

CHAPTER 5

MISSION WORK OF THE REFORMED CHURCH TSHIAWELO IN AN URBAN SETTING

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In order to gather the relevant data concerning the mission work of the Reformed church Tshiawelo in an urban setting, the questionnaires were designed and handed to the church leaders and also to the members of this congregation (see appendix A and B), and they positively responded to those questionnaires. Besides the data collected from the questionnaires handed to the leaders and to the church members, the researcher was a participant observer in many occasions held by the Reformed Church Tshiawelo. For example, he attended many church leadership conferences, mission seminars and mission conferences, congregational conferences, congregational worship services and also anniversaries. He preached several times at some of the fellowship centers at Sunday worship services and also on Wednesdays' small groups' services of this congregation. The data collected from the questionnaires and also from what the researcher observed as a participant observer in many church services of this church were used in this chapter.

5.2 REFORMED CHURCH TSHIAWELO ²⁶

This church is found in Gauteng Province, and she is situated in Soweto Township. She was established in 1968 (*Die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika*, 2005:410). This

²⁶ In this thesis, the Reformed Church Tshiawelo sometimes is abbreviated as **RCT**.

church falls within the REFORMED CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA²⁷ - RCSA (DIE GEREFORMEERDE KERKE IN SUID AFRIKA abbreviated as GKSA). She is one of the Churches that previously constituted the Synod Midlands²⁸, and formed part of the Classis Moroka²⁹. In 2005 the Reformed Church Tshiawelo took a decision of being a member of the Synod Soutpansberg³⁰, and she wrote a letter to the Classis Moroka to request such a change. The Classis Moroka on its meeting held at Diepkloof during December 2005 (Rabali 2006: 9), decided to discuss the matter at its next assembly, and when it did so at its Kagiso assembly on 27th May 2006, granted permission to the Reformed Church Tshiawelo to apply for a membership at the Soutpansberg Synod as it was indicated in the letter written to the Classis Moroka by the Reformed Church Tshiawelo. The Reformed Church Tshiawelo was accepted as a member of the Synod Soutpansberg in the meeting of the Synod Soutpansberg held at Iyani Bible and Training Institute in December 2006. This brought a great joy to the Synod Soutpansberg as this process was long being waited by this Synod to occur. The important question that people who do not know the mutual relationship between the two (**RCT** and **SS**) can ask is, “why has the acceptance of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo by the Synod Soutpansberg to be one of its members, brought great joy to all the churches that constitute this Synod?” The question is relevant to those who do not know the great relationship between churches that constitute the Synod Soutpansberg and the

²⁷ There are three National Synods within THE REFORMED CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA, i.e. Synod Midlands, Synod Potchefstroom and Synod Soutpansberg.

²⁸ Synod Midlands is composed of eight classis, i.e. Classis Moroka, Classis Tshwane, Classis Tlokwe, Classis Ditsobotla, Classis Itheke, Classis Mangaung, Classis Kwa Thema and Classis Monti (cf *Die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika* 2005:4; 409-436).

²⁹ The churches that form the Classis Moroka were as follows: Diepkloof, Dobsonville, Dube, Jabavu, Kagiso, Meadowlands, Mohlakeng, Muldersdrift, Tarlton and Tshiawelo.

³⁰ Soutpansberg Synod (**SS**) is formed by the following congregations: De Hoop, Fundudzi, Hosiyata, Malamulele, Mutale, Niani, Nzhelele, Seshego, Tshitandani and Tshiawelo (Since December 2006).

Reformed Church Tshiawelo. But to those who know much about the great impact of the reciprocal relationship between the Synod Soutpansberg and the Reformed Church Tshiawelo, the above question is irrelevant. The relationship between the two (SS and RCT) was built on the following two reciprocal aspects:

First aspect, the Synod Soutpansberg entered into partnership with the Reformed Church Tshiawelo on urban mission (urban church planting) with the special focus on the Gauteng Province. *Second aspect*, the Synod Soutpansberg also entered into partnership with the Reformed Church Tshiawelo on the theological training of the students at Heidelberg Theological Seminary. The above factors strengthened and enriched the mutual relationship between the churches that constitutes the Synod Soutpansberg and the Reformed Church Tshiawelo in such a way that all students from those churches that constitutes the Synod Soutpansberg who migrated in great numbers to the Gauteng Province to further their studies in institutions that are located in Gauteng Province, were encouraged to associate themselves with the Reformed Church Tshiawelo. And also those members who migrated to Gauteng Province to look for jobs were encouraged to associate themselves with the Reformed Church Tshiawelo. Even today, those church members from those churches who are presently migrating to Gauteng Province are being encouraged to associate themselves with the Reformed Church Tshiawelo (RCT). The reality is that the Reformed Church Tshiawelo is formed by almost 75% or more of members who are from the churches that constitute the Synod Soutpansberg. The researcher was a participant observer of this reality; he observed this reality in many congregational gatherings and congregational worshipping services of this congregation. Even the Church Council members of this congregation is composed of almost 80% or more members from the churches that constitute the Synod Soutpansberg, who came to Gauteng Province to study at institutions in this province, and also those who came to work at this province. That is why when a researcher

explains the urban mission of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo, is always forced to speak about the contribution and co-operation of the Synod Soutpansberg to the mission work of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo. A clear explication of this contribution and co-operation of the churches that constitute the Synod Soutpansberg for urban mission of the RCT is given in this chapter. This fact is clearly elucidated in the partnership between the two, the Reformed Church Tshiawelo and the Synod Soutpansberg, where the two vital areas of mutual partnership were expounded; namely, partnership on urban mission (urban church planting) and also partnership on theological training of Ministers at Heidelberg Theological Seminary.

5.2.1 The partnership between the RCT and the Synod Soutpansberg

Within world Christianity, 'partnership' expresses a relationship between churches based on trust, mutual recognition and reciprocal interchange. It rules out completely any notion of 'senior' and 'junior', 'parent' and 'child', or even 'older' and 'younger'. It is a term designed to show how different parts of the Church belong to one another and find their fulfillment through sharing a common life. It implies a relationship in which two or more bodies agree to share responsibility for one another, and in which each side meaningfully participates in planning the future of the other (Kirk 1999:184). Perhaps the nearest word in the New Testament to partnership is *koinonia*. Its most basic meaning is 'partaking together in' a group which has a common identity, goals and responsibilities (Kirk 1999:188). The two vital areas of partnership between the Reformed Church Tshiawelo and the Synod Soutpansberg had great impact on the urban mission of the church. In other words, they all contributed a lot to the flourishing of urban mission of this church.

5.2.1.1 The partnership on urban mission

According to J. Andrew Kirk, 'partnership in mission' belongs to the essence of the church: partnership is not so much what the Church does as what it is. Churches (theologically) belong to one another, for God has called each 'into the fellowship (*koinonia*) of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord' (1 Cor 1:9) (Kirk 1999:187). In March 1998 the Church Councils of the Churches that constitute the Synod Soutpansberg together with the Church Council of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo held a great leadership conference at Tshipise. The conference was well attended by almost all Church Council members of "all congregations that form the Synod Soutpansberg"³¹ and also by Church Council members of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo. The conference was led by Professor T.C. Rabali, and the main theme of the conference was: "*Tshivhumbeo tshashu sa Kereke ri tshi pfuka nwaha wa 2000*" which means "*Our form as a church when we pass the year 2000*". This conference was a wake up call for the congregations to prepare for the year 2000 and beyond. The matter of urban church planting was also indicated as the agent and a serious call for the church (Rabali 1998:16). During that conference, Church Council members started vigorously to understand and see the necessity of urban church planting especially in the Gauteng Province. This was also motivated by the fact that there was a great number of youth who were migrating to the Gauteng Province in order to study at the universities, technikons, technical, colleges, and other institutions located in the Gauteng Province. During that time most of the youth were migrating to Gauteng, to cities like Pretoria and Johannesburg for studies. Besides youth, there were also other men and women who were also migrating to big cities in the Gauteng Province for work. This played an

³¹ The leadership conference was attended by Church Council members from the following Reformed congregations: De Hoop, Hosiyata, Malamulele, Mutale, Niani, Soutpansberg, Nzhelele, Tshitandani, and also from the Reformed Church Tshiawelo.

important role of seeing urban mission as an urgent and serious work to be done. After the conference, Professor T.C. Rabali was requested by many people to write a booklet about the teachings he delivered during the Church Councils' conference he led at Tshipise. He wrote a booklet titled the theme of that conference: *Tshivhumbeo tshashu sa Kereke ri tshi pfuka nwaha wa 2000*. Many church leaders together with the church members of the churches that constituted the Synod Soutpansberg together with church leaders and church members of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo bought that booklet, and it opened their minds to see the necessity and urgency of urban mission in the Gauteng Province. This booklet is the basis of the mission that has been carried out in urban areas by the Reformed Church Tshiawelo. This booklet is still recommended by Professor T.C. Rabali as the basis for urban mission which is being carried out by the RCT in cooperation with the churches of the Synod Soutpansberg; and in most of his written mission books, he has quoted this booklet as the basis of this mission.

During the same year (1998) of the Church Councils' conference held at Tshipise, the Synod Soutpansberg at its meeting held at Iyani Bible and Training Institute took a decision of urban church planting, especially in the Gauteng Province. In most of the Synod Soutpansberg meetings, the matter of urban mission is highlighted as one of the most important issues. According to the Acts of the Synod Soutpansberg of the Reformed Churches in South Africa³² (RCSASSA 2000:8), the mandate number two of the Mission Deputies of the Synod Soutpansberg was to continue looking for a place where urban mission should be carried out in South Africa. They were mandated to find a strategy in which they can utilize mission in the Gauteng Province. The Mission Deputies in their report to the Synod held in December 2000 at Iyani Bible and Training

³² In this chapter the Acts of the Synod Soutpansberg of the Reformed Churches in South Africa will be abbreviated as "RCSASSA".

Institute (Sibasa) indicated that they have contacted Professor T.C. Rabali concerning the mission work in Tshiawelo, Pretoria and Johannesburg. Professor T.C. Rabali indicated that those Churches are growing tremendously. He recommended that what the Mission Deputies of mission have to do was to see that those churches have fulltime Ministers (RCSASSA 2000:9).

