

**The Self-Marginalisation of the Church:
A Practical Theological exploration in the Brooklyn Methodist Church**

by

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ETHICS STATEMENT

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this mini-dissertation, has obtained, for the research described in this work, the applicable research ethics approval. The author declares that he has observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's *Code of Ethics for researchers* and the *Policy guidelines for responsible research*.

I declare that the dissertation, which I hereby submit in partial fulfilment for the degree Master of Arts (Practical Theology) at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

DEDICATION AND THANKS

To the many persons who have been marginalised by an unattractive and off-putting Church, and who thus exist outside of its life-giving fellowship.

I want to thank God, my Lord, my Life-giver, for the privileged calling as a local church minister and the opportunity this has afforded me for growth and study.

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CONTENTS:

LIST OF FIGURES	10
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	10
LIST OF TABLES	10
SUMMARY	11
KEY WORDS	12
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	13

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction	14
1.2 Selection of the theme	16
1.2.1 Description of the theme	16
1.2.2 Development of the theme	17
1.2.3 Specific field of research	19
1.2.4 Anticipated outcomes of the research	20
1.2.5 Practical theological classification, sub-discipline, relevance	20
1.2.6 Type of research	23
1.2.7 Literary sources	24
1.2.8 Research relevance	29
1.3 Research problem, hypothesis and aims	31
1.4 Methodology	32
1.4.1 Research model	32
1.4.2 Research methodology	34
1.4.3 General	35
1.5 Conclusion	35

CHAPTER 2: BUILDING UP THE LOCAL CHURCH & MARGINALISATION

2.1 Introduction	36
2.2 The Church	37
2.2.1 The “defined”/normative Church	38
2.2.1.1 “Defined”/normative: not a “blueprint”	39
2.2.2 Cross-disciplinary constructs regarding the “defined” Church	40
2.2.3 The Church and the kingdom of God	42

2.3 The <i>building</i> metaphor	43
2.4 Building up the local church - fundamental theory	44
2.4.1 Underlying concepts	45
2.4.1.1 A concept of identity finding	45
2.4.1.2 A concept of reformation	46
2.4.1.3 A concept of long-term ministry	47
2.4.1.4 A concept of integrating and co-coordinating ministries	48
2.4.1.5 A concept of dependence upon God	48
2.4.2 Foundational theological perspectives	49
2.4.2.1 Communication of the Gospel.....	49
2.4.2.2 In the service of God and people	50
2.4.2.3 <i>Didache</i> (Teaching).....	51
2.5 Building up the local church: identity-reformation.....	52
2.5.1 Motivation and unfreezing	53
2.5.2 Congregational analysis.....	53
2.5.2.1 Identity (face) formation.....	54
2.5.2.2 Perceived identity (face).....	56
2.5.3 Strategic planning.....	57
2.5.4 Purposeful action.....	57
2.5.5 Evaluation, stabilisation and repetition	58
2.6 Conclusion	58

CHAPTER 3: MARGINALISATION OF THE CHURCH

3.1 Introduction	59
3.2 Marginalising factors	61
3.2.1 External marginalising factors	61
3.2.1.1 Secularisation.....	62
3.2.1.2 Cultural shifts: modernism and post-modernism	63
3.2.2 Internal marginalising factors: self-marginalising Church identity.....	66
3.2.2.1 Institutionalism	67
3.2.2.2 Theology	69
3.2.2.3 Integrity	73
3.2.2.4 Legalism and judgementalism.....	76
3.2.2.5 Irrelevant, archaic Church sub-culture	78

3.2.2.6 Attitude: negativism	82
3.2.2.7 Attitude: unfriendly, uncaring and unloving.....	83
3.2.2.8 Attitude: withdrawal from community.....	87
3.2.2.9 Attitude: prejudice	89
3.2.2.10 Shallow spirituality: a cost/cross-less, non-intentional discipleship	91
3.2.2.11 Reductionism	97
3.2.2.12 Prescriptive, closed-minded & bigoted	99
3.3 Conclusion	101

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH WORK: AN EMPIRICAL RESEARCH SURVEY

4.1 Introduction	102
4.2 The research process	102
4.2.1 Connecting with Department of Statistics.....	103
4.2.2 Establishing the target groups.....	103
4.2.3 Developing the questionnaire.....	103
4.2.3.1 General	103
4.2.3.2 Members	104
4.2.3.3 Ex- members (<i>non-gathered</i>)	104
4.2.3.4 Outsiders (<i>never/non-churched</i>).....	104
4.2.3.5 Pilot study.....	105
4.2.4 Drawing random samples.....	105
4.2.4.1 Members of Brooklyn Methodist.....	105
4.2.4.2 Ex- members (<i>non-gathered</i>) of Brooklyn Methodist.....	105
4.2.5 Letter of consent	105
4.2.6 Addressing the questionnaire to the sample groups	106
4.2.7 Receipt of completed questionnaires	106
4.2.8 Batching completed questionnaires for data-capture	107
4.2.9 Submission to research consultant	107
4.2.10 Statistical results	107
4.3 Research findings: analysis and interpretation.....	107
4.3.1 Introduction	107
4.3.2 Straight-line analysis results.....	108
4.3.2.1 Sample groups information	108
4.3.2.1.(a) Age distribution of the sample groups.....	108

4.3.2.1.(b) Gender make-up of sample groups.....	109
4.3.2.1.(c) Relationship-status of sample groups	110
4.3.2.1.(d) Race composition of sample groups	111
4.3.2.1.(e) Socio-economic sector of sample groups	111
4.3.2.2 Why people left the church.....	113
4.3.2.2.(a) Empirical study of praxis	113
4.3.2.2.(b) Theory and praxis	114
4.3.3 Cross-tabulation results.....	115
4.3.3.1 Cross-tabulation of the two sample groups <i>Personal Profile</i> data	116
4.3.3.2 Cross-tabulation of belief and Church factors	116
4.3.3.2.(a) Cross-tabulation <i>belief in God and Church membership</i>	116
4.3.3.2.(b) Cross-tabulation <i>If I came across a church that was like Jesus, I would seriously consider attending/joining it and My feeling towards the church as a whole is</i>	117
4.3.3.2.(c) Cross-tabulation <i>Mostly, I feel towards God and My feeling towards the Church as a whole is</i>	118
4.3.3.3 Cross-tabulation: Gathered and non-Gathered research data	118
4.3.3.3.(a) If I was church-shopping I would look for a church that was perfect	118
4.3.3.3.(b) If I was church-shopping I would look for a church that was GLBT friendly.....	120
4.3.3.3.(c) If I was church-shopping I would look for a church that was popular & big	120
4.3.3.3.(d) If I was church-shopping I would look for a church that was disability-friendly.....	121
4.4. Conclusion	121

CHAPTER 5: THE PRAGMATIC TASK: RE-CASTING IDENTITY

5.1 Introduction	123
5.2 Recasting the identity of Brooklyn Methodist Church	124
5.2.1 The nature of the church's "crisis"	124
5.2.1.1 Relevant research-sourced information.....	125
5.2.1.2 Features of the ideal church.....	126
5.2.1.3 Comparison: <i>ideal church features & reasons for leaving</i>	128
5.2.1.4 Significant identity-casting communicative actions of our church.....	129

5.2.2 Motivation for change	130
5.2.3 “Deep change” process	131
5.2.4 Initiating change	132
5.2.4.1 “Models of practice”: pragmatic strategy	132
5.2.4.2 “Rules of art”: pragmatic interventions.....	134
5.2.4.2.(a) Welcoming friendliness (inclusivity)	135
5.2.4.2.(b) Creative value-adding	135
5.2.4.2.(c) Kingdom of God discipleship paradigm	135
5.2.4.2.(d) Ensuring theological soundness	135
5.2.4.2.(e) Missional outward/community-focussed church ethos	136
5.2.4.2.(f) Caring for the well-being of church members	136
5.3 The Methodist Church of Southern Africa as a whole	137
5.4 Conclusion	138
5.5 Extended conclusion- of mini-dissertation as a whole	138

APPENDICES:

APPENDIX 1: RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE NON-GATHERED CHURCH	142
APPENDIX 2: RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE GATHERED CHURCH	147
APPENDIX 3: NON-GATHERED - MEANS AS CENTRES OF GRAVITY – WHY THEY LEFT	152
APPENDIX 4: UP ACCREDITING LETTER FOR RESEARCH	153
LIST OF WORKS CONSULTED	154

LIST OF FIGURES:

Figure 1: Visual expression of core relational dynamics of this research	17
Figure 2: Inverse relationship- Church belonging = Church "Deformity"	18
Figure 3: Osmer's four tasks of Practical Theological Interpretation	32
Figure 4: Factors impacting upon C/church identity	37
Figure 5: Building up the local church shift towards the defined church.....	44
Figure 6: Graphic of progressive Church-marginalising factors	61

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS:

Illustration 1: Church membership in South Africa by denomination, 1911-2001	27
Illustration 2: Bar chart illustrating age distribution of both sample groups.....	108
Illustration 3: Gender composition of both sample groups	109
Illustration 4: Relationship status by sample group	110
Illustration 5: Doughnut indicating race composition of whole sample	111
Illustration 6: Education data of sample groups.....	111
Illustration 7: Pie-chart of monthly household income of both groups together	112
Illustration 8: Bar chart depicting reasons for non-gathered leaving the church....	113
Illustration 9: Features of the ideal local church	126
Illustration 10: Identity-casting communicative actions of Brooklyn Methodist	129

LIST OF TABLES:

Table 1: Association of main empirical & theory reasons for marginalisation.....	114
Table 2: Juxtaposing ideal church features and reasons for leaving the church ...	128

SUMMARY

“The Self-Marginalisation of the Church: A Practical Theological exploration in the Brooklyn Methodist Church”

It is my contention that were the Church a better mirror of Jesus Christ, churches would be filled, people clamouring to hear and experience this incredible love story. Tragically, conversely, the Developed World Church is in major decline; it is in crisis.

Over my fifty year Church journey, thinking on this topic has been triggered by observation of the informal leaving of/non-participation in the Church by most of my childhood contemporaries. There must be something drastically wrong in the telling, and lifestyle modelling, of this incredible love story.

Furthermore, I have learnt that many outsiders are not only ambivalent, but also hostile, to the Church. Why? Some Christians attribute this to anti-God related guilt; maybe so. However, I forever recall outsiders labelling Church members hypocrites - and subsequently discovering this often to be the case. Not only so, the Church has victimised, persecuted, judged and rejected outsiders. It has often been anything but the incarnation of Christ in the world.

These and other factors - including the course *Building up the local church* at the University of Pretoria - have inspired this research. I have a passion for transformation of C/church *identity* into Christ-likeness through, and as a result of, the building up process, thus removing obstacles to Church belonging. My conviction is that this will be a watershed moment in the C/church's witness, and thus its growth and the expansion of the kingdom of God.

I hope, trust and pray that this research may in some way contribute toward this end.



KEY WORDS:

Brooklyn Methodist Church

Building up the local church

C/church

C/church identity

Communicative actions

Deep change

Defined/normative Church

Developed World

Face of the C/church

Gathered church

Kingdom of God

Marginalisation of outsiders

Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA)

Microcosm

Missiological/Missional ecclesiology

Non-churched

Non-Gathered church

Obstacles to C/church belonging

Outsiders

Perceptions of the C/church

Self-marginalisation

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The following are key concepts used in this research project:

Church - "...the fellowship of those who believe in Christ, the fellowship of those who have committed themselves to the person and cause of Christ...." (Küng 2001:13); a living organism, formed by Christ, in the power of the Spirit, as Christ's agent in the world.

C/church – simultaneous reference to the whole Church and the local church.

Developed World - includes the countries of the United Kingdom, United States of America, Europe (including Russia) and the Nordic States/Scandinavia, and other developed regions/countries such as Australasia, Japan and Canada.

Kingdom of God-DNA (Slaughter 2008:88) – "Deoxyribonucleic acid is a molecule that encodes the genetic instructions used in the development and functioning of all known living organisms...." (Wikipedia 2015), creating their unique identity; in this case the kingdom of God.

non-Churched - all persons who have not yet come to faith in Christ or belonged to the Church.

non-Gathered Church - the section of the Church which is living away from and out of fellowship with the Church; the vast number of "Christians" in the world, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, disconnected from the Church.

Outsiders - all persons who do not belong to the Church, comprising the non-Churched and non-Gathered Church.

Theory of action - the view that human actions are by nature communicative and that they convey something of the *actor* to the recipient or observer thereof.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The Christian Church is in crisis, as indicated by trends in Church membership and attendance (Hendriks 2004:20; see van der Merwe 2014:1 and Beyers 2015:1) (1.2.7). This has particularly occurred "...in most Western countries since the 1960s" (Erasmus & Kotzé 2007:103; Hendriks 2008:109). The Church has been marginalised by the societal realities of ever-increasing secularisation as well as modernism, and more recently post-modernism. A "... disestablishment of the church" (Hendriks 2004:20) is being experienced in the Developed World—in contrast to the Undeveloped World where as a whole Christianity is showing expansive growth, particularly in the Southern Hemisphere (Jenkins 2007:1, 2, 17; see Hendriks 2008:109, Kallmier & Peck 2009:12). This may not be the first time in its history that the Church is under threat, but some forecasts are alarming (van der Merwe 2014:1, referring to Peterson 2013:1). The Emerging Church groundswell (Gibbs & Bolger 2006; see Tickle 2012:85-109, Skead 2009:9-17 and Niemandt 2012:2), encompassing the Fresh Expressions initiative (Church of England 2004) emanating from the United Kingdom, is one response to this dire situation.

This fact of a Church in crisis underlies and is the starting point of this research project. Our South African context is a milieu of Developed and Undeveloped Worlds. Significantly, Hendriks notes that even in South Africa's Developed World, "The contextual situation of mainline churches in typical Western [Developed] countries differs from those in South Africa" (2008:110); this is, for example, due to our very different socio-political history and present situation. Notwithstanding - though lagging in extent -, following the Developed World pattern in general (Hendriks 2004:20), substantial decline has occurred in our metropolitan regions (see 1.2.7). Church decline in mainline denominations particularly, has "...accelerated considerably...." since 1994 (Hendriks 2004:20). There is a growing consensus that "...the church is being more and more *marginalised* (italics my own)" (Hendriks 2004: 20). And "...signs [thereof]...are becoming more and more evident" (Dreyer 2015:2). Trends in general thus both portray and warn of accelerating Church decline in

“Developed” South Africa. As a middle-aged white South African my thinking, culture and Church experience are mostly of this Developed World, my research context. Admittedly, this constitutes only a minority segment of our South African milieu (see for example, Vellema 2015).

Through my own experience of the Church, including what I have gleaned from others (both within and outside the Church), I have come to believe that this decline is to a very large extent self-inflicted (cf. Beyers 2015:7). Church decline frequently relates to a deformed Church, a Church unlike Christ in its identity - De Klerk (2001:40) relevantly contends that, “Die kerk het ‘n bepaalde identiteit, naamlik die beeld/vertegenwoordiger van God...” This deformed Church is often unattractive. Kinnaman & Lyons (2007:11) says that “Christianity has an image problem” (see also van der Merwe 2014:2, referring to Tyra (2013)). Kallestad (2001:21) makes the comment: “*Tragically, many in our society have tried Christian faith and found it wanting – largely because they have tried the church and found it wanting (italics my own)*”. And so, *an unattractive (identity) face of the Church has, in my opinion, often overshadowed any attractive features, and has contributed to the decline of the Church.* This unattractiveness cannot simply or entirely be written off as the perception of outsiders, but is often hard fact (see Ch. 3). Büchner (2001:118) tellingly quotes from a *Beeld* newspaper article (no further information given) by Wilson: “Die Christendom word deur uitwissing in die gesig gestaar en dit is nie die wetenskap nie, maar *die Christene self wat vir die agteruitgang verantwoordelik is (italics my own)*”. Dreyer (2015:3), referring to the work of Niemandt (2007:38), writes: “*The church is responsible for its own crisis. Churches are responsible for people leaving the church [sic] (italics my own)....*” Duin (2008:177) concurs from an American perspective: “After doing this research, I found the leave-takers *to be blameless (italics my own)* with very few exceptions”.

This is not to say that the Christian faith is normatively entirely attractive, especially given the fact that its founder, Jesus of Nazareth, was martyred as a young man in his thirties– but it is, by the same token, not entirely unattractive, for example in terms of its authenticity and credibility, and its offer of new life and a deep sense of belonging and purpose to those of the faith (Gibbs &

Coffey 2001:53; see Nicklas 2014:491, 501). Nor does it disregard the fact that in the Developed World in more recent times there has been an increasing trend of disbelief in God, a god or gods of any sort; for example, as propounded by Richard Dawkins in his work, *The God Delusion* (Dawkins 2006). Notably, *Mail Online* (18 December 2012), sourcing its information from the study *The Global Religious Landscape* by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, reported that "...having no religious affiliation is now world's third biggest 'faith' after Christianity and Islam", constituting approximately 16% of the world population. The study further states that based upon the research data collected in 2010, Islam and Hinduism are the religions that are most likely to show future growth, which is of grave concern in the context of a declining Church.

Furthermore, this research project's singular focus upon the human dimension of the Church in no way presumes to discount the overwhelming reality that "...the church (and Church) does not exist because of its own initiative or planning, but...because of God's work" (Bentley 2010:152; see Niemandt 2012:2). However, although the Church "...celebrates the divine activity in its formation...it has a human membership" (Bentley 152). Doerksen holds these two aspects in dynamic tension when he states: "The church [sic] is a human construct, but a construct in which God is at work...." (2010:3).

1.2 Selection of the theme

1.2.1 Description of the theme

I aim in this mini-dissertation to research the impact of the observed and experienced identity (face) of the Church on Church belonging and consequently- and most significantly- on faith practice. I am interested to discover through research the influence of people's perceived identities of- and given to- the Church on their relationship with the Church, which I believe has a knock-on effect on their spiritual faith development and participation in the kingdom of God and its mission in the world (Figure 1).

1.2.2 Development of the theme

I became convinced - and also discovered confirming empirical research of others (e.g. see Gibbs 1993) - that *many outsiders to the Church are not opposed to the Christian faith itself*, and in fact often believe in the Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ (Kallestad 2001:21).

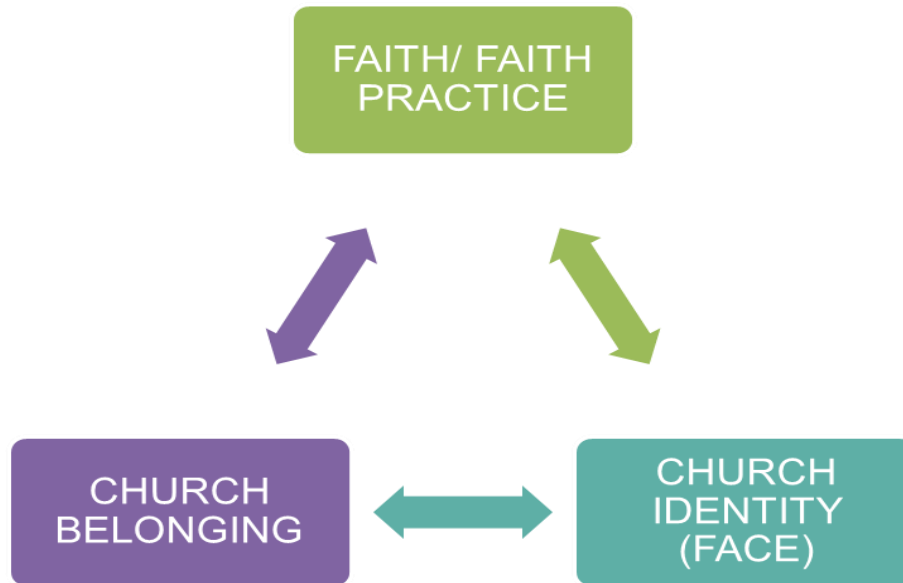


Figure 1: Visual expression of core relational dynamics of this research

Thus they are “...not non-religious or indifferent religiously” (Erasmus & Kotzé 2007:103). Their problem rather is with the Church, and its beliefs and practices. The book title, *Ja vir Jesus, nee vir die Kerk* (Botha (ed.): 2001), is instructive here. As is this response to a South African survey of twenty seven to thirty year-olds as to why they were churchless: “Ek het my hele lewe weens skuld gevoelens kerk toe gegaan tot dat ek besef het dat ek nie daaroor skuldig hoef te voel nie. Nou gaan ek nie meer nie. Ek glo steeds in God” (van der Merwe 2001:64). Dreyer (2006:1315), referring to Avis (2003:108), asserts: “Daar is groot en groeiende belangstelling in spiritualiteit – *met of sonder die kerk* (italics my own)”. Erasmus (2007:92) refers to Goodhew (2000:362) who lists “...*religious factors*....[S]uch as ‘zeal, theology, liturgy and *competence of the various religious bodies*’ (italics my own)....” as factors that may have led to the decline (and in some cases the growth) of churches in South Africa.

The above reality is suggested by, amongst other indicators, the fact that in South Africa within my denomination (the Methodist Church) only approximately 25% (calculated as the number of Methodists per the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) as a percentage of the number of Methodists per SA Government census 2001- no religious data collected in 2011 census) of self-declared Methodists are on our church's membership records. These believers (this "non-gathered" part of the body of the Church), I believe, often struggle with Church-related and often *not* primarily God-related issues, which keep them from fraternising with the institutional Church (van der Merwe 2014:5) (3.2.2.1). *The Church*, and by definition the local church, has an identity problem – as put by Stott (2007:53): "Many churches are sick because they have a false self-image. They have grasped neither who they are (their identity) nor what they are called to be (their vocation)". Van der Merwe (3), investigating the core problem of a declining Church, quotes Tyra (2013:4) who puts it this way: "There is a deeper and more basic issue that must be explored, one that has to do with the church's theological identity, that is, what it means to be the church". So much so, that – in my opinion - Church belonging has an inversely proportional relationship to Church-identity *deformity* (see Figure 2): as the level of *deformity* increases, so Church belonging decreases.

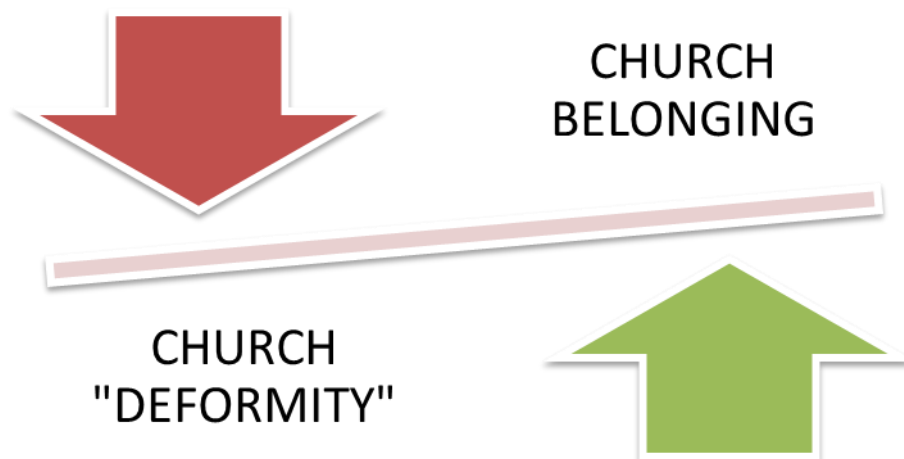


Figure 2: Inverse relationship- Church belonging = Church "Deformity"

If the "Gathered" Church could at local level carefully identify these negative traits- as far as they are inconsistent with Christ's gospel- and attend to some cosmetic work on its face (identity) in becoming more Christ-like, it is my belief

that many outsiders would experience a new “Church” freedom (see van der Merwe 2014:3). As found in research conducted by the South African-based Unit for Religion and Development Research (URDR) at a local church, in comparing *insider and outsider* focus groups’ perspectives on the church, “Members of the *outside* group did....In some sense...have this longing to be part of what they thought the church *should be* (italics my own)” (Erasmus & Kotzé 2007:103). Such an identity correction could in itself see outsiders moving back – and some for the first time – to the Church, reversing the current outward tide. This has extreme import for building up the local church (and Church) and is the motivation for my research.

This does not discount the fact that in our post-modern culture, Church-building requires the Church to “...be not only inviting but [also] infiltrating...” (Gibbs & Coffey 2001:167). Nor does it discount the fact that the Church in the world will never reach perfection (van der Merwe 2001:63). It is, as “the incarnation of the Spirit” - as termed by Prof Nel (*Building up the local church* lecture, University of Pretoria, Centre for Contextual Ministry February 2007) - still developing in its becoming of “the body of Christ” (1 Cor 12: 27) in the world. In fairness to the Church, this reality is not self-imposed (i.e. it is not a case of self-marginalisation), but is rather the Church’s default status whilst it is in the world and comprised of redeeming human beings. The Church does, on the other hand, have the assurance and the hope “... that he who began a good work in you [the Church] will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phlp 1: 6) (see 3.2.2.3).

Essentially then, this research focuses on the Church’s *self-marginalisation* and the resulting ostracising of many from Church community (Gibbs & Bolger 2006:18).

1.2.3 Specific field of research

I am using my local church, Brooklyn Methodist Church, Pretoria/Tshwane, where I have served as Ordained Minister for the last five years, to conduct my research- consent has been obtained through the Executive Committee. This church has over its 105-year history formed its face (identity) which is

presented to members and outsiders/the wider community. I anticipate that my research findings will add value to Brooklyn Methodist Church itself, as well as beyond.

1.2.4 Anticipated outcomes of the research (see 1.2.8)

I am setting out, through probing research, to identify the negative perceptions of our local church in the minds of our local community. I want to glean from members/past members, the very real everyday barriers to church-belonging at Brooklyn Methodist Church, and potentially the Church as a whole.

I will be feeding these findings into our local church in order to inform praxis and theory. The objectives will be: firstly, to change current theory and praxis where necessary as extensively as possible to strategically reverse negative perceptions; and secondly, to transform, as iron sharpens iron, further into the likeness of Christ and his kingdom. In both instances the desired outcome includes the removal of barriers to Brooklyn Methodist/Church-belonging. Before changing praxis, understanding of outsiders will need to be revisited and theory adjusted as appropriate. I thus envisage a mutual impact on theory and praxis within the practical theological bipolar tension of our own theory-praxis ellipse (Heyns & Pieterse 1990:31-32) as a local church. This ellipse is "...characterised by *critical mutual correlations*...." (Fowler 1985:48) between the two exigencies of theory and praxis, being most in common with Lamb's (1982: Ch. 3) - as referred to by Fowler (47-49) - fourth type (of five) for relating theory and praxis. This is consistent with Osmer's model (1.4.1).

1.2.5 Practical theological classification, sub-discipline, relevance

Firstly, this research work is a classic Practical Theology exercise. Practical Theology as a discipline focuses on the theological theory of Christianity, which (Christianity) is in itself essentially practical by nature- hence the title "Practical Theology" (Maddox 1990:650-670; see van der Ven 1988:7-27). It is the ongoing hermeneutical task of working out the understanding or theory of our faith - doing *theology* - in the context of the living out of our faith - *practical* Christianity - , both in the Church and in the world. "Practical Theology is a continuing hermeneutical concern discerning how the Word should be

proclaimed [in Heitink terms, “communicated”] in word and deed in the world” (Hendriks 2004:19).

Heitink (1999:129, 151) understands Practical Theology similarly, as the subject of the communicative action of God in the world in bringing human beings into relationship with God, often, but not exclusively, through the Church. He defines Practical Theology as “a theological theory of action” (Heitink 6). In terms of Heitink’s (and Hendriks’) understanding, this research, ultimately concerned with the identity-forming communicative actions (and in-actions) of the Church, is, as stated above, a pure, classical Practical Theology exercise.

Osmer (2008: x) contends that “...the scope of practical theology comprehends the web of life”. Yet he selectively locates his model of “practical theological interpretation” (which I will use in conducting this research) in the context of “...the leaders of congregations” (Osmer x), defining Practical Theology as practical theological interpretation exercised contextually by church leaders. In this respect, this research also qualifies as a classical Practical Theology exercise.

Secondly, under the umbrella of Practical Theology, this research falls within the sub-discipline of *Missiological Ecclesiology* (Van Gelder 2000:31) or more recently *Missional Ecclesiology* (Hendriks 2008:109, see Niemandt 2010a:1 & 2012:1, and van der Merwe 2014:4). It is so called because it dynamically marries the concepts of Church (ecclesiology) and, from a theocentric perspective, God’s mission in the world (missiology). The mission of God is realised (not exclusively) through the Church (2.2.1) (Müller 2008:55-59), via “...the calling of the congregation in its local context...” (Van Niekerk 2014:2; see also Pillay 2015:1, 2). The intrinsic inseparability of Church and mission is well expressed by Swiss theologian, Emil Brunner, who wrote, as quoted by Mgojo & Irvine (2001:70), “The church [sic] exists by mission as a fire exists by burning”; see World Council of Churches 2005:9-11, Niemandt 2012:2). Niemandt (2012:3) concurs: “...ecclesiology follows mission – the church [sic] does what it *is* and then *organises* what it *does*...The *missio* Dei institutes the *missiones ecclesiae*...The church [sic] is mission and participates in God’s

mission because it cannot do otherwise” (see 2.1). Recent associated terminology includes *Missional Church* (Hendriks 2008:109; see Niemandt 2010b:397) and *Mission-shaped Church* - resulting from a church planting and new expressions of Church initiative (Church of England 2004: ix & xi).

Pillay gives insight into the *missional church*, detailing Wegner’s (Wegner & Magruder 2012) at least fifteen ‘missional moves’ these churches make:

...from: Saved souls to saved wholes, missions to mission, my tribe to every tribe, centre to the margins, top to bottom up, diffused to focused, transactional to transformational, relief to development, professionals to full participation, from formal to fractal leadership, institution to movement, from ‘we can do it; you can help’ to ‘you can do it, we can help’, and from Great Commission to Great Completion

(Pillay 2015:2).

Both Hendriks’ (2004:11) *Congregational Studies* and Nel’s (2005:(iii), 10) *Building up the local church* very specifically pursue the local church’s transformation into its God-defined self (2.4), in order to realise its God-given purpose in the world. As forerunners to the “missional renaissance” (Pillay 2015:2) – which Pillay (1) says McNeal (2009: xiii) refers to as “...the single biggest development in Christianity since the Reformation” - described above, their points of departure of the inseparability of God’s mission and the local church are essentially the same. In this regard, this missional ecclesiological mini-dissertation falls within – and is undertaken upon - the field of study *Building up the local church* (see Ch. 2).

Although Pillay (2015:1) makes the statement that the missional church concept within the missional renaissance is not about “...making the church [sic] attractable....”, and, conversely, this research *is about* making the C/church “attractable” (see 1.2.8 and 2.4.1.2), this does not in itself discount the relevance of this research (see Ch. 5). It will indirectly assist the missional

church in crossing over the Church- world divide, and being accepted and embraced in its incarnational emergences.

It should also be noted that Kok and others (eds.) (2014:10), in their focus upon the Christian mission-ethics dynamic, introduce the very pertinent perspective of *ethics* in the C/church insider-outsider relationship in the sense that matters of “...inclusivity, exclusivity, and sensitivity to outsiders or the lack thereof...” are ethical considerations (see Du Toit 2012:1 and Niemandt 2012:8). This additional dimension is only mentioned here and not pursued in this research exercise.

1.2.6 Type of research

This research is descriptive in that it will descriptively inform, and thereby add understanding to, the essence of the phenomenon (Osmer 2008:52) of the relationship between outsiders (specifically ex-members) and members/the C/church.

My hypothesis stems from my observation and study, and will be empirically tested in this research project. A preliminary literature review supports my hypothesis, and also indicates that theory on this topic is growing. My research will thus, from the context of my local church, concurrently serve to deductively endorse current theory as well as inductively provide new, emerging theory (with some measure of generalisability) on the subject. It will therefore constitute *abductive* research (University of Pretoria, Course in Research Methodology, March 2007). This well-grounded theory will inform our transforming praxis in the pragmatic task (Osmer 2008:4) of the reformation of our Gospel-communicating actions (Heitink 1999:129, 151) – see Chapter 5.

An intensive qualitative empirical research type (Osmer 50) (4.2), or “strategy of inquiry” (Osmer 49), will predominantly be used. The descriptive nature of the research project --exploring and seeking “...to understand the actions and practices [with regard to the C/church] ...and the meanings they ascribe to their experience” (Osmer 49, 50) – will predominantly inform this naturalistic, rather than positivistic, qualitative approach.

I expect through this research to find myself changed as a Church practitioner.

1.2.7 Literary sources

Several authors from the Western World in the field of Ecclesiology and Practical Theology- as well as sociology- have, more recently in particular, expressed concern about a Developed World diminishing or marginalising Church. A report in the *Sunday Times* (2008, n.d.) on church-rating in Britain significantly motivated this research.

Brierley, a Church researcher and author, has predicted that "...60% of all existing Christian congregations in America will disappear before the year 2050" (Gibbs & Coffey 2001:20). Furthermore, De Claisse-Walford (2008:5) states: "Almost 80% of Americans who believe in God assert that participation in a church community is not a necessary part of their faith". It may be noted that membership of the United Methodist Church (USA), for example, declined by 18% between 1985 and 1987 (Gibbs 1993:19).

