

**A recurring decreasing of membership in a congregation: A Pastoral
Challenge**

By:

LOUISA MAKHURA

(STUDENT NO 19398621)

A proposal in fulfilment of the degree

MASTERS OF THEOLOGY (PRACTICAL THEOLOGY)

At the

FACULTY OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGION

At the

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

Supervisor: Prof Masango



DECLARATION

I, Louisa Makhura, declare that this dissertation, which I submit for the Degree of Master's in Theology (in Practical Theology) at the University of Pretoria, is my original work. I have not submitted this work for a degree at this University, or any other University. All the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated, and acknowledged by means of complete references, within the text.

Signature (Student) Date: 02 February 2023

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'L. Makhura', written over a horizontal dashed line.

Signature (Supervisor) Date:

ABSTRACT

Gone are the days when Sunday was marked with different uniforms on the road across all directions. Now the people of God have deserted their fellowship with the Creator to follow their own ways. The proposed study seeks to investigate the incessant of unfaithful attending of church services on Sundays especially after the same priest has been deployed for more than two years in the congregation. This does not only hamper the church growth but breaks the relationship with God which sometime results to the stay in the shebeens, and the loss of human dignity. Therefore, the proposed study seeks to pastorally respond to the dwindling church that bunks church services for every two years and stay in the shebeens.

The proposed study is qualitative in approach because it deals with social science, matched with a positive deconstruction technique in order to listen and treat the participants with respect. Therefore, the research methodology would be theological action research conducted in the form of a semi-structured interview to obtain data that would use for the better improvement of church life. The conclusion that was drawn was that offering, and tithing needed by the central office was causing a pressure to the congregants mainly the poor, which subsequently caused the division as the poor felt unwanted and excluded by the pastors. Another conclusion was that the causes for drinking were mainly linked with a high rate of unemployment as a result bunking the church Services on Sundays became the option for the poor people in Bela-Bela. As a result, the researcher and pastor will journey with the congregation, employing Pollard's theories, positive deconstruction, and Gerkin's shepherding to heal broken souls and return the congregation to the house of the Lord.

The study concluded with findings and recommendations that will help the congregation change from a congregation that started out destitute and had no choice but to stop attending church, to a congregation that sees their situation as an opportunity to make a difference in the Bela-Bela community, particularly in the AME Church.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my late Mother, Ruth Mokwena, my late Husband Daniel Ramatla Edwin Makhura, May the good Lord continue to grant them eternal rest. Further dedication is towards my beloved children Reshoketswe and Lethabo Makhura.

I would like to include all beloved who assisted me and constantly reminding me to finish my work, my loved ones and the congregation of Bela-Bela to allow me to grow in my ministry.

In addition, to all pastors who are dedicated in being effective shepherds of the flock, I commend you servants of the Almighty God.

Lastly, I would like to also thank Jabulani Mthethwa who worked tirelessly in coaching and mentoring me throughout this paper. I thank the Lord my God for giving me the wisdom and knowledge that kept me, To God be the glory because all praises go to Him that kept me from falling.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To God be the glory. Prof. Maake. J. Masango, for believing in me and always willing to help each time I knocked on his door. The passion he has in helping students deserves great gratitude. May the good Lord be with you all the way. To my classmate, Mr Jabulani Mthethwa for keeping me awake at night. May the Lord bless you in abundance.

TABLE OF CONTENT

DECLARATION	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	ii
GLOSSARY.....	vii
CHAPTER 1	1
1.1 Background.....	1
1.2 Introduction.....	1
1.3 Hypothesis of the study	3
1.4 Research Methodology.....	3
1.4.1 Research Approach	3
1.4.2 Research Method	4
1.4.3 Data collection techniques	5
1.4.4 Data collection tool.....	5
1.4.5 Data validity and reliability	6
1.5 Research problem	6
1.5.2 Problem Statement	7
1.5.4 Objectives.....	7
1.6.1 The primitive ground for restoring those fallen away	7
1.6.2 The transition to un-churched society	8
1.6.3 The degeneration of missiology	9
1.6.4 Incongruence between the church and social lifestyle	10
1.6.5 The Significance of Dialogical approach as a response to church growth.....	11
1.7 The relevance of the study.....	13
1.9 Research Gap	14
1.10 Summary of chapters.....	15
1.11 Ethical consideration.....	16
1.12 Limitation and Delamination of the Study	17
1.11 Preliminary Conclusion.....	17
CHAPTER 2	18
2.1 Introduction	18
2.2 Transition to unchurched society	19

2.3 The Primary Causes of Church Decline.....	21
2.4 Perceptions in Ordination of Women.....	22
2.5 Divisions.....	23
2.6 Other reasons why churches don't grow.....	25
2.7 Cost of attending church services.....	25
2.8 Conflict that cause decline within the church	26
2.9 Lack of integrity.....	27
2.10 Sexual scandals and other unethical behaviour	28
2.12 Church leadership	30
2.13 The attrition of Millennials in the Church.....	34
2.14 When do we consider church decline?	36
2.15 Multicultural Aspects	36
2.16 Contrast between the church and social lifestyle	37
2.18 Preliminary conclusion.....	39
CHAPTER 3.....	40
3.1. Introduction.....	40
3.2 The nature of the study.....	40
3.3 Defining methods.....	40
3.4 Qualitative Research.....	41
3.5 Humanity.....	42
3.6 Critic.....	42
3.7 Research Method	43
3.8 Mixed method technique	44
3.9 The theory of positive deconstruction.....	45
3.10 The theory of shepherding the flock	45
3.11 The importance of identifying the worldview	46
3.12 The theory of positive deconstruction	46
3.13 Positive deconstruction.....	47
3.14 Process of Positive Deconstruction	48
3.15 Interviewing	49
3.15.1 There are two interviewing technics in qualitative research.....	49
3.15.2 Face-to-face/direct interview	50
3.15.3 In-depth/unstructured interview.....	50

3.16 Participant's observation	50
3.17 Tools for data collection	51
3.18 Data collection techniques	52
3.21 Data validity and reliability	53
3.22 Credibility and trustworthiness of data	54
3.23 Preliminary conclusion.....	55
CHAPTER 4	56
4.1 Introduction.....	56
4.2 Background	56
4.3 Historical background of this church	57
4.4 Pastoral appointments.....	57
4.5 Decline membership	58
4.6 Church structure	59
4.7 Addressing the problems pertaining reduction of membership.....	59
4.8 The Setting and Social Life of Bela-Bela	60
4.9 The Appointment of an Itinerant Minister in the AME Church	61
4.10 Preliminary Conclusion.....	61
CHAPTER 5	62
5.1 Introduction.....	62
5.2 Data presentation	62
5.3 Data analysis and interpretation	63
5.4 Tithing and offering	64
5.5 Issues pertaining giving.....	66
5.6 The impact for preaching and music on church attendance.....	68
5.7 Interpretation and analysis.....	69
5.8 Alcoholism and drug abuse	71
5.9 Analysis and discussion	73
5.10 Economic aspect of alcohol.....	76
5.11 Poor worship due to lack of human resource	77
5.12 Data analysis and discussion	78
5.13 Pastor's leadership and care.....	79
5.14 Analysis and discussion	80
5.14.2 The pastor's leadership and care	81

5.15 Preliminary conclusion.....	83
CHAPTER 6.....	84
6.1. Introduction.....	84
6.2. A pastoral care model for the unemployed, poor people in Bela-Bela.....	84
6.3. Change mindset.....	85
6.4. A pastoral response to spiritual decline	88
6.5. Construct a proposed model for healing.....	90
6.6 A pastoral response to those under captivity of alcohol abuse	91
6.7 A healing pastoral leadership for the small congregation	94
6.8 Growth.....	96
6.9 Non-church residents.....	98
6.10 Preliminary conclusion.....	99
CHAPTER 7.....	101
7.1 Introduction.....	101
7.2 The findings of the study	101
7.2.1 The demand for money by the church	101
7.2.2 The recommendation.....	102
7.3.1 Recommendations	103
7.4 Drinking and buzzing in the community	104
7.4.1 Recommendation	105
7.5 A lack of caring leadership of a pastor.....	105
7.5.1 Recommendations	106
7.6 Conclusion.....	106
APPENDICES.....	108
APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE	108
APPENDIX 2: LETTER OF PERMISSION.....	109
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	110

GLOSSARY

AMEC	African Methodist Episcopal Church
Bela-Bela	Village where the church is located
Church	A community of believers, congregation, or a parish. For the purpose of this research, the church refers to the African Methodist Episcopal
Clergy	A body of all people ordained to perform pastoral or sacerdotal functions, especially in the Christian Church. In this research, pastor or minister will be used interchangeably with clergy.
Children	Young children between the ages of 0-12
Dues	The monthly financial contribution over and above offering
Limpopo	A province in South Africa
Members	People that joined the church and are received into full membership of the church though attending confirmation class for 3 months
Narrative	A spoken or written account of connected events
Shebeen	A joint or place where people gather to consume alcohol and have fun
Story telling	Describes the social and cultural activity of sharing stories, sometimes with improvisation, theatrics or embellishment
Stewards	Board members that are being elected at the church conference which occurs annually at the beginning of the church year, this leaders are appointed by the Minister/Pastor for a period of one year and may be re-appointed every year if the Minister/Pastor wish to

Polokwane	A location in the Limpopo province which is situated in the northern side of South Africa
------------------	---

CHAPTER 1

1.1 Background

When I was young, from a very early age church was not a choice but a must. We had two Sunday services and my grandmother ensured that we have an evening prayer in the house daily. Being the youngest of the 13 grandchildren, I used to sleep at those gatherings. When it is my turn to sing or pray, they had to wake me up with her stick and I often sang when I am supposed to pray or the other way around. My mother told me that I never finished a sentence.

Things got better when I was little bit older because I led the service at home. In addition, since church was a 3-hour walk, we (grandmother and cousins) had to leave home very early and stay for both services and only returned home late in the afternoon. I saw nothing wrong with that until I become a Pastor in the church I am assigned to. My life was about God and fellowship, but in this congregation, they take turns to come to church and some stay away for months and it looks like it's normal. It cannot be normal.

1.2 Introduction

The Pastor of this Church is currently serving her fifth year in this congregation. She recalled that on arrival all the pews used to be fully occupied with 100 plus/minus adult people, plus approximately 40 young people and children recorded on average attendant register. Later, the pastor noticed a constant decline of numbers of people attending the church from a third year (2017) to fifth year (2020). The decline of numbers was also noticeable in attendant register and offerings giving to the church. For the first two years, the pews remained full. On the 3rd year, the numbers began to drop. On average 10 adults, 12 youth and 28 plus children will attend worship service. On the 5th year, the church barely had youth left but the children remained the same.

One evening the pastor could not sleep because the noise of the radio's outside was very loud and noticed that there were children playing in the streets, it was around 23h00. I went and stood at the gate of the mission house to check why the children were playing in the streets that time of the night. One of my congregants' child was

playing with the others so I asked her what she was doing in the streets that time of the night; she said she went to fetch her mother at the Shebeen. This is a frequent recurrence in these areas as most people spent their leisure time in the Shebeens. On several occasions, I have been waking up and find that the children had to bring their mothers from the Shebeen and that touched me. Could this be the reason why the pews are empty on Sunday services? A suggestion was made by parish stewards to hold class cells groups on Saturdays during the day unfortunately, nobody attends them and that time they claim to be cleaning their houses. One can only wonder why parents do not then send their children if they are busy with household chores.

The reduction in number of people became a hindrance and the Pastor raised this to the stewards with great concern. However, in response those who are left commented by saying this happens to all Pastors who come here. Moreover, that does not seem to be bothering the congregation. Why are the church members reluctant to attend such services? Another assumption is that this congregation may not appreciate the fact that their Pastor is a female. Alternatively, perhaps they are too comfortable that nothing is said about their reluctance of attending service and continue this pattern every time a Pastor stays longer than two years.

Occasional questions were asked from the previous pastors who have served in Hickman chapel to see if the pattern of the behaviour of the congregation was the same. A comparison was done with the 6 pastors that served in this church including the current one and the following was found. For the purpose of this study, will call them by numbers.

Rev One I female pastor, she served 2 years at Hickman chapel and left the church to start her own Ministry. It is believed that she lost interest in the church because the members did not attend. Not much is said about her, and she seem to have been forgotten. Rev Two, a male pastor who stayed at the mission house, it is believed that the congregation did not attend church he often find himself alone on several Sundays. He only served for 2 and half years. He passed away while pastoring there. Rev Three. A female pastor who served the church for a few months and asked to be moved from the church. It is believed that she used to go house to house asking members "whom do they think she must minister to". The Bishop moved her to another congregation (it

must be noted that in the African Methodist Episcopal Church if you ask to be moved the Bishop may assign you to a much further location where the situation is much worse than where you are currently serving). Rev Four, a male pastor who served the church for 4 years and asked to be moved since the church members were not able to pay his salaries and he was expected to pay the Episcopal budgets out of his own coffers. That meant he must borrow money to meet that obligation otherwise he would be referred to Ministerial efficiency for noncompliance. Rev Five, a male pastor who served the church for two years and left the church to open his own ministry. It is said that the church members did not like him because of his Pentecostal spirituality and the congregation accused him of not teaching the AMEC doctrines and liturgy. Rev Six served the church for 2 years sadly the priest passed on.

1.3 Hypothesis of the study

The assumption of the study is that congregants are not coming to the church because they are spiritual bankrupt. Consequently, they find the church boring while the world is enjoyable.

1.4 Research Methodology

1.4.1 Research Approach

There are two types of research: qualitative and quantitative research. Khothari (2004) describes qualitative research as the type that intends to investigate the phenomenon of human behaviour. This is to say it examines the reason/s for underlying issue. Therefore, assessment of behaviour, opinions and attitude become vital important in qualitative approach. On other hand quantitative focuses on studying and analysing data on a numerical form. It usually characterised by experiments and survey methods. The purpose of qualitative research is to reveal meaning that informs action or outcome revealed by quantitative study (de Vos, 1998). Therefore, due to the nature of this study, qualitative approach is chosen so that behaviour and attitudes towards poor attendance of Sunday services would be studied and find the reasons for such behaviour (Grillo, 2012).

1.4.2 Research Method

The research method will be participatory action research as the study falls under Practical Theology. There are many approaches employed under action research enlisted by Kemmis (*et al.* 2014) such as action science, which is utilised in organizational settings and constitutes professional knowledge for change by competent members. For the nature of this study participatory action research (PAR) will be used. In participatory action research, the participants themselves are part of planning and problem solving (Grey, 2004). Likewise, the problem of quitting the church every two years should not be laid upon the pastor but participants as well so that they will participate in planning and problem solving. In that way, the participants take responsibility of their own faith beyond pastor's duration.

Moreover, the role of pastor is to initiate, empower and stimulate insight to the participants. Empowerment is only when people are aware of their own abilities and resources to tackle their own problems rather than resolving an unidentified problem (Bhana, 2002). Similarly, the pastor will assist the participants to not only share their ideas but put efforts as well since they have skills, talents and spiritual gifts that need to be utilised. Consequently, the participants become researchers as well for their own church as they continue seeking solutions to dwindling church.

The PAR approach cannot be effective without first understanding and viewing the world from participants' view. Likewise, Pollard (1997) theory of positive deconstruction will come into part to assist pastor first to enter into the space of participants withdrawing all the judgement but to first understand the problem as it is. For Pollard "it is important to hold a notion of understanding one's worldview and see the world the way other people see it" (1997: 48). According to this theory, before one attempts to convert a non-believer, it is important to enter their space positively and try to see the world from their own views before deconstructing that view. Likewise, in this study one would need to listen attentively the reasons for not attending the church services without being judgmental before reconstructing their views.

1.4.3 Data collection techniques

In-depth interview: is the type of interview with the list of questions though unstructured it intends to capture the opinion of one or few participants and questions are short (De Vos, 1998). Likewise, the participants will be interviewed as individual so that they feel free to share their opinions and ideas concerning the problem of quitting the church services every two years.

Semi-structured interview: often used in qualitative research and many issues are covered though questions may deviate from sequence (Grey, 2004). Similarly, semi structured interview will be conducted with short list of questions. This will help to compare data obtained from the in-depth interview with semi-structured to get the gist of the problem.

Observation: In qualitative study, observation means to note behaviour and action of people in a specific setting contrary to the quantitative study where observation means to watch the reaction of chemicals in experiment (Grey, 2004). Equally, the behaviour and actions of participants will be continually observed as the study continues.

1.4.4 Data collection tool

Recording audio helps the interviewer to focus on the interview without being disturbed by writing notes. However, sometimes listening to the long audio can be time consuming (De Vos 1998).

Diary: helps to note the date and place the interview occurred (De Vos 1998). Equally, all the meetings with participants will be noted on the diary.

Notebook: helps to write key words and important points during the interview (De Vos 1998). Similarly, notes will be taken during interview and observation period so that further clarity can be made where necessary.

1.4.5 Data validity and reliability

Data validation in participatory action research is very important since it completes three following purposes (cited in Gray, 2004: 387). The first purpose of validity is to identify places that need more clarity in the engagement. In order to gain clarity and ensure validity, the data obtained will be sent back to the participants to affirm its validity. Second purpose is to compare if the data obtained from different sources make coherence. Likewise, the data obtained from the individuals who are no longer coming to church will be compared with the data obtained from the church council. Lastly, the purpose of validity is to get new knowledge and facts, which could have been missed when data was collected. Therefore, participants would have an opportunity to add or subtract whatsoever information they felt was misinterpreted or not fully clarified. Data reliability is obtainable through comparing various sources of information or information obtained from different techniques (Grey, 2004). Equally, the data obtained from in depth interviews will be compared with one from focus group to ensure reliability.

1.5 Research problem

The congregation does not come to church. This I have observed in the second year of my ministering in this church. When I asked other congregants, they narrated that this happens with other pastors as well. Sunday services comes and go, they are claiming to be members of the church, but they hardly attend Sunday services. When deliberating with the members when I conduct home visits, they indicate that they are well with the way church is. It does not bother them when they did not attend Sunday worship service. Many of them say I worry for nothing; they are still and will always be members of the church despite the fact that they are not attending services and they don't contribute or offer in tithe or any other offerings that is required to keep the church running. The members only show up when there are funerals that are conducted in the church while some insists that their beloved one's last service must be conducted in the church.

1.5.1 Research questions

The following research questions will be asked to those who are no longer coming to church and parish council

- What could be the factors that lead to the reluctance in attending church services on Sunday?
- What do they understand and their opinion/s with the current state of the church?
- What is their view of faith and Christianity?
- What is the pastoral mechanism that can be employed to bombard the reluctance of the members coming to church on Sunday?

1.5.2 Problem Statement

The consistence decline of congregation in Sunday services every two years when a pastor had been deployed to the church for more than 2 years.

1.5.3 Research Aim

The aim is to improve the attendance of Sunday Services by congregation.

1.5.4 Objectives

1. Is to investigate the causes of reluctance to attend the Sunday service.
2. Assess knowledge of worshippers regarding their relationship with God.
3. Examine the understanding of an individual for worship vs accountability of one's spiritual relationship with God.
4. To find out the possible majors that can be applied to avert the current situation.

1.6 Literature review

1.6.1 The primitive ground for restoring those fallen away

The importance of mission is centred on ecclesiological understanding and how does the church function. The most important thing is relationships that is centred on love or friendship that was first instigated by Jesus to his Disciples. The great commission "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the

Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28: 16-20). The importance of commission is to emulate the nature of the church that denote the relationships of Jesus with his disciples, which is more communal. Sprinkle asserts that the work of the discipleship is communal as this denotes the communal church that was started by Jesus (2016:41). Likewise, it is imperative for a minister or pastor to go out into the world to impart the gospel of Jesus and to restore those who have left the church.

The importance of imparting the gospel is not limited to those who are heathens or not Christians but even to those who have left the church. In the gospel according to Luke (15:3-7) the good shepherd leaves 99 sheep to look for the one that is lost, when it is found the whole heavens rejoices. The importance of restoring the lost members is not to fill the church but to take care of them because some are hurt, broken, angry and disappointed in life (Swindoll, 2017:416). Congruently, the time spent by people of Bela-Bela in shebeens’ drinking is enough to indicate their stress and bleeding wounds, which need to be healed. It is also important to note that the method for restoring those who have lost their faith ought to be pastoral and friendly in approach just as Jesus did when He associated and ate with the sinners of his time. Consequently, Jesus enhanced the relationship and friendship with sinners as part of social life than religiosity (Swindoll, 2017). This denotes that friendship with those outside the church should be a lifestyle other than relationship in religious interest.

1.6.2 The transition to un-churched society

Although one may not focus on Church history and missiology but the transition from being the church society to individualism and rationalism has cause a huge impact to the decline of the congregational membership. Klaas (1996) posits that in the early centuries when the church merged with the state under the emperor Constantine the church flourished and grew in numbers because the emperor himself was the symbol of Christianity. The unity of a church and state continued even during times of reformation. In America, one remembers the days when schools in America used to begin and end with prayer. Parents used to encourage their children to go to the church every Sunday, the prayer was centred on their daily life even at home (Klaas, 1996:4-5). Similarly, in South Africa schools, hospitals and other institutions in the secular

world used to begin their work with prayers and sometimes invite local pastor for prayers. In that way, the whole life was centred in prayer in all aspects of life. This correlate exactly with what Mbiti postulates that Africans are stubborn with their religion because religion is found in all activities of life to African people (1969).

1.6.3 The degeneration of missiology

The Church has been missionary from its foundation beginning by Jesus who made the Kingdom of God to be known. The early churches were missionary because in spite of language barrier and culture they managed to build churches and get them full. Missionaries are people who are passionate to learn other people's language and culture to infuse the gospel (Reid, 2009). The act of illuminating the gospel (evangelism) or proclamation of Christ as Lord to the non-believers or pagan or heathens cannot be separated from the mission. There is a strong conviction that the mission and evangelism are of God and ought not to diminish. According to Reid, gone are the days where churches use to hang writing "Visitors Welcome" since they have abandoned the ministry of evangelism to the world and inherited the notion of sustainability (2009:5). Unfortunately, more often and astonishing; the congregations are declining while the population increases.

The Methodist Church, Baptist Church, and other protestant churches respectively reported the reduction of numbers by approximately 9.5 per cent while the population increases at bigger percentage (Reid, 2009). The decline of numbers might cause by number of reasons but among them, the church has ceased being missionary instead becoming internal institution dealing with internal affairs.

As far as the mission and evangelism are concerned, it is highly important to draw the distinction between the mission abroad and evangelism locally (Hollinghurst, 2010). Some people fail to differentiate between the strategies or approaches congruent with mission abroad where cross-cultural need to be considered with local evangelism where the gospel should merge the culture. When one is talking about a mission is referring to minister to those who are "not yet Christians" denoting the possibility of facing foreign culture of foreign people but evangelism refers to infusing the gospel with the local culture, thus, to preach to the "no longer Christians" and restore them

back to the church” (Hollinghurst, 2010:12). A number of churches have raised a concern about the degeneration of young people to the church, this is caused by the mere fact that the secular world is moving fast, culture changing very rapid than the church can match (Kemper & Adkins, 2006). There is a strong belief that if the gospel is not merged with culture, it becomes irrelevant, on other hand one must be cautious not to turn the gospel into the cultural norm. More often, the missionaries sometimes become unaware of their own enculturation and want to pose it to the audience. As a result, ‘they end up like tourists who insist on speaking their own language and simple speak louder and slower if they are not understood’ (Hollinghurst, 2010:4). In other words, if one does not consider the issue of culture in mission and evangelism, the issue of church planting and growth will remain the dream.

1.6.4 Incongruence between the church and social lifestyle

The upward shift of education level to young people, while the old and traditionalists hold on a view that building the church where people are, will obviously increase the congregation are incongruent. The church’s level of education has not increased so much to match the standard of young people. Though it happens sometimes for young person to show up due to the low level of education of pastors especially in mainline Protestants, the expectations for young people are not met as education itself generate its own culture and lifestyle (Kemper & Adkins, 2006). Therefore, church’s lifestyle ought to emulate the lifestyle of the community for growth to be possible. Nevertheless, the Word of God should not succumb to the lifestyle of the community and that of the world. According to Wagner the evangelist may not have high qualifications but “must be saved ...filled with Holy Spirit ... committed to the body ... obedient to the Lord ... and energetic” (2010:121-123). In that way, though some pastors may not have adequate skills and better education to match the standard, but they should not be discouraged instead pastors and other ministers of the Word they must keep trying and believing the Lord.

The lack of congruence between the church and community is another contributing factor to the decline of membership. On a study conducted by Kemper & Adkins (2006)

in Presbyterian Church in United States, reveal that at one time the church used to be full but later decreases. The research discovered that the majority of people have moved far away from the location of the church while they remain attached to it. Contrariwise, the community had become so diverse in terms of race and ethnic, but the church has not assimilated to the surrounding. The attached members had no or little relationship with the diverse community (Kemper & Adkins, 2006). Consequently, the church remains accessible but unknown to the residents as it never invites nor welcome them in the area. Therefore, evangelism had not been effective for some years as the church members have not yet incorporated or make relationship with the entire community, but instead has maintained the old ethnic group that was there when the church was built. In a sense, a church continues to be far to those who are local residents embedded on a wrong notion that accessibility is equivalent to the relationship.

1.6.5 The Significance of Dialogical approach as a response to church growth

It is important to note that though pastor's role is to teach the Word of God and affirm the truth in all the teachings and discussions, the significance of being dialogical in approach need to be considered. The significance of dialogical approach is to search the truth beyond reasoning together but feeling the same at the end in both existence and spirit (Helskog & Stokke, 2014). In the study conducted in Norway in 2014 through Gandhi project, though the study intended to review the curriculum to accommodate the room for other religions; the dialogue among Christians and non-Christian (Muslims, atheists, Buddhism) students promoted mutual respect, understanding and improved unity in spirituality. Among other things, that project attained through dialogical approach was learning through withdrawal of prejudices associated with differences in culture and religion (Helsekog & Stokke, 2014).

