

**Developing a Sustainable Missionary Programme for
Black South African Churches: An analysis of the Role
that Churches in Black Community are Playing in
Terms of their Missionary Obligation.**

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis ‘Developing a sustainable missionary programme for black South African churches: an analysis of the role that churches in the black community are playing in terms of their missionary obligation’ is my own work and that all the resources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signature

Date



DEDICATION

To my mother (Pontsho) who will not be privileged to read this thesis because she has been promoted to be in glory.



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SUMMARY

The concern is often expressed that African churches in general seem to have failed to become self propagating churches – missional churches – that are not living up to the commandment of Jesus Christ to proclaim the gospel of his love to all people in the world. The thesis entitled: *Developing a sustainable missionary programme for Black South African Churches*, firstly sets out to test this notion, and then – against the backdrop of the mission history of the main Christian traditions in Africa – researches the missionary endeavours of a number of churches in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. Learning from their experience, the researcher then develops his own model for missionary engagement, which may help to empower South African churches in their quest to be true to their missionary calling.

In **Chapter One** the relevance of the thesis is discussed, together with the necessary information on the research problem, the hypothesis, the methodology employed, as well as the definitions of some of the more important terms used in the thesis.

Chapter Two focuses on the close relationship that has developed between Church and Mission in the 20th century, taking special note of developments in the following church traditions: Catholic Churches, Mainline Protestant Churches, Orthodox Churches, African Initiated Churches, and Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches. African views on mission during the past centuries were also studied. The researcher further develops a holistic definition of mission which answers to the needs of the church to proclaim the love of Christ in a comprehensive manner, one that makes sense at the beginning of the 21st century. The following topics were defined:

- The *Kerygmatic* dimension in mission which involves evangelism, conversion, follow-up, and also reaching across the cultural divide, etc.
- The dimension of *Diakonia*, which refers to poverty alleviation, quest for justice ministry in social issues, the church taking care of the HIV/Aids infected and affected etc.

- The *Koinonia* dimension in mission that includes the planting of churches, ecumenical co-operation, and the nurturing and empowering of the saints for their ministry.
- The dimension of *Leitourgia* in mission which refers to mission as, ultimately, an act of worship, bringing glory to God, and proclaiming His name over all the earth.

In **Chapter Three**, the researcher conducted an empirical study in twenty selected churches in the Gauteng region; that is, in Pretoria, Alexandra, Soweto, Auckland Park, and Sebokeng and Sharpville. The findings in general, confirmed the hypothesis that indeed, for generations, African churches have been introverted, seemingly failing to rise to the challenge of becoming the sending churches in their own right. However, through the findings in this study, it was indicated that there were mitigating factors which prevented black churches from becoming involved in their missional obligation. The following reasons were identified. One issue which continued to stand out is that different views are harboured by the Catholic Churches / Mainline Protestant Churches and Pentecostal / Charismatic Churches with regard to the question: How does one become a Christian? The study indicated that Catholics / Mainline Protestant Churches hold the view that infant baptism, guiding the child towards future repentance and faith in Christ, is the right way, whereas Charismatic / Pentecostal Christians believe that baptism should be limited only to adults who can make an intelligent decision to confess their faith. According to literature review, this argument has existed for many centuries.

Other questions that arise are: Do new members regularly join the local church? How are new members attracted to the church? Which difficulties do members have in sharing their faith with others? How practical is one's faith in day to day activities, such as work, home, school, social life, politics, and etcetera? What is the Christian view of politics? Taking the answers to these questions into consideration, this study indicated that most Christians are not very effective in reaching out to the non-Christian communities within our broader community. Christians often do not reflect the light of Christ, and find it difficult to be the salt of the earth.

Regarding the issue of mitigating circumstances that explain the Christian's lack of missionary élan, a number of reasons were offered, in particular, a deficiency of information as to their calling to be witnesses of Christ, as well as an inadequacy of empowerment and equipment. For many, the notion that all believers share an obligation to be missionaries of Christ, was quite novel. Generally, it appears that involvement in a missionary ministry was open only for specially elected individuals or clergy. On the issue of empowerment of church members, Roman Catholics indicated a high score, but unfortunately, this was not related to a missionary focus.

