



CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In this thesis the first chapter explained the relevance of the subject, which stems from the fact that urban church planting, is of prime importance to the church and her mission today. During the 20th century cities have mushroomed on six continents, also in Africa. Urbanization and modernization, with their concomitants of materialism and secularism, have become prominent features of our time.

If urbanization is one of the most important social realities in Africa today, it goes without saying that Christian mission must take full account of it. The church has turned her attention to African towns and cities none too soon. Her own historical and theological inclinations have led the church in the past to favour the rural areas, where success has been widely achieved. Yet the whole Christian enterprise in Africa is threatened by urbanization, and a half-hearted approach to the towns will not save it. The church must take urbanization seriously and use it as a good opportunity that God is giving to His church in our time. This implies that the Church must give urban mission a priority that is absolute. Personnel have to be deployed in towns and cities, and proper structures created, if the Gospel is to continue to make an impact in the lives of people in the beginning of the 21st century.

This led the researcher to determine five objectives as a goal for this thesis:



- Understanding the Biblical theology of urban mission.
- Discerning the role of a local church in urban church planting.
- Developing a comprehensive mission strategy for the church in an urban setting.
- Evaluating the work of urban mission of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo.
- Developing the strategies that the Reformed Church Tshiawelo can utilize to plant more churches in metropolitan cities outside Gauteng Province.

7.2 HYPOTHESIS

The hypothesis for the research, as stated in the introduction of the thesis read as follows:

The younger churches on the African continent – especially in Southern Africa – are awaking to their missionary obligation, of moving from the position of receiving churches to sending churches. Especially in the growing cities of Africa the churches need to be informed and empowered to play their part in this regard. The hypothesis of this study is that: with a proper understanding of the Biblical mandate for mission, as well as of the urban context in which the church has to function, a comprehensive strategy for mission in the cities of Africa may be developed. The congregation of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo in Soweto was used as a case study in the research (see p 4).

It is the researcher's contention at the conclusion of the research that the hypothesis proved to be correct.

7.3 MAIN CONCLUSIONS

7.3.1 Biblical theology of the city

The biblical theology of urban mission was discussed in Chapter Two. The focus was on the way both the Old and the New Testaments view urban mission. From the biblical point of view, it was clear that the *mission* of the church always concerns *sending*. The Triune God is involved in the sending. The biblical theology of the city showed both the negative and the positive image of the city. City was negatively viewed as the city of Satan, for example, because she sinned before God (cf Rv 17:1-2; 18:2-3, 9-19), Babylon (Rv 17:1-19:10) was regarded as the city of Satan. The city was also viewed as the symbol of all evil. The violence (Ezk 7:23), murder (Rv 17:5-6) and injustice (Ezk 9:9) were the characteristics of the city. God indicated that He will judge the city because of her wickedness or rebellions against Him (Rv 18:10; 4:17, 19). The positive image of the city regarded the city as the city of God, the place where God ordained and where His Name would dwell (Dt 12:11). For example, Jerusalem was regarded as the 'city of the Great King' (Mt 5:35; cf Rv 21:1-4). From the positive side of the city, the city was also regarded as the symbol of good. Prophet Ezekiel, who viewed the city as evil, also viewed the positive pictures of the city. He reached for a name which would best characterize the restored city, "the Lord is there" (Ezk 48:35). The symbolism of the city of Jerusalem was rich in imagery. It incorporated the garden qualities of the Edenic paradise, though the language of Eden as such was not used (Ps 46:4). God showed His concern to the cities, like Nineveh (Jnh 1:2; 17:3:4), Sodom (Gn 18:26-32), Jerusalem (Jr 5:1), etc. Jesus Christ had a great concern for the repentance of the city dwellers. He preached in cities (Mt 9:35-36), He cried for the city of Jerusalem for her repentance (Lk 13:34-35), He sent His disciples to preach in cities (Mt 10:5, 7, 11, 14, 23). He also promised to send the Holy Spirit to His disciples, so that they can be His

witnesses from the city of Jerusalem, all Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Ac 1:8). As a result of what Christ promised to His disciples in Acts 1:8, the Gospel was proclaimed or spread from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, Antioch, and to other parts of the earth (cf Ac 2:1-24:5). Jesus Christ also showed His great concern of the life of the *Seven Churches* resided at the seven cities of Asia Minor (Rv 2:1-3:22). It was clear in this study that Paul's life was mainly centered on preaching, and planting churches mainly in urban areas. This is indicated in Paul's three missionary journeys and also his journey to Rome. Cities in the history of the church were regarded as the places where God is worshipped, places where many people are reached and also as the places of rebellions against God.