Likewise, few churches spend so much money, time, energy and resources in trying to meet and dialogue with those who are inactive or non-members. The focus of the church is on membership and buildings with no concern to dialogue with non-church members or even at least to invite them to be the part of church's celebration (Sjogren

& Lewin, 2003). In contrast, the growing and relent church has a specific amount of budget and hours spent on non-church members. This type of church is called “go and do” church different from “come and see” church which focuses only to her internal affairs (Sjogren & Lewin, 2003:23). Intensely, the church that is dialogical in approach includes even those who are not fully converted in her programme especially on volunteering tasks. In a sense, the recognition does not begin by one being converted and active in the church but humanity and ability of human being as ground for dialogue and participation (Sjogren & Lewin, 2003). As a result, the failure of the church to relate and dialogue with non-Christian and non-active church member’s prelude to more strangers to the church, thus exacerbate decline for church growth in all aspects.

On another hand, the impact of rationalization stemming from secularization has a detrimental effect to the church and religion at large. The religion is about supernatural power over the events and mysterious that cannot be fully conceptualized clearly by human mind. In contestation with religion, rationalization seeks reasons and explanation for events (Bayers, 2014). Consequently, as events are explained in logic, then religion is left with no role to play in the society. The decline of religion or church growth is even made worse by secularization that allows religion to be removed or reduced from the economy and politics. The results for such, leads to individualism and liberty that sometimes opposes religious authorities (Bayers, 2014). In a context where individualism and liberty is promoted, the obligation to attend the church (a group institution) degenerate since one has a choice not attend religious gathering. Further, one is allowed to believe in other thing that one wants to believe as an individual. Contrary, Bellah (quoted by Bayers, 2014:7) articulates that religion will never diminish instead it will change from one form to another. Similarly, the establishment of Protestants did not finish religion but at least changed its function as means for prosperity and earthly riches under the notion of grace (Weber, 2003).

1.6.6 A proper planning for mission and evangelism to improve church growth

Growth and success come with planning either secular or faith-based institution. It is without doubt that church is both institutional and organism. The latter focuses on the understanding that Christ is the head of the church, and all other members are part of his body with spiritual gifts just as if Christ is the spirit. While the latter denotes the organizational structure of the institution like any other institution in the secular world (Wagner, 2010). The church must plan properly, set goals and objectives they want to achieve. Evangelism cannot happen by coincidence; therefore, proper training and budgeting must be set aside for such work. An annual mission and evangelism should have annual budget, just as mid-term mission should have its own midterm budget. Budgeting helps one to plan and control the goals and objectives while indicates a time when such activity will occur (Schick, 1999). According to Kiambi, (2018) in analysing the performance of protestant churches in Kenya, where proper budget was made and people were involved in such budgeting, the performance and growth were highly achieved compared to the churches with poor budgeting and autocratic leadership. Thus says, proper budgeting for mission and evangelism ought to be par excellent pragmatic. However, as Wagner cautions, the churches to avoid luring people on grounds of pursuing the mission, as “the end cannot justify the means.” (2010: 28). Thus says, God’s work must not be mixed with immoral and unethical actions covered under mission and restoration of those who have worn out.

1.7 The relevance of the study

The significance of the study seeks to empower and restore pastors who are in a position where their spirit has been trotted down by an empty church. In doing so, the mission of the church is to convert and restore the lost sheep become members of that denomination and to have loyalty to the God they serve practically as the study itself is in practical theology. Further, through restoring those who are no longer attending the church services and encourage them to have an interest in serving their

Christian obligation, the mission is to be witnesses in the world and see this yoke they are carrying become so lighter. Pastorally, the study is significant as it intends to restore the dignity for those who are swallowed by alcohol and other shebeens' activities. Further, the Church's name is also dragged into the mud; therefore, through the proposed study the church would be rescued from disrepute. Academically, the study is significant because it aims to investigate the causes and come up with possible mechanism/s to curb the scourge for inconsistency attendance to the church and other institutions. In a sense, the proposed study will seek solution/s to absenteeism and decline of momentum to attend church services and other institutions while restoring the dignity for humans and of the institution (a church in this case).

1.8 Motivation

Professor in my class motivated me to up skill myself in this field since this is bothering me. To gain knowledge of different types of churches that are or may be faced with and how to deal with problems that may arise while in this Ministry. To help me as a female Minister to understand what dynamics the world has in as far as being led by a female. In addition, to understand how pastorally one can deal with situations, which seem to make one lose one's faith in this field. As Pollard argues, "evangelism is not easy, particularly in today's culture, and if we are serious about reaching people with the gospel, we must be serious about wrestling with difficult, complex issues" (1997:20). Likewise, the task of getting church members back to the church would be a hard task in Bela-Bela.

1.9 Research Gap

Research gap is on the congregation that seems to bunk church services over the period of time, which is so different to the dying congregation, or growing congregation of which other literatures are based on. The gap is to avert the habit of losing momentum after two years. Further, to care pastorally to those whose dignity has dampened in shebeens due to alcohol. Hence, the previous research focus on evangelism, converting the heathen, restoring faith to those whose faith had diminished, and growing the church. In that way, there is little if any research has been done in inconsistency attendance to the church services while at the same time

restoring their human dignity. Further, the study is participatory action research not only investigating the problem and come with solution instead the research seeks to empower the lost sheep to take responsibility of their own faith and participate in problem solving and planning for such activities.

1.10 Summary of chapters

Chapter 2: This chapter will begin with introductory section for previous literature and theories on which the study is laid upon. The theories of David Bosch (2011) *The Transforming Mission* explain and analyse critically the mission of the church, which is to witness, and proclaim Christ in the world. In doing so, the missionary church must take into account culture and inclusiveness of people. Mission and evangelism need to be strategized and well planned critically since planning and strategies are biblical, traditional and Godly (Wagner, 2010). The theory of Liberation theology coined by James Cone criticises the oppression of the poor by the rich and excluding them from social issues. Likewise, indulgence and wild living in shebeens oppress the black poor people. Therefore, there is an emergence need for such liberation to not only fill the church but also restore the human dignity. This chapter will end with preliminary conclusion.

Chapter 3: will begin with introductory part explaining two research approaches: quantitative and qualitative. As this is methodology, the study will describe clearly the research methods and techniques in acquiring data. The research approach will be merged with the theory “positive deconstruction” coined by Pollard (1997). This theory enhances the importance of viewing the world the way other people view it. More important, positive deconstruction theory encourages relationship between the missionary (caregiver) and the client (care receiver) before positive deconstruction so that the care receiver does not feel judged from the first meeting but heard and understood. The researcher will also journey pastorally using the theory of Gerkin’s

(1997) to heal the congregation of Bela-Bela. This section will end with preliminary conclusion.

Chapter 4: will have introductory part explaining the context of research and participants interviewed. The data will be presented as raw data though selected. In presentation of data, the participants will not be mentioned by their real names. This part will end with preliminary conclusion.

Chapter 5: will begin with introductory section explaining what analysis in research and analysis techniques is. This chapter will focus on analysing the raw data and try to find meaning. As analysis explore the testing of validity and reliability will come to place to ensure that the findings are true and correct according to the research. This section will end with preliminary conclusion based on analysis.

Chapter 6: will have an introductory section introducing healing method that will be applied. The section will focus on reclaiming the dignity of God, as it will sit well with the methodology “positive deconstruction.” This chapter will help to heal and restore those whose faith has broken through restoring their dignity. Then the chapter will conclude with preliminary conclusion.

Chapter 7: will focus only on the recommendations depending on the findings of the research. Regardless of the outcome of the study, the recommendations will be theological, missionary based, practical and pastoral. Likewise, conclusion will summarise the findings and give the overview of the study.

1.11 Ethical consideration

There are number of considerations that one ought to observe especially in qualitative research since the interviewees are the sources of information. The interviewees must be respected and treated in a dignified manner (De Vos, 1998). Likewise, the participants will be respected during the research in such a way that they will only be called by their preferential names. Moreover, during data presentation their real names will not be disclosed. Lastly, the permission to conduct the study will be requested from all relevant structures.

1.12 Limitation and Delamination of the Study

For as long as I am assigned to this church, this research may be possible but should the Bishop change my appointment that may pose a limitation to the study. I am also the Pastor in the same congregation and the congregants might have fears to tell the truth. Transport cost for research. Gender issue may be hindering me from visiting taverns or bachelors. What the study will not include is the social responsibility, only people who have been at the church for past ten years will be interviewed, and they will not be given money for their information. The people have a right to refuse if they do not want with the information or may change their minds any time during and after they were interviewed.

1.11 Preliminary Conclusion

The intention of this research is to keep the church members from bunking church and to ensure that they are interested in attending church services. Their spirituality and their commitment to be willing to fellowship in season and out of season in the church irrespective of the changing of pastors since we are an episcopal church which means that a Pastor may be moved at any time at the call of the Bishop. This research seeks to address the reasons of the current behaviour. It will involve the congregants in finding a solution to their problem if any so that the church may not die but instead to encourage growth and continuity of the mission of God in this area and church.

CHAPTER 2

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to help the researcher gain insight through the findings of other similar studies that are connected to the one she has undertaken especially on the issue of decrease in membership. The study will concentrate on reviewing West African as well western scholars on the issue of decrease in membership. Schaller argues that “Protestants congregation pass through a life cycle of birth-to-death. He continues to say that new congregations are fragile, and must grow to be depended” (Schaller, 1992:11). This is precisely the issue that made me to research the problem of decline in membership. The researcher only noted the decline in membership in a congregation based in Bela-Bela where she is pastoring. According to Mhlongo, “A literature review assists to detect relevant theories and concepts that will define the research problem” (Mhlongo, 2005:18). These two scholars and many more (Schaller: 1991, Bosch: 2011, Mhlongo: 2005 *etc.*) will assist in the research problem faced in Bela-Bela. Mhlongo is helpful when he states “literature review lays the groundwork for a study and inspires new thoughts while also being able to assist in determining gaps in the body of research” (2005:18). This study of literature review will focus on addressing experience of those who do not attend church, based on absenteeism within the church, especially when a new minister is assigned to the congregation.

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the reviews on the concept of mission and caring for those whose faith has faded away, as a result they have stopped coming to church. Schaller (1991), argues that “congregations grew in size and eventually, become independent, after several years they shrink in numbers and eventually disappear from the scene” (Schaller, 1991:11). The theory-transforming *mission*, which discusses the concept of mission from the grassroots as the mission of God (*Missio Dei*) in conversation between Bosch and Duraisingh are important to making out the decline of membership. Duraisingh’s “mission-shaped the church” that cares for people outside the church is of importance because it will explain the lack of pastoral care amongst those who have fallen away (2010:56). Duraisingh articulates precisely the issue similar to Bela-Bela congregation especially the part where he articulates the

core of people outside the church, in particular the outside members who are neglected pastorally by the church. The study would be inconsiderate if it does not take into account the beliefs of the people it serves, because that has an impact on the membership of the church. Therefore, the study would also engage with “transition from the church society to un-church society” (Klaas, 1996:14). Klaas notes that the fastest growing denomination is church of the unchurched” (1996:15). A part of the problem faced in this ministering of declining of membership within our denomination assumes that we focus on internal membership while neglecting the external (outsider) members who lapse during worship. This is part of the reason Bosch researches on this mission in order to address issue of declination in congregation, the reader can now understand why Bosch speaks about the mission of the church amongst people. The main question to ask is how we address the issue of declining in membership (in particular Bela-Bela) the process will now lead us in analysing transition to unchurch society.

2.2 Transition to unchurched society

Gascoigne (2009) suggest the negatives and positives that come with freedom from secularization, which affects membership within the church. Among positives things that come with freedom is the issue of human dignity, communion that seeks for common good of all. He states that, “the first of these stories is of individual freedom as the source of creativity and diversity, as the warrant of critical reason to constantly reform social institutions for the sake of the common good; this story proclaims the right of even the most apparently insignificant to make their voices heard in the debates that concern their destiny” (Gascoigne; 2009:7). Whereas in the western world Ferreira & Chipenyu, (2021) argue that in the “UK church attendance was halved and in Germany 50% of the population attest that they don’t believe in God” (Ferreira & Chipenyu, 2021:3). This shows a direct response to how people prefer to deal with their freedom. Since the dawn of democracy in South Africa in 1994, the church was left behind and did not address the changes that were happening within the country. That may also be one of the causes of decline of membership within the church. The author will tease this assumption in interviews to analyse whether scholars are truthful

about the above quoted statement. The interviews and responses will be compared to scholarly writing in literature review. For example, Pillay (2017) gives a broader perspective by mentioning, “the church needed time to revive because it lost its focus” (2017:3). In other words, reawakening from a state of dormancy and stagnation means that freedom helps to raise and discard the form of injustice that may not contribute to the common good of the society. Gascoigne (2009) argues an individual states that freedom may help to break away the meaningless tradition that confines and limit the expression of skills and talents may help to shape the human values.

However, Gascoigne (2009) cautions us that freedom is not without limitations and constraints that hold up human values and community together. The above can also be said by the church. Differently with the above, freedom can also become a tool to tarnish the human values and dignity of the community especially when freedom is expressed without consciousness). In other words, when freedom is not addressing adequately the church may become irrelevant and thus contribute to making people stop coming to church. The researcher agrees with Gascoigne when he says freedom can also become a tool to tarnish the human values and dignity of the community especially if the freedom is expressed without consciousness). Maybe this is one-way (decline of membership) in which the church failed to address ethical values within the community. Hence, the country is dealing with the issues of corruptions, which affects the community, the society, and the church. For Gascoigne “freedom as a voluntarism is one that destroys the ethical and cultural substance of tradition, leaving only the emptiness of self-indulgent within (2009:7). If we contribute with the idea of freedom as volunteerism, we should analyse how it contributes to the decline of membership in short, people are free and are willing to do anything within the church. This connotes that even if one is free, but one must still observe certain laws and traditions that enhances socialism and solidarity with the community. Therefore, any freedom that does not have moral constraints denigrates the value of the society. Hence, restoration of fallen human beings is imperative for a just society.

2.3 The Primary Causes of Church Decline

Several scholars like Most Rev George Carey and Brierley have pointed the decline of membership within the mainline churches in a conference of church growth held in England on church growth. Brierley (2002) puts the above idea in the following way, “The people who used to come twice to church on Sundays now come twice a month” (Brierley, 2000:11-17). The researcher wonders why this has become the norm. The assumption may be that mainline churches restricting the ministry of word and sacraments to pastors, and ordination of men and women may be one of the factors contributing to the difficulties of church growth/decline of membership. It is interesting to note that this concept brought a dichotomy (tension) between priests and laity, which goes hand in hand with boundary between sacred and secular. This leads to the exclusion of mission from the secular world where laity often spend most of their time with the minister. This assumption will be tested in chapter 5, which focuses on interviews. The researcher wonders if this may be another way in which the church has contributed to the decline of membership. The interesting concept raised by Duraisigh (2010) who says, “the failure of what the church stands for contributed to the attitude of relegating service to ordination of men and women (which led to decline) and also to the calling, led to the decline of membership within the church” (Bosh quoted by Duraisigh, 2010: 22).

On the other hand, Mann argues, “many congregations enter the decline cycle partly because they are spiritually malnourished” (1999: 50). Adding to that, Ferreira & Chipenyu, (2021) say that “the decline in membership in Protestant churches globally indicates a church that does not have full expression of its intended purpose in its community” (Ferreira & Chipenyu, 2021: 4), while Collins, (2021) highlights a very important issue around church leaders by saying “the Bible contains inerrant science in their interpretation when it is not true, and this topic is treated as an inaccuracy that causes some intelligent people to decide not to be Christians and leave the church” (Collins, 2021: 7). It will be interesting to test the above (spiritual) concept as well as to get the view of the community about the Bela-Bela church.

2.4 Perceptions in Ordination of Women

The researcher wonders if the ordination of a woman, especially in churches that do not believe in the ordination of women or where a woman is considered as a mere object, affects church decline. Oduyoye, (2018) lamenting from the circle of concern for African Woman Theology by saying “our aim should be to cure the ills of the continent generated by culture and religion” (Oduyoye, 2018; 7). Depending on the context where a female pastor has been sent, membership has declined. Brierley (2000) argues that when the General Synod of the Church of England approved the ordination of women more than 300 priests left the church. Lummis (2012) argues that congregational centred denomination due to their liberty to take decision in a local congregation, has accepted the ordination of women in early 90’s of 20th century. Amongst those churches, one may mention United Church of Christ in America, and Assemblies of God, as well as the African Methodist Episcopal church both in South Africa and abroad. In contrast, the number of institutionalised-centred congregation where decision-making is taken by the Synod or central office ordination of women has been difficult. In cases where region or local congregation has acted against the policy to ordained woman, such cases have led to the church schism and later church decline (Lummis, 2012:159-161). Correspondingly Kobo (2018), argues that the manner in which the voices and cry of women in Elmina dungeons below a Dutch reformed church’s upper rooms (Kobo, 2018:1). Kobo argues about the dehumanisation, demeaning of woman who lived at Elmina dungeons while they were supposed to have attended training into ministry. When a question was asked, “Why there were no woman in this conference, the answer was that it is difficult to find good woman” (Kobo, 2018:6). That implied that woman cannot be presented in the presence of men, woman must know their place (Kobo, 2018). It is clear that in the patriarchal society it will be difficult for men to accept ordination of woman. When a Bishop sent a woman pastor in their church, this may cause decline in membership especially male members. Nevertheless, some of institutionalised-centred congregations such as African Methodist Episcopal Church in America, Evangelical Lutherans had approved the ordination of woman towards the end of 20th century. Subsequently, Lummis, (2012) notes that such decisions have threatened the relationships of the dioceses, but not the considerable membership within the diocese or region. These could also

be the reason for the decline of membership in the church because the house of God is not equally represented while others are marginalised.

In line with the above, in Africa, some patriarchal cultures have denigrated the status of women into bottom. This was even made worse by the preaching of missionaries in denying polygamy. In other words, the wives who were part of polygamy were forced to be divorced and rejected and lived a sorrowful life since they were depending on their husbands for their living. Such practise led to some men and women leaving the church (Daniel, 2010). To substantiate this notion, Oduyoye avers that “there is no woman as beautiful as the obedient one, and women are the servants of men, which woman cannot help but object to if they have any sense of self” (2001:31). The researcher is aware that patriarchy is not the issue being researched here, but it contributes in the decline of membership especially the way in which women are treated in the church.

2.5 Divisions

Another issue that affected the decline of membership in the church is the issue of LGBTQI+ group exclusion by churches, has caused divisions and decline of membership within the African church. Dreier describes, “LGBTQ inclusion as the church policies that allow gay, lesbian, bisexual transgender, and other queer-identifying people to be married and serve as clergy” (2018:428). About the purification, Longwe (2019), reading from the literature based on decline of membership the author realises that the deep aspect of conservative theology contributes to the decline of membership especially by female who are in the arena of feminist and liberation theology. The above issue threatens men in such a way that they react instead of responding to problems faced by the church and its members. This issue will be analysed in Chapter 4 in decline of membership. Naume raised an interesting concept of violence by male clergy in Mozambique who denigrates their spouses to fill worthless and undermined in the church Naume expresses that woman since the start of early 1990’s there have been some divergences between provinces and dioceses with regards to the recognition and inclusion of LGBTQ communities.

Dreier (2018) preaches that in most cases those who argue for usually base their argument on human rights, equality and social justice. Whereas those who argue against the notion base their objections on culture, tradition and Biblical teaching labelling the practice as unchristian (Lambeth Indaba, 2008). In support of this, 1998 resolution taken by the synod of Bishops of Anglican Church resolves, “same sex marriage is incompatible with the Scripture” (Dreier, 2018: 430). In 2003, the Episcopal Church in United State in America became the first recorded mainline church to consecrate the open gay Bishop by the name Gene Robinson. The news did not only steer the Anglican Communion, but most of the mainline churches across the globe especially those that have ecumenical relations with Anglican Communion. Some churches in Africa and Latin America are Conservative hence the decline. Few years later, Lutheran Church in Canada and Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Sweden also recognized the inclusion of LGBTQ groups in the church. These developments either embedded in pastoral care or subsumed by freedom have its own impacts on the increase or decline of congregation. This decision also affected African churches, especially the conservative patriarchal clergy. Some of the congregation pull out of the mainline churches and started their own churches. Bela-Bela was also affected by this decision and female clergy are not tolerated.

In some cases, the adoption of LGBTQ community in the ordained ministry has negatively affected the growth of transnational relations among sister churches (cf. Lambeth Indaba 2008; Dreier, 2018). For example, Lutheran Church in Ethiopia decided to dissociate herself from that of America. Such termination of relationship resulted to financial strain since Ethiopian, Lutherans and other churches were depending on Americans for funding of programmes and assets (Dreier, 2018). As a result, some buildings could not be renovated and maintained, while some programmes collapsed (Dreier, 2008). Brierley (2000) opines that buildings have impact on church growth in an indirect manner because some people may not attend church service where buildings are dangerous and old. Therefore, a change in policy or doctrine must be introduced in a very sensible manner to ensure that all the members of the church are well catered.

2.6 Other reasons why churches don't grow

I have traced particularly what scholars are saying about the decline of churches, they make mention of the Protestant churches particularly in the western world that are growing because they are liberal, Flatt (*et al.*, 2017), while mainline churches are not flexible and therefore, they remain stuck in the church laws. This suggests that the fact that young people or young adults are not able to make some changes on the order of service or be innovative and propose vibrant and exciting worship style that is seen in Protestant or Charismatic congregation causes the youth and young adults to be reluctant in attending daily worship service. Similarly, Schaller (1991) notes the fact that “the common explanation why youth groups does not attract other teenagers are because youth programs was designed to reach the generation born in the 1942-55” (Schaller, 1991:92). The researcher notes with sadness on how mainline churches do not realise the problem and are not willing to alter the programmes in the church to accommodate the youth or young adults in a church and that poses a concern which could be the reason some churches do not grow.

2.7 Cost of attending church services

Much as this may not be a consideration for some churchgoers but it is a reality. Attending church services has its costs and the one attending church needs to consider certain things to make the habit of attending every Sunday a painless effort as stated by Harris, (2013). He highlights further in his thesis that “compared to the increase of Americas population growth, church attendance is declining” (Harris, 2013:14). Added to that he points out “the cost of attending church needs to be brought into account. Time a person spends when getting ready for church, driving or finding alternative transportation, and money for offering, Sunday clothing and other considerations”(Harris 2013:17), must be considered prior to dedicating all your Sundays to the church since that may be a reason for church decline. The researcher wonders if that could be the reason for the Bela-Bela congregation not to attend church since the economy is so dire in that area. On the other hand Schaller,(1991) calculates the offering made by the church members and divides it per member, in doing that Schaller makes an assumption that offering given on a Sunday in a church is equal all

the time (Schaller, 1991). The writer notes further that as oppose to the above cost implication of coming to church, the latter will create a great competition or force congregants to watch each other when they offer and that may pose a danger to those that does not have a source of income at Bela-Bela.

2.8 Conflict that cause decline within the church

Whilst many reasons may be posed which causes church decline, Joynt (2018) posits, "Conflict can be caused when leadership shares responsibility without sharing authority because they are threatened by other staff" (Joynt, 2018:4). This could be one reason why such conflict may be the course of church decline. Interestingly financial diversity as well a cultural diversity causes conflict which leads to membership decline in a congregation as (cf, Volf, 1996:36) According to Naidoo & De Beer (2016), "Christian communities have not always been successful in promotion dialogue on diversity, especially race, gender, and sexuality. In reality, far too many instances in which "churches" are supposed to be the mediating force for peace are at best ineffective and at worst complicit in conflict (Naidoo & De Beer, 2016:3). The author notes that even though diversity and church leadership may be two distinct causes, if not managed by the church leadership, it can result in a decline in membership. Because of the economical discrimination in Bela-Bela, the reader can now realise how female clergy will focus on addressing political problems caused by decision of patriarchs, and thus lose focus on kingdom building. This however will be researched further in the researcher's PhD research.

2.8 Generational loyalty

Other scholars such as (Schaller (1991) suggest that "denominational merges erode denominational loyalty" (Schaller, 1991:107) the researcher notes that loyalty must be maintained as is because it then becomes difficult to start that kind of relationships in a new church especially where age is concerned. On the contrary Merwe, *et al.*, (2013) gives a broader perspective of generational loyalty by suggesting that "young adults can decide whether or not they want to attend church, how often to do so and what type of church service they would prefer" (Merwe, *et al.*, 2013:1). Further to this Merwe

continues to advocate for young adults by stating that “Younger members of the society have enormous work pressure, and with it abundant choice of leisure, relaxation and social activities which could be distracting them from attending church services” (Merwe, *et al.*, 2013:1). This means, church continuity is not an option for younger members as opposed to their parents.

2.9 Lack of integrity

Some scholars have this to say about the reasons the church is dying, Dreyer, (2015) posits that the church has lost its ideas and have forgotten about God. He says, “Some of the churches has lost its integrity and its identity” could this mean that the church is now empty because it does not do what God wants the church to do (Dreyer, 2015). The church cannot afford to compromise its values just to keep members in the church. The African scholars have identified what could be the problem. One is seeking to get different views about what Dreyer is saying. Dreyer goes further to say that “the church has now become materialistic and is now making money, added to that is that some of the congregation have deserted their medication because they have been promised to be healed by their pastors” (Dreyer, 2015:3). Pillay, (2017) gives a further perspective by mentioning, “The church is faced with challenges such as corruption. Political turmoil, sexual immoralities, secularisation, spiritual empathy, religious friction “(Pillay, 2017:3) the church faces decline not because of the challenges it is faced with but because of the silence it finds itself with the status quo (Pillay, 2017) the arguments that are both raised here are critical and dent the image and the integrity of the church. Do those who flee to church for refuge find themselves in worse situation in the church? Could this perhaps be a sign of desperation by that congregation that are still left in the church? Or does the above statement suggest that the above could be the reason for people not the attend church any longer, these questions do not have an answer currently as the researcher’s focus is on a decline of church membership therefore such research has not been explored by the researcher. Interestingly Foster, (2015) notes that “the church has been left somewhat weakened and voiceless in the new dispensation. Unlike the period up to 1994 there is thankfully no longer a state

church that can speak on behalf of the people, and sadly no longer a struggle church liked to a strong functional ecumenical body” (Foster,2015:11) & (Naume C. F., 2008).

