

CHAPTER 5: Conclusion, Findings and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This final chapter sets out to summarize the main findings of this research, and to make certain contributions for the purpose of a better understanding of mission amongst black churches in South Africa, in particular. This is necessary, as it provides a comprehensive perspective for understanding mission and helps black churches, particularly in Gauteng region and beyond, to identify their role in God's mission. The content of this chapter is organized under two main headings:

- The findings of the study, and
- Proposals for further research.

5.2. Findings of this Study

The hypothesis of this study indicated that African churches are generally perceived to have failed to become self-propagating communities. This, to a point, may be true, but - according to the findings of this study - there are mitigating circumstances that are contributing towards a lack of missionary enthusiasm amongst the African churches. The research, however, pointed to the fact that if these churches could be properly trained and informed about their missionary responsibility, they may yet play a vital role in spreading the gospel throughout the world according to the Great Commission (in Mat. 28: 18-20) and other Scriptures.

5.3. The South African Churches in front of a Missiological

Mirror

Having discussed the close relationship between church and mission in the 20th century in chapter two, the objective of chapter three was to carry out empirical research into twenty selected churches in Gauteng region with the help of a questionnaire from IMER.

Some of the more important findings are the following:

- a) On the issue of how one becomes a Christian, the findings indicated that there is a vast difference between Catholics/Mainline Protestant Churches and Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches. It is evident from church history that this difference has existed since the beginning of these churches, and therefore this issue cannot be resolved overnight. It is the view of the researcher that these churches should rather form a formidable force in pursuing the missionary enterprise for which God has mandated them. Ecumenical co-operation is a *sine qua non* for mission.
- b) In terms of creating missional churches, the high score which was indicated by the Roman Catholic Church as opposed to Mainline Protestant and Pentecostal/Charismatics in particular, came as a surprise. One would have expected the findings to be the other way round. According to the observation, Pentecostal/Charismatics are employing various methods to attract new members to join their churches, such as, for example, healing crusades conducted by itinerant evangelists with healing ministries; and church members are continuously inviting their friends to the church, and as a result, many decide to join their churches. The study is of the view that a new fresh way to address the context and spiritual needs which will cause new members to regularly join the local church is needed.
- c) It is clear that innovative creative strategies are needed to attract new members to the church. Furthermore, the study noted that there is a need for an accurate and balanced assessment that needs to take place within both the church and the community in an open and frank spirit. This endeavour will perhaps assist the church to be a catalyst of mission in her neighbourhood and beyond her borders. According to notable missiologists, the church must exert both (centripetal) attractive force, as well as an (centrifugal) expansive impetus in order to be vibrant in her missionary obligation.
- d) The study noted that many Christians find it difficult to share their faith with people from other faith communities. According to the findings this, precisely, is

one of the reasons why non church members are not attracted to the church. The score of a mere 47% of Christians who are sharing their faith is a cause of great concern. Most of the respondents indicated a lack of training and empowerment from their churches as the main reason for not sharing their faith. This could be remedied. It should be noted that every believer is a missionary, and therefore, obligated to further God's kingdom wherever God has placed them in their community and the world.

- e) On the positive side, the research indicates the strikingly high score in regard to the balance of Christians matching their faith with family and marriage. This should be commended, but most of the churches under consideration polled low in matching their faith with social life, the workplace, and politics. According to these findings, Christians dichotomize between faith and other essential elements of life, and as a result, their witness is negatively affected. It is generally observed that this situation is still prevalent in many churches in our day. Simply put, some churches view involvement in politics or social issues as unholy for any Christian and, therefore, they adopt a passive approach.
- f) In addition to the previous section, this study noted that the church has failed to develop a theology which could be applied to socio-political issues and conflict resolution. In the past the churches often failed to protest against false ideologies such as the ideology of apartheid. Some churches indeed developed theological arguments for apartheid. This must not happen again: the churches should develop a prophetic theology tackling the issues of our day. To do that, in the view of this study, the church needs no less than a paradigm shift on the issues of socio-politics and conflict resolution in order to make an invaluable contribution in advancing her missionary task.
- g) The findings of this research revealed that the Roman Catholic churches are doing fairly well in tackling unemployment and poverty in their communities. It is also interesting that this study indicated that the churches under consideration are involved on a small scale in this endeavour. However, according to the findings, there is much that needs to be done in the area of unemployment and poverty. Owing to the lack of work in our country, the researcher recommends that the

church must empower people to start their small businesses in partnership with the Association of SADC Chambers of Commerce & Industry (ASCCI), which is well known to him. The purpose of ASCCI is to equip those enterprises, including small businesses, who have been running their own businesses without adequate information on how to manage and grow their businesses and so forth.

