care in the two traditions.

Themes in Pastoral Care Conversations

The findings reveal both significant similarities and clear differences in the themes addressed in pastoral care conversations. Several basic themes recur in both traditions, particularly family-related problems, conflicts, and images of God. However, the material indicates different thematic centers of gravity, which may be understood considering differences in theological profile, ecclesial context, and pastoral role understanding.

Among Pentecostal pastors, the most frequently reported themes are family-related problems, personal and spiritual growth and maturity, images of God, healing, conflicts, ethical questions, grief, and forgiveness (cf. Table 1). Family-related problems are reported by 62% as a theme that occurs fairly often or often, while personal and spiritual growth and maturity is reported by 58% (cf. Table 2). Images of God and healing also rank high, at 50% and 48%, respectively. This result suggests that pastoral care in Pentecostal churches often moves within the span between relational challenges, faith-related processing, and the expectation of God's presence and action. Comparatively, the most frequently reported themes among priests and deacons in the Church of Norway are grief, family-related problems, conflicts, loneliness, depression, images of God, somatic illnesses, and mental illnesses. Grief is particularly conspicuous as the most prominent theme in the Church of Norway, since 81% report it occurs fairly often or very often. This occurrence contrasts with the Pentecostal pastors, among whom 39%

report grief at the same level. The difference of 42 percentage points signifies a clearer grief- and crisis-oriented profile in the Church of Norway's pastoral care material.

Notably, the two datasets do not represent entirely different worlds of pastoral care. Family-related problems rank high in both groups, at 62% among Pentecostal pastors and 70% among priests and deacons. Conflicts also occur relatively frequently in both datasets, at 45% in the Pentecostal Movement and 49% in the Church of Norway. Images of God are also a central theme in both contexts, but are reported more frequently among Pentecostal pastors than among priests and deacons, at 50% and 34%. This finding indicates that relational challenges and faith-related interpretation are important pastoral care themes across ecclesial traditions, even if they form part of somewhat different overall profiles.

The greatest differences are particularly evident in themes such as personal and spiritual growth and maturity, healing, grief, the problem of suffering, unanswered questions, and fear of death. Personal and spiritual growth and maturity is reported 38 percentage points more frequently among Pentecostal pastors than among priests and deacons. Healing is reported 35 percentage points more frequently in the Pentecostal material, while the problem of suffering and unanswered questions occurs 21 percentage points more frequently among Pentecostal pastors. This finding indicates that the pastoral care of Pentecostal pastors often thematizes the development of faith, experiences of God's possible intervention, and the need to interpret life experiences theologically. An illustrative example is the theme of healing. Almost half of the Pentecostal pastors report that healing is addressed fairly often or very often in pastoral care conversations, while this occurs far less frequently among priests and deacons. This finding may indicate that healing functions not only as a theological motif in the Pentecostal tradition but also as a concrete pastoral care theme. In a Pentecostal context, care seekers may therefore require pastoral care with an expectation of intercessory prayer, divine intervention, or help in understanding the absence of healing. The findings concerning the problem of suffering and unanswered questions signify the same. They show that pastoral care in a Pentecostal context is not only about expectation and hope but also about processing experiences in which God's presence, silence, or action is difficult to understand.

In contrast, among priests and deacons in the Church of Norway, grief, loneliness, depression, somatic illnesses, and mental illnesses are more prominent among the most frequent themes, giving the Church of Norway material a clearer profile of life crisis, loss, health-related burdens, and existential vulnerability. Fear of death also occurs more frequently among priests and deacons than among Pentecostal pastors. While fear of death appears as a relatively low-frequency theme in the Pentecostal material, the difference between the groups is 21 percentage points. Suicidal thoughts are not reported by any Pentecostal pastors as a theme that occurs fairly often or very often, whereas this is approximately 10% among priests and deacons. This result must be interpreted with caution, particularly because of the size of the sample. Nevertheless, the finding raises questions about which crisis- and death-related themes are most frequently actualized in the different pastoral care contexts.