5.2.1.1.1 The rebuilding of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo

Mission is also concerned with the founding of new church communities. That is the way Paul saw mission and is the way the Church has functioned throughout ages (Müller 1987:34). This was how the Reformed Church Tshiawelo comprehended mission. As it is indicated above that the Reformed Church Tshiawelo was established in 1968 (*Die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika* 2005:410), but she was a local church without any outposts before 1999. Her first outpost or fellowship center was established outside the township of Soweto in 1999; this was done in co-operation with the churches that constitute the Synod Soutpansberg (Rabali 2006:2). This was after rebuilding the church herself. The Reformed church Tshiawelo was a local church without fellowship centres for a long time. But now she is one of the churches that are flourishing well. According to the statistics of this church, in 1995 she had less than 30 members, but presently she has more than 1000 church members (see Appendix F). She has many new fellowship centers (zwitasana). Presently, the Reformed Church Tshiawelo consists of wards in Soweto townships (Tshiawelo, Dube, Senaoane and Protea Glen) and wards in the city centers (Johannesburg and Pretoria)³³, and other wards in Midrand suburb, Katlehong

³³ The ward in Johannesburg is in Braamfontein and in Wits University Campus, while the two wards in Pretoria are in Sunnyside.

township, Medunsa campus, Pretoria Technikon campus, Vaal Triangle campus, Meadowlands, Muldersdrift and Middelburg in Mpumalanga.

The way this church is growing and flourishing, one can agree 100% with the researcher that there is something great done by this church under the leadership of Professor T.C. Rabali who started to work in this congregation in 1995 after the agreement between the Church Council of the Reformed Church Mutale and the Church Council of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo. Before Professor T.C. Rabali started to work in this congregation, there was no sign that this church will grow the way she is growing now. Professor T.C. Rabali is a man of great faith, vision, courage, ability, and so on. What he did was to work very hard in all spheres of this church. In 1999 the Reformed Church Tshiawelo was a congregation that was in a position to become instrumental in establishing new fellowship centres which were developed and planted as five daughter churches of RCT during her 40th anniversary which was celebrated on the 15-17th of August 2008. Anyone who knew this church (RCT) before 1995 would ask this crucial and burning question which the researcher asked the church leaders of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo in his questionnaire in order to gather information. “What did the Reformed Church Tshiawelo use or do to re-build the church to the extent that by 1999 she was in a position to become instrumental in establishing new fellowship centers (zwitasana) which are being developed to become local churches in August 2008?” All leaders who answered the above question mentioned their Minister as the pioneer, leader whom God used to have a vision of rebuilding this church, he had a vision about the future of the church and he also worked very hard to succeed. He developed clear and understandable goals to be reached within limited times, and he worked very hard to reach the reputable goals. 100% of the church leaders of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo indicated that there are many things done in the process of rebuilding this congregation under the leadership of their Minister, Professor T.C. Rabali. Some of the

things done by the church leaders and church members to bring this church to this stage are the following:

5.2.1.1.1.1 Sunday preaching

Preaching is the most important tool to change the hearts of people. Through preaching one can lead people to a spiritually bright future. This was in the case of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo. 96% of the church leaders who answered the question “What did the Reformed Church Tshiawelo use or do to re-build the church to the extent that by 1999 she was in a position to become instrumental in establishing new fellowship centers (zwitasana) which are now being developed to become local churches in August 2008?”, indicated that there was Sunday preaching (people who listened to the messages from 1995 to 1997) which invited many others to come to the church. They further indicated that their Minister is enthusiastic in preaching. He prepares his message in such a way that through his message, God touches the hearts of the people, and bring changes. This is what the preaching should do; it must change peoples’ hearts, lifestyle and also behavior. When Professor T.C. Rabali preaches the Word of God, one can feel that he is preaching what he knows and not his own message, but God’s message. His sermons are well organized, written and in an understandable language which everybody in the church understands. He takes preaching as a serious and important obligation to be faithfully done in the church. When he stood on the pulpit, he preached as a man who is given a last chance to preach, who will no longer get a chance to stand on the pulpit again. He gives himself a long time for preparation and also for preaching in church services. He knows that the power of changing the hearts, minds and behavior of people is by preaching. As a participant observer, the researcher observed this in many church services led by this Minister at Tshiawelo. The Minister of this congregation was the researcher’s principal and lecturer at the Heidelberg Theological Seminary from 2000 to

2004. If one wants to seriously hurt the mind of this Minister, it is by preaching a dull sermon. If you want to please him, prepare, write your sermon and faithfully devote yourself with your sincere heart to the deliverance of your sermon to the congregation, and also be a faithful, hard worker in church activities. All this indicates that preaching in this congregation is regarded with great importance and it has great impact in the flourishing of her mission.

If Christians read the Bible, they will find that preaching was also taken seriously by Jesus Christ, by the apostles, and also by the early Church. The Risen Lord said quite unequivocally to the disciples: “Proclaim the Good News to all creation” (Mk 16:15) (NIV). Peter and John testified before the Sanhedrin: “We cannot keep quiet. We must speak about what we have seen and heard” (Ac 4:20) (NCV). It was a matter of course for the newly converted Paul to preach “boldly and open in the name of Jesus” and to bear witness to Him (Ac 9:27). When Paul claimed the honorary title “apostle”, he understood himself as “herald” (praecox), that is, the official announcer of Good News. He is a servant of the Good News (Rm 15:16; Col 1:23). He calls himself “herald, apostle and teacher” of the Gospel (2 Tm 1:11) (Müller 1987:142). Anyone who has experienced the full power of the Christ-event should feel a compulsion to cry out this event just like the Apostle of the Gentiles; like Paul, Christians should feel the duty laid upon them: “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel” (1 Cor 9:16).

5.2.1.1.1.2 House visitation

Churches should have a group of members committed to and involved in evangelistic visitation. These members will not only invite others to attend, they will try to lead lost persons to Christ, even before they can be persuaded to visit the church for the first time. These experienced members will be active in a regular visitation program of the

church and in specialized evangelistic programs, such as Evangelistic Explosion or Continuing Witness Training, but they may be more effective as agents of growth through their everyday activities. As witnessing Christ becomes a normal part of life, they will reach their friends, family members, co-workers, and acquaintances for Christ (Hadaway 1991:31). House visitation is the other thing that brought success in urban mission of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo. This is what Professor T.C. Rabali did with his Church Council members. The researcher still remembers the day he was discussing with one of the church leaders of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo. One day he was commenting to one of the church leaders of the RCT who has served in an Eldership office in this congregation for a long time. The researcher commented that he is very pleased to see the way the Reformed Church Tshiawelo is flourishing and growing. Because the researcher realized that the particular church Elder was one of the church leaders who have worked with Professor T.C. Rabali for a long time, he asked him, the following question, “How did you manage to rebuild the Reformed Church Tshiawelo to be what she is today?” He replied, “We managed this by engaging ourselves in house visitation. The coming of our Minister in 1995 to the Reformed Church Tshiawelo was a blessing to this church. He encouraged us to do house visitation during weekends and holidays. During the week, house visitations were conducted during the evening. I still remember during that time, the Reformed Church Tshiawelo was unable to pay him enough money for petrol as he was traveling time and again from Vanderbijlpark to Tshiawelo using his Nissan 1400 van “*bakkie*”. During that time he was using his own money for petrol. Because he is a man of vision, he tolerated those difficult circumstances. He always encouraged us by repeating his courageous words, especially when things are tough ‘*kha ri kondelele, zwidoluga*’ which means ‘*let us persevere, it will be fine*’. He also indicated the importance of house visitation in his book, “*Nga Vhudele na nga Mulayo*” which was published in 1993 by Sunsetview Publishers (cf Rabali 1993:16-28).



The leaders of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo in responding to the above question confirmed the importance of house visitation carried out by this church. They indicated that, they did a lot of house visits on Saturdays and holidays, in fact all holidays and most Saturdays were utilized in this way, reaching out to people by visiting homes and also following up on those who were attending Sunday services. The desire to reach others for Christ was vigorous among the members and nearly all church members, and was also mobilized and channeled into action, especially in the form of prospect visitation. Kirk C. Hadaway extended on what the Reformed Church Tshiawelo is doing concerning house visitation by saying that:

The concept of visitation should be expanded beyond showing up at someone's front door for an appointment or an unannounced visit. In fact, in an urban setting, meeting someone for lunch may be more appropriate than visiting them at home. Similarly, talking to homeless persons on a street corner or making a point to talk to an unchurched friend during a break at work, at the health club, at the grocery store, over coffee, or across the back fence can be, and should be, seen as prospect visitation. Prospect visitation is more difficult in some settings than in others, but in any setting, greater success results from visiting prospects who are already linked to the church or to church members in some way. Clearly, the best prospects are those who have already visited the church. If a church is not visiting these persons, it is literally begging to decline. Churches which have few visitors should start with those they do have and develop ways to attract others. Various forms of social ministry can all be used to draw visitors and develop a list of viable prospects. The names are wasted, however, if they are not followed up quickly (Hadaway 1991:24-25).

5.2.1.1.1.3 Targeting of various groups

The Reformed Church Tshiawelo targeted on various groups of people in cities. The first targeted group was the people who migrated from rural to urban areas, especially those who came from churches that constituted the Synod Soutpansberg. Amongst those people are those who came looking for jobs and also the students who came to study at the institutions that are found in the Gauteng Province. Even those church members from churches that constituted the Synod Soutpansberg who got jobs in the Gauteng province were also on target. Another very important thing done was to target the various groups in the church with more teaching and involvement in outreach visits. The other targeted group was the unbelievers; this was done especially during mission campaigns. This helped the Reformed Church Tshiawelo to prosper in her mission. This is an indication that she is engaged in mission work. According to Müller (1987:35), a church that is not missionary, that is, which does not reach beyond herself that does not transcend herself, is no real church.

5.2.1.1.1.4 Catechism classes

The church leaders of this congregation realized that for people to have faith, more knowledge of the Bible, and the Reformed doctrine, they must be instructed. 98% of the leaders who responded to the above question indicated that those people who came to this church for the first time, who did not profess their faith, were encouraged to attend the catechetical classes. The church leaders indicated that their membership class (catechetical classes) for those seeking membership was also more effective, they approached this with the purpose of turning such candidates into becoming more committed and active members. They were taught the Heidelberg Catechism and

Reformed doctrine. Those who were teaching the catechism classes were also instructed so that they can conduct classes well. After the examination of the catechism class members, they were baptised to become members of this congregation. This played an important role of building up the church through indoctrinated members.