7.3.2 Urbanization, a fact of our time

Chapter Three focused mainly on urbanization. Urban growth was expounded (Monsma 1989:108; Linthicum 1991a:17-19; Shorter 1991:1-2) in such a way that its causes and also its problems were clearly illustrated. It was clear in this chapter that cities all over the globe are growing in such a way that the church should be aggressively taking urban mission seriously, because many people in this era are flocking to the cities in great numbers. They are forced to migrate from rural to urban areas because of push and pull factors. The push factors indicated in this chapter are rural population growth; rural disasters like famine, flooding and community unrest; escalating unemployment; rural overcrowding; people need freedom; permanence and security. The other push factors are poor health care; increased birthrates; limited land; etc. The pull factors that are attracting people from rural to urban areas are economic reasons; industrialization; better education; better health care; cities are centers of service and dominance. The other pull factors are entertainment; new opportunities and excitement. Natural growth is the second cause of urban growth indicated in this chapter. The birth rate in urban areas is

growing tremendously because of the following reasons: *First*, young men and women who have migrated to urban areas, settle there, and give birth to children. The *second reason* was that not only the people from rural areas who migrated to the urban areas give birth to urban children, but also the immigrants from other African countries and also from oversea countries who permanently settle in our urban areas, also give birth to urban children. The *third reason* is the teenage pregnancy. Many teenagers are competing with each other by involving themselves in childbirth in order to get child grants which are provided by the government. All these reasons are playing an important role in causing urban growth. The third cause of urban growth indicated in this chapter is immigration. As indicated in the *Statistics South Africa (2005:xiv)*, South Africa has many immigrants from African countries and also from oversea countries. South African cities are full of people from Nigeria, Swaziland, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, India, China, Somalia, Portugal, Pakistan, United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, Namibia, Canada, etc. (*Statistics South Africa 2003*). The causes of immigration indicated in this chapter are as follows: they are refugees, driven off their lands by war and violence, for example, the people from Zimbabwe who migrated and are still migrating in great numbers to South Africa because of the war and violence in Zimbabwe. Others are attracted by the opportunities in the more affluent cities of the world. Others came to this country for business purpose, others for study purpose and others for work purpose (*Statistics South Africa 2006:2*). The problems that immigrants are encountering in this country are xenophobia and unsettlement. There are many immigrants who were killed, burned, and injured in this country especially in Alexandra Township and Sebokeng this year (2008) in May and June. It was quite clear in this chapter that due to the fact of urban growth, there are many urban problems that are encountered in South African urban areas, for example, urban poverty, prostitution, street people, HIV/AIDS, unemployment and crime (such as murder, armed robbery, house breaking, assault, kidnapping etc.).

7.3.3 The calling of the church in the cities

As it has been indicated in Chapter Three that the more urbanization occurs, the more the population flocks to urban areas in great numbers. The more migration and immigration occurs instantly, the more problems occur in urban areas. In Chapter Four the development of a comprehensive definition of mission in an urban setting was discussed where the church should have no alternative but to take her responsibility of witnessing Christ in word and deed to the urban dwellers. It was indicated in this chapter that the church must understand the subject of mission and also what mission entails. Mission is not primarily the activity of man, but God's work, and it should be regarded as *Missio Dei*. It has the Trinitarian base, God the Father sent Christ to the world, God the Father and God the Son sent God the Holy Spirit, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit sent the Church to the world. Although mission is primarily the work of God, but Christ called the church to be His witness (*martyria*) to the world (Ac 1:8) (*missio ecclesia*). The church had to witness Christ in urban areas by proclaiming the Word of God (*kerygma*) to the people, by serving people (*diakonia*), and by entering into fellowship of love with people (*koinonia*). The terms *kerygma*, *koinonia*, *diakonia*, in combination describe the main aspects of the witness (*martyria*) of the Kingdom of God. When the church witness Christ through *kerygma*, *koinonia* and *diakonia*, it is true to her deepest calling of worshipping God (*leitourgia*).