The least frequent themes also show some similarity between the datasets. Themes such as immigration, God's judgment, hell, sexual problems, other religions, and unemployment are rarely reported as occurring fairly often or often in either group. This result suggests that certain themes occupy a marginal place in pastoral care conversations across ecclesial contexts. Notably, sanctification is among the least frequent themes in the Church of Norway, whereas personal and spiritual growth and maturity is among the most frequent themes in the Pentecostal Movement. This finding reinforces the impression that spiritual formation and faith-related development occupy a more central place in the pastoral care of Pentecostal pastors.

Table 1: *Themes in Pastoral Care Conversations among Pentecostal Pastors and Priests/Deacons*

What themes are discussed in pastoral care conversations?	Responses in %				N = 66	Mean 1–4 pastors	Mean 1–4 Priests/Deacons (N=408)	Diff. Between pastors and Priests/Deacons
	(Al-most) never	Occa-sion-ally	Fairly often	Very often				
Family-related problems	0	38	52	10	66	2,7	2,9	-0,1
Personal/spiritual growth	1	41	47	11	66	2,7	2,0	0,7
Conflicts	5	50	41	4	66	2,5	2,6	-0,1
Images of God	11	39	50	0	66	2,4	2,2	0,2
Healing	2	50	40	8	66	2,4	1,9	0,5
Grief	5	56	36	3	66	2,4	3,1	-0,7
Forgiveness	6	57	30	7	63	2,4	2,1	0,3
Ethical questions	6	53	39	2	66	2,4	2,1	0,2
Depression	9	58	27	6	66	2,3	2,2	0,1
Doubt	8	56	36	0	66	2,3	2,1	0,2
Unanswered questions	9	58	29	4	66	2,3	1,7	0,6
Loneliness	17	47	30	6	66	2,3	2,5	-0,3
Prayer, meditation	14	51	32	3	66	2,2	1,9	0,3
Mental disorders/illness	15	54	26	5	66	2,2	2,2	0,0
Somatic disorders/illness	17	53	27	3	66	2,2	2,2	-0,1
Guilt	14	57	29	0	66	2,2	2,1	0,1
Struggle with faith	12	62	24	2	66	2,2	1,7	0,4
God's absence	20	53	23	4	66	2,1	1,0	1,1
Identity issues	25	43	29	3	63	2,1	1,8	0,3
Sanctification	13	68	19	0	63	2,1	1,3	0,7
Romantic relationships	22	51	25	2	61	2,0	2,1	0,0
Theodicy, the problem of suffering	6	58	30	6	61	2,0	1,8	0,2
Spiritual experience/mysticism	15	67	16	2	61	2,0	1,9	0,2
Shame	21	61	12	6	66	2,0	2,0	0,1
Feeling of emptiness	23	54	23	0	61	2,0	2,0	0,0
Problems with the Bible	23	59	18	0	64	1,9	1,8	0,1
Lack of meaning or purpose	28	57	15	0	61	1,9	2,2	-0,3
Financial matters	34	53	11	2	61	1,8	1,6	0,2
Sexual problems	41	56	3	0	61	1,7	1,5	0,2
Uncertainty regarding changes in society	42	48	10	0	61	1,7	1,5	0,1
Becoming an adult or growing old	49	39	10	2	61	1,6	1,9	-0,3
Fear of death	48	46	6	0	66	1,6	2,1	-0,6
Suicidal thoughts	56	44	0	0	63	1,4	1,7	-0,3
Alcohol/drug problems	62	33	3	2	61	1,4	1,7	-0,2
Unemployment	57	41	2	0	64	1,4	1,4	0,1
Immigration	59	38	3	0	64	1,4	1,4	0,0
Church-political matters	67	25	8	0	61	1,4	1,5	-0,1
Hell	64	33	3	0	64	1,4	1,4	0,0
God's judgment	67	30	3	0	63	1,4	1,5	-0,2
Other religions	73	22	5	0	63	1,3	1,4	-0,1

Note: The table depicts how often various themes are addressed in pastoral care conversations among Pentecostal pastors. The percentages are based on a four-point scale from 1 ((almost) never) to 4 (very often). The mean scores for priests/deacons are from Grung et al. (2016). Positive differences indicate higher mean scores among Pentecostal pastors, while negative differences indicate higher mean scores among priests/deacons. The table is descriptive.