5.2.1.1.1.5 Small groups services

The other thing that was utilized in order to rebuild the Reformed Church Tshiawelo was to use small groups' services. This was confirmed by 65% of the church members who indicated that their spiritual lives were developed by involving themselves in small groups' services organized by the church. They have cell groups in some of the wards, women services, men services, youth services. During the week, some of the fellowship centers had cell groups, where they rotate in the homes of church members. Women services, men services, youth services, and Sunday School services were conducted after Sunday morning services (Hadaway et al 1987:230). Their programmes include Bible Studies, singing, topic discussions, etc. They enjoyed this fellowship. 35% of the church members who completed the questionnaires indicated that in their fellowship centers small groups' services are inactive. This means that the members of those fellowship centers are missing fellowship in small groups. The church should activate small group services in those fellowship centers that have become inactive, as these services are essential for the growth of those fellowship centers, and the growth of the entire congregation. This is why many missiologist writers encourage fellowship of Christians to worship in small group services as it is essential for church growth.

A great church is one which has a good fellowship among its members. It gives a living demonstration that the essential nature of a church is a fellowship in Christ. This kind of fellowship is essential for any church to



experience a degree of success. With this fellowship almost any obstacle can be overcome. Without this fellowship the church is severely handicapped, if not doomed (Young 1978:38).

Small groups in the community of the church present a good place to begin and to continue the process of training. In the home meetings of the church the opportunity for service becomes tangible. It is in the small group that members become involved with the needs of the community as people share their concerns (Conn and Ortiz 2001:466). The fellowship of church members is based on their fellowship with Christ. Just as there is a bond of love between the individual believer and his Lord, so there is also a bond of love that unites believer with believer. A Christian's experience of salvation is essentially a relationship of love which expresses itself vertically, between the believer and Christ, and horizontally, between the believer and his fellow believers (Young 1978:38). This is what members of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo are experiencing.

The good fellowship maintained in a church is a constant witness in the community. Visitors in the church, as well as those who may observe it somewhat more remotely, are impressed by the demonstration of mutual love and the spirit that they see among the church members. Conversely, a church which does not have this spirit of fellowship, particularly one that is marked by periods of tension and feuding, may have an exceedingly difficult time in enlisting others into her membership (Young 1978:39).

5.2.1.1.2 Equipping and mobilizing Christians for mission

Luke 9:1-17 is a remarkable passage. Jesus prepares His disciples to send them out for service. He takes them through three stages: a plunge into the community, interrupted, and learning through doing. These three stages are essential for the Christians to

prepare themselves for true leadership for transformation (Bruwer 2001:91). To be true to her calling the congregation of Tshiawelo realized that the members of the church needed to be equipped and trained for the task of urban church planting. This was done through leadership training, mission seminars and conferences, mission campaigns and anniversaries.

5.2.1.1.2.1 Leadership training

Equipping the laity for urban ministry begins with the vision of the Minister and the leadership. The leadership of the church must have a commitment to mobilize the church for worship, the Word and mission to the world. Neil Braun is of the opinion that if the churches are to move into an era of church multiplication based primarily upon evangelism, the training of the laity must be assigned as a high priority (Braun 1971:140). It is the church's leadership which must cultivate the sense that laity mobilization is a high priority. John Mott is of the opinion that:

The secret of enabling the home church to press her advantage in the non-Christian world is one of leadership. The people do not go beyond their leaders in knowledge and zeal, nor surpass them in consecration and sacrifice. The Christian Pastor, Minister, Rector – whatever may be denominated – holds the divinely appointed office for inspiring and guiding the thought and activities of the church. By virtue of his position, he can be a mighty force in the world's evangelization (Mott 1998:21).

Leadership that follows the instructions of the Bible brings the church to maturity and to service. In the city, as in other places, a vision for the renewal is needed. In the case of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo, the Minister of this congregation who is a visionary

leader, when he started to work at Tshiawelo, immediately equipped and motivated leaders for mission work. Since that time up to this date, there are many conferences and workshops that are being conducted at this congregation. This was confirmed by 91% of the church leaders who completed the questionnaire. They indicated that the most important aspect of their training was not only theoretical teachings, but was to make sure that they are taken along when mission house visits are undertaken. In other words they are trained not primarily by being lectured upon alone, but also by being involved in doing the work (showing them how to do this as well as allowing them to do the work) (cf Mutavhatsindi 2000:37). They indicated that they also have major urban mission conferences in which they give church leaders and church members the vision and the theoretical or biblical basis of evangelism for urban church planting. They are also provided with some notes that they can read. What Professor T.C. Rabali is doing is mentoring, and this is very important in equipping people for mission so that they can use the spiritual gifts which God gave them.

It is wise to mentor people in the use of their particular gifts as part of the training component. Mentoring assists the growth of the individual but also provides accountability. Churches should keep in mind that there are areas of ministry in which all Christians should be involved, such as giving, teaching and evangelism, and that training should also provide for those areas of service (Conn and Ortiz 2001:465).

The Minister of this congregation usually writes every sermon or teaching he preaches. He also wrote books specially for equipping leaders. Some of the books are, *Nga vhudele na nga Mulayo* (Rabali 1993), *Khuvhangano ya Nyambedzano dza vhafunzi* (Rabali 2005). The purpose of writing those books is for equipping the leaders and church members for mission work.

5.2.1.1.2.2 Mission conferences and seminars

One of the mandates given to the Mission Deputies of the Synod Soutpansberg by the Synod was to organize urban mission workshops focused on Gauteng Province in co-operation with the Church Council of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo (RCSASSA 2005:20). This mandate is being regularly carried out by deputies of mission together with the Reformed Church Tshiawelo. This was clearly confirmed by 98% of the church leaders responding to the question which appeared in the questionnaire which says, “How many urban mission conferences or seminars were conducted by Reformed Church Tshiawelo? Name the *venues, dates, and objectives* of those conferences or seminars”. In answering the above questions, they indicated that, they regularly have mission conferences and workshops. They have basically not less than three mission conferences every year. The primary purposes of such mission conferences are to develop their mission vision, to motivate members for mission as well as to share experiences on how to do mission work especially in urban areas. Over and above these regular local church mission conferences, they also have had major urban mission conferences in which they invited the churches from the Soutpansberg area as their partners in mission work. They held the following major urban mission conferences: in 2000 (at Tshiawelo); in 2003 (at Tshiawelo); in 2005 (at Johannesburg); and in 2007 (at Pretoria). The primary aims of these four major urban mission conferences have been to clarify their church vision, plans, and objectives with their urban mission programme; also to advance and motivate a passion for urban mission; to have leaders and members understand the strategic value of their urban mission; also to make sure that they strengthen their partnership with the Soutpansberg churches with respect to urban church planting.

Professor T.C. Rabali had many teachings delivered on urban mission to the Reformed Church Tshiawelo and also to churches that constitute Soutpansberg Synod. Some of his teachings are included in his book on mission, *Vhurumiwa na Doroboni-vho!*, which was published in 2005 by Plantinum Press in Vanderbijlpark. He wrote this book after many people requested him to write a book after a mission conference which was held at Soweto in 2000 (Tshiawelo). The book includes the three urban mission teachings delivered to the leaders and other members of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo; and to the church members constituting the Soutpansberg churches in 2000, 2003 and 2005 (see Rabali 2005).

5.2.1.1.2.3 Mission campaigns

Both the church members and church leaders emphasized that mission campaigns played an important role in equipping and motivating church members to involve themselves in urban mission. 90% of the church members and 94% of church leaders indicated that they also utilized mission campaigns in which they were strengthened by those Christians sent to assist them from the Reformed Churches in the Soutpansberg area (for example, the Reformed Church Mutale started doing this in December 1995 till today). They encourage the churches from Soutpansberg area to be responsible for sending their church members to assist during the mission campaigns of this congregation, and they in turn fund the transport fee for all church members from the Soutpansberg churches when they return back to Limpopo after the mission campaigns. This strengthens and also broadens both the partnership and the relationship between the Reformed Church Tshiawelo and churches that constitute the Synod Soutpansberg.

5.2.1.1.2.4 Anniversaries

The Reformed Church Tshiawelo usually has anniversaries as a thanksgiving to God who helped her to achieve some specific goals. There are many anniversaries held by this congregation. In the questionnaire distributed to the church leaders of this church, the researcher asked them to explain all the anniversaries held by the Reformed Church Tshiawelo (*indicating the dates, venues, and purposes or objectives of those anniversaries*). 98% of the church leaders indicated that this congregation had four celebrated anniversaries. Their *first anniversary* was held at Tshiawelo in 1998, it was 30 years anniversary. This helped the church to understand that she is no longer a child and that therefore she should reject all forms of paternalistic tendencies. They used that major celebration to lead the church to a commitment with respect to their status as a church that will be fully accountable to God for what God expects His church to do; this was an important event because they used it also to emphasize that it will not do to keep on blaming the past (such as apartheid) as an excuse for failing to be what God expects them to be. Their *second anniversary* was held in Pretoria in 2004, they were celebrating the five year anniversary of their fellowship center in Pretoria. This was used primarily not only to thank God but to assess what had been done and what needed to still be done around urban church planting. Their *third anniversary* was held in Dube in 2005. Basically to highlight the need for rebuilding churches that died out (rebuilding ruins). The *fourth anniversary* was held in Johannesburg in 2005, they were celebrating the Johannesburg fellowship center's five years existence.

Besides the four anniversaries indicated by the church leaders in answering the questionnaires, there is a *fifth anniversary* which was held on the 15-17th of August 2008. It was the celebration of the 40 year anniversary of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo. On the 16th of August 2008, five daughter churches were planted by the

Reformed Church Tshiawelo: *Reformed Church Vaal, Reformed Church Pretoria, Reformed Church Johannesburg, Reformed Church Protea Glen, and Reformed Church Midrand*. It was done with the aim of also establishing a Classis, and it was established the same day as Classis Gauteng of the Synod Soutpansberg. According to the Church Order of the Reformed Churches (Church Order of Dordrecht), the Church Councils of the new planted local churches will send (delegates) representatives to assemble at the Classis. The idea is that these new local churches together through mission deputies of the Classis will facilitate the planting of more churches leading to more Classes in the future. If all goes well, it is hoped that in 10 years to come (say around 2018) they should be having churches organized in several Classis so that there may be a need for a regional Synod if the churches are to be related to each other properly to assist and expand together effectively.