Regarding North America, the title of Kiesling's (2004) book, *Jaded: Hope for Believers who have Given up on Church but not on God*, is instructive. Meyers' (2009) *Saving Jesus from the Church: How to Stop Worshipping Christ and Start Following Jesus*, as the title suggests, bears upon the Church's role in its marginalisation and decay. Barna and Kinnaman's (2014) *Churchless* presents relevant North American research outcomes, most especially significant to this research that "...more than one-quarter of the unchurched [interviewed] are seriously interested in matters of faith, and nearly two-thirds have generally positive perspectives on faith matters" (Barna & Kinnaman 40,41). They go on to conclude that, "Few churchless people are anti-faith or *harbor* [sic] *animosity toward God* (italics my own)" (Barna & Kinnaman 48). Very recently, two American sociologists, Packard & Hope (2015), published their research in the book, *Church Refugees: Sociologists Reveal Why People Are Done With Church but Not Their Faith*, which has not been sourced in this review.

Moynagh's (2001) *Changing World, Changing Church* declares and examines this empirical Church crisis from a United Kingdom perspective. Jenkin's (2007)

The Next Christendom (1.1) does the same - Frambach (2007:18), as quoted by van der Merwe (2014:5), defines “Christendom” as “...‘a culturally supported, central place in the public life of many Western societies’”. Kallmier and Peck (2009:15) report findings of the Christian Research organisation that “...one million people left the Church in the UK between 1989 and 1998, with a further half-million from 1998 to 2005” (see Brierley 2006:12-14). In spite of this, Kallmier and Peck (23), referring to the Office for National Statistics 2001 April Census Summary of Religion in Britain released in 2003, point out that “...just under 72% described themselves as ‘Christian’”. This is in support of the research hypothesis that many who are anti-Church are not necessarily anti-God.

Forster (2009:4) draws reference to *Time Magazine* (2008) on a survey of the Church in the United Kingdom:

Churches 2005

48328 (including 18503 Anglican, 4585 Catholic and 6062 Methodist)

Churches 2050 (projection)

27473 (including 4014 Anglican, 3359 Catholic and 2037 Methodist)

It has been more recently reported:

“The proportion of Britons identifying themselves as Anglican has dropped from 21 per cent in 2012 to 17 per cent in 2014, a fall of about 1.7 million people. Over the same period, the number of Muslims in Britain grew by about 900,000.... Lord Carey of Clifton, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, said that unless urgent action was taken, the church [sic] was ‘one generation away from extinction’”.

The London Times, online (1 June 2015)

Research conducted by Portmann and Plüss (2011) in European Switzerland endorses the fact of a diminishing Developed World Church. However, it does not directly support this research hypothesis. Portmann and Plüss's (184,190, 192) conclusions indicate a post-faith European context defined by an equivalent – to the Church - marginalisation of God to the extent of the almost “death of God”. They state, for example (Portmann & Plüss 190): “*Distanced church affiliation* defines distanced church-members and *weak personal religiosity* can be expected among them”. In this context, the (institutional) Church is largely viewed as just another social welfare organisation, devoid of God, and responsible for fostering traditional values in society as a whole (Portmann and Plüss 192).

Their research suggests of this European context that although anti-Church does not expressly translate into anti-God, in contradistinction to North America, New Zealand, South Africa, and to some extent the United Kingdom, it does translate into an apparent state of God-ambivalence. Significantly, Portmann and Plüss (191) assert that for the non-gathered, Church “...symbolises *tradition, cultural origin* and *identity*. Distanced church-members pursue their membership, even though their personal affiliation with the Church has significantly decreased”.

Jamieson's (2002), *A Churchless Faith*, focuses from a New Zealand Developed World perspective on the growing disillusionment with the status quo of the Church as well as believers' attempts at living their faith outside of the institutional Church.

A literary review is- as it would be on most topics- limited by language constraints. For example, books sourced, authored by Kretzschmar (2001, *Distanzierte Kirchlichkeit*) and Stoltz (2011, *Religiosität in der modernen Welt*) could not be reviewed.

Illustration 1 (Forster 2009:11) reflects the recent situation of a rapidly declining traditional mainline Church in the South African context. Conversely, statistics also indicate that the Christian percentage of our population has historically

significantly and continuously increased, from 45,7% in 1911 to 79,8% in 2001 (Erasmus 2007:83); with a slight decline to 79,1% in 2006 (Erasmus & Kotzé 2007:101). This dichotomy in itself indicates the complexities inherent in analysing declining *Developed World Church* membership statistics (Schoeman 2014:3).

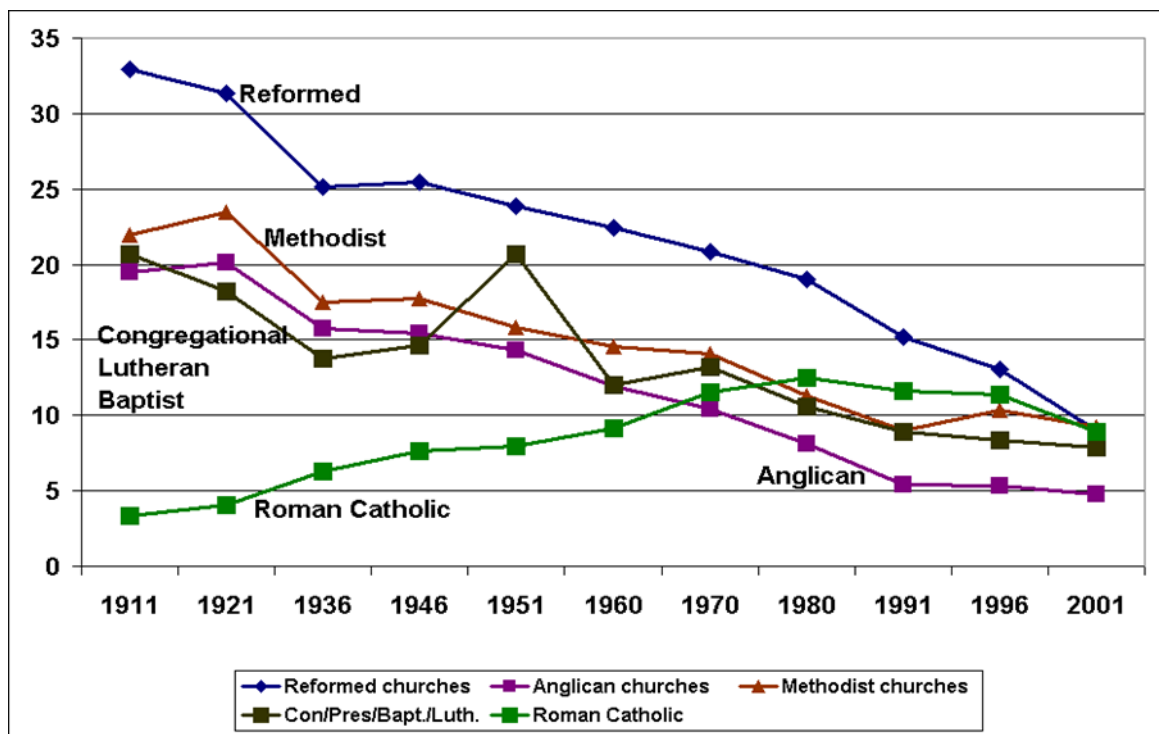


Illustration 1: Church membership in South Africa by denomination, 1911-2001

The overall increase in Christianity is accounted for by the burgeoning of the African Independent Churches (largely in Undeveloped World contexts) as indicated in the 2001 National Census (Symington (ed.) 2007:77), as well as the significant growth of Pentecostal, Evangelical and Charismatic churches – “New Churches” as referred to by Brierley (2000:67) - in both Developed and Undeveloped World contexts (Erasmus 2007:86) (see 1.1). Overall population trends of the historically chief constituents of South African mainline churches have materially contributed to Church decline; most notably, high emigration and overseas working volumes (especially in young families, with a knock-on effect on population growth) – approximately one million white people emigrated between 1995 and 2005 (Schoeman 2014:5, quoting from GKSA

2012) – and a decreased birth-rate (Schoeman 2, referring to Erasmus & Hendriks 2005:102).

The incongruence highlighted above is, however, also supportive of the research hypothesis that many outsiders of the Church (particularly the non-Gathered Church, whom Meyers (2009:8) calls the “walking wounded”)- especially in the instance of mainstream denominations- are not necessarily unbelievers, but rather simply Church-averse believers who have privatised their religious life (Erasmus 2007:93). They fall into the category of “*believing without belonging*” (Erasmus & Kotzé 2007: 96; cf. Moynagh 2001:68).

Moynagh (2001:188) appositely comments: “There is a spiritual openness among many people: frequently it is not God who is the barrier, but church [sic]”. Kinnaman & Lyons (2007:232) include a relevant afterword by pastor and author Kimball- “...while people have negative perceptions of the church [sic] and Christians, they are open to and respect...Jesus....[I] conclude that people *like Jesus but not the church* [sic]”. This contention is also supported by statistics indicating a substantial increase in White South Africans - who have traditionally constituted the majority of Developed World Church members (the focus of this research) - with no religious affiliation, from 7,0% in 1991 to 14,6% in 2006 (Erasmus & Kotzé 99,101).

The decline of the Church in South Africa has been much less the focus of (local) ecclesiastical literature than that for much of the Developed World - as stated by Erasmus (2007:88), “Unfortunately, there seem to be no data sets available as to the reasons why people disaffiliate from religion in South Africa. This area needs further research”.

What has been written addresses the reality of a declining Church and reasons therefore. For example, van der Merwe (2001:59) refers to research done amongst First-Year students at Potchefstroom University (van der Walt 1999), and Schoeman (2014) examines factors behind the declining membership statistics of South African churches. Bosch (1991:3) refers to the *crisis* as, “...not only a crisis in regard to mission”, but a crisis that “...affects the entire church [sic], indeed the entire world....” Nel’s (2005) book, *Who Are We?*, on

building up the local church implicitly addresses the declining-Church crisis. Erasmus (92) makes reference to Goodhew (2000:360-362), although this source only covers the period from 1961 to 1991. Hendriks' (2004) *Studying Congregations in Africa* to some extent overlaps with this topic. The formation - and various literature - of the South African Partnership for Missional Churches (SAPMC) (see Niemandt 2010a and Hendriks 2008:109-119) is essentially motivated by the knowledge that "...Christendom is vanishing" (Niemandt 2010b:398). Other relevant literature is referred to in 1.1 and 1.2.2. Various media reports have addressed the subject; for example, a letter to *Beeld* (1 June 2011) in which a South African theologian gives reasons why he has left the formal Church, and a *Mail & Guardian Online* article (5 April 2012) which reported that officially twenty thousand members left the Dutch Reformed Church in 2011.

Other than Storey (2014:75-88), no South African Methodist research into this topic, and certainly none relating to Brooklyn Methodist Church, my research object, has been sourced. Writing on the subject of the MCSA's identity-finding challenge, Storey (83) claims that the church currently has three identity issues, "...doctrinal, racial and cultural", which are impacting its wellbeing. I hope through this research to contribute to a Methodist theory base, at least, targeting the evident South African research gap.

In conclusion, quoting from Erasmus and Kotzé (2007:107): "It seems to be that people cease to be religious in ways previously thought of...but they remain religious, albeit in new ways". Significantly- with regard to the asserted research gap on the subject-matter -, however, they (Erasmus & Kotzé 107) add: "*Empirical evidence to be able to describe this is lacking* (italics my own)".

Further literary sources are specifically referenced in the body of this research paper.

1.2.8 Research relevance (see 1.2.2)

It has the potential to transform our local church, and beyond, contributing to an improved relationship with outsiders and members alike- significantly, Niemandt

(2010b:410) referring to Heitink (2007:342–344) writes: “Contextual praxis, explored by empirical research, is very important to formulate a new ecclesiology”. This will be achieved by developing among members an awareness of the unattractive features of our church (and perhaps the Church), as a means of reforming its identity, and thus its image, in the public sphere. Bentley (2010:19) appositely writes: “If the Church is not in relationship with anyone or anything, then it cannot be an agent of mission, for it will then only exist for itself and within itself”. These improved relationships will, in other words, facilitate the mission of the Church, its’ *raison d’être*.

The outcomes can inform local church leaders of how the church is perceived by outsiders, and by so doing provide leadership with invaluable information for use in strategizing the missional life of the church. The church will be equipped to modify its practice and image, to reflect more accurately her normative (defined), authentic identity in Christ (Nel 2005:365), notwithstanding inherent complexities therein (for e.g. see Dulles’ *Models of the Church* and Vellem 2015:3). This in turn will impact positively on outsiders’ negative perceptions of the church, removing stumbling blocks to faith and practice – as importantly stated by the Fresh Expressions organisation (2015:5), “...*the perception that the community holds towards the church [sic] greatly influences how much people will allow themselves to consider the possibility of God* (italics my own)”. This is endorsed by De Klerk (2001:35) - “Die persepsies wat ander mense oor die volk van God het, *beïnvloed ook hulle persepsies oor God* (italics my own)”.

Perhaps most importantly, the results will educate the member in the pew (the whole body of the church)- as the Monday-to-Saturday C/church in the world- in becoming sensitive to these perceptions in their interactions with others and making use of every opportunity to improve them. Members will thus be empowered to address the interface where barriers to C/church belonging exist, “...*crossing borders* (italics my own)...[T]hat separate people from God, one another and creation” (Niemandt 2012:4, referring to WCRC 2010:164).

Although focussed specifically upon the local church, this mini-dissertation recognises the indelible relationship between it and *the Church*, the “...implicit

bonds between them” (Hendriks 2004:14). Küng (2001:14) pertinently states: “Thus every local church makes the whole church fully present....” Drawing upon Hauerwas (2010:55), Niemandt (2012:7) says that, “Church needs locality”. In this sense, “The local congregation is the basic unit of Christian witness....” (Niemandt 7, referring to Hendriks 31). Helpfully elucidating the local church-Church relationship, Niemandt (7) quotes from Balia and Kim (2010:118) in their reference to Edinburgh 2010: “...‘In each local context the people of God are the footprint of the Church universal’”. By impacting on the local church as the primary manifestation of *the* Church, the Church itself is impacted, from grass-roots level, upwards and outwards (Hendriks 14-15). Marais (2007:122) pertinently writes: “The Apostolic age was characterised by each local church understanding themselves to be mission outposts within the mission of God; ...the very movement of God towards the world” (see Pillay 2015:3).

Such a research project can make a significant contribution towards healing and restoring the credibility of the Church, even if only, as a result of the research, the Church is seen by outsiders to take them seriously and to truly care for them. Many outsiders simply cannot believe in or be associated with a defaced Church; for example, as per the headline of a *Sunday Times* (n.d.) news report: “When so many churches compete for truth, Christianity does not exist” (see Dreyer 2015:4).

1.3 Research problem, hypothesis and aims

The problem I have identified for research and outlined thus far is the negative impact of the C/church on its members, as well as on outsider interest and participation, and consequently on faith practice; in other words, that the C/church, rather than absence of faith, often is the major obstacle confronting outsiders and their faith practise. Due to the constraints of this mini-dissertation, my specific research hypothesis to be empirically tested is: *the perceptions of members and outsiders (the non-Gathered Church) about the Church are stumbling blocks and barriers to their Church belonging and consequent faith practice*. Researching the perceptions of the “never-Churched” (“non-churched”) would make this project too broad, and is a project on its own, for

another study. The research will thus aim to substantiate this hypothesis as well as provide answers to the reasons why members leave the Church (and by inference why outsiders are not in the Church).

1.4 Methodology

1.4.1 Research model

I will be using Osmer's (2008) model of practical theological interpretation (see 1.2.5) to advance the theory-praxis interplay. Osmer's method (Figure 3) is similar to Heitink's (1999) three-dimensional hermeneutical model, except that it refines Heitink's strategic cycle into normative and pragmatic tasks.

The Four Tasks of Practical Theological Interpretation

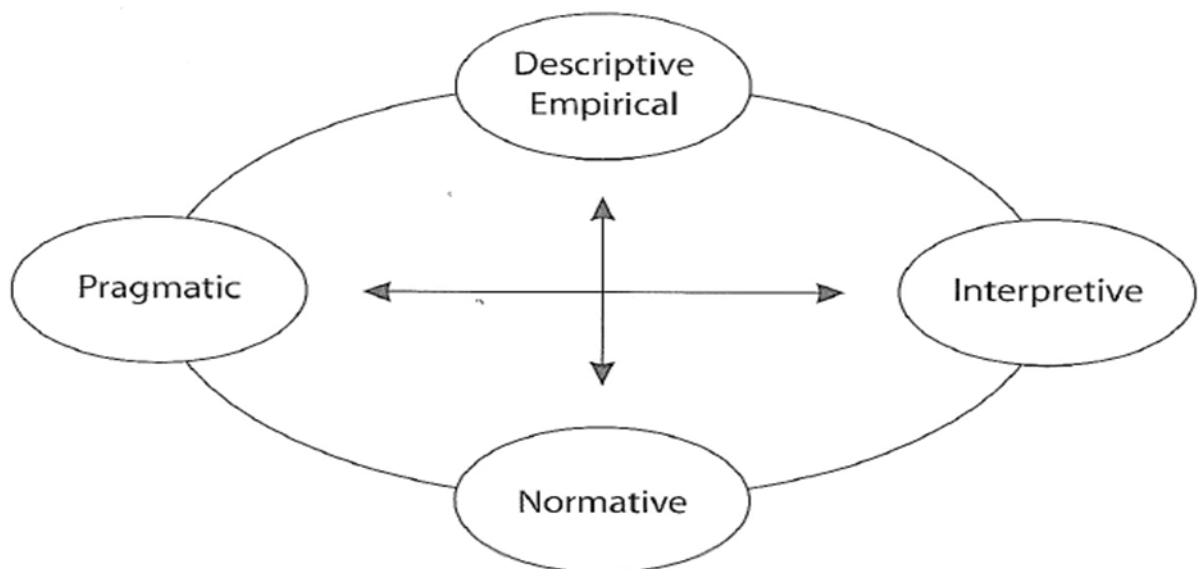


Figure 3: Osmer's four tasks of Practical Theological Interpretation

Osmer's methodology (2008:4) incorporates four tasks which form the basic structure of practical theological interpretation: the descriptive-empirical, the interpretive, the normative and the pragmatic:

- The *descriptive-empirical task* asks the question: "What is going on?" The researcher answers by empirically describing *what* is happening in the given situation: "Gathering information that helps us discern patterns

and dynamics in particular episodes, situations, or contexts” (Osmer 4, 31-78).

- The *interpretive task* asks the question: “*Why is this going on?*” What are the reasons for this situation? It draws “...on theories of the arts and sciences [e.g., psychology and anthropology] to better understand and explain why these patterns and dynamics are occurring” (Osmer 4, 79-128).
- The *normative task* asks the question: “*What ought to be going on?*” that is, *what should* be happening in this situation; using theological concepts to interpret particular episodes or contexts, constructing ethical norms to guide our responses, and learning from “good practice” (Osmer 4, 129-173).
- The *pragmatic task* asks the question: “*How might we respond?*” In other words, what might we do in this context to move from the current to a preferred situation? , “Determining strategies of action that will influence situations in ways that are desirable and entering into a reflective conversation with the ‘talk back’ emerging when they are enacted” (Osmer 4; see 175-218). Systemically, friction in the force-field of the ongoing dynamic mutual interaction between the normative and the actual subjects catalytically sparks corrective interventions, simultaneously honing theory (Church and Community Facilitation Network 2005:35).

Osmer (2008:10), referring to Palmer (1969:25, 26, 87, 88, 118-121), conceptualises these four tasks “...with the image of a hermeneutical circle, which portrays interpretation as composed of distinct but interrelated moments” - see Figure 3 (Osmer 11).

In their interrelatedness, the four tasks also interpenetrate. Indeed, “The interaction and mutual influence of all four tasks distinguish practical theology from other fields” (Osmer 2008:10). This interaction and mutual influence occurs via the constant “circling back” to tasks that have already been explored,

in *spiral* (not only circle)-like fashion, with new insights developing and adding value to each dimension of the hermeneutical process, and to the interpretive enterprise as a whole (Osmer 11).

1.4.2 Research methodology

This interrelatedness and interpenetration of the four tasks of practical theological interpretation is evident in their execution in the context of this mini-dissertation (1.4.1).

- The *descriptive-empirical task* of detailing *what* is happening in the field of the research subject is introduced in Chapter 1 and undertaken in Chapter 4, in the empirically based delineation of the circumstances of a diminishing Developed World Church, often resulting from the marginalising impact of its own identity deficiencies.
- The *interpretive task* which seeks to explain/answer the *why* of a Developed World Church self-imposed demise is accomplished in Chapter 3 (although closely correlated to Chapter 4). Reasons are given for the marginalisation of outsiders by local churches - the *why* of self-marginalisation is answered theoretically through researched literature on this subject (Ch. 3) (as well as empirically by the *what* of this research, Ch. 4).
- The *normative task*, defining what should by default be happening in the local church is attended to in Chapter 2 (though also cursorily in Ch. 1).
- The *pragmatic task* of advancing practical theological theory and responding with corrective action in promoting transformation through “deep change” from the empirical to the normative (defined) subject is dealt with in Chapter 5.

The four tasks of Osmer’s model thus interrelate and interpenetrate in the research.

1.4.3 General

Data will be confidentially and sensitively handled. Ethical connotations may arise should disciplinable feedback about any member be received.

1.5 Conclusion

Aptly, in continuation of this research, van der Merwe (2014:10) states: “Die antwoord op die kerk [sic] se krisis is nie te vind in nuwe strategieë of programme nie, maar dit lê in die herwinning van ’n teologiese identiteit vir die kerk [sic] om kerk [sic] te wees in die *kairos* wat aangebreek het”.

My love for Christ’s Church and personal desire to contribute to its growth and wholeness, have developed within me over the course of most of my life. It is my belief and hope that this research project will go some way in realising this objective, as well as increasing my personal worth as a Church Practitioner within Christ’s kingdom.

CHAPTER 2: BUILDING UP THE LOCAL CHURCH & MARGINALISATION

2.1 Introduction

The individual's relationship with the local church hinges largely upon C/church identity. This identity correlates with the church's stage of maturity in growing up from its empirical self into its "defined" (Nel 2005:365) self (2.4) - as put by Hendriks (2004:105): "...the *identity* of a congregation can, and should, grow continuously in *maturity* to become, and do, what the missional God intended....". It has been said (see 1.1 & 1.2.8) that the objective of this research is to highlight that local churches aberrations from their defined selves (Dulles 2002:128) are the principal causes of outsiders' negative perceptions of the church. Kinnaman & Lyons (2007:15) comment - "...*unChristian*, reflects outsiders' most common reaction to the faith: they think Christians no longer represent what Jesus had in mind....". Dreyer (2015:1, 3) concurs: "...the real crisis of the church [sic] is...the inability of the church [sic] to be what it already is....The discrepancy between the true nature and empirical manifestation of the church leads to crisis, loss of integrity and regression".

Dynamically interacting at this maturity-dependent identity interface are the personal contexts and worldviews of church members and outsiders alike. This dynamism creates a vortex in which identity formation of the local church occurs (Figure 4), resulting in "...a church constituted by both its participation in the life of God and the world, a constitution necessary for mission" (Niemandt 2012:4).

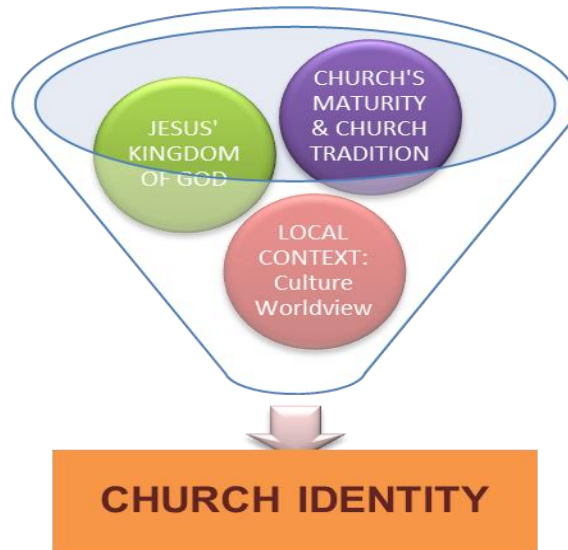


Figure 4: Factors impacting upon C/church identity

This vital maturity-identity interplay occurs within the on-going praxis - theory ellipse of Practical Theology (Heyns & Pieterse 1990:31-32). The C/church enterprise, *Building up the local church* (1.2.5) - under which subject this research falls -, targets congregational health at this maturity-identity interface and is thus perfectly suited to provide a backdrop for highlighting local church identity aberrations (2.1), as well as a platform from which to work in addressing them. Essentially, *Building up the local church* attends to Osmer's (2008:4) *normative task* (1.4.1), answering the question, "What ought to be going on?" in the C/church. Deriving mostly from the German Protestant Church, the study of "*Gemeindeaufbau*"- "*gemeenteopbouw*" (Plantinga-Kalter 2009:10) - began at the end of the nineteenth century, following - and as an antidote to - the decline of the Church in that country (Nel 2005: iii). It has become a subject of interest, study and research for practical theologians around the world, including South Africa.

2.2 The Church

Küng (2001:13, 14) recalls the meaning of the word *church* – "In the Germanic languages ('church', 'Kirche') the name is derived from the Greek *kyriake* = belonging to the Kyrios, Lord, and means the house or the community of the Lord. In the Romance languages...it derives from the Greek word *ekklesia*...or

the Hebrew word *qahal*, and means ‘assembly’ (of God)”. Expounding on *ekklesia*, Vellem (2015: 3) simply and helpfully describes church as “...communities that followed the teachings of Jesus Christ” (see also van der Merwe 2014:6). This definition of church fits into an *ecumenical* paradigm (of church) (van der Merwe 7), as found in Peterson (2013:6, 7) (see Niemandt 2013:170). Bonhoeffer (2005:97), as quoted by De Gruchy (2014:26), stated that the church, “...‘is [sic] nothing but that piece of humanity where Christ really has taken form’” – not dissimilar to our understanding of the kingdom of God (see 2.1 & 2.2.2).

2.2.1 The “defined” or normative Church

Central to this research is the *Building up the local church* construct, the “defined” or normative Church. The *defined* self of the Church (2.2.1) is “...the way the Bible refers to and describes the local church” (Nel 2005:365). It is the *true* Church (Dulles 2002:114), which Brislin (2014:32) reminds us, has, “At least since the early fifth century...been summed up...as ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’”.

Developing Bonhoeffer’s (2.2) Church description, as a result of the Holy Spirit’s formational role, the Church becomes an, “...incarnational presence...in the world...” (Gibbs & Coffey 2001:213; see Niemandt 2010b:408). De Gruchy (2014:26) concisely states: “Whatever else the church [sic] might be, its identity is inseparable from Jesus Christ...”. Niemandt (2012:4) defines this as a “missional-incarnational ecclesiology”. It is also not unlike the “New Evangelisation” of the Roman Catholic Church (mooted by Pope John Paul II and continuing until this time) (Brislin 2014:34). And it fits into the *missional* (*missio Dei*) paradigm (of Church) (van der Merwe 2014:7) (see 1.2.5), as per Peterson (2013:94). In this *missio Dei* paradigm, the Church - the missional church, that is (1.2.5) - is created (or incarnated) in the Spirit’s outward, “centrifugal” movement in/to the world (van der Merwe 7) (2.4.1.5).

“*The Spirit is God Inside Out*” states Peterson (2013:94), as quoted by van der Merwe (2014:7), meaning that God’s essential, innermost nature is disclosed in this outward movement in/to the world (i.e. the *missio Dei*). This significantly

impacts our understanding of - and quest for - the defined or normative *identity* of the Church (van der Merwe 7) - implying that this (identity) is nothing less than God's essential, innermost nature. Aptly, Bentley, referring to Barth (1978), states:

...the Church's *identity* is founded on the premise that it exists as a response to the work that God has done. God reveals God-self [supremely in Jesus Christ], and so *the revelation [defined identity] is received...*and, as a result, a community is established that continues the witness of those who have testified to God's self-revelation as attested in Holy Scripture (all italics my own).

Bentley 2010:146

Niemandt's (2012:2) description of the Church as, "...a sign and symbol of the reign of God" (cf. Dulles 2002:60) endorses this view. As does his (Niemandt 2012:8) quote from Edinburgh (2010:1) describing the Church as, "...a living demonstration of the love, righteousness and justice that God intends for the whole world", the *imago Dei*. Similarly, Nel (2005:8) states that the Church is an *organism* whose "...duty [is] to reveal the real nature of...God". Hendriks (2004:105) verifies this perspective, commenting on the local congregation (church): "...the identity and culture that develop should *mirror their Creator and the Kingdom that God envisages* (italics my own)". This is not unlike Dulles' sacramental model of the Church (2002: 55).

2.2.1.1 "Defined"/normative: not a "blueprint"

Significantly, however, - though adding complexity- the Apostle Paul asserts of our human view of God's revelation in Christ: "Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face" (1 Cor 13:12). This is corroborated by Jesus who said: "...he [the Spirit] will guide you into all truth....[T]aking from what is mine and making it known to you" (Jn 16:13,14). As such, a dynamic, evolving understanding of the nature of truth is postulated. Hence, any anthropological "knowing" of God's essential, innermost self, as

evident or revealed in the Spirit's activity in the world, albeit the defined Church, *must itself be* dynamic and evolving. This viewpoint is substantiated by the human-divine character of the Church.

From the point of view of the building up of the church (into the defined Church), it is vitally important to note the resulting complexity: that the (always anthropological) normative identity of the C/church *must itself* always be dynamic and evolving. For example, as highlighted by Niemandt (2010b:409), the artful use of *discernment* becomes crucial in the anthropological ascertaining of the microcosmic shape of God's kingdom (the defined identity of the C/church) at any one time and place (context) (again see Figure 4).

Furthermore, again from an anthropological slant, and as indicated by the "fruit of the Spirit"- God's innermost nature (Gl 5:22) – varying, differing aspects of that nature will be elicited according to the prevailing context. This endorses the vortex-like identity formation process described in Figure 4, yet also substantially intensifies and again complicates this unceasing, robust dynamism that serves to illuminate God through the output/product of the C/church. This principle of context-dependent C/church identity is verified by the statement of Kok & Roth (2014:4): "...from the very beginning the movement was *diverse in nature* (italics my own) and...different groups defined their respective conceptions of *identity* (italics my own) and ethos in different ways...". De Gruchy (2014:23), referring to Minear (1960:250), concurs. It is also supported by van der Merwe (2014:10) who relevantly states: "Die doel van ekklesiologie is nie...om 'n *bloudruk* (italics my own) te ontwerp vir kerk-wees [sic] wat geskik vir alle tye en plekke is nie".

Meaningfully, in relation to the already-stated *identity crisis* of today's Church, Minear (1960:250) wrote of the early Church, "It did not see itself either as it was or as it was meant to be" (De Gruchy 2014:23).

2.2.2 Cross-disciplinary constructs regarding the "defined" Church

In this way, and for the purposes of this mini-dissertation, I will in Osmer's (2008:25) cross-disciplinary fashion use the construct "*microcosm* of the

kingdom of God” to describe the (defined/ normative) Church. A *microcosm* is defined as, “A community, place, or situation regarded as encapsulating in miniature the characteristics of something much larger” (Oxford Dictionaries online). The Church, as a manifestation of God’s innermost nature by the Spirit (through the *missio Dei*), encapsulates in miniature the characteristics of God. This construct will form a critical element in the motivation for change in the local church (5.3)

Such microcosms of the kingdom of God are understood to manifest in local churches across the world through a process not unlike that of biological *mitosis*. Mitosis is defined as (Oxford Dictionaries online), “A type of cell division that results in two daughter cells each having the same number and kind of chromosomes as the parent nucleus, typical of ordinary tissue growth”. In this sense, in the Spirit of God’s ongoing activity in the world, *spiritual mitosis* occurs in the continuous reproductive propagation of new microcosms of the kingdom of God in the form of churches, human communities of Christ-followers. In this mitosis process of God’s self-giving, God, the parent, does not in any way become less (diminish).

From an anthropological perspective, as individual persons welcome the world-wide activity of God’s Spirit within their lives through the reconciliatory life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, a biological-type process of *cell fusion* occurs. Cell fusion occurs as, “...walls and cavities of...cells coalesce together” (Wikipedia 2015). In this way, several cells combine to form one new cell. In the individual’s Spirit-connection with God, fusion occurs between the two differing “cells” of individual and God (heterotypic fusion), God coalescing with the individual and forming one new cell/creation in the new life of the person (2 Cor 5:17).

In such a process of cell fusion, *mutation* takes place as “...cell[s], DNA molecule[s], etc....undergo or cause to undergo change in a gene or genes” (Oxford Dictionaries online). Critically - in the case of an individual’s “fusion” with God -, through such mutation, a person’s DNA undergoes change as the DNA of God’s innermost nature coalesces with and transforms their own.

Ultimately, in the fulfilment of Jesus statement, "... where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them" (Mt18:20), through the activity of God's Spirit drawing two or more of these Christ-followers together, a microcosm of the kingdom of God, bearing God's DNA (3.2.2.10), results – C/church forms.