Regarding the question of the socio-political involvement of local churches and their members, the low score was alarming – although progress is being reported in Pentecostal / Charismatic Church circles. Some Christians, however, are still cautious with regards to the issue of their involvement in the socio-political issues of the day. Importantly, the submission that was made by The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa (TEASA) on behalf of the majority of Evangelical, Pentecostal and Charismatic churches to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (1997) was remarkable. This was a sign of true repentance. However, the question remains: has there been any improvement since that confession? As stated in the previous chapter, the church needs to be equipped for its socio-political witness and involvement.

In terms of community service, such as combating unemployment and poverty, the churches indicated some measure of involvement, which is commendable. Many programs have been generated to help the poor, such as soup kitchens, or distribution of clothes to the needy. However, churches in this study realize that they should be more innovative in creating job opportunities in order to alleviate poverty and crime in their communities. With regards to the issue of ecological and environmental challenges, in contrast to the AIC churches, the minimal score of 7% among mainline churches was evidence that these churches are weak in maintaining their environment. It was clear, according to the present study, that as God's stewards of that which God has entrusted to them, the church should restore and maintain God's creation.

In **Chapter Four**, a sustainable model which the researcher has developed to enlarge the missional involvement of the local church is presented. The researcher describes a number of strategies which the different mission organizations and churches in the

country are employing in terms of *kerygma*, *diakonia*, *koinonia*, and *leitourgia*. Against this background, the researcher developed his own model / programme for a local congregation based on the findings discussed in chapter three. In the opinion of the researcher, one must differentiate between a *missionary* church and *missional* church. For example, the former refers to the traditional way of doing mission which involves a few church programmes and selected individuals who are involved in a local church. In contrast, in the missional church, every member of the church is involved, including the children's ministry. It was highlighted that the church should return to her core fundamentals regarding the priesthood of all believers and renew her focus on missiology.

The stewardship of giving to mission was also discussed. In as much as the churches under consideration indicated a fair amount of giving, it was clear from the ignorance of the respondents towards mission that the funds were geared towards other church related programmes apart from mission.

Ultimately, the researcher addressed the needs of the local church by applying all four dimensions of mission in his planning and programmes. Furthermore, it was evident that the clergy and key members of church leadership need to undergo thorough training with regards to these models/principles, so that they in turn could continue the process of training their congregations. In this way a multiplication process takes place, and the church will honour her missionary obligation.

Chapter Five summarizes the conclusions, findings, and recommendations for further research of this study. However, some churches indicated that their monthly budget will not allow any extra financial burden since they had to pay salaries to their pastors and cover other church related expenses.

Kane (1981: 117) states categorically that all missions, denominational and non-denominational, experience the same common issues since they all find it difficult to raise funds to advance God's mission. He considers that it is easier to raise support for candidates going into Foreign Service than for those going into home missions. For example, it is easier to raise funds for famine relief than for a missionary enterprise. Certain of the churches under consideration, who indicated their involvement in soup

kitchens to the poor, for example, have developed social responsibility programmes that care for the needy of the church and the local community. Indeed, this is excellent, and covers the service dimension of mission. It is always easier to describe physical need – poverty, disease, malnutrition, hunger – than to depict spiritual need. It goes without saying that it is impossible to portray spiritual need in a visual way (Kane 1981: 117).

In our South African context, in order to make a mark in our missionary obligation, the church will have to take stewardship seriously. The church should not wait until it is rich before giving towards mission. Church members generally should be faithful in tithing their total income. If one of the churches interviewed in this study is able to give between 50% and 80% of their budget to missions, a classical example, it is possible and can be done, if church leaders have vision and are committed to their missionary obligation. Kane (1981: 118) cautioned us that the churches must never reduce their commitment to world missions. The church will be greatly assisted in her resolve if she remembers, and really believes as the Scripture declares: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’ (Acts 20: 35). Kane suggests that ‘[i]f every church member acted on that principle, our financial worries would disappear overnight’.

There is a spiritual harvest to those who give sacrificially to the advancement of God’s kingdom. (Galatians 6: 8) states that, ‘he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting’. Olford (1972: 73) argues that this text actually means that as we respond to the indwelling Spirit in love, sacrifice, and stewardship, we shall be adding interest to the capital of eternal life which we already have in Christ. Bright, the late founder and president of Campus Crusade for Christ (a mission organization), who was concerned about believers who do not take their stewardship responsibilities seriously, asserted:

I am amazed at the life-style of the average Christian, a life-style that differs little from that of non-believers in terms of attitudes, actions, motives, desires and words. Many Christians are experiencing financial difficulty, emotional turmoil, even physical illness as a result of the kind of seed they are sowing. Unlike Job, who suffered for the glory of God, they are being disciplined for

sowing un-righteously, as was King David after he committed adultery and murder (1 Samuel 25).