To clarify the main pattern in the Pentecostal material, the 12 most frequently reported themes from Table 1 are gathered in Table 2. The table is based on the proportion of respondents who answered “fairly often” or “very often,” and functions as a simplified overview of which conversational themes are most often actualized in Pentecostal pastoral care. Family-related problems, personal and spiritual growth, images of God, and healing rank highest, indicating a pastoral care profile in which relational challenges, faith-related pro-

cessing, spiritual development, and the expectation of God's presence are closely interwoven. However, the table also shows that classic pastoral care themes such as grief, loneliness, doubt, and the problem of suffering are common.

Together, the findings depict two pastoral care contexts with overlapping but distinct thematic profiles. In both datasets, relational challenges, conflicts, and images of God are important themes. The difference lies particularly in how the other themes are distributed. The Church of Norway material has a clearer grief-, crisis-, and health-oriented profile, while the Pentecostal material is often characterized by spiritual growth, healing, images of God, forgiveness, and theological interpretation of suffering and unanswered questions. This result may be understood as an expression of how the themes of pastoral care are shaped by theological tradition, institutional context, and care seekers' expectations of what the pastoral care space can and should contain.

Table 2: *The Twelve Most Frequent Conversational Themes in Pentecostal Pastoral Care*

Theme in the pastoral care conversation	Fairly often / Very often (%)
Family-related problems	62
Personal/spiritual growth and maturity	58
Images of God	50
Healing	48
Conflicts	45
Ethical questions	41
Grief	39
Forgiveness	37
Loneliness	36
Doubt	36
Theodicy, the problem of suffering	36
Prayer, meditation	35

Note: The table displays the 12 themes Pentecostal pastors most frequently report as occurring in pastoral care conversations. The figures indicate the proportion of respondents who answered "fairly often" or "very often." Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Understandings of Pastoral Care

The pastors were given an open-ended free-text question about how they understand pastoral care, and the responses were analyzed qualitatively. This analysis resulted in three main categories: 1) listening and empathy, 2) guidance and counseling, and 3) spiritual support and comfort. Moreover, the survey data confirm that these perceptions enjoy broad support, particularly when pastoral care is understood relationally and as a natural arena for bringing in the dimension of faith.

In the category of *listening and empathy*, the pastors emphasize the importance of creating a space in which the care seeker can open up and receive understanding. More than 80% of participants report that they fairly often or very often work in a care seeker-centered way, and approximately 80% report the same regarding accompaniment (cf. Table 3). One pastor specifies: "Conversations that listen to people's challenges. Not necessarily that one has advice and answers, but that one can listen and provide care." The second category, *guidance and counseling*, also appears to be central. More than 70% report that they fairly often or very often provide spiritual care, while 70% state that they fairly often or very often offer spiritual guidance. This finding corresponds to several pastors' statements about being present, giving advice, and contributing to understanding. One pastor notes: "To be present, to be someone

who listens and creates comfort and, hopefully, understanding. To give advice that people can take with them further.” The third category, *spiritual support and comfort*, indicates how the pastors integrate faith and intercessory prayer into the pastoral care space. Approximately 80% report that they fairly often or very often bring the God dimension into people’s lives, while almost 75% note that they easily open up the spiritual dimension. One pastor writes: “To meet and listen to people, and give them room to open up ... to help them understand God/Jesus and the perspectives and possibilities of faith. Intercessory prayer.”