This is, at its inception, by very "nature" the "defined" C/church of Christ – in relation to the anthropological "nature versus nurture" debate (Mandela 1995:7). This debate questions whether a person's character is the result of nature – what we are inherently born with - or nurture – how we are raised and influenced by external factors. "Nurture" has, consistent with Mandela's (7) contention that "...nurture, rather than nature, is the primary moulder of personality....", generally affected the development of an empirically deficient or deformed C/church (1.1).

2.2.3 The Church and the kingdom of God

It is helpful in the consideration of the nature of the Church to distinguish between the Church and the kingdom of God as propounded by Jesus Christ (see 2.1) – especially when using the *microcosm* theological construct as a norm for the Church.

The kingdom of God construct is central to the message of Jesus Christ (2.1) and its realisation generally accepted as being integral to the *missio Dei*. The *missio Dei* is understood to be God's renewing of God's creation (see Rm 8:18-25) through the progressive realisation of the realm and reign of God in the world – the kingdom of God (see Niemandt 2012:5). It is rooted in the earthly kingdom- announcing and realising ministry of Christ (Mk 1:15) and takes on fuller form when Christ passes on the baton (of this work) to his disciples (Jn 20:21-22), the Church.

Thus, the kingdom of God is always a larger (than the Church), all-encompassing construct, of which the Church is only a part. The Church, as a microcosm of the kingdom, although an expression thereof, remains less than and in the service of the kingdom of God in the world.

With regard to the Church's role in the realisation of God's kingdom in the world, Pillay (2015:1) pertinently states: "This is not about making the church [sic] attractable, but missional. It is not about bringing people into the church [sic], it is about taking the church [sic] into the world – to transform the world to reflect the glory of God and God's kingdom or sovereign rule".

In the context of the subject-matter of this chapter, the theory of *Building up the local church* should provide some of the *human solutions* to the current C/church crisis, in informing the reformation of this defective identity and thereby modifying outsiders' images of the C/church- remembering in accordance with the quote from Bentley (2.2.1) that first and foremost the building up of the C/church is primarily God's work (see 1.1 & 2.4.1).

2.3 The *building* metaphor

The *building* metaphor (in *Building up the local church*) is founded in the deep Biblical perspectives, of both the Old Israelite and the New Church Covenants, in respect of God's activity of building God's people – according to Dr G Loubser (*Building up the local church* course lecture, Some remarks on the church and the building metaphor, University of Pretoria, Centre for Contextual Ministry July 2006). God is indispensable to this building work: as the Psalmist wrote (Ps 127:1), "Unless the Lord *builds* the house, its *builders* labour in vain (italics my own)".

As stated by Loubser (*Building up the local church* lecture July 2006), throughout the Old Testament God is gathering a chosen people together and *building* them into a community of God - see Roberts (1963:190). And, despite consistent failures on the part of the people and the consequent destruction of community, the Biblical narrative repeatedly recounts God's corrective, restorative (*re-building*) work. This dynamic is epitomised in the vivid imagery of the valley of dry bones and their restoration to body life (Ezk 37:1-14).

The New Testament (incorporating the Apostolic Tradition) - according to Loubser (*Building up the local church* lecture July 2006) - promotes the perspective that God inherently undergirds and intentionally builds up the Church; and that, therefore, God requires this of the Church itself. For example, Jesus infers a *church-building* process when he says to his disciple, Simon Peter, "...you are Peter, and on this rock I will *build* (italics my own) my Church...." (Mt 16:18). And further, it is implied in Jesus' parting instruction to his disciples to "...go and make disciples of all nations...." (Mt 28:19).

Paul, writing to the Ephesian Church, frequently uses the building metaphor in respect of the Church (Roberts 1963:190). For example, he wrote: "You are ...members of God's household, *built* (italics my own) on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself the chief cornerstone. In him the whole *building* (italics my own) is joined together and rises to become a holy temple...." (Eph 2:19-21) and "...he...gave some to be apostles...so that the body of Christ may be *built up* (italics my own)...attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:11-13).

2.4 Building up the local church - fundamental theory

Building up the local church is first and foremost about the local church rediscovering its authentic identity in Christ (Nel 2005:25). It is in the remembering and re-establishing of its true identity in Christ that the local church can begin to be built up, *brick by brick*, into who it intrinsically is in Christ (Nel 2005:366-367). In the reformation process it moves from its empirical to its defined, normative self (Figure 5) (Nel 365, and see 2.1), "...the church in the likeness of God" (Niemandt 2012:3).



Figure 5: Building up the local church shift towards the defined church

As such, it is about the reformation of the local church; the C/church growing into full health, into its true and full potential in Christ (Nel 2005:363-365). It is then far more comprehensive than the term *Church Growth* as developed by McGavran (1970) (see van der Merwe 2014:2)- it is what Gibbs & Coffey (2001:172, 213) are speaking of when they write: “It demands a transforming experience of God, and a deeper engagement with Scripture, both in fashioning the internal life of the church [sic] and in defining its mission in the world”; and, “The issue is not simply one of ecclesiastical re-engineering. Rather we are talking about a radically different way of being the church [sic]”.

It is the contention of this research that the marginalisation of outsiders by the Church is deeply connected to the Church’s identity issue (see Ch. 3).

Therefore, it may be deduced that the subjects of Church up-building and marginalisation are closely interrelated. The gulf between the empirical and *theoretical* (defined) Church is central to both. They mutually require on-going attention in moving from the empirical to the normative (defined) Church.

2.4.1 Underlying concepts

Certain underlying concepts of this subject (see Nel 2005:363-376) connect deeply with local church identity-rooted self-marginalisation, including:

2.4.1.1 A concept of identity finding

The import of this concept, discussed above, is expressed in Nel’s (2005) title, “*Who are we?*” and also Peterson’s (2013), “*Who is the Church? An ecclesiology for the twenty-first century*”. Van der Merwe (2014:3), contends that “Die hoofstroomkerke se krisis is ten diepste ’n *identiteitskrisis* (italics my own)”. Essential to the local church in its *becoming*, is knowledge of its true self, its essential nature – “The self-understanding of the church [sic] is essential for its proper response to its vocation” (World Council of Churches 2005:3). This truth is well expressed in Mgojo & Irvine (2001:26), telling the story of a Lutheran Pastor who when asked by a group of church leaders as they faced the advance of Nazism in the 1930’s, ““What are we to do?”” replied, ““*First*

we must know who we are and then we will know what to do (italics my own)''.

The principles of this concept of identity-finding are found concurrently in the fields of psychology and behavioural sciences. It is commonly known from these disciplines that human personality and behavioural problems are, very often, directly related to *identity crises*. Behavioural and psychological therapies (i.e. *up-building*) often focus on identity discovery, congruency and consolidation, resulting in wholeness.

Every congregation has an identity (Gibbs & Coffey 2001:172; see Hendriks 2004:105) and it is essential for this concept to be dealt with in churches addressing self-marginalisation. In a sense, as stated by Prof Nel at his *Building up of the local church* lecture in July 2006 at the University of Pretoria, the local church becomes *identity-driven*. This is substantiated by De Gruchy (2014:15) who states that, "...the quest for identity is inseparable from our [the Church's] reason for existence....". De Gruchy (15) goes on to define this search for identity as "...the search for self-understanding". Conradie (2014:13) highlights the importance of the identity concept when he writes: "This quest for identity is radicalised in the light of...a 'branded Christianity', where churches compete with each other....".

De Gruchy (2014:24) tempers this focus on being identity-driven by, with reference to Clements (2013:198), warning of the dangers of churches being obsessed with their identity, and suggesting that such a quest should always be an ecumenical endeavour.

2.4.1.2 A concept of reformation

In the spirit of *the* Reformation, church up-building is about renewal, the reforming and the revitalising of the C/church (Niemandt 2010a:1-7); cf. Beyers 2015:8 and van der Merwe 2014:10). De Gruchy (2014:26) asserts that "...the identity of the church [sic] is about its continual formation or renewal....". Pre-Reformation disillusionment had been

mounting owing to the observed ever-widening chasm between the *defined* Church of the New Testament and that of the day. This dichotomy is now often expressed in the concepts of *being* and *becoming*. The *being* of the Church is its Christ-defined self; that is, who the Church essentially is, and hopefully who it is *becoming*. In other words, the identity of the Church is God-given, God-*defined*.

This is synonymous with Paul's understanding of the Church as the "already and not yet" eschatological community of God (Bosch 1991:154, 169; cf. Roberts 1963:191 & World Council of Churches 2005:10).

This creative tension between *being and becoming* (Nel 2005:22, 367) is not only helpful in pointing the Church towards full maturity in Christ, but also in explaining and understanding the imperfection of the Church. In this sense, as will be seen in the unfolding of this research, such tension is at the epicentre of the Church's self-marginalisation. It will be argued that reformation, renewal and revitalisation are necessary for the C/church to transform itself into an attracting rather than repelling entity. In Moynagh's (2001:16) view, "Nothing less than a *makeover* (italics my own) will equip the church [sic] to reach the changing world that is emerging so rapidly before our eyes."

2.4.1.3 A concept of long-term ministry

Building up work, synonymous (as argued in this study) with the work of self-marginalisation *reversal*, is not an overnight, quick-fix affair (Kallestad 2001:166). It is long-term, as witnessed by two thousand years of Church history; the life-long process of gradual transformation into the defined Church of Christ (Nel 2005:372-375), and as claimed by Loubser (*Building up the local church* lecture July 2006) may well continue until such time of Christ's ultimate return (*parousia*) (see Rm 8:18-25). This is expressed in Barthian terms in Bentley's (2010:153-154) quote from Yocum (2004:118): "...the eschatological dimension of the church's [sic] existence [its ideal identity] might...be interpreted as a telos which is never fully reached in this age, but may be glimpsed in a glass, darkly".

Identifying and adequately responding to its self-marginalising features will be a long-term, endless activity of the local church.

2.4.1.4 A concept of integrating and co-coordinating ministries

This refers to the *systemic* nature of *Building up the local church* (Nel 2005:369). It is not simply the addition of further ministries to those already existing. Rather, it is the systemic operation of all ministries in a synergistic manner, through which growth occurs exponentially (see Nel 369-372). It is the co-ordinating and integrating of all ministries within, and in the furtherance of, eight functions of the local church (Nel 371), namely: preaching, worship, teaching (*didache*), deeds of mercy- service (*diakonia*), witness (*marturia*), leadership, management and administration (cybernetics), fellowship (*koinonia*) and pastoral care (Nel 111).

This efficient operation of the local church would be attractive to outsiders. As will be indicated later in this work, inefficiency and out-dated methods are often off-putting to outsiders (see Ch.'s 3 & 4).

2.4.1.5 A concept of dependence upon God

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter (2.1), this concept reminds us that building up (the *make-over* of) the local church is first and foremost the work of the Spirit of God (Nel 2005:375-376; see Dulles 2002:114, van der Merwe 2014:7, Beyers 2015:7). The World Council of Churches (2005:4) makes the statement that the Church "...is the creature of God's Word and of the Holy Spirit". Niemandt (2012:2, 3) conclusively claims that, "The church [sic] is the result of God's action through his Spirit and is thus dependent on the Spirit for its very existence" (see also van der Merwe 7, 13). Roberts (1963:191) wrote that, "...the action of God...is the dominant perspective of the upbuilding of the church.... Everything else that is said about [it]...should be viewed from this perspective" (see 2.4.2.1). Peterson (2013:8), as quoted by van der Merwe (8), uses the phrase "*Spirit-breathed church*".

The activity and goals of building up the local church are rooted and validated in the pneumatological dimensions of the Church's Pentecostal birth and life (World Council of Churches 2005:23,24), and the on-going work of God's Spirit in "making everything new" (Rv 21:5) (Nel 1994:130-148; cf. Roberts 1963:192; see Niemandt 2010b:400, 407, 408, and Pillay 2015:4). In this regard, van der Merwe (2014:13) speaks of a "missional spirituality".

2.4.2 Foundational theological perspectives

Moreover, several foundational theological perspectives of "Gemeinde-aufbau" (see Nel 2005: 24-110) underpin church identity-formation:

2.4.2.1 Communication of the Gospel

Firet (Heitink 1999:130) states that the faith community's existence is rooted in the task of communicating the Gospel to the world, in the service of Christ (see Dulles 2002:200; World Council of Churches 2005). This is underwritten by the mission of Jesus Christ to simultaneously communicate and realise the good news (Gospel) that the kingdom of God had arrived in the world (Mk 1: 15). The local church participates with God in this endeavour, to the extent, as stated by van der Merwe (2014:6), that, "Die kerk [sic] se werk in die wêreld kan niks anders wees nie as God se beweging na die wêreld toe – *perichorese*".

Van der Merwe (2014:6), referring to Niemandt (2013:26), describes *perichoresis* as a dance that is so designed that everything dances in step with the Trinitarian God. In fact, Niemandt (3), referring to Volf (1998:129), suggests that, "We must conceive an ecclesiology in the light of the social perichoretic character of God the Trinity – the church in the likeness of God" (2.4.1.1). In the execution of its task, the C/church asks (van Niekerk 2014:4, quoting from Algemene Sinode 2013:9–11), "What is God doing?' and then...go[es] and join[s] in with what God is doing" (see Pillay 2015:3 and van der Merwe 1). Peterson (2013:7), as quoted by van der Merwe (7), introduces the concept of the *economic Trinity* (versus immanent Trinity) with regard to what God is busy doing in the (redeeming of the) world. The *success*

(effectiveness) of a local church should then be measured by its *economy*, the extent to which it communicates - brings and realises - the kingdom Gospel of Christ in the world through word and deed (Nel 2005:26; see Beyers 2015:7), as it dances in step with God.

This is therefore the goal of *building up* work. It is my contention that, consciously or otherwise, local church generic Gospel-communicating actions (words and deeds) serve to form the identity that members and outsiders' have of the church, and are, therefore, at the crux of the self-marginalisation of churches.

2.4.2.2 In the service of God and people

The Old Testament overwhelmingly indicates that the people of God generally did not comprehend that they were chosen for the purpose of receiving God's love and being channels of that love to outsiders (of their nation), in order that both they and Gentiles would be drawn into a relationship with God (Bosch 1991:19, 20; see Grant 1979:57). It was the isolated voice, such as that of the prophet Isaiah that understood the nature of their "called-ness" by God: "I will keep you and will make you...a light for the Gentiles...." (Is 42:6, 7).

The Church, likewise, has often ignored the fact that Christ calls it to a life of service beyond itself (see Nel 2005:38-95; World Council of Churches 2005: 21, 29; Beyers 2015:9). Jesus said, "...whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant....For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many" (Mk 10:43-45). This is Dulles' (2002:81) servant model of the Church. It is, "...the Jesus thing to do" (Barna & Kinnaman 2014:186).

It is contended that often in this forgetting and neglecting of its Gospel-communicating life, the Church has achieved the opposite outcome - ostracising outsiders. This perspective of serving - especially those outside of the Church and God - is central to the Church's building up

and the simultaneous reversal of outsider self-marginalisation. Beyers (2015:8), making reference to Huber (1999:320), “...sees the future of the church [sic] as establishing a culture of help in society”. As claimed by Barna & Kinnaman (2014:54): “One way to change people’s minds about your church is to do things in and for your community that are valuable, visible, and memorable”.

2.4.2.3 *Didache* (Teaching)

For the Gospel to be effectively communicated in the world, and for the Church to grow, it is vital that Christians be appropriately and adequately nurtured and equipped (Eph 4:12; Dulles 2002:208-210). This is the subject matter of *didache* (Nel 2005:96-110). This perspective - or rather the lack of it - underlies much of the Church’s self-marginalising practice (see 3.2.2, especially 3.2.2.10). For example:

Volgens Watson...[som]...dissipelskap...Christus se hele plan vir die wêreld op. *‘Yet for all its brilliant simplicity, it is the one approach that most western churches have neglected’* (Watson 1983:18). In die plek van dissipelskap het kerke verslae, kommissies, konferensie, seminare, veldtogte, liturgiese hervormings en so meer, terwyl daar min aandag gegee word aan die betekenis van dissipelskap, iets waarsonder die kerk [sic] eintlik nie kerk kan wees nie.

Van der Merwe 2014:10

Discipleship is central- at the very core of—, as well as critical, to the life and building up of the C/church. It is the overriding and uniting element in the integration and co-ordination of the ministries of the C/church in its up-building (2.4.1.4). Discipleship is an ongoing apprenticeship in the Christian school of learning and becoming as Christ-followers, in which we simultaneously nurture others (Prof Nel, *Building up the local church* lecture, University of Pretoria, Centre for Contextual Ministry, 8 May 2007).

Building up the local church is succinctly summarised, once again highlighting the relevance of this subject to my research:

Building up the local church is the ministry whereby a local church is trained and led to:

- **Understand** its own nature (identity) and reason for existence (purpose) (**Hermeneutical dimension**)
- **Evaluate**, as a body of believers, its own functions, formulate objectives accordingly and reach these objectives in a planned manner (**Agogical-Teleological dimension**)
- **Develop**, as required and on a continuous basis, structures for congregational life that will serve the work of the Triune God and His Salvific acts in His church and in the world to the glory of HIS NAME. (**Morphological dimension**)

(Nel 2005:17)

2.5 Building up the local church: identity-reformation

The work of *Building up the local church*, reforming and transforming its identity into Christ-likeness is a process (Nel 2005:134; cf. Niemandt 2010b:408-411) (2.4.1.3). Although, as history indicates, *local churches* do not have an indefinite life-span, this principle of being *a work-in-progress* nevertheless applies. Correcting local churches/*the Church's* self-marginalising features, is therefore an on-going, life-long process.

Nel (2005:147), referring to Seifert & Clinebell (1969: 83 et seq.), distinguishes five variable phases in this on-going process which he calls "congregational strategic planning". These phases are not necessarily held in watertight compartments and may overlap at times (Nel 136, 176). Furthermore, the process does not necessarily run strictly

sequentially from phase one onwards to phase five; very often there will be some movement backwards and forwards between the various phases (Nel 144-147). It is, however, critical that *all five phases* be covered in the up-building process.

2.5.1 Motivation and unfreezing

In order for a local church to embark upon a process of identity-reformation, a reasonable level of motivation for it has to be generated (see 5.3). When this has not taken place, the church is not ready for the renewing changes involved, and efforts aimed at building up are consequently countered with hard resistance or, at worst, are destructive. The Church and Community Facilitation Network in South Africa (2005:21), drawing on the material of Kenneth Halstead (1998), works with the concept of “*stuckness*” which in some way elucidates this same principle, namely that local churches (especially older ones) are prone to become *set in their ways* and need to be ‘loosened up’ before a process of growth can start.

2.5.2 Congregational analysis

In any process of development, knowledge of the current status is essential before the way forward can be charted. This applies in personal and organisational growth, including the Church and the work of its up-building (Nel 2005:177, 178). The local church’s current position is determined through what is referred to as *congregational analysis*.

This phase involves the completion of (i) a congregational profile (what the church looks like), (ii) a diagnosis of the church’s local community (a situational and societal analysis) which assists in reflecting the church’s realistic potential for growth as well as mission priorities, and (iii) a congregational diagnosis which reflects the strengths and weaknesses of the local church (Nel 2005:178-184; see Callahan 1983: xxix-xxxi and Niemandt 2010(a)).

Hendriks (2004:44), on the other hand, identifies four perspectives to the analysis of a specific congregation and the community in which it serves: (i) a contextual analysis of the ecology of the congregation; (ii) an identity analysis of its culture; (iii) a process analysis studying relationships and communication; and (iv) a resource analysis compiling a profile of the assets of the church. He also considers type, size and systems in church analysis.

Identity-forming of the local church by outsiders is appropriately incorporated through the inclusion of outsider perspectives in this congregational analysis. Outsiders, through a broad-spectrum professionally developed survey, are asked how they perceive the local church (Nel 2005:200). In other words, they *give a face*, an *identity*, to the church.

This introduces the *face* (identity) concept of the C/church. Paul, writing to the Corinthian church, uses the “body of Christ” metaphor for the Church (1 Cor 12: 27). In terms of this, in my very early days as a clergyperson, I became convinced that the local church, like any living organism, has a corporate, public *face*, by which its character, its attractiveness, its relevance (or irrelevance), its strengths and weaknesses, and so on, become- and are- known in its local community. Portmann and Plüss (2011:183) helpfully refer to this concept as “public demeanour”. They further comment (Portmann & Plüss 185): “...beauty or ugliness plays a remarkably important role in evaluating religions”. As generally said, “every face tells a story”.

2.5.2.1 Identity (face) formation

In one sense, the identity or face of a church is developed continuously from its inception -- and even before (cf. 2.2.1). This happens through historically accumulated Church tradition – De Gruchy (2014:15) refers to “accumulated identities”. Thus the identity of the C/church at a point in time is also to some extent an “inherited identity” (De Gruchy 16). This amounts to the accumulated effect of all the Church’s public, *face-forming*, actions; in the words of Firet (1987:260) in his paradigm of Practical Theology (Heitink 1999:120,130), “... communicative action[s] in the service of the

gospel”’. An example is the contentious housing a few years ago of Zimbabwean refugees at the Johannesburg Central Methodist Church; displaying Gospel hospitality in offering shelter and food to those who had none, these caring Gospel-communicating actions had a major impact on the identity (face) of this church - such that a SMS message, stating that the Methodist Church was the only church in our country that cared, was at the time sent by a member of the public to SABC TV and screened during a morning talk-show as a bottom-of-screen caption.

These face-forming actions are diverse, corporate and individual. *Corporate actions* include Sunday Services and preaching events, funeral services, weddings, Sunday-School events, building designs and condition (Portmann and Plüss 2011:185), campus maintenance and so on, significantly affecting how the church is seen by others – whether efficient or slovenly, inviting or uninviting, relevant or irrelevant. Local church identity is also formed by the actions of the greater Church, at regional, denominational and universal level. Broad Church policy and practice affect local church faces- for example, in South Africa the identity of the white Church generally was considerably damaged due to its silence on and support of apartheid (cf. Bosch 1991:407-408).

Individual face-forming actions embody those of every person known to belong to (and thus represent) a local church. The impact of these actions is incorporated into the identity (face) of the church. Thus each member of a church, in his or her personal capacity, contributes to its appearance. A case in point is that of a South African local church that had a number of years ago organised a hunting trip as a fund-raiser (*Pretoria News*, n.d.). The local SPCA (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) had an issue about the church’s ethics in this regard. The church’s spokesperson reportedly told the SPCA to “go to hell”- a significant identity-forming action on the part of just one member of that local church.

The *inaction* of the local church, corporately and individually, is also a face-forming *action*; for example, the frequent inaction with regard to the poor and the marginalised has often drawn criticism, scarring the Church's identity.

2.5.2.2 Perceived identity (face)

The face of the C/church *seen* by outsiders is not necessarily its actual face. Human observation is always, by definition, subjective and therefore what is seen is always a perceived view. This needs to be borne in mind in any study of the impact of a church's identity upon its relationship with outsiders; for example, what may be an apparent marginalising feature of a church might simply be people's perception and not reality. A perception is, as I understand, a viewpoint on a specific reality that influences a person's attitude to and relationship with that reality; this viewpoint may be based on facts or hearsay, may be justified or not. Perceptions are very often outdated in that events that formed them have since changed.

Perception adds complexity to the nature of the relationship between churches and outsiders. Perception is a powerful reality. As stated by Gibbs (1993:246): "With some people, the major obstacle preventing...their coming to personal faith...*is principally attitudinal* [outlook, perception] (italics my own)". During the struggle years of apartheid, for example, it was incorrectly perceived that portion of the tithes of members of our denomination was ultimately ending up in the hands of terrorist organisations and being used to fund weapons in the border war against South Africa. This false perception did untold damage to the face of our church as well as to the faithfulness and generous giving of our members, our church's growth, and these people's faith.

Hunter (1996:166) relevantly writes that "...people are more likely to find faith through involvement inside the church than outside it...". This underscores the importance of the local church being appealing, and not unnecessarily off-putting, so that more people will form positive perceptions (a positive identity) of the church, be open to its message of fulfilling its mission in the community, and remain in/be drawn into the church. Thus the public identity of the local church has a significant impact upon its success.

The public's perception of the face of the local church is an integral part of its overall identity, and thus critically pertinent to congregational analysis and any up-building work undertaken. The *face* of the church serves - in the words of Hunsberger (1998:279), and as quoted by De Claisse-Walford (2008:50) - as "...the hermeneutic of the gospel- the interpretive lens through which people will see and read [the]...gospel....".

2.5.3 Strategic planning

Building up of the local church with the outcome of identity-transformation requires a strategic, long-term plan (Callahan 1983: xi) (see 5.2.4.1). It is not the result of sporadic, un-cohesive, un-sustained activity. According to Callahan (1983: xxii, 117), developing a long-term strategic plan begins with the diagnostic work of congregational analysis (2.5.2). This is followed by the prayerful and intentional discovery of its preferred identity in Christ (vision), the manner in which it will become that (mission) within the realities of its context, and consequently its primary direction (goals and objectives) for the short to medium term (Callahan 1987: xxv; see Pillay 2015:5). Schoeman (2014:7) attests that churches intentionally taking new strategic direction are generally reflecting increased well-being.

Having completed its analysis and planning phases, the local church then takes action (Nel 2005: 233). It now aims to become the *living gospel* in society whereby, through its actions, in the thinking of Newbigin (De Claisse-Walford 2008:7), "...a semblance, a preview, of the kingdom of God...." is seen.

2.5.4 Purposeful action

In this fourth, critical action phase of implementation, responsible parties work in co-operation with God's Holy Spirit towards the realisation of the vision (Callahan 1987:67) (5.2.4). Callahan (1) importantly states: "The purpose of planning is action, not planning". Local churches may be inclined to plan well, but to fail to successfully implement the plan.

2.5.5 Evaluation, stabilisation and repetition

Fifthly, as is the case in any enterprise, review and evaluation are necessary in the identity-transforming process (Callahan 1987: 52, 53; see Nel 2005:237-241), so that progress can be assessed, and improvements and fine-tuning done (Callahan 52, 53; see Nel 238) – such that the chances of success and stability are increased. Evaluation is followed by stabilisation, when achieved results are cemented in (Nel 240). Next follows repetition of the five-phase process, ensuring the church retains rhythm in its on-going building up (Nel 241).

2.6 Conclusion

An underlying assumption of this mini-dissertation is that prescriptive, marginalising perceptions of the C/church may be changed by local church efforts to become its authentic *defined* self, the Church of scripture and tradition. *Building up the local church* provides the theoretical foundation for *what ought to be happening* – Osmer's (2008:4) normative task - in the local church. Through dedicated up-building work, as detailed in this chapter, I believe that the *face* of the local church can be transformed further and further into the image of Christ, its true *identity*.

In the process, through the communicative Gospel-actions of the church, positive changes will begin to be made in perceptions of the church, negative stereotypes erased (and replaced with positive ones), and barriers broken down so that the church becomes positioned for growth in fulfilling its God-given mission in the world. In time, a snow-balling effect may well result as newly activated members and outsiders assist in furthering the reformation of the local church, and the whole process repeats itself in the Church's ongoing transformation and ultimate consummation. Fittingly concluded by van der Merwe (2014:10): "Dit gaan dus nie oor 'n stel nuwe dinge om te doen nie. Die punt waaroor dit gaan, is eenvoudig: Jy is die kerk [sic], so wees kerk".

CHAPTER 3: MARGINALISATION OF THE CHURCH

3.1 Introduction

As stated in Chapter 1 (see 1.2.7), in the last half-century the Church has been grossly marginalised in the Developed World context. So much so that, for example, Küng (2001:4, 5) writes in respect of the Catholic Church:

“...numerically the strongest and probably also the most powerful representative of Christianity....[At] the beginning of the third Christian millennium the more or less benevolent indifference widely shown to the church around fifty years ago has turned into hatred, indeed public hostility”. And, on 30 March 2009, a South African television news channel broadcast the following bottom-of-the-screen caption: “100 000 Britons de-baptise using Internet download, denying their faith”.

The Church has seen itself move from the centre of society to the fringes (van der Merwe 2001:69). Gibbs & Coffey (2001:19) quote Regele & Schulz (1995: 182): “...The combined impact...has displaced the historic role the church [sic] has traditionally played. As a result, we are seeing the *marginalisation* (italics my own) of the institutional church [sic]”. Definite boundaries now exist between Church and community (Sider, Olson & Unruh 2002:151). No longer does Christianity dominate in Westernised Societies (the Developed World) within which historically most people belonged to the Church (Jenkins 2007:1, 2).

There is, on the other hand, a New Christendom emerging in the Southern Hemisphere, however this is concentrated mostly in an Undeveloped World context (Jenkins 2007:4, 107, 108), not within the ambit of this research (see 1.1).

Our South African context comprises a hybrid of both Developed and Undeveloped Worlds. In its Developed World setting, South Africa is generally following the Developed World as a whole (see 1.1), albeit at a slower pace. This has predominantly been the experience of mainline traditional churches (van der Merwe 2014:2) (see 1.2.7).

The MCSA (of which Brooklyn Methodist Church is a part) has itself been significantly marginalised -see Illustration 1; according to the graph, membership of the MCSA declined by a third, approximately 33%, over the fifty year period up to the end of the twentieth century. This is congruent with Developed World trends in Methodism (Brierley 2000:38).

This membership decline has impacted Brooklyn Methodist Church. Indicators include a shrunk Sunday School from approximately six hundred children in the 1970's and early 1980's (as per word of mouth) to about one hundred children currently, as well as the fact of a worship centre built over fifty years ago still not filled to capacity and decreased attendance statistics; notwithstanding a church plant in the developing eastern suburbs in this time-period. Other traditional mainline churches in the surrounds of Brooklyn Methodist Church show similar trends of decline.

Analysis of these trends is very complex, being affected by various and diverse inter-acting factors (see 1.2.7). Nonetheless, societal Church-averse creep, marginalising the Church and slowly transitioning the surrounds towards a "Churchless" society (Jamieson 2002) is prevalent. This is, for example, evident in Pretoria/Tshwane on Sunday mornings at busy shopping malls packed with shoppers who may otherwise - and certainly years ago would - have attended Church services.

The issue of Church marginalisation invites and necessitates the essential Osmer-methodology (2008:4) *interpretive task* (1.4.1) question, "Why has the Church been marginalised in this way?" (cf. Jamieson 2002:8). Or, in other words, "Why is the Church *unattractive*?" This chapter will interpretively (Osmer 4, 79-128) seek to answer these questions (see Figure 6) under two headings; exploring, firstly, factors *external* to the Church (societal factors) and, secondly - and most importantly in terms of this research -, factors of *self-marginalisation* rooted in the Church itself (Jamieson 11). Beyers (2015:1-9) discusses a similar - and yet quite different - construct of the *self-secularisation* of the Church as developed by Huber (1999) "...from a Western European context and in particular on behalf of the Protestant community in Germany" (Beyers 3).

Answers to these questions are imperative to stemming the outgoing tide (Brierley 2000), perhaps even reversing it. In this mini-dissertation I aim to discover answers that can be pragmatically interpreted and converted into praxis (Osmer 2008:4, 175-218) (Ch. 5).

3.2 Marginalising factors

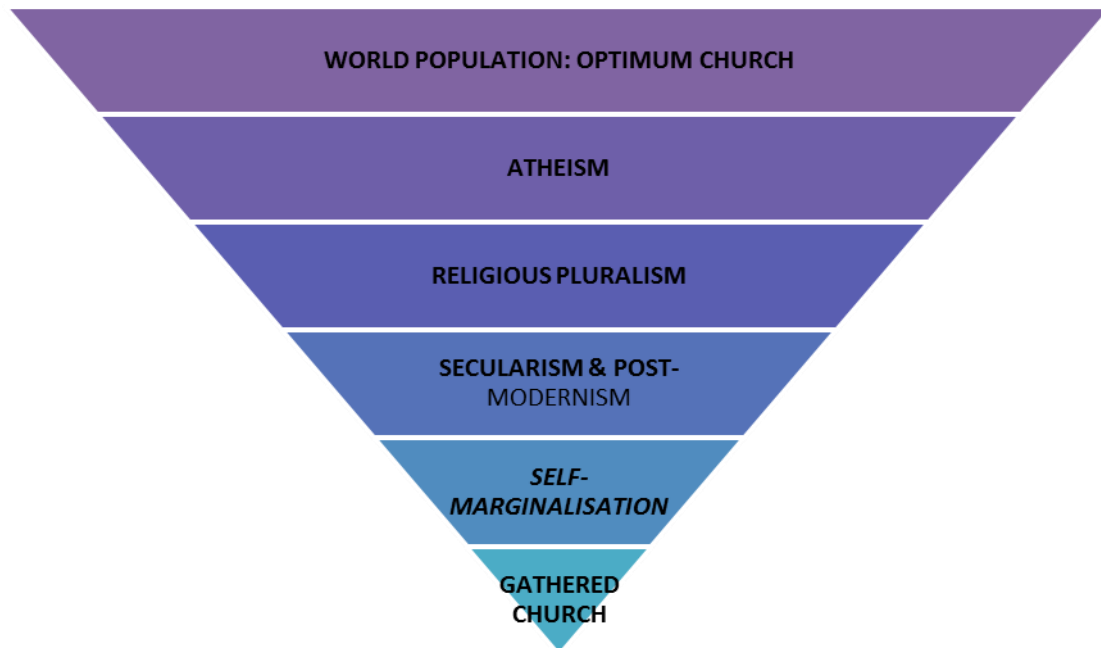


Figure 6: Graphic of progressive Church-marginalising factors

The graph in Figure 6 illustrates the more significant Church-marginalising factors identified and focussed upon in this mini-dissertation.