The three ways of witnessing Christ in urban areas were illustrated. The *first* way indicated was through *kerygma*. The content of the proclamation of this ministry is the Good News that God the Creator and Lord of the universe, has personally intervened in human history and has done so supremely through the person and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth who is the Lord of history, Saviour and Liberator (Bosch 1991:412). The entire

message should be Christocentric. Although Christians should preach about judgment, admonishment, and the call of sinners to repentance, above all, the central theme of the church's messages should be the proclamation of redemption (Bavinck 1960:129). The church of Christ should know that the Lordship of our Lord Jesus Christ is for the church, of all people, and for all creation (cf Col 1:15-20). The unbelievers must be brought to the *kerygmatic* confession "Jesus is Lord". The *second* way of witnessing Christ in urban areas indicated was *koinonia*. From the missiological perspectives, *koinonia* was viewed two ways, the nurturing of Christians and ecumenical cooperation. One of the simplest but most complex words describing the church of Christ is the command of Jesus: love. Jesus gave His disciples a new commandment, to love one another as He has loved them, so they have to love one another (Jn 13:34). The non-Christians in urban areas must experience the way Christians love each other as they belong to a new family, the family of God (Eph 2:19). Christians must support each other in times of stress and distress. The love of Christians must also be indicated through their cooperation in mission work. The missionary church must therefore become church-with-others, must truly incarnate the essential *koinonia* of the body of Christ. One denomination needs the hand of the other. Mission in unity and unity in mission are impossible without a self-critical attitude, particularly where Christians meet with others, fellow believers or non-believers, who, by human standards, should be their enemies. Ecumenism is only possible where people accept each other despite differences. The goal of the urban church should be a fellowship exempt from conflict, but one which is characterized by unity in reconciled diversity. The *third* way indicated in this chapter in which an urban church must witness Christ in urban areas is *diakonia*. The church should not witness Christ by only proclaiming the Word of God and loving one another, but Christians must also serve one another. A good example indicated in this *diaconal dimension* is Jesus Christ "The Great Diakonos". He washed the feet of His disciples as a clear demonstration of what Christians should do to each other; they must witness Christ by

becoming servants who serve others. The world as a whole is the open arena for the urban church's diaconal ministry. All Christians in urban areas must exercise this diaconal ministry by taking care for the jobless, the homeless and the hungry. They must battle against the wrongs in urban areas that lead to poverty and malnutrition in a country of wealth and affluence. They must fight for the renewal of broken lives and broken homes. The church must develop a ministry of hospitality to the urban poor, ministry to the street people, etc. The main goal of witnessing Christ in urban areas should be the *glorificatio Dei* "to glorify God", this is the *liturgical dimension*. This dimension deals mainly with the public service that the church renders to God especially through worship. The church can render her services directly to God or indirectly to God by serving fellow human beings within and outside her areas. In conclusion, it was clear in this chapter that in developing a comprehensive definition of mission in an urban setting, all five rubrics or dimensions of mission which are: *martyria*, *kerygma*, *koinonia*, *diakonia* and *leitourgia*, are of great importance. The Christians should not employ one and leave the others, or they should not employ the other four and leave one, all dimensions are of great importance in defining the mission of the church in an urban setting.