5.2.1.2 The partnership on the theological training of Ministers

According to Kritzinger et al (1984:6), partnership between churches in theological training of students is very essential especially the theological seminary which originated as a result of the missionary work of the church. Kirk (1999:11) is of the opinion that there can be no theology without mission – or, to put it another way, no theology which is not missionary. This is partly a matter of observation in that theology is, by its nature, about fundamental concerns which affect life at all levels. People engaged in theological reflection invariably take up positions on a whole host of important matters, even if they do so from vastly different stances, with conflicting results and sometimes without being aware of what they are doing. Theology, even when it claims to be nonpartisan, is in reality thoroughly committed, as has so often been pointed out in recent years. In countless respects, it is in the business of persuading others to believe and act in specific ways. The missionary nature of

theology is unavoidable. This is also on the case of mission work of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo, the Heidelberg Theological Seminary has an impact on the mission of this congregation. Development in the congregation of the Reformed Tshiawelo and in the Soutpansberg Synod has impacted on one or another during the years. In order to understand this development and the mutual partnership of the two, the Reformed Church Tshiawelo and Synod Soutpansberg, on the theological training of Ministers, a short historical background of the Heidelberg Theological Seminary is given.

5.2.1.2.1 The establishment of the Heidelberg Theological Seminary

The Synod Soutpansberg was established in 1961 as a Synod for churches composed mainly of Venda and Shangaan speaking people. This Synod had close relationship with Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika (Synod Potchefstroom). The training of Ministers of the Gospel who were to serve in the churches of the Synod Soutpansberg was at first done by the Afrikaans churches, which make up the Synod Potchefstroom. The Afrikaans churches involved went to great lengths to ensure that the Black churches they have helped to plant would have Ministers. The theological school they established for the Black churches was at first located at Dube (Soweto) but was later re-located to Hammanskraal. It seems those who were training the Ministers for the Black churches were themselves not part of the Black churches and had a limited knowledge and understanding of the context within which the churches they were training Ministers for operated. The training was also done without the real participation of the churches in the Soutpansberg. It was of course; at first, not possible to meaningfully involve the Black churches in the training of their Ministers as these churches were still small and young. The non-participation of the Black churches was later dealt with by allowing the Black churches to appoint advisory curators. The Synod Soutpansberg was not satisfied with this and kept on striving for meaningful

participation in theological training at Hammanskraal. This was not however possible and this state of affairs resulted in the training not being experienced as being effective enough to answer the ministerial needs of the churches. Many white missionaries belonging to the white churches, which make up the Synod Potchefstroom, because of their knowledge of the conditions within Black communities were also critical about the training of Ministers as it existed and operated during the 1970s through to the 1980s. The Synod Soutpansberg finally decided to end the paternalism involved in theological training when it established its own theological school in 1990 at Iyani Bible and Training Institute (Sibasa). The new institution, the Heidelberg Theological Seminary, made it possible for the churches within the Synod Soutpansberg to have a training programme that was more sensitive to the needs of the churches, and which was controlled by the churches themselves (cf RCSASSA 2000:138-139). It started with 3 students. The researcher is one of those first three students of the Heidelberg Theological Seminary. The Ministers from the congregations that constitute the Synod Soutpansberg were giving lectures to the students. The Presbyterian churches in Australia that have a partnership with Synod Soutpansberg sent Rev Ken Thomas Martin to help in lecturing the students at Heidelberg Theological Seminary. He came with his wife (Gill), three sons (Luke, Paul and Andrew), and one daughter (Rachel). Rev Ken Thomas Martin was a Minister who was assisting at the Reformed Church De-Hoop by delivering spiritual services. During that time, the congregations gave strong support financially and also spiritually to the theological seminary. The students admitted at the Heidelberg Theological Seminary from 1990 until 1994 were ten.

5.2.1.2.2 The merging of three Theological Seminaries

In 1994, the Potchefstroom Synod approached Synod Soutpansberg to phase out its seminary, and merge with Potchefstroom Theological Seminary. The other theological

seminary that was phased out to merge with the other two theological seminaries was Hammanskraal Theological Seminary. The Synod Soutpansberg interpreted that request as indicative of a change of heart on the part of Potchefstroom. It was then hoped that the previous paternalism would not be continued in theological training and that the one theological school in Potchefstroom would not only belong to all the churches involved but that it would be shaped to ensure that there would be an emergence of a more relevant ministry with respect of the needs of all the communities in South Africa (RCSASSA 2000:139).

In 1994 there was an agreement between three theological seminaries (Potchefstroom Theological Seminary, Hammanskraal Theological Seminary and Heidelberg Theological Seminary), that they should merge. Early in 1995, the deputies for Theological training of the Synod Soutpansberg transferred the students of the Heidelberg Theological Seminary to Potchefstroom. In Potchefstroom, those students from Heidelberg Theological Seminary began studying together with those who had been at Hammanskraal and Potchefstroom. The two members of the board of curators from the Synod Soutpansberg who were responsible for overseeing the studies and lives of the brothers involved at the Heidelberg continued to pray that they be given grace to persevere as the move to Potchefstroom also entailed many challenges and adjustments. Many of the church Ministers, church members from the Synod Soutpansberg saw this development as indicative of better things to come in the partnership of all the segments making up the Reformed Churches in South Africa. It was seen as a step that would hasten more manifestations of their unity as churches of the same faith. Many Christians from the Synod Soutpansberg expected that the churches were to see growth in the numbers of those preparing to become Ministers within all their churches at the one seminary in Potchefstroom. The churches making up the Synod Soutpansberg were therefore encouraged to view the Potchefstroom

Theological Seminary as theirs and accordingly to support it with their prayers and financial sacrifices. Indeed, the merging of the three theological seminaries made many of the Christians from the Synod Soutpansberg together with their Ministers more positive even with respect to the search for better arrangements regarding the enhancement and manifestation of their churches' oneness through a restructuring or reorganization of the church assemblies. People were very positive and hopeful that everything will be possible (RCSASSA 2000:115). Some of the students from the Soutpansberg Synod who were studying at Potchefstroom Theological Seminary were helping at the Reformed Church Tshiawelo during weekends and holidays. They were doing home visits and preaching on Sunday worship services. They were also involved in the mission of the church. Those students played an important role in the up building of the RCT. The RCT was financing the trips of those theological students from Potchestoom to Tshiawelo (Soweto). Some of them, after they completed their studies, were called to be Ministers of this congregation.

5.2.1.2.3 The reestablishment of the Heidelberg Theological Seminary

The Church Council of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo took a decision in 1998 of entering into partnership on theological training with the Synod Soutpansberg. The Synod Soutpansberg also took a decision to work in partnership with the Church Council of Tshiawelo in theological training (RCSASSA 2002:49). According to Carl S. Dudley, the partnership of congregations may be a way to a fruitful future (Dudley 1987:173).

The Synod Soutpansberg experienced no change even after seven years of amalgamation; theology was still in the hands of the White churches. Black churches were treated as junior partners and questions or challenges arising from the context of

the Black churches continued not to receive proper attention (RCSASSA 2000:139). The April 2001 Soutpansberg Synod therefore decided to bring its partnership in theological training with Potchefstroom Synod to an end by seeking and establishing a theological training programme which can help to ensure that both the Word of God and the context are taken seriously. It seems that it had become evident to the Synod Soutpansberg that the sidelining of Black churches in theological training programme was not good for the churches of the Synod Soutpansberg. It was their hope that they can achieve these objectives through a partnership with the faculty of theology of the University of Pretoria. They hoped to have a training programme in which the churches will play a meaningful role in the selection, supervision, training, and examination of those who train with a view of entering the ministry of the Reformed Churches making up Synod Soutpansberg (RCSASSA 2000:139).

On the 02nd June 2001 the deputies of theological training sat with different Church Councils to organize how the re-establishment of Heidelberg Theological Seminary will be done (RCSASSA 2003:59). After the meeting the churches motivated each other, and as a result the Heidelberg Theological Seminary was re-established, and the students are studying through the University of Pretoria. The Synod elected Professor T.C. Rabali and Rev T.E. Liphadzi to teach some courses during the years, which are not offered by the University of Pretoria. Up to now, the seminary has four students who are still studying, two completed their studies in 2007 and they are already called to be Ministers. One of them was called by the Reformed Church Tshiawelo, and the other one was called by the Reformed Church Hosiyata (Giyani). There are two young men from the Reformed Church De Hoop who will be studying at Heidelberg Theological Seminary next year (2009).

5.2.1.2.4 The impact of the theological training in the mission of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo

According to Donald A. McGavran, the theological seminaries should prepare their students to multiply Christian congregations in the tremendously complex mosaic of humankind. He further indicated that theological students are the most segment of society in the world today (McGavran 1988:12). The theological seminary must train students who will be establishing sound Christian congregations in every ethnos, tribe, tongue and people in their own nation and every other nation (McGavran 1988:137). The theological students who are studying at the Heildeberg Theological Seminary have brought a great impact to the mission work of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo. The theological seminary has urban church planting programme on its curriculum. During their sixth year of studies, the theological students are given a chance to plant a church in a new area in order to see whether they can establish a church or plant a church in that area. They are involved in the mission campaigns of this church, some of them are teaching *catechetical classes* of those who are being prepared to profess their faith and to be baptised. The theological students are also *preaching at several fellowship centers* during Sundays, and they *are leading small groups' services* like Bible Studies, Wednesday services, etc during the week. The Reformed church Tshiawelo has two established fellowship centers that are being led by the theological students. The one is in Gauteng Province (Muldersdrift) while the other one is in Middelburg in Mpumalanga Province. The theological school is preparing students to be urban mission minded, especially in urban church planting programmes. By focusing on this programme for a long time, the church will be able to reach many cities within Gauteng Province and outside Gauteng Province with the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ rapidly and with

ease. By following this programme, the Synod Soutpansberg together with the Reformed Church Tshiawelo will plant churches in other African Countries and also in overseas countries with ease. In order to achieve this, the Synod Soutpansberg together with the Reformed Church Tshiawelo must recruit and encourage many spiritually matured men and young men to study for ministry. The more the theological seminaries have many good quality students, the more the chances of planting new churches are possible. The real fact is that when churches want to plant many urban churches, they must train good, quality, visionary theological students who will take this programme as their responsibility for life.