2.10 Sexual scandals and other unethical behaviour

These issues are part of the problems clergy people are faced with in congregations; they also have an impact in declination of membership. Naume (2009) connotes that male clergy in Mozambique made their spouses to feel worthless and undermined in the churches where they serve which makes them not to express themselves as female leaders and as a result, they resort to silence as a coping mechanism, in other words they compromise the truth on the gospel by being quiet. Naume expresses that “woman are prevented from growing, they are experiencing violence from their partners and worst is that they cannot speak because the congregation respect their partners (male clergy) and may not believe their outcry” (2009:108). It is interesting to note that Stats SA (2018) reports that nearly 75 percent South Africans are Christians. This suggests that number of people in the country affiliate with Christian religion. Surprisingly, Stats SA (2018) also reported the number of increase in crime including sexual abuse and domestic violence in 2017-2018. In TV show (On Point, 12 August 2020) minister of South African Police Service Mr Bheki Cele reported the increase of crime about gender-based violence, worse during the South African lockdown, which aimed at curbing the Corona virus. The silence of the church in speaking out against this issue has also contributed to the decline, because women felt pastorally left out by the church. The minister reported that approximate 93 000 cases linked with sexual abuse and assaults were opened across the country (On Point TV show, 404 SABC NEWS) some of this incidences were caused by male clergy within the church. This connotes the huge participation of Christians in sexual abuse scandals and weird behaviour by some men. The impact of crime in South Africa Doniwen, (2021) mentions that “homicide rate in 2020 was five times the global rate; South African Police statistics are inadequate as they do not give an accurate depiction of the full scale of gender based. They claim that this will reflect badly on them” (Doniwen, 2021:1) this then also increases fear to women and children which makes them absent from the church services especially at the evening and where

security is uncertain. In Bela-Bela, this is most common since there are many shebeens, which operate until early hours of the morning hence it is not safe for women and children to be in the streets. Violence and abuse, observably some scholars' analysis decline of female membership in the church by pointing that Patriarchal behaviour plays a major role in the attendance of both women and girl children since their partners will not allow them to attend such gatherings or engage in certain topics. Oduyoye, (2019) when she gathered women to discuss the ordination of a woman, one man said "How can OUR women be doing this, and we do not know about it" (Oduyoye, 2019:14). In support on the issue of gender inequality, the clergy in Rome face resistance from the pope (Oduyoye, 2019) the researcher then notes that, women can only speak about their ordination if they get permission from the men. Many women therefore fail to find security in churches and abstain from church attendance.

2.11 Deeper meaning

People attend church for different reasons. In addition, some attend church because they grew up going to church so more than anything it is a tradition to go to church. However, there are those especially the youth who attend church to get deeper meaning of what Christianity is all about. Merwe, *et al.*, (2013) connotes that "young adult's stay in church to find meaning" (Merwe, *et al.*, 2013:9) for them if the church cannot convince them about going to church and they cannot find an understanding about Christianity, they leave church and look for the deeper meaning. In support of this Joynt, (2018) says members of the clergy also leave church if the church in this regard, congregation and senior clergy, does not give them the respect they aspire (Joynt, 2018). There are many differences according to Joynt that contribute to the clergy not to continue with their career and some even end up assuming that they were perhaps not called (Joynt, 2018). The researcher will explore agree with the first argument and would like to explore that further in her research. As for the latter cannot be deliberated further, since members of clergy are not going to be interviewed in her document. Perhaps that could also form part of her PHD studies.

The Sunday Times newspaper (13 January 2019) reported the resignation of the Bishop in the Diocese of Zululand after being accused of sexual assaults to the

diocesan deacon. The scourge regarding sexual offense is not limited to mainline churches. Pastor Omotoso of Jesus Dominion International has been all over the South African news since 2017 and still attending the case in Port Elizabeth High Court in connection with number of rape cases. Archbishop Stephen Zondo of Rivers of Living Waters Ministry has also been tainted with a number of scandals associated with sexual assaults and corruption of which Cultural Religious and Linguistic (CRL) commission is still investigating (SABC News 404, SA Today, 11 November 2020). The involvement of clergy and other trusted members of the church in sexual assaults does not only reduce or affect membership, but also contributes to the lack of trust in the church, which makes it to be an unsafe place for women. As a result, the church is no longer perceived as a Holy place where the flock of the Lord finds joy and peace, but a place of tears and sorrows especially for women. These events do not only bring the church into disrepute, but loss of membership followed by immoral in the society, as the church is known to be the institution of morals. In a newspaper published in Los Angeles, this issue does not only affect Bela-Bela but it is a global problem (Richardson, 2006). The AMEC is no different from the other churches as cases of that nature have been heard and some clergy members were referred to the Ministerial efficiency and were forced to correct their behaviour by transferring them to move to the rural area churches. (This data could not be found, as it is not recorded in the books of the church, the Ministerial efficiency is a committee that listens to such matters and report to the Bishop at the sitting of the annual conference). In another news report Madhani (2002), reported from Chicago Tribune with great concern about sexual reports in the Catholic Church and in many different faith denominations (Madhani, 2002). Although this may also be reasons for church decline, however in the Bela-Bela church such have not been reported as a reason for the recurring decline of membership.

2.12 Church leadership

Some scholars share that the problem is also created by leadership role. They do not treat the holiness of the church in their actions as well as pastorally caring for the flock. The church leadership emanates nowhere except from Christological understanding

of Christ as the head of the church (Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18; 1 Cor. 11:13). This connotes that the church is both sacred and divine in a special way because it constitutes the divine Son of God. On the leadership part, headship of Christ means his active presence that all believers ought to note and adhere. In other words, the leader in the church must lead all people of God cautious minded about the presence of Christ in the congregation and in the world. Manala (2010) argues very correctly, "The Christian leader's call is 'always from God for a specific God-given purpose' there is no place for the leader's own agenda" (2010:48). This implies that the agenda that the church leader must pursue must be divinely inspired. The essence of Christological notion in the church leadership helps to substantiate the importance of prayer, meditation, and critical Scripture reading by Christian leaders to ensure that the mission pursuit is of God. The above scandalous actions of church leaders has affected the relationship between clergy and members of the church. The issue of trust is lost hence the decline in membership. The prevalence of immoral and unethical behaviour by some church leaders in South Africa display, not only sin in the society, but absence of relationship with God (Williams, 2003:148). Therefore, there is a need for Christian leaders to revisit and renew their relationship with Christ to promote the leadership that enhances church growth.

There is agreement and definite view held by number of scholars (cf. Manala, 2010; Bosch, 2011; Clarke, 2008; Pali, 2018) that sacrificial or servant-ship leadership is essential for the church because it emulates Christ. Therefore, when the church is in decline, it loses its essence. In other words, the researcher's concern about the decline of church membership is not unfounded. If one sheep is lost you leave the rest and go and look for the lost one, Luke (15:4), Clarke (2008) explains that servant-ship leadership is well explained by Pauline theology when referring to himself as the slave of Christ (παῦλος δούλος Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ) in a letter to the Romans (1:1). Manala (2010) clarifies that the notion of slave is that of servant-ship and submitting to the Master not abusive relationship in a form of enslavement. A number of scholars are critically analysing the way clergy have deviated from servant-hood into oppression of members, in particular women. In other words, a leader in the church is expected to serve people on the ground, in contrast with leaders in the secular world who stays in the high offices. Pali (2018) posits that a successful congregation is one that does not

only manage conflicts but transforms conflicts into a ministry, this notion can be used for those who no longer attend church regularly. This is to say that when the conflict emerges, a leader must be vigilant enough to note that this is an area of concern that needs attention pastorally. For an example, a conflict that may arise due to discrimination against gender could be used as the area of focus since that may cause decline of membership in a church.

Correspondingly, it is important for the church leadership to consider the context of the area that the church is located. Nugent (2016) points out that the good type of leadership is one that focuses on the societal needs or members, which is the most required need to be addressed. This suggests that the church must acquaint itself properly before addressing any other need that may arise in the society. Nugent (2016) cautions that stewards' priorities must be to work together with their society in order to achieve the needs of all. The most important question in leadership is to ask, "What are the needs, what are the church's human and material resources" Nugent (2016:136). So that they can ascertain what needs to be done when the church membership is declining. For Akehusts (2013), certain needs may require a leadership that adheres to coalition with other churches or societal structures/institutions in order to meet the needs of people in the case of this research, which is decline in membership, how does clergy address this issue? Therefore, a good leadership style is the one that places the needs of the people in a society rather than the congregation itself; therefore, the main aim is serving Gods people.

The contrast that is drawn between preaching the word and social involvement affects the church to the reduction of what Christianity stands for. As already mentioned above that there is none that is priority or above the other because we are focusing on the wrong elements of damaging God's people. The World Council of Churches in 1968 correctly pointed it out that "Christianity that has lost its caring ministry to the people in the community has lost its salt and is not only insipid in itself, but useless to the world" (Bosch, 2011:418). Equally, as appears in 1982 Mission and Evangelism

document, “Christian participation in the struggles for justice which does not point towards the promise of kingdom also makes an exaggeration of a Christian understanding of justice” (Bosch, 2011:418). This suggests that the spiritual and social needs ought not to be separated. Further to that Howard & Mckeever (2011), observe that sometimes a person may suffer emotionally due to the lack of social needs and as a result, that person may end up being low spiritually. Moreover, the presence of social sin in the community that is ignored by the church would eventually lead to the spiritual bankruptcy of the community (Howard & Mckeever, 2011). The researcher can now understand why members will stop attending church since some needs are not addressed. Therefore, there is a need for church leaders to strike the balance between spiritual and social needs of a person in a caring ministry. The balance model would not only lead to the church growth, but a health growing church that cares for the welfare of people. This is one way of addressing pastorally the issue of decline in membership.

Similarly, to the above point, Padi (2018), highlights the health issues that arose from failure of conflict management in the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa, Orange Free State. According to the story the conflict that happened during apartheid in South Africa led to the division of...most of the conflicts originate in the congregation and spill over to other structures...” (Padi, 2018:3). This issue caused decline in some church membership. As a result, there was a loss of valuable resources including some clergy who resolved to leave the church along with those who could no longer take the ills and consequences of conflict. The departure of some members of the clergy led to the shortages of priests in some of the congregations. According to Padi (2018), the few ministers that remained had to work tirelessly in order to offer services in many congregations. As a result, fatigue caught up with them and ended up being ineffective in a ministry and some left their churches. Subsequently, membership of that congregation had to go through a journey that led to the drastic decline in church attendance and eventually they stopped attending services.

2.13 The attrition of Millennials in the Church

Interestingly Rainer & Rainer (2011) actually argue that people born after 1980 who were active in youth activities are leaving the church once they reach a certain age. For Rainer and Rainer people who are born from 1980 – 2000 refers to them as Millennials (2011:14). According to the study conducted by Rainer & Rainer (2011), reveals that only 13 percent of the Millennials are religiously inclined in support of this, one of the respondents when he was asked about his belief in Christian religion, he replied, “I really don’t think much about religion. ... The only little bit I know about the religion is the Bible I got from the parents” (Rainer & Rainer; 2011:22 *italics are my own emphasis*). This suggests the lack of core Christian values held by the millennials, which also suggest the reason church membership is declining.

There is consensus by a number of scholars (cf. Rainer & Rainer 2011; McDonald, 2017; Breirley, 2000) that millennials are educated generation. A generation that makes their lifestyle easy by living closer to where they find it easy to continue with their lifestyle away from the previous generation. They often live in the cities closer to their educational institutions and workplaces. Consequently, churches compete with the schools and work on the demand for attendance. In line with the above, Breirley argues that “Many schools and workplaces have fixtures on a Sunday morning, thereby making it more difficult for some children and parents to get to Sunday services” (2000:15). Therefore, this has a direct impact on decline of church membership. Bela-Bela is no different therefore apart from fixed schedule that clashes with church services; the church members do not show interest in attending on Sundays. In another study, Smith (1993) argues that the increase of wages in a market has increased the demand of time. Employees increase the working hours to Sundays to earn a better wages (Smith, 1993). In the study conducted in Scotland in 1953-1988 indicates the correlation between the increase of wage and attrition in membership. The working class often prefers to use Sundays for leisure such as picnics, sports and entertainment instead of attending church service that demands intensive focus and discipline (cf. Smith, 1993; Brierley, 2000). To substantiate this notion: Gilbert postulates that:

“The emergence of television and motor vehicle ownership has undermined organized religion. ... Television has functioned to privatize leisure shifting recreation away from the public sphere, including public acts of worship, into the home (Smith, 1993:32).

This suggests that those who once find joy or leisure at church worship may now prefer to find it on television. Moreover, the issuing of social services that were of church such as education, health and relief grants by government has threatened the significance of church in many countries (cf. Smith, 1993; Rainer & Rainer, 2011). Therefore, churches must improve services in order to increase its relevance to people. This assumption will be tested in the interviews.

Correspondingly, Jacobs (*et al.*, 2019) notes that millennials (from teenage to young adults) start to stop attending the church when they separate from their parents. In the study conducted in the US reveals that 70 percent millennials leave the church. In another study in US, 18 percent of congregations reportedly having no young people.

Amongst the reasons for attrition was due to pregnancy and parenting. (Jacobs, *et al.*, 2019:39-40). Brieley (2000) avers that since 1990 cohabitation has increased amongst young people. Moreover, most of the churches especially the mainline churches teach us against cohabitation. As a result, those who cohabit decide to repudiate from the church. Subsequently, their faith wilt and only come to church after many years when they are married, or not at all. This behaviour of absconding church services at a particular time has a negative impact as some end up leaving the church permanently. Therefore, the church must endorse pastoral care to those perceived as fallen to keep their faith up and running. Moreover, in endorsing care the researcher is taking an initiative to dig deep into the root of non-attendance to those who have fallen, so that pastoral care can be given properly once the reasons are known.

2.14 When do we consider church decline?

Interestingly church consists of numbers as well as finances, when numbers are falling but finances are not reducing, some churches can still continue to function however when both are declining it poses a serious challenge on the income of the church. In Bela-Bela, a decline in attendance as well as a decline of new membership that joined the church reduced drastically which affected finances. In support of the above, some scholars define decline in membership differently. Ferreira & Chipenyu, (2021) say that “the life of the church fulfils the unity in the body which enables every member to serve in the church, both unity and diversity are important in a church, when a number or all these attributes are absent in a church, decline occurs” (Ferreira & Chipenyu, 2021:7). The researcher observes that there are many elements that may be the cause of decline in a church. It will be very enlightening to see how the congregation of Bela-Bela responds to this question on the interviews. This matter will be explored further in chapter 5.

2.15 Multicultural Aspects

Most of the mainline congregations were established in the past many years, during the apartheid period. Their buildings are very old and so are their doctrines. In most cases, those congregations were nearby towns and were characterised by single dominant colour, ethnic group, language or nationality (Mann, 1999). Due to the high increase of people from rural areas and other foreign nationals flocking into the cities or urban area for employment and education. The churches that once had a dominant ethnic group are now mixed or multicultural. The dynamics have now changed which challenges the church in a different way. This challenges the senior members to adapt in new multicultural church (Arn, 1998). According to Arn, “... ethnics most likely to attend multicultural service are those with at least a high school education who interact occupationally with persons of other cultures ...” (Arn, 1998:109). This suggest that those with low education or illiterate cannot relate with other ethnic groups. Consequently, they stop attending the church or go elsewhere thus contributes to the church decline. One of the impact of lack of attendance is change of social lifestyle. Much as the researcher agrees with the fact that churches are old and were built in

the apartheid period, the researcher believes that we should embrace those churches and not cause decline of members, which eventually will end up dying.

2.16 Contrast between the church and social lifestyle

Interestingly, Haskell (2016) revealed that declining mainline Protestant churches attendees compared to conservative churches, that mainline churches have much to improve upon in order to be able to retain its members in the church. Haskell indicates how the church use of old traditional worship or part of the problem because it is not attracting young adults and the churches do not have any youth programs (Haskell, 2016). This poses a threat to the future and the growth of the Protest and churches.

In contrast with the above, Hillier (2008) avers that religious institutions makes it difficult for members who are gay and lesbians to attend church or participate in any church administration by remaining stiff necked about their sexual differences. Hiller (2008) notes that the church is very judgemental about their sexuality, which makes those who find themselves in this predicament, prefer not to attend any church services to avoid being judged by the congregation. It will be interesting to test the above statement by asking those who have stopped coming to church. It will contribute to the research in a powerful way. If the church does not tolerate different sex beliefs then this led to a church decline because youth are not free to express their challenges, leaders of faith communities needs to revisit their core belief to accommodate all.

Interestingly, Hiller (2008) expresses some of the issues that alienate people of different sexuality to participate in church activities without being questioned of their worldview and how to change so that they can be accepted in the house church. Hiller (2008) avers that the option is for young people to leave the church. This is the challenge that may lead to church decline unless if the belief of the church elders may accommodate gender equality.

Schaller (1990) an American Scholar writes in his book, titled Growing Plans, that churches are faced with decline if the mission of the church changes from what it used

to be. Schaller avers that when a community based church does not have the same community it used to have when the church was established that (new minister, different kinds of neighbourhood, the new generation lost interest etc.), poses a threat to the growth of the church and thus if plans are not put in place to regroup the mission of the church, then the new residents do not fit into the old church (Schaller, 1990). This connects to the topic because since the church in Bela-Bela was founded in 1970 and only built a structure in 1980. Since then even the church building is dilapidated and the church does not recruit new members. But back home in the African context, in South Africa in particular, Pityana (1995) asserts that the church in the Apartheid region had its foundation on the oppression of that time, in the current situation the church must be able to say no when it is faced with challenges that do not address the needs of the poor or its congregation for that matter one is in agreement with the latter since it addressed the issues that the churches are faced with (Pityana, 1995). The church in particular in South Africa cannot stand by and see the congregation being oppressed by the economy shutting off the poor. No, the church must advocate for those that are marginalised.

2.17 Ancestral calling

The researcher observed that on several occasions, members who must receive their traditional calling leave the church completely to attend to their call, and with concern, they never return even after they have completed (Kanyandago, 2013). Kanyandago posits that ancestral calling says, "Colonization and evangelization denied the identity of the African culture" (2013:68). Kanyandago continue to emphasize that "for an appropriate approach to reconciliation in Africa, the Church needs to correct past theologies which tended to justify the supremacy and superiority of the West" (2013:60). Since the ancestral calling have been marked as demonic and sin, members feel that they must leave the church, attend to their calling and return once that is sorted out. Watt highlights the fact that "a person belongs to a Christian community does not necessarily mean that one should imply a break from traditional believes" (*et al.*, 2021:6). Even though the two scholars have highlighted this, many studies must still be done around this argument, the focus is on church decline. What is visible though is that the Christian denomination choses to treat members who

received a calling differently depending on their Christian belief. This however adds to the decline of church members in a denomination because one is not guaranteed that such an individual will return as soon as he has attended to his calling.

2.18 Preliminary conclusion

Having researched different views and reasons why churches are facing a decline, the researcher had come to realise that there are many different reasons and conditions that lead to decline of churches. Much as a lot has been said about the reasons for the decline in churches, what the researcher is bringing in this research needs to be explored. The different views from different literatures are not the same as the challenge that is facing this congregation in the (AME Church) in Bela-Bela therefore in the next chapter we shall explore different methods that will assist in analysing the core of what may be the course of membership decline. In the next chapter, we will look into the methodology that will be used to dig deep into the root cause of the decreasing membership in a church.

CHAPTER 3

3.1. Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with the literature review of the study, problem statement, sub-research questions and possible reasons for the decline of church membership. This chapter gives an overview of the strategy to be used to conduct the research and gather data for analysis and interpretation.

3.2 The nature of the study

The study will explore the nature of qualitative research and will apply grounded theories, which makes the researcher to focus on data that will assist the researcher to formulate healing methodologies. It will also get to the root course of the reasons for members who are not interested in attending church services when a pastor is deployed to their charge for more than two years.

3.3 Defining methods

There are two types of research: qualitative and quantitative research, but the focus on this chapter will be on qualitative. Khothari (2004) describes qualitative research as the type that intends to investigate the phenomenon of human behaviour. This is to say it examines the reason/s for underlying issue. Therefore, assessment of behaviour, opinions and attitude become vital important in qualitative approach. In similar thought, Denzel and Lincoln define qualitative research in this way:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Flick, 2011:2). This means that a qualitative research can be defined as an approach

where the researcher is inserted in the real world to study and explain the phenomenon through engagement with people and environment in order to find the realities of the subject studied, provide solutions and conclusions where possible.

The purpose of qualitative research is to reveal meaning that informs action or outcome revealed by quantitative study (de Vos, 1998). Therefore, due to the nature of this study, qualitative approach is chosen so that behaviour and attitudes towards poor attendance of Sunday services after a pastor having to serve more than two years would be studied and find the reasons for such behaviour (Grillo, 2012). The researcher may, how then will this study be designed? The research design of a qualitative research is different from that of traditional research (quantitative research) because it does not have restrictive concepts that usually comes with a particular order in order to achieve a specific goal (Maxwell, 2009:214; McCusker & Gunaydin, 2019). Moreover, sometimes the deviation from a specific order could be caused by the focus and eagerness to provide a life solution in a given context where participatory action research is being used. This shows that qualitative research does not only focus on scientific knowledge needed in the field of discipline but needed in a life-threatening situation (Sukamolson, 2007). In connection with the above, through researcher's involvement the approach accommodates extraneous variables to be studied and discards the notion of being controlled by the objective. In this study, the use of open-ended question will be applied in this chapter.

3.4 Qualitative Research

The study is determined to engage qualitative methodology. The researcher will as well use narrative method because the study will have to interpret the stories of the interviewees. In dealing with the solution, the study positive deconstruction methods used by Pollard in teasing out a possible solution to the congregation of Bela-Bela as well as he element of shepherding used by Gerkin is needed in order to help priests care for, or shepherd, the flock through their leadership. A shepherd is someone who cares for a flock not only leading them to graze in good places, but also by providing security and showing a willingness to die for the flock (Gerkin, 1997).

3.5 Humanity

It is important to know that human beings are created and known for being the producers and spreaders of information and knowledge. In the criticism against quantitative research, White argues that “The claim here is that humanity cannot and should not be continually subjected to quantification that it reduces human endeavour to meaningless claims in the guise of objectivity” (White, 2015:2). This suggests that the perspectives and truth that comes from human beings ought not to be discarded based on quantities but can be tested for validity with critical inviting questions in the interviews. In congruence with the above, Hickey supports qualitative research on the basis that it “Champions multiple perspectives, diversity, and human experiences while at the same time promotes advocacy and activism for basic human rights and democracy for all (cited by White, 2015:5 italics are my own emphasis). A qualitative approach does not only deal with factors linked to the problem but contextual details contributing to the problem. Similarly, in this study qualitative may not only focus on reasons that make people to squander the church services, but underlying issues pertaining to the problem.

3.6 Critic

Nevertheless, qualitative research is criticized by some scholars for biasness on the side of the researcher (Kothari, 1990; Fouche, 1998; McCusker & Gunaydin, 2019). Qualitative research associates with high risk of reflexivity whereby a researcher may be influenced by his or her belief system and cultural norms to make a wrong judgment. Sometimes emotions may emerge in the field of study and researcher end up neglecting the importance of neutrality. Further, qualitative approach turns to extract data from the few viewpoints of the participants on the subject investigated (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2019:4-5). This leaves out much information uncollected from the number of participants linked on the subject uncollected. According to Fouche, “Personal experience of a participant is important for knowledge, but it can also mislead people through propaganda and stereotyping leading to overgeneralization” (1998:38). In the context of this study, over generalization could be caused by some of the events that the researcher observed while she was a priest in the congregation such as a case study shared in the introduction of this study. This has a potential to

ignore the contradictory evidence that could be shared by the participants and opt for narrow evidence confirming the researcher has preconceived ideas (Fouche, 1998). For this study, such criticism will be avoided by examining the collected information through triangulation. The qualitative will be focused on interviewing the following

1. The stewards of the church.
2. The non-active members.
3. The members who are still actively attending church services.

The qualitative method will be used in this research methodology to explore and dig deep into the reasons that may have caused the research problem statement. However, Pollard and Gerkin will help the researcher understand the journey of the church members and the reasons for their decision while employing methods used in the two scholars to heal and restore both the church and the congregation.

3.7 Research Method

There are quite number of enquiries used in both qualitative and quantitative research methods. There are various types of quantitative research used depending on the nature of the study that includes, correlational research “where the statistical method is used to assess a possible linear association between two continuous variables” (Mukaka, 2012:69), experimental research: its research enquires used to examine the assumption of a problem (Kothari, 1990:48). Survey research is a method of collection of information from individuals with the intention of understanding ways in which certain behaviours occur (Sukamolson, 2007:12).

There are two kinds of survey research (i) in person interview, in this interview, the researcher asks question face to face at a place convenient for both parties. The advantages on such an interview are that it allows one to do it at one’s convenience. Its disadvantages are that coding, and analysis may take a while which turns out to become expensive. (ii) Telephone interview, the method of contacting the participants via telephone posing questions and the answers are voice recorded. Among the advantages for telephone interview is cost effective and time saving. Moreover, it

enables participants to share the information that could have made them to feel uncomfortable to face the researcher (Sukamolson, 2007:12). The disadvantages for telephone interview are that of privacy and anonymity to the participants. Moreover, participants have a limited time to reflect on their answers to the question (Geyer, 2021). For this study, the in-person interview will be used in order to allow participants to reflect on their on their answers. Questionnaires were issued to the participants in order to collect a qualitative data in a form of a survey. The form of the interview used was structured interview with the same set of questions to the participants. Geyer (2021) posits that the benefit for structured interview is the use of same questions to a number of participants in order to explore the subject and enhance the reliability of data.

3.8 Mixed method technique

A mixed method research/approach is described as a collection and analysing of both qualitative and quantitative data in one study (Fouche & Strydom, 2021:419). Some scholars (Sandler & Berrera, 1984; Jehn & Johnsen, 2010; Seawright, 2016) refer to the mixed method approach as a multi-method because it uses more than one approach. However, some scholars such as Cresswell (2015) have refuted the use of the word multi-methods as a synonym for mixed method on the basis that the earlier refers to different methods of data collection in a single approach. According to this view, multi-methods may include participant observation, interviewing and the use of documents to collect data in qualitative research (Fouche & Strydom, 2021:420). For this study, the researcher chose mixed method technique in a single study in order to use participant's observation, group structured interviews and person interviewing. The main purpose for choosing qualitative approach is to investigate, describe and explore the causes of church absconding in Bela-Bela.