- h) The findings indicated that the churches being researched scored poorly in their involvement with keeping their environment clean. It could be concluded that the church abuses her God-given stewardship over nature. Therefore this study recommends that, if Christians play their part in tending to and keeping their environment clean, this could serve as a witness to the world.
- i) With regard to the concept of empowering her church members, the study notes that churches are scoring highly, which is commendable. But according to this study elsewhere, Christians have already indicated that they lack training and empowerment; hence they are not involved in missionary work. In order to redress this discrepancy, the study recommends that the church should create an effective programme where members will be adequately empowered for their missionary responsibility. Indeed, Christians should be empowered in order to impact on their communities and be of service in God's kingdom.
- j) Two major reasons why respondents prefer not to become Christians, according to the findings of this study, are ancestral worship and ignorance about Christianity and what it really means to be a Christian. From these findings, the researcher concludes that Christians are not playing their vital role in being the light and salt of the world. For example, if Christians were to fulfil their role faithfully, the issue of ignorance and ancestral worship would be adequately addressed, and non-Christians would know and worship the living God.
- k) One of the signs of a vibrant church with a missionary focus is her budget. According to this study, most churches under consideration are poor in giving, and their budgets are telling. The trend in a few churches is their engagement in community projects, which comprises only a small part in regard to mission. According to the findings, some churches are concentrating on paying their

pastors, and maintaining the church facilities like paying the rates, rentals, and repairing the church. It is the view of the researcher that churches should be reminded about the comprehensiveness of God's mission, and that as part of their obligation to the Great Commission, a certain percentage should be budgeted towards advancing God's mission. In contrast, according to this study, 80% of one church's budget is geared towards mission to South Africa, and the world. This clearly indicates that the church has much potential to play a vital role in furthering God's mission.

5.4. Developing a Model for Missionary Involvement

The objective of this chapter was to develop a sustainable model to enlarge missional involvement in the local church. This will include the strategizing and planning activities which could help the local church to implement the principles indicated in this study. In the course of the study, attention was accorded to four missiologically known aspects in mission: *kerygma*, *diakonia*, *koinonia*, and *leitourgia*.

As part of its introduction, this chapter discussed the importance of dialoguing with other faiths as one component of missionary responsibility of the church. It was noted that many churches in South Africa do not relate well to other faith communities, and according to the findings of this study, there must be a radical change in this regard. For example, churches should:

- Develop an attitude of humbleness and openness;
- Comprehend the need to know and understand the religious convictions of people of other faiths;
- Acquire a more precise theological definition of dialogue as the church, which should filter through to the entire congregation;
- Be aware that a true 'trialogue' must prevail, including the Holy Spirit.

It was also emphasized that, in the process of dialogue, the churches must be willing to listen to one another, and that judgment should not be practised, but, rather, there must be love and understanding when approaching people of other faiths. A classic

example was furnished: that of the Muslim world. It was mentioned that a missionary amongst the Muslims should be aware of his/her own deficiencies and discern carefully that which is Christian from that which is cultural. Furthermore, cross-cultural communication was also discussed, including a few invaluable steps which were noted in regard to cross-cultural communication.

In regard to serving the need of *kerygma*, the researcher mentioned the following elements that the church could employ in their context to accelerate their missionary endeavours: evangelistic campaigns, Bible study classes, literature, pamphlets, tapes, literature evangelism, media, Heartlines, Truth-Media Internet, Jesus film & video, saturation evangelism, personal evangelism, Athletes in Action, children's games, tent campaigns and crusades.

Serving the needs of *diakonia*, it was observed that the *word* and *deed* can actually be combined as a dimension of the one 'good news' activity. The church should not divorce the two words as has been done traditionally. It was noted in this study that more emphasis is placed on evangelism and very little on deeds. For example, according to the empirical study (Table 3: 5-9), churches are paying less attention to their *diakonian* responsibilities. Furthermore, the study further discussed a few areas to which the church should pay attention:

- Political and social justice;
- Poverty;
- Unemployment;
- Illegal immigrants;
- Environmental involvement and the reasons why the church should be involved in caring for her environment and its engagement therein;
- The paradigm shift that needs to take place in the church.