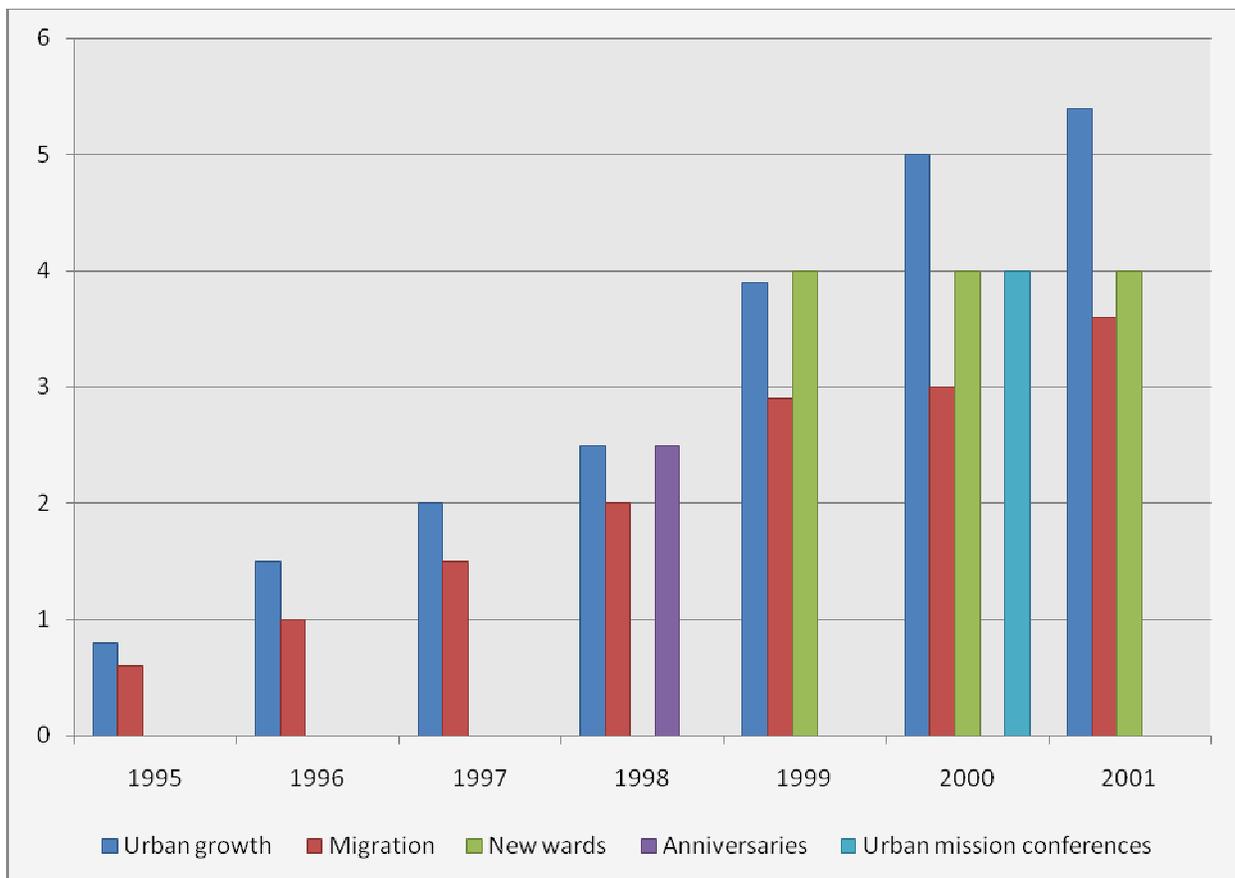
5.2.1.3 The growth of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo

As it was already said that the Reformed Church Tshiawelo was established by missionaries in 1968, but her growth was not good. During the period between 1970s and 1980s the church membership was declining. Some church members moved to other churches while others decided to go nowhere but decided to stay at their homes. The few people who remained were also discouraged and they were pessimistic about the future, that the church could be rebuilt again and grow tremendously. During this period, the church was about to be closed down because she suffered a serious decline of her membership. This was confirmed by Mrs Phampha who grew up in this congregation from her childhood, attended Sunday School, youth activities, and other church activities at this congregation. She testified this on the 16th of August 2008 at Tshiawelo during the celebration of this congregation's 40th anniversary. Church Elder, Mutheiwana George, who served at this congregation in the office of Eldership in that period and is still serving in this office, experienced that painful period of membership decline, also confirmed during the 40th anniversary of this church that he felt hopeless about the possibility of the rebuilding of the RCT during that period. Here the

researcher will indicate the growth of this church from 1995-2008. This is illustrated in two tables, one indicates the period of rebuilding this church, from 1995-2001, and the last one indicates the climax period of establishing new worshipping service centres, planting daughter churches, and constituting of new Classis of Synod Soutpansberg (Classis Gauteng) which was constituted by RCT and her daughter churches planted on the 16th August during her 40th anniversary at Tshiawelo (see Appendix F).

5.2.1.3.1 Church growth from 1995 – 2001

Figure 5.1: This table indicates church growth from 1995 - 2001

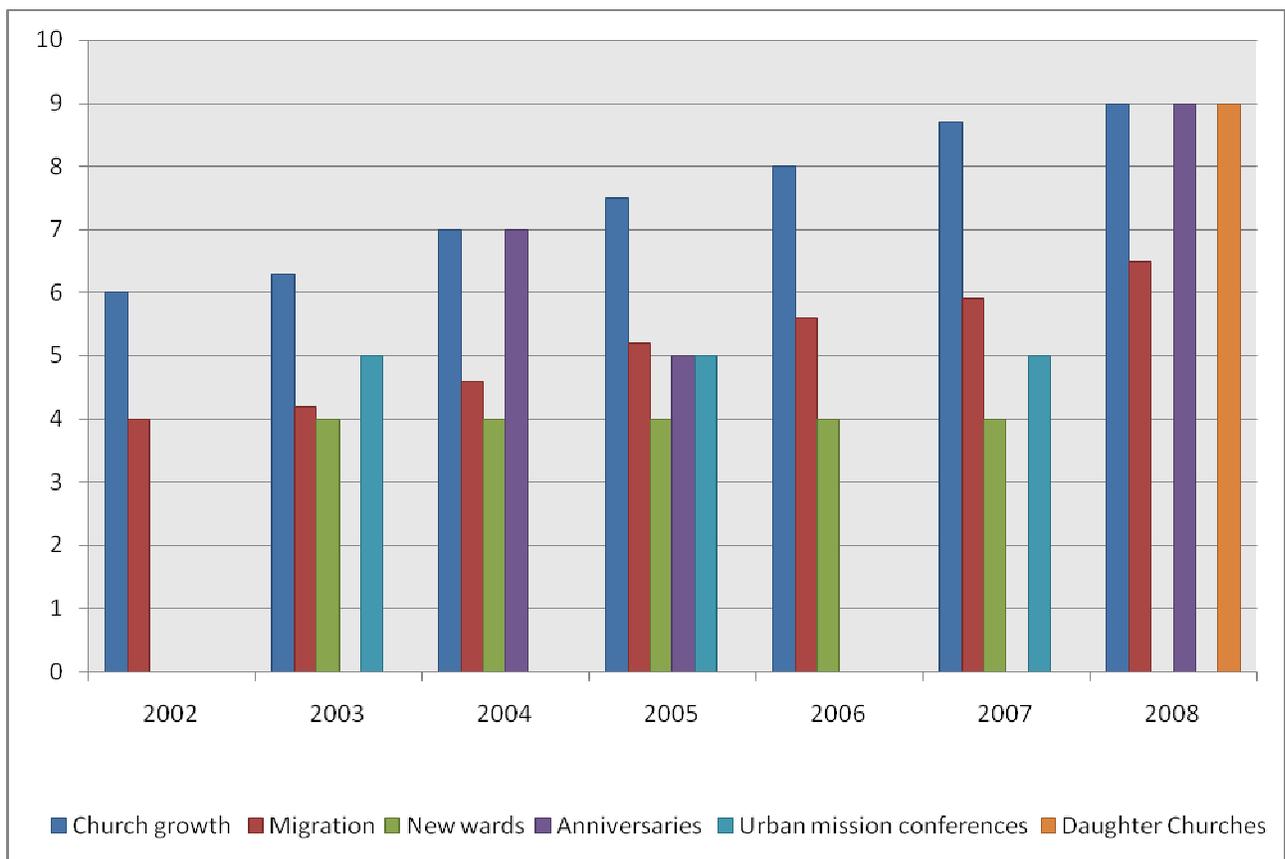


From the table above it is clearly indicated that in 1995, the church membership was very small. Although there was a few people who migrated to urban areas in the Gauteng Province who came to attend this church, but there was no great change in the membership of the church. The church during this year had less than 30 members. After the hard work of the Professor T.C. Rabali together with a few Church Council members, it uplifted membership in 1996. The number of migrants from churches that constituted Synod Soutpansberg who came to attend church services was also increased. In 1997 the church growth was boosted by the many young people who came to study at institutions in Gauteng Province. Most of the students, who associated themselves with this church, were equipped to become mission minded members. Some of them were trained to be church leaders. Those young men who showed commitment in church activities were ordained as Church Council members after they had undergone training. In 1998 the Church Council took a decision of establishing new fellowship centers outside Soweto. In her 30th anniversary held at Tshiawelo in 1998, the vision of establishing new fellowship centers outside Soweto was sold to the church members. The same year (1998), a Tuesday evening Bible study and prayer group was already in place in a flat in Pretoria. The members of the cell group in Pretoria worshipped at Tshiawelo on Sundays. The Church Council transformed this group into a fellowship center with Sunday services and midweek meetings by the year 1999. In 1999, there was a great number of migrants (students and old people who came to work at Gauteng Province) who associated themselves with RCT. There were a great number of people from Johannesburg area who travelled by train, taxis and also by car who always came to this church to attend worship services. By seeing the great number of people who were always travelling to Tshiawelo to attend church services, the Church Council established a new fellowship center in Johannesburg in the year 2000. During the same year, the Church Council organized an urban mission seminar which was held at Tshiwelo. It was well attended by people from different areas.

Churches that constituted the Synod Soutansberg sent their members in great numbers to attend this urban mission conference. In 2001, the church continued to grow, and the Church Council established a new fellowship center in Protea Glen.