3.9 The theory of positive deconstruction

Where do we start to help people who are not interested, worse who did not invite us for help? The researcher will explore two methods, which is Pollard (1997) positive deconstruction and Gerkin (1997) shepherding model. Pollard model observes that people's perceptions on Christian faith fall into four categories. The first group consists of people who are interested in Christianity but need somebody to bring them. This is a ready group, in the context of this study that could be a group of people who are interested in returning back but perhaps lazy or afraid after being absent for some months they just need a slightly motivation from the minister (Pollard, 1997:7). Group two consists of people interested but they have certain doubts and questions because of their limited knowledge about Christian faith. Group three: represents individuals who are interested but they know very little about Christian faith, worse they had never attended a church nor read the Bible before. Although the study did not entirely focus on new members, but those who had disappeared for sometimes, Group four: refers to the individuals who want nothing to do with the church or Christian faith. In the context of this study, this group could be people who left the church because they were hurt by either the pastor or other believer. As a result, they want nothing to do with the Church or Christian faith to such an extent that they do not even want to enter into conversation.

3.10 The theory of shepherding the flock

While Gerkin's *shepherding model* describes the element of shepherding that is needed in order to help pastors care for or shepherd the flock through their leadership. Shepherding in Africa is common and a known method of Caring for the flock. The common entry is shepherding, which will help pastors and pastoral care-givers to connect with those members who lose interest in attending church services, and pastorally care for them as members of the flock. African people respect shepherds. A shepherd is someone who cares for the flock by not only leading them to graze in a good place, but also providing security and being willing to die for the flock (Gerkin,

1997:40). The New Testament depiction of Jesus as the Good Shepherd who knows his sheep and is known by his sheep (John 10:14) has painted a meaningful normative portrait of the Pastor of God's people. In Bela-Bela, the importance of shepherding the flock meant to take care and pastor to those who had some months without going to church.

3.11 The importance of identifying the worldview

How then does one begin to engage with people from diverse groups who are not interested in Christian faith? Pollard observes that cultural factors such as clothes, music, and language play a crucial role to engage and win those without Cristian faith. However, as Pollard points it out that "without identifying the basis of the worldviews informing the attitude of the participants, the use of culture and other factors remain the sham and fake" (1997:32-33). Then what does one speak about when using the term 'worldview?' Worldview may mean different things to different people. The term worldview started to surface and used by different scholars (such as Benjamin Lee Whorf, Franz Boas) wards the end of 19th and the beginning 20th century. According to Humboldt, worldview is explained as "a fundamental and necessary processing of the world by the mind through the faculty of language" (Underill, 2009:15). This is to say a language is a tool that shapes and forms the concept about the world *weltansicht*. In other words, the world is viewed in relation to the language used. Contrary to the above, the worldview may not be confined to the use of language or the development of language to better understand the world, but to the framework or conceptual beliefs held and used by either the individual or group of people to view the world *weltanschauung* (Underhill, 2009:16). For this study, the worldview embodies both *weltanschauung* and *weltansigt* since one's use of language signifies and associates with concepts informing the worldview.

3.12 The theory of positive deconstruction

For Pollard, there are two categories of worldview, (1) the bottom-up model which is informed by conclusion drawn after studying and analysing particular events

happening in the area, and how the situation can be amended embedded in a particular culture or belief system (1997:33). For example: Covid-19 pandemic associates with high mortality and low economy across the globe could be understood as a punishment for defying and deserting God. The possible solution could be repentance and obedience to God. (2) The top-down worldview model refers to the lenses used by the individual or group of people to see the world (Pollard, 1997:34). For example, a person holding a cultural worldview may interpret the silence of women in public meeting as a respect to the chief, whereas radical worldview may see it as oppression of women and dominance of patriarch. For Pollard (1997), a better model for understanding the worldview that brings a good insight is the combination of the two (bottom-up and top-down). This is to say it is important to understand what people understand about a particular phenomenon and their way of seeing so that positive deconstruction will take place. We now turn to the theory positive deconstruction and how it relates to this study.

3.13 Positive deconstruction

A positive deconstruction model does not begin by telling people about Jesus and how he came to save humanity from sin. Instead, it seeks to search people's faith and the lenses used to view their faith. It then goes on to highlight errors and loopholes in their faith before it introduces Jesus and Christian faith. Pollard states that the process of helping people see and positively accept the loopholes in their faith is deconstruction (1997:44). However, the process is positive because it is conducted with an aim of replacing that error with something better which is Jesus in this case. Therefore, positive deconstruction is a process of identifying the loopholes and faults within one's belief or worldview in order that the correct faith or worldview may be induced (Pollard, 1997:45). Likewise, the researcher had to help the participants to see their loopholes and faults in their comfort zone for absconding the church and God because of issues they raised. Let us now look at the process undertaken to deconstruct the participants' worldviews.

3.14 Process of Positive Deconstruction

Identifying the worldview: It is critical to comprehend what captivated people, what is at the heart of their beliefs, and what they uphold when executing their lifestyle. When one digs deep, one may discover that they do not understand what they believe in (Pollard, 1997:48). As a result, the underlying reasons why participants are not interested in attending Sunday services may have been caused by their worldview.

Analysing the worldview: The emphasis will be on the three tests steps namely: coherence, correspondence, and pragmatics (Pollard, 1997:52). The goal will be to determine whether the interviewee's worldview makes sense, corresponds with reality, and if it works (Pollard, 1997:52). Pollard connotes that everything that is true is simple, it must make sense and it must correspond (Pollard, 1997:56). As a result, the focus of the analysis will be to find out if data coming from the participants align with three steps of Pollard.

Affirming the truth: As a result, both Christians' and non-Christians' worldviews contain some truth (Pollard, 1997:54). To substantiate the above both sides need to be looked into while seeking to search truth from both participants.

Discovering the Error: Admitting both Christians and non-Christians make mistakes proves our ability to learn and rediscover what is true and how to apply it, according to (Pollard, 1997:56). Accordingly, critical analysis of responses from the interviewee's responses will be to learn and set apart this worldview.

Analysing the types of worldviews: by identifying if, participants are relativist "belief that there is no absolute truth while seeking to determine errors in participants believe (Pollard, 1997:60)". Accordingly, emphasis will be to set apart what is gospel truth since Christians believes that everything that comes from God is true (Pollard, 1997:61). This averts that error could be found in both worlds without them knowing.

Pollard cautions that for people to change their minds from what they believed in, to a new understanding we must give them space and proper time (Pollard, 1997:71). Therefore, this learning process will have to be two folds one side to analyse their worldview, which is the course of them staying away from church on the other hand giving them reasons why they need to reconsider attending church.

3.15 Interviewing

Interviewing is explained as a well-planned process which needs to be well executed whereby a researcher poses questions to the participants/s with a purpose of producing and collecting data (Geyer, 2021:355). This is how Pollard will help the researcher understand the worldview of the interviewees in Bela-Bela. Taking time will be part of the journey with them in understanding why is it that each time a pastor is assigned to their church and happens to get an appointment for two years or more do they leave or discontinue to attend services which leads to church decline in membership.

3.15.1 There are two interviewing technics in qualitative research

Direct interviewing or online interviewing for both individually and group interviewing. The technic chosen for interviewing can be based on the nature of the study, the purpose of the study and the type of the research. Some of the reasons of choosing interviews is a “belief that people’s knowledge, views, understandings, interpretation, experiences, and interactions are meaningful properties of the social reality which research quotations are designed to explore (Mason, 2002:69)”. This is to say knowledge and information, interpretation and interactions construct the realities of the communities. For the purpose of this study, the choice for interviewing was based on the views that the views, perceptions, believes and values of people are important as far as their faith is concerned. As results, in person interviewing approach was chosen though there were also few participants who were called after they had raised their time constrains in meeting in person.

3.15.2 Face-to-face/direct interview

Informal field interview: This type of interview takes place in the field during observation usually technique is used to affirm the researcher's perception it is also characterized by the use of field notes since the interview is not recorded (Geyer, 2021:357). Equivalently, this study used informal field interview to ask participants about the impact of increased taverns as identified in most of the corners of Bela-Bela. The response for such answers were recorded in the field notebook.

3.15.3 In-depth/unstructured interview

This technique is used to explore subject characterized by open-ended questions and minimal deviation from questioner is permitted. The technique is usually successful whereby the researcher and participant know each other as it can take place at home, church, field, school, *et cetera* (Geyer, 2021:357). According to Geyer "unstructured interviews are used to understand participants lives, experiences, feelings, perceptions or situations from their point of view in their own world" (Geyer, 2021:357). In that way it can suite very well with ethnography where the researcher wants to explore the culture, belief, values and language of people. Similarly, the researcher chose in-depth interview in order to explore the culture values and believes of people of Bela-Bela. Moreover, with unstructured interview the researcher explored more concepts, dynamics as participants explained their challenges in attending church services, and how such challenges could be resolved.

3.16 Participant's observation

According to Saunders (Grey, 2004:239), observation is differentiated into two aspects, participant's observation using qualitative research which focuses on actions, behaviour, attitude and facial expressions of participants and the researcher is able to interpret their feelings concerning the subject. Structure observation is used in quantitative research where the researcher focuses on frequent actions or reaction in the experiment (coated in Grey, 2004:239). For the purpose and the nature of this study, the researcher has chosen participants observation not only to notice

expression of participants but their behaviour, culture, and actions leading to them absconding church which applied when qualitative data was collected.

3.16.1 Structured interview: use survey questionnaire to be completed during the interview, same set of questionnaire to be completed during the interview, same set of questions are posed to participants in order to explore concepts using direct questions (Geyer, 2021:358). Similarly, the study used structured interview in order to explore concepts that were raised by the participants as causes for church squandering. Structured interview technique was used to collect some data which also helped to test whether certain factors hinted as hindrance were to be considered as major factors or not.

3.17 Tools for data collection

Recording of collecting data not only because the participant's authentic words are kept, but precisely because the flow of the interview is not disturbed (Geyer, 2004). Another advantage of recording enhances the process of listening, interpreting, and focusing on the interview (Geyer, 2004). Similarly, interviews were recorded following the permission of the participant and to ensure that the information is kept and secured.

Field notes: Emerson argues that "field notes are form of representation reducing just observed events, persons, and places to written accounts" cited in (Mason, 2002:98). This is to say field notes capture the events, situations and interactions occurring in the field. Likewise, the researcher in this study captured valuable information, events occurring, and knowledge shared by participants during interviews and participants observation while still in the field of study.

Diaries: Diaries must keep the dates, place and participants who are interviewed. In addition to that diary also helps the researcher with the reflection as it contains notes and topics discussed (Geyer, 2004). Correspondingly the researcher uses diary to keep the participants' names, dates, times, and place for interviews.

3.18 Data collection techniques

In-depth interview: is the type of interview with the list of questions though unstructured it intends to capture the opinion of one or few participants and questions are short (De Vos, 1998). Likewise, the participants were interviewed as individual so that they were free to share their opinions and ideas concerning the problem of quitting the church services every two years.

Semi-structured interview: often used in qualitative research and many issues are covered though questions may deviate from sequence (Grey, 2004). According to Geyer (2021) semi-structured interview helps to collect a thick rich information because of its flexibility, but a researcher still needs to guide from being side-tracked by unnecessary information. Similarly, semi structured interview was conducted with short list of open-ended questions in the house of participants. To avoid the trivial information, the researcher explained clearly the topic of the research so that participants would give the required information.

3.19 Participants' observation:

In qualitative study, observation means to note behaviour and action of people in a specific setting contrary to the quantitative study where observation means to watch the reaction of chemicals in experiment (Grey, 2004). Equally, the researcher observed the setting of Bela-Bela and kind of social activities, institutions available, social behaviour of the community and the participants' attitude during the interviews for qualitative data. This was important to insert data into its context for interpretation.

Questionnaires: There are various types of questionnaires used in research such as mailed questionnaires, telephonic questionnaires, and hand-delivered questionnaire. For this study, two types of questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data. (1) Self-administered questionnaires are whereby questionnaire is handed to the participants to be completed in their homes while the researcher is around Roestenburg (2021). The purpose for such was to ensure that participants fill the questionnaire and give clarity where participants had misunderstood the question. (2)

Group-administered questionnaires is whereby a group of participants is given questionnaires to be completed by the individuals, but the researcher explains the questions to everybody for clarity (Roestenburg 2021:223). Similarly, in the context of family setting where number of participants were obtained group-administered questionnaire was used to save time.

3.20 Data collection tool

Recording audio helps the interviewer to focus on the interview without being disturbed by writing notes. However, sometimes listening to the long audio can be time consuming (De Vos 1998). In this study, recording was used to ensure that authentic words of participants were captured.

Diary: helps to note the date and place the interview occurred (De Vos 1998). Equally, all the meetings with participants will be noted on the diary.

Notebook: helps to write key words and important points during the interview (De Vos 1998). Similarly, notes were taken during interviews and observation period so that further clarity could be made where necessary.

Questionnaires: Roestenburg (2021) asserts that questionnaires work very well where the purpose of the study is well explained to the participants. The type of information needed and the nature of the study influence the design of the questionnaires. If the kind of information needed is just a general overview or description of phenomenon, the questions designed even in the case of survey are not highly rigorous than in where scale or statistics are conducted (Roestenburg, 2021:212). Correspondingly, this study used questionnaire (survey) to find general overview of the participants about the concepts raised during qualitative interviewing to describe and explore the concepts linked to decline of members from the congregation.

3.21 Data validity and reliability

Data validation in participatory action research is very important since it completes three purposes that are suggested by McNiff *et al.* (1996, cited in Gray, 2004:387).

The first purpose of validity is to identify places that need more clarity in the engagement. To gain clarity and ensure validity, the data obtained will be sent back to the participants to affirm its validity. Secondly, is to compare if the data obtained from different sources make coherence. Likewise, the data obtained from the individuals who were no longer coming to church was compared with the data obtained from those who still attend the church. Lastly, the purpose of validity is to get new knowledge and facts, which could have been missed when data was collected. This corresponded with step number three of Pollard (discussed above) to find coherent in what the participants shared. Further, even the approach of exploring the concepts emerged from qualitative data through survey also intended to ensure validity and find the coherence and facts. Correspondingly, 19 participants were sampled to represent 61 people with children, which makes it to be the enough for content validity.

Data reliability is obtainable through comparing various sources of information or information obtained from different techniques (Grey, 2004). According to Leavy (2017), this technique of using different techniques of data collection is called triangulation. It is also used as an interpretive method. Equally, the data obtained from in depth interviews will be compared with one from focus groups to ensure reliability. Further, the use of local documents such as that obtained from local municipality will be used as external validity to ensure the reliability of data.

3.22 Credibility and trustworthiness of data

The credibility of the study in a qualitative research refers to the link between participants' views versus researcher's interpretation of data (Schurink, Schurink, & Fouche, 2021). This connotes that there must be a connection between the perception of the participants and that of the researcher. This goes along with the selection of good representative sample (participants) and good understanding of the background or setting where participants live to insert data within its context. This will require a long and critical engagement with the participants so that rich data is collected (Schurink *et al.*, 2021:394). Congruent, in this study trustworthiness did not only emanate from good selection of participants but also immersion in the field of study so

that data shared by the participants could be inserted to the background of the participants. This process required the researcher to thoroughly observe the setting of Bela-Bela and its social life to ensure the credibility of data.

3.23 Preliminary conclusion

This chapter has discussed qualitative approach. The use of positive deconstruction theory as the theory of the study (theoretical framework) helped the research not only to access data from the participants but also to validate using various techniques for data collection participant observation, questionnaire, and interviewing. The different techniques were used in order to get correspondence, affirmability, and truthfulness as shared above by Pollard (1997). While the use of Gerkin's *shepherding the flock* to understand their world view will be essential in the case of Bela-Bela congregation to assist them in understanding the transition of continuing a consistent church attendance irrespective of the changes they may encounter. Further, the sampling techniques discussed above also met the purpose of the study and matched with the main research objective to find out the reasons why the number of congregants were no longer attending the church services. These sampling techniques and data collection techniques discussed in this chapter will be useful for data analysis and interpretation responding to research questions as it will be shown in chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4

4.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to expand and explore the research problem in Bela-Bela and how the background/social context of the research has been affecting the decline of believers in the church specifically AME. The social life of Bela-Bela will be described and how the environment links with the research problem whereby members of the church cease coming to church after certain number of years the new pastor has been deployed.

4.2 Background

The pastor was assigned to the denomination in 2015 in Bela-Bela district, a township in the Limpopo province. Upon arrival, the inventory of membership that was given by the stewards on this church was 122 members including children under the age of three who were baptised and integrated as full members of the church. The researcher observed that over the months the number given cannot be verified and she asked that a survey be conducted which will indicate what the actual membership of the church was.

A steward member as well as the pastor to ascertain and verify the numbers that were given by the church stewards to the pastor conducted a house-to-house visit. A final membership that was verified was 60 membership, which included children under the age of 3 years. The visits also demonstrated that out of 60 only 40 people who were still active or had been in the church for past five months. This alluded to the conviction that the register had not been updated for a while if more than half of the congregants could not be verified as members of the church when the new pastor came. Alternatively, perhaps, the problem for decline of members had been taking place drastically without anybody seeking to identify the cause and possible remedies for such decline.

4.3 Historical background of this church

According to the members of the church, this denomination was established in the 70s but since no history was recorded, the researcher could not verify the data, but the church was erected in 1980 according to the stone on the wall on the church. At that time, the Bela-Bela community had only few people since the area was mostly known for tourist and travellers that were travelling mainly from Polokwane to look for the jobs in Pretoria and Johannesburg. It is believed that not many people settled in Bela-Bela because there was no work except for the natural warm water and where the name Bela-Bela originated (Tswana/Pedi for "the pot that boils"). This culminated in the church not having many people settled in the community because the number of them were tourists or squatters heading to Gauteng province.

4.4 Pastoral appointments

Historically, that is since inception this church was known for not improving in membership and finances. Most of the pastors that were assigned to AMEC in Bela-Bela were either fresh from school, or pastors who had poorly perform from their previous congregations or those who had some faults (mainly to humble the pastor for whatever wrong he or she may have done in his or her previous appointment). Wiloughby (2015) posits that the appointment of pastors to the congregation without considering the financial aspect of the congregation has negatively affected church growth and pastors' life too. Similarly, AMEC in Southern Africa has not considered the financial aspect of the pastor and that of the congregation when it comes to the appointment, as it will be shown below.

In this case, the researcher was fresh from theology seminar and did not have a church. The previous pastor had just passed away in December, so the church needed a shepherd. Pastors' appointments according to the discipline of the AMEC (African Methodist Episcopal Church, 2012:84) is only one year, but most of the time it is upon the call of the Presiding Bishop to appoint the pastor the way he/she sees fit to do so (African Methodist Episcopal Church, 2012:84). Therefore, the presiding Bishop may appoint a pastor to the same charge for more than a year or for just one year. The

researcher works and stays in East Lyne (Pretoria) as a self-supporting priest. The Bela-Bela church is two-hour drive from Pretoria, which does have financial implications on the side of the pastor and that of the congregation. As a result, pastoral visits and other ministerial duties had been restricted by the distance and financial implication.

4.5 Decline membership

In January 2016, the researcher approved to this new charged where the presiding elder of the district accompanied her. That Sunday morning the church had so many members that could not be counted. Although the church did not record the attendees, but one would estimate, approximately 140 people had attended the service because others had to stand. That Sunday more chairs had to be brought to the church when we realised that many people were standing. On average, the church can accommodate 100 people. From 2016-2018, the church had a reasonable church attendance which could have been around 80 people.

In November 2018, the decline of membership started to be noticed as a result, the church steward asked to host the annual conference, which constitute 152 AMEC churches (commonly known as the 19th Episcopal District. MM Mokone). What come out from the conference especially from the previous pastors was that the decline of members had been occurring when they were still pastoring in the Bela-Bela circuit. After the annual conference, on the very first Sunday, when the pastor attended the church. Surprisingly, there was only youth, and not all parents and adults attended. When the pastor enquires about the whereabouts of the adult members, she was informed that they are at home with no valid reason for their non-attendance. An observation was made that on Saturdays if there is a celebration of any kind (i.e., funerals, weddings *etc.*) in Bela- Bela, the congregation does not attend a church services. Another observation was that on Sundays when the pastor had visited the stations for services, the main church in Bela-Bela would be empty. Bell (2009) asserts that he once noticed the congregants looking at each other with concern for pastoral and spiritual guidance after the pastor had announced his movement away from the congregation. Similarly, though the Bela-Bela parish had lay preachers but the

unavailability of a pastor for those Sundays was marked as a reason for absenteeism even for those who used to attend.

4.6 Church structure

This church (in Bela-Bela) has an addition of 2 stations which is in another two different villages that is surrounding the main church. Therefore, they are also to be given services by the pastor. The pastor has appointed lay preachers that are assisting with pastoral duties when she is at the other station. All previous pastors also used the same method for alternating services between main church and stations. The observation of non-attendance of congregation was addressed by both the stewards' board members as well as in the official board members. Leadership of the church committed to counter the problem that the church is facing. What could be the reason for church decline in membership?

4.7 Addressing the problems pertaining reduction of membership

It was in the third year (toward the end of 2018) when the attendance became extremely low. Therefore, both the pastor and the elders of the church had to come up with strategies to address the problem. The stewards informed the pastor that this problem occurred frequently when the minister is assigned for more than two years in Bela-Bela.

A few plans were put in place and just to mention two; one was to do house visits and conduct cell groups where prayers will be done and to give the members personal attention while addressing the problem.

The other one was to give auxiliaries slates so that they can also get a chance to preach on Sundays. This will also assist that type of auxiliary to train their members how to lead alternatively, how to engage in church activities and give different topics on days that were allocated to them.

Both plans worked only in the beginning but ended up failing as the members themselves never wanted to listen to each other. That lead to other problems which made the researcher to come up with the different method of keeping members

interested in attending church Sunday services while moving auxiliaries' services to Thursdays and Saturdays. Roasters were put in place, topics that they have chosen for the year were done, and different speakers from both in and outside church were invited.

4.8 The Setting and Social Life of Bela-Bela

In general, Bela-Bela community is the township in Limpopo province under Waterberg District, which covers an area of 4000 km². The Bela-Bela local community has been characterised with high population growth. The statistics show that in 2011 the area consisted of 66 000 people whereas in 2016 the population reported the growth of 76 000 (SA Government's Official COVID-19 Resource, 2012-2022). The population growth could be caused by not only birth rate but also location as the area is situated in the southeast boundary of Mpumalanga province and south to the Gauteng province (BLM, 2019). The community composed of 90 percent African people with half of them speaking Sepedi as their first language. The main economic means of Bela-Bela are agriculture, tourism and few manufacturing companies. Sadly, there is a discrepancy between the area of economic means and where people reside (BLM, 2019). What makes it worse is that local people especially black do not own even those heritage sites and nature reserves that make local economy. This makes the level of poverty to be high.

Several research have confirmed that poverty or unemployment rate are closely linked with poor education or the lack of professional skills (Tierney, 2015; Sarwar, *et al.*, 2011; Raffo, *et al.*, 2007). Similarly, Bela-Bela has a number of uneducated people with 4 percent illiterate, 32 percent matriculants; only 9 percent graduates (SA Government's Official COVID-19 Resource, 2012-2022). The unemployment is not the only problems but also crime, health issues as HIV/AIDS had reportedly increased by Development Bank of Southern Africa since 2006 with number of child-headed families (BLM, 2019:154). All these factors do have implications on the response of congregants towards the church, as it will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

4.9 The Appointment of an Itinerant Minister in the AME Church

An Itinerant Minister in the church is given an appointment for one year, but it depends on the Bishop at the sitting of an annual conference. The Bishop makes appointment according to the discipline of African Methodist Episcopal Church but many other factors also lead to certain appointments (2012:100). The Bishop knows those reasons. More often, the Bela-Bela circuit is known for the deep end of the pastor where those who had failed, scandalous and often knew in ministry are deployed. The reason being that the circuit is known for failing to pay the conference financial obligations (money paid by parishes to the Bishop's office). Consequently, the Ministerial efficiency committee is known for not recommending good and effective pastors to that circuit of which constitute to the problem for decline membership.

4.10 Preliminary Conclusion

The above section has demonstrated the setting of Bela-Bela and how the background is linked with the lifestyle of the attitude of the congregants towards the church. Further, the deployment of the pastors by the office of the Bishop and that of a presiding elder also affect the performance of the pastor and the growth of the church. Although some means had been done as pastoral measures that included the hosting of annual conference and the office of lay preachers to ensure that the congregants are revived and spiritually fed, but the decline of congregants and inconsistent attending of church services continue to be the problem of which this research seeks to respond. Therefore, the following chapter will present and analyse data collected from the participants with a purpose of finding a mechanism to help the congregation curb the decline.

CHAPTER 5

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a qualitative method of data collected from the participants through interviews and participants observation. The study used different techniques of interviews, which included face-to-face interviews, focus groups and structured interviews for to the themes. To sort and summarise data, themes were used to demonstrate and reply accordingly. The data collected through qualitative approach is used to analyse and interpret the different responses.

5.2 Data presentation

Themes emerged from qualitative data

The main causes people not to attend the church services

Focus groups	In-depth interview	Participants' observation
Money	Money	
Unemployment	Unemployment	Unemployment
Church Service	Church Service	
Sermon	Sermon	Dull service
Music	Music	Worship and Music
Substance abuse	Substance abuse	Substance abuse
Stress due to joblessness and chronic disease	Social culture of alcoholism	Joblessness
Accessibility	Hang-over	Increased taverns in the community & Social culture
Pastoral life of a pastor	Pastoral life of a pastor	
Home visits	Home visits	Pastoral visits
Leadership	Leadership	Leadership

There is no doubt that money and offerings are needed for the normal operation of the church. The data obtained from participants in Bela-Bela shows that money was the major reason believers were no longer showing up. 'Participant 6 who had stopped attending the church for some months put it this way, "the way things are happening and there are many rules; offering, the minister doesn't want coins" (Participant 6, interview). Participant 5 also shared the same sentiments, "He (referring to the pastor) wants us to pay R20.00 and I am not working where will I get the money from" (Participant 5, interview). Participant 2 when she was asked the last time she went to church; "I was a regular church attendant, but I am no longer one, since they changed our contribution from R50 to R100 and we are not working in this community" (Female participant 2, interview). Similarly, when participant 13 was asked why she was no longer coming to church, she answered: "I left when they always wanted us to give money. And they change pastors each time you try to get used to a pastor" (Female participant 13, February 18, 2022). From participant's observation, the researcher noticed that every time she went to Bela-Bela either for pastoral visits or during interview, she would find big number of people roaming the streets. Furthermore, majority of participants were found relaxing at their homes, even when the pastor did not make an appointment. This shows the convictions that many people in Bela-Bela are not working.