Moreover, the survey findings provide nuance to the picture. Almost 40% specify that they almost never perceive themselves as a messenger from God, and 40% report the same regarding a preaching role. This finding confirms that most pastors do not see the pastoral care space as an arena for preaching but rather for listening, support, and accompaniment. Taken together, the findings indicate that pastoral care among Pentecostal pastors is a practice in which human presence and the spiritual dimension are held closely together. The results demonstrate a clear emphasis on the care seeker-centered and relational dimensions, while the spiritual dimension is integrated as a natural part of the conversation. Additionally, there is little support for preaching-oriented or “messenger”-oriented pastoral care, which indicates an image of the pastor as an accompanier rather than a preacher.

Table 3: *Different Pastoral Care Approaches among the Pastors*

Different pastoral care perspectives	Responses in percent				Mean 1–4:	N=
	(Almost) never	Occasionally	Fairly often	Very often		
Care seeker-centered	1	17	56	26	3,1	66
Bringing the God dimension into people’s lives	0	16	63	21	3,0	66
Accompaniment	1	17	61	20	3,0	66
Spiritual care	0	19	63	17	3,0	66
Ease in opening up the spiritual dimension	2	24	59	15	2,9	66
Spiritual guidance	0	30	57	13	2,8	66
Interpreter of life in light of Christian faith	8	34	46	12	2,6	66
Cautious approach to the spiritual dimension	14	52	32	3	2,2	66
Conversations about the spiritual dimension only if/when the care seeker opens up for it	34	37	25	5	2,0	66
Messenger from God	39	40	18	3	1,9	66
Life assistance without the spiritual dimension	34	53	10	3	1,8	66
Preaching-oriented	40	41	18	2	1,8	66

Note: The table depicts the pastors’ assessment of how often different pastoral care approaches characterize their practice. The percentages are based on a four-point scale from 1 ((almost) never) to 4 (very often).

DISCUSSION

Pentecostal Pastoral Care as a Distinct Practice

This study demonstrates that Pentecostal pastoral care should be understood as a distinct ecclesial practice not only because pastors use prayer, Bible reading, and intercessory prayer but because their understanding of pastoral care is shaped by a pneumatological comprehension of reality. The Holy Spirit is not primarily understood as a theological reference in the background but as a possible agent in the conversational space itself. This notion gives pastoral care a different epistemological structure from the one normally described in mainline church literature on pastoral care: the pastoral caregiver listens not only for the care seeker's story but also for how God may be present, speaking, or active within that story. Therefore, Pentecostal pastoral care stands in continuity with the movement's emphasis on faithfulness to the Bible, the presence of the Spirit, prayer, healing, and discernment (Decker et al., 2021; Mathew, 2020; Buker, 2021, 2022; Cartledge, 2001; French, 2017, 2019, 2021, 2022). This concept differs from dominant descriptions of pastoral care in the Church of Norway. Grung et al. (2016) describe priests and deacons as predominantly care seeker-centered, and Jakobsen and Jakobsen (2022) argue that deacons are cautious about opening the spiritual dimension if the care seeker has not opened it themselves. Such descriptions, however, reflect a mainline church context in which pastoral care often occurs in ritual-adjacent settings and encounters a broad spectrum of the population. They cannot therefore be transferred directly to the Pentecostal Movement in Norway, where pastoral care emerges from a different theological self-understanding, church structure, and tradition of practice.

An important structural difference between the contexts should also be mentioned: it is reasonable to assume that care seekers who approach a Pentecostal pastor often have some connection to the congregation—as members or participants, or through relational ties. This context differs from practice in the Church of Norway, where priests and deacons encounter a variety of people, including those outside the faith community. Johannessen (2025) describes the mainline church as an ambiguous entity but describes how the Church of Norway has historically functioned as a church in which rituals frame collective actions and life-cycle markers from cradle to grave. This detail helps explain why pastoral care in the Church of Norway is often practiced in connection with rituals such as baptisms, weddings, and especially funerals, and why priests and deacons encounter people with varying degrees of ecclesial rootedness. Another significant difference concerns theological education and professionalization. Johannessen (2025) emphasizes that personal commitment and theological competence are two qualitatively different realities that cannot replace each other; he links the professionalism of priestly ministry to formal competence and quality assurance. To become a priest in the Church of Norway, a standardized professional education in theology is required, whereas the Pentecostal Movement in Norway has no corresponding formal educational requirement. In this study, 46% of the respondents report having higher theological education, 35% have Bible school or equivalent training, while 19% have neither theological education nor Bible school. This difference does not imply that Pentecostal pastors lack theological competence but that their competence is more composite and less institutionally standardized. Consequently, pastoral care practice may often be shaped by local church culture, personal experience, charismatic practice, and the pastor's own understanding of the pastoral role.