5.2.1.3.2 Church growth from 2002 – 2008

Figure 5.2: This table indicates church growth from 2002 - 2008



The church continued to grow spiritually and also in numbers. The mission conferences, preaching and home visits, uplifted the standard of growth in this congregation. In 2003 the church established a new fellowship center in Midrand. During this year, the Church Council organized an urban mission conference at Tshiawelo, and Christians were inspired and encouraged to engage themselves in

urban mission. In 2004, two new fellowship centers were established, one in Katlehong and the other in Vaal. During the same year, the church celebrated the 5th anniversary of her fellowship center in Pretoria. The anniversary was held in Sunnyside (Pretoria). In 2005, the church had two anniversaries; the first one was the 5th anniversary of her fellowship center in Johannesburg and the other one was held at Dube. During the same year (2005), there was an urban mission conference which was held in Johannesburg. In 2006, a new fellowship center was established in Muldersdrift. In 2007, two fellowship centers were established, one in Meadowlands, and the other in Middelburg (Mpumalanga Province). (The one in Meadowlands was established after Classis Moroka indicated to the RCT that, due to the fact that the RCT is no longer one of the churches that constitute this Classis, RCT must no longer use the church building of Dube which was under this Classis. The RCT then started a fellowship center in Meadowlands and many of the church members that used to worship at the church building of Dube, moved to Meadowlands). During the same year (2007), there was an urban mission conference which was held in Pretoria. The Reformed Church Tshiawelo came to her climax stage during her 40th anniversary which was held in Tshiawelo on the 15-17 August 2008. The function was well attended. The members from the Synod Soutpansberg, some members from the Madison Avenue Christian Reformed Church (USA) and members from the local churches attended this function. The growth rate of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo is sudden, in 1995 it had less than 30 members, but in 2008, her members are more than thousand. This was confirmed by Rev Thiofhitshithu Rabali who led the worship church service on the 17th August 2008 (see Appendix F). On the 16th August, Professor T.C. Rabali preached from the Book of Isaiah 54, where he encouraged church members to see the necessity of planting churches in South African cities, African cities, and also indicating the great possibilities of reaching even European countries with the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. They were encouraged to extend the scope of their mission, "Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent

curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes” (Is 54:2) (NIV). He strongly emphasized this fact of enlarging the tent, and to stretch their tent curtains wide. He made it clear to the congregation that four Reformed doctrinal terms played an important role in their faith to bring the church to her present stage, those *Latin* terms are *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone), *Sola Fide* (by faith alone), *Sola Christus* (by Christ alone) and *Sola Gracia* (glory to God alone) (Muller 1985:283-284). Words from Isaiah 54:2 together with the above mentioned Reformed doctrinal terms (*Latin* terms) were printed on the handbags, T Shirts, etc that were sold during this anniversary as a reminder to the church members. Rev A.E. Liphadzi delivered his paper on how the church can comprise of both the Reformed and African character. The celebration came to its climax this day (the 16th August 2008) when the Reformed Church Tshiawelo planted five new daughter churches at the same time: Reformed Church Vaal, Reformed Church Protea Glen, Reformed Church Pretoria, Reformed Church Midrand and Reformed Church Johannesburg (see Appendix F). On behalf of the deputies of the Synod Soutpansberg, the researcher handed out an *Act of New Constituted Churches*³⁴ to the leaders of the new planted churches. After planting these daughter churches, a new Classis (Classis Gauteng) of the Synod Soutpansberg was constituted the same day. The researcher on behalf of the deputies of Synod Soutpansberg handed out an *Act of New Constituted Classis*³⁵ to the leaders of the

³⁴ *An Act of New Constituted Churches* is a letter given to each of the new planted churches as a confirmation that a new church is instituted, with the name of the new church and her commitment to work according to the rules indicated in the Church Order. This letter was signed by two Church Council members of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo, three members of the Deputies of the Synod Soutpansberg and three members from each of the two neighbouring churches (Mutale and Niani).

³⁵ *An Act of New Constituted Classis* is a letter given to the leaders of the new constituted Classis (Classis Gauteng) as a confirmation that a new Classis is instituted, with the name of the Classis, the names of the churches that constitute it, and also the rules that should be followed by the churches when they send their deputies to the Classis meetings. This letter was signed by two Church Council members

churches that constitute Classis Gauteng. The Classis Gauteng is constituted by the Reformed Church Tshiawelo and her five daughter churches. This was a blessing to the Synod Soutpansberg which is now constituted by three Classis which are: Classis Gateway³⁶, Classis Gauteng³⁷ and Classis Luvuvhu³⁸. Three people were given a chance to convey greetings and well wishes to the Reformed Church Tshiawelo together with her daughter churches. Mr D.A. Muhali spoke on behalf of the Reformed Church Mutale, Mr N.J. Ramantswana spoke on behalf of the deputies of the Synod Soutpansberg, and one delegate from USA spoke on behalf of the Madison Avenue Christian Reformed Church (USA). Mrs Phampha and Elder Mutheiwana George gave the history of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo. On the 17th August, Rev Thiofhitshithu Rabali led the Sunday Church service. On the 6th of September Classis Gauteng held its first meeting at Tshiawelo. On the 7th of September all the churches that constitute Classis Gauteng had their first worship service together in Tshiawelo. The worship service was led by Rev N.P. Makhuvha of the Reformed Church Protea Glen. The first youth conference of Classis Gauteng was held on the 13th of September at Pretoria. Professor T.C. Rabali led the conference. From the above two diagrams, it is clear that the Reformed Church Tshiawelo is a church that is growing well.

of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo, three members of the Deputies of the Synod Soutpansberg and three members from each of the two neighbouring churches (Mutale and Niani).

³⁶ *Classis Gateway* is constituted by the following Churches: Reformed Church Fundudzi, Reformed Church Nzhelele, Reformed Church Seshego and Reformed Church Tshitandani.

³⁷ *Classis Gauteng* is constituted by the following Churches: Reformed Church Johannesburg, Reformed Church Midrand, Reformed Church Pretoria, Reformed Church Protea Glen, Reformed Church Tshiawelo and Reformed Church Vaal.

³⁸ *Classis Luvuvhu* is constituted by the following Churches: Reformed Church De Hoop, Reformed Church Hosiayata, Reformed Church Mutale, and Reformed Church Niani.

5.3 THE CHALLENGES OF THE REFORMED CHURCH TSHIAWELO

5.3.1 Money

67% of the church leaders of this congregation in responding to the question about the challenges or stumbling blocks they are encountering in their urban mission indicated that one of their challenges is money. They indicated that they have money, but it is not enough to carry the work. This is caused by the fact that not all church members are faithful in tithing. According to the researcher, there are three groups of people in the church: the *first* group is composed of those members who are tithing faithfully; the *second* group is of those who are tithing below their income (the amount they are supposed to give according to their income) and the *last* group is of those who do not tithe at all.

What should be done is that: more home visits focused on encouraging Christians to be faithful in tithing. This should be clear that to tithe below the real tithing is to rob God and also to be unfaithful. Even those who are not tithing must be taught to repent and tithe. Every church member should be led through preaching to dedicate himself or herself to God with his or her being and also his or her belongings, which includes money (cf Mutavhatsindi 2000:67). They must know that money does not belong to them, but it belongs to God, thus why God demands it from every Christian (Hg 2:8). When they tithe faithfully, God opens the windows of heaven and pours His blessing on to them, but if they do not tithe, He promises not to open the windows of heaven and He will not pour His blessings (MI 3:8-10) and those people must know that what they are doing is robbing and disobeying God (Mutavhatsindi 2000:67).

5.3.2 Church buildings

Even though the RCT is flourishing in her urban mission, but the lack of sufficient church buildings is a serious challenge of this church. In her 16 fellowship centers, only 3 fellowship centers have church buildings. In most of her fellowship centers, Sunday worshipping services are held at hired buildings. This was confirmed by 97% of church leaders who completed the questionnaire; they indicated that there are many fellowship centers which have no church buildings. They further indicated that they have this problem because at this moment they do not have enough money to erect their own buildings but they are presently working on this issue so that they can have their own buildings. They are teaching members to involve themselves faithfully in tithing so that they can have their own church buildings.

If the church does not have her own church building, she sometimes encounters some disappointment. To cite an example, the fellowship center of this congregation in Pretoria Sunnyside attends her church services at the church building of the Reformed Church Harmonie, sometimes it is not possible to use the building during the week. Even if the Reformed Church Tshiawelo has an agreement with the owners of the church buildings, but the problem is that, the ownership of the building still remains with them, they can do what they want about their building, they can allow other people to share with RCT the same building, and by so doing, their services will always not be stable, they could be disturbed any time. The disturbance of services creates terrible confusion to the church members. The consequences might be of losing many church members, and losing important church services that should benefit church members by leading them to spiritual maturity.

5.3.3 Commitment of all members in mission work

71% of church members and 64% of church leaders who responded to the question asked in both questionnaires of church members and church leaders which says, “How do Christians involve themselves in urban mission?”, indicated that the involvement of members to urban mission is good. 23% of church members and 25% of church leaders indicated that the involvement of members to mission is poor. The researcher was forced to ask one of those church members who indicated the poor involvement of members in mission of the church. The church member told the researcher that he responded in that way because most of the people who are involved in mission campaigns of the church are youth, and not all youth are involved. He further indicated that old people are less involved in urban mission of the church. He was concerned that all members must commit themselves to mission work of the church. The reflection of Christian commitment of members in the RCT is not 100%, there is still more work of teaching all the youth and older people, men and women to fulfill their full commitment in mission work of the church, especially in mission outreach or mission campaigns.

Christians should know that Christ called them from the world, not because of their good works or by being righteous, but because of His grace. And He called them for a purpose, to be servants of the message of salvation to the heathens. This is clearly indicated by Karl Müller who gave an example of Paul, and says:

Paul regards himself as servant of the message of salvation. He has been “specially chosen to preach the Good News” (Rm 1:9), it is his charism to be “a priest of Jesus Christ and ... to carry out (his) priestly duty by bringing the Good News from God to the pagans” (Rm 15:16; he



is not sent “to baptize but to preach the Good News” (1 Cor 1:17); he knows that the servant of the Gospel can only plant and water, but God makes things grow (cf 1 Cor 3:6).

But what does this service of the Good News aim at? The “announcing” – *keryssein* – of an apostle is not an end in itself and neither is its object the satisfaction of the listeners’ curiosity. What the apostle preaches is official proclamation, that is, the announcement of a “herald”. The apostle proclaims the Gospel of the Kingdom of God which is an appeal calling for and involving a personal decision. Paul says quiet plainly in Romans 1:5: “Through him we received grace and our apostolic mission to preach the obedience of faith to all pagan nations in honor of his name”. The “obedience of faith” is contained in the intention of God and the intention of God is also that of the apostle: “What I am presuming to speak of, of course, is only what Christ Himself has done to win the allegiance of the pagans, using what I have said and done by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rm 15:18-19.). According to Romans 16:25-26 everything – the proclamation of St. Paul, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the revelation of the mystery kept secret for ages but now revealed – serves to bring the pagans everywhere to the obedience of faith (Müller 1987:72-73).