7.3.4 The contribution of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo

Chapter Five focused on the mission work of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo in an urban setting. It was made clear in this chapter that when one speaks about the urban mission of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo he or she is obliged to speak about the cooperation of the churches that constituted Synod Soutpansberg in the mission work of this church. This cooperation was based on the mutual partnership between the Synod Soutpansberg and the Reformed Church Tshiawelo. That partnership was based on urban mission and also on training of ministers at Heidelberg Theological Seminary. The Reformed Church Tshiawelo was a local church without fellowship centers for a long

time. But when Professor T.C. Rabali came to this congregation after the agreement between one of the churches that constitute Synod Soutpansberg (the Reformed Church Mutale) and the Reformed Church Tshiawelo, things changed radically. The conference led by Professor T.C. Rabali held at Tshipise in 1998 which was attended by almost all Church Councils' members of the churches that constituted Synod Soutpansberg together with Church Council members of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo, was the main basis of the changes that brought the Reformed Church Tshiawelo to her present juncture. That conference inspired both the Church Council members of all churches that constituted Synod Soutpansberg together with those of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo to see the necessity of urban mission. The inspiration from that conference contributed a lot to the meeting of the Synod Soutpansberg held at Iyani Bible and Training Institute in December 1998. The Synod took a decision of encouraging all churches that constitute this Synod to associate their church members who migrated to the Gauteng Province with the Reformed Church Tshiawelo. The Synod also gave its mission deputies the mandate of looking for places in Gauteng Province where they can plant churches, and they were instructed to cooperate with the Reformed Church Tshiawelo. The cooperation between the Synod Soutpansberg and the Reformed Church Tshiawelo was made realistic, and is still realistic. Church members from the churches that constitute Synod Soutpansberg were sent to support the Reformed Church Tshiawelo during mission campaigns, and also during mission seminars and mission conferences held at this congregation. Through the hard work, dedication, and motivation of Professor T.C. Rabali, the church now had 16 fellowship centers, and on the 16 August 2008 in her 40th Anniversaries, 5 new churches were instituted. This indicates the marvelous work that is being done at this congregation. It was clear in this chapter that the Reformed Church Tshiawelo under the leadership of Professor T.C. Rabali managed to bring the church to her present juncture because the Church Council mainly focused on Sunday preaching, house visitation, small groups' services, etc.

Christians were equipped for urban mission through mission conferences, mission seminars, and also by leadership training. The church always evaluates herself by having different anniversaries. The anniversaries played a vital role of encouraging Christians to focus more on the vision of the church and also to thank God for everything He has done for them. In evaluation of this church through the “Seven I’s Programme developed at the University of Pretoria, it was quiet clear that Christians are *inspired* to get involved in the mission work of the church. Church members are being *informed* of everything planned in the church or everything that is happening in the church. The Word of God is well *interpreted* in this church that is why she is growing tremendously. Church members are *involved* in all church activities and also in mission work being done by the church. For the church members to be involved in mission work, they are constantly being *instructed* through mission seminars and conferences so that they must be responsible for urban mission in urban areas. When coming to *investment*, the Reformed Church Tshiwelo in her yearly budget, has some % budgeted for mission work. This implies that they know that for the mission work to be well done, money is needed. The issue of *intercession* is also regarded as great importance to this congregation. It was made clear in this chapter that the Reformed Church Tshiwelo is a praying congregation. Church members are taught and encouraged to pray. Small groups were formed for men, women, Sunday School, youth and also cell groups. This was done to encourage them to motivate each other even in prayer. It was indicated that this church in her mission work is encountering some challenges. Some of the challenges indicated in this thesis are: lack of enough finance, lack of more church buildings, strong opposition from some churches in the family of the Reformed Churches in South Africa (GKSA), etc. Although the RCT is encountering those challenges; this church is unstoppable in her urban church planting programmes. This church is planning to plant more than 28 daughter churches within the period of ten years to come (2018).

7.3.5 Strategies needed for the church in an urban setting

Chapter Six focused on the strategies in which the Reformed Church Tshiawelo can utilise to plant churches in metropolitan cities outside Gauteng Province, e.g Bloemfontein, Cape Town, Durban, Port Elizabeth, East London, Kimberley, etc. The strategies were summarized in four phases which are: visionary phase, planning phase, preparation phase for church planting and establishment phase of the daughter churches. It was quite clear that the leaders are the people who must have a vision, and they must share their vision with their co-workers, and sell it to the small groups and lastly to the entire congregation. The leadership training should be done as soon as possible. The church leaders must make sure that prayer is their first priority in the process of planning to plant churches in urban areas. After planning has been done, the targeted areas must be visited to study their setups and also conditions in those areas. After that, nucleus members must be formed, once the nucleus is formed, the church must be stabled. Principles of urban church planting are also discussed, and the methods of church planting are the last issue discussed in this chapter.