Context, Thematics, and Approach

The findings in this study indicate that pastoral care practice among pastors in the Pentecostal Movement in Norway appears distinct in expression and emphasis when compared with main-

line church literature on pastoral care and studies of priests and deacons in the Church of Norway. However, this distinction does not suggest that the practice of Pentecostal pastors opposes a care seeker-centered understanding of pastoral care. Rather, the pastors themselves often report that they work in a care seeker-centered way. The distinction is therefore not about whether the practice is care seeker-centered but about how a care seeker-centered orientation is combined with counseling, spiritual support, intercessory prayer, and expectation of God's presence. The free-text responses reveal three dimensions in particular in the pastors' understanding of pastoral care: 1) listening and empathy, 2) guidance and counseling, and 3) spiritual support and comfort. This threefold structure provides insight into a practice with different dimensions that complement and reinforce one another. Based on Eide's (2014) distinction between understanding and deepening, one may say that Pentecostal pastoral care contains both of these movements: it attempts to understand the human being as a whole while also seeking to encounter the person at an existentially and spiritually deeper level. The same picture emerges when analyzing which conversational techniques the pastors use. The study demonstrates that they not only practice active listening but also use explanation, counseling, and various forms of spiritual communication—which also reflects the three main dimensions of their pastoral care practice. Moreover, such a practice may contain a vulnerability: when spiritual guidance and counseling are closely intertwined, the pastoral caregiver may unconsciously become too directive or introduce spiritual interpretations that the care seeker neither desires nor has the capacity to process. Pentecostal pastoral care therefore appears as a practice that integrates emotional, relational, and spiritual support. By spiritually oriented, I do not mean merely that the conversation includes existential or religious questions but that the pastors often describe pastoral care as a space for prayer, intercessory prayer, Bible reading, spiritual guidance, and reflection on God's possible presence and intervention in people's lives. Therefore, pastoral care becomes not only responsive but also formative, as it seeks to support the care seeker in faith, life interpretation, spiritual maturity, and hope. Additionally, the vulnerability of the practice lies precisely in the connection between spiritual guidance, counseling, and expectation of God's presence, particularly if the pastor's interpretation becomes too directive or is given too much authority.

This orientation is also expressed in the themes most often actualized in pastoral care conversations. The distribution of themes suggests that the content of pastoral care is determined not only by the needs of individual care seekers but also by the theological language, institutional points of contact, and expectation structure of the ecclesial context. Whereas the Church of Norway material has a clearer grief-, crisis-, and health-oriented profile, the Pentecostal material appears to be more faith-, growth-, healing-, and interpretation-oriented. This distinction may be understood through Tunhav's (2020) analysis of Swedish Pentecostal spirituality, where spirituality is described as an interplay between doctrine, practice, and affect, and where continuity with the early Pentecostal movement is expressed particularly in Jesus-centeredness, focus on salvation, the authority of the Bible, the local church as a relational community, the significance of prayer, expectation of divine healing, and longing for God. In this study, a corresponding spirituality is expressed in the thematic profile of pastoral care: personal and spiritual growth, images of God, and healing rank high among Pentecostal pastors, while grief is significantly the most prominent theme among priests and deacons. This finding does not imply that the two contexts represent separate worlds of pastoral care. Family-related problems, conflicts, and images of God occur frequently in both datasets. Rather, the difference lies in which themes form the center of pastoral care. The findings concerning personal and spiritual growth, healing, the problem of suffering, and unanswered questions in particular clarify that Pentecostal pastoral care often functions as a space for faith-related interpretation. Here, pastoral care is not only about processing life problems but also about understanding experiences in light of God, the presence of the Spirit, prayer, and the possibility