It should be noted that God controls the returns because he owns everything. He knows us and our motives in our giving, and he is the one who returns a harvest of blessing to us. Conversely, Scripture reveals that we can add to our spiritual capital by continual enrichment as a result of our generosity and the ministry of giving to God's mission. Smith (1959: 61-62) used a 'Faith Promise' which he regards as a Pauline method of raising funds for mission. From the Scriptures, chapters 8 and 9 of 2 Corinthians (in *Living Letters*) are normally referenced in this regard. In terms of a 'Faith Promise Offering', the individual has to pray about it and ask God how much he/she would have to give, and then trust God for the amount. Month by month, the individual goes to God in prayer and asks Him for the amount promised, and waits upon the Lord until God provides the amount. Smith considers that this is the offering that brings blessings. One or two churches known to the researcher are still using this method to support their missionary work.

Vargo (1995: 20) states that the failure of many churches is, unfortunately, due to a lack of budgeting, which results in frustration and distress for many church leaders. He further warns that, if budgeting is done correctly, it is time consuming, but the dividends are incomparable. It involves making numerous assumptions and obtaining considerable cooperation and promises from the people. Importantly, for the vast majority of churches, the benefits of sound budgeting will outweigh all the associated problems that may be anticipated. The following are the ten reasons why budgeting is important for any churches, since it:

- Formalises planning;
- Reduces emotion-charged discussion;
- Is a basis for performance evaluation;
- Is a basis for control;
- Assists in communication and coordination;
- Gets members involved;
- Increases the commitment to giving;

- Generates confidence in the church's leadership;
- Allows for continued operation when cash receipts and disbursements are mismatched; and
- Allows time to lend or borrow prudently (Vargo 1995: 20-24).

It is vitally important that churches prepare budgets for the smooth running of their financial operations. This is one area that cannot be ignored by the church as it forges ahead with its missionary obligations. Unfortunately, failure to budget has contributed to the death of many churches in our communities.

The churches will be helped in doing their strategic planning as this is one of the findings in this study. Much time should be spend with church leaders in doing a strategic planning in view of developing their own goals and objectives which will guide their every action, especially their missional obligation. It is noted that without proper planning, goals are dreams, objectives are hazy, programmes are vague, priorities are confused, and evaluations impossible (Vargo 1995: 16). Callahan noted in his famous book entitled: *Twelve Keys to an Effective Church* that

The first and most central characteristic of an effective, successful church is its specific, concrete, missional objectives... 'specific' refers to the fact that the local congregation has focused its missional outreach on a particular human hurt and hope – for example, by being in mission with alcoholics and their families, with housebound elderly, or with epileptics and their families. Missional outreach is not best accomplished by developing a purpose statement or some generalized approach to a given age group in the surrounding area. Nor is mission best accomplished by the church seeking to engage in helping everyone with everything. The church that does that ends up helping anyone with anything... Objectives refers to missional direction stated in a sufficiently clear fashion that it is possible to know when they have been achieved ... The local church that is effective ... has moved forward toward the substantial accomplishment and achievement of very clear, intentional goals. The effective congregation is not engaged in wishful thinking with a

generalized purpose or goal statement that just lists its sentiments to do something noble, worthwhile, and helpful (1983: 1-2).

Vargo (1995: 17) argues that, as churches operate as non-profit sectors, and usually with a large cadre of volunteers who need focus, it is essential that they plan more effectively in order to reach maximum results. He further outlines his proper planning formula as follows:

- Identify needs;
- Stating goals – statement of intent, general purpose, or broad direction;
- Stating objectives – the desired ends that are to be achieved in a specific period of time;
- Being specific (as opposed to generalizing);
- Establishing priorities;
- Being able to evaluate progress toward reaching goals and objectives;
- Considering both short-term and long-term perspectives.

My strategic planning process has been adapted from Athletes in Action (Campus Crusade for Christ Outreach Strategies to Sports). The strategy is user friendly and can be adapted to different ministries such as those in churches, university campuses, the field of sports etcetera. I argue that churches under consideration need a strategy as they focus on missionary endeavour.

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