3.2.1 External marginalising Factors

“One of the major contributors to church [sic] decline is the effect of our changing world”, state Kallmier & Peck (2009:13). Two identified major “changing world”, *external* (that is, *non-self-marginalising*) causes of Church marginalisation that much has been written about, and which relate to human socialisation patterns and development, are secularisation (Beyers 2015:1) and the cultural shifts of the last century or so of modernism and, more recently, post-modernism. Due to their significant impact on Church-marginalisation, they

will be briefly covered here. Religious pluralism (Gibbs 1993:193) and growing atheism (and agnosticism) (1.2.7), though also significant, are not explored in this research which focusses upon ex-church outsiders (1.2.6), albeit that a nominal number of ex-churched may have drifted into these categories.

3.2.1.1 Secularisation

The fourteenth to sixteenth century Renaissance in Europe began the shift away from the medieval period's focus on God and the world to come (Gibbs 1993:161). The eighteenth century Enlightenment in Europe manifested a new era of human intelligence and ability, which was the precursor to industrialisation, urbanisation and capitalism (Gibbs 162). Major technological developments enabled Developed World human beings to become mostly self-sufficient, able to themselves satisfy most of their "Maslowian" needs (Gibbs 159). This led to large-scale materialism and a status quo in which human beings (apparently) no longer need God (to meet their needs). A loss of God-consciousness followed, in a seductive intellectual and religiously pluralistic climate (Gibbs 164). Secularisation had dawned.

De Gruchy (2006:81) quotes Wilson (1996:747) in defining secularisation: "*Secularization [sic] is the process of social change in which religion loses its social significance*".

Secularisation has created the tendency of people to compartmentalise their lives, and in so doing religion- in this case Christianity- is confined to one segment of a person's life, and not lived holistically (Gibbs 1993:165). People have become individualised and privatised (Gibbs & Bolger 2006:92), as has their faith and Church experience (Guder 2000:117). Faith is separated from the day to day affairs of life, making irrelevant and marginalising the Church (Gibbs 159; see Gibbs & Bolger 87). On a larger scale, the separation of state and Church, causing the "disestablishment" of the Church, has according to Guder (7) made the Church into "...a private assembly in some sense...."

Secularisation has largely removed social pressure to belong to the Church as part of one's social identity (Gibbs 1993:20). It has often occurred concurrently

with urbanisation and increasing levels of wealth- which has again made the Church less important and less necessary for social identity, and social and business networks (identified by religious sociologists as motivators for Church belonging) (Gibbs 20).

Secularisation has become “...so all pervasive that...[It] has not only *marginalised* (italics my own) the Church from society, but has itself permeated the belief system and institutional life of the Church” (Gibbs 1993:159). As startlingly stated by Gibbs & Bolger (2006:22), “The church [sic] is sending spiritually minded people to strive after other religions *because it has become secularised* (italics my own)”. Erasmus (2007: 92), in referring to Goodhew (2000:344-369), asserts that secularisation’s impact has equally left its mark on the Church in South Africa.

The damaging impact of secularisation is well summed up in this quote from Newbigin (1986:20) in Gibbs (1993:176): “...The result is not...a secular society. It is a pagan society, and its paganism, having been born out of the rejection of Christianity, is far more resistant to the Gospel than the pre-Christian paganism with which cross-cultural missions have been familiar. Here, surely, is *the most challenging missionary frontier of our time* (italics my own)”.

3.2.1.2 Cultural shifts: modernism and post-modernism

Gibbs (1993:12, 23, 24) states that, “...the cultural milieu in which it [the Church] finds itself...” will either promote or marginalise the Church. The cultural period of modernism - closely associated with secularisation - was (and is) the pinnacle of the enlightenment. It is characterised by dominance of confidence in human ability and rationale, dismissing the transcendent and revelation (the mystery of the Gospel), and control, and also differentiation between private and public spheres of life (Gibbs & Coffey 2001:25, 27). Compartmentalising modernism (Gibbs & Coffey 27) has marginalised the Church, pushing it to the fringes of society (Gibbs & Bolger 2006:87); “In reaction to the Western [Developed World] church’s [sic] identification with the rationalism of modernity, a significant number of believers are...*abandoning the Christian faith entirely* (italics my own)” (Gibbs & Bolger 22).

Developed countries have more recently- since the 1950s- shifted sociologically from modernism to post-modernism (Dunahoo 2005:25; see Gibbs & Coffey 2001:28). Post-modernism arose in response to the void ensuing from the overemphasis on science, reason and logic (Dunahoo 138); it is the outcome of the rejection of modernism and its shortcomings (Dunahoo 25). Post-modernism is characterised by open-endedness, uncertainty and a subjective concept of truth which is often meaningless because of the difficulty of defining it (Gibbs & Bolger 2006:68). Truth becomes "...that which works in good pragmatic fashion....", and is meaningfully experienced by the individual – "...'Beauty is in the eye of the beholder'..." (Dunahoo 138, 139)

In post-modernism, no all-encompassing, over-arching truths or meta-narratives are recognised (see Dunahoo 2005:143-146) - in fact, they are rejected (Jamieson 2002:161). Post-modernism rather recognises that often a number of narratives pertain to any situation (Gibbs & Bolger 2006:68).

Peter Brierley (2000:17) lists the following five key elements of post-modernity which are helpful in understanding this period from a Christian perspective, and its impact on Church-marginalisation: spirituality without Christianity, environment without a Creator, words without meaning, individuality without belonging, the present without a future.

Gibbs & Coffey (2001:31) elaborate: "As our culture lurches from modernity to postmodernity [sic], the church [sic] finds itself *pushed out to the wings* (italics my own) of the social stage". This marginalisation also occurs as a result of post-modernity's fragmentation of society "...which means that there is no longer either a centre or a circumference" (Gibbs & Coffey 218), and the church [sic] exists (Gibbs & Coffey 216) "...as just one segment in that fragmented world...." Jamieson (2002:122), drawing upon Fowler's (1995:294) stages of faith model, explains that the cultural phenomenon of post-modernism acts like a catalyst, shifting people onto later stages of faith-development. These later stages are characterised by movement away from faith establishments.

Significantly, “If the church [sic] does not embody its message and life within post-modern culture, it will become increasingly *marginalised* (italics my own)....” (Gibbs & Bolger 2006:8). Jamieson (2002:9) writes that Tomlinson (1995) has provided “...an understanding of the increasing mismatch between popular forms of church and a postmodern [sic] social context”. He lists post-modernism as key in Church-marginalisation by a significant, and increasing, sector of Churched people (Jamieson 16). Fox (2006:111) states, “The moment exists for mainline churches to wake up and respond to the post-modern revolution and the renaissance it implies”. It must engage the cultural changes that have led to its marginalisation (Gibbs & Bolger 18).

Most importantly, post-modernity’s “...emphasis upon aesthetics more than ethics challenges [the Church]...to provide space for the aesthetical and the experiential”, in “...a new appreciation of creativity in mission” (Niemandt 2012:7, referring to Kim & Anderson 2011:302). Lausanne III (The Lausanne Movement 2011:23) endorses this point of view: “We possess the gift of creativity because we bear the image of God. Art in its many forms is an integral part of what we do as humans and can reflect something of the beauty and truth of God” (Niemandt 7) (see 5.2.4.2).

In this time of change, herein defined as a shift from modernism to post-modernism, Müller (2011:2, 3), for example, argues for a “postfoundationalist” [sic] approach in order to describe this transition in society, “...and to understand and describe a holistic pastoral ministry by using the grammar of transversal rationality” (Müller 2).

Urbanisation is another sociological factor impacting Church marginalisation (Gibbs 1993:123), though not expounded upon here. In addition, commenting upon church-decline amongst South African Afrikaans churches, Dreyer (2003:1052), as quoted by Schoeman (2014:4), identifies individual wealth and power as significant causes.

3.2.2 Internal marginalising factors: self-marginalising Church identity

This mini-dissertation, however, specifically focusses on *self-marginalising* features of the Church - see Figure 6 - within the context of a rapidly diminishing Developed World Church and as presented by research on Brooklyn Methodist Church. My hypothesis (1.3), *Perceptions of the Church in the minds of outsiders...are stumbling blocks and barriers to Church belonging...*, alleges that the Church's identity (Nel 2005:25) is a key cause of marginalisation (see van der Merwe 2014:3).

Gibbs (1993:12) - see also Beyers (2015:1) - asks, "To what extent is the problem of church [sic] decline *due to factors within the church [sic] itself* (italics my own)....?" He also states that, "The Church must be prepared to recognise that it may be as much a part of the problem as the solution" (Gibbs 70). Kok and others (eds.) (2014:13) notably temper this reality, highlighting that persecution, social pressure, exclusion, ridicule, et cetera, against the Church would impact the way the Church embodied sensitivity towards, and thus related to, outsiders. According to Cilliers (2001:168), "Dis 'n eerste rede waarom mense wegraak uit die kerk [sic]: *omdat die kerk [sic] nie is wat dit behoort te wees nie*". This is endorsed by Barna and Kinnaman's research (2014: 86): "...believers have chosen to disassociate from a church [sic] they believe is *too different from the family of faith they see in the Bible* (italics my own)".

Clearly expressing *the Church's own responsibility* for its wellbeing, Sider et al (2002:185) state, "When Christians *love one another* and *meet one another's needs*, when they *experience growth and unity* in Christ, and when their lives *display the wonders of the Spirit*, then congregations become *powerfully attractive* and transformed communities (italics my own)".

My general reading, research and personal experience have identified the following self-marginalising identity (face) factors in the historical tradition of the Church.

3.2.2.1 Institutionalism

As the Church expanded geographically, and in size, some form of organisation became necessary for expediency's sake (Guder 2000:187; see Van Gelder 2000:157). However, this organisation often has taken over and throttled the life of the Church (Guder 188-198). Guder (182), drawing reference to Bosch (1991: 50-52), writes that a major failure of the Church has been "...the transition of the early Christian movement into *an institution* (italics my own)" - "They were a movement not an *institution*" (Gibbs & Coffey 2001:212). As further written by Guder (187), "...it is essential to New Testament mission that the Christian community, as it necessarily institutionalises, do [sic] so in an incarnational fashion, that is, in a way which continues to demonstrate, invite, and initiate people into the knowledge and service of Christ".

Captive, sometimes suffocating, institutionalism, perhaps the severest self-marginalising feature of the Church, has invariably dislocated the Church from its true self, and also often made the Church off-putting (Gibbs & Coffey 2001:72, 172; see Guder 2000:182) - "By institutionalism we mean a system in which the institutional element is treated as primary" (Dulles 2002:27). In Dulles' opinion (27), "...institutionalism is a *deformation* (italics my own) of the true nature of the Church...a real danger to the institutional Church". Portmann and Plüss (2011:193) describe institutionalism as a substantial marginaliser of outsiders. Erasmus & Kotzé (2007:103) express the same opinion: "Seen from the *outside* people are much more cynical about the church [sic] as a religious institution".

Jamieson (2002:165) quotes Tomlinson (1995:144-145) who asserts that far from being *the* context in which a person can connect with, feed and develop their spirituality, the Church has become known for its autocracy, bureaucracy, hierarchy, power struggles, empire building, et cetera. It has often become known for its punitive people-made rules and procedures. Authentic, organic (Viola 2008:18) Christianity has through this form of "inculturation" (Guder 2000:193) become "...an established type of organisation...." buried under layers of institutionalism (Guder 103,182). Viola (18), explaining the concept "organic church", quotes Austin-Sparks (2000:49) to whom he attributes credit

for this term: “God’s way and law of fullness is that of organic life. In the Divine order, life produces its own organism....This means that everything comes from the inside....[F]rom this law of life within. It was solely on this principle that what we have in the New Testament came into being. Organised Christianity has entirely reversed this order”. Guder (103) quotes Rasmusson (1995:234) who, in discussing the work of Ernst Troeltsch, wrote that the *institutional* Church “...accepts secular order, dominates the masses, has universal claims, and therefore uses...the state and the ruling classes to sustain and expand its domination and to stabilize and determine the social order”. Schoeman (2014: 4) draws upon Dreyer (2003:1052) to highlight the greater difficulty experienced by poorer, less enfranchised people, with an institutional Church.

This is contrary to the essentially relational and functional nature of the New Testament Church- the Ecclesia, the gathered people of God (Küng 1995:82-87), the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27), the incarnation of Christ (Guder 2000: vii). Institutionalism “...motivated reductionist tendencies (3.2.2.11) that ultimately were fateful for the church’s [sic] missionary mandate” (Guder 105). Guder (181) relates Bosch’s (1991:50-52) contention that the early Church’s focus more and more became its own “...survival as a distinct religious group”. It also became known for “...the administration of salvation” (Guder 133). Institutionalism, instead of mission, has often shaped the Church and in the process often detracted from that mission (Guder 182). Relevant to my research entity, Brooklyn Methodist Church, Light (2008:150) significantly states, “Methodism was originally a renewal *movement* (italics my own) that favoured passion over structures....” Light (150) writes, quoting Storey (2004: 24), “[T]his became more difficult as *institutionalization* [sic] (italics my own) had its fossilizing effect”.

Jamieson (2002:165) refers to Tomlinson (1995:144-145) who states that modern, and especially post-modern, people are weary of institutionalism (see Guder 2000:192 and Dulles 2002:37). Millennials – people born between 1980 and 2000 – are “...not into going to church, *even though they believe in God* (italics my own), because they don’t identify with big *institutions* (italics my own)....” (*Time Magazine* 2013:30-35). Developed World people are largely no

longer interested in working through the many layers of institutionalism in order to get to the spirituality at the heart of the Church (van der Merwe 2001:60). This barrier to Church belonging and consequent faith practice explains the many would-be members who consider the organised Church irrelevant to their spirituality and why they have often turned to New Age, self-help, forms of “spirituality” (Gibbs & Bolger 2006:21).

Off-putting institutionalism is experienced by outsiders who encounter voluminous red tape when approaching a local church for a wedding or a funeral; when local churches are more concerned and pre-occupied with their own survival than with their Christ-given mission (Gibbs 1993:231); in church premises (Gibbs 231) where Church life is often removed and hidden from the outside world, building barriers, invoking suspicion and making it very difficult for outsiders to get in.

Guder (2000:198) quotes Snyder (1975:21): “It is hard to escape the conclusion that today one of the great roadblocks to the gospel of Jesus Christ is the *institutional* (italics my own) church [sic]”. Elsewhere Guder (138) states that the Church “...must also move against the current of its culture in its relationship to the exercise of domination and power [(institutionalism)]”. Significantly, Guder (204) also postulates, “Perhaps the greatest obstacle to faithful witness on the part of Western [Developed World] Christianity is our failure to address the *institutional compromises* (italics my own) that we have made over the centuries”. Dulles (2002:37) concurs when he writes, “...it is exceptionally difficult to *attract people to a religion* (italics my own) that represents itself as primarily institutional”. Slaughter (2008:57) states conclusively, “The world doesn’t need religious organizations...”

3.2.2.2 Theology

The Age of Reason and the Enlightenment also introduced a new age of thinking into the world, one which created untold challenges for the Church (Guder 2000:116). Previously acceptable doctrine began to be questioned, and sometimes even rejected and replaced (Guder 116, 117). The doctrinal authority of the Church was no longer conclusive. This negative public opinion

towards Church theology continues to mount; for example Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion* (2006). Armstrong (2010:8) postulates that, "The popularity of [such]...books suggests that many people are bewildered and even angered by the God concept they have inherited". Strydom (2001:201) writes: "An important factor for some people's lack of involvement may be a *conflict with church teaching* (italics my own) [theology]...." The very reality of theology per se, the Church's "...love affair with tight logic and ordered reasons for faith...." (Slaughter 2008:46), does not augur well for the future of the Church in a post-modern world. It is noteworthy that "...*theologies* (italics my own) given birth within modernity will not transfer to post-modern cultures...." (Gibbs & Bolger 2006:34). Kallmier & Peck (2009:38) list "Unresolved Theological Questions" as reason for church-leaving.

Secularised and post-modern people are not, for example, willing to discount science and their intelligence when interacting with Christian theology (Gibbs 1993:250; cf. Dawkins 2006), causing many to leave the Church (Barna & Kinnaman 2014:99). As expressed by Hunter (1996:58), "...the church [sic] historically has been wrong so many times concerning science and human freedom that secular people question its intellectual credibility...." Certain sectors of the Church reject science when it differs from the Bible and are often threatened by it; Dawkins (111) quotes Jefferson(no reference given), "The priests of the different religious sects...dread the advance of science as witches do the approach of daylight...." And thus the avoidable, marginalising conflict between faith and science in part of the Church. Galileo's 17th century forced recantation of his Copernican claim that the earth revolved around the sun is a classic example in this regard (MacCulloch 2010:684).

Although Church growth is occurring mostly in fundamentalist churches, this is a contextual matter. According to Fowler's stages of faith theory for individuals (see Jamieson 2002:110-120), fundamentalism is especially attractive to people in the early stages of faith development. However, in later stages it is found to be off-putting. In a Developed World, predominantly "post-Church" (Jamieson 153) society, the majority of people would fall into a later, enquiring or critical, anti-fundamentalist faith development stage and would therefore experience

fundamentalist-based marginalisation by the Church (see Dawkins 2006:282-286).

Fundamentalist strangleholds on questionable and peripheral faith issues, such as the virgin birth of Christ, present an out-dated, naive - and even embarrassing - face of the Church, thus losing Church-credibility for modern and post-modern people (Dawkins 2006:59; cf. Macquarrie 1990:392-394).

Conversely, liberalism has also marginalised the Church for some (Gibbs 1993: 71, 72). Fowler's stages of faith development apply here in as much as those in the earlier stages would find liberalism heretical. For example, liberalists are attracted by a Church re-assessing its condemnatory stance on homosexuality. However, others find this *liberal* approach offensive to the faith and as a result leave the church. Liberalism experienced as the undermining of the authority of the Bible through rationalism and empiricism has also caused some to leave the Church (Gibbs 72). However, post-modernity generally points to a wider appreciation for theological liberalism, as attested by Portmann and Plüss (2011:193).

With regard to the homosexuality issue, considering research - Wikipedia (2015) - that between one and ten percent of the population are homosexually orientated, in the light of the Church's general rejection of homosexuality as an abomination, it is plausible that this issue has marginalised many from a hurtful, judgemental and exclusive Church (see Dawkins 2006:289-291 and Kinnaman & Lyons 2007:29).

Conservative theology in respect of the role of women in the Church, especially as it applies to the ordination of women, has distanced many women from the Church - "There are many women who have been hurt by the Catholic Church structures and who are *outside of it* (italics my own) and have no place to go" (*Mail & Guardian*, October 3 to 9, 2014).

Brierley (2000:14-18), makes the comment that in Britain the increased incidence of *co-habitation* (couples living together before marriage) has been a

key factor marginalising the Church there. Couples, aware that this practise is frowned upon by the Church, have chosen to withdraw from the Church rather than live under its condemnation. Barna and Kinnaman's (2014:100, 101) North American research corroborates this. My experience confirms this phenomenon in South Africa.

People have been marginalised from the Church on a large scale through its many ill attempts at explaining human suffering in the context of a loving God - theodicy (van der Ven 1993:160, 172); Hamilton (2002:81) writes, "...the number one question that keeps unchurched people from faith: 'Where is God when tragedy strikes?'" This is not limited to the Christian context alone, as for example the work of Rabbi H S Kushner (1981).

Bad *political* theology has been self-marginalising for the Church, for example, the abuse of the Bible in justifying apartheid in South Africa (Strauss 2001:39). Tragically this marginalised many from within the Church as it placed in question its integrity, made many feel misled by the Church, left them confused about their beliefs, and ultimately turned them against the Church and its teaching (Sammelink 2001:52). Bad theology in the political sense has also manifested in a "Volkskerk or 'national church'" (De Gruchy 2014:21).

Elements within the Church have diminished the Church's credibility in the frequent unfulfilled predictions (*prophecies*) of the end of the world.

Kuyler (2001:30) sums up the self-marginalising impact of poor theology on the Church: "...mense...sukkel en worstel om dit *wat die kerk [sic] doen en se*, te aanvaar....[S]ommige mense tradisionele geloofsbegrippe moeilik aanvaar". More tellingly, Armstrong (2010:307, 308) writes: "The result is that many of us have been stranded with an incoherent concept of God....Not surprisingly... many of us rejected the God we had inherited....Others, reluctant to abandon religion [*non-gathered*]...feel uncomfortably caught between two sets of extremists: religious fundamentalists...and militant atheists...."

Gibbs & Coffey (2001:169) temper the above, stating that in a post-modern culture where many are already on a spiritual quest, intellectual obstacles to faith (and not Church) are not necessarily a significant marginalising factor.

3.2.2.3 Integrity

Lack of integrity is another severely off-putting facial feature of the Church (Gibbs 1993:67). This is evidenced by a long history of practice that is incongruent with its Gospel message of love and grace; the Church has often not “practised what it has preached” (van der Merwe 2001:63), with the resulting marginalisation of many - and would-be - members who have now themselves become outsiders (Cilliers 2001:168, 169). The Church has lost credibility when it has demonstrated values contrary to the life-giving values of the kingdom of God, as personified in Christ (Sider et al 2002:48; see Kok et al (eds.) 2014:17). Referring to a poll in the United States of America, Karen Ward of the Church of the Apostles, Seattle, found that 95 % of the unchurched had a favourable view of Jesus; but, they do not like the Church, “...because *they do not readily see the church [sic] living out its teachings* (italics my own)....” (Gibbs & Bolger 2006: 48). It has often been the case of “what you are doing is shouting so loudly that I cannot hear what you are saying” (source unknown). In stark contrast, Küng (2001:43) identifies, “The lofty ethic....” of the infant Church as seminal to its unexpected expansion. And, as Niemandt (2012:8) states: “God’s election of his people is intended to produce a community committed to an ethical life and in doing so be a fulfilment of God’s mission of blessing the nations”.

A key integrity-related factor is the impact of clergy or Church representatives on Church belonging. Unfortunately, as stated by Sider et al (2002:137) in referring to Accornero (1994: 229), “The reputation of Christianity has been grievously tarnished over the centuries and around the world by ‘missionaries who went in Christ’s name, yet without his nature’”. Strydom (2001:202) comments on the damaging effect of “...the behaviour of bishops and pastors throughout the centuries of church history....” Lifeway Christian Resources research (2006) found that the second most common reason for people not attending church was “...disenchantment with the pastor or the church” (Duin

2008:122). Duin (23) states that Church scandals, particularly those involving clergy or key leadership, are often alienating. Cases in point include: the past controversial practice of an overseas pastor who used violent means in his healing ministry (*Sunday Times* 3 March 2013), the large-scale incidence of sexual abuse and paedophilia by clergy (Strydom 202; see Brown Taylor 2013: 8), controlling - with high levels of associated secrecy – pastors (Duin 129,130), and the statement once made to me by a local building contractor that he had left the Church because of his experience of *Sunday* pastors.

This lack of integrity is evident in the compromises with power brought about by the Constantine establishment which led to the downfall of the Church from a pacifist movement to a body that endorses theologies of just war (Guder 2000: 179); in the murderous crusades, inquisitions and persecutions of heretics of the Middle Ages (Küng 2001:185); in the endorsing of apartheid in South Africa by the Church – as per a 28 year-old’s response on reasons for being churchless, “Ek het ‘n probleem met die kerk [sic], hoofsaaklik omdat hulle apartheid verswyg het” (van der Merwe 2001:64); in competitive “*churchism*” between churches in the efforts to be bigger and better than the other (van der Merwe 60); in the unethical and dishonest business practises of Christian business-persons (including wage and environmental justice); in the indictment of television evangelists for fraud (Brown Taylor 2013:8); and in the employment of domestic workers on terms that separate them from their families and deny them Sabbath worship.

Many Developed World contexts have become multi-cultural, and very often, as in North America, “...our [the Church’s] primary way of dealing with this challenge has been through various forms of segregation and of domination of minorities by the white majority. The *integrity* (italics my own) of the incarnational witness of [the Church]...is on the line...” (Guder 2000:167). In South Africa, the Church has lacked integrity with regard to a racially divided Church (van der Merwe 2001:62) – the *Sunday Times* (13 March 2005) front-page main headline read, “Racism shock in Catholic Church”. This racial segregation and division in the Church disempowers and discredits the witness of the Church (Sider et al 2002:40). Furthermore, extreme superstition-based

cultic practices by “miracle pastors” within indigenous African fundamentalist evangelical churches, such as the drinking of petrol, eating of grass and the swallowing of live snakes (*Saturday Star*, p 4), discredit the Church of Christ.

Sider et al (2002:58) state that the Church’s lack of deeds, its lack of social action- including the quest for justice- in Christ-like servanthood, has undermined the Church’s message; they (Sider et al 59) quote one Rev. Moore of Tenth Memorial Baptist Church, USA – “To talk about Jesus feeding the hungry and clothing the naked, and then to send people away from our churches...who are hungry, who are ill-fed, who are ill-clothed, and not to do anything about it, *negates the witness of the Gospel* (italics my own)”. As written, “...faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead” (Ja 2:17). Sider et al (43, 45) state, “Holistic ministry in the spirit of Christ-like servanthood *challenges the unbelieving community’s perception of the church* [sic] (italics my own) and Christianity”, forges integrity and makes churches attractive to outsiders.

Many are offended by the Church’s often perceived *love for money*, its pre-occupation with wealth (its own) (Kallestad 2001:128), to the extent that it is sometimes seen to be unnecessarily and even obscenely wealthy (e.g. the Vatican). The Church then lacks the integrity of a financially temperate, servant-like community. Local church meetings consumed by financial matters (van der Merwe 2001:61) are indicative of this. Also, it is my sense that the Developed World local church has sometimes imparted the perception of Christianity as a means of self-enrichment and the Church a community of the wealthy (e.g. the prosperity cult).

Outsiders have also been given the impression, by the Church, that the Church has a hidden agenda, resulting in distrust and compounding relationship-damage between outsiders and the Church (Gibbs & Bolger 2006:134). Beneficiaries of Church outreach have often perceived, and sadly ultimately discovered, that the Church had an ulterior motive in establishing a relationship with them (Kallestad 2001:41) – a disguised attempt to convert them (Gibbs & Bolger 128; cf. Kinnaman & Lyons 2007:29). In this regard, Gibbs & Bolger

(127) quote Steve Collins of Grace, London, who commented: “*Coming alongside* means faking who you are in order to trap others”.

It is important to add a caveat to this point - that the - or desired - integrity of the Church is not, in my opinion, dependant on the Church attaining perfection; while in this world, as history shows, the Church will always be imperfect (van der Merwe 2001:63). It is, rather, intrinsically coupled with the confession of the Church; it is in the confession of its brokenness that the pathway to integrity lies (Sider et al 2002:141; cf. Kinnaman & Lyons 2007:62). The Church assumes the role of a *wounded healer* (Nouwen 1994:92-94) - “When we in the church make our weaknesses transparent to the community, our posture of dependence upon God *adds to our evangelistic witness* (italics my own)” (Sider et al 137). This is endorsed by Beyers (2015:9): “The first step towards restoring the credibility of the church is acknowledging that which is not correct. To be self-critical is crucial”. For example, the NG Kerk in South Africa added to the integrity of its witness through the public confession of its complicity in apartheid. Conversely, the Catholic Church’s concealing of its history of clergy child sexual abuse has only further tarnished its integrity. Küng (2010) lists this factor as one cause of the Roman Catholic Church’s “...worst credibility crisis since the Reformation”.

3.2.2.4 Legalism and judgementalism

The Church has marginalised itself through a historic spirit of legalism and associated judgementalism (Gibbs 1993:71). This has been expressed through its communicative actions presenting a legalistic community (Slaughter 2008: 61-62), defined in terms of strict adherence to the letter of the law (Gibbs 74); the voice of authority, the watchdog of societal norms and values, in the process gaining a reputation of being offputtingly critical (De Kock 2001:137). Hamilton (2002:205, 206) states: “When I asked un[non]-churched people to tell me what they don’t like about church and organised religion I typically hear that churches are *judgemental, hypocritical and that they excel at making people feel guilty* (italics my own)”. A response to a South African survey of churchless persons between the ages of twenty seven and thirty read: “Ek het my hele lewe weens skuld-gevoelens kerk toe gegaan totdat ek besef het dat ek nie

daaroor skuldig hoef te voel nie. Nou gaan ek nie meer nie. Ek glo steeds in God” (van der Merwe 2001: 64).

An empirically unsubstantiated *holier than thou* (self-righteous) attitude on the part of many outwardly pious Christians is often found in the Church (van der Merwe 2001:63). Closely related to this is the “Messiah Syndrome” (Sider et al 2002:140-141) distortion that has crept into the Church - and successfully been communicated to outsiders -, earning the Church (and justifying) the label of *hypocrites* (Kinnaman & Lyons 2007:29). This is manifested in a judgemental attitude towards others, thus creating a “...false hierarchy between the ‘us’ who have it all together and the ‘them’ who need help....” (Sider et al 141). This hypocrisy has marginalised many (Barna & Kinnaman 2014:53).

The Church has often judgmentally cast stones at others and in the process marginalised them (Kuyler 2001:34; cf. Kinnaman & Lyons 2007:30). This spirit of judgementalism is often evident in a church’s appraisal of whom is deserving of its help- sometimes this leads to help being withheld, for example on moral or ethical grounds, or to withholding help until such time that those in need show repentance and/or clean up their lives (De Claisse-Walford 2008:131). In stark contrast, some time ago I heard from a Baptist pastor the refreshing and life-giving story of a Durban local church that shared an outside wall with a neighbouring brothel, who after prayerfully considering its response to this situation, were convicted that they must offer a baby-sitting service for the sex-workers’ children. This demolished the wall of marginalization between them. As fittingly stated by Slaughter (2008:118), “We [the Church] have no right to exclude someone God has invited to the banquet”.

A judgemental Church is also experienced when it broadcasts the message that it alone has the truth of the way to God (van der Merwe 2001:65). This tendency may underlie the following reported by *Ecumenical News International Online* (26 November 2009): “The secretary general (the second-ranked official) of the ruling Democratic Party of Japan stoked the ire of Church leaders in the country when he commented that Christianity is ‘*exclusive and self-righteous*’ (italics my own)”.

Instead of offering the world a vital life-giving relationship with God, the Church has offered the world a rule book, a set of impossible standards to try and attain (Slaughter 2008:61-62). The Church has often failed to communicate to the world that it is "...a hospital for sinners, not a museum for saints" (source unknown); that, like the apostle Paul (1 Tm 1:15), those in the Church are the worst of sinners (Sider et al 2002:141).

Pillay (2015:5) quotes: "What if we looked at our world...with pity and not blame? What if we heard God's call to evangelise out of love instead of fear, hope instead of judgement? What if we saw sin for the complex mixture it is, grounded in wounds and unmet needs? What if we automatically tried to see the 'total fact' of others? ...what would it mean to read our world with a hermeneutic of love?" (Heath 2008:119).

3.2.2.5 Irrelevant, archaic Church sub-culture

The Church has also marginalised itself by failing to contemporise (Hunter 1996:59); "The danger in that part of the world [i.e., Central and Eastern Europe], as throughout the North-Atlantic societies, is that we shall continue to function as though our inherited cultural shapes are still normative" (Guder 2000:95) - this applies equally to our Developed World context in South Africa (Strauss 2001:41). It frequently does not provide a contemporary Christian role model; "The people [that]...walk into our buildings...do not expect the traditional churches to say anything relevant or understandable to them" (Guder 96). As stated by Strauss (64), "Die kerk [sic] bied nie vir my as individu 'n verwysings-raamwerk wat met my daaglikse werklikheid ooreenstem nie"; a forty one year-old South African testifies that, on his wedding day in 1987, he walked out of the church, and standing on its steps outside decided never again to go to church – "Ek het skielik besef ek is verveeld met ou goed wat as tydlose waarhede aangebied word, maar wat eintlik absurd en belaglik geword het...." (Landman 2001:81). A discontented person expressed: "Sondae moet ek ander klere aantrek as wat ek gedurende die week dra, anders is ek nie tuis in die kerk nie" (Venter 2001:111).

The Church is very often a *cultural fit* – stuck in one inherited culture - and in need of *Pentecostal translation* so that it may become “culturally bilingual” (Guder 2000:95,96) in today’s world. Sider et al (2002:154) express this as the challenge for churches to become “culturally adaptive and ‘user-friendly’”. So much so, that outsiders will not be kept away (marginalised) by this cultural impasse and can feel at home in the Church (van Rensburg 2001:148). Indeed, Küng (2001:43) lists the early Church’s “...wide-ranging assimilation to Hellenistic-Roman society....” as a key reason for its most unlikely establishment in that time.

Hunter (1996:58, 59) introduces the corresponding concept of a distinct *Church sub-culture*; in his view, the Church has often developed its own particular culture, a sub-culture (which is the very first thing about the Church that strikes outsiders), quite different and foreign- if not totally off-putting- to the culture of the outside world, to the non-churched, functioning to separate them from the Church. This is endorsed by Sider et al (2002:153), and also Semmelink (2001: 53; see Nell & Grobler 2014:755) - from a specifically South African perspective - when Church tradition is referred to as, “...amper ‘n kultuur binne ‘n bepaalde streek”. Significantly, Light (2008:151) states: “This is generally characterised by Sunday events comprising vocabulary and *culture unique to those who belong* (italics my own)...[T]hat [outsiders] don’t even understand what it’s about”. Gibbs & Bolger (2006:16) raise this very same issue when they ask the missional question, “...whether the church [sic] exists simply as a *sub-culture* (italics my own) or a counter-culture or whether it can become truly cross-cultural in the sense of crossing into the broader culture through proclaiming the good news within the cultural context....”