5.3.4 The misunderstanding of the GKSA

Another problem indicated by church leaders of this congregation (RCT) is their experience of being misunderstood within the larger denomination (the GKSA). 93% of the leaders who completed the questionnaire indicated that it seems there are many who oppose mission work done by this congregation and they seem to think that it

empowers reformed people who happen to be Black to the extent that it might be detrimental to church unity. They experienced that the hatred of members of this congregation for racism and paternalism is not appreciated by many and therefore they are misunderstood as people who do not want to forgive the wrongs done in the past by those who were deeply involved in apartheid.

From all the challenges that are experienced by the churches in their mission work, they are called to carry on with the work of Christ, of proclaiming His Word to the people. The church of Smyrna in the Book of Revelation 2:18-11 is an example of churches that continued to be faithful even in times of challenges. The church is called to bear. According to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the Body of Christ, which was given for Christians, which suffered the punishment of their sins, makes them free to take their share of suffering and death 'for Christ'. Now they may work and suffer for Christ, for the sake of Him who did everything possible for them. This is the miracle of grace Christians enjoy in their fellowship in the Body of Christ (Phlp 1:25; 2:17; Rm 8:35-39; 1 Cor 4:10; 2 Cor 4:10; 5:20; 13:9). Although Jesus Christ has fulfilled all the vicarious suffering necessary for their redemption, His suffering on earth is not finished yet. He has, in His grace, left a residue ($\psi\sigma\tau\epsilon\pi\eta\mu\alpha\tau\alpha$) of suffering for His church to fulfill in the interval before His second coming (1 Col 1:24) (Bonhoeffer 2001:182-183). He further indicated that the church is called to bears as the Almighty God bears:

For God is a God who bears. The Son of God bore our flesh, He bore the cross, He bore our sins, thus making atonement for us. In the same way His followers are also called upon to bear, and that is precisely what it means to be a Christian. Just as Christ maintained His communion with the Father by His endurance, so His followers are to maintain their communion with the Christ by their endurance. We can of course shake



off the burden which is laid upon us, but only find that we have a still heavier burden to carry – a yoke of our own choosing, the yoke of our self. But Jesus invites all who travail and are heavy laden to throw off their own yoke and take His yoke upon them – and His yoke is easy, and His burden is light. The yoke and the burden of Christ are His cross. To go one's way under the sign of the cross is not misery and desperation, but peace and refreshment for the soul, it is the highest joy. Then we do not walk under our self-made laws and burdens, but under the yoke of Him who knows us and who walks under the yoke with us. Under His yoke we are certain of His nearness and communion. It is He whom the disciple finds as He lifts up His cross (Bonhoeffer 2001:47).

According to Johan H. Bavinck, God breaks through each barrier. He breaks down all obstacles and removes all hindrances. The deepest motive of the Book of Acts, therefore, is not the deeds of the apostles, but the mighty works of the risen Jesus Christ. For in spite of the church's reluctance and opposition, Christ takes the church with Him on His triumphal march through the world (Bavinck 1960:276-277).

5.4 THE FUTURE PLAN OF THE CHURCH

From the studies done in this chapter, it was clear that the Reformed Church Tshiwelo is a church with a promising future, concerning urban mission. Even though there are some areas that should be considered, the fact is that the capability and potential in this congregation is noticed. The reality that is being experienced in this era is the migration of people to urban areas in great numbers. There are many people who are moving to the metropolitan cities which are outside Gauteng Province, for example, Durban, Cape Town, Bloemfontein, Port Elizabeth, Kimberley and etc. They are moving to those

metropolitan cities because of various reasons, for example, some for study purpose at the tertiary institutions, some for working purpose, and etc. The researcher asked the church leaders this question in the questionnaire, “What are the plans of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo for planting churches in those metropolitan cities which are outside Gauteng Province?” In answering to this question, 77% of the church leaders indicated that they have been speaking about this for a long time but not much has been done to date. They only were able last year (2007) to start their first fellowship center outside the Gauteng Province (in Middelburg which is in Mpumalanga Province). Their intention was to do this in other major cities too. They intend to facilitate this by following up on their members and also making use of technology (for example, by using e-mail to send through Bible study material and sermons which members can use when they meet with others around them). They also intend to continue using their campus ministry to achieve this. Already they have students from major universities attending their tertiary conferences with this in mind that they will be organized to form such structures.

The Reformed Church Tshiawelo is becoming slow in her implementation of this most important mission work to the metropolitan cities. Besides the church members who migrated to those metropolitan cities from the Synod Soutpansberg, the cities themselves have many people who should be reached with the Gospel of Christ. What should be done is that RCT must start implementation of her intention to those cities as soon as she can, with the help of proposed strategies for urban church planting indicated in Chapter Six.

5.5 EVALUATION OF THE URBAN MISSION OF THE REFORMED CHURCH TSHIAWELO

5.5.1 Evaluation through the “Seven I’s” Programme

The “Seven I’s” Programme developed at the *University of Pretoria* will be used as an instrument to *diagnose* the missionary quality of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo and for a *prognosis*, to help this prosperous inward-looking church to be motivated and to become the dynamic oriented missionary congregation. The “Seven I’s” Programme is so called because of the seven catchwords used (Kritzinger et al 1994:48) namely; Inspiration, Information, Interpretation, Involvement, Instruction, Investment and Intercession. The researcher will start by indicating what the church is being expected to do under each of the Seven I’s Programme, and lastly he will evaluate what is being done at the Reformed Church Tshiawelo under each of the ‘Seven I’s Programme’.

5.5.1.1 Inspiration

Under inspiration, the church is expected to inspire her members through preaching of the Word of God so that they can engage themselves in mission. Mission work is not supposed to be of few people, but for all, young and old, men and women, boys and girls. The preacher’s task is to preach in such a way that everybody within the church accepts the responsibility of involving himself or herself in the mission work of the church. The preacher can do this through preaching in the pulpit during church services or through home visitation. In their preaching, the preachers must remind church members that they are of great importance before God, they are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God (cf Heyns 1980:49), that they may declare the praises of Him who called them out of darkness into His wonderful light. It

should be made clear that God called them through Christ, they were not a people, but now they are the people of God; once they had not received mercy from God, but now they have received mercy through Christ (1 Pt 2:9-10) (Heyns 1980:47). Every member within the congregation should be inspired in such a way that he or she takes as his or her obligation to proclaim the Word of God to other people, and they must not be ashamed to do it as God wants to bring the unbelievers to salvation (Rm 1:14,16) through them.

The Reformed Church Tshiawelo is inspiring her members through preaching for mission work. What is being emphasised in the preaching in this congregation is the fact that everybody must be involved in mission work, as it is not the work of few but the work of all church members (Kritzinger et al 1994:48). The Ministers are inspiring Christians sometimes through house visitation. The leadership of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo inspires the members to get involved in the mission work of the church. The believers are taught to be faithful and consecrated to the Lord (Williams 1988:22). All Church members, through preaching, conferences, seminars are led to proclaim openly that "Jesus is Lord" (Phlp 2:11, cf Col 3:17) (Pretorius et al 1987:175, cf Boer 1961:74).

Even though they are inspired through preaching to involve themselves in mission work, but the real fact is that not all members are involved in the mission of the church. During mission campaigns most of the people who are involved are youth. More inspiration through preaching, house visitation, and also through literature writing should be done to let every member know they are important before Christ and be ready to be involved in mission work, and be able to proclaim the Word of God to other people.

5.5.1.2 Information

Information plays an important role in the conviction of people to be involved in mission work of the church. If people lack information, it is difficult to involve themselves in the program or activities of the church. For people to have knowledge, they must be provided with information. The information should be on everything that is happening in the church and also what the church is planning to do in the future should be provided to the church members. How can the congregants be informed? There are many ways that can be used to provide the congregants with information. This can be done by providing pamphlets to the church members. The church should have her own newsletters where her church news can be written (Kritzinger et al 1994:50). Christians should be encouraged to have the church newsletter so that they can be informed about the church news or activities. This should depend on the particular church whether her newsletter could be published every week or every fortnight or every month. Missionary magazines, books and pamphlets describing the activities within the Church and outside her should be made available to the whole congregation (Williams 1988:23). Technology makes it simple nowadays to spread information to church members. There are telephones, e-mails, etc that can be used to spread the information with ease to church members. Those who do not have access to the technological ways of spreading information can be provided through home visits.

The Reformed Church Tshiawelo uses many ways of spreading information to her members. They use e-mails, circulars, telephone, etc. People have knowledge of what is being done in the church. Sometimes information is spread to the members verbally, especially during congregational conferences or congregational church services. This makes it easy for the church members to be informed about the church's vision, and her plan. Every year, the Reformed Church Tshiawelo provides her members with year

calendar, where all church meetings, Holy Communions, conferences, etc are clearly indicated. Besides this, there are books that Professor T.C. Rabali wrote in order to spread information to the members at large. For examples, he wrote a book titled, *“Kereke ya Tshandululo Tshiawelo, Iwendo Iwashu Iwa uyo vha Kereke dzi vhumbaho Kilasisi Gauteng ya Tshinodo Soutansberg”* which could be translated as *“The Reformed Church Tshiawelo, our journey to be Churches that constitute Classis Gauteng of Synod Soutpansberg”*. He wrote this book in order to inform the church members about the future of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo, and also the decision taken by this congregation of being one of the churches that constitute Synod Soutpansberg. He indicated all the procedures followed by the Reformed Church Tshiawelo in her preparation to be one of the churches that constitute Synod Soutpansberg. In that book he also informed the church members the problems encountered by this church in her preparation for this process (Rabali 2006:1-10). But the ways of spreading information are not all used in this congregation; the congregation should also develop a church newsletter to spread information. Nowadays there are technologies that are also good in spreading information, for example, through videos, compact disc or DVD and radio cassettes. In the places where there are church buildings, notice boards should be used for placing information for the church members.

5.5.1.3 Interpretation

The full interpretation of what the Gospel of Jesus Christ is all about, should be done accurately in the message of the church. The preacher must interpret the contents as well as the Gospel demands from the congregants. The preacher must also fuel the expectation on how the vertical and horizontal dimensions fuse into one message of the Kingdom of God. It should be made clear in the message that God loved the world in

such a way that He gave His only begotten Son Jesus Christ so that whoever believe in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life (Jn 3:16). It should also be made clear that those who do not believe in Jesus Christ, will perish (Jn 3:36). Reiteration Sunday after Sunday that the Kingdom of God has everything to do with everyday lives, with the needs and cares of people around Christians is very crucial (cf Heyns 1980:22). It is of great importance in interpretation of the Word of God to indicate that visiting the inmates of local prison, caring for the sick, visiting strangers into their homes, finding jobs for the jobless, etc, are Christians' part and parcel of their message (Kritzinger et al 1994:51). Ministers and other people who preach the Word of God should be in great pains to interpret the Word of God to the church members, what the Gospel message really is, what the consequences of believing in Jesus Christ in both society and in their day really are.