5.3 Data analysis and interpretation

In the context of Bela-Bela, it is not surprising that the lack of money was marked as a major issue for people not to attend the church. Eight out of eleven participants who stopped coming to church because they could not afford the financial dues of the church, let alone the transport fare to the church, because they were not working. The two who were working pointed out that they believe that it is true that those who were unemployed were negatively affected by the financial obligation hence they stopped coming to church because of guilt. From their reasons of bunking, the church was the poor attendance by those who did not afford financial obligations, which resulted to the poor worship. The other one said he had stopped giving to the church because

money is not used to develop the congregation, but instead it is used to enrich the central office in America. As a result, the participant did not only stop giving but also ceased from going to church though his reasons were not on financial status.

In contrast with the above, eleven percent of congregants who attended the church services (at least twice in a month) regularly were working class and number of them were church stewards. The three participants who shared that money was never an issue to attend church services had full time jobs two of them had positions of leadership in the church. This is understood that the Bela-Bela church give church positions to the working class. In support of this claim, the discipline of the church does not state that a member must not be elected when he or she is not working, the discipline of the AME Church states that a member should be in good and regular standing (AMEC, 2012: 64). The researcher's interpretation of good and regular standing is that the members were attending church services and participated in all activities. That qualified them to hold any position. Participant 11 argued, "There are those who are being favoured especially if you are working" (Participant 11, interview, February 11, 2022). This connotes that the working class is likely to be preferred for positions because they come regularly since they are not negatively affected by the church financial obligation. This results, not only to the exclusion of the poor to positions, but discrimination, which eventually yield to absenteeism and worsen the decline of membership. In other words, it means that the church must find a way of making enquiry about tithes and offering from church members, which can also accommodate those that are not working.

5.4 Tithing and offering

The point of departure should be the Scripture passage on the issue of tithing and offering, since the scripture carries both supreme and absolute authority to the church (Barrett, 2016; Nagel, 1956). (Vaux, 1962) articulates that the period 10 century BC, Israel was characterised with equality with many houses of the same size. However, eight century BC started to show the inequality to the society with property owners, judges, and the rich started to rob the poor through frauds, bribes, and debts (Am. 8.5,

Is. 5.8, and Mi. 2.2.) In Bela-Bela, members are unemployed and according to the responses of those interviewed, they cannot afford to pay the church offerings and other obligation. YHWH gave the teaching and practise of offering and tithing to the temple to Israel. Before, the tithes and offering were brought to the temple, during the period of monarch, all people of Israel brought them to the palace (Ez.45:13-16, Ne. 10:33-40). This depicts that the patriarchs had practiced mandatory offerings as the obligation to the religious institution. Further, it also denotes the subscription to the central authority for administration of laws, which is embedded in the establishment of theocracy (Lasor, *et al.*, 1982). Likewise, the financial dues required by the central office at AMEC intended to build theocracy and covenant with God just like in Israel during the Old Testament period as the obligation that all members must uphold. However, a contradicting view and notion of grace comes into stake when reading a New Testament on the issue of tithing which this research will also look at later.

According to the acts of AMEC in Commission on Stewardship and Finance of section, 4 stipulate that:

- (1) Each year the Commission shall set up a budget for the church and shall submit the same to the Official Board for its action and denomination.
- (2) There shall be an annual "Every Member Canvas" for individual pledges (AMEC, 2013:77).

The work of the commission as stipulated in the acts of AMEC is to guide and give the responsibilities of the commission on stewardship and finances. The mere fact that the budget is drawn by the commission and allocated to the church piles a pressure firstly to the priest and to the congregants. The pressure that is absorbed by the pastor comes from top as the pastor is expected to ensure that the congregation meets the budget set by the commission. The commission that set out the budget is not from the local congregation. This means that there are highly possibilities of setting a high budget for the congregation that has many poor and unemployed persons. This results to the pastor demanding tithing from the congregation, which eventually leads to congregants ceasing to come to the church. The emphasis by the participants that "the pastor wants money" denotes the view of financial strain upon the congregants. On

other hand, the lack of money is the hindrance in growing the ministry from the side of the pastor. These issues result to the stagnant church with decline of membership in Bela-Bela, and thus the researcher will use the methods of both Pollard's positive deconstruction and Gerkin pastoral care methods, which will be explained in detailed in Chapter 6. This is meant to heal and encourage the congregation who have stopped attending church services to be able to return to church services and revive the church into a new and vibrant church.

5.5 Issues pertaining giving

There are other two issues pertaining to tithes and offering that one feels the church has not developed. Firstly, the spiritual aspect of giving that alters the Jewish law or obligation as it has been portrayed and taught by the AMEC. Although the New Testament does not explicitly deal with offering and tithing as in the Old Testament, but there are texts that depict the acceptance of giving though not as a command or moral obligation (Peters, 2021). The story about a poor widow in the gospel of Mar. 12:41-44 depict a spiritual logic regarding the tithing of the poor. Malick (2019) uses a structural form of criticism, notes that in Galilee Jesus' ministry was endorsed with crowd with many miracles and Messianic signs. Mark's gospels depict Jesus' ministry in Galilee as triumphant with the element of Messianic powers.

Conversely, Malick (2019) observes that Jerusalem city was a place where Jesus' ministry was questioned, challenged, and opposed by the scribes, priests, teachers of the law and Pharisees especially the preceding stories of Chapter 12. Further, even the disciples seem to be puzzled, and struggling to understand Jesus' teachings and parables. Purposely, the story of a poor widow occurred in the context of Jerusalem where Jesus' teachings were opposed. The proceeding section (Mar. 12:28-33), Jesus is clarifying the issue about a major commandment in the Jewish law. Loving your God with all your heart, mind and soul supersedes all other commandments, which is then followed by the story of a poor widow. According to Malick, Jesus does not only sympathise with a poor widow but also applauds her for exemplifying a whole-hearted kind of love towards God. Moreover, a poor woman also signifies individualistic and outcast that is not recognised by the majority while conversely faithful to God (2019:9-

10). Therefore, poor congregants in Bela-Bela seem to be lacking the spiritual aspect of being needy and remain faithful to God; even though others since do not recognize them as faithful, they do not afford the financial target required by the church board. The next chapter will be dealing with the healing methods to be applied in Bela-Bela.

In the early church and now, number of Pentecostals are growing in mission and while able to maintain operation costs in Africa and United State because its members have been faithful in giving. In the study conducted in England under the diocese of New Westminster, out of seven churches, only one was financial stable, the rest had financial challenges leading to unpaid rates (water and electricity switched off). Moreover, the priest was discouraged to further ministry and/or render pastoral ministry to people because of lack of financial support (Muir, 2017:76-77).

Having demonstrated the need of the money in the church, how does then one begin to enquire offering from the poor. Let alone that some church members go far as cursing them because they cannot give hence, they stop coming to Church. Though Old Testament giving was agrarian, the beneficiaries of the tithe were priests, Levites, and the widows of the time. There is a consensus from biblical understanding by the number of scholars (Peters, 2021, De Vaux 1962; Igbo, 2021) that the reasons the tithe and offerings were brought to the temple workers is because they had no right of ownership to land (Deu. 26:12, Num. 18:21-32, Neh 10:32-39). In the context of Bela-Bela, it was not surprising that out of twenty participants, twelve of them were unemployed nor running a business mainly dependant on child support grant and casual work. Therefore, it is highly possible that a constant reminder by the treasurer to pay the church dues could fragment the spirituality of the poor leading to absconding the church services in AMEC in Bela-Bela.

The selection of scripture to exonerate the extraction of money from the majority poor has started to taint today's church. Irvine, cautions that "... in the church, money should not be the driving force" (Irvine, 2005:22). This connotes that church should not be viewed as a profitable institution where money is at the centre. Congruently, Igbo argues, "The NT never enforced tithing on believers; further the poor such as

fishermen and artisans were exempted from tithing” (Igbo, 2021:203). This does not only bring pastoral side to the poor but also removing unnecessary pressure put on the poor. Likewise, the poor in Bela-Bela must not be pressured to pay certain amount of money set by the parish council as this makes them to feel guilty. Let alone that one participant also complained that the church has increased her financial (dues) while she is not even employed. “I was a regular church attendant, but I am no longer one. They changed our contribution from fifty rand to one hundred rand and many of us are not working in this community” (Participant 2, interview, 18 February 2022). In contrast, from literature review, which depicts that church decline, is caused by personal commitments that people have during Sundays. In Bela-Bela, decline of membership is caused by the financial strain put on the majority poor people.

It should also be noted that it is difficult to find employment in Bela-Bela since it is a semi-rural area, their main source that general income in the tourist industry, which is also not that big. The community of Bela-Bela have since grown in number, which adds to the state the residence finds themselves in. The next chapter will then speak of healing methods to be applied in Bela-Bela to address the problems faced in this church.

5.6 The impact for preaching and music on church attendance

One may not deny the fact that there are many reasons that make people to attend church services regularly. That may include companionship, sense of belonging, enjoyment, healing, and perhaps enhancing faith as shared in earlier (in Chapter: 2). Using qualitative approach, a following question was asked to research participants: What motivated you to attend the church services in cases where you have managed to do so? The response from number of participants signalled that it was an inspiring sermons and music (Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 14, & 15). One of the participants who has been attending the church regularly put it “I get spiritual fulfilment. The church distresses me and I feel different when returning from church” (Participant 1, interview

18 February 2022). In agreement with participant 1, one participant who once stopped coming to church because of her studies shared that, "I like worshipping and sermons gave me a reason to return" (Participant 15, interview, 18 February 2022). The focus group that consisted of four participants shared that they stopped going to church because only few people used to attend the church. When the group was asked what makes one not to attend the church? One of the participants from the group shared that "Sometimes there are no people attending there and they make me dry in spirit" (Participant 10, focus group, 18 February 2022). Other members agreed with participant 10 in a focus group and added that some church members only go to church when they have a death case at home, and they only need support and their deceased to be buried. The focus group consisted of people who had a minimum of three months without attending the church. When the group was asked what motivated them to attend the church before? They indicated that sermons and music were inspiring and reviving before (Focus Group, interview, 18 February 2022). This indicated that sermons and music inspired many people to attend the church services before. Consequently, the decline in either one or two of these activities contributed to the decline of membership in AMEC at Bela-Bela community.

In order to find out how much influence the church services (sermons and music) had on regular church attendance. The question (How much will preaching and music improve the church attendance in Bela-Bela?) was asked to participants using a questionnaire for quantitative data. The data found out that more than fifty percent (thirty-one percent indicated very high while twenty-two percent marked high) of participants believed that the improvement in sermons and music will improve church attendance. Twenty-six percent of the participants marked moderate indicating that the improvement on church services will also improve church attendance but not very much. Only four percent indicated that the improvement on church services would not have a significant improvement on church attendance.

5.7 Interpretation and analysis

A clear indication that a sermon and music do have an impact on the growth of the church cannot be denounced based on the data shown above. Most people who

indicated that sermons and music motivated them to attend the church services were unemployed and poor. Perhaps sermons also came with the message of hope in their lives to keep them strong. In support of this claim, the question was posed to participants concerning the reasons for attending the church before. The participant replied: When the minister preached, I felt that angels were coming. The researcher asked: And what happened later? Participant: The pastor does not preach the way I want, he preaches, but not that much (Participant 5, interview, 17 February 2022). Participant (15, 18 February 2022) also signified that though she had stopped attending church services because of her studies but she was of the view that people of Bela-Bela had lost interest in the church. Perhaps the observation that the researcher hinted earlier that congregants of AMEC at Bela-Bela seem to be showing an interest when the pastor is still new and as time progresses, they gradually fade away could be caused by the decline in the level of preaching by the pastor.

In a research conducted by (Kim, 2008), it was found out that sixty-eight percent of members had joined Global Mission Church because of pastors' preaching including those who just came from other cities. Moreover, the same research also revealed that preaching had a great impact on inspiring other church members to be the evangelists and expand the mission, which eventually led to a church growth. This study found out sixty-five percent of participants asserted that they can highly advice non-AMEC members to join AMEC church in Bela-Bela. This seems to contradict their assertions about the decline of preaching standard that has discouraged number of them to go to church regularly. On other hand, the encouragement of non-AMEC members could be linked with lamentation by other church members who have ceased attending the church because of small numbers that show up for church service on Sundays. Using qualitative approach, the participants were asked: What is the status of the church currently? A number of participants shared that, "People are always at home" (Participants 14, 16, 17, & 18; Interview, 18 February 2022). This shows that people still believe and love their church that is why they have not joined other churches. Participant 14 put it explicitly "Members are sitting at home. They don't join other churches because they are hoping that structures of this church will change"

(Participant 14, interview, 18 February 2022). It is possible to think that the few attendance may also discourage pastors to prepare a good sermon for Sunday services. This goes along with poor music especially in a congregation where the church members do singing. This is to say, the smaller the number of congregants, the lesser motivation to preach a sound sermon, which associates with uninspiring music. Therefore, in Bela-Bela, one problem led to the other, which eventually worsen church attendance.

Though a small percentage, some congregants alluded that for them preaching could not be the main reason why they go to church. For Participants (1, 18, 19) who still go to church indicated that they grew up in church and they want to uphold those teachings regardless of pastors' sermon or music sung in the church. Based on the views of these participants, people were not going to church because their interests were in booze drinking. However, what was noticeable was that number of the participants who had not ceased attending church services were those who had specific offices in the church. On a question: Do you go to church regularly? Participant 18 answered: Yes, I served in all offices because people did not want to do anything and expected the pastor to work alone (Participant 18, interview, 18 February 2022). This connotes that people become more active in places where they had a specific role to play. Therefore, in order to curb the continuous decrease of membership, more people need to be assigned activities to do. This will not only help to increase membership on Sundays, but also sharing their skills and information as social beings.

5.8 Alcoholism and drug abuse

Alcohol and the use of drugs are among the most serious problems revealed in the interviews, that South Africa need to declare as a new pandemic. The death of twenty-one children in Enyobeni tavern in the Eastern Cape most of them reportedly by media under the age of 18 years indicate the depth of the problem. The scourge of alcohol and drug abuse does not only bother the non-believers but also the church in Bela-Bela. The AMEEC in Bela-Bela is surviving under the menace of alcohol and drug abuse. Several congregants have pointed alcohol as one of the big spells holding the

church under captivity. The issue of alcohol came out from a number of questions, among them was: What is the life-style of Bela-Bela community? Several participants would without hesitant mention 'partying and drinking' as the lifestyle of the community (Participants, 4, 9, 10, 11, 17; interview, 19 February 2022). When participant (2, interview) was asked about the culture of the community. She responded, "The life is fast, very fast, drinking, and doing drugs. People from outside come for entertainment. It's about shebeens!" (Participants 2, in-depth interview, 19 February 2022). Similarly, the results from the focus group also pointed out drinking, and the use of drugs as the culture of community. The group highlighted individualism, corruption, robbery and having no sense of guilty in doing wrong. According to the focus group, shebeens had a huge effect on the crimes and the lack of morals to people. The participants hinted, "All youth is attending the clubs, and that is their priority, and not church. People in this area will go to drink alcohol than to go to the church" (Focus Group, interview, 19 February 2022). This shows that drinking and access to the shebeens have an impact on the lifestyle of the community and negatively affected the church.

The information shared by the participants was intensified by the researchers' observations in Bela-Bela community. After hearing participants mentioning drinking as the habit of the community the researcher then took a drive around to see the shebeens around. Surprisingly, in almost every 100 metres in the location there is at least one tavern. Most of the taverns that the researcher identified were more than the churches. In the area that can be approximately 20 km, the researcher identified 16 shebeens against 12 churches of which number of them were characterised with old buildings. It is not surprising that in homes that the researcher visited for interviews, three of them had shebeens. This shows that it is not only non-Christian who own the shebeens, but also the members of the church. This kind of culture did not surprise the researcher because some participants had already admitted that they do not go to church because they were sometimes tired on Sundays after boozing the whole night. Participant 3 admitted that sometimes she just does not go to church she would be tired after having some drinks at night (Participant, 3, interview, 18 February 2022). Beside drinking and the use of drugs, the researcher noticed that many of young women had infants. This led to the view that perhaps those children came out as a results of drinking and partying, which could have led to unprotected sex. One of the

participants when asked about the lifestyle of Bela-Bela. She said that Bela-Bela is an HIV zone (Participant 14, in-depth interview, 19 February 2022). This clearly shows that apart from drinking and selling of drugs, Bela-Bela community is also challenged with HIV/AIDS of which could be causing stress to the infected members leading to drinking lifestyle.

As results of complaints about the shebeens and taverns in the community, the researcher took an initiative to use quantitative approach (survey) to find out the extent of drinking to absenteeism on Sunday services. It was not surprising to note that the participants who objected the impact of alcohol to church attendance had shebeens in their homes. This could have come as a personal defence for their economic activities. According to the results of this study, one can conclude that alcohol and the use of drugs had high impact on the decline of membership to AMEC in Bela-Bela community.

5.9 Analysis and discussion

There is a strong belief that there are different psychological theories linked with alcoholism. Among theories linked with alcohol, one may mention tension-reduction theory. According to this theory, people who suffer from losses (could be relationship, job, death of a loved one, self-esteem, joblessness) could result to stress. As an attempt to reduce psychological stress, an individual may resort to alcoholism (Leonard & Blane, 1999). Several researches have proven that psychological stress does lead to severe drinking of alcohol and the use of drugs (Gondre-Lewis, *et al.*, 2016; Ayer, *et al.*, 2011; Coleman, *et al.*, 2013; Sillaber & Henniger, 2004). Just as indicated in the previous chapter (Chapter: 4) that Bela-Bela is a high unemployed community with lesser economic means belonging to the residents. Just as indicated by the participants in both qualitative and quantitative data that one of their biggest obstacles was a financial obligation to be paid to church while they were unemployed. A study conducted in Northern California found out those stressful life events and economic insecurities were heavenly linked with high drinking to poor women. According to this study, poor women were found to be high on alcohol use because of

hardships they face such as caring for families and susceptible to various crimes leading to the loss of property (Mulia, *et al.*, 2009). Congruently, drinking habit in Bela-Bela associated with stress and time availability due to lack of employment. If one considers that interviews for this study took place during the week in a daytime (participant's observation), let alone that there were no appointments made prior, but participants were found in their homes. One coheres with participants about the lack of employment as a hindrance to meet the financial dues of the church. The lack of financial stability leads to heavenly drinking and eventually to the church absenteeism. Therefore, a theory of tension-reduction (alcoholism) due to unemployment comes to the fore in Bela-Bela community, which results to members absconding the church services not primarily because of drinking, but because of lack of financial securities.

A cry by the number of participants (as shown above) that a church wants money does not only remind the participants of being unemployed or poor, but may also embody the lack of belonging in a sense (Stanic, 2012). One of the participants who pointed money as a major hindrance was asked: How does offering affect you? She responded, "I feel so bad when people bring offering, but I can't because I am not working" (Participant 11, in-depth interview, 18 February 2022). Further, participants also commented about discrimination and favouritism in a form of financial status as a blight needed to be out-rooted (Participants 3, & 11 interviews 18 February 2022). From participants' views, pastors usually favour those who are able to meet financial dues of the church. Then those who are poor feel neglected, outcasts and isolated without any sense of belonging. Contrary, when the poor go to the shebeens, they feel welcome without even a pressure to bulge out the money. As results, shebeens become the area of distress with lesser financial pressure while the church becomes an area of high pressure with high financial obligations. Therefore, the earlier becomes homely while the later becomes foreign which results to lesser people going to church and eventual church decline. This finding is different from the literature used in this study, as the poor are the ones who are faced with financial pressure leading to alcoholism while the literature has shared that the working class are usually busy on Sundays or sometimes use Sundays as a rest day.

Another theory of alcoholism is social learning theory. According to this theory “alcohol use emphasizes the role of vicarious learning and social environment in the development of alcohol use and alcohol problems” (Leonard & Blane, 1999:6). This means the way the environment understands the alcohol use will have an influence on the way one sees and uses alcohol. In the context of Bela-Bela, the use of alcohol also seems to be social and cultural in essence which falls under social learning theory. The evidence for this when participants were asked about the culture of Bela-Bela community, several of them alluded alcohol and partying as a culture of the area (Participants 1, 3, 6, 11, 14, 15 & 19, interview, 18 February 2022). However, financial instability had been identified as a core cause of alcoholism, but the level of alcoholism had emerged to be a culture of the society. This means that alcohol is not only used for coping mechanism but a good alternative to escape dealing with life’s real issues, as highlighted by Bishop Mbetse who preached at Enyobeni Funeral where 21 children lost their lives at the tavern. The Bishop lamented, “Alcohol in South Africa has become a new disease, and either it’s a party! It’s alcohol! Funeral! It’s alcohol! Celebration! It’s alcohol!” (SABC News 404, 06 July 2022). This agrees with the study conducted in Presbyterian Church of East Africa, which aimed to find out the reasons for continuous drinking to the youth in the church. The study found out that social influence to alcohol and drug use was the main reason. The social influence was not exclusive to local area, but also included social media and the way alcohol use is portrayed (Mathai, *et al.*, 2018:114-115). Drinking and partying that usually takes place during the weekend have a detrimental influence on church attendance as people get tired and sleep for almost the whole day. This kind of lifestyle makes it hard to go to church since the body is tired associated with low spirituality. Therefore, social drinking culture must be destroyed and construct a new societal culture that will promote health life and free alcohol community. Apart from fatigue and low spirituality emanating from drinking alcohol, unplanned sex and HIV become rampant in the community. Participant (13, 2020), when asked about the culture of a community shared that Bela-Bela is an alcohol and HIV zone. Therefore, there is a need for the church to intervene in the extreme use of alcohol and unplanned sex, which negatively affect the church. Pastoral healing needed

5.10 Economic aspect of alcohol

As far as alcohol and drugs use are criticised by many organizations including World Health Organization and churches across the world based on external costs such as loss of life due to crime, sickness, low driving ability, loss of jobs, and high medical costs, but the struggle seems to be in vain (Hartley, 1989; Ranaweera, *et al.*, 2018). In many countries (such as United State of America, Sri Lanka, England, and South Africa), government has introduced number of restrictions on sales of alcohol such as an increase of price, increase government levy, reduce operation time on liquor, restricting age group to sales of alcohol, but the sales and drinking of alcohol increase drastically yearly (Setlalentoa, *et al.*, 2010; Horn, 2018; Ranaweera, *et al.*, 2018). South Africa is ranked top among countries with high alcohol consumption. Despite, price elasticity and heavy tax that government impose yearly, various studies conducted in South Africa have discovered that price elasticity has not reduced drinking to moderate and heavy drinkers (Rataemane & Rataemane, 2006; Setlalentoa, *et al.*, 2010; Horn, 2018). The continual increase of alcohol consumption is also supported by the drastic increase of shebeens and taverns in townships and villages. In 2006 the estimates of illegal places selling alcohol were between 150 000 to 200 000 which makes it hard to control it. Just like counter argument in banning of alcohol sales by the government, alcohol also contributes almost 1.1% of South African GDP.

In 2020-2021 due to lockdown regulations, approximately more than R36.2 billion was lost, and 200 200 employees were badly affected since wine industry reportedly employed more than 1 million people in the country (SALBA, 2021). Similarly, in Bela-Bela as indicated before (Chapter: 4) that Bela-Bela is predominately shebeens and taverns indicating a type of economic system prevalent in the community. It was not surprising to find out that even some of the congregants had shebeens in their homes. In support of the above claim, when the participants were asked about the culture of Bela-Bela they responded, "We are going a day by day without an income, what must you do? You must also sell alcohol so that children will get food" (Participant 7, interview, 18 February 2022). The owning of shebeens, and access to taverns in the community impaired the church attendance. The reasons being that shebeens are

unregulated and they run the whole time and usually closes when the money or alcohol is finished. Moreover, the prevalence of shebeens and taverns increases alcohol accessibility. This kind of economic system usually associates with fights, crime, violence that causes social disruption. As a result, people might find it hard to go to church because of violence, crime and robbery taking place in their community. This results to the decline of membership and absenteeism.

5.11 Poor worship due to lack of human resource

The above-mentioned reasons for church decline seem to be extending to other problems of boredom and low spirituality in the church. The decline caused by the lack of money and the rampant use of alcohol by the church members demotivate others who were still interested because of poor attendance. When the participants were asked about the status of the church, some of them hinted reluctance because of poor attendance. The participant commented, “The church is very empty. And that demotivates people” (Participant 2, interview, 18 February 2022). The other participant who last went to church in 2021 (before interview) responded, “I don’t know, I just heard there are no members any longer” (Participant 11, interview, 18 February 2022). In addition, participant (3) shared same sentiments though on a different question about area of development and improvement, a participant hinted that the lack of membership is demotivating. The absence of members in Bela-Bela goes along with late coming which also depress other members. One of the participants commented, “The church is supposed to start at 09H00 but you will sit and wait until 10 am, but still people don’t pitch up it’s only you and pastor” (Participants 9, interview, 18 February 2022). In agreement with other participants, Participant (7) shared that people were getting lesser than the time the researcher was the pastor. The participant commented that on average one would get five to six congregants with a pastor. The small number of congregants attending a Sunday service does have a negative impact on praise and worship.