Hunter (1996:58) says that, “...the most widespread, entrenched, and formidable barrier that prevents the most people [sic] from considering the Christian faith today: the ‘*culture barrier*’.... (italics my own)”; so much so, that he conclusively expresses the opinion that, “The *culture barrier* (italics my own) between the churches and the un[(non)]-churched people of Europe is *the largest single cause of European Christianity’s decline* (italics my own) in this century” (Hunter 62). Discussing the “real issue” in the Church, Hudson

(2012:69) states: "...overall the real issue is that we need a culture change". Gibbs & Bolger (2006:19) state: "Much of what we understand as historical church practices is simply cultural adaptations that occurred at other times and places in church [sic] history. The church [sic] must 'de-absolutise' many of its sacred cows in order to communicate afresh the good news to a new world". The Church has often, for example, held onto archaic forms of worship with regard to music, language, style and preaching (Gibbs 1993:76; see Kallestad 2001:76). Light (2008:151) quotes Spong (2001: xvi): "I am constantly amazed at how threatened ecclesiastical representatives are when they confront the fact that the words they use to tell their faith-story simply no longer communicate meaningfully in the world of today's experience".

Furthermore, the Church "...continues to communicate a verbal, linear, and abstract message to a culture whose primary language consists of sound, visual images, and experience, in addition to words...." (Gibbs & Bolger 2006: 20). It continues to use a mode of one-way communication, monologue - mostly via the preached sermon – which is outdated and off-putting to a younger generation (van der Merwe 2001:65). Sub-standard preaching that does not address real issues is "a huge factor" in people leaving a church (Duin 2008: 103,113; see Nell & Grobler 2014:758). As significant, as remarked by emergent church pastor Brian McLaren in an interview (Duin 106), "...A lot of teaching does not take into account the sophistication of our listeners'...."

As noted by Brierley (2000:87), one reason for decreased attendance at Sunday services is that they are experienced as uninviting, boring, old-fashioned, hard to follow, having unknown hymns and being too long – this is corroborated by Barna & Kinnaman (2014:51). Kallmier & Peck (2009:42) state: "Many leave church because they are bored". Services are experienced as heavy, melancholic and oppressive, and too ritualistic (van der Merwe 2001:62, 64). Especially the preaching of the Church is often experienced as irrelevant or condemning, adding no value to people's lives, and therefore being of no interest to outsiders (van Rensburg 2001:147, 149). Gibbs & Bolger (2006:316) record the comment of Andy Thornton of Late Late Service, Glasgow, UK, "...people need to escape the timeless ecclesiastical vice that has left *many*

who love God standing outside the doors of the Christian faith (italics my own)''. Commenting on Jamieson's sequel to *A Churchless Faith*, *Church Leavers: Faith Journeys Five Years On*, Duin (2008:175) records the statement by a university reviewer of the book, that, "...the book 'underscores once again just how irrelevant or unhelpful the institutional church [sic] has become for so many reflective and intelligent believers today''".

As such, the Church is often seen by outsiders as an archaic, irrelevant organisation (Kinnaman & Lyons 2007:29; see Duin 2008:27-46) - it presents an out-dated face to the world, adds no value to their lives and fails to address people's contemporary needs – *felt needs* (Slaughter 2008:31) - thus pushing people away from it (Kuyler 2001:30). To the contrary, a feature of healthy churches is that they focus on serving the needs of those in their community first and foremost (Slaughter 98).

Furthermore, the Church has often got –and to look- tired and as a result has become sluggish (Gibbs 1993:46); it no longer prays expectantly, it appears to have lost its way, plodding along cumbersomely without any real direction, no capturing vision, no expectation of God-activity in its midst (van der Merwe 2001:63; see Schoeman 2014:5). The Church's witness to the life-saving Gospel is often perceived as ineffective and powerless (van der Merwe 73). It even appears to have lost interest in its primary mission of reaching the non-churched (Hunter 1996:59). Members are often uninvolved, and there is a lack of practical Christianity and preaching relevant to outsiders' needs and questions (Gibbs 80).

An archaic sub-culture has a significant impact upon children of the church, often encountered in a bad Sunday School experience (Brierley 2000:108) - he comments, "The difficulty of poor Sunday Schools is that there is now a generation who have had some Church experience who are currently outside the Church, and don't wish to return. 'We've tried it already', they say" (Brierley 108). This was my own experience with many of my peers.

The impact of the cultural shifts of modernism and post-modernism (3.2.1.2) are in broader terms symptomatic of the overall impact of culture on the Gospel in every context (Guder 2000: xi), and the necessity for “cultural translation” of the Gospel in every context (Guder 14). For example, in our Developed World culture, Western Christendom has dominated in its self-understanding of it being normative Christian culture (Guder 10).

Failure to recognise the prevailing culture of the day undermines the Church’s overall mission and threatens its very survival (Gibbs & Bolger 2006:15, 17), as does the failure to focus on the culture of the local church and cultural transformation (Marais 2007:124). Significantly, Gibbs & Coffey (2001:57) list, “A willingness to embrace change....” as a common feature of churches in England that have experienced growth against the prevailing trend of decline.

Erasmus (2007:93), referring to the work of Anderson (2005:66), says that having “...a global Charismatic ‘meta-culture’ that transcends locality and denominational loyalty” is key to successful, growing churches (see also van der Merwe 2014:5).

Light (2008:153) quotes Rev Dr Carlos Ham of The World Council of Churches - “...‘ We are living in a rapidly changing sociological reality....We need a *changing church* [sic] *in a changing culture!*’ (italics my own)”. In this regard, Slaughter (2008:13) writes that churches relevant to a post-modern world “...defy old identities....[D]on’t fit into the usual categories....[Are] tough to label, difficult to classify, and downright unpredictable....[A]re based on shared life in Jesus – not issue-centered (sic) ideology.” This need for the Gospel to be culturally normative is expressed in the words of the apostle Paul (1 Cor 9:22), “I have become all things to all men....”

3.2.2.6 Attitude: negativism

In many instances, the Church has succeeded in transforming the Gospel (good news of God and God’s love) into a negative evangel (Guder 2000:29; cf. Kinnaman & Lyons 2007:26); the message of the Church has been a negative one, devoid of the joy of the Gospel of Christ (van der Merwe 2001:61). The

Church has often been experienced as the broadcaster of a message of punishment and consequently engendered a God-response motivated by fear and guilt (De Kock 2001:137, 138). The positive Biblical message that the creation is essentially good, that the God of creation is constantly active in bringing hope to creation in the context of the challenges of created life through the arriving reign of God in the world, has often been lost by the Church (Guder 31-39). This negativism is not at all attractive and serves to marginalise the Church. In this respect, many in the Church *themselves* have a negative attitude toward, and issues with, the Church, and increase such a spirit of negativism (Strauss 2001:37).

In contrast, Sider et al (2002:182) write: “Contagious worship has a festive dimension, as people experience the joy of coming before God as well as the joy of being in one another’s company”. Furthermore, a common feature of growing churches in England is that “...members *enjoy* (italics my own) attending” (Gibbs & Coffey 2001:57).

3.2.2.7 Attitude: unfriendly, uncaring and unloving

The Church has often succeeded in presenting itself to those outside as cold and unfriendly, uncaring and unloving, and therefore also unwelcoming and inhospitable (Sider et al 2002:155; see van der Merwe 2001:62), particularly of those who are “different” (Sider et al 181) as well as those experiencing doubts about their faith (Barna & Kinnaman 2014:102). Outsiders approaching a church are often confronted by “...an atmosphere of indifference, stubborn pride, or contention” (Sider et al 178). *Disciples’* atypical lack of love for each other - the absence of Gospel-type *koinonia* (van der Merwe 2001:76) “...invalidate[s] their witness to the watching world” (Guder 2000:155, see World Council of Churches 2005:12 and van der Merwe 2014:13) and tells this world that they are pseudo-disciples (Jn 13:35). Outsiders are thus repelled by them (Sider et al 178). The incorporating- as opposed to marginalising- spirit of “...‘See how they love each other!’” (Sider et al 179, quoting from Accornero 1994:29) is damagingly absent. As a result, the Church has marginalised many.

As written by Sider et al (2002:179), “A *caring* (italics my own) church...offers a living demonstration of the Good News we share. True *koinonia* makes the world sit up and take notice”. Niemandt (2012:5) concurs: “*Koinonia* is an integrating concept in terms of the identity of the church”. Van der Merwe (2001:78) writes: “Een ding staan egter as [sic] ‘n paal bo water: indien gemeentes nie daarin slaag om *koinonia* te kweek nie, sal hulle baie moeilik voorsien in die diepte [sic] geestelike behoeftes van die mense wat hulle bedien. *Dit is dan wanneer mense begin wegdryf van die kerk* [sic] (italics my own)”. Concisely and relevantly stated by van Rensburg (2001:151), “Die grootste klag wat baie kerklos mense teen die kerk rig, is *die klag van liefdeloosheid* (italics my own)”. Strydom (2001:203) writes: “Many Catholics fall away *because they have not experienced the warmth and intimacy of a faith-community* (italics my own)”. In the same vein, Barna and Kinnaman (2014:51) report that outsiders do not “...see church as a place of meaningful community” and Kallmier & Peck (2009:41) state, “...people leave because they long for deeper relationships than they are experiencing”. Duin (2008:50) sums up the point succinctly- “One of the top reasons people give for leaving church is loneliness: the feeling...that no one knows or cares whether they are there”.

There are many casualties of Church-hurt, who have thus developed a negative perception of the Church as unloving and uncaring; for example, in small group settings, and when personal conflicts have been unresolved, as a result of which members have withdrawn from the Church as a whole (Gibbs 1993:75, 76, 79). Kallmier & Peck (2009:46) list “Conflict” as a major reason for people leaving a church. Many have over-committed themselves to Church work and as a result have suffered Church-burnout, ultimately leading to their complete withdrawal from Church-life (Gibbs 84). And often members who do withdraw are not followed up to establish how they are doing and why they have left the church, entrenching in their minds their picture of the church as “unloving and uncaring” (Jamieson 2002:145). Their stories of Church-hurt are often told to family, friends and colleagues, passing on a marginalising, negative perception of the Church (Jamieson 144).

The Church is experienced as unfriendly and uncaring by parents and children specifically when an ignorance of, and lack of interest in, the needs of the family unit – especially the non-traditional - and children is shown, not making space for them, and not giving special consideration to their development and integration in the life of the Church (Barna & Kinnaman 2014:109-118; Portmann and Plüss 2011:183). This negative experience of Church often causes them to withdraw.

Insensitive and over-aggressive evangelism practices, such as Bible punching, are also experienced negatively, and as unloving (Gibbs 1993:74). People are targeted as objects to convert in adding to the evangelist's tally of scalps, completely lacking a kingdom perspective on salvation (Sider et al 2002:48).

Church actions, including the spending of time (Gibbs 1993:237), money and energy, often communicate that the church is more concerned with its own affairs - such as its own internal issues of theology and order, the upkeep and beautification of its premises and elaborate facilities - than with caring for the needs of the perishing, sick, homeless, unemployed, lonely and imprisoned. Referring to the early Church, Guder (2000:104, 105) quotes Bosch (1991:50): “Their survival as a separate religious group, rather than their commitment to the reign of God, began to preoccupy them”. The Church, according to one Reverend Centeno (Sider et al 2002:165), thus became “...‘a kind of incubator, a safe zone....’” for its own. It then reveals itself as a selfish, inward-focussed, self-perpetuating organisation, thus repelling people (Sider et al 146) - “Die kerk [sic] moet weer besef dat hy nie ter wille van homself bestaan nie, maar ter wille van God en sy koninkryk” (van der Merwe 2001:76).

The Church has lost credibility – and members - when humanitarian-driven welfare organisations have shown more social concern than it has, for example in America in the 1960's and 1970's (Sider et al 2002:43). Such humanitarian organizations have often shown deeper concern for and responded more meaningfully to the plight of the poor and the HIV/Aids infected than the Church. This occurred in South Africa during the time of apartheid, for example

in the case of the late political activist Chris Hani who, once closely associated with the Church, wrote:

‘...as time passed, I began to view the church [sic] as indifferent to the socio-economic improvement of black people, even though I was sure the Bible demanded the opposite....I came to believe that the political organisations to which I belonged were doing far more than the church [sic] to eradicate the suffering of the people....In this ethical context I, in turn, began to question the existence of God’.

Smith & Tromp 2009:16

When the local church learns and implements meaningful ways of sharing Christ’s love with outsiders, they are drawn to rather than pushed away from the Church (Sider et al 2002:24) - “During the time a holistic church is engaged in community ministry, it is adding to its fund of credibility as an institution for social change” (De Claisse-Walford 2008:119). As written by van der Merwe (2001:74): “As daar een manier is waarop ons weer kerklos mense kan bereik, is dit sonder twyfel deur die diens van barmhartigheid [deeds of mercy]”. It is by loving the community in which the local church exists, “in word and deed”, and in loving the enemies of the church – “...liefde is die taal wat blindes kan sien en dowes kan hoor, veral in ‘n wêreld waar kerklosheid en kerkvyandigheid ‘n aaklige werklikheid is” (van der Merwe 75, 76). Van der Merwe (75, 76) also writes, “Uit die *persepsie* (italics my own) van kerklos mense is dit duidelik dat hulle alles behalwe hierdie besondere diens van die kerk verwag”. Notably, Portmann and Plüss (2011:190) highlight meaningful social engagement as a critical parameter in outsiders’ assessment of religions in general.

With regard to today’s world, the younger generation are being drawn by the casual, communal and *friendly* atmosphere of culturally relevant churches (Slaughter 2008:28). Küng (2001:39, 40), writing about the unlikely growth of the early Church, significantly says, “What was amazing and *attractive to outsiders* (italics my own) was the social cohesion of Christians...this was a

main reason for the unexpected success of Christianity”. As per Moynagh (2001:92): “Church should be superbly placed to meet the longing to belong”.

3.2.2.8 Attitude: withdrawal from community

Local churches have often become insular, comfortable groups, closed to infiltration by outsiders (Sider et al 2002:147), “...building walls of dogma and exclusivity...” (Slaughter 2008:19), that keep others apart. They display a lack of interest in anyone outside of themselves and appear content to exist simply for their own benefit (De Claisse-Walford 2008:73; see Slaughter 116), which consequently entrenches marginalisation (van Rensburg 2001:151). Churches thus become disconnected from their communities (Moynagh 2001:71; see Sider et al 159) and their buildings often stand as monuments of strange, separatist cults. Relevantly, Portmann and Plüss (2011:185) attest that churches will be “...criticised, if they segregate and isolate themselves and live completely according to their own rules”. The converse of this- that expanding churches in England have “...effective links with their surrounding community” (Gibbs & Coffey 2001:57) - endorses this reality (see also Schoeman 2014:7).

For example, there is a predominant tendency for local churches to run programmes that are inward focussed (Gibbs 1993:232; see Gibbs & Coffey 2001:226), indicating an unawareness of the surrounding community, and thus automatically excluding outsiders. Hudson (2012:154) explains it this way: “Historically, communities have found it very difficult to resist the *inward pull* focusing on the *Gathered* church (italics all my own)”. This withdrawn, identity-damaging behaviour is also apparent in the tendency of churches not to own the communities’ in which they reside, showing no interest in or sense of belonging to them and not identifying with them in any significant way. This is demonstrated in an absence of networking, participation in community events and affairs, and commitment to the community (Sider et al 2002:155-158); “If the church seeks to have a voice in the community...then *it must be a living part of that community* (italics my own)” (De Claisse-Walford 2008:144).

The withdrawal of the Church is experienced by those suffering injustice in times when the Church’s prophetic voice is silent. De Claisse-Walford (2008:

119,120) writes: “...the voice of the church that speaks out against social injustice....[H]as more credibility, and carries far more authority if it is a church that is engaging those issues as a fundamental part of its *raison d’être* than if it is a church disengaged from such issues and speaks simply from its moral principles...‘what you are speaks louder than what you say’”.

The Church has erected *physical barriers*, shutting – and keeping - outsiders out (Sider et al 2002:154). Premises are often secured so that they are inaccessible. Although this may be necessitated by security concerns, which is especially true in our current crime-ridden South African context, it does present an unwelcoming front to outsiders, especially first-time visitors. Sometimes the layout of buildings, with concealed entrances and lack of direction signs, are unwelcoming to newcomers (Sider et al 154). Moreover, outsiders often confront the relative invisibility of church community life - activities mostly take place behind closed doors, naturally creating an insider-outsider scenario (Sider et al 159). This may cause an element of suspicion, heightening the barrier to the church in the minds of the outsider.

The withdrawal of the Church from the outside community may be indicative of a misinformed theology (3.2.2.2) in regard to Jesus teaching that the Church is *in the world, but not of the world* (Jn 17:11, 14-15). This has resulted in the Church erecting a spiritual-secular, self-marginalising divide between itself and the world on the outside (Sider et al 2002:151). This is sometimes motivated by the fear of being corrupted by the world (De Claisse-Walford 2008:117). The Church has then withdrawn from the community, and maintained a safe distance between *them and us* (Sider et al 151). However, this withdrawal from the outside community might also be due to a church’s sense of inferiority, believing that it has nothing of value to contribute to the community at large (Sider et al 152). This would be especially so in the post-modern, post-Christendom context of many churches.

Relevantly, De Claisse-Walford (2008:144) states, “...*nor is a congregation a true church* (italics my own) if its faith practises are events that occur only within the church’s walls or to its own immediate benefit”. Slaughter (2008:97)

concurr: “The church does not exist to simply sustain itself, but rather to reach out to the poor and *marginalised* (italics my own)”. Slaughter (107) further contends that , “...our connection with God is never complete until we make the commitment to sacrifice our personal needs and...our personal spiritual journeys to serve the needs of the oppressed and hurting all around us”. And, significantly, Dulles (2002:88) quotes Robinson (1965:92): “The house of God is not the Church but the world”. Kallestad (2001:13) quotes Bonhoeffer (1971: 382): “The church is the church only when it exists for others....” (see Pillay 2015:6).

Moynagh (2001:79) succinctly states: “The church [sic] has left the playing field”. This point is summed up in the words of Newbigin (1989:233) who asserts that the Church will be recognised by society in general “...when local congregations renounce an introverted concern for their own life, and recognise that they exist for the sake of those who are not members, as sign, instrument, and foretaste of God’s redeeming grace for the whole life of society”.

3.2.2.9 Attitude: prejudice

Churches also marginalise others by their demographic and cultural proclamation: “...‘This is who fits in here (and who doesn’t belong)’” (Sider et al 2002:152). In this way, “The church’s *identity* (italics my own) can become a barrier to community acceptance” (Sider et al 152). This may indicate a prevailing selfish and mistaken view that the church is their own, as well as resistance to change for the sake of others. Prejudice and fear have been obstacles to churches going into and connecting with certain “different” communities (Sider et al 152).

This may be a class divide (Sider et al 2002:153), traceable back to the early Church (Ja 2:1-11) - a less affluent social class receives the subtle message that they are not welcome because they do not fit in; for example, domestic live-ins, the homeless, and even those without their own transport.

Marginalising prejudice, typical of our South African context - even post-apartheid - is often a race issue (Sider et al 2002:153). For example, many of

our suburban churches in South Africa do not reflect the post-apartheid, post-separate development racial demographic change of our neighbourhoods (Sider et al 153). Some years ago in the city where I lived and worked, I heard of a local church that had publicly declared people of a certain race group were not welcome. Five years into our new South Africa, working on integrating people of a different racial group into a historically white local church in Port Elizabeth, it was revealing to hear of the huge gulf that these people confronted - and had to cross - in this process. The prejudicially marginalised - for example non-whites in South Africa – may be inclined to turn their back on the God and Church of the oppressor.

Within my denomination, the MCSA, a notably strong black empowerment group, the Black Methodist Consultation, is active even until this day in its aim of eradicating racism in our church and forming an African church.

Women are not only marginalised by the theology of the Church (3.2.2.2), but also by prejudice (Portmann and Plüss 2011:183). Duin (2008:139) refers to Barna's (2006) research on non-churched America which indicated that "...over the last decade there was a 'significant' increase in women who avoid church". In often male-dominated churches, women in North America express the experience of being side-lined - of not finding "...any kind of significant place in the church where they are really valued...." - , especially in the case of "independent and career-driven women" (Duin 137). In my own denomination, it has been necessary to decree the required representation of women in leadership structures as a means of dealing with this prejudice. Duin (147) articulates: "There does seem to be a huge disconnect between what women are reputed to be and what they are".

More subtle is the prejudice experienced by single – unmarried – adults. As stated by Duin (2008:86), "Statistically, singles lead the pack in terms of people sliding out the back doors of America's churches, and many singles never make it in the front door". Research conducted by a student at the University of Virginia, America in 2005, stated: "Twenty-eight percent of the decline in religious attendance over the last thirty years can be attributed to...the fact that

fewer adults are now married with children” (Duin 86). The American milieu indicates that singleness, linked to changes in family structure, is a significant marginalising factor in the local church (Duin 86).

Prejudice experienced due to sexual orientation, another significant marginalising factor, is discussed under 3.2.2.2.

Conversely, “A congregation can...define its cultural boundaries in a way that *includes* (italics my own) the community of ministry” (Sider et al 2002:153).

3.2.2.10 Shallow spirituality: a cost/cross-less, non-intentional discipleship

People have been turned off a Church that has lost its spiritual character (Venter 2001:113), evident in the shallow God-experience it offers (Slaughter 2008:73; see van der Merwe 2014:2, referring to Butler Bass 2012:26). Barna & Kinnaman (2014:98) list “*Christianity as practiced is too shallow*” as a key reason why young adults are dropping out of Church in North America. Similarly, Duin (2008:170) quotes John Eldredge, North American bestselling Christian author and para-Church ministry founder after an interview with him: “...They [the Church] are not bringing people into a genuine encounter with God”. The outcome of this shallow spirituality is a community that lacks incarnational ethical and behavioural “differentness” (Guder 2000:137) to the outside community, and thus loses any magnetic *attracting* power. Outsiders are searching/have an as yet unrecognised need for an authentic spirituality (Gibbs 1993:44; cf. Kinnaman & Lyons 2007:60), “...for more than superficial Christianity” (Sider et al 2002:43), in which they can grow spiritually and emotionally together with others (De Kock 2001:139; see van der Merwe 2, referring to Peterson 2013:3).

This is especially relevant in an age of individualism (Kallmier & Peck 2009:7) and selfishness in our Developed World, which promotes self-fulfillment in Christianity – what Pritchard (1996:256), as quoted by Gibbs & Coffee (2001: 53), labels “Fulfillment theology”. Outsiders experience this as a selfish, self-centred, self-enhancing, egocentric evangel, which results in them

simultaneously being repelled by, and out-rightly rejecting, the Church. Furthermore, “If converts are attracted on the basis of satisfying self-interest, it will be difficult to change this into the daily cross-carrying that is a characteristic of authentic discipleship” (Gibbs & Coffey 54).

The local church’s identity and character is formed - and defined - by the collective identity and character of its core members, its disciples (see Hudson 2012:13). This is, for example, evident in Paul’s *Church* letters, and also in the messages to the seven churches in the Revelation of John (Rv 2, 3). A collectively deformed, unattractive – and thus avoided - church implies a church consisting of a significant number of deformed, unattractive members/Christians. The quality of its members’ falls short of what it means to be authentic, organic disciples of Jesus Christ (Slaughter 2008:123). This is especially relevant in the case of church leadership, considering their higher profile and influence in the church.

Such a deficient discipleship/shallow spirituality is evident in a *lukewarm* faith (Rv 3:16), in which disciples have “...forsaken [their]...first love” (Rv 2:4) and are spiritually dormant. They are not actively practising their faith in running the race with perseverance, keeping their eyes fixed on Jesus (Heb 12:1, 2). Armstrong (2010:308) pertinently states: “Because ‘faith’ has come to mean intellectual assent to a set of purely notional doctrines that make no sense *unless they are applied practically* (italics my own), some have given up altogether”. Participating in the Great Commission, through the intentional discipling of others, is negligible. There is a lackadaisical attitude towards sin, justified by the (abusive) reliance on God’s grace (van der Merwe 2001:62). Disobedience to God is common, and absolute, self-denying surrender to God - taking up one’s cross in following Jesus (Mt 16:24, 25) - is largely absent.

Christians have often received the benefits of salvation (God’s forgiving grace, strengthening presence, healing power, etc.), but not reciprocated in submitting their lives to the Lordship and service of Christ in the world. Their Christ-relationship is split into two dimensions - *Saviour* and *Lord*. This can result from inadequate instruction on Christ’s claims, especially in the context of Tertullian’s

statement, “Christians are made, not born” (Gibbs & Coffey 2001:195). Commenting upon the increasing dissatisfaction with their local church amongst the longer-standing of fifteen thousand members of Willow Creek Church, North America, interviewed “on how they felt they were growing as Christians”, Duin (2008:173) writes: “I wondered if the problem...was the church *servicing up only baby food* (italics my own)”. A purposeless state of lost enthusiasm is created, and an ensuing distancing from the Church (Gibbs 1993:81).

Bonhoeffer (1937:4) calls this phenomenon “cheap grace” – “... grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate”. Van Niekerk (2014:2) refers to “...a privatised gospel...”. It is exhibited in a *cost/cross-less, non-intentional discipleship* as a Gospel of *personal salvation* in contra-distinction to the world encompassing *missio Dei* (Guder 2000:126). Gibbs & Coffey (2001:223) comment, “Undisciplined [sic] church [sic] members present one of the greatest challenges facing the church [sic] ...”

Guder (2000:120) expresses this reality as the detrimental impact of the separation of *the benefits* from *the mission* (i.e. the reason) of salvation, and identifies it as “...the most profound reductionism of the gospel” (3.2.2.11). He further asserts (Guder 135) that, “...the goal of the gospel has become ‘the pursuit of happiness,’ [sic] ...”, thus reducing (Guder 133) “...the kingdom to individual and personal salvation...”. Significantly, in Niemandt’s (2012:8) words, “The kingdom is not about an experience with God but about the society of God participating in God’s mission”.

In referring to Kaoma (2011:296), Niemandt (2012:6), expressively states: “The *missio Dei* is the *missio Creato Dei*. The Gospel is not only about salvation for problems of personal sin, but salvation of all of creation”. Van Niekerk (2014:3) appositely quotes: “... the Bible itself will reduce our tendency to reduce the gospel to a solution to our individual sin problem and a swipe card for heaven’s door, and replace that reductionist impression with a message that has to do with the cosmic reign of God in Christ that will ultimately eradicate all evil from

God's universe (and solve our individual sin problem too, of course) (Wright 2010:31–32)”. ”.

Guder (2000:121) quotes from his earlier work (1985:232): “Our greatest priority...should be to re-join the benefits of salvation with the responsibilities and call to the saved to enter into God's mission in the world”.

This reduced Gospel, “...profoundly shapes Christian witness [the face of the Church] as it addresses the world into which we are sent [i.e. outsiders]” (Guder 2000:137). The Christian witness of reductionist discipleship, lacking transformation, will be a destructive witness (Sider et al 2002:142,143). Sider et al (141) quote Merton in Postema (1983:159): “Whoever attempts to act and do things for others...without deepening their own self-understanding, freedom, integrity and capacity for love, *will not have anything to give* (italics my own)....”

Guder (2000:132) asserts that through reductionism “...*the in-breaking of God's kingdom is hindered or diluted* (italics my own)....” Especially in today's post-modern world, only an authentic Christ-witness will attract outsiders; Gibbs & Coffey (2001:192) pertinently quote Posterski (1989:31, 32): “The world needs to see what Christian life looks like....[T]he Gospel will be perceived as a feasible alternative when those who do not know God [(outsiders)] have some positive personal experiences with people who do know him”.

“Evangelism focussed on decisions without discipleship....” (Sider et al 2002: 65; see Hudson 2012:13) has also contributed to a watered-down discipleship - this has, retrospectively, been identified as a shortcoming in the ministry of evangelist Billy Graham. As indicated by Prof Nel (*Building up the local church* lecture, University of Pretoria, Centre for Contextual Ministry, May 2007) approximately 80% of Graham's converts had fallen away as disciples of Christ; that is, become *outsiders*. Duin (2008:109,110) comments: “...churches' tendency to win people to Christ, then do nothing for their formation beyond a Christian basic class...has *sent hordes racing out the back doors* (italics my own)”. Duin (115) further writes: “A...reason for the exodus from churches is the lack of teaching beyond the basics”.

Closely related to the previous paragraph, shallow spirituality as a marginalising factor is evident - as I have witnessed - when "...in the evangelical church...we don't know what to do with people as they mature in their Christian faith" (Jamieson 2002:103). Often there is a failure in assisting members to identify and utilise their gifts in ministry, causing disillusionment and loss of interest (Gibbs 1993:83). Duin (2008:174) referring to Lewis (2007) makes the statement that, "To keep...people, you have to release them into ministry...." Some outgrow mission opportunities within their local churches. It may be that sub-consciously and/or pathologically the local church places a ceiling on the development of their members.

Other contributing factors include the *reductionism of Church membership*, making membership too easy (see Guder 2000:169-179); a tendency to form Church, rather than kingdom disciples; discipleship which has meant just being informed and not formed (Watson 1981:83) - and as such not expressly aiming for the transformation of life in disciple-making through a transformed, Christian worldview ("framework") (Dunahoo 2005:72, 14); focusing "...on the cognitive aspects of the faith rather than people's experience of God or their feelings...." (Jamieson 2002:104).

The local church, in its continuous work of disciple-making forges its collective identity. Therefore, any initiative at building up the local church, in maturing into its "Christ-identity", will require its intentional struggle with and transformation of both its understanding of discipleship, and its disciple-making processes (Rainer 2015). Bonhoeffer (1937:17) sums up succinctly: "Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ". Aptly, Slaughter (2008:88) states, "I would rather have a church of twelve people who can replicate the DNA of the kingdom of God than a church of thousands that will infect people with something less". This means full "...immersion in Jesus. More than merely sampling the Christian life, immersion means taking on the nature, desires, passions, and behavior of Jesus" (Slaughter 80; see Viola 2008:33-37 and Pillay 2015:2).

Costly, cross-carrying discipleship "...begins as Christians submit their whole lives to God as instruments of his love by the power of the Spirit" (Sider et al 2002:144). Bonhoeffer (1937:42) appositely wrote, "Discipleship means ...submission to the law of Christ which is the law of the cross". And, Watson (1981:251) stated: "To follow Jesus means to follow his way of suffering and crucifixion". The cost of this call is quint-essentially summed up by Bonhoeffer (44): "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die".

Pertinently, John Wesley (1986:258), the father of Methodism, stated: "I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist...But I am afraid, lest they should only exist as a dead sect, *having the form of religion without the power* (Italics my own). And this undoubtedly will be the case unless they hold fast both the doctrine and the discipline with which they first set out".

Succinctly stated by Nel (2005:103), "The radical demand for unremitting surrender to God is watered down to participation in the external duties of Christianity". And as aptly questioned by Barna & Kinnaman (2014:187): "Could it be that the life of faith we offer to the churchless is *too small*?" Duin (2008: 180) concludes her research stating: "Miracles happened in Acts 2 [sic] when Christians decided to share things in common, be willing to suffer together, and be part of a supernatural church [sic]. They can happen again if enough believers are willing to pay the price [of a deeper spirituality]. Then people will begin craving church [sic] instead of quitting church [sic] and the exodus will be no more".

Appositely put by Duin (2008:116): "Most people don't like to fail, so when they get enlisted into a faith in which they cannot hear the Lord's simplest directions or get their prayers answered, they check out fast. Most either slide into a *costless* (italics my own) Christianity that's easily maintained or simply give up". Duin (108) restates Lifeway Christian Resources' (2006) conclusion after conducting research amongst North American Southern Baptists as to why they had left church: "Many churches...have done a poor job of grounding people in their faith and laying down what commitment as a Christian means.... As a

result, people slid easily in and out of attendance. Instead of lowering the bar, the church...needs to raise it....”

Barna & Kinnaman (2014:175) relevantly state that in respect of some Churchless people who already recognise value in the Church, there are “...two main hurdles between them and deep engagement: (1) the sense that God is missing from church [sic], and (2) the suspicion that Christians are missing the point ”.

3.2.2.11 Reductionism

Closely associated with paragraph 3.2.2.10 is the dynamic of *reductionism* – the “...separation between evangelization [sic] and community [in which]....The church [sic] ...tends to reduce or neglect its essential missionary character.... [T]ends to proclaim *something less than the full Gospel* (italics my own).... [Which] stand in obvious tension with an incarnational approach to mission....” (Guder 2000: ix).