One of the conclusions of the foregoing chapters is that the church should realize that, indeed, mission is not only the proclamation of the gospel, but it also involves *learning* and *servng*.

In examining the *koinonian* aspect of the churches under consideration, this study indicated discrepancies in this area. For example, the researcher observed that members of most churches are just enjoying coming together, and having fun with one another, which frequently develops into a stage of inward looking, where it falls into an unhealthy situation. Furthermore, the relationships become so deep and mutually absorbing, that ultimately these become a focal point of attention. It was concluded in the findings that the fellowship of believers and the church should be geared to reaching the world. And this is where the study introduced the element of church planting as part of *koinonia* of the church.

On the question of church planting, this study established that church planting must include the word 'movement'. According to Garrison (2004: 21), the church planting movement is a rapid multiplication of indigenous churches planting other churches that sweeps through a people group or population segment. This study observed that this definition is comprehensive, and it includes what is happening in church planting movements, which is certainly essential. The researcher concludes that the church planting movement goes beyond the so-called, mass evangelism, church outreach crusades, tent campaigns and the like. The church planting movement produces multiplying churches, i.e. churches which employ multiplication, rather than addition.

Regarding the worship service, this study noted that churches are not sufficiently attractive to draw new members to the church. The findings of this study concluded that worshipping God is paramount in fulfilling the missionary obligation of the church. The church should worship and glorify God for who he is, his sovereignty, majesty, and his greatness. Furthermore, it was observed that worship can actually serve as an instrument of evangelizing the lost world, as they experience the presence of the Lord in their midst.

After discussing all the practical challenges of mission for a local church, the researcher described his own model that could be used in local churches, and the strategy which could help church leaders implement invaluable principles which are indicated in this study. In developing his model, the researcher continued to use the three rubrics in regards to mission, as they constitute the heart of this study: *kerugma*, *diakonia*, and *koinonia*.

Under evangelism, three important key elements were identified: media evangelism, public preaching, and personal evangelism. It is concluded that preaching of any kind is commendable, as long as people are being saved. There might be different methods employed according to the context of the audience, but as long as the preaching of the message is not compromised, and people are saved, these should be encouraged.

On the issue of training churches in the sustenance of the spiritual harvest, the study concluded that the preparation of and equipping the churches has been poorly attended to. Furthermore, it appears that some church leaders are not yet ready to absorb large numbers of new church members. This calls for more training and equipment on the part of the church leadership. The conclusion is that the training should rather be transferable, that is, church leaders should be able to transmit it to the churches. Furthermore, the study pointed out that Jesus is a good model, showing how he trained his disciples, and entrusted them with continuing his work.

Another striking finding was that regarding the principle of empowering the church to become what God has called her to be. One finding of this study is that many members in the churches under consideration indicated that empowerment for mission should be accorded priority in the church. This study indicated that one of the reasons why Christians are not sharing their faith is simply because they have not been taught how to witness. It was concluded that the empowerment is not a quick fix solution to the missionary work of the church, but rather a process which will take time and patience.

As far as discipleship is concerned, the researcher defined discipleship at length and observed that it is lacking, and furthermore concluded that discipleship is to accept God's call, and be willing to fulfill God's mission wherever the person is, such as work, business, school, and so on. The researcher further elaborated on two key points, inter alia: discipleship in mission, and the process of discipleship. It was concluded that discipleship is not head knowledge, but it should be applied in order to bring about a changed and transformed life.

It is evident that financial giving is lacking in the churches under consideration. It was concluded that most churches experience the same common issue, of not giving

towards the mission or advancing of God's work. It was also noted that if the church were consistent in budgeting, the dividends would be substantial. Furthermore, the researcher concluded that the church should take mission seriously, and its budget should reflect its missionary endeavours. Importantly, generosity should not be an issue, no matter how poor people are, but furthering God's mission, as an obligation for every church and believer, is a priority. It was noted that God controls everything, and Christians are stewards of what has been entrusted to them. Therefore, it behooves every Christian to be faithful in giving to mission.