of transformation. Moreover, the findings nuance the image of Pentecostal pastoral care as one-sidedly oriented toward hope or healing. Since the problems of suffering and unanswered questions are reported more frequently among Pentecostal pastors, pastoral care also includes experiences of God's silence, absence, or lack of intervention. This finding is significant from a pastoral care perspective, since religious and spiritual struggles—understood as conflicts; questions; and doubts related to faith, God, and religious relationships—may intensify psychological and existential burdens if they remain unaddressed (Campbell, 2022). The distinctiveness of Pentecostal pastoral care therefore lies not only in the expectation that God can act but also in the need to interpret experiences in which this happens in a straightforward way.

This thematic profile involves both a resource and a vulnerability. It gives pastoral care a language for hope, prayer, healing, and spiritual maturity but may also obscure certain experiences. Although themes such as fear of death and suicidal thoughts are reported significantly less frequently among Pentecostal pastors, this result should be interpreted with caution, especially because of the sample size. Additionally, Tunhav (2020) found that Swedish Pentecostal spirituality is also marked by change and discontinuity, including the fact that certain previously identity-bearing themes related to sin, the role of the Spirit, and eschatology receive less space. Therefore, one may ask which experiences and themes find language in Pentecostal pastoral care, and which risk becoming less visible if the dominant language of pastoral care is hope, growth, and God's possible intervention.

Scope, Pastoral Role, and Ethical Tensions

The findings demonstrate that pastoral care has a significantly smaller scope among Pentecostal pastors than among priests and deacons in the Church of Norway, raising important questions about both role understanding and practice. Whereas pastoral care in the Church of Norway is institutionally anchored and regarded as a core task, it appears more peripheral and situation-driven in the Pentecostal Movement. This difference explains some of the variation in scope but not all of it. Considering the Pentecostal theological emphasis on relationship, transformation, and the presence of the Holy Spirit, it is striking that so many pastors report few or no pastoral care conversations during a month. This finding suggests a possible gap between theological ideals and practical enactment. If pastoral care is an arena in which the Spirit works in the encounter between people, the practice must ideally occupy a more prominent place in pastoral ministry. Additionally, the findings indicate significant untapped potential, where a stronger integration of pastoral care—in a broad sense—could strengthen both congregational care and pastoral leadership. In this respect, the difference in scope raises the need for further reflection within the Pentecostal Movement, both on what pastoral care is and what role it should play based on the movement's own theology and self-understanding.

Pentecostal pastors assume a counseling role in pastoral care to a greater extent than priests and deacons, perhaps partly due to the pastor's self-understanding as shepherd of the congregation. Resane (2020) notes how servant leadership and shepherd leadership in a Christian context emphasize the pastor's responsibility to guide, protect, and equip, while pastoral integrity is crucial for avoiding unreflective or dominating practice. In this material, the counseling orientation indicates a fundamental tension between shepherd authority and care seeker autonomy. This tension may also be understood as a question of interpretive power, which Johannessen (2025) describes as power over meaning-making and symbols—a form of power exercised through language, myths, symbols, and narratives, and which shapes the identity, foundational outlook, and values of the community. He further emphasizes that this power is exercised not only in preaching but also in pastoral care and other pastoral practices that discuss people's interpretation of life and moral values. In a Pentecostal context, such interpretive

power may acquire particular intensity because the pastor's counsel, biblical interpretation, and expectation of the Spirit's guidance may be closely interwoven. Although counseling may be understood as an expression of care, responsibility, and a desire to strengthen the care seeker's ability to make their own choices, the findings reveal that more often than priests and deacons, Pentecostal pastors intervene in the care seeker's process through advice, explanations, and in some cases, persuasion. That one in five pastors report using persuasion occasionally, compared with only a small proportion of priests and deacons, indicates a possible vulnerability in the practice. When the pastor's role of guidance is combined with spiritual authority and expectation of the Spirit's guidance, the boundaries between support, influence, and direction may become hazy, necessitating the development of a Pentecostal theology of pastoral care that both values bold guidance and upholds the care seeker's autonomy, boundaries, and responsibility for interpretation.