7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.4.1 Recommendations to the Reformed Church Tshiawelo

7.4.1.1 Church members

(a). The congregation of the Reformed Church Tshiawelo needs to be reminded constantly that the most important instruments of mission are the members of the church themselves. Every Christian needs to be encouraged to take his/her responsibility to be a faithful witness of Christ seriously.

(b). Church members need to be trained and empowered for their mission in the community. Proper courses need to be provided and opportunities for lay Christians to serve and to witness where they live and work, need to be created.

7.4.1.2 Mission committee

The Church Council - through its mission committee - must ensure that a strategic plan for the congregation's missionary enterprise is put in place. Long term and short term goals for mission need to be developed, sustainable plans to execute the mission need to be provided, and mentoring programmes need to be installed. A budget, sufficient to cover the congregation's outreach programmes, must be provided.

7.4.2 Recommendations to the Heidelberg Theological Seminary (HTS)

(a). The HTS must share the church's responsibility to call Christians into the ministry of the church, to be trained as ministers *and* as missionaries. The recruitment should be done *inter alia* through conferences and workshops in presbyteries and local congregations.

(b). The subject of Missiology must take its proper place among the other theological disciplines in the curriculum at the HTS, to ensure that the students understand their missionary calling, and to enthuse and equip them for their task to help develop the churches that they intend to serve, to become truly missionary churches. The acquisition of mission skills - evangelization, church planting, addressing the needs of the community, inter-faith dialogue, et cetera - must be included in the courses.

According to Donald A. McGavran:

Every theological seminary must decide whether the ideal denomination, most pleasing to God, would be one that cares only for existing Christians or one that, in true New Testament fashion, both cares for existing Christians and multiplies churches in unreached portions of humanity. If the answer is that the church most pleasing to God is one that in every possible way seeks to disciple *panta ta ethne* as well as care for existing Christians, then the seminary curriculum must prepare Ministers to do both tasks (McGavran 1988:8).

(c). The HTS must also help develop mission courses for lay members that may be taught in local congregations. The whole church must benefit from expertise acquired at the seminary.

(d). The HTS must build strong ties with other theological institutions and seminaries, in South Africa, Africa, as well as overseas, in order to learn from their experience, also in terms of the teaching and practice of missions. Exchange programmes that will benefit both lectures and students need to be developed.

7.5 AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In coming to the end of this study, the researcher is aware that there are still a number of issues with regard to the subject of urban mission that beg further research. Among them are:

- (a). The crucial relationship between the so-called ‘mother churches’ and ‘daughter churches’, the sending churches and the newly planted churches in urban settings.
- (b). The development of curriculum for urban church leaders. The churches in urban areas very often reveal the character and style of their leadership. What can be done to empower the leaders in the church?
- (c). The role of women in urban church planting is another area that needs to be considered. This should be clear from the biblical point of view accepting that women in New Testament times as well as in history played an important role in the mission of the church.
- (d). Another area that should also be taken into consideration is that of mission and unity, the ecumenical perspective of our calling. No church operates in a vacuum space. They need one another in their quest to be instruments of God’s mission in the world.

7.6 CONCLUSION

From this research it becomes clear that urban churches in South Africa must wake up to the urgency of urban church planting. The Reformed Church Tshiawelo is doing well in her mission work even though she is often working under difficult conditions, sometimes having to cope with the opposition of those who do not share the Church’s vision and mission; she is progressing through God’s providence and grace. It was also indicated in this thesis that through her cooperation with the churches that constitute Synod Soutpansberg, the Reformed Church Tshiawelo is committed to be a faithful witness of God’s love for the cities and urban sprawls of South Africa.