The researcher observed that mission should be incarnation. It should represent the gospel within the cultural context of the target group; in order to provide the conditions in which ordinary people's experience of faith can become more significant for theological reflection. Furthermore, he noted that incarnation implies learning the cultures of the target group; understanding how they think; what it feels like to be in their world; how they view the world; and how a missionary can identify and be accepted in their world. Indeed, this approach is very different from that of the first missionaries who described African peoples in the most degrading terms as brutal savages with no concept of God, of good and evil. According to Saayman (1993: 39) early missionaries maintained that

All their social institutions reflected only depravity and brutality, and it was the God-given calling and privilege of western peoples (who were all good, civilized members of Christendom, after all) to root out the depravity and heathenism and impose, through lesser or greater application of force, standards of 'Christian civilization', thus bringing 'light' to 'the dark continent'.

This study concluded that while doing mission in the 21st century, the church should not neglect the importance of the incarnational aspect, which is congruent with the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The findings of the study confirmed that a church which has once been reformed is always in the process of reforming in order to resemble the character of Christ. The

church needs to allow the Holy Spirit to grant continual guidance, and experience reshaping, and remoulding into the image of Christ.

The research established that planning and strategizing for mission is fundamental and cannot be avoided. The researcher observed that most churches under consideration inadequately plan for any activity. Therefore, this study concludes that churches must view planning as vital for the progress of the church and their missional outreaches. The findings noted that churches should develop their own goals and objectives which will guide their actions, especially their missional obligations. For example, the key strategic planning process included the following elements:

- Direction the church is going;
- Situational analysis – facing reality;
- Critical mass – leaders and their tools;
- Critical path;
- Resource release- stewardship efficiency;
- Elevate and refine the process of planning;
- Putting the plan into action.

Missiologists and church growth experts all agree that, in order for the church to be successful and effective in mission, planning and strategizing are paramount. The study concludes that an effective church has a vision, dreams, and reachable goals, and it should not be engaged in useless and wishful thinking.

Ultimately, the findings of this study concluded that saturation prayer should permeate the church's missional efforts. Indeed, it matters not how effective the church becomes in her missionary endeavours; unless prayer is a priority, everything will fall flat. It was noted that God is our source, and our total dependency, and He alone is worthy to be acknowledged as such. The study also discussed the key elements of saturation prayer.

5.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations can be made in view of the above findings and conclusions. These recommendations are not intended to suggest a complete remedy in regard to the missional responsibility of the local church. They are tentative, limited, and are thought of as temporary bridges until the church finds time to restructure its programme and organization in order to embody the newly discovered missional principles that are indicated in this study. With this in mind, I suggest:

- The church should consider the children's ministry as vital and important for the missional work. According to this study leaves much to be desired. It should be noted that the church will not advance according to God's will without an intentional ministry to children. Children should feel that they are needed in the church, and that they are part of building God's kingdom.
- Church leaders should concentrate on empowering Christians for the work of the ministry. They should not use Christians as helpers in fulfilling their own vision; rather, they should assist them to attain the spiritual potential that God has given them. If leaders are faithful in their responsibility to empower the church, then the missional aspect of ministry will fall into the right perspective.
- It is evident that a Christ-like ministry will yield dividends in attracting people to church. According to our empirical study, various reasons were given why people are not attracted to the church, but it is the conviction of the researcher that, if church leaders were to return to the basics employed by Jesus, their churches would experience tremendous results in attracting new members to their churches. For example, Jesus used three methods in attracting crowds: (a) He loved and accepted people just as they are, including the little ones (Matt. 9: 36; Mark 10: 13-16); (b) He met and ministered to the spiritual needs, before the material needs (Matt. 15: 30); (c) He taught them in a practical and appealing way (Matt. 13: 34; Mark 12:37). Leaders should do research and study their target group well, and then minister appropriately in a way that will attract people to the church.