Synchronous with institutionalism (3.2.2.1), Rasmusson (1995:237), in reference to Troeltsch (1931:1007), states – as quoted by Guder (2000:104) – that reductionism means “...a modification of Christian thought in order to *bring it down to the average level...of practical possibility*, and it is a principle of far-reaching adjustment and compromise”. It is the sin-based human tendency to reduce the Gospel, to - in the words of Yoder (1994:111), as quoted by Guder (102) - “...provide respectable grounds to relativize [sic] [i.e., bring under control] the real claims of Christ”. The outcome is to remove God’s control – and ultimately to control God (Guder 98). It thus compromises the Gospel in relationship with the environments in which it is expressed and lived out (Guder 98). Critically, Guder (101) claims, “A reductionist view assigns an authority to a reduction that ends up making it into a distortion.”

Reductionism’s distortion of the Christian faith forms Church which is less - and other - than the Christ-like prototype (Guder 2000:102). This particular expression of an inherently flawed, humanly constituted Church has marginalised many, impeding God’s work in and through it. The Church becomes “...*an obstacle* (italics my own) to the flow of God’s love and grace

into the world” (Guder 132). Guder (133) cautions, “We must, therefore, be profoundly concerned about the implications of a reductionist gospel for the church [sic]”.

The “...curious separation of salvation from the kingdom of God in the church’s [sic] evangelistic proclamation....” (Guder 2000: ix) and “...the individualism of most evangelistic work in the West [Developed World]” (Guder x; cf. 109, 110, 111) significantly narrowed the meaning of salvation. For example, especially in the early and Constantine Church the focus shifted to the concern, preparation and qualification for the individual’s life after death (Guder 105, 111) – *eternal life* and paradise. Therefore in its mission, the focus became the saving of souls - “...salvation has itself become the purpose and program of the church [sic]” (Guder 133).

Outsiders experienced the Church as a soul saving exigency (Guder 2000:127; see Pillay 2015:2) - with reference to Barth (1962:568) (as edited to reflect Barth’s emphasis), as an “institute of salvation” or “(*Heilsanstalt*)” (Guder 135). The Church’s core business became “...the management and distribution of salvation....” (Guder 113). It’s message and relevance in society became disenfranchised, souring sentiments towards it and the faith (3.2.2.7). This was detrimental to the vastly greater kingdom of God vision proclaimed by Jesus (Guder 108 & 109). Guder (110 & 111) portends: “The essential character of the incarnation as the definition of Christian existence (3.2.2.9) was largely diluted for the majority of Christendom”, distancing people from it. Guder (102) conclusively asserts that, “...Western reductionisms are the great challenge that North Atlantic [that is, Developed World] churches face...[in]...evangelistic ministry”.

Drawing on the work of Karl Barth (1962:559), Guder (2000:124) also identifies an ethical over-emphasis upon the promotion of social justice and morality as a dilution of the Gospel, it rapidly becoming an ideology of human creation (cf. Beyers 2015:3). Guder (124) postulates: “When God’s justice...is reduced to a humanly managed program of social change [for example in North American mainline denominations]It must make its case as one of many ethical systems...within the cultures of the world”. Christianity - and the Church -

consequently loses its distinctive power of faith and hope, losing much of its special appeal for - and making it unattractive to - outsiders (Guder 124).

Notably, with reference to Bosch (1991:50-52), Guder (2000:105) states that the “...chasm between the Christian and Jewish faith communities has resulted in a pervasive reductionism of the gospel with regard to our rootedness in Israel and the Old Covenant ...” This has potentially marginalised many (the Jewish community) from the Church. Also, the Gospel’s early encounter with the Hellenistic world’s strong philosophical base negatively caused the Gospel’s “...movement from event to system....” (Guder 107), removing some of the dynamism of the *pure* Gospel.

Reductionism is an enormous challenge for the Church, requiring “...radical conversion from a deeply engrained reductionism whose result is a *gospel that is too small*” (italics my own) (Guder 2000:102).

3.2.2.12 Prescriptive, closed-minded & bigoted

Outsiders are put-off and frustrated by - and thus withdraw from - the Church due to their perception of it being closed to dialogue on, or questioning of, many of its beliefs and/or practices (Jamieson 2002:121) (3.2.2.2). This is indicative in a “the Bible says it, so I believe it (so don’t question it)/take it or leave it” type of approach; a “my way or the highway” mind-set (De Kock 2001:138). It is expressed in an attitude of exclusivity (Barna & Kinnaman 2014:101). The Church has an unattractive reputation of being defensive rather than willing to engage (Dawkins 2006:211). According to Slaughter (2008:28), “Postmoderns [sic]...believe the religion of the church to be restricting”. Barna and Kinnaman (95) aptly conclude after voluminous research: “...when the Christian community does not provide a thoughtful or challenging response to their [exiles - young adults on the verge of drifting from the Church] deeper probing, exiles often lose interest in and passion for the things of God....” This closed-mindedness is also expressed in a confrontational approach to evangelism (Gibbs & Coffey 2001:190,191).

This attitude is rooted in legalism and judgementalism (3.2.2.4), and arrogance. It is evident in a closed-mindedness towards any who are different, such as those of other faiths or alternative ideological viewpoints (Jamieson 2002:165) and those who prefer other forms of being and doing Church (De Kock 2001: 138). In extreme forms, this develops into a “laager-type” situation where the local church erects walls around itself, successfully isolating itself from the outside world – for example, I heard first-hand of a local church which *encouraged* members to only marry someone from within their local church.

This closed-minded, high-handed, repelling attitude is sometimes fostered by an inherent self-righteousness on the part of the Church, adopting a “know-it-all” attitude in its relationship with the outside world. What the Church thinks and says is prescriptive, and in no way errant. Portmann and Plüss (2011:183) identify the prevailing human need for *autonomy* as opposed to *coercion*, stating: “Religions, religious groups and their protagonists are therefore criticised or rejected as soon as they use coercion, prescribe a certain form of belief or a certain conduct or way of life”. This is to some extent evident in preachers’ expectations of their message being accepted without question (De Kock 2001:138). Certain contexts subversively require the leaving of one’s God-given brain and rationale outside of the church - a few years ago a colleague in the Western Cape erected a sign outside his church asking people to please bring their brains with them to church.

The C/church is often prescriptive and thus marginalising of its own. This occurs when clergy are too controlling (Duin 2008:23). It is also experienced in churches “... restrictive controls that exclude laity from ministry and from taking initiative” (Gibbs & Coffey 2001:89). This takes on a more destructive form when the Church fails “...to recognise the calling of laypersons in the world as their primary area of ministry” (Gibbs & Coffey 89). Pertinently, quoting from Slocum (1990:170), Gibbs & Coffey (89) state that, “...the issue is not ‘how to get the laity involved in the ministry of the church’ but ‘how to get the church involved in the ministry of the laity!’”

The above are all marginalising facial features, identity traits, of the Church- the way outsiders see the local church at its crucial interface with their lives. This does not imply that responsibility for marginalisation of people sits solely with the Church. Many outsiders, at one time “insiders”, have also due to their own various actions marginalised themselves from the C/church and become a part of the non-Gathered Church category; for example, never having understood the claim of Christ upon their lives (or resisting this claim (cost)) or never having got involved in ministry in the C/church (Gibbs 1993:81-85), neglecting the essential disciplines of the Christian life, including regular worship and fellowship with other Christians (see 4.3.2.2). Furthermore, the Church is a work-in-progress (see 1.2.2) which in itself will be a cause of marginalisation.

3.3 Conclusion

The attention, in this chapter, to Osmer’s (2008:4) interpretive *why* of the Church’s marginalisation in a Developed World context has shown that it is dangerously self-perpetuated, and entrenching (Gibbs 1993:13). The effect naturally spans outward through social groupings, especially the family unit. The result is an accelerating downward spiral, society as a whole becoming more and more secularised, and separated from the Church; and the Church becoming further and further marginalised, to the extent at times, of threatening extinction. Van der Merwe (2014:5) relevantly quotes Wright (2008:264) in this regard: “If, then, the church [sic] is to be renewed in its mission precisely in and for the world of space, time, and matter, we cannot ignore or *marginalize* [sic] (italics my own) that same world”.

In the next chapter, the Church’s *own contribution* to its demise (self-marginalisation) - as theoretically postulated in this chapter-, particularly through its *deformation*, will be empirically researched.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH WORK: AN EMPIRICAL RESEARCH SURVEY

4.1 Introduction

This, *descriptive-empirical* task - the first of Osmer's four tasks of practical theological interpretation (Osmer 2008:4; see 1.4.2) - was carried out to test the research hypothesis that *the perceptions of members and outsiders (the non-Gathered Church) about the Church are stumbling blocks and barriers to their Church belonging and consequent faith practice* (1.3). In Osmer terminology, in this chapter the question is asked of current praxis: *What is going on?* The methodology for this task is outlined in section 4.2.

Because it is to be expected that the data sources and retrieval methods of this research will not be fool-proof, potential problems and limitations of the project were identified, including the inability both to secure sufficient respondents and to source sufficient data to draw meaningful conclusions. The reality must be faced that the research exercise may uncover no significant findings, as must the possibility that respondents may corrupt the research by answering with false information.

My proactive approach to the above potential problems has been to hold to the courage of my convictions regarding the value of this project, to be alert to the possibility that there may be people who may want to corrupt the research, and to create a general awareness about my research project in our church community ahead of my actually conducting the research.

4.2 The Research Process

The decision to use the method of a detailed research questionnaire to acquire research data is discussed in Chapter 1. Data to test the hypothesis of this mini-dissertation was sourced from targeted groups by way of their completing the research questionnaire (4.2.3). Those targeted to complete the questionnaire were dealt with ethically: they were clearly informed of the nature and purposes of the research, of the intended use of the research findings, of the absolute confidentiality of their individual response, as well as of their anonymity in the project - see 4.2.5. The undertaking was given that specific

sources of research data would not be divulged. No persons would be pressurized into completing the questionnaire.

4.2.1 Connecting with Department of Statistics

The empirical research process began (and continued for the duration of this mini-dissertation) with an inaugural meeting with dedicated supervisors from the Department of Statistics at the University of Pretoria, Mesdames Fransonet Reyneke (statistician) and Joyce Jordaan (research consultant), who were appointed to my project. The parameters for the empirical survey via questionnaire were discussed and established.

4.2.2 Establishing the target groups

In terms of the scope of this research, three separate target groups were identified: those within the church, those who have left the church (the “non-Gathered” church) and those who have never belonged to the church (the “non-churched”) living in the suburb of Brooklyn. All the above therefore live in the same community as the church and have, it may be assumed, some knowledge of the church. This was based on the understanding that this research involving Brooklyn Methodist members and ex-members had been approved by the church executive (1.2.3). A target of thirty respondents for each grouping was set. The research questionnaire for each group would by definition need to differ to some extent.

4.2.3 Developing the questionnaire

4.2.3.1 General

In order to test the research hypothesis adequately, and at the same time to collect additional data relevant to building up the local church, a broad pro-forma questionnaire was developed in co-operation with the Department of Statistics. This would allow data to be manipulated as to gender, race group, age, level of education, and so on. The questionnaire was developed so as to elicit from the respondents factors that have created - or are creating - obstacles to church participation. This is addressed deductively as well as inductively.

Drilling down further in the data field, the questionnaire requests a response indicating in which sphere of the respondent's church experience these obstacles were experienced; for example, the Sunday Service or the Youth group or the choir (see Appendices 1 & 2).

An attempt was made to balance any negatives with the opportunity for a positive perspective. Incorporated in each grouping's questionnaire was the identifying and weighting of pre-listed features making up the respondent's ideal church.

4.2.3.2 Members

This questionnaire (Appendix 2) was adjusted to capture members' current experience of Brooklyn Methodist Church, both positive and negative. This would elicit information from the member regarding shortcomings in the church which are off-putting to them, and therefore potentially to outsiders as well.

4.2.3.3 Ex-members (*non-Gathered*)

My goal in this group (see Appendix 1) was to find out why they had left the church - which factors had contributed to this decision. This would identify issues ex-members had with the church, which may have marginalised them as then members. These same issues could potentially have a similar impact on others in the church as well as on the non-churched.

4.2.3.4 Outsiders (*never/non-churched*)

The third group's questionnaire was also specifically designed for its own particular context, researching how the non-churched in general experienced Brooklyn Methodist Church.

Owing to the constraints inherent in a mini-dissertation such as this, as well as to unforeseen factors in targeting the public in general, this third grouping to be researched had to be withdrawn from this study. It is hoped that this aspect of the study will be able to be carried out at some future opportunity.

4.2.3.5 Pilot study

The completed questionnaires were used with volunteers in a pilot study to test their suitability in terms of factors such as ease of comprehension and completion, the time required for completion, and suitability/relevance of the questions. The response of those in this pilot study was positive.

After the report-back to the research consultant at the university, the questionnaire was then finalised for use amongst the random sample groups.

4.2.4 Drawing random samples

In order to establish the credibility of the research data, the sample selection would need to be random. Random samples from populations of the two target groups - members and ex-members - as supplied (4.2.4.1 & 4.2.4.2) were therefore generated by the Department of Statistics (UP). These random samples proved sufficient, allowing a fair margin for unsuccessful “hits”.

4.2.4.1 Members of Brooklyn Methodist

An electronic version of the current membership of Brooklyn Methodist, listed alphabetically, was supplied to the Department of Statistics, who ran a random sample and from that supplied a random sample listing of a large proportion of our membership.

4.2.4.2 Ex-members (non-Gathered) of Brooklyn Methodist

From our archived records at Brooklyn Methodist we were able to produce in electronic format a listing of ex-members who had terminated their membership at the church in the last five years. This was also submitted to the Department of Statistics and once again a random sample was generated, and a listing of just over 250 ex-members supplied.

4.2.5 Letter of consent

To legitimise the research study further, a letter of consent - to be signed by the respondent - was drafted by the Department of Practical Theology of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria (see Appendix 4).

4.2.6 Addressing the questionnaire to the sample groups

Ex-members and members were contacted by telephone (owing to the sensitive nature of the enquiry) or email, with the request that they complete the questionnaire and consent letter, and return it to me. This was done sequentially working from the top of the random sample lists (4.2.4.1 & 4.2.4.2) downwards. Initially, approximately 50 potential respondents in each group were canvassed. Those who responded positively were electronically mailed or hand-delivered the documents and their names duly recorded on a control listing for record/follow up purposes.

In the course of the research activity, owing to a significant level of unsuccessful “hits”, the above process was repeated a few times, working sequentially further and further down the random sample listings.

4.2.7 Receipt of completed questionnaires

As completed questionnaires were returned - by email, fax or by hand - those that were identifiable were marked off as completed on the control listing and a tally kept of the number of completed returns.

In the process it became clear that inadequate provision had been made for confidentiality and anonymity in respect of respondents. As a result, a research “post-box” was placed in our church for questionnaires to be returned anonymously. Some respondents requested even stricter measures to ensure absolute anonymity, and therefore the avenue was created - and respondents informed about it - whereby completed questionnaires could be submitted directly via email to Mrs Jordaan at the Department of Statistics. A number of questionnaires were subsequently returned via this route.

This survey phase of the empirical research took a much longer period of time than had been originally planned for (more than two months, compared to an anticipated one month). In order to balance the attainment of the target of 30 for each of the two surveyed groups and the time constraints for the completion of the mini-dissertation, it was ultimately decided to finalise this phase with 28 responses having been received from ex-members and 33 from members.

4.2.8 Batching completed questionnaires for data-capture

The completed questionnaires were processed for data-capture, allocating each questionnaire a sequential respondent number (within each of the two groups), and transcribing the respondents' choices for each question into the relevant data-capture field on the questionnaire itself.

4.2.9 Submission to research consultant

The completed questionnaires, containing the very important research data, were handed in at the Department of Statistics for data-capture and programmatic data reduction. Adequately sophisticated methods of reduction, correlation and integration were used.

4.2.10 Statistical results

After some time, the results of a basic straight-line analysis were mailed to me in the form of summary tables and were subsequently discussed with my research consultant. These summary tables of findings were then used to produce graphs (4.3.2), which aid analysis and interpretation of the data. A request for certain cross-tabulations was also made to the statistics department, and subsequently supplied. These finer analyses of data provide added value to the analysis phase – see 4.3.3.

4.3 Research findings: analysis and interpretation

4.3.1 Introduction

The information resulting from the statistical processing of the research data obtained from the completed questionnaires, and as supplied in the Department of Statistics reports, was analysed and certain conclusions drawn as to *what* is occurring regarding self-marginalisation. It is fundamentally desirable and the ultimate objective of this study that certain generalisations should be able to be made about the research subject (Brooklyn Methodist Church) from such a research project, as long as such generalisations constitute a fair and accurate interpretation of the recorded data.

4.3.2 Straight-line analysis results

The straight-line analysis revealed certain important information with regard to the sample groups, as well as the research hypothesis.

4.3.2.1 Sample groups information

The following information, presented below in various graph formats, is of significance for the purposes of this mini-dissertation.

4.3.2.1.(a) Age distribution of the sample groups (Question no. 1.1 per questionnaire)

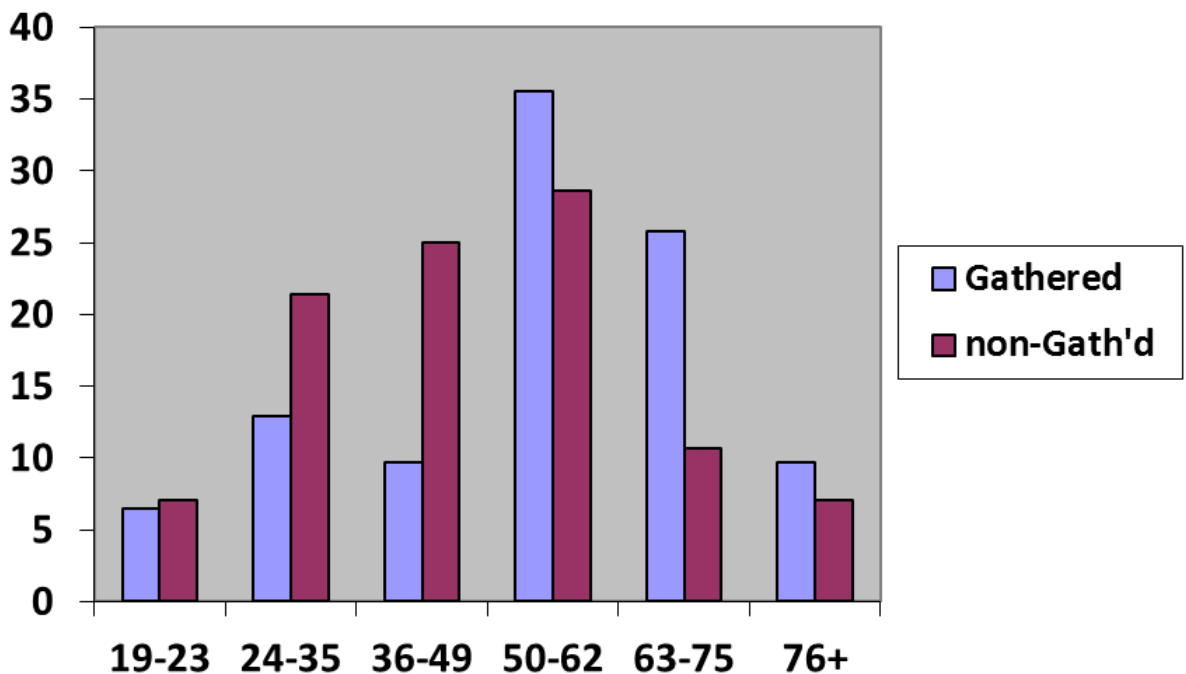


Illustration 2: Bar chart illustrating age distribution of both sample groups

The graph in Illustration 2 graphically represents this information. The information is useful, first of all because the age distribution of the sample groups fairly accurately parallels that of our congregation as a whole (the research population), thus lending credibility to the randomness of the samples drawn. This applies more particularly to the Gathered church (current members) than to the non-Gathered church (ex-members). The higher incidence of 24-35 and 36-49 year-olds in the non-gathered category is potentially indicative of the

world-wide trend towards the marginalisation of this age group, in particular, from the church (3.2.2.5). However, it may also indicate the greater potential of this age bracket to experience the church as irrelevant and boring and to lose contact, as well as the higher mobility of these categories in terms of career development and emigration - older, and especially retired persons, are far more inclined to be settled in one place. This information is extremely important for Brooklyn Methodist, the research subject (see 4.3.3.1 for age distribution cross-tabulation).

4.3.2.1.(b) Gender make-up of sample groups (Question no. 1.2)

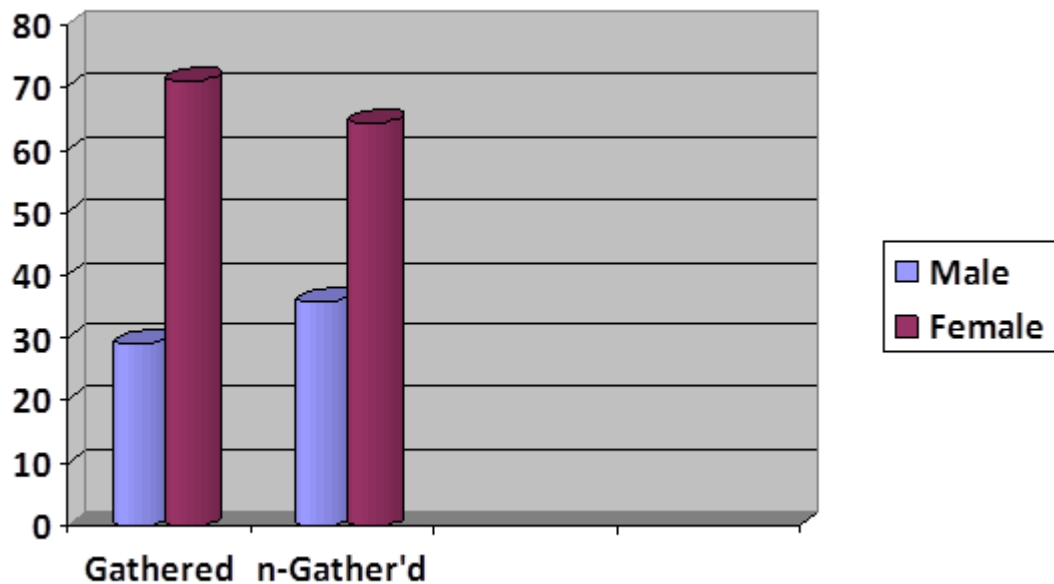


Illustration 3: Gender composition of both sample groups

The bar-chart in Illustration 3 reveals the gender make-up of the two sample groups. It is interesting to note the similarity of the gender-composition of the samples, once again suggesting the validity and reliability of the random samples drawn, endorsed by the fact that Brooklyn Methodist, like many South African – and possibly worldwide – churches, has a higher percentage of female than male members. In addition, the information indicates that reasons causing members to leave Brooklyn Methodist are impacting female and male uniformly, and therefore that male-female gender bias is not a factor impacting church-leaving. However, the fact that neither sample group included a homo,

bi or trans-sexual person supports the contention that church dogma, specifically in respect of such gendered persons, has marginalised these people from the Church (see 3.2.2.2).

4.3.2.1.(c) Relationship-status of sample groups (Question no. 1.3)

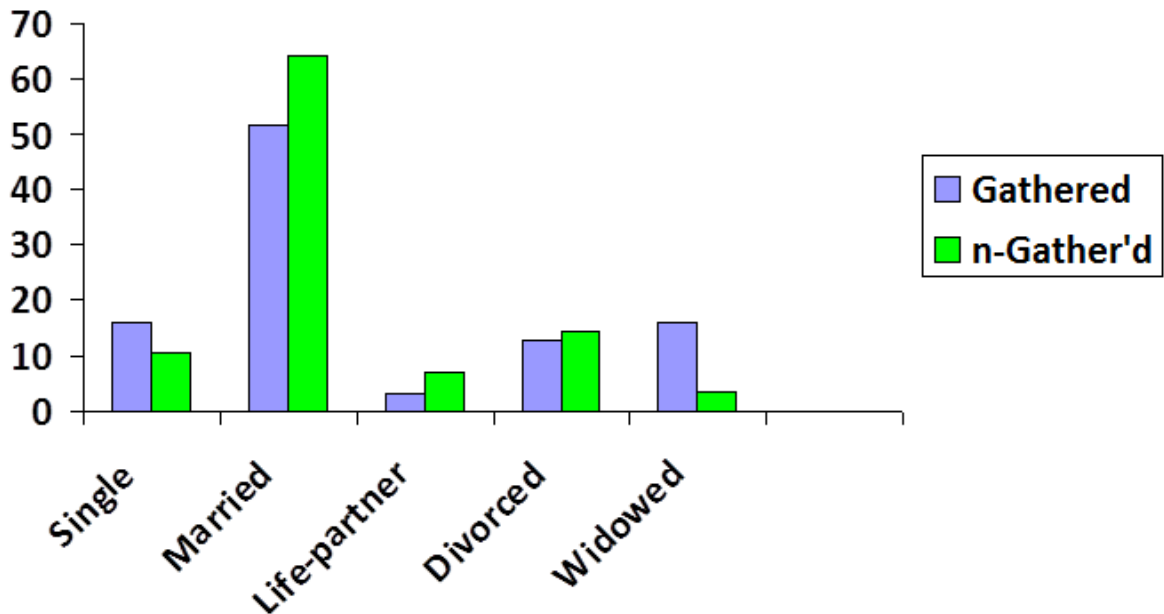


Illustration 4: Relationship status by sample group

The bar-chart in Illustration 4 once again reflects sample groups that are consistent with the composition of our church as a whole - another endorsement of the credibility of the samples. This particular information is of interest with regard to Church-marginalisation from the perspective that proportionately more people have left this church as married couples, and that single and widowed persons are least inclined to leave. One possible interpretation may be that married persons, having a spouse, are less likely to need the Church relationally, and therefore may be less tolerant of shortcomings of the Church, some of which are listed as reasons for marginalisation from the Church (see 3.2.2).

4.3.2.1.(d) Race composition of sample groups (Question no. 1.6)

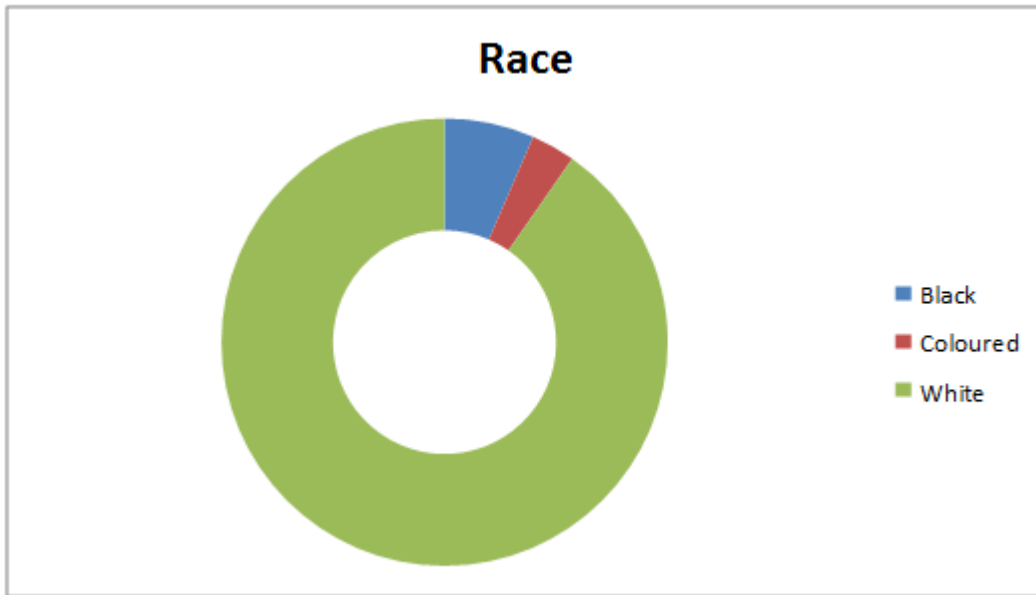


Illustration 5: Doughnut indicating race composition of whole sample

The pie chart in Illustration 5 indicates once again that the random samples were accurate in that the race distributions in them are consistent with our overall membership as a mostly white, conservative suburban congregation.

4.3.2.1.(e) Socio-economic sector of sample groups

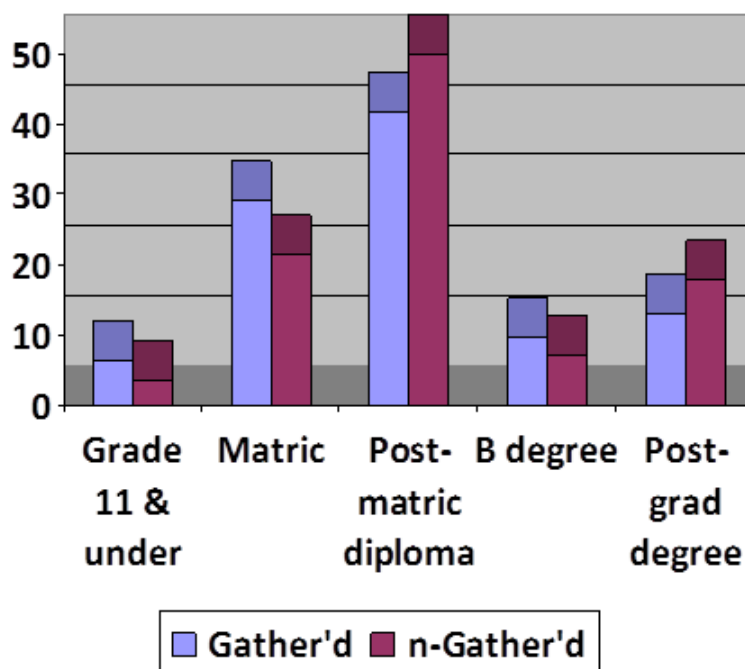


Illustration 6: Education data of sample groups (Question no. 1.8)

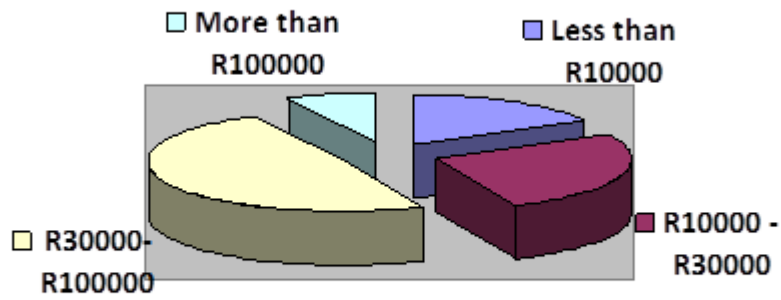
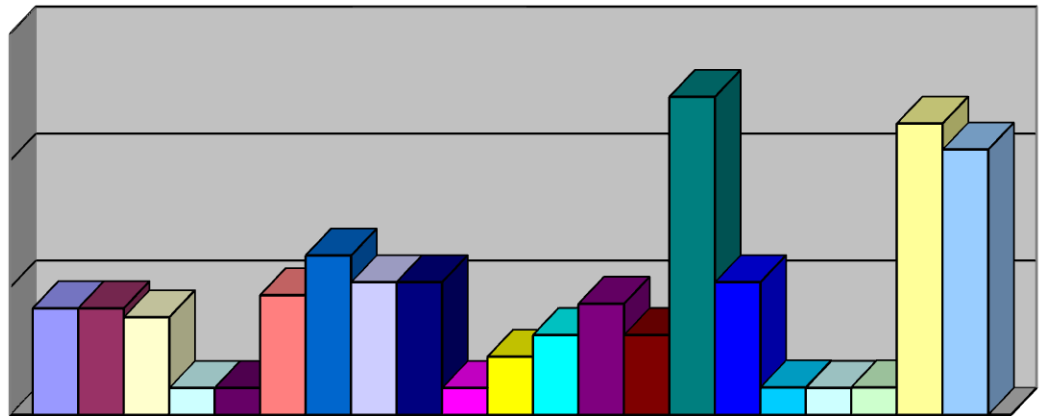


Illustration 7: Pie-chart of monthly household income combining both groups (Question no. 7)

Illustrations 6 and 7 indicate a mainly tertiary educated, middle and high-income earning socio-economic composition of the sample groups.

4.3.2.2 Why people left the church

4.3.2.2.(a) Empirical study of praxis (Question 4.1)



un-welcoming/un-friendly	self-righteous/hypocritical
irrelevant, outdated & boring	not generous
self-centred	unsound doctrine/watering down/corrupting Christianity
cut-off	un-caring
imposing & bureaucratic	exclusive
negative/judgemental	dislike minister
hurtful of members	lacking integrity
non-value adding	church burnout
turned from faith	anti-God
no longer believe in God	post-churched faith
lost contact	

Illustration 8: Bar chart showing reasons why non-gathered left the church

Illustration 8 graphs the reasons why non-gathereds' left the church, indicating *what* is happening in the context of the loss of members. It is clear from the graph which factors had most and which least impact. Many of the reasons listed for leaving the church substantiate theory of Chapter 3 (see 4.3.2.2.(b)).

The statistics department also calculated the means as centres of gravity for the scales of why ex-members (the non-gathered) had left the church – see Appendix 3. The table lists these factors according to the calculated *mean*, in ascending value order, moving down the chart. The lower the value of the mean as centre of gravity, the higher the incidence of the factor as a cause of people

leaving our church. Those indicating the highest occurrence rate in this analysis correspond with the results shown in the graph, Illustration 8.