The Faith Dimension and Boldness in Pastoral Care

Pentecostal pastors show greater boldness and openness toward the faith dimension in pastoral care than the deacons of the Church of Norway. This finding should not, however, be understood as a simple question where faith is either thematized or not. Rather, the difference seems to concern degrees of explicit spiritual language, who introduces the faith dimension, and which forms of religious or spiritual expression are experienced as natural in the conversation. This dimension is expressed particularly through prayer, Bible readings, and intercessory prayer in conversations with care seekers. In contrast to the findings of Jakobsen and Jakobsen (2022), which state that none of the deacons in the Church of Norway are drawn toward proclamation-oriented practice and that prayer and Bible reading are rarely used, this study demonstrates that expressive ecclesial tools are common and natural elements in Pentecostal pastoral care. The pastors describe a practice in which the faith dimension is often introduced by themselves—not as preaching but as an integrated part of the relationship and conversation. Through Liefbroer et al.'s (2019) distinction between different models of spiritual care, the practice of Pentecostal pastors may be comprehended as more clearly rooted in a particular faith and tradition context than in a general understanding of spirituality. This boldness may be understood in light of Pentecostal faith and practice, where the Holy Spirit is regarded as actively present and operative in people's lives. Pastoral care thus becomes a space in which the Spirit may work for comfort, guidance, and renewal—which legitimizes a more open and faith-based approach. However, this pattern of practice also raises the need for ethical awareness and humility in relation to the care seeker's story and vulnerability. The expression "expressive ecclesial tools" may encompass anything from quiet prayers to more intense, faith-filled practices of intercessory prayer, which is not necessarily experienced as safe or relevant by all care seekers. In some cases, such practices may unintentionally activate memories of previous spiritual overreach or unwanted religious influence. This kind of pastoral care therefore requires a particular capacity to listen and discern. The findings indicate that Pentecostal pastors, to a limited extent, perceive their role as preaching-oriented or kerygmatic in the traditional sense; however, this does not signify that the practice lacks kerygmatic features. When pastors use biblical references, intercessory prayer, and spiritual guidance, pastoral care may assume a clear proclamatory and interpretive character. The decisive point, however, is that the pastors themselves describe this as support, accompaniment, and spiritual help rather than as preaching to the care seeker. Hence, although Pentecostal pastoral care does not appear to be kerygmatic in a pure sense, it contains kerygmatic elements that are integrated into a relational and care seeker-centered conversational form. Thus, the study indicates an absolute distinction to different ways of articulating and integrating the faith dimension rather than between "religious" and "non-religious" pastoral care. Whereas priests and deacons in main-

line church studies are often described as reluctant to introduce explicit religious language before the care seeker opens up for it themselves, Pentecostal pastors consider it as more natural that prayer, biblical references, intercessory prayer, and expectation of the Spirit's guidance form part of the conversation. This distinction supports the main finding: Pentecostal pastoral care is characterized by boldness, trust in the work of the Spirit, and an openness to addressing spiritual needs in the conversation, as well as by a need for ethical reflection on how this is executed in practice.