- There must be a clear vision and purpose statement in the church, and every member must be aware of this motivating vision and be committed to it. It should not be something that belongs to a higher hierarchy of the church; but every member, including children, must be exposed to the vision and mission of the church. I would recommend that at least once a year, the church leader broadcast the missional vision so that it becomes part and parcel of each member of the church.
- There should be a mission structure which will be responsible in the local church. It is true that the pastor of the church cannot do the leading of this ministry by him/herself; nor can any single individual. The researcher would recommend that this ministry be led by one of the inner core people from the leadership team, but with the pastor ex officio as one of the members of the committee. He/she needs to give guidance, but someone must take leadership with authority to execute the work. A clear job description should be drawn up of that leader.
- One of the concerns stemming from the respondents during the empirical research was the lack of training in witnessing and other areas of outreach. I would suggest a systematic teaching programme on mission, including witness and outreach for the whole congregation. The teaching on mission should include youth, children, men, women, and literally every church member should go through mission training. Indeed, mission should be an integral part of every department of the congregation. It is essential that the mission committee take responsibility for developing this ministry by way of planning, and inviting relevant people to visit and motivate the church. They should make sure that they acquire enough material on mission.
- If mission is one of the top priorities in the church, then there must be a definite commitment to pray regularly for mission. Intercession and saturation prayer for mission should be included in the whole church. In every gathering, prayer for mission should be included.

- The church leadership must discover what types of people live in their area, subsequently decide which of those groups their church is best equipped to reach, and then discover which styles of evangelism best match their target. This researcher has established that most churches under consideration do not know their target group well; hence some of the methods employed for outreach are not effective. It should be clear to the church leaders that while their churches may never be able to reach everyone, they will be especially suited to reaching certain types of people. It goes without saying that knowing who one is trying to reach will make evangelism much easier.
- In order for the church to survive in the 21st century, it must carry out ‘exchange’ relationships with its environment. It must exert some degree of influence upon its environment, and the environment must exert some degree of influence upon the church in return. It should be noted that the environment is made up primarily of other social institutions, such as political, economic, educational, family ones, etcetera, with which the congregation has an exchange relationship. For example, the congregation could offer single mothers a free auto repair service. In exchange, these mothers would send their children to the church events or attend certain events themselves, and this could accelerate their missional aspect in their community.
- The whole church must be taught about stewardship and giving towards mission while in the same vein, the leader of the congregation should devise a clear, concise plan for missional work and gain a reasonable idea of costs and time. It may be argued that the lack of written goals and objectives is usually a sign of slothfulness on the part of church leaders, and this must change. I would also recommend the following resources for teaching and equipping the church on how to mobilize Christians on giving for missional endeavours: *The church guide to planning and budgeting* by Richard Vargo; *Using your money wisely: Biblical principles under scrutiny* by Larry Burkett; *Pastors*

resource package from Crown Financial Ministries; *The grace of giving: Messages on stewardship* by Steven Olsford.

- Inasmuch as the African Initiated Churches are not involved in the ecumenical stream of South African Churches, much can be learned from them in the area of earth keeping. As part of their theology, AICs are dedicated in cleansing the land as God's creation. The church should take heed of what Jacklyn Cock so aptly stated, that the Christian church should take the lead in addressing environmental problems in SA since (a) it has an organized space at the grassroots level to promote mass environmental awareness; (b) it is a unique ethical source; and (c) a holistic, ecological vision has deep roots in the Christian tradition (unpublished notes page 8).

5. 4 Further Areas of Research

In this study, the researcher concentrated primarily on analyzing the role that churches in the black community are playing in terms of their missionary obligation.

A number of issues have been left untouched, and these warrant further research. They include:

- Further research into the role of children's ministry in furthering God's mission: taking note of what happened in church history and the role the children's ministry played in advancing God's kingdom.
- Proper curricula and courses in order to empower local churches for their outreaches and missionary enterprise.
- Strategies to empower the laity as well as the clergy in local congregations to meet the challenge of their missionary obligation.



- Further study on African Independent Churches: their strategies for outreach and recruiting more people in their congregations, and their involvement in earth keeping.
- This study focused on black churches and their role in mission. It would be interesting to further examine the churches of other races, and undertake a comparative study on God's mission and how they are faring.
- In addition, it would be commendable if further research could be done into the Biblical theology of missions which would include the biblical themes of *missio Dei* and the kingdom of God, and the evaluation of the church's contemporary involvement in the *missio Dei*.
- In regard to cross-cultural communication there could be an investigation into how to appraise the socio/political and religious setting of any given culture in order to develop the strategies one needs to employ in establishing an indigenous church within the particular culture.
- Further research is needed in assessing the unfinished task in our country and beyond, so as to use that information to motivate and mobilize the church to missions.