Both of these indicators (i.e., Illustration 8 and Appendix 3) reveal that ex-members mainly left the church *not* owing to God-factors (such as loss of faith and turning against God), but because of factors related to the church itself; the three most common being: (i) the church was *not adding value* to their faith; (ii) they could just as easily *practise their faith without* the church; and (iii) they had *lost contact* with the church. In fact, they indicate that God-factors causing people to leave the church were ranked the three *lowest*, having the very *least* impact upon those leaving. These results *vis-à-vis what* is happening regarding church-leaving, therefore, as a whole *support* my research hypothesis.

4.3.2.2.(b) Theory and praxis

Main reasons for leaving the church (per Illustration 8)	The theory of self-marginalising factors (per Chapter 3)
Non-value adding	Reductionist; Shallow spirituality;
Post-churched faith	
Lost contact	Unfriendly, uncaring & unloving
Church is cut-off	Withdrawal from community
Uncaring	Unfriendly, uncaring & unloving
Church burnout	
Imposing & bureaucratic	Institutionalism; Prescriptive, closed-minded & bigoted (intolerant)
Unsound doctrine	Theology
Hurtful of members	
Unwelcoming & unfriendly	Unfriendly, uncaring & unloving; Prejudice; Negativism;
Self-righteous & hypocritical	Legalism & judgementalism; Integrity
Irrelevant, outdated & boring	Irrelevant, archaic Church sub-culture

Table 1: Association of key empirical & theory reasons for marginalisation

It is also significant that many of the reasons for the non-gathered leaving the church (Illustration 8) match the theory of Church self-marginalisation detailed and discussed in Chapter 3 (3.2.2) - see Table 1. The more significant reasons for leaving the church are listed in descending order on the left and the theory factors of self-marginalisation - where there is a fit - matched against them.

This observation serves to verify the literary sources on the theory of Church-marginalisation, and concomitantly to add credibility to the empirical research-sourced information, thus adding integrity to the research project as a whole.

For analysing and strategizing purposes (Ch. 5), the most frequent reasons for leaving the (our) church (Illustration 8) can be grouped by connection, producing the following short-list of principal reasons for having left:

- *Non-value adding* - overwhelmingly the principal reason- (including non-value adding, post-churched faith, irrelevant, out-dated & boring)
- *Un-welcoming & unfriendly* (including un-welcoming & unfriendly, self-righteous & hypocritical, cut-off, imposing & bureaucratic)
- *Uncaring* (including lost contact, church burnout, hurtful of members)
- *Theologically unsound*

4.3.3 Cross-tabulation results

In addition to the straight-line frequency tests run, certain cross-tabulations were calculated by the Department of Statistics in order to test and/or reflect associations between various factors included in the research questionnaire and thus also to test the research hypothesis. Unfortunately, most often, the result “no association” was reported – this may be the result of the low number of responses per factor cross-tabulated. However, in addition to those statistically reflecting an association, the cross-tabulations do descriptively indicate certain relevant and interesting information.

4.3.3.1 Cross-tabulation of the two sample groups *Personal Profile* data

The results of this exercise primarily statistically confirmed the graphically presented straight-line based composition of the sample groups and research population as a whole (4.3.2.1): that being, that the two sample groups (the Gathereds and the non-Gathereds) are largely - and importantly for the research exercise - homogenous, with one exception. This is in the case of the age distribution of the sample groups (4.3.2.1.(a)). The straight line analysis shows significant variations between the samples, however the cross-tabulations do not produce any associations in the frequencies reported (interpreted as indicating that no significant variations exist between them). This apparent anomaly may be due to the fact of the relatively low number of responses being worked with (4.3.3).

4.3.3.2 Cross-tabulation of belief and Church factors

4.3.3.2.(a) Cross-tabulation *belief in God and Church membership*

(Question no.'s 2.2 & 3.1)

A cross-tabulation of belief in God and Church membership indicated that belief in God does not have a direct correlation with Church membership; in other words, that belief in God does not necessarily imply Church membership. Of the 100% of the non-Gathered Church who professed a belief in God, 34,6% were not active Church members. Likewise, cross-tabulation indicates that belief in God does not imply or mean a favourable view of the Church (of the 100 % of the non-Gathered Church professing a belief in God, 20% were either ambivalent about or un-interested in the Church). Even some of the Gathered Church who professed a belief in God reported some ambivalence towards the Church.

These cross-tabulations descriptively *support the research hypothesis* (1.3) that non-membership of the Church is often dissociated from non-belief in or negative attitudes towards God, and is often due to the Church itself.

4.3.3.2.(b) Cross-tabulation *If I came across a church that was like Jesus, I would seriously consider attending/ joining it and My feeling towards the church as a whole is* (Question no.'s 3.6 & 3.3)

A cross-tabulation of *If I came across a church that was like Jesus, I would seriously consider attending/ joining it and My feeling towards the church as a whole is* (non-Gathered) indicates that 13% of those who would join a church that is like Jesus are either ambivalent about or disinterested in the Church. Significantly, in fact, in contrast with the statistical “expected count” of 11,5 % of non-gathereds’ choosing *not* to join a (theoretical) church that is like Jesus, 0% of them chose this option. The Pearson Chi-Square and the Fisher’s Exact Test statistical calculations - both giving a result of 0.008 (which is within the standardised benchmark of .05) - test positively for an association between these parameters.

In terms of these research results, contrary to some expectations, *certain people although ambivalent about or disinterested in the Church would join a church that was like Jesus*. Deductively, it may therefore be said that the reason why these people are *not* in the Church is because it is not like Jesus; it is because of the Church’s own shortcomings in, or “deformities” of, identity that people do not belong. It thus empirically shows that a disparity between the normative/defined and empirical Church does exist, and furthermore that this disparity is - in support of the research hypothesis - a barrier to Church-belonging and resulting faith practice.

It is also noteworthy that, compared to the full 100% in the case of the non-Gathered, only 84% of the Gathered would join/move to a church that was like Jesus, suggesting that the Gathered are happier with the current status of the church. It also therefore once again indicates that the non-Gathered have withdrawn from the Church because of shortcomings in the Church itself; that is, because the Church is *not* fulfilling its true identity in Christ.

4.3.3.2.(c) Cross-tabulation *Mostly, I feel towards God and My feeling towards the Church as a whole is* (Question no.'s 2.4 & 3.3)

A further cross-tabulation was carried out between respondents *Mostly, I feel towards God* and their *My feeling towards the Church as a whole is*.

Interestingly, though not statistically tested, in the case of both the Gathered and non-Gathered groups, the research revealed descriptively that it is predominantly those who mostly feel *love* towards God that have a significant (18% and 14% respectively) degree of ambivalence towards the Church. It is possible, though not statistically conclusive, to deduce from this that for this group of respondents, for whom God's love is paramount, there is a shortcoming of love in the Church. This would affirm the reality that of the Church's problems, identity is a major one (1.2.2).

Overwhelmingly, the outcomes of the above cross-tabulation calculations support and further endorse the research hypothesis.

4.3.3.3 Cross-tabulation: Gathered and non-Gathered research data

Furthermore, cross-tabulations of the two sample groups were carried out on various factors (over and above *Personal Profile* - 4.3.3.1), comparing responses between the Gathered and non-Gathered in order to source potential additional information related to the research. The exercise only resulted in a few associations being highlighted, this in itself importantly - in terms of adding credibility to the research as a whole - indicative of the homogeneity between the two groups. The following are the associations that resulted.

4.3.3.3.(a) If I was church-shopping I would look for a church that was perfect (Question no. 5.1)

The Pearson Chi-Square value of 0.033 is less than 0.05, ordinarily indicating an association. However, the statistical warning that more than 20% of the cells - 75%, in fact - have an expected count of less than 5, informs that it is more suitable and reliable to read the Fisher's Exact Test result. This reading of 0.03, also less than 0.05, again indicates an association. Using the Standard Residual statistic - for which results of 2 or higher, or -2 or lower, are telling -, the results of -1.5 and 1.5 under the *Strongly disagree* responses are that close

(and closest) to 2/-2 to suggest that the association occurs here. This prompts an investigation of these *Count* and *Expected count* results.

The Gathered and non-Gathered both have *Expected counts* of 4 compared to actual *Counts* of 1 and 7 respectively. These are significant variances in terms of the low bases they are derived from. The fact that the Gathered's count in strong disagreement with the tested statement is lower than expected (1 versus 4) says that for those in the church the desirability of a perfect church is higher than would be expected; the converse applies to the non-Gathered where a higher than expected number strongly disagree with the statement (7 versus 4) indicating that their need for a perfect church is less than would be expected.

This observation may suggest a number of things; those in the Church are more naïve about the realities of Church-life and still believe in such a thing as a perfect church, whereas those who have left have a less idealistic view of the Church because of their past negative experiences; the non-Gathered's are in fact disillusioned with the Church and (more) sceptical about a *perfect* church; the Gathered's, remaining/having chosen to remain in a church that has for a considerable period experienced on-going conflict and pain, have a strong need and desire for a conflict-free, united and happy, perfect church; non-Gathered's may have found it difficult to find and join/not yet have joined another local church and therefore their priorities in terms of church virtues may have changed, a perfect church becoming far less important when one does not even yet belong to a church.

In terms of the research hypothesis, the above as a whole suggests that those outside of the Church have a less positive/more realistic view of the Church, which may support the hypothesis that their absence from the Church is due to the Church and not God per se.

Notably, cross-tabulating the groupings of the strongly agree/agree and strongly disagree/disagree gives both a Pearson Chi-Square - with 0% cells with expected count of < 5 - and Fisher's Exact Test result of 0.074, above 0.05. Between the standards of 0.05 and 0.1, this serves only as weak evidence of

an association and does not necessitate further analysis. This observation serves to indicate the value - and thus appropriateness - of the detailed categorisation of researched data per the layout of the research questionnaires.

4.3.3.3.(b) If I was church-shopping I would look for a church that was GLBT friendly (Question no. 5.1)

Although the results are a Pearson Chi-Square and Fisher's Exact Test of above 0.05 (0.085 and 0.087 respectively), they do (being between 0.05 and 0.1) give a weak signal of an association. Again, the Standard Residual count of 1.099, well less than the benchmark of 2, does not point to an analysis of the cell *Counts* and *Expected counts*. Yet such analysis reveals that a significant variance between these two counts occurs within the *Strongly disagree* response to this statement – a 2 count versus 5.3 expected, and then 8 versus 4.7, for Gathered's and non-Gathered's respectively. Further analysis, however, reveals almost the reverse situation within the *Disagree* response, such that combining these two categories (*Strongly disagree* and *Disagree*) balances the two out – a breakeven - with negligible variances presenting.

Overall, what this shows is that the disagreeing sentiments of the Gathered's for a GLBT church were weaker than anticipated, whereas those of the non-Gathered stronger. These facts could suggest firstly, that because the Gathered's are settled in and belong this becomes less of a central issue, and secondly that bearing in mind *Theologically unsound* was one of the main reasons the non-Gathered left the church (4.3.2.2) they may generally be more theologically fundamentalist. This also endorses the principle (of this research) of the Church – rather than God – causing people to leave the Church.

4.3.3.3.(c) If I was church-shopping I would look for a church that was popular & big (Question no. 5.1)

With 50% - more than 20% - of the cells having an expected count of less than 5, the Fisher's Exact Test result of 0.056 is used. Though above the 0.05 threshold, it is close enough to give some evidence of an association. The overall Standardised Statistic of 2.058 is suggestive of a scrutiny of the cell *Counts* and *Expected counts*. This reveals in the combined *Strongly agree/*

agree category *counts* of 7 and 1 against *Expected counts* of 4.3 and 3.7 for the Gathered's and non-Gathered's respectively. Significantly more than expected of those currently in the church would look for a church that was *popular and big*, the converse applying to those who have left. This says something about both the Gathered's and the non-Gathered's: for those in the church *size does count* and there is a desire to be part of a church where things are happening/ that people are attracted to; this is no longer very important to those who have left, whose priorities have shifted and for whom other factors have become more important (5.2.1).

4.3.3.3.(d) If I was church-shopping I would look for a church that was disability-friendly (Question no. 5.1)

Although the Pearson Chi-Square reading of 0.022 (less than the benchmark of 0.05) would indicate an association in the cross-tabulation, warning is given that more than 20% - 33.3% - of the cells have an expected count of less than 5. This statistic is therefore unreliable and it is preferable to use the Fisher Exact Test. This result is 0.026, also below 0.05, and also indicating an association. The Standard Residual - *standardised statistic* - of 2.604 points to an analysis of actual versus expected counts. These indicate that in terms of *Strongly agreed* with disability friendliness the Gathered *count* was higher than *expected* and the non-Gathered lower than *expected*. In respect of those that *agreed* the opposite applies- the *count* for the Gathered is less than *expected* and the non-Gathered higher than *expected*.

An interpretation of this is firstly that in general disability friendliness is more important than would be expected, and secondly that for those who have left the church it is less important because having experienced Church-discontent, and perhaps not yet belonging to another church, more personal factors of church-content are of higher priority; in other words, those happy in their church context would be more able to consider the needs of marginalised groupings.

4.4. Conclusion

The outcome of this empirical research, having asked the question, *What* is happening in this diminishing church?, is the establishment of the fact that there

are a significant number of former (and existing) church members who have negative sentiments towards or feel that they have outgrown the C/church, but *have no faith issues with God*. It can thus be concluded that the empirical exercise serves to positively affirm the research hypothesis that, within the context of a diminishing C/church, *the perceptions of members and outsiders (the non-Gathered Church) about the Church are stumbling blocks and barriers to their Church belonging and consequent faith practice (1.3)*, and that to a large extent the C/church suffers from *self-marginalisation*.

This conclusion invites the constructive, pro-active response by the C/church (and especially my local church) to address these C/church (identity) issues by reforming current church theory and praxis. The C/church's theory - often amounting to preconceived ideas - about why people are leaving or not joining in the first place will need to be amended. It will require a paradigm shift in the mind of the C/church in this instance. Subsequent to, and arising from, this paradigm shift, a refashioning of the C/church's gospel communicative actions will be necessary in order to target and to reform negative perceptions they formerly created in the minds of affected individuals. Pragmatically, the shortcomings in both theory and praxis need to be sufficiently eradicated so that they no longer pose barriers to church belonging and consequent faith practice.

This is the subject-matter of the next chapter (5).

CHAPTER 5: THE *PRAGMATIC* TASK: RE-CASTING IDENTITY

5.1 Introduction

The intent of this mini-dissertation has been stated as (see 1.3): “*The research will thus aim to [(i)] substantiate this hypothesis –that the perceptions of members and outsiders (the non-Gathered Church) about the Church are stumbling blocks and barriers to their Church belonging and consequent faith practice*”, and (ii) “provide answers to the reasons why members leave the Church”. The hypothesis has been substantiated in the previous chapter (4). The research indicates that Brooklyn Methodist Church shares in the Developed World diminishing-Church crisis (1.1 & 5.2), often as a result of *self-marginalisation*. Attempts by this local church to address the crisis would require “*deep change (italics my own)*” (5.2.3) (Osmer 2008:177, quoting Quinn (1996)), which itself would need to be preceded by sufficient motivation (Osmer 177, 183) for such change (5.2.2). *Change* is a key concept in this pragmatic task.

C/church-leaving reasons will now be tackled - as the second goal of this mini-dissertation – as a means of addressing this church’s crisis. This is executed according to the *pragmatic task* of Osmer’s practical theological model (1.4.1). This task occurs within the “...interaction and mutual influence of all four tasks....” of Osmer’s interpretive practical theology, “...as normative *theological* perspectives [are used] to interpret [this] research and attempt[s made] to shape [this]...field [of study]....” (Osmer 2008:10, 11). The shaping happens through both advancing Practical Theological theory as well as “...the task of forming and enacting strategies of action that influence events in ways that are desirable” (Osmer 176). Outcomes will be the reforming of C/church theory and praxis relating to negative perception-creating communications and actions, and the *re-casting* of the *church’s identity*. C/church-erected barriers to church-belonging and associated faith practice should be minimised, if not eradicated. This will serve to address the current crisis, and stem the tide of Church-leaving and concomitant contraction of God’s kingdom (1.2.8); notwithstanding Bentley’s (2010:148) *Barthian* viewpoints, that, “...the revelation of God is already complete outside its [the Church’s] proclamation (CD 1/2:749). God’s

self-disclosure is...not solely dependant [sic] on the Church's testimony....” (Barth 1978:749), and that ““God...makes good what we do badly’ (CD 1/2: 751)” (Barth 751).

The *pragmatic task* to some extent parallels the five-phase, *congregational strategic planning* process of *Building up the local church* (2.5), creating movement from the empirical to the *normative Church* (1.4.1). *Building up the local church* theory (Ch. 2) will thus function as a platform in this task. Theory of self-marginalisation (Ch. 3) will serve as an interpretive framework; and the *defined Church* as a *microcosm* of the kingdom of God used as the normative theological base.

5.2 Recasting the identity of Brooklyn Methodist Church

5.2.1 The nature of the church's “crisis”

Before embarking upon the pragmatic task per se, it will be helpful to clearly outline the precise nature of Brooklyn Methodist Church's crisis (see 1.1).

Foundationally, the church's crisis centres on who and what it is at this point in time. As previously noted (1.2.7 & 3.1) the church falls in the category of Developed World traditional mainline churches which generally are experiencing considerable decline, and for which predictions of future decline are woeful. As a very old church of more than one hundred years' lifespan, the challenges in this regard are exacerbated. The church culture is deeply entrenched, generally making change in this regard very difficult. Theory on why people leave or do not join the church in the first place is inaccurate, and dated. Resistance to change is severe. Further - and related - challenges are presented by changes in the feeder area of the church, including the ageing of the population, changing demographics in terms of increased cultural/language diversity which has lessened the potential for members in terms of its current identity and the gradual encroachment of businesses.

All of these factors impinge upon financial viability. The critical crisis this church faces is the very real possibility of having- in the foreseeable future- to function without an ordained minister or even to close its doors. This, unless an effective

theory-praxis reformation (2.4.1.2) can be effected, recovering an authentic kingdom of God face to the church, thereby changing outsider perceptions (2.4.1.1 & 2.5) and transforming into a twenty-first century, multi-cultural, South African church. The research findings (5.2.1.1) provide detail for specific focus.

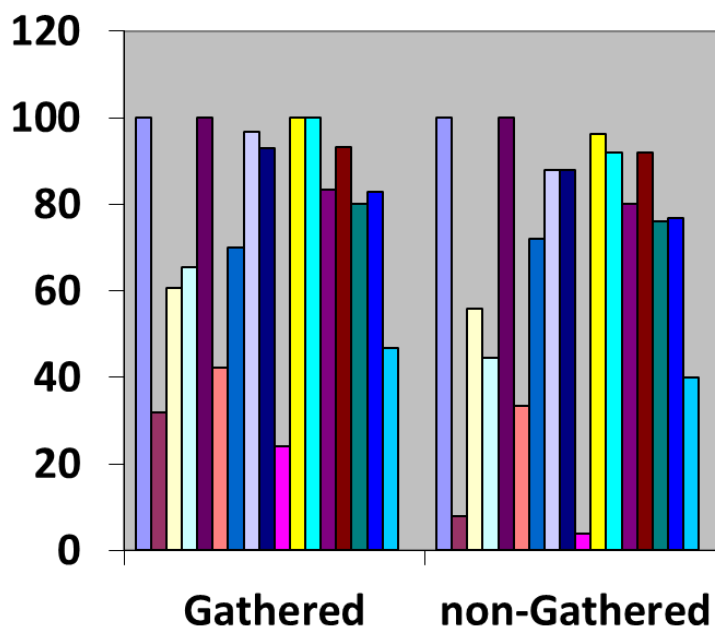
At this juncture it is significant to once again note the anti-cyclical growth in “New churches” - non-traditional churches; for example, Pentecostals and Independent Charismatics (see 1.2.7). Analysis of this trend is complex. However, it is at least partially attributable to an attractive, voguish public face (image), endorsing the *face* (identity)-value principle of this mini-dissertation. This includes contemporary music styles, trendy dress codes (see Portmann & Plüss 2011:185) and state-of-the-art marketing, and excellence as a value (3.2.2.5). Also significant is the Emerging Church movement, an atypical, organic (see 3.2.2.1) and authentic pragmatic norm - and identity- reforming response to Church decline (1.1).

5.2.1.1 Relevant research-sourced information

The research outcomes latently offer much for the future building up of this local church, particularly in the context of a declining Developed World traditional Church. The information generated by the research serves as a pointer to various aspects of the life of this church which are unhelpful to some and which, if positively and effectively addressed, would improve the perception that people have of the church and in the process help to abate the future loss of members for some of these reasons. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, the outputs of this research would serve well in the exercise of creating awareness amongst members of the current, empirical identity of Brooklyn Methodist Church, as a means of taking up the challenge of building up this local church into the identity of the defined, normative Church - no less than the identity of Jesus Christ. This would be the most authentic initiative possible in fulfilling the purpose of being the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27) and a credible witness to Christ (Ac 1:8) in the world – as claimed by Guder (2000:138), the C/church’s “...formation [into what it *should be*] in and before the world is essential to its witness”.

Empirical research data identify ideal characteristics (5.2.1.2) (see Illustration 9), as well as significant identity-casting communicative actions (5.2.1.4) (see Illustration 10) of the local church. Reasons for the non-gathered leaving the church (see Illustration 8, Ch. 4) also provide input to the pragmatic task. Collective information will therefore be used in the reformulating of theory and the design of corrective interventions.

5.2.1.2 Features of the ideal church (Question no. 5.1)



Welcoming/friendly	Perfect	GLBT friendly*
Traditional	Child friendly	Fundamentalist
Strong-preaching	Creative	Casual/informal
Popular/big	Thelogically sound	Dis-ability friendly
Culturally/racially integrated	Community involvement	Focussed on poor
Connected other churches	Non-denominational	Other

Illustration 9: Features of the ideal local church

*(GLBT: Gay, Lesbian, Bi- & Trans-sexual – this acronym has morphed since this research was conducted into GLBTI, adding the Inter-sexual category)

Respondents to the questionnaires theoretically rated the importance to themselves of a given list of features of their ideal church – see Illustration 9. A comparison of the two research groups’ responses generally reveals a similar grading in importance of these. Noteworthy variances occur in respect of the

relatively unimportantly rated features of *perfect* (being without fault or blemish), *traditional* and *popular/big-* and therefore the variances are of negligible import. In all cases, the lower rating by the non-Gathereds may be due to the fact that having experienced the upset of church-leaving they place lower priority on *perfect*, *traditional* and *popular/big*, and greater import in a sense of belonging (4.3.3.3).

The commonly preferred features of an ideal church in the more or less top 80% plus bracket are: *welcoming and friendly*, *child friendly*, *creative*, *casual and informal*, *theologically sound*, *disability friendly*, *culturally and racially integrated*, *involved in the local outside community*, *focussed on the poor* and *connected with other churches*.

Grouping some of these features for pragmatic reasons results in the following *short-list of features of the ideal church*:

- *welcoming and friendly* (including child & disability friendly, casual & informal, culturally & racially integrated)
- *outward-focussed* (including involved in the local outside community, focussed on the poor, connected with other churches)
- *theologically sound*
- *creative*

5.2.1.3 Comparison: *ideal church features & reasons for leaving*

Key features of respondents' ideal local church	Principal reasons for the non-Gathered leaving the church
Welcoming & friendly	Non-value adding
Outward focussed	Unwelcoming & unfriendly
Theologically sound	Uncaring
Creative	Theologically unsound

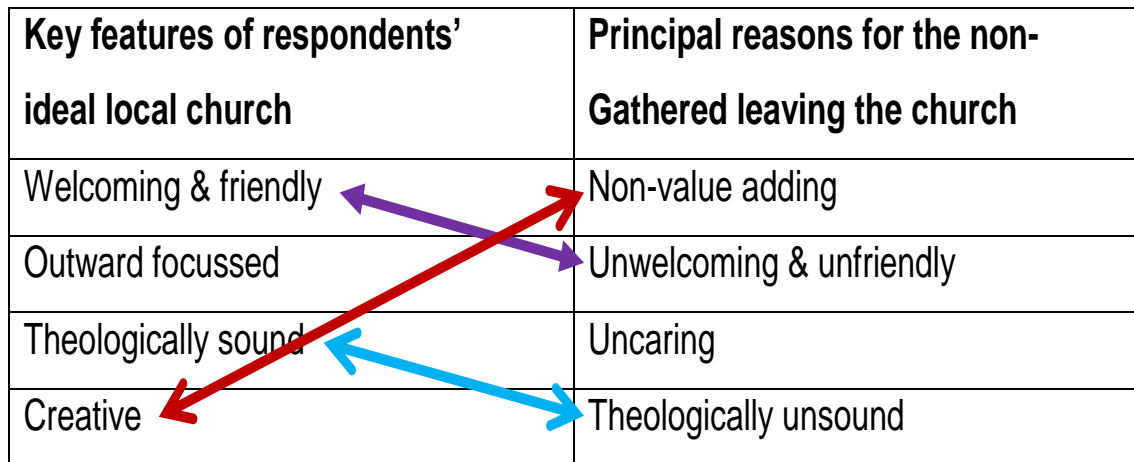


Table 2: Juxtaposing ideal features and reasons for leaving the church

A comparison of the above ideal features (short-list) (5.2.1.2) and the main empirical reasons for leaving (4.3.2.2) consolidates the research data (Table 2).

The outcome is significant in that three of the four top-listed factors are logically consistent with their converse (shown by the arrows in Table 2); *Creative* and *Non-value adding* connect since, generally, creativity (3.2.1.2) adds value (cf. Kinnaman & Lyons 2007:211). The primacy of these church-building features is thus endorsed.

A consolidated short-list of features for a preferred Brooklyn Methodist Church is thus:

- ✓ *Welcoming & friendly*
- ✓ *Value-adding & creative*
- ✓ *Theologically sound*
- ✓ *Outward-focussed*
- ✓ *Caring*

5.2.1.4 Significant identity-casting communicative actions of our church

(Question no. 4.2)

Both target groups were asked to indicate- from a given list of church activities - the particular church context informing their opinion of the church or the reasons why they left – see graphed results, Illustration 10. Focussing interventions upon these key communicative actions will maximise their effect.

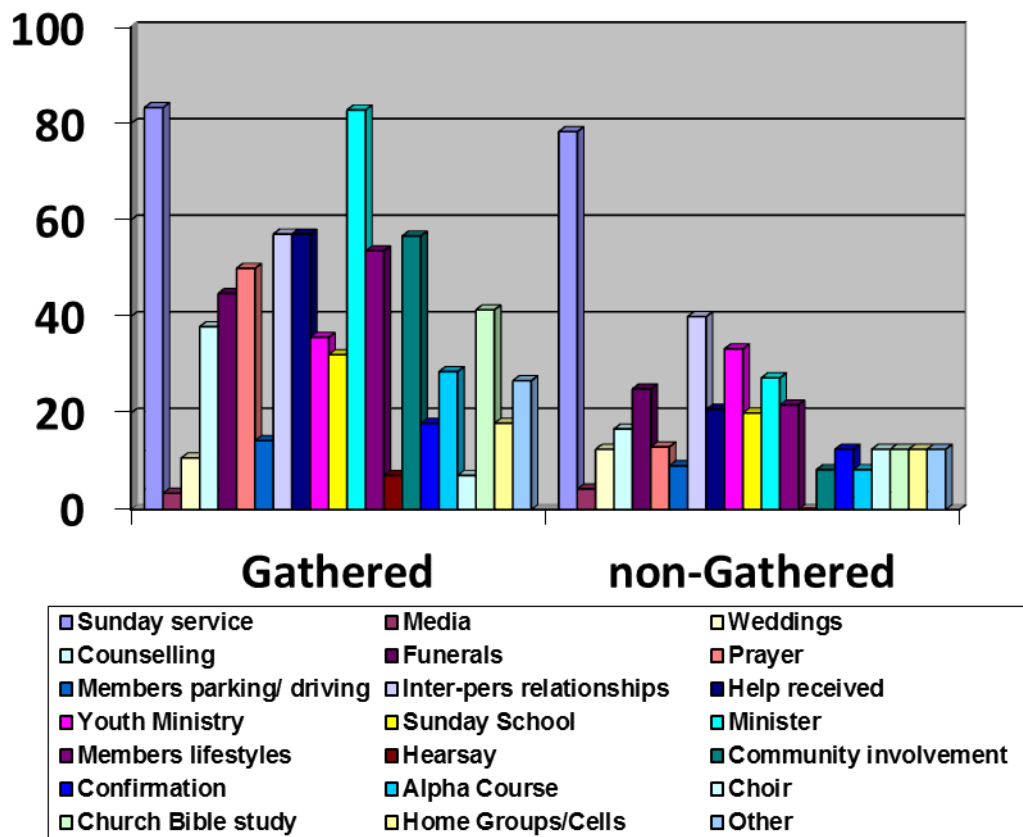


Illustration 10: Identity-casting communicative actions of Brooklyn Methodist Church

Averaging the Gathered and non-Gathered results, the key opinion-forming communicative action of the church is *the Sunday service*. Thereafter, the most important factors are: the *Minister*, members' *Inter-personal relationships*, *Help received* and *Members' lifestyles*. *Youth Ministry*, *Funerals* and *Community involvement* also feature quite prominently.

The researched information garnered, the pragmatic task now follows.

5.2.2 Motivation for change

Building up the local church theory lists *motivation and unfreezing* (2.5.1) as the first step in the strategic process of up-building. This step most importantly involves convincing the members of the church of the need for change. Though the crisis of the church (5.2.1) may serve as shock factor in unfreezing, primary motivating factors identified in terms of building up the church theory are compassion, community and hope (Prof Nel, *Building up the local church* lecture, University of Pretoria, Centre for Contextual Ministry, 19 July 2006). The element of hope is strongly connected with vision-casting in the strategic planning exercise (2.5.3).

By “...projecting a[n enticing] vision of what the congregation might become....” (Osmer 2008:177), members can be mobilised in becoming committed to this vision. Vision can thus function as a powerful motivator for change. The microcosmic theological construct of the C/church (2.2.2) is in itself motivating. The church can be mobilised for change by creatively painting a picture of it as such a microcosm, as a holistic community of the kingdom of God, in which Christ-like values predominate and the life of the church community spills over into its surrounds as salt and light, and yeast (Mt 5:13, 14; 13:33) in the service of God and people (2.4.2.2) through its gospel-communicating actions (2.4.2.1), resulting in healing and transformation in society as a whole. In this vision-casting, God’s purpose for the church is succinctly expressed, such that it can be said of the vision, “This is what God has called the church to do and be” (Osmer 9).

Equally relevant in this motivating phase is the reconstitution of the church’s theory on outsiders as a whole, and (both) their God and C/church attitudes. The goal is a paradigm shift in the church’s corporate theory on the marginalisation of the C/church, especially in respect of the concept *self-marginalisation*, so as to initiate outward change in the church’s behaviour.

In regard to this mobilising vision, the church is importantly portrayed as a “contrast society” and “a catalyst of social transformation” (Osmer 2008:191). These are tangible and workable constructs, within the reach of the Church at large, and are therefore by nature motivating. They are usefully congruent with the MCSA’s vision for each local church to become a centre of healing and transformation, as well as its current formative slogan: “Together a transforming discipleship movement” (Siwa, Morgan & Nkosi 2015:2, 5).

In building motivation for change, resistance to change, especially by a “dominant coalition” (Osmer 2008:178) should be anticipated. As this is characteristic of most processes of change, it is important that leaders do not allow such resistance to deflate them.

5.2.3 “Deep change” process

In a transformative process, such as required to avert a possible crisis at Brooklyn Methodist Church, “deep change” (5.1) is necessary. Osmer (2008: 177) defines “deep change” as “...leading an organization [sic] through a process in which its identity, mission, culture, and operating procedures are fundamentally altered”. This includes contextualising the vision of the church, making the choice for either “revolutionary” or “evolutionary” change - bearing in mind that evolutionary change often does not result in “deep change” (Osmer 203) - , and supporting change at all levels within the church (individual, group and total system levels) (Osmer 201- 206).

Osmer (2008:206) refers to Quinn’s (1996:167-169) four-stage, transformational cycle model of change, comprising: (i) initiation, (ii) uncertainty, (iii) transformation and (iv) routinisation. The stages, or phases, nature of “deep change” is confirmed in Kotter’s (1996) eight-step process (Osmer 206, 207), which emphasises working thoroughly step by step, avoiding as far as possible making any errors along the way, which “...can have a devastating impact on the entire process”. *Building up the local church* theory on strategic planning provides its own basis for “deep change”, including the important phases of *purposeful action* (2.5.4), and *evaluation, stabilisation and repetition* (2.5.5). *Building up the local church* also emphasises the long-term

nature of “deep change” (2.4.1.3) and the important role of teaching therein (2.4.2.3).

Most importantly, Osmer (2008:217) underlines the key role and importance of *effective* leadership in steering and mustering a process of deep transformational change. It is also essential to identify key, influential individuals in the church and to get them behind the initiative for change (Osmer 217). With regard to leadership, Osmer (18-20) introduces the helpful metaphor of the pastor as “interpretive guide”. *Building up the local church* recognizes the important role of effective leadership within the function *cybernetics* (management & administration) (2.4.1.4).

5.2.4 Initiating change

As mentioned, change is needed in order to avert a crisis at the church (5.1). The nature of the crisis (5.2.1) provides much insight into the kind of change that is required. In such a change-initiative, the systemic nature of the C/church (Osmer 2008:199-207), alluded to in *Building up the local church* terminology as the *integrating and co-ordinating of ministries* (2.4.1.4), needs to be keenly observed.