5.12 Data analysis and discussion

It is true that people go to church for various reasons, hence fixing one problem does not resolve all issues in the congregation. The stiffness and lack of excitement especially in the mainline churches is one of the reasons that had led to a number of people leaving to join Pentecostal churches and charismatic churches. Kgatle (2019) argues that music by congregational church is therapeutic to the members of the congregation than churches where singing is left to individuals. The qualitative data above collected through in-depth interviews shows that some congregants who once enjoyed church services due to sound music had stopped going to church because there are few people to sing on Sunday service. Calitz (2017) from North-West University argues that liturgical singing has various purposes, which include scriptural motive, confession, and pastoral motive. The author went on to argue that in “Pastoral motive worship service is not only service of the churchgoers, but also a service to the churchgoers” (Calitz, 2017:2). In other words, the churchgoers but also the recipient of such service do not only offer worship service. Thus, makes worship to become healing to the congregants involved in such activity. So, in a context such as AMEC in Bela-Bela where only few people attend the Sunday service there are two occurring problems that were observed during the interviews. The first one will be the lack of humankind to offer such service (lack of human resources). The second one emanates from the first one, which would be the failure of service delivery to the recipients (members of the congregation). This results to further absenteeism due to the lack of therapeutic worship occurring when many people attended the church service.

There is no doubt that worship in Bela-Bela is one of the activities that inspire congregants. Its ratings were high and very high when merged. More than 60 percent of participants indicated worship as one of inspirational activities that keep them going to church. Twenty percent of congregants were categorised under moderate denoting a medium level. In other words, the moderate level means worship does have an impact though it was not a major reason for people to go to church. What was noticeable was that most of participants who were categorised under high & very high were those who were no longer attending the church, and mostly unemployed. This shows that the continual decline of membership could have negatively affected even

those who were the recipient of worship service and ended up sliding backward. In the study conducted in Virginia it was found out that there is interconnectedness between worship and evangelism. According to this study, corporate worship is both vertical and horizontal. It is vertical because it honours God, which is a primary focus. On other hand, it is horizontal because it encourages not only our beloved Christians but also those outside Christian faith (Chapel quoted by McKinney, 2021:32-33). This means congregation worship does witness Christ in the world; hence, there is no evangelism without worship. Therefore, the increase in worship will also increase the evangelism, which will eventually lead to the growth of the church (McKinney, 2021:33). In agreement with McKinney, Calitz (2017) posits that through congregational worship, our emotions and grief are released while the upliftment occurs to the listener, which enables the Spirit of God to be felt. Therefore, worship needs to be intensified in order to curb the decline of members at AMEC in Bela-Bela community.

5.13 Pastor's leadership and care

The caring by the pastor is one of the most needed skills in a ministry. When the participants were asked: What needs to be done to improve the church attendance? A number of participants highlighted home visits, hospital visits, revivals, Bible study as well as fair treatment between the rich and poor (Participants, 3, 5, 14, &19). Participant (5) through in-depth interview commented, "The minister must stop demanding money! He also does not treat people right; he does not look at people the same" (Participant 5, interview, 18 February 2022). In agreement with other participants, Participant (2,) remarked, "Discrimination! The minister (not referring to the researcher) is the cause because he shows the difference between employed and unemployed members and shows favouritism" (Participant 2, interview, 18 February 2022). To support the above claim of favouritism by the ministers, Participant (3) commented that the pastor only do home visits to those who are working. From the observation, the researcher noticed a probability of further decline of church attendance because even those who used to attend when the researcher was a minister in Bela-Bela had stopped attending the church.

5.14 Analysis and discussion

5.14.1 Discrimination

It does not need to be over emphasized that the church in Bela-Bela composed of majority poor people as already discussed above. The majority who complained about the minister's economic discrimination between the poor and working class were poor who were no longer going to church. Those who refuted the issue of economic discrimination (marked not at all, & low) were males both active and non-active members. However, it ought to be noted that the majority members of the church were women mainly unemployed. The total men who were the members of the church were eight, and the rest were women. On the other hand, the moderate number composed of women who were no longer attending the church who accepted economic discrimination, but not as a major reason. In support of this claim, one of the participants admitted that she had never been at church since the new pastor came because not all other family members were no longer attending the church (Focus Group interview, 2022). The majority people who pointed economic discrimination as the cause for absconding the church were poor women who used to attend the church inconsistency but had completely ceased attending the church since the new pastor came in January 2022. One of those participants who had stopped completely going to church was participant 6. When she was asked why she completely stopped she replied, "The way things are happening and there are many rules. He (referring to the new pastor) doesn't want coins" (Participant 6, interview, 18 February 2022). Furthermore, the participant added that the minister refused to baptise those who do not pay church dues. This finding is different from other findings from other studies and that in literature review where members of the church had left the mainline churches to join Pentecostal or charismatic churches in order to advance the prosperous gospel, healing, and barrenness (Benyah, 2020:4; Sarbah, *et al.*, 2020; Kipgen, no date). However, the member of AMEC in Bela-Bela had ceased going to their church, but they had not joined any other church. They hope that one-day things will change; hence, this research seeks to find possible ways to restore and resuscitate AMEC church in Bela-Bela.

5.14.2 The pastor's leadership and care

Pastor's leadership and care towards both active and non-active congregants should go together. Participant 1 who was still attending the church (at the time of this research) when asked about good leadership needed for the congregation pointed out that a leadership graced with humility and commitment to do home visits (Participant 1, 2022). This participant hinted that although the whole problems of a congregation cannot be laid on a minister alone but his/her leadership does have an impact. For Participant 2, pastoral visit/home visits by the pastor to find out the reasons why people were no longer attending the church was a first step to curb the decline of membership (Participant 2, 2022). Beside the issue of money that has been discussed above, some participants admitted that with previous minister's leadership although they did not have money, but they felt respected and attended the church since the minister would come to check them in their homes (Participants 4, 5, & 6, 2022). The data (Figure: 3) also confirm that more than 55 percent of people believed that pastors' leadership has an impact on the decline of membership. Most of the participants who remarked pastor's leadership and pastoral visits as one of the reasons keeping the church empty were poor women who were once active but felt excluded by new leadership. The moderate group demonstrated that of course pastors need to listen to both side of the story where there are issues or gossips since this impact the church growth. This group admitted some errors from pastors' leadership and pastoral ministry but were never major issues to collapse the church. The low group were those who believed that pastor's leadership had a little impact. Most of them were those who were still attending the church or had stopped but their issues lied on the church structure not at a parish level. This finding is similar to what the literature (Chapter: 2) has depicted that a divided leadership leads to the decline of membership (Pali, 2018; Manala, 2010, Clark, 2008). In addition, other studies have come to the similar conclusion about the importance of good leadership in a congregation (Setley & Gautsch, 2015; Fylstra, 2015). According to Setley & Gautsch, "Regardless of the theory and concept, leadership requires followers, this is somewhat axiomatic" (2015:17). Sadly, it is without doubts that the current leadership in AMEC in Bela-Bela lacks followers, the evidence for that is the huge number of congregants who were no longer attending the

church. This leads to the investigation about possible measures that can be taken to restore the fallen members as one of the research objectives.

As earlier mentioned in the objectives and the methodology of the study that one of the objectives was to find a pastoral mechanism to restore back the fallen members. The qualitative question was asked to the participants: What are possible ways that can be done to motivate the members who are no longer coming to church? Several participants cited the reduction of tithe demanded on poor congregants mainly women (Participants, 3, 4, 5, & 6). Similar, focus group also shared the same sediments that church must get away with the notion of demanding money from people since the majority were unemployed (Focus group, 2022). Participants (1, 2 & 13) pointed out that home visits and Bible studies would improve church attendance for AMEC in Bela-Bela. A survey was also conducted to identify possible ways that can suit the majority in order to resuscitate the AMEC in Bela-Bela. The majority congregants (45 percent) had a view that the introduction of electronic sources such as online services and the use of musical instruments like pianos will improve the church attendance. However, a number of participants (almost 35 percent from those who marked not at all and low) had an opposing view against the use of such tools. In spite of all this, the participants unanimously (100 percent, not in a graph because there was no discrepancy) agreed that revivals would restore the fallen members.

A number of participants as shown above strongly believe that the love of money (using participants' language) was a major reason for church decline, hence lifting and/or reducing of tithe would improve a church attendance. Sadly, due to time constrains and financial costs to the research area, the researcher was unable to investigate the extent of reducing tithes through survey. In contrast, from this finding, some studies (Muir, 2017; Bambang, no year) have found that the giving churches grow faster and larger than churches that lack financial support. This could emanate from the fact that financial assistance would help the church to expand project such as evangelism and social outreach. The use of electronic sources should be look in multiple ways. Firstly, on a positive side, electronic sources could advance worship and the sharing of the Word even during the week. However, on a negative side, electronic sources only benefit the working class who can afford internet connectivity.

Moreover, electronic sources are only affecting those who are members of the church only, showing the lack of evangelic perspective. Lastly, the use of electronic sources fits well in a quiet environment whether in a house or society. However, in an environment, such as Bela-Bela where people are living in one house as a large group and radios are making noise, such technique may not yield better results. Nevertheless, testing electronic techniques may not be a bad idea. Therefore, there is a need to further investigate such techniques if it would reduce the continual decline of members, hence number of participants that the researcher observed were using small phones. On other hand, the data suggested that revivals might increase church growth since they associate with big number of people coming for spiritual growth. Moreover, revivals are usually not associated with the demand for money to be paid in order to meet financial obligations of the church.

5.15 Preliminary conclusion

The above collected data has demonstrated that the use of alcohol, demand for tithe, and the small number attending church on Sunday are major problems discouraging members from going to church on Sundays. Secondary issues raised were pastors' leadership and discrimination though they were not regarded as primary issues, but they had an impact. The use of electronic resources though was found to be accepted by the majority but had its own challenges. Instead, revivals and financial reduction seem to be the possible solutions needed immediately. This takes us to the next chapter, which is healing methodology to identified problems.

CHAPTER 6

A healing methodology to those whose faith has faded away

6.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a healing model and pastoral care to those who have left the church because of various reasons, which may include shame for lacking money to pay tithe and other church obligations, alcohol abuse, discrimination, and demotivated members because of uninspiring music and sermons. The chapter will concentrate on theology of the presence. This process will connect to the pastoral visitation in the homes of lapsed members of Bela-Bela. Notable, a pastoral care model for backsliding members cannot be seen as the reason for absconding the church since there were different reasons brought out from the interviews in the previous chapter. Therefore, the approaches as well as measures to be taken ought to be heterogeneous in order to mitigate the level of absenteeism in AMEC at Bela-Bela. However, the theory of positive deconstruction as explained in (Chapter: 3) has helped to enter the world of those whose spirituality has trodden down due to challenges shared in the previous chapter. In conjunction with Pollard's *positive deconstruction theory*.

6.2. A pastoral care model for the unemployed, poor people in Bela-Bela

Poverty and unemployment in South Africa have heighten up, worse under COVID-19 pandemic and load-shedding by ESKOM. Stats SA (2022) have reported a skyrocketing of unemployment that shoot above 35 percent in first quarter of year 2022. This does not only illustrate the lack of food and basic needs to several South Africans, but social exclusion and shame to those who cannot afford to pay rates and basic needs for the family. In a context of a church, those who cannot fulfil church's financial obligation feel shame and guilt. According to Lazarus, "shame is related to church failure of self or when the exposed self is found inadequate and is felt when negative evaluation of the global self is involved" (Paez, *et al.*, 2006:60). When one is found inadequate to achieve particular goals, or live up to particular standards, then shame occurs. Consequently, as Paez (*et al.*, 2006) explain that a person may resort to hide or disassociate with such places or events triggering shame. Similarly, the poor, unemployed congregants in Bela-Bela may feel shame as a result of failing to meet the financial target set for them. Failure to meet church's financial dues

assimilate to inadequacy. Moreover, poor people may also have a feeling of guilt on the aspect of failing moral obligation like tithing in this case (Paez, *et al.*, 2006). Although shame is related with victim, while guilt is closely link with a perpetrator, and reparation as well as apologising as corrective measures. Both of them can lead to anti-social collective behavior (Paez, *et al.*, 2006:61). Congruently, the poor congregants in AMEC in Bela-Bela could have felt guilt for moral obligation and opted to stay home which is similar to anti-social collective behavior. How then does one begin to help a member who feels ashamed and guilt at church because of low financial state as the case in AMEC in Bela-Bela.

6.3. Change mindset

Pollard's *positive deconstruction theory* as explained earlier (Chapter: 3) explained it clearly that the most important stage in helping people to change their mindset is identification of the worldview (Pollard, 1997). Worldview in this case refers to the way people view things particularly their reasoning. For Pollard, today's generation is often characterized by *pick-and-mix worldview* which associate with beliefs supporting a particular way of living which suit them at a particular time regardless of the truthfulness and value embodied in the life-style (1997:42). This leads to a justification why one behaves in a particular way than having a principle life style guided by certain morals. In most cases, as Pollard argues, such life style is characterised by what he calls a "mixture of contradictory beliefs" (1997:39). In the context of Bela-Bela, the contradictory belief is that people are no longer going to church because they are poor, the major aim is that the church 'demands' money of which they do not afford, as a result they may feel guilt and ashamed. On the other side, the drinking life-style and buzzing explained in the previous chapter (Chapter 5) illustrate affordability of alcohol (money). Therefore, this lifestyle can be marked as a pick-and-mix worldview justifying their behavioral life. However, as the purpose of the study is to help the fallen away Christians resucitate their faith we then move to the deconstruction part.

Pollard (1997) explains that the most important task in deconstruction is relational task with people whom one seeks to help. Positive deconstruction begins by listening and understanding clearly the worldviews and culture of people whom one is seeking to

help. Pollard warns us about the danger of overlooking the process of positive deconstruction, and quickly says “All we need is to pray for people” or “All we need is to simply love people” or give food to the poor (1997:45). It is important to positively deconstruct people so that they will be able to see not only fault with their worldviews and its praxis, but also values in Christian belief and its praxis. Congruently, Toronto argues that there is a difference between caring about and caring for. When one cares about poor people damning in poverty, one would give food parcels and carry on with one’s life. In contrast, when one cares for, “the caring person must devote much attention to learning what the other person might need (Kennedy, 2012:2). Therefore, when helping the congregants in Bela-Bela who are no longer attending the church because of humiliation and guilt emanating from unemployment, one must listen carefully, learn, and find out what possible help could be offered as process of deconstructing the way they view themselves.

The general mistake that the victims, which result to a failure of active or purposive silence and listening, need caregivers make is to assume what help. Glenn & Ratcliffe (2011) argue that silence and listening are inseparable in therapeutic setting and are important for three following reasons. (1) Silence and listening improve rhetoric and composition studies in reading, writing and speaking. Reading in the context of providing healing to people of Bela-Bela may not be necessary but asking open-ended questions as well as using respectful and kindly words when addressing the victims, do not only make them feel important, but remove shame concealed under unemployment. Furthermore, purposive silence and active listening help the lapsed members to have a will to share more about their distain condition which is a healing on its own (2) Silence and listening enhance analysing, and practising cultural beliefs of both high-, and low-profile people. Correspondingly, a caregiver would need to find out the history of Bela-Bela in relation to economic system, but more important economic means viable in the area. Analysing in the context of unemployment will include identification of all resources (such as land, labour, and capital) and find out if church could help in reducing unemployment (3) Offer multiple ways to negotiate, deliberate with other groups. For Pollard (1997), it is through deliberation that one may be able to rediscover an error in one’s worldview and sometimes feel uncomfortable with it especially if it is a non-Christian worldview that makes sense. For example: One

of the participants shared that the reason she sells alcohol is a result of unemployment, hence alcohol sales provide them with money to buy food, clothes, rates, and transport fee for children. It is only business that the family knows and had survived with it for some years. Similarly, by actively listening of the pastor to those who stay away from church would help to learn multiple ways to engage with people of Bela-Bela especially to learn to understand their socio-economic life. This may lead to one understanding why some congregants may not need to stop selling alcohol but pose certain rules such as not selling at hours that prohibit them from resting and in that way they have time to attend to their spiritual needs on Sundays.

Pollard emphasises the importance of affirming the truth or better answers that may come from non-Christians. In his argument, Pollard shares that in the beginning of 20th century Christians discarded social action because it once reduced the value of the Bible, and as a response especial on the side of evangelicals the whole social actions were discarded (1997:54-55). Pollard (1997) makes an example of the child who once asked his father where he came from. The father from his misunderstanding explained the reproductive process leading to the birth of a child. The boy was puzzled, because he wanted to know about his place of origin since his friend came from a neighbouring country (1997:94). This illustrates the importance of rhetoric listening to ensure that context of concepts is captured. According to Glenn & Ratcliffe, listening does not only help the listener to understand and learn, but also empowers the marginalized through "Making what used to be invisible rhetorical experiences visible and consequential, and transform ... marginalised players into legitimate, viable contenders" (2011:4). This says those whose voices and life experiences were not heard or known become visible and transformed from 'illegitimate' to legitimate when we listen and make their views, concern, and life experiences expressed. Similarly, active listening to the marginalized group in Bela-Bela would aid in making their voices and life experiences expressed fully while boosting their ego concealed under unemployment and poverty.

6.4. A pastoral response to spiritual decline

The boring of church services (worship & sermons) cannot only be blamed on a pastor as a preacher, but perhaps as an agent of change. The boredom and starvation at church are the symptoms of lack of spiritual maturity for congregants on a daily basis. Forster (2014) argues that the failure of pastors to equip, empower, and transform church members to be spreaders of the Good News during the week are the reasons Christians lack spiritual maturity and discipleship. Furthermore, the churches often encourage people to be the participants of Sunday services which result to a failure of congregants to impart gospel to their social life (Forster & Oostenbrink, 2015:3). The repercussion for a failure to infuse mission to the social life either work place or social gatherings such as sports and entertainment has not only led to passive Christians or/and decline of membership but also moral degeneration in the community (Forster & Oostenbrink, 2015:4). In the context of Bela-Bela, spiritual leadership capital model (Tetty, 2018) would help the leadership with congregation to resuscitate their spirituality (Tetty, 2018). Now, let's look at this model and how it would help the AMEC in Bela-Bela.

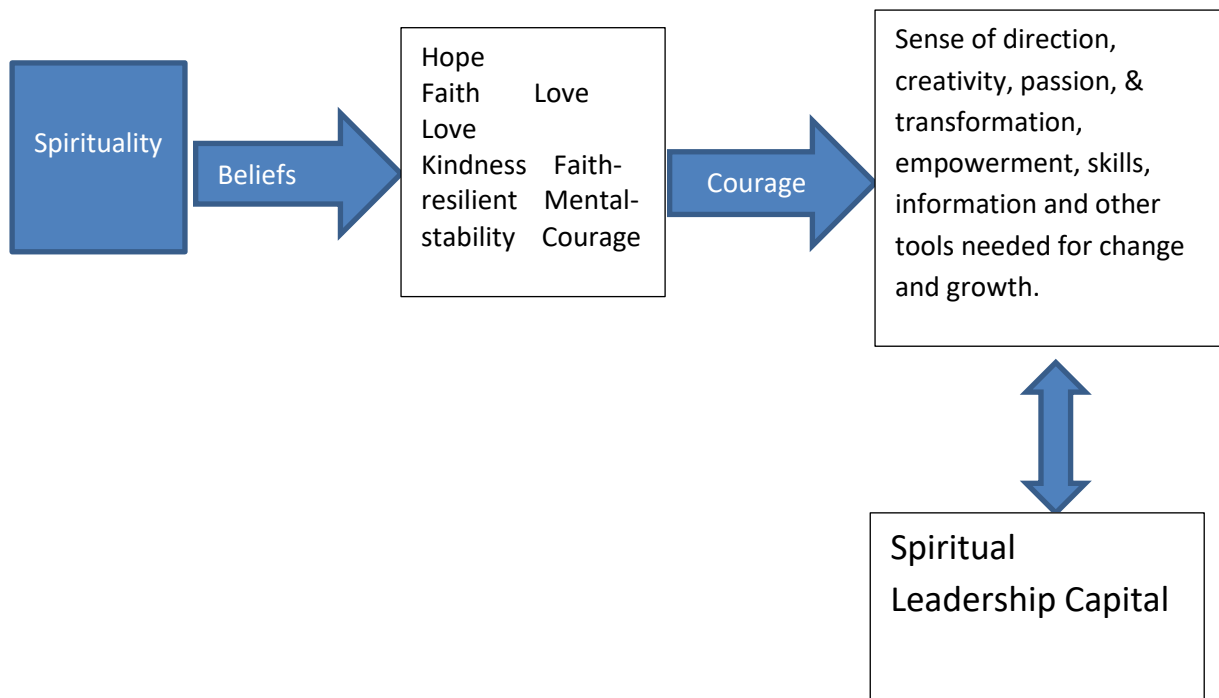


Figure: 4 Formation of SLC (Adopted from Tettey, 2018:101)

Tettey argues that when the pastor's spirituality and beliefs are filled with love, hope, care, kindness, and other factors linked to kindness it usually effects to mission and the growth of the congregation. For Tettey, the church emulates the kind of spirituality and beliefs that the pastor possesses. The notion of spiritual deprivation that AMEC at Bela-Bela had lamented shows 'disequilibrium' of spirituality either in the church or society (2018:101). This phrase agrees with the 'mission shaped church' theory that focuses on the caring and ministering to people outside the church walls discussed in chapter 2 (Duraisingh, 2010). The failure of the church to feed her congregants with spiritual needs even on Sunday illustrates the absence of spiritual consumption in social life during the week and poor discipleship. How do we then care for those who feel spiritually dry and consequently hopeless about their lives?

The language of hope in a form of preaching comes to surface as the starting point. Vos asserts that 'People go to church with high expectation. They attend the church services to be given hope and although they are often let down by their expectations, they keep on going to church' (Vos, 2007:11). In the context of Bela-Bela, hope had not fully dried out although the larger number is no longer attending the church services because their expectations for getting the message of hope or life changing message had not come, but they hope that things one day will be better and come back to their church. The message of hope could be found in Psalm 42-43 which are known to have been written by the sons of Korach in Book II of Psalists (Hempenius, 2021). Scholars (Koplitz, 2021; Hempenius, 2021; Olofsson, 2011) agree that Psalm 42-43 emanate from the context of covenantal nomanilism where suffering is a result for deserting God, while victory and prosperous life mark obedience to God. Hempenius argues that "Psalm 42 & 43 recognizes a gap between God's promises and human experience and believes that this dissonance should be presented to God for him to resolve" (2021:1). For Broyles, "Regrettably, lament has been all, but censored from most Christian worship services. By always stressing the positive, such worship alienates those suffering pain and depression. And shying away from lament produces unnecessary guilt and ultimately, superficial faith" (Hempenius, 2021:1). This says that there is an error that most Christians do to negatively view lament as a sign

of failure and the lack of faith by always focusing on positive things. Human life consists of both good and bad things, therefore when life demands sadness, disappointment, and perhaps shame it is still good to go through that process, because it helps one's faith to grow where one puts faith to God for vindication. Therefore, disappointment and stress that come with poor attendance, boring church service characterized by unenergetic music, and sermons in AMEC at Bela-Bela can be healed by allowing lamentation that seeks and hopes in God's vindication. From practical point of view, healing suggested here could be done in a form of homily in a setting such as retreat.

Although a frustration for poor church attendance leading to unenergetic music could be mistakenly limited posed to the individuals who have ceased going to church, it also frustrates those few who still attend.

6.5. Construct a proposed model for healing

The aim of this research was to construct or suggest a model for healing in the church of Bela-Bela. The researcher strongly suggests to also employing the model of shepherding that is suggested by Gerkin, (1997) to pastorally guide the congregation. Gerkin introduces a simplified term of guidance by narrowing it to "Healing, reconciling and sustaining" (1997:25). This process of caring will help us to assist those congregants who felt neglected and encourage them to turn to Christ and His church, to be embraced, loved, nurtured, welcomed, bandaged and properly mentored in their quest for healing from what could be pushing them to stay away from church. The church of Christ, which constitutes of all Christian believers, should genuinely demonstrate willingness to take over the families of non-believers and leading them to a Christian life. The church should become the village where people can turn to in times of pain, rejection and hurt and not only when they need the church to bury their loved ones. This research notes that pastors and pastoral caregivers are wounded healers and have experienced pain. They also understand the importance of healing the pain of others, and this research has suggested ways to rehabilitate the pastors who neglect their pastoral responsibilities and the church of Jesus Christ and to

introduce measures that could be used to take care of the congregation while considering Gerkin's views on shepherding.

6.6 A pastoral response to those under captivity of alcohol abuse

Gerkin posits that; “the success of human healing is dependent on Divine grace” (Gerkin, 1997:86). This proposes that pastors and pastoral caregivers whose aim is to help heal injured souls need to depend on God to do the work of healing. Healing in Bela-Bela comes in different ways and understanding of healing indeed needs God's grace in order to enable the congregation of this church to understand the scripture that says, “seek He first the kingdom of God and its righteousness then all shall be added unto you” (Matt 6:33). The researcher believes that this dependence on God and the work of His Holy Spirit will enhance and assist those who seek God first by redirecting their focus from the caregiver (wise men and woman) and to focus on the creator (the Almighty) (Gerkin,1997:23). The Shepherding model will assist the researchers to journey with the congregation members from their dependence on lazing around hoping that help will come one day and move to the creator who will make them not to blame the flows of the church, but to see Christianity and fellowshiping with one another. That new meaning of life will be detected from such behaviour. Gerkin, posits that “a good pastoral care is not simply talk about the gospel or some general statement of its applicability to people's lives rather, a good pastoral care embodies the gospel in relationships by speaking to the inner being of individuals (Gerkin,1997:88). The pastor should be searching those who are not willing to attend church services during home visits, hear their reasons and assisting into a healing that will lead them back into the church.

Gerkin's models of Pastoral Care is used in this research to highlight to all pastors and pastoral caregivers, and in this case every church leader or elder who have been appointment by the church board to commit themselves to the three topics, which are “1. Commitment regarding parenting and other forms of generativity, 2. Commitment to faith, 3. Commitment of occupation and vocation” (Gerkin, 1997:195). The AMEC refers to such leaders as the “class leaders, trustees and stewards” and they are appointed by the pastor to foresee the needs of the congregation. In doing that, the

researcher embarked on the teaching from the book of Acts, which reads, “pay careful attention to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood” (Acts, 20:28). In order to win the congregation of God back to the church. Pastoral visitation will be on way of caring for lapsed members.