The interpretation of the message, the full interpretation of what the Gospel of Jesus Christ is all about, as well as the demands of the Gospel is well interpreted by leaders of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo to the congregation. This was confirmed by 82% of the church members who indicated in response to questionnaires that they develop their spiritual life by attending Sunday worship services, Wednesday services and through group services where the Word of God is well interpreted by the church leaders. They reiterate, Sunday after Sunday that the Kingdom of God has everything to do with their everyday lives, with the needs and cares of people around them. They are taught to obey the command of love, which implies that they must involve themselves in proclamation of the Word of God to non-believers. Kritzinger et al (1994:51) is of the opinion that to motivate the congregation to be a missionary minded congregation, the leaders should take great pains to interpret to the believers what the Gospel message really is, what the consequences of believing in Christ, in our society, in our day, really are, that is what the leaders of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo are doing.

5.5.1.4 Involvement

What is necessary in the church is the involvement of church members in church programmes or activities. They should also be involved in the proclamation of the Word of God. For church members to proclaim the Word of God, they must be equipped and be given the opportunity to preach. They can preach it in small group services, in church outreach, or they can preach it every where they go to everybody. In witness by deeds, Christians are expected to live what they preach. Before they can be involved in the mission of the church, a careful and thorough planning is necessary. The leaders of the church should create opportunities for the church members and involve them in mission. If opportunities for involving the church members in mission are not created, what happens is that, the church members distance themselves from the mission work of the church. They will not take mission as their obligation to do, but as others' obligation. For Christ involved His disciples in mission work, they also knew that they were involved in His mission. Every Christian is very important before God, he or she is an important member of the Body of Christ. Christ expects every member of His body to be involved in obeying His command of love, in bringing the non-believers to repentance.

The leaders of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo always involve their believers, not only telling them what to do, what to say, but also to get them to the actual point of doing it. They involve them in the proclamation of the Gospel (Rabali 2006:26). To involve the church members in mission work requires careful and thorough planning. Opportunities are created for Christians of RCT to be involved in mission work. The plan made in some of the fellowship centres of this congregation, is to group members in small cells, so that everybody can learn and involve himself or herself in proclamation of the Word. They are also given opportunities to proclaim to anyone the Word of God. They are

also encouraged to engage themselves in mission campaigns and also in church outreach. According to Kritzinger et al (1994:52), to enthuse men and women, to call them to commit themselves to mission work, without providing them with the opportunities to do something, borders on the unethical. It provides a guaranteed inoculation against all future missionary enthusiasm and involvement. All believers are taught to acknowledge that they are important before God. They are taught that no one should regard himself or herself as of less importance before God, and as a result, distance himself or herself from doing mission work. They are an epistle of Christ ministered by Him, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God (2 Cor 3:3) (Boer 1961:111).

5.5.1.5 Instruction

People require proper instruction, training and mission education so that they can involve themselves wholeheartedly in mission work. This helps the Christians to enjoy the mission work, but if they are not well instructed or trained, mission of the church will be unsuccessful because they will be lacking knowledge on how to do mission. The church should include training courses in her programmes. Instruction of church members could be done in small group services like confirmation classes, cell groups, Bible Study groups, etc. Besides in small groups, instruction could be done in congregational worship services, mission seminars and conferences. Church leaders must not just instruct people for the sake of doing it, but they must spend time in doing this so that they can be quite sure that instructed church members will be able to do the work correctly. Christ spent enough time in instructing His disciples for the work (Mt 10). When He sent them to do the work, He was convinced that they could do the work the way He expects them to do it.

Instruction of members for mission work is one of the vital roles Reformed Church Tshiawelo is doing tremendously. It was noticed in this congregation that people required a proper instruction, training and mission education so that they can understand mission work and involve themselves in it. Training conferences are being offered in this congregation. Those members who are involved wholeheartedly in mission work of the church are those who were positively involved in training offered by the church leaders. Instructions are also given in small groups like cell groups, Bible Study groups. Besides in small groups and training conferences, instructions are given in congregational worship services through sermons, in mission seminars and also in mission conferences. In this congregation, there is teaching and preaching that motivates each member to consecrate himself or herself fully to the Lord for the fulfilment of His purpose (Rabali 2005:46-88). The missionary responsibility of each believer is set forth from the Word of God. Thus there is a consistent education and motivation of the entire congregation regarding their missionary responsibility in urban areas (Williams 1988:18).

5.5.1.6 Investment

Everything in life needs money. In order to do mission work very well and succeed, the church must have money. This means that the church that wants to do urban mission, especially urban church planting must have enough money for the work. In order to equip Christians for mission and to buy necessary equipments for mission work, money is essential. The church must see to it that in her annual budget, there is some % budgeted for mission work. This can be done by agreeing on some % from tithing that will be budgeted for mission work. Mission work must be prioritized in the church, even in the budget of the church, it must be given enough %. Besides the annual %

budgeted for mission work, the church could occasionally have fund specifically for the mission work of the church.

The Reformed Church Tshiawelo is aware that money is essential in everyday life, even in the wellbeing of the church. In her annual budget, there is some percentage budgeted for an urban church planting programme. The money is used to finance the mission campaigns, equipping members for mission work, mission seminars and conferences. In section A of both the questionnaires answered by both church members and church leaders, there is a question which says, “Does Reformed Church Tshiawelo make a budget for urban mission?” In response to this question 100% of both church members and church leaders responded that Reformed Church Tshiawelo makes a budget for her urban mission. They responded positively because they are updated time and again about church finances. The researcher observed this in many congregational worship services where the treasurer of the church gives reports about the income and the expenditure of the church. And by so doing, they are able to do their mission work. What the church could do as she is intending to plant more churches in metropolitan cities outside Gauteng Province, is to increase her mission percentage annually in her budget so that she can be able to reach those metropolitan cities outside Gauteng Province with ease. The provision for some percentage for mission is very important in doing urban mission. This was confirmed by Kritzinger et.al (1994:53):

As most other human activities – indeed, church activities – mission, also runs on money. To be able to involve as many as possible, to equip the faithful, to send missionaries into the field, nearer to home as well as further a field, may prove costly in a monetary sense. The financial committee, therefore, needs to be persuaded as to the real

priorities in the life of the church. If the annual budget becomes a missionary budget, the battle is won!

5.5.1.7 Intercession

Prayer plays an important role in mission work of the church. Preaching and teaching about the importance of prayer should instantly be done. Christians must be taught to pray for the mission work of the church, so that God can bring unbelievers to repentance through the mission work of the church. Through prayer, Christians should be able to ask power, strength and good health from God so that they can do mission without any problem. They should be able to see the necessity of many Christians who should engage themselves in mission as Jesus Christ saw the necessity of many labouring (Mt 9:37-38). Christians should be encouraged to have prayer partners. Prayer groups within the congregation should be developed. The people who are unable to participate in mission because of age, and other circumstances, can be involved in mission through prayer.

The Reformed Church Tshiawelo is a praying congregation. The leaders of this congregation sometimes preach on the importance of prayer, and also on the impact of prayer in the life of a Christian. Teaching and preaching about prayer are done in prayer groups, and also in different conferences. Christians are also encouraged to pray in their homes. Prayer teams and Impact groups are formed in such a way that every believer is encouraged to pray. Through constant and disciplined intercession every member of the congregation, young and old, are encouraged to become co-workers, partners in prayer, in mission work and this motivate them to involve themselves in mission work.

5.5.2 General evaluation

5.5.2.1 Self evaluation

What Reformed Church Tshiawelo is doing, of evaluating herself through anniversaries is very good. She critically appreciates all what she achieved, thank God for those achievements, plans on what to be done to achieve the outstanding plans. She also critically shares with her members everything they failed to achieve during the previous years, and encourages each other to have more focus on those things in her future plans.

5.5.2.2 The Reformed Church Tshiawelo will succeed in her mission

The researcher's opinion is that Christians live in the most exciting time in history for the church. Unparalleled opportunities and powerful technologies are available to their congregations. More importantly, they are experiencing an unprecedented movement of God's Spirit in many parts of the world today. More people are coming to Christ now than at any other time in history (Warren 1995:15). The researcher believes God is sending waves of church growth wherever His people are prepared to ride them. What church leaders have to do is to discover the needs of the community to fit those needs with the people they have in the church. This was confirmed by Conn and Ortiz (2001:461) who says:

Discovering the needs of the community is not enough to have a ministry. The church must then fit those needs with the people God has given them. This requires knowing the gifts and personalities God has provided for that particular church as embodied in its members



We believe that the Lord has provided the essential gifts for the church in community to do the necessary work of the ministry. The gifts divinely distributed (1 Cor 12:7; Eph 4; 1 Pt 4:10) to all Christians at the time of regeneration. All Christians have a duty to exercise their gifts (1 Pt 4:10). In Ephesians 4:16 (cf 1:22) it is clear that the ministerial power of Christ is delegated to the church in the form of spiritual gifts. This is the continuing work of Christ in the world. This enablement of the church is for service. Therefore, there is a plan for the church to be equipped to minister in its particular context. When the church utilizes the power of God in community, more and more people come under the lordship of Christ. The result of this is that the church grows qualitatively and quantitatively (Conn and Ortiz 2001:461).

After completing his research on the mission work of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo, the researcher, as a participant observer, is 100% convinced that if the Reformed Church Tshiawelo can go on with her program of equipping and motivating church members to involve themselves in urban mission, there is nothing that will stop her success in urban church planting within Gauteng Province and also outside Gauteng Province, especially in the metropolitan cities. The researcher does believe that God who provided this church and lifted her up from where she was will continue lifting her up to better circumstances than where she is today.

5.6 CONCLUSION

From the research done, it was found that the Reformed Church Tshiawelo is one of the few churches progressing in urban mission. It was quite clear that the leadership of Professor T.C. Rabali together with his co-workers played an important role in bringing the church to her present stage. Christians are taught, motivated, and involved in



mission work. But there are many areas of concern in the mission work of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo. The lack of sufficient church buildings, involvement of some members in mission work, lack of sufficient money, etc requires serious attention.