Practical theology assists this pragmatic task of change “...by offering models of practice and rules of art” (Osmer 2008:176). Osmer (176) relevantly informs: “Models of practice offer leaders a general picture of the field in which they are acting and ways they might shape this field [overall strategies] towards desired goals. Rules of art are more specific guidelines about how to carry out particular actions or practices”.

5.2.4.1 “Models of practice”: pragmatic strategy

From the preceding research, the following “models of practice”, or strategic initiatives are identified for broadly shaping the future identity of the church in microcosmic terms:

- development of a united *core leadership team*; consisting of members with credibility - and therefore power and authority - in the community,

with gender and cultural diversity, and also younger leaders, including youth

- establishing/refining the church's vision of *Touching Heaven, Changing Earth* within the construct of the church as a *microcosm* of the kingdom of God, as a contrast society (5.2.2); understanding our context and shaping our vision and identity accordingly
- learning and practising *discernment* together as leaders
- as leaders, appropriately and discerningly choosing between revolutionary and evolutionary change, as necessary
- utilising the research outcomes as a leadership team *working document* for planning and transformation in the church
- gaining support for the church's vision from *key leaders*, formal and informal, in the community
- eschewing a kingdom of God world-view (Dunahoo 2005:59-73) and developing mechanisms for schooling kingdom disciples
- harnessing and manifesting kingdom of God values in the church, especially that of love; role-modelling such values as leaders and pastor
- forming a theological education task team to consolidate and oversee the church's theology, and develop teaching initiatives
- educating members regarding the church crisis, the empirically based unattractive features of our church (1.2.8) and *self-marginalisation*
- creating a sense of urgency with regard to the need for change (in order to avert a crisis) (Osmer 2008:210)

- educating and enlightening the church as a whole in terms of current trends in C/church theory, as empirically supported
- making a paradigm shift from an “Extending family church” identity to unashamed inclusivity and outward, centrifugal focus
- promoting a missional (church) ethos; taking the church across the divide between itself and the local community through meaningful service, as a catalyst for transformation (5.2.2)
- creating opportunities and forums for meaningful Christian community (*koinonia*), open to outsiders
- establishing a pastoral visitation initiative, aimed as much at non-members, in a “Faithful Witnesses” paradigm
- generally enhancing connectivity with and between members, especially through use of social media
- confronting and seeking to win over “dominant coalitions”
- establishing feedback loops, especially from the sub-systems (small groups)
- concretising or pegging gains

It would not be possible to effectively address these various models of practice simultaneously. Therefore, it would be necessary to discerningly prioritise them, as well as then to put time frames to their individual focus (for example, by year, over a three to five-year strategic window period).

5.2.4.2 “Rules of art”: pragmatic interventions

Integrating the research-generated information with validated theory (Ch.’s 2 and 3) and with regard to the “models of practice” identified above, the following

pragmatic interventions are posited. They are aimed at reforming the empirically ascertained, marginalising identity of Brooklyn Methodist Church, impacting on both theory and praxis.

5.2.4.2.(a) Welcoming friendliness (inclusivity)

Cultivating an inclusive culture of friendliness; through *radical hospitality* (Schnase 2007:11) as a core value, enabling easy accessibility to pastoral staff and leadership, nurturing a culture of mutual care, embodying *unity in diversity*, fostering a culture of impartiality and attentiveness to visitors, elevating the profile of youth and children's ministries to that of the rest of the church, contemporising the church campus and facilities (e.g. establishing a coffee shop on campus) and making the church easily accessible to outsiders.

5.2.4.2.(b) Creative value-adding

Adding value creatively via a honed, engaging, enticing and energising vision, capturing the church's future dream, defining the key mission foci clearly and concisely, establishing and attentively living core church values and adopting a rigorous branding program to effectively market our church identity, aiming for highly relevant, creative Sunday services with preaching focussing more on life issues, and facilitating high-level connectivity with God and others in the church and enabling creative and energetic member participation.

5.2.4.2.(c) Kingdom of God discipleship paradigm

Entrenching a holistic, kingdom of God-DNA (Slaughter 2008:88) discipleship paradigm, encompassing all facets of life, creating awareness and appetite for such discipling by, for example, promoting a kingdom world-view, offering intentional and creative disciple-forming processes and facilitating outward expressions of discipleship (see 3.2.2.8)

5.2.4.2.(d) Ensuring theological soundness

Ensuring a sound theological foundation for the church by instituting practices that facilitate attentive and soundly responsible custodianship of the church's theology, and creating accessible member-to-pastor/leaders' feedback loops, addressing theological errancy in the wider church, actively engaging

individuals/groups in the church exhibiting erroneous theology, establishing and applying standards of required theological maturity for leaders and teachers - especially in new appointments, ensuring adequate leader/teacher teaching, formation and oversight, and intentionally advancing the theological understanding of minister and members by various means.

5.2.4.2.(e) Missional, outward/community-focussed church ethos

Instilling such an ethos through identifying needs in the local community and creating awareness of them amongst members, praying continuously and consistently for the community, especially in church gatherings, committing together as a church to serve the community outside the church by way of a *Service Evangelism* (Armstrong 1979) model of involvement, forging meaningful relationships with the local community, participating in local community forums and events, supporting and serving local public institutions, offering our premises for use by/in support of the local community, caring for and up-keeping of the neighbourhood environment, and actively supporting existing/developing new community projects.

5.2.4.2.(f) Caring for the well-being of church members

Striving for increased pastoral contact and inter-connectivity amongst members by way of setting up Facebook and Twitter communication channels, prioritising pastoral visitation by pastoral staff, establishing a structured lay visitation programme, arranging neighbourhood member get-togethers, promoting the ideal of every member belonging to a cell group, establishing a sound human resources function within the church, managing tenures of leadership and service to avoid burnout, introducing a structured leader-mentorship program, and creating and equipping laity for ministry opportunities.

Posited here are pragmatic interventions (“models of practice” and “rules of art”) to effect “deep change” in the church’s *continuing conversion* (see 3.2.2.11) that will have a significant impact on outsiders, are identity-attractive and aimed at re-branding the church. Appropriately, Kinnaman & Lyons (2007:226) state: “As Christians of all generations allow Christ to transform their hearts, minds,

and actions, their expressions [(communicative actions)] of the Christian faith will change, resulting in an influence on society that we have not experienced in decades”.

5.3 The Methodist Church of Southern Africa as a whole

Similarly (to 5.2 above), the research outcomes (5.2.4.1 & 5.2.4.2) would be applicable to the Developed World component of the MCSA especially, and to a lesser extent, the Undeveloped World component of the church. The research could prove helpful to our church as a whole in striving to remain relevant and contextual in the often adverse circumstances detailed in 5.2.1, in at least the following ways:

- ❖ *strategy* – seriously engaging the *missional church* movement of God’s Spirit in accordance with the incarnational substance of our faith and developing strategies for rolling this out amongst local churches
- ❖ *clergy formation* - the crucial inclusion of the related concepts of *Building up the local church*, for example, church identity, church culture and impact of the church’s diverse communicative actions, in our clergy training and formation program, considering their (clergy’s) key function as appointed leaders of local churches (*The Methodist Book Of Order: The Laws and Disciplines of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa* (12th edn.) 2014, para. 1.42: 21)
- ❖ *clergy stationing* - the incorporation of this discipline in clergy stationing processes of the MCSA, in terms of the optimal utilisation of clergy skill-sets and experience in appointments to local churches, matching clergy to local church profiles - not unlike the corporate world identification and deployment of turnaround specialists in specific contexts
- ❖ *local church profiling* - in terms of building/built-up (maturity) and identity status, to assist clergy stationing as well as other processes

- ❖ *local church building up* – assisting the building up of local churches throughout the MCSA by
 - offering regional training on the subject
 - recognising and appointing suitable regional resource personnel to assist local churches embarking upon processes of building up and transformation
 - making this information available to leadership throughout our Districts and Circuits as a theory/praxis resource, to support local up-building initiatives and processes

5.4 Conclusion

Various diverse- but not necessarily comprehensive or conclusive- pragmatic interventions have been submitted to shift my local church- and thus, the Church (1.2.8) - from marginalisation and decline into up-building; notwithstanding the inherent realities that the life of the Church is primarily dependent upon God (1.1) and that whilst in this world the Church will more than likely not reach perfection (1.2.2 & 2.4.1.2). This shift would result from the effective implementation of these interventions, positively re-casting the *identity*, the *public face*, of the church and in so doing removing -or at least respectively lessening and lowering- the stumbling-blocks and barriers to church belonging. In this process, it will be essential that the dynamic tension in the inter-play between authenticity and trendiness be held in balance.

5.5 Extended conclusion- of mini-dissertation as a whole

This mini-dissertation has, in terms of its hypothesis and within its empirical scope - and in the said context of a diminishing Developed World Church (1.1) - established that the Church itself - rather than non-belief in God - is often (but not always (Gibbs 1993:81)) the reason for people leaving and not belonging to the Church (see 4.3.2.2). It has also, to some extent, addressed and filled the identified research gap on this topic, "...deductively endorse[ing] current theory, as well as inductively...provide[ing] new, emerging theory (with some measure

of generalisability)...[I]nform[ing] our transforming praxis in the pragmatic task (Osmer 2008:4) of the reformation of our Gospel-communicating actions (Heitink 1999:129, 151)” - see 1.2.6.

It has also significantly - in my opinion -, in terms of my personal objectives (1.2.6), deepened my passion and love for the Church and its growth, enhanced my personal worth as a Church Practitioner within the MCSA and been developmental in my vocation in Christian ministry, especially in the field of academia.

In spite of the Church’s current state of crisis (1.1), it is not without hope –

No strategy, tactics, or clever marketing campaign could ever clear away the smokescreen that surrounds Christianity in today’s culture. The *perceptions of outsiders* (italics my own) will change only when Christians strive to represent the heart of God in every relationship and situation. This kind of Christian will attract instead of repel. He is provoked to engage instead of being offended by a decadent culture. She lives with the tension of remaining pure without being isolated from this broken world. When outsiders begin to have fresh experiences and interactions with this new kind of Christian, perceptions will change, [sic] one person at a time. When they have cataloged [sic] enough experiences with this kind of Christian to outweigh their negative ones, the reputation will change.

(Kinnaman & Lyons 2007:226)

These research findings will be made available through my research report to the University of Pretoria, as well as through submission to and amongst my denomination at local and regional level. I envisage that the outcomes will become a working document for the Leader Body of our local church. Such communication of my findings will be under the authority of the MCSA.

It is recognised that due to the constraints of such a mini-dissertation, the generalisability of these findings is restricted. In order to achieve a considerable degree of generalisability of research outcomes, it would be necessary to significantly extend the scope and detail of the empirical study. This would include far more extensive sample populations, as well as broadening the research beyond the singular focus of my particular local church, both within my own denomination and beyond. Furthermore, research on this topic of Church marginalisation would be grossly incomplete without addressing that group in society who are completely removed from Church; that is, those who have never belonged to the Church, the *non-churched* (in my terms), and whom would have constituted a third sample group in this project had it not been procedurally obstructed and proven too broad for the purposes of a mini-dissertation.

It is also recognised that knowledge is not static, but is developing, and therefore that in addition to the limitations imposed by the outline of the research itself, our working knowledge is always a work-in-progress and is tempered by its evolutionary stage.

Overall, the above indicates that a Doctoral study on this topic would be necessary in order to: (i) attain more conclusive and credible generalisable outcomes; (ii) better understand the factors and dynamics impacting persons relationships with the Church - thus adding to Practical Theological theory in this regard; and (iii) better reform the communicative actions of the Church in ways that both shift the Church closer, through this building up, to its normative self and thus soften outsiders relationships with the Church. This would do much to counter-act the recent trend of Church decline in the Developed World specifically, and the concomitant adverse impact on the kingdom of God.

Fittingly, Strydom (2001:207) writes: "...for the Church to come to people and speak in the name of the Lord Jesus, is to be identified with Him, to be in his lovely character and person, to be His body. And then people will be *attracted* (italics my own) to the Church, people will flock to the love and grace and

beauty of Christ; they will experience the healing and life-giving presence of Christ”.



APPENDIX 1: RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE NON-GATHERED CHURCH

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE 1						
THE SELF-MARGINALISATION OF THE CHURCH: "NON-GATHERED" CHURCH (Those who have left the church)					For office use only	
Respondent Number					V0	<input type="text"/>
Please tick the appropriate box and/or write in the space provided, as indicated.						
1. MY PERSONAL PROFILE						
1.1 Age :	19- 23		1	V1	<input type="text"/>	
	24- 35		2			
	36- 49		3			
	50- 62		4			
	63- 75		5			
	76+ years		6			
1.2 Gender	Female		1	V2	<input type="text"/>	
	Male		2			
	Other		3			
1.3 Relationship Status	Single		1	V3	<input type="text"/>	
	Married		2			
	Life-Partner		3			
	Co-Habiting		4			
	Divorced		5			
	Widowed		6			
	Other, e.g. dating (specify):		7			
1.4 Do you have children?	Yes		1	V4	<input type="text"/>	
	No		2			
1.5 Nationality	South African		1	V5	<input type="text"/>	
	African - Other than South African		2			
	Other (specify):		3			
1.6 Race	Black		1	V6	<input type="text"/>	
	Coloured		2			
	White		3			
	Indian		4			
	Other (specify):		5			
1.7 Home Language	English		1	V7	<input type="text"/>	
	African		2			
	Afrikaans		3			
	Other (specify):		4			
1.8 Highest Education Level	Grade 11 or under		1	V8	<input type="text"/>	
	Matric (Grade 12)		2			
	Post-Matric Diploma		3			
	B.Degree		4			
	Post-Grad Degree		5			
	Other (specify):		6			
1.9 Employment Status	Employed		1	V9	<input type="text"/>	
	Self-Employed		2			
	Retired		3			
	Student		4			
	Home-Executive		5			
	Unemployed		6			
	Other (specify):		7			



2. MY RELIGIOUS PROFILE					
2.1 Religion	None		1	V10	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Muslim		2		
	Christian		3		
	New Age		4		
	Other (specify):		5		
2.2 I Believe in God	Yes		1	V11	<input type="checkbox"/>
	No		2		
	Not Sure		3		
2.3 Mostly, in my view God is... (Please tick only one)	Friendly		1	V12	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Cruel		2		
	A Saviour		3		
	Unfair		4		
	Uncaring		5		
	In Control		6		
	Other (specify):		7		
2.4 Mostly, I feel towards God ... (Please tick only one)	Love		1	V13	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Fear		2		
	Anger		3		
	Gratitude		4		
	Hate		5		
	Awe		6		
	Resentment		7		
	Joy		8		
	Other (specify):		9		
3. MY CHURCH PROFILE					
3.1 I am an active church member	YES		1	V14	<input type="checkbox"/>
	NO		2		
3.2 If yes (3.1), my denomination is:	Catholic		1	V15	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Mainline Protestant (e.g. Anglican, Methodist)		2		
	African Independent		3		
	Pentecostal		4		
	Other (specify):		5		
3.3 My feeling toward the church as a whole is one of: (please tick only one)	Like		1	V16	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Ambivalence		2		
	Disinterest		3		
	Dislike		4		
3.4 My impression of the Methodist Church is: (please tick only one)	Positive		1	V17	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Neutral		2		
	Negative		3		
	None		4		
3.5 I attend church: (please tick only one)	Never		1	V18	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Used to		2		
	< Once a month		3		
	> Once a month		4		



3.6	If I came across a church that was like Jesus I would seriously consider attending or joining it: (please tick only one)	Strongly Agree				1	V19	
		Agree				2		
		Disagree				3		
		Strongly Disagree				4		
4.	MY BROOKLYN METHODIST CHURCH PROFILE							
4.1	I stopped attending Brooklyn Methodist because: (Please answer by ticking the appropriate response box for each reason listed)							
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree			
	a) I was hurt or let down by the church	1	2	3	4		V20	
	b) I found its preaching irrelevant	1	2	3	4		V21	
	c) I found the members hypocritical and self-righteous	1	2	3	4		V22	
	d) I no longer believe in God	1	2	3	4		V23	
	e) The church lacked integrity	1	2	3	4		V24	
	f) The church watered down the Bible	1	2	3	4		V25	
	g) The church was not adding any value to me (I was not growing as a Christian)	1	2	3	4		V26	
	h) The members are reclusive (cut-off) and secretive	1	2	3	4		V27	
	i) I lost contact with the church	1	2	3	4		V28	
	j) The church as a whole was negative and judgemental	1	2	3	4		V29	
	k) Church services were outdated and boring.	1	2	3	4		V30	
	l) I did not like the minister	1	2	3	4		V31	
	m) The church is exclusive, e.g. xenophobic, homophobic, class conscious,	1	2	3	4		V32	
	n) I realised that I could just as well practice my faith without the church	1	2	3	4		V33	
	o) I had church burnout	1	2	3	4		V34	
	p) The church(world-wide) has lost its way and corrupted Christianity	1	2	3	4		V35	
	q) The church was unwelcoming/unfriendly	1	2	3	4		V36	
	r) The church did not care	1	2	3	4		V37	
	s) The church's teachings had become outdated	1	2	3	4		V38	
	t) Money was the church's god and it was not generous	1	2	3	4		V39	
	u) The church is self-centred (unavailable and uninvolved in the community)	1	2	3	4		V40	
	v) The church is bureaucratic	1	2	3	4		V41	
	w) I became anti-God	1	2	3	4		V42	
	x) I turned away from my faith (Christianity)	1	2	3	4		V43	
	y) Other (specify):	1	2	3	4		V44	



4.2 This opinion/experience (4.1) was informed by/occurred at: (Please answer by ticking the appropriate response box for each option)						
		YES	NO	NOT APPLICABLE		
Sunday Services	1	2	3		V45	<input type="checkbox"/>
Media Reports	1	2	3		V46	<input type="checkbox"/>
Weddings Attended	1	2	3		V47	<input type="checkbox"/>
Counselling Received	1	2	3		V48	<input type="checkbox"/>
Funerals Attended	1	2	3		V49	<input type="checkbox"/>
A Prayer Experience	1	2	3		V50	<input type="checkbox"/>
Member's Parking/Driving habits	1	2	3		V51	<input type="checkbox"/>
Member's inter-personal relationships	1	2	3		V52	<input type="checkbox"/>
Help Received	1	2	3		V53	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Youth Ministry	1	2	3		V54	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Sunday School	1	2	3		V55	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Minister	1	2	3		V56	<input type="checkbox"/>
Members' Lifestyles	1	2	3		V57	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hearsay	1	2	3		V58	<input type="checkbox"/>
The church's involvement in community projects	1	2	3		V59	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Confirmation course	1	2	3		V60	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Alpha Course	1	2	3		V61	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Choir	1	2	3		V62	<input type="checkbox"/>
A Church Bible Study	1	2	3		V63	<input type="checkbox"/>
A Home Bible Study/Cell Group	1	2	3		V64	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other :(Specify)	1	2	3		V65	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3 In general, I can summarise my overall experience of Brooklyn Methodist Church as: (please tick only one)						
	Positive			1	V66	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Neutral			2		
	Negative			3		



5. MY IDEAL CHURCH PROFILE		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree							
5.1 If, theoretically, I was church-shopping, I would look for a church that was : (please answer by ticking the appropriate box alongside each statement)												
	Welcoming and Friendly	1	2	3	4	V67						
	Perfect	1	2	3	4	V68						
	Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual, Trans-sexual friendly	1	2	3	4	V69						
	Traditional	1	2	3	4	V70						
	Child Friendly	1	2	3	4	V71						
	Fundamentalist	1	2	3	4	V72						
	Strong-preaching	1	2	3	4	V73						
	Creative	1	2	3	4	V74						
	Casual/Informal	1	2	3	4	V75						
	Popular & Big	1	2	3	4	V76						
	Theologically Sound	1	2	3	4	V77						
	Dis-ability Friendly	1	2	3	4	V78						
	Racially/Culturally integrated	1	2	3	4	V79						
	Participative in wider community	1	2	3	4	V80						
	Focussed on the poor	1	2	3	4	V81						
	Connected to other churches	1	2	3	4	V82						
	Non-denominational	1	2	3	4	V83						
	Other (Specify):	1	2	3	4	V84						
6.	(Optional) My sexual orientation is : (Please tick one only)	<table border="1"> <tr><td>Hetero</td></tr> <tr><td>Homo</td></tr> <tr><td>Bi</td></tr> <tr><td>Other</td></tr> </table>				Hetero	Homo	Bi	Other	1	V85	
Hetero												
Homo												
Bi												
Other												
						2						
						3						
						4						
7.	(Optional) My monthly household income is : (Please tick one only)	<table border="1"> <tr><td><R10 000</td></tr> <tr><td>R10 000 - R30 000</td></tr> <tr><td>R30 001 - R100 000</td></tr> <tr><td>> R100 000</td></tr> </table>				<R10 000	R10 000 - R30 000	R30 001 - R100 000	> R100 000	1	V86	
<R10 000												
R10 000 - R30 000												
R30 001 - R100 000												
> R100 000												
						2						
						3						
						4						
8.	Any comments in general that you would like to add on this subject/research experience.											

<p>THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE. Your time and kind assistance in helping conduct this research is much appreciated.</p> <p>Please be reminded that your responses to this questionnaire will be treated with the strictest confidence.</p> <p>Gary J Molver</p> <p>July 2013</p>												



APPENDIX 2: RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE GATHERED CHURCH

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE 2					
THE SELF-MARGINALISATION OF THE CHURCH: "GATHERED" CHURCH (those within the fellowship of the church)				For office use only	
Respondent Number				V0	<input type="text"/>
Please tick the appropriate box and/or write in the space provided, as indicated.					
1. MY PERSONAL PROFILE					
1.1 Age :	19 - 23		1	V1	<input type="text"/>
	24 - 35		2		
	36 - 49		3		
	50 - 62		4		
	63 - 75		5		
	76+ years		6		
1.2 Gender	Female		1	V2	<input type="text"/>
	Male		2		
	Other		3		
1.3 Relationship Status	Single		1	V3	<input type="text"/>
	Married		2		
	Life-Partner		3		
	Co-Habiting		4		
	Divorced		5		
	Widowed		6		
	Other, e.g. dating (specify):		7		
1.4 Do you have children?	Yes		1	V4	<input type="text"/>
	No		2		
1.5 Nationality	South African		1	V5	<input type="text"/>
	African - Other than South African		2		
	Other: (specify)		3		
1.6 Race	Black		1	V6	<input type="text"/>
	Coloured		2		
	White		3		
	Indian		4		
	Other (specify):		5		
1.7 Home Language	English		1	V7	<input type="text"/>
	African		2		
	Afrikaans		3		
	Other (specify):		4		
1.8 Highest Education Level	Grade 11 or under		1	V8	<input type="text"/>
	Matric (Grade 12)		2		
	Post-Matric Diploma		3		
	B. Degree		4		
	Post-Grad Degree		5		
	Other (specify):		6		
1.9 Employment Status	Employed		1	V9	<input type="text"/>
	Self-Employed		2		
	Retired		3		
	Student		4		
	Home-Executive		5		
	Unemployed		6		
	Other (specify):		7		



2. MY RELIGIOUS PROFILE					
2.1 Religion	None		1	V10	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Muslim		2		
	Christian		3		
	New Age		4		
	Other (specify):		5		
2.2 I Believe in God	Yes		1	V11	<input type="checkbox"/>
	No		2		
	Not Sure		3		
2.3 Mostly, in my view God is... (Please tick only one)	Friendly		1	V12	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Cruel		2		
	A Saviour		3		
	Unfair		4		
	Uncaring		5		
	In Control		6		
	Other (specify):		7		
2.4 Mostly, I feel towards God ... (Please tick only one)	Love		1	V13	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Fear		2		
	Anger		3		
	Gratitude		4		
	Hate		5		
	Awe		6		
	Resentment		7		
	Joy		8		
	Other (specify):		9		
3. MY CHURCH PROFILE					
3.1 I am an active church member	YES		1	V14	<input type="checkbox"/>
	NO		2		
3.2 If yes (3.1), my denomination is:	Catholic		1	V15	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Mainline Protestant (e.g. Anglican, Methodist)		2		
	African Independent		3		
	Pentecostal		4		
	Other (specify):		5		
3.3 My feeling toward the church as a whole is one of: (please tick only one)	Like		1	V16	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Ambivalence		2		
	Disinterest		3		
	Dislike		4		
3.4 My impression of the Methodist Church is: (please tick only one)	Positive		1	V17	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Neutral		2		
	Negative		3		
	None		4		
3.5 I attend church: (please tick only one)	Never		1	V18	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Used to		2		
	< Once a month		3		
	> Once a month		4		



3.6	If I came across a church that was like Jesus I would seriously consider attending or joining it: (please tick only one)	Strongly Agree				1	V19	
		Agree				2		
		Disagree				3		
		Strongly Disagree				4		
4.	MY BROOKLYN METHODIST CHURCH PROFILE							
4.1	My experience of Brooklyn Methodist Church is that it is: (Please answer by ticking the appropriate response box for each option listed)							
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree			
	a) Welcoming/ friendly	1	2	3	4		V20	
	b) Helping/ serving	1	2	3	4		V21	
	c) Irrelevant, outdated and boring	1	2	3	4		V22	
	d) Generous and giving of its resources	1	2	3	4		V23	
	e) Reliable	1	2	3	4		V24	
	f) Guilty of watering down/ corrupting Christianity	1	2	3	4		V25	
	g) Cut-off (reclusive, unavailable and uninvolved)	1	2	3	4		V26	
	h) Caring	1	2	3	4		V27	
	i) Self-righteous and hypocritical	1	2	3	4		V28	
	j) Exclusive- xenophobic, homophobic, class-conscious, etc.	1	2	3	4		V29	
	k) Positive and non-judgemental	1	2	3	4		V30	
	l) Lacking a good minister	1	2	3	4		V31	
	m) Hurtful of its members	1	2	3	4		V32	
	n) Lacking in integrity and has a bad reputation	1	2	3	4		V33	
	o) Value adding	1	2	3	4		V34	
	p) Imposing and bureaucratic	1	2	3	4		V35	
	q) Destructive of its members (e.g. overloads, burnout)	1	2	3	4		V36	
	r) Sound in its doctrine/theology	1	2	3	4		V37	
	u) Self-centred	1	2	3	4		V38	
	y) Other (specify):	1	2	3	4		V39	



4.2 This opinion/experience (4.1) is informed by/has occurred at: (Please answer by ticking the appropriate response box for each option)							
			YES	NO	NOT APPLICABLE		
	Sunday Services		1	2	3	V40	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Media Reports		1	2	3	V41	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Members I know personally		1	2	3	V42	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Weddings Attended		1	2	3	V43	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Counselling Received		1	2	3	V44	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Funerals Attended		1	2	3	V45	<input type="checkbox"/>
	A Prayer Experience		1	2	3	V46	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Member's Parking/Driving habits		1	2	3	V47	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Member's inter-personal relationships		1	2	3	V48	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Help Received		1	2	3	V49	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The Youth Ministry		1	2	3	V50	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The Sunday School		1	2	3	V51	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The Minister		1	2	3	V52	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Members' lifestyles in general		1	2	3	V53	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Hearsay		1	2	3	V54	<input type="checkbox"/>
	A business relationship with the church		1	2	3	V55	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The church's involvement in community projects		1	2	3	V56	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The Confirmation course		1	2	3	V57	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The Alpha Course		1	2	3	V58	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The Choir		1	2	3	V59	<input type="checkbox"/>
	A Bible Study at the church		1	2	3	V60	<input type="checkbox"/>
	A Home Bible Study/Cell Group		1	2	3	V61	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Other (specify):		1	2	3	V62	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3 In general, I can summarise my overall experience of Brooklyn Methodist Church as: (please tick only one)							
	Positive					1	V63 <input type="checkbox"/>
	Neutral					2	
	Negative					3	



5. MY IDEAL CHURCH PROFILE											
5.1 If, theoretically, I was church-shopping, I would look for a church that was : (please answer by ticking the appropriate box alongside each statement)											
					Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree			
	Welcoming and Friendly				1	2	3	4	V64		
	Perfect				1	2	3	4	V65		
	Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual, Trans-sexual friendly				1	2	3	4	V66		
	Traditional				1	2	3	4	V67		
	Child Friendly				1	2	3	4	V68		
	Fundamentalist				1	2	3	4	V69		
	Strong-preaching				1	2	3	4	V70		
	Creative				1	2	3	4	V71		
	Casual/Informal				1	2	3	4	V72		
	Popular & Big				1	2	3	4	V73		
	Theologically Sound				1	2	3	4	V74		
	Dis-ability Friendly				1	2	3	4	V75		
	Racially/Culturally integrated				1	2	3	4	V76		
	Participative in wider community				1	2	3	4	V77		
	Focussed on the poor				1	2	3	4	V78		
	Connected to other churches				1	2	3	4	V79		
	Non-denominational				1	2	3	4	V80		
	Other (specify):				1	2	3	4	V81		
6.	(Optional) My sexual orientation is : (Please tick one only)	Hetero							1	V82	
		Homo							2		
		Bi							3		
		Other							4		
7.	(Optional) My monthly household income is : (Please tick one only)	<R10 000							1	V83	
		R10 000 - R30 000							2		
		R30 001 - R100 000							3		
		> R100 000							4		
8.	Any comments in general that you would like to add on this subject/research experience.										

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE. Your time and kind assistance in helping conduct this research is much appreciated.											
Please be reminded that your responses to this questionnaire will be treated with the strictest confidence.											
Gary J Molver											
July 2013											



APPENDIX 3: NON-GATHERED - MEANS AS CENTRES OF GRAVITY- WHY THEY LEFT

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
V26: I stopped attending BMC because the church was not adding any value to me	24	1	4	2.63	1.013
V33: I stopped attending BMC because I realised that I could just as well practice my faith without the church	24	1	4	2.75	1.073
V28: I stopped attending BMC because I lost contact with the church	24	2	4	2.83	.816
V30: I stopped attending BMC because church services were outdated & boring	24	1	4	2.92	.929
V35: I stopped attending BMC because the church has lost its way & corrupted Christianity	24	1	4	3.04	.859
V27: I stopped attending BMC because the members are reclusive & secretive	24	1	4	3.04	.859
V21: I stopped attending BMC because I found its preaching irrelevant	24	2	4	3.08	.717
V41: I stopped attending BMC because the church is bureaucratic	24	1	4	3.13	.850
V37: I stopped attending BMC because the church did not care	24	1	4	3.17	.868
V38: I stopped attending BMC because the church's teachings had become outdated	24	2	4	3.17	.702
V34: I stopped attending BMC because I had church burnout	24	1	4	3.21	.884
V22: I stopped attending BMC because I found the members hypocritical & self-righteous	24	1	4	3.21	1.021
V25: I stopped attending BMC because the church watered down the Bible	24	2	4	3.25	.676
V31: I stopped attending BMC because I did not like the minister	24	1	4	3.25	.897
V36: I stopped attending BMC because the church was unwelcoming / unfriendly	24	1	4	3.25	.847
V20: I stopped attending BMC because I was hurt / let down by the church	23	1	4	3.26	.964
V40: I stopped attending BMC because the church is self-centred	24	1	4	3.29	.690
V24: I stopped attending BMC because the church lacked integrity	24	1	4	3.29	.806
V29: I stopped attending BMC because the church as a whole was negative & judgemental	22	1	4	3.32	.894
V32: I stopped attending BMC because the church is exclusive	24	1	4	3.38	.711
V39: I stopped attending BMC because money was the church's god & it was not generous	24	1	4	3.38	.711
V43: I stopped attending BMC because I turned away from my faith	23	1	4	3.61	.722
V42: I stopped attending BMC because I became anti-God	24	2	4	3.83	.482
V23: I stopped attending BMC because I no longer believe in God	23	2	4	3.87	.458
Valid N (list-wise)	21				



APPENDIX 4: UP ACCREDITING LETTER FOR RESEARCH



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Theology
Department of Practical Theology

26 JUNE 2013

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

MASTERS PROGRAM: RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

This letter serves to confirm that Rev. Gary Molver, a post-graduate student at the University of Pretoria, Faculty of Theology, is currently busy with a Master's thesis in Practical Theology. The research subject is the Brooklyn Methodist Church, whose executive committee has sanctioned such research.

The research project aims to identify attitudes to the Church in general, as well as the Brooklyn Methodist Church specifically. As such, it is anticipated that the findings of the research may be of benefit to Brooklyn Methodist as well as to the Methodist Church in general. The final thesis is made available to the university for academic purposes.

Rev. Molver is conducting research by way of a detailed questionnaire which has been formulated in conjunction with the university. The research will be done amongst a random sample of members and former members of Brooklyn Methodist Church, drawn by the university's statistics department.

The privacy, as well as absolute confidentiality, of all participants will at all times be respected and observed. Members/ former members are welcome to contact the university at any time should any problems be experienced in this regard.

We encourage you to offer your support to Rev. Molver in this project

Thank you.

Prof (Emeritus) Malan Nel (University of Pretoria)

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email: malannelup@gmail.com

Rev Gary Molver (Student, number 27417850)

Office: 0124603271; Cell: 0834494008

email garym@brooklynmethodist.org.za

I hereby willingly consent to participating in this research. Signed:

Name :

Date :

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