A culture of drinking seems to be invading in all spheres of life in South Africa starting from home, school, workplace, church, and other socio-cultural gatherings. A widespread drinking practise in Bela-Bela as explained in (Chapter 5) seems to be perpetuated by being jobless, economic decline, and/or a new cultural way of socialization, which led members staying away from church. Apart from negative consequences linked with alcohol (unplanned childbearing, HIV/AIDS, poverty, school dropout, violence, divorce and quarrels in a family setting) alcohol does shame the users especially Christians on the side of morals and ethics. Alcohol that is more important leads to addiction where the user finds it hard to edge the siege. Gerkin’s book: *Pastoral care*, helps the researcher to help those stuck in alcohol abuse as to advocate for transition by stating that “if persons are to develop a sturdy and authentic sense of self, they must be surrounded by a consistent set of nurturing relationships, a good enough holding environment, as they develop” (Gerkin, 1997:101). The researcher must pastorally assist those who may be affected by alcohol in their efforts to set people back into the world being accepted into the church of Christ and not to feel discriminated and being treated unequal to the other congregants. When one looks at the social context of Palestine in the first century one finds the high level of inequality almost like what one’s experience is in South Africa.

The rich (the rulers and lawmakers) constituted almost 1 percent, but half of the economy was in their possession. The middle class consisted of priests, military and merchants and had sufficient material needed to afford daily living. Then the lowest class composed of peasants, artisans, daily labours and even slaves. In this period, honour and shame were determined by material possession from top class to the lowest. The lowest class consisting of (artisan and low educated person) which was known to be expendable to the eyes and minds of the middle and top class This does not only depict economic class for Jesus, but the shame he has suffered as being

lesser important person in the community. Coherently, a high number of people in Bela-Bela are those without jobs neither educated who are expendable in the eyes of the community due to their economic possession. As a results, they had also internalized their insignificance as classified by the society and they have exchanged their eschatological life with buzzing and drinking.

Jesus' wilderness is a place of weakness, hunger, lack of resources, strain, and low positive attitude to hold on one's faith and trust to God. Moreover, wilderness signifies the real-life experiences associate with human limitations of individuals without being distracted where possibilities of being derailed and deceived are highly possible because of vulnerability (Gerkin, 1997:57). Similarly, congregants in Bela-Bela who are under the siege of lack of resources and alcohol abuse may say, 'Human beings cannot wallop joblessness with drinking, and partying too, but the relationship with God' is what completes the thought. It is through the lenses of suspicion that one may view alcohol as a temptation that the Devil uses to catch those vulnerable and weak in life (Gerkin, 1997). Therefore, learning on Jesus escaping temptation in the wilderness may not only help people trapped in alcohol to redeem their dignity, but also help to be aware of God's presence in one's life.

The above-suggested healing model may work much better to a person who is drinking, but not addicted. However, to the addicted person the model to view alcohol with suspicion may not help that much because a person is already susceptible to the use of alcohol. In case where drinking was caused by physiological predisposition/hereditary a victim could be aware of the problem, but find it hard to escape it (Kgabe, 2013). According to Fichter, although in case whereby alcoholism is, caused by, biological disorder cannot be primarily blamed on the victim (excusing moral responsibility); it is upon shoulders of a victim to seek for healing (Kgabe, 2013:156). Klaasen observes that the role of a caregiver in pastoral counselling is not much 'on what to do' but more on 'who to be' (2020:2). Klaasen also observes that the conventional models used by western and European countries are criticised not only for materialistic approach, but for focussing more on a knowledge and skills that a caregiver must possess. As a results, pastoral care and counselling in a conventional model fails to transform a care-receiver to a care giver since the carereceiver is not

considered as a knower. A second observation, is that the conventional models are not only individualistic & institutionalised in nature, but turn to be prescriptive without noticing the limitation that comes with one's experience. For that reason, Klaasesn suggests a narrative model embedded in relationality and interconnectedness of human beings in African context which involves caregiver's "not knowing' and not determining" (Klaasen, 2020:6). For Africans do not describe a human being as an individual but view him/her as being in connectedness with other beings, nature, spirits (community) which makes group counselling to be more viable and therapeutic in South African context. According to the late Archbishop Tutu, *Ubuntu* is an African philosophy which encompasses compassion, humanity, dignity, love, and mutuality in building a compact and just community (Sibiya, 2021:3). Coherently, The purpose of narrative approach/story telling is not limited to education, but to create a sense of belonging and trustworth to the community members especially the victims of alcohol abuse (Sibiya, 2021). For Demasure & Muller,(2006) story telling leads to the acceptance of one another as people sympathise with the person in the story while at the same time it helps the community members see themselves in the story (Demasure & Muller,2006). Consequently, the victims of alcohol abuse who were once shamed, or even isolated by the church are accepted while a sense of belonging that opposes rejection is also established. Finally, the community at large becomes the caregivers through listening to one's story while the victims become the source of power for healing through story telling.

6.7 A healing pastoral leadership for the small congregation

Jesus once asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" (Mat. 16:13). The similar question was asked to the participants during interviews: What is the church known for in this community? Just as it has been shared from, the previous chapter (Chapter 5) participants pointed out elements such as preaching, singing while some said nothing. Sadly, almost all things that participants had mentioned indicated how inward the AMEC in Bela-Bela is, because it was only concerned with its members and not the community who are not church members too. Nixon (2002) reminds us that Jesus' ministry was characterised by hospitality whereby the strangers and outcasts were warmly welcome and friendships were established. Pastors should

quickly learn that “We live in a customer service era. ... therefore we come to church with the expectation of being received by warm and friendly stewards which demonstrates service delivery. Does anyone meet us as we approach the church building with a smile and a cheerful greeting? “ (Nixon, 2002:82). The answer is obvious No! Most of the churches just like AMEC in Bela-Bela focuses on its needs and members and come to welcome visitors in the middle of the service which is very late. Unfortunately, those who had been absent for sometime may even struggle more to find a proper welcoming and hospitality or a seat. It takes a collective constant effort to make the church to be a place for everybody who lives in the community. For Houghton caring is derived from the Latin word *cura* which means the “healing of the soul” (Houghton, *et al.*, 2014:2). It carries the element of empathy, sympathy, healing, and helping each other. Moore (quoted by Houghton, *et al.*, 2014) suggests that caring involves building of relationship among people involved which eventually permeates to the growth in all aspects of life.

Therefore a minister needs to develop caring relationship with the lapsed members of the church. The ideal is bringing them back to the church. Therefore, pastoral leadership for AMEC in Bela-Bela must organize a healing service where members who once felt discriminated, local people who never put their feet to church and other believers from other churches could be invited. A special liturgy asking for forgiveness for forgetting to regard the community members as ‘members of the church’ must be designed. The service must also seek to heal those who once felt disregarded, discriminated in any form or not recognised and seek new ways that the church can live for the entire community. This will help not only to heal the previous wound, but also trying to build the new relationship with those who left the church, and those who never became the church members. This would help to transform the church into a hospitable institution and care for people regardless of who they are which may likely to permeate to growth of membership of which is the main goal of the study. The researcher noted that shepherding involves showing features of loving, caring, nurturing, guiding, and teaching (feeding) the flock of God in which the pastor or pastoral caregiver requires himself/ herself to be guided by God. Coupled with this, there is a great need for the pastors and pastoral caregivers to teach people about forgiveness and to demonstrate forgiveness himself/ herself in his / her dealings with

people. In other words, Gerkin, (1997) says, “the model of doing theology undoubtedly has its roots in the turn towards the self” (Gerkin, 1997:107).

6.8 Growth

There are various methods that have been suggested by number of evangelists helping the growth of church membership such as revivals, Bible-study, outreach programs, and etceteras. But the most effective way over the years is face-face evangelism in a form of repeatedly home visitation (Schaller, 1983). Face-face/home visitation brings multiple of advantages for church growth simaltenous. The first thing it builds the relationship between the caregiver and carereciever (Schaller, 1983). For Pollard (1997) the most important point in evengalism is to build the relationship with people holding non-Christian worldview that will permeate to a number of conversations resulting to conversion. The second observation is that home visits also helps the caregiver to better understand the carereceiver’s socio-economic life especially where there is a significant margin between the caregiver and carereceiver (Elliot, *et al.*, 2020:514). Through the information gained from home visits, this helps in bridging the gap between what the church is providing and what the congregants need. This helps to meet objective three of this study (To examine knowledge of congregants in order to stregthen their relationship with God). The third point embedded in home visits is expansion of pastoral care to individuals who are part of the family, but do not attend church services on Sundays. One of the studies conducted in New York reveals the reduction of violence to families who received home visits than the families that did not have home visits by the pastor. Further, the study also demonstrated that elderly people who had home visits were much improving on health compared to those who did not have home visits (Elliot, *et al.*, 2020:506). Coherently, in number of places including Bela-Bela, a priest is regarded as a moral compass of the society, therefore when you see the pastor at carereceiver’s home, it automatically raises awareness of morals and peace to the families living with tension just like that family fight the researcher observed when doing home visits (this concept was elaborated in Chapter:5). Therefore, a pastor can schedule time for home visits especially during afternoon when people start to roam the township. The technical approach to home visits will be shared below.

There are number of reasons why small congregations struggle to grow. Schaller posits that “among other reasons it includes the lack of funds catered to care for the minister of the church especially for evangelism, lay-centered congregation where decision making lies with the laity than a minister, group life that focuses on relational growth than institutional growth whereby leadership positions are given to a close friend or relative” (Schaller, 1983:20). The small number of membership attending church service had bothered not only ministers, but also discourages other members from going to church as analysed in the previous chapter (Chapter 5). The assumption that small churches lack commitment in mission is refuted by Schaller (1983) on the basis that there is no evidence showing that, the approach and focus on mission could be different between the small churches and the growing church. However, the small churches could be comfortable with small numbers and their interpersonal relationships they had developed overtime of which sometimes may result to acceptance of the small size congregation, and lack initiative strategy to grow the church. In AMEC at Bela-Bela, the small number of congregation had grown to a small group of individuals who had accepted its small size and seem to have no self-esteem to expand the mission on evangelism. This is what ought to be done. The newly energetic minister with evangelic skills must be assigned to Bela-Bela with a clear mission rather than sending either a failed pastor or new pastor from the school without experience in the field.

Below is the figure that shows how much work an evangelical skilled minister will assist the growth in Bela-Bela because the findings in the research above show the number of members who lack a sense of belonging vs members in an inner circle. This gap needs to be closed.

1. Ordinary residents who also do not feel a sense of belonging, but find services

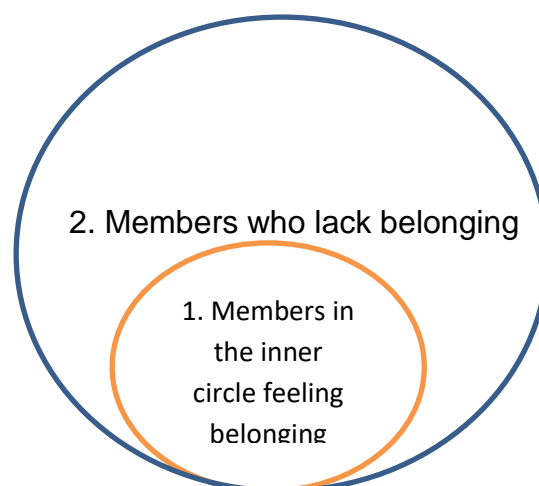


Figure: 2 the church members on different spheres

When coming to a new congregation, it is important to know numbers of your congregation. Therefore, the newly appointed pastor must visit the church members at large i.e., church and unchurched people to build a relationship. This process will help him/her identifying skills, talents and possible resources that can be needed. Schaller (1983) posits that there are two groups of people in the church, those who feel strong about their belonging, and those who feel alienated though are members of the church. In the context of Bela-Bela, the visits must also include the shebeen owners, businesspeople, poor and isolated people who could have been once involved in crime, drugs and so on. The inner circle members in Bela-Bela are likely to be the working class who feel strong about their church membership. The members who feel they do not belong are likely to be poor people who feel neglected by the priest and the leadership of the church.

6.9 Non-church residents

Lastly, non-church residents could be categorized in third group, though they are not church members but their relation to the church needs to be acknowledged as some ask priests to conduct funerals, baptism or borrowing church facilities for the events such as funerals and birthday parties. Therefore, after some few months (perhaps three months) of conducting these home visits then the pastor can expand the inner circle by bringing those who feel isolated to form part of the prayer team, which may encourage them to join the church. Schaller (1983) suggests that a compact group does not need to be disbanded when building but expanded. This will make those who feel isolated to be the part of the inner circle (gaining a sense of belonging). On second aspect, Tye suggests that the small congregation usually succeed when they focus on people-centred approach than the programs (2008:2). This helps to strengthen the relationship among the members of the church, which makes the mission to be about all the people of God than the few individuals. Tye (2008) argues that the small group is susceptible to higher risk of burn out. Therefore, the bigger the group the lesser risks of susceptibility to burn out. This helps in making the mission to be the life of the church

than to make it the project that has a life span as it has been shared earlier (Chapter 2). For Malphurs (2005) observes that imparting the gospel to non-Christians also helps to nurture one's spiritual growth as the evangelist prays, read Scripture, receive communion, and interact with other beings. This will help the AMEC members in Bela-Bela to strengthen their faith and nurture their spirituality especially those who once felt neglected because of economic conditions. There should be communication with those who felt worship boring or were once discriminated for any reason. They should be interviewed and their suggestions to the team responsible for music ministries and stewards should be shared to introduce innovative plans to make the church programs appealing. This approach corresponds with the third objective of the study to resuscitate and nurture the spirituality of the congregants who feel they are down and demotivated. Therefore, pastoral visits in a form of group cell heal those whose spirituality has trodden and helps the church to grow in numbers, which is the main goal of the study.

6.10 Preliminary conclusion

The pastoral model *positive deconstruction* in this chapter had not only helped to deconstruct the perception that pastoral receivers had that the church only cared about money or those who have money, but it also build the relationship with the inner circle members. The relations are not only built through interactions but by listening to share, their life stories especially stories that are linked with their faith. The theory has merged well with Gerkins' pastoral care because it transmits the power from pastoral caregiver (pastor) to the care-receiver. Consequently, the care-receiver who was earlier viewed as uninformed becomes the knower who shares the story, and the care-receiver becomes as the listener who is taught about the subject. This helps in boosting the ego or self-esteem on the side of a care-receiver while at the same time it erodes the shame through acceptance of one another. The pastoral model of doing home visits is evangelical in nature while it revives the spirituality of people especially those who have lost faith and hope in life. The model fitted all three objectives of the study (to find out the causes of decline and to find the pastoral model that could help in growing the church membership). The following chapter will look at the recommendations that

could also help the church to growth, future research on this subject and conclusion of the entire study.

CHAPTER 7

7.1 Introduction

This section will give a summary for the findings of the study emanated from Chapter 5. The conclusion will be shared and can be drawn and will be followed by the recommendations. The findings of the study answered the main question: What causes church members not to attend church services on Sundays? Note that every two years the same pastor had been deployed in the parish at Bela-Bela, faces the same problem. The hypothesis that the researcher had before the study was that congregants were suffering from spiritual bankruptcy; as a result, they were finding the world enjoyable and exciting. The main goal of the study was to pastorally restore the congregants who were no longer attending the church services, so that their spirituality would be resuscitated. The following were the objectives of the study.

- To investigate the reasons why the congregants were reluctant to attend the church services on Sundays.
- To examine the congregants' level of relationship with God.
- To assess the congregant's knowledge on the importance of Sunday worship and to help them take the responsibility of their own faith.
- To find the pastoral measures that could be taken in order to help the congregants who were no longer attending the church services on Sundays to revive their faith.

7.2 The findings of the study

7.2.1 The demand for money by the church

The study found out that the constant pressure for offering and tithing by the church in Bela-Bela had caused most congregants, especially the poor to fall away from the church. The research revealed that the few who were still attending the church were those who were holding certain position or offices in the church, and they were mostly the working class. The poor who had no money for tithing and offering were strongly feeling the pressure as well as low recognition within the church. This finding was

similar to other findings used in this study such as Pillay (2017) whereby people had stopped attending the church because it was seen as money making scheme rather than being the caring institution for the community.

The conclusion that could be drawn from this study was that offering, and tithing needed by the central office was causing a pressure to the congregants mainly the poor, as a result bunking the church Services on Sundays became the option for the poor people in Bela-Bela. Moreover, the tithe and offering caused the division as the poor members felt unwanted and excluded by the pastors. The claim “the pastor wants money” that a number of participants shared signifies the broken relationship between the congregants and the pastors. Unfortunately, the lack of finances does not only affect the congregants, but it also affects the pastors since the lack of money hinders the pastoral duties whereby the pastor can call or visit the congregants at their homes (Schaller, 1990:18).

7.2.2 The recommendation

The AMEC leadership from the Official Board should reduce the offering required from the Bela-Bela congregation for the annual conference budget as well as the monthly financial obligation of the local church. The reader should keep in mind that the congregation is not only poor and unemployed, but the country is also dealing with the reality of recovering from mass job losses caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The episcopal office should consider the socioeconomic environment in which the Bela-Bela church functions when developing the local church budget for the annual conference. Furthermore, it would be practical to first determine the number of working members within the church before making a financial decision based solely on the number of people attending.

The unity of the AMEC in South Africa must be holistic. This simply means that churches that are financially stable must also help churches that are financially poor. For example, the help could not be limited to the financial aspect, but also to strategies, ideas, and resources that could be developed in order to help the poor congregation in Bela-Bela to start projects such as sewing that could empower congregants and generate income. In doing so, the AMEC would be able to solve not only finances of

the church but also mitigating the level of poverty to the people, which is a caring part of the church.

7.3 Unsatisfactory church services

The study also discovered that either most congregants who had stopped attending the church services on Sundays were dissatisfied with a sermon or hymns sang at church. The blame on pastors was that his preaching level had declined, as a result, the inspiration faded away in worship. There was also a significant number of participants who admitted that the few congregants on Sundays made worship to be boring as there were few people to sing. As results, they also ended up not attending church services. This finding was similar to other researchers (Kim, 2008, Massey; Wilson, 2019; Massey, 2020) whereby preaching had improved church growth

The kind of conclusion that can be drawn from unsatisfactory service is that when congregants are unhappy about either music or sermon their attendance decline. In the same way, when congregants are satisfied with sermon, praise and worship their level of church attendance will increase. The pastoral side of good preaching is hope to those who are vulnerable. Praise and worship become therapeutic to those whose souls and spirit are down. For Nixon (2002) a sermon must bring hope if it could be understood and related to the life issues of the congregants (Nixon, 2002:97-98). Therefore, preaching the Word with sound worship helps to cure people whose life situations are difficult. It also helps to improve the attendance of church services.

7.3.1 Recommendations

In order to improve preaching, the AMEC in Bela-Bela must design evaluation forms whereby congregants would comment and give feedback about the sermon of the day. This will not only help the pastor to improve but also giving the opportunity to the congregations to be the part of preaching in an indirectly manner. Again, it is important for congregants to identify some life (incidence?); situations that they would like the pastor to address in during the year in his/her sermons. This will help the pastor to relate the preaching and addressing (with the) life situations of people in the congregation. Remember that in the AME (considering that in most cases) pastors are

deployed every year. In Bela-Bela, the newly appointed pastor might not be familiar with some life challenges in the area. Although preaching is done by the pastors, but preaching is for the church. Therefore, congregants should also pray for the pastors that their preaching would be meaningful, seasoned with grace as taught by Pollard (1997-11). Praise and worship should be adjusted to suit the population of people on a day. Some hymns can be sung with large number of people while others do not need large a number of people. This will help on improving worship even if there were few people who attended on a day. Lastly, the use of sound system such as piano, keyboard would also help to improve the worship services. Let me now address the main issue that affects Bela -Bela - drinking.

7.4 Drinking and buzzing in the community

One of the most serious factors giving rise to the absenteeism for Sunday services at Bela-Bela is a drinking habit that is spreading like wildfires in the community. The study found out that drinking habit has expanded in such a way that shebeens (places of drinking in South Africa) exceed churches in terms of numbers. A drinking problem in Bela-Bela cannot be limited to the church attendance but a societal issue that the community is suffering from. The causes for drinking were mainly linked with a high rate of unemployment and economic issue thus a number of houses became involved in illegal trading of alcohol. The finding was similar to that of other researchers such as Kendler & Myers (2009), who found out that the relationship between church attendance and the use of alcohol and nicotine was inverse. The more individuals continue drinking habit and use nicotine as a means of satisfying their needs, the more they grew reluctant in attending the church services. In addition, Kgabe (2011) discovered that the clergy who had drinking problems due to loneliness or stress after a loss of a close relative did not pastorally care for members properly in their ministry. Although these findings did not come from literature used in this study, but the finding is similar to another research conducted under the same topic.

The conclusion is that societal drinking and the increase of shebeens in the community had an inversely impact upon (relationship with) church attendance. Although the

common reason for drinking related to stress due to unemployment and enjoyment culture in Bela-Bela, the results for Low Church attendance was similar to other studies. Therefore, the continual use of alcohol and other drugs in the community have a negative impact on church growth.

7.4.1 Recommendation

AMEC in Bela-Bela should form partnership with other churches and other organizations in order to deal with the abuse of alcohol and other illicit drugs. The scourge of alcohol seemingly has infiltrated the large part of the community; therefore, the huge number of people must undertake the response. On the side of economic impact, especially those who make living through the sale of alcohol should not be encouraged to trade on Sunday. The municipality should regulate their licences to comply with regulations undergirding the sales of alcohol and cigarette. (Authority, 2004). Those who are the victims should be encouraged to visit professional help while the church continues to minister to them. The church should also work with the victims caught in this trap, in order to help them to not (started to stay away from the) to abuse of alcohol. This should be done pastorally without rubbing the scripture on the face of victims.

7.5 A lack of caring leadership of a pastor

The research also discovered that the lack of caring for God's people is another problem faced by members of Bela-Bela congregation. In other words, lack of leadership from pastors also had an impact on the decline of membership. The caring should include home visits, either for spiritual or non-spiritual matters, inclusion in programs (caring for the sick, giving the elders communion and hospital visits, youth programs *etc.*) especially non-working group, and helping them in social life. The decline of membership is caused by (due to) poor caring leadership. Several scholars in the literature of this study (Clarke, 2008; Manala, 2010; Pali, 2018) also shared this. The mere fact that some majority of pastors deployed in Bela-Bela were not residing in the area. Consequently, doing ministry especially during the week became difficult.

Therefore, the lack of home visits and other ministerial duties contributed to the decline of membership.

The conclusion is that pastors who are living far away from their congregations struggle to care pastorally, especially according to their abilities due to the costs of travelling, and other life commitments. As results, congregation suffer from the lack of pastoral care as their faith continue to shrink until they are not seen completely in the church vicinity (Resane, 2020:5). Therefore, the lack of shepherding kind of leadership in Bela-Bela exacerbated the decline of leadership due to the distance between the congregation and the pastors.

7.5.1 Recommendations

The leadership of AMEC should train people who reside in Bela-Bela to be the pastors so that they would take care of the congregation. This would ease the costs and distance that come with pastors who are living far away from the congregation. Moreover, the congregation needs to come up with some activities for community building such as celebrating birthdays together in order to enhance unity, care, and spiritual life of which it can happen with or without the physical presence of a pastor.

7.6 Conclusion

The study has found out that though there was a number of factors, which contributed to the decline of membership, but financial issues accompanied by the emphasis on the language “The pastor want money” was the main reason followed by buzzing lifestyle in Bela-Bela. The lack of a caring leadership as the cause for church decline was the least factor in comparison to other factors. The assumption that the researcher had in the beginning of the study that the church was empty because the congregations or members had lost a spiritual grip was true. Even those who still attended the church hinted to the research in interview that, the decrease of good worship due to the lower number of people attending (showing up for) church services on Sundays, had negative impact on members and even the preacher. The increase of people in shebeens showed the decline of spiritual growth as discussed above. Although some factors causing decline to the congregation appeared in the literature,

but some were not in the literature but discovered by other researchers as shown earlier


Future research on caring for the declining congregation should investigate why the poor would spend the little money they have on drinking alcohol than offering at the church. It would also be interesting to investigate on the advantage of a working pastor. In other words, the one who has a full-time work and the one who has ministry as part time. The Pastor living with church members in the community if the Episcopal office can consider providing for a stipend on a monthly basis, such research would help AMEC to decide on whether to deploy a local pastor or someone from other village or town. Lastly, some studies on the use of sound instruments by the mainline churches needs to be undertaken in this research, in order to find out why members are leaving Main Line Churches and attending Charismatic Churches. The researcher wonders whether such decline has something to do with lack of caring for members. A further analysis on the issue of boring of Church worship needs to be investigated from the above input. Relation to church decline following the lamentation by the participants on boring praise and worship should be the focus of the study.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE

- What could be the course for one not to attend the church?
- In your case what could be the course? Where you have not attended church services.
- When did the consistency to attend the church services on Sundays start to degenerate
- What could be the causes that lead to the reluctance in attending church services on Sunday?
- How does one view the current state of the church?
- Is there anything ever done before to curb the scourge of this inconsistency attendance of services on Sundays?
- How does one maintain the good relationship with God on a daily basis?
- What is the significance of fellowship with other believers especially on Sunday?
- How does one understand the importance of worship especially communal worship?
- What is attractive and incessant about this church?
- If there is anything that one may change about the church, what would it be?
- What is the church known for in the community?
- In what so way is this church different from others?
- What is your current role or ministry in the church?
- Where does one wish to be developed or empowered in this church?
- What vision do you have about this church?
- What actions to put in order to obtain the vision of the church?
- What leadership do you think is preferable to meet with the vision of the Church?

APPENDIX 2: LETTER OF PERMISSION



HICKMAN CHAPEL AME CHURCH

*God our Father, Christ our Redeemer, the Holy Spirit our Comforter,
Humankind our Family*

28 January 2021

To: **THE ETHICS COMMITTEE**
University of Pretoria

Cc: Rev Louisa EP Makhura
Student No.: U19398621

RE: **PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A STUDY RESEARCH**

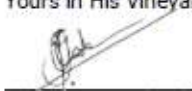
I greet you in the wonderful name of our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ.

This letter serves as a confirmation that I, the Rev Tebogo G Mabena, the Appointed Pastor of the abovementioned church, have granted the Rev Louisa EP Makhura, Student No.: U19398621, a permission to conduct her research on the Topic: *A recurring decrease of membership in a congregation: a pastoral challenge* at Hickman Chapel AME Church in Belabela.