Pentecostal Pastoral Care as a Triological Middle Position

Pentecostal pastoral care should therefore not be understood as kerygmatic pastoral care in the traditional sense. Although a theology with a strong preaching profile might be expected to lead to a more proclamation-oriented pastoral care, the findings in this study indicate that such an inference is too simple. The pastors do not primarily describe the care seeker as the recipient of a message but as a person whom they listen to, support, guide, and pray with. Additionally, the practice is not purely care seeker-centered. The pastoral caregiver does not merely follow the care seeker's own process but invites counsel, prayer, biblical perspectives, and expectation of the Spirit's presence. Pentecostal pastoral care therefore appears as a middle position but not merely as a balance between kerygmatic and care seeker-centered pastoral care. Rather, it challenges the axis that such models often presuppose. If pastoral care is understood as a tension between message-orientation and care seeker-orientation, one risks overlooking that Pentecostal pastoral care introduces a third dimension: the expectation of the Spirit's presence and work in the conversation. This third dimension does not, however, signify that Pentecostal pastoral care experiences are essentially different from experiences that may be formulated through other theological concepts in a mainline church context, such as God's presence, the comfort of the gospel, grace, peace, or existential meaning. Rather, the difference lies in how the experiences are given language, what expectations are attached to the conversation, and what role the possible active presence of the Spirit is given in the pastor's understanding of the pastoral care space.

This dimension signifies that pastoral care is oriented not only toward the message or the care seeker but toward a dynamic interpretive process in which pastor, care seeker, and God are understood as relationally involved. It is therefore more precise to understand Pentecostal pastoral care as a triological practice than as a variant of kerygmatic or care seeker-centered pastoral care. The concept "triological" here indicates an analytical designation for a Pentecostal understanding of pastoral care and not as a claim that only Pentecostal pastoral care contains experiences of God's presence. In such a practice, listening and presence are joined together with prayer, discernment, and theological interpretation. However, this is precisely the point at which the ethical vulnerability of the practice becomes clear. When the pastor's expectation of the Spirit's guidance is combined with counseling and spiritual guidance, the boundaries between support and direction may become unclear. There is a risk that the pastoral caregiver interprets experiences too quickly along a spiritual track or introduces interpretations that the care seeker does not desire or cannot handle. Pentecostal pastoral care therefore does not need less pneumatology but a more reflected pneumatology—an understanding of the Spirit's presence that both gives boldness and obligates humility, testing, and ethical caution.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how pastoral care is understood and practiced among pastors in the Pentecostal Movement in Norway, and how this practice compares with mainline church literature on pastoral care and studies of priests and deacons in the Church of Norway. Pastoral care in a Pentecostal context is primarily practiced through a threefold approach, emphasizing listening and empathy, guidance and counseling, and spiritual support and intercessory prayer. Pastoral care thus appears as a practice in which human presence and the spiritual dimension are interwoven, and in which the conversation becomes a possible arena for God's active work. Compared with findings from the Church of Norway, Pentecostal pastoral care emerges as a distinct variant of pastoral care. It is more explicitly faith-oriented and rooted in a particular confessional and congregationally based understanding of reality. The pastor understands himself or herself both as an accompanier and as a spiritual guide, and expressive ecclesial tools such as specific intercessory prayer and references to the Bible are naturally integrated into the conversation. Additionally, the study demonstrates that the difference concerns not only method but also thematic profile: whereas the material from the Church of Norway has a clearer grief-, crisis-, and health-oriented profile, the Pentecostal material often appears faith-, growth-, healing-, and interpretation-oriented.

Taken together, Pentecostal pastoral care, as described by the pastors in this study, may be understood as a triological practice in which the pastoral caregiver and the care seeker understand the conversation as open to the presence and active work of the Holy Spirit. This practice contains resources such as boldness, hope, intercessory prayer, spiritual guidance, and expectation of God's presence. The study also raises ethical questions, particularly when shepherd authority, counseling, and expectation of the Spirit's guidance are interwoven. Therefore, this study indicates the need for a Pentecostal theology of pastoral care that both values pneumatological boldness and develops a more nuanced language around spiritual expressions, the care seeker's autonomy, boundaries, and responsibility for interpretation. The study highlights the need for further empirical research that can deepen the understanding of how Pentecostal pastoral care and the presence of the Spirit are experienced, interpreted, and practiced.

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