This letter does not in any way give permission for any Pastoral Interference as outlined in the Doctrines and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

For any queries, please contact me on 083 566 7947 or alternatively email on: rev.tgmabena@gmail.com

Yours in His Vineyard,



Rev T.G. Mabena
Resident Pastor
AME Church, Belabela

73 Mazemola Street,
Belabela
0480

Phone: 083-566-7947
Fax: 086-617-6839
Rev.TGMabena@gmail.com

Pastor
Rev Tebogo Mabena

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adeba, A. O., & Harold, G. (2013) *The Relevance of black theology in post-apartheid in South Africa* Pretoria: University of Pretoria.

African Methodist Episcopal Church, 2012. *The Doctrine and the Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*. Nashville Tennessee: AMEC SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION.

Akehusts, C. (2013). *The Decline of the Suburban Church*. *Quadrant*, 57(12), 51-56.

Arn, C. (1998). *How to Start a New Service*. United States of America: Baker Books.

Available at: <http://ro.uow.edu.au/compapers/113>

Available at: <http://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0198640>

Available at: <http://municipalities.co.za/demographics/1136/bela-bela-local-municipality>

Available at: <https://salba.co.za/alcohol-industry-releases-data-on-cumulative-impact-of-three-alcohol-bans-showing-r36-3-billion-in-lost-revenue/>

Ayer, L. A., Harder, V. S. & Helzer, J. E., 2011. *Drinking and Stress: An Examination of Sex and Stressor Differences Using IVR-Based Daily Data*. *Drug Alcohol Depend*, 115(3), pp. 205-212.

Bambang, W., no year. *A theology of church growth*, s.l.: s.n.

Barber, R. (2020, October 30). *Globalization, contextualization, and indigeneity: Local approaches to indigenous Christianity*. *Sage Journals*, 48(4), 376-391.

Barney N. Pityana, C. V.-V. (1995). *Being the Church in South Africa Today*. South Africa: South African Council of Churches.

Barrett, M., 2016. *God's Word Alone: The Authority of Scripture*. Michigan: Grand Rapids Publishers.

Bayers, J. (2014). *The church and the secular: The effect of the Post Secular on Christianity*. *Theological Studies*, 1-12.

Bela-Bela Local Municipality, 2019. *Bela-Bela Local Municipality 2019-2020: 2021/2022 Integrated Development Plan*. s.l.: South African Government.

Bell, S., 2009. *The Vacant Parish: Managing a Pastoral Search*. Michigan: Faculty Publications.

Benyah, F., 2020. *Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches and the Provision of Social Services in Ghana*. *Transformation*, 00(0), pp. 1-15.

Bosch, D. J. (2011). *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shift in Theology of Mission*. Maryknoll: Orbis.

Brieley, P. (2000). *The Tide is Running Out*. London: British Library Publishing Data.

Calitz, C. J., 2017. *Healing Liturgy: The role of music and singing*. *Verbum Ecclesia*, 38(1), pp. 1-9.

Claasen, J. S., 2020. *Pastoral Care and narrative: Towards a narrative pastoral care approach in intercultural communities*. *In die Skriflig*, 54(1), pp. 1-8.

Clark, E. A. (2013). *Liberalism in Decline: Trends Limiting Religious Freedom in Russia and Central Asia*. *A Journal of the University of Iowa College of Law*, 1 (22), 295-303.

Clarke, A. D. (2008). *Pauline Theology of Church Leadership*. London: T & T Clark.

Coleman, I. et al., 2013. *Stress and Development of depression and heavy drinking in adulthood: Moderating effects of childhood trauma*. *Social Psychiatry and epidemiology*, 48(2), pp. 265-274.

Collins, L. G. (2021, November 21). *Gallup Polls*. Retrieved August 17, 2022, from <https://news.gallup.com/poll/341963/church-membership-falls-below-majority-first-time.aspx>

Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. (2011). *Designing and conducting Mixed Methods Research*. New York: Sage Publications.

Daniel, K. (2010). *The role of woman in Church in Africa*. *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 2 (6), 126-139.

David Millard Haskell, K. N. (2016). *Comparing the traits of Growing and Declining Mainline Protestant Church Attendees and Clergy*. *Springer*, 58(4), 1-28.

Demasure, K. & Muller, J., 2006. *Perspectives in Support of the Narrative Turn in Pastoral Care*, Hatfield: University of Pretoria.

Doniwen, P. (2021). *The Relevance of Theology and Legal policy in South African society in connection with violence against woman*. *OASIS*, 7.

Dreier, S. K. (2018). *Resisting Rights to Renounce Imperialism: East African Churches' Strategic Symbolic Resistance to LGBTQ Inclusion*. *International Studies Quarterly*, 62, 423-436.

Dreyer, W. (2015). *The real crisis of the Church*. *OASIS*, 15.

Duraisingh, C. (2010). *From Church-Shaped Mission to Mission-Shaped church*. *Anglican Theologica Review*, 92(1), 7-28.

Elliot, C., Witherspoon, P. W. & Werner, K. D., 2020. *Home visits*. *A Journal of family practise*, 69(10), pp. 507-513.

Evans, G., & Northmore-Ball. (2012). *The Limits of Secularization? The Resurgence of Post-Soviet Russia*. *Journal for the Scientific Religion of Study*, 54(4), 795-808.

Ferreira, I. W., & Chipenyu, W. (2021). *Church decline: A comparative investigation assessing more than numbers*. *OASIS*, 10.

Fiedler, K. (2015). *Missions as the Theology of the Church*. Luwinda: Mzuni Press.

Flatt, K. N., Haskell, M. D., & Burgoyne, S. (2017, October 24). *Secularization and Attribution: How Mainline Protestant Clergy and Congregants Explain Church Growth and Decline*. Retrieved August 18, 2022, from doi:10.1093/socrel/srx044

Flick, U. (2011). *What is Qualitative Research?* In C. Marshall, & G. B. Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research* (pp. 1-15). New York: SAGE Publications.

Forster, D. A. & Oostenbrink, O. W., 2015. *Where is the church on Monday? Awakening the church to the theology and practice of ministry and mission in the marketplace.* In *the skriflig*, 48(3), pp. 1-8.

Foster, D. A. (2015). *What hope is there for South African? A Public theological reflection on the role of the church as a bearer of hope for the future.* OASIS, 15.

Fouche, C. (1998). *Introduction to research process.* In C. F. Fouche, H. Strydom, & W. J. Roestenburg, *Research at Grassroots: For the Social Sciences and Human Services Professions (Fifth Edition ed.)*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Fouche, C. B., & Strydom, H. (2021). *Mixed Methods Research.* In C. B. Fouche, H. Strydom, & W. Roestenburg, *Research at Grassroots* (pp. 419-436). Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Foundation, W. (n.d.). *Wikipedia.* Retrieved September 08, 2022, from <http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity>

Funeral Service for Enyobeni Tavern Victims. 2022. [Film] South Africa: SABC News, 404.

Fylstra, B. A., 2015. *The Correlation between a Pastor's Job Experience and Church Servant Leadership Practices*, s.l.: Walden University.

Gascoigne, R. (2009). *The Church and Secularity.* Washington: George Town University Press.

Gerkin, C. V. (1997). *An introduction to Pastoral Care.* Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Geyer, L. S. (2021). *Interview as Data Collection Method.* In C. B. Foucher, *Research at Grassroots: For the Social Sciences and human services professions (Fift Edition ed., pp. 355-378)*. Pretoria: Van Schaick Publishers.

Glenn, C. & Ratcliffe, K., 2011. *Introduction: Why Silence and Listening are Important Rhetorical Arts.* New York: Southern Illinois University Press.

Gondre-Lewis, M. C., Warnock, K. T., Wang, H. & June, H. L., 2016. *Early Life Stress is a risk factor for excessive Alcohol drinking and impulsivity in adults and is mediated via a CRF/GABA_A Mechanism. International Journal on the Biology of Stress, 19(2), pp. 235-247.*

Grey, D. E. (2004). *Doing Research in Real World*. London: SAGE Publishers.

Grillo, L. S. (2012). *African Rituals*. In E. K. Bongmba (Ed.), *African Religions* (pp. 112 - 170). UNITED KINGDOM: Wiley Blackwell Publication.

Harris, M. (2013). *From a faith perspective: scholars and bloggers respond to decline and growth in church participation*. Wisconsin-Platteville: University of Wisconsin-Platteville.

Hartley, K., 1989. *Alcohol, Tobacco and Public Policy: The Contribution of Economics*. Heslington: University of York.

Helskog, G. H.; Stokke, C, 2014. *Enhancing Relational Spirituality Dialogues philosophical dialogues as an approach to intercultural and interfaith dialogue in education*. Volume, 24 (2). *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue*. 202-220

Hempenius, E. J., 2021. *Psalm 42 and 43, s.l.: s.n.*

Hollinghurst, S. (2010). *Mission Shaped Evangelism*. Norwich: Canterbury Press.

Hong, J. (2019). *Character of Korean Protestant Nationalism in Japanese Colony*. In S. Shin, & A. Kovacs (Eds.), *Nationalism, Communism, and Christian Identity: Protestant Theological Reflections from Korea and Hungary* (pp. 3-10). Gwangju: Debrecen Reformed Theological University.

Horn, A. J., 2018. *Regulation of Alcohol in South Africa, N/A: HRNAIDOO1*.

Hotchison, W. R., Albanes, C. L., Stackhouse, M. L., & WcKinney, W. (1991). *The Decline of Mainline Religion. Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation, 1(2), 131-151.*

- Houghton, J. D., Pearce, C. L., Manz, C. C. & Stewart, G. L., 2014. *Sharing is Caring: Toward a Model of Proactive caring through shared leadership*. *Human Resource Management Review*, pp. 1-15.
- Howard, J. C., & Mckeever, B. C. (2011). *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling: Resources for the Ministry of healing and Growth* (3rd ed.). Nashville: Abingdon.
- Igbo, P., 2021. *The Over-Emphasis on the paying of Tithe: The Quest for Materialism among Religious Leaders: An Evaluation of the Biblical Teaching on Tithe*. *Journal of Religion and Human Relations*, Volume, 13(1), pp. 187-207.
- Irvine, H. J., 2005. *Balancing Money and Mission in a local church burget*. [Online]
- Jacobs, D., Tilstra, D., Benjamin, F., James, H., Thayer, J., Klingbeil, T., & Pittman, S. (2019, November 20). *Adventist Millennials: Measuring Emerging Adults' Connection to Church*. *Religious Research Association*, pp. 39-56.
- Jehn, K. A., & Johnsen, K. (2010). *A Multimethod approach to the study of sensitive organizational issues*. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 313-341.
- Joynt, S. (2018). *Exodus of clergy: 'when the fight is just not worth it anymore' - the role of conflict in responding to the call*. *AOSIS*, 9.
- Kalkandjieva, D. (2014). *The Russian Orthodox Church*. New York: Routledge.
- Kanyandago, P. (2013). *Violence in Africa: Pastoral response from Historical Perspective*. In D. W. Waruta, & H. W. Kinoti (Eds.), *Pastoral care in African Christianity* (pp. 41-71). Nairobi: action Publishers.
- Kemper, R. V., & Adkins, J. (2006). *Who are My Neighbours? Congregation and Community in North Texas*. *Faith Based Community Organization*, 35, 295-339.
- Kendler, K. S. & Myers, M. D., 2009. *A development twin study of church attendance and alcohol and nicotine consumption: A model for analysing the changing Impact of Genes and Environment*. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 166(10), pp. 1150-1155.

- Kennedy, R., 2012. *Caring about ending poverty: Caring for poor people. Ethics and Social Justice*, 26 May, pp. 1-10.
- Kent, J. (2002). *The Enlightenment. In P. Byne, & L. Houlden (Eds.), Companion Encyclopaedia of Theology (2nd Edition ed., pp. 251-271). Oxford Publications: Routledge.*
- Kgabe, V., 2013. *Abuse of alcohol by Anglican Clergy: Pastoral Challenge. Pretoria: University of Pretoria.*
- Kgatle, M. S., 2019. *Singing as a therapeutic agent in Pentecostal worship. Sabinet African Journal*, 40(1).
- Kiambi, G. N. (2018). *Budgeting Processes, internal controls, organizational characteristics and performance of selected Protestant and Evangelical Churches in Kenya. Nairobi: University of Nairobi.*
- Kim, I. H., 2008. *The Role of Preaching in Church Growth: Centering on the Preaching of Dong-Won Lee of Global Mission Church. Virginia: Liberty Theological Seminary.*
- Kipgen, P., no date. *New Generational Charismatic/ Pentecostal Churches in India, s.l.: s.n.*
- Klaas, A. C. (1996). *In Search of the Unchurched. Herndon: The Alban Institute.*
- Kobo, F. A. (2018). *Black woman's bodies as reformers from the dungeons: The Reformation and womanism. OASIS*, 9.
- Koplitz, M. H., 2021. *Discovering the Spiritual World through the Psalm, s.l.: Zenordo.org.*
- Kothari, C. R. (1990). *Research Methodology. New Delhi: New Age International (P) Limited Publishers.*
- Lambeth Indaba. (2008). *Capturing conversations and the reflections from the Lambeth Conference.*

Lasor, W. S., Hubbard, D. A. & Bush, F. W., 1982. *Old Testament Survey*. Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Leavy, P. (2017). *Research Design*. London: The Guilford Press.

Leonard, K. & Blane, H. T., 1999. *Psychological Theories of Drinking & Alcoholism*. Second ed. New York: The Guilford Press.

Longwe, L. (2019). *African Feminist Theology and Baptist Pastors' wives*. Malawi: Malawi Baptist Publications.

Lummis, A. T. (2012). *Forever Pruning? The Path to Ordained Woman's Full Participation in the Episcopal church of the USA*. In I. Jones, K. Thorpe, & J. Wootton (Eds.), *Woman and Ordination in Christian Churches: International Perspectives* (pp. 157-176). New York: T & T Clark.

Lynne Hillier, A. M. (2008). *I COUNLDN'T DO BOTH AT THE SAME TIME': SAME SEX ATTRACTED YOUTH AND THE NEGOTIATION OF RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE*. *Gay & Lesbian ISSUES AND Psychology Review*, 4(2), 1-14.

Madhani, A. (2002). *Many faiths haunted by sex abuse, clergy say*. Chicago: Chicago Times.

Malick, D. E., 2019. *The poor Widow who gave in the Temple: Narrative Logic in Mark 12:41=44*. *Priscila papers*, 33(04), pp. 8-12.

Malphurs, A., 2005. *Planting Growing Churches*. 3rd ed. Michigan: Baker Books.

Manala, M. J. (2010, October 13). *A triad of pastoral leadership for congregational health and well*. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, pp. 1-6.

Mann, A. (1999). *Can our church live?* Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Alban Institute.

Massey, Y. D., 2020. *The Impact of preaching on church growth: Black churches in the North Georgia Conference for United Methodist Church*. Evanston: Garretr Evangelical Theological Seminar.

Mathai, L. M., Bururia, D. & Kagema, D. K., 2018. Persistence of Alcohol and Drug Abuse among the youth in the Presbyterian Church of East Africa. Scholars Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, 6(10), pp. 1911-1920.

Maxwell, J. A. (2009). Designing a qualitative study. In L. Bickman, & D. J. Rog, Social Research Method (pp. 214-253). Washington: SAGE Publications.

McCusker, K., & Gunaydin, S. (2019). Research Using Qualitative, Quantitative or Mixed methods and Choice Based on the Research. In D. Louise, A. M. Brady, G. Bryne, M. Asane, & L. Finlyson, Sage: Mixed Method Research (pp. 1-12). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications. Inc.

McDonald, N. C. (2017). Are Millennials Really the "Go- Nowhere" Generation? Journal of the American Planning Association, 81(2), 90-103.

McKinney, J. A., 2021. Worship, Discipleship, Evangelism: How the Purpose of the Church Affects Congregational Singing. Lynchburg: Liberty University School of Music.

Merwe, M. C., Globler, A. F., Strasheim, A., & Orton, L. (2013). Getting young adults back to church: A marketing Approach. OASIS, 12.

Montaudon-Tomas, C. (2019). Avoiding Spiritual bankruptcy in organization through the fruit of the Spirit. Journal of Biblical Perspective in Leadership, 17-34.

Muijs, D. (2011). Doing Quantitative Research in Education with SPSS. Los Angel: Sage Publications.

Muir, S. D., 2017. Why Do They Stay? S.I. University of Toronto.

Mukaka, M. M. (2012). Statistics Corner: A Guide to appropriate use of correlation coefficient in medical research. Malawi Medical Journal, 67-71.

Mulia, N., Schmidt, L. & Korcha, R., 2009. Stress, Social Support and Problem Drinking among Women in Poverty, Abingdon: HHS Public Access.

Muthuphei A Mutavhadsindi, P. G. (2014, January 14). *Church planting in South Africa: The role of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo*. Retrieved August 03, 2022, from <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ve.v35i1.424>

Nagel, N., 1956. *The authority of Scripture*. *Concordia Theological Monthly*, pp. 1-14.

Naidoo, M., & De Beer, S. (2016). *Diversity: Negotiating difference in Christian communities*. *OASIS*, 8.

Naume, F. C. (2009). *Male clergy violence against their spouses in the Presbyterian church of Mozambique- a new theory of praxis*. Pretoria: University of Pretoria.

Nixon, P., 2002. *Fling Open the Doors: Giving the Church Away to the Community*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Nugent, J. C. (2016). *Endangered Gospel*. Oregon: Cascade.

Nussbaum, S. (2005). *A Reader's Guide to Transforming Mission*. New York: Orbis Books.

Nwuzor, D. N. (1997). *A survey of African Christology*. Pamplona, 1, 57.

Oduyoye, M. A. (2001). *Introducing African Woman's Theology*. England: Sheffield Academic Press LTD.

Oduyoye, M. A. (2018). *African Woman's Theologies, Spirituality and Healing*. New York: Paulist Press.

Olofsson, S., 2011. *As a deer longs for flowing streams: a study of the Septuagint version of Psalm 42-43 in its relation to the Hebrew text*. Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Paez, D., Marques, J., Valencia, J. & Vineze, O., 2006. *Dealing with collective shame and guilt*. *Psicologia Politica*, Volume 32, pp. 59-79.

Pali, K. J. (2018, December 05). *An Analysis of Conflict Situations within the Leadership and Various Structure of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa, Orange Free State*. Retrieved March 17, 2021, from <http://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v74i2.4972>

- Peters, P. E., 2021. *Deontology of New Testament Tithing: An Analysis*. *Theological Viatorum*, 45(1), pp. 1-7.
- Pheto, B. (2019). *Top Anglican Quits Over Sex Assaults Claims*. Johannesburg: *Sunday Times*.
- Pillay, J. (2017). *Revival and Unity of Reformed Church how to deal with this challenges: Allan Boesak and Reformed Churches and theology*. Published by the church history society of Southern Africa and Unisa press, 16.
- Pollard, N. (1997). *Evangelism Made Slightly Less Difficult*. In *How to Interest People Who Aren't Interested* (pp. 43-139). Illinois: Intervarsity Press.
- Pollard, N. (1997). *Evangelism made slightly Less Difficult: How to interest people who are not interested*. New York: B & H Publishing Group.
- Raffo, C., Dyson, D. & Gunter, H. M., 2007. *Education and Poverty: A critical Review of theory, policy and practice*. New York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Rainer, T. S. (2015). *I Could I might I can I should I WILL! United States of America: B&H Publishing Group Nashville, Tennessee*.
- Rainer, T. S., & Rainer, J. W. (2011). *The Millenials: Connecting to Americas Largest Generation*. Nashville: P &H Publishing group.
- Ranaweera, S. et al., 2018. *Economic Costs of Alcohol use in Sri Lanka*. [Online]
- Rataemane, S. & Rataemane, L., 2006. *Alcohol in South Africa*. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 25 September, Volume 17, pp. 373-375.
- Reid, A. (2009). *Evangelism*. Nashville: B & H Publishing Group.
- Resane, K. T., 2020. *Servant leadership and shepherd leadership: The missing dynamic in pastoral integrity in South Africa today*. *Theological Studies*, 76(1-8).
- Richardson, L. (2006). *AME Church Relieves Minister of Duties After Sex Abuse Allegations*. Los Angeles: Los Angeles Times.

Roestenburg, W. J. (2021). *Quantitative data collection methods*. In C. B. Fouche, H. Strydom, & W. J. Roestenburg, *Research at Grassroots* (pp. 199-226). Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

SA Government's Official COVID-19 Resource, 2012-2022. *Municipalities of South Africa*. [Online]

SALBA, 2021. *Alcohol industry releases data on cumulative Impact on three alcohol bans, showing R36.0 -13824 in lost revenue*. [Online]

Sandler, I. N., & Berrera, M. (1984). *Toward a multimethod approach to assessing the effect of social support*. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 37-52.

Sarbah, E. K., Niemandt, C. & White, P., 2020. *Migration from Historic Mission Churches to Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches in Ghana*. *Verbum Ecclesia*, 41(1), pp. 1-10.

Sarwar, A. M., Nouman, M., Sarwar, H. & M, W., 2011. *Impact of Education on Poverty Reduction*. Pakistan: MPRA.

Schaller, L. E. (1990). *Growing plans*. United States of America: Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data.

Schaller, L. E. (1991). *Create Your Own Future! Alternatives for the long-range planning committee*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Schaller, L. E. (1992). *Create Your Own Future (3rd ed.)*. United States of America: Abingdon Press.

Schaller, L. E., 1983. *Growing Plans: Strategies to increase your church's membership*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Schick, A. (1999). *A Contemporary Approach to Public Expenditure Management*. World Bank Institute, 89-120.

Schurink, E. (1998). *The Nature of Research in the Caring Professions*. In A. d. Vos, E. M. Schurink, E., & H. Strydom, *Research at Grassroots*. Pretoria: J.L. van Schaik Publishers.

- Schurink, W. J., Schurink, E. M., & Fouche, C. B. (2021). *Qualitative Data analysis and interpretation*. In C. B. Fouche, H. Strydom, & W. J. Roestenburg, *Research at Grassroots* (p. 391). Hatfield: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Seawright, J. (2016). *Multi-method social science: Combining qualitative and quantitative tools*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Setlalentoa, B. M., Pisa, P. T., Thekisho, G. N. & Ryke, E. H., 2010. *The Social Aspect of Alcohol misuse/abuse in South Africa, Potchefstroom: University of North West*.
- Setley, D. M. & Gautsch, D., 2015. *Leadership and the church: The impacts of shifting leadership constructs*. *International Journal of Business and Social Research*, 05(12), pp. 15-25.
- Shin, J. (2019). *A Formation of Christian Nationalism in Korean Protestantism after Liberation*. In J. Shin, & A. Kovacs (Eds.), *Nationalism, Communism, and Christian Identity: Protestant Theological Reflections from Korea and Hungary* (pp. 27-42). Kwangju: Debriefed Reformed Theological University.
- Sibiya, P. V., 2021. *African heritage and humanity, s.l.: Alternative Horizons*.
- Sillaber, I. & Henniger, M. S., 2004. *Stress and Alcohol Drinking*. *Annals of Medicine*, 36(8), pp. 596-605.
- Sjogren, S., & Lewin, R. (2003). *Community of Kindness*. California: Regal Books.
- Smith, I. (1993). *The Economics of Church Decline in Scotland*. *International Journal of Social Economics*, 20(12), 27-36.
- Smith, S. D. (2014). *The Rise and Decline of American Religious Freedom*. London: Harvard University Press.
- Sprinkle, P. (2016). *GO: Returning Discipleship to the front lines of Faith*. New York: Navpress.
- Stanic, Z., 2012. *Pastoral Response to Alcohol Abuse among Adventist Church Members: Case Study*. Bracknell: Newbold College.

- Sukamolson, S. (2007). *Fundamentals of quantitative research*. Language Institute Chulalongkorn, 1-20.
- Swindoll, C. R. (2017). *INSIGHT ON Luke (3 ed.)*. Illinois: Tyndale House of Publishers.
- Terfassa, D. O. (2014). *The Impact of Migration on Evangelism in Europe*. *International review of mission World council of churches*, 19.
- Tettey, S. F. K., 2018. *Spiritual Leadership Capital: A theory of poverty in a congregational development*. Pretoria: University of Pretoria.
- Tierney, W. G., 2015. *Rethinking Education & Poverty*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Tyre, K. B., 2008. *Christian Education in the Small Membership Church*, s.l.: Newburgh Theological Seminar & College of the bible.
- Tziotzou, J. M. (2019). *Factors that affect the probability of Bankruptcy*. *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership*, 17-34.
- Underhill, J. W. (2009). *Humboldt, Worldview and Language*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd.
- Union, A. M. E. c. S. S., 2012. *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*. Fothy - ninth edition ed. Nashville Tennessee: AMEC Publishing house.
- Vaux, R. d., 1962. *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*. London: Darton, Longman & Todd.
- Vos, C. J. A., 2007. *Preaching as a Language of Hope*. In: C. J. A. Vos, L. L. Hogan & J. H. Cilliers, eds. *preaching as a language of hope*. Pretoria: Pretoria Book House, pp. 11-28.
- Wagner, C. P. (2010). *Strategies for Church Growth*. Eugene: WiPF & Stock Publishing.

Watt, A. S., Biederman, S. V., Abdulmalik, J. O., Mbanga, I., Das-Brailsford, P., & Seedat, S. (2021). *Becoming a Xhosa traditional healer: The calling, illness, conflict and belonging*. OASIS, 9.

White, C. (2015). *Critical Qualitative Research*. Charlotte: Information Age Publishing.

Williams, D. (2003). *Spirit of Holiness? Moral Decline in Christian Society*. *Scriptura: International Journal of Bible, Religion and Theology in Southern Africa*, 82(01), 147-156.

Wiloughby, K. A., 2015. *Assigning Pastors to the congregation: Resource Management and Ministerial Service Enhancement*. Saskatoon: University of Saskatoon.

Wilson, J. C., 2019. *The Gospel Driven Church: Uniting Church Growth Dreams with the metrics of Grace*. Zondervan: Publishing Ministry of Good New Publishers.

Zurlo, G. A. (2017). *South Africa*. In K. R. Ross, K. Asamoah-Gyadu, & T. M. Johnson (Eds.), *Christianity in Sub-Sahara Africa* (pp. 21-62). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press