

## **PART FOUR**

### **CONSEQUENCES FOR CHURCH DEVELOPMENT AND CHURCH PLANTING POST-1994**

#### **34. THE DRC AND THE YOUNGER CHURCHES AND THE PROSPECT OF A PARTNERSHIP AFTER 1994**

What has happened with the partnership in mission? I have indicated that this era has terminated. The URCSA is independent and an appeal is made to the DRC to unite. When we look at the emblem of the URCSA we see that there is still a space to be filled. That is why it is a uniting church and not yet united. Once the DRC joins in, it may be called *united*. The NGKA and the Reformed Church in Africa also are invited to unite. With the Belhar Confession (1986), the URCSA showed that its independency was solid and the DRC family churches will have to acknowledge this. For unification it is imperative that all the family member churches will accept it as one of the new confessions of the church. The different Moderamen are dealing with this matter.

As far as partnership in mission is concerned, one can say that there is no written contract regarding partnership. The DRC must recognize that the URCSA is no longer the object of mission work. Some DRC congregations are still contributing financially and quite a few white ministers are still serving in different URCSA congregations. Each DRC Regional Synods replaced the word *mission* with *getuienis* (witnessing). In the Free State it is called *Sinodale Getuieniskommissie* (SGK) (*Ned Geref Kerk Jaarboek 2007:107*). The DRC Eastern Synod calls it *Bediening vir Getuienis* (Service for Witnessing). The DRC Eastern Synod, the DRC Northern Synod as well as the URCSA for the Northern Region also have a functional post for ecumenical projects. Although mission has been discontinued, certain projects are still continuing. These projects have a serving character (*diakonia*).

##### **34.1 PARTNERSHIP AND UNITY**

Van der Watt (2010) said that there was a phase in the mission when emphasis was laid on proclaiming the gospel (*kerygma*). This was the time when no churches had been planted yet. It was the pioneer phase. When the young churches were established, the time of *diakonia* had come. The older churches supported the younger churches with goods. This

phase was characterized by prescribing and dependency as in a mother and daughter relationship. Now we have entered a new phase, where relationships are central – the phase of fellowship (*koinonia*). From this *koinonia*, the fellowship, love and union, flows the desire to listen to the Word together, witness together, serve and worship together. Only when we start from this unity in our fellowship within the scope of the Triune-Unit, our witness and service will be effective and credible (Van der Watt 2010).

### **34.2 A NEW RELATIONSHIP**

It is quite clear that, apart from the dialogue regarding unity, a new relationship is developing between the DRC and the URCSA. This is practical and sometimes also spontaneous socializing. Kritzinger (*NGTT* 1997:38) makes it clear that partnership is not synonymous with unity. “Partnership, per definition, takes for granted a plurality of structures. Sometimes co-operation even functions as a technique to uphold division, or to postpone or defer a necessary unity. Organizations and churches may have to be challenged with the option of sacrificing their own identity and integrating (merging) into something new. This may indeed be God’s will in a certain situation, in which case partnership will not be the desirable goal, but unity. This should, in all seriousness, be considered. Also in our present discussions of partnership we should not ignore this possibility.”

The DRC, when thinking of the younger churches, is slowly undergoing a mindshift. To quote Saayman (2007:106): “During the first three waves the same missionary motivation was at work throughout, closely linked to the Afrikaner’s self-understanding and their sense of being in control (often expressed in typical western terms as a sense of stewardship over immature indigenous Africans’).

“However, since 1994 a new reality brought a change in attitude and a sense of necessity to reach out to black Christians. Not all congregations have outreach projects, but the thinking is slowly changing. Not all members in the DRC underwent a mind change yet, but under the guidance of the new committees for Service and Witnessing and the contributions called ‘geloofsoffers’ (faith-offerings) there is an indication that they want to commit themselves to serving the Body of Christ by supporting outreach projects, also assisting URCSA congregations financially with their charity projects such as HIV Care

centers for children and others. In 2008 the Skuilkrans DR Congregation published a list of 44 service groups. One group is reaching out to Egreja Reformada em Mocambique.”

Yet, some leading members of the URCSA and DRC are still reticent in reaching out to one another. Saayman (2007:121) quotes Van der Watt (2002:ii-iii; Louw 2002:ii); “it seems as if congregations choose rather to become involved somewhere far away, where the possibility of such difficult everyday relationships is non-existent”. Saayman (2007:122) also quotes Kritzinger, *et al.* (2004:276) in saying: “There seems to be weariness among many Afrikaners to deal with African people in depth and on a long-term basis, and to negotiate or co-operate with the URCSA. The DRC seems to be tired of having to face the fruits of its successive waves of mission over the past 300 years, and being unhappy that there is so little to be proud of, so few URCSA members they can work with comfortably or without problems.”

### **34.3 STEWARDSHIP**

When Dr SD Maluleke took over the office of executive secretary of the URC of the Northern region, he immediately started to try and change the thinking of members of the URCSA who were strongly cemented in the old DRC mission era. What was the position then? He described it as follows: “Many congregations among the African communities were started by the white missionaries. They were sent by white congregations. They were also financially supported by their mother churches. The African people were only asked to repent and accept Jesus Christ as their Lord. The white congregations provided money to build churches for African believers. White congregations took responsibility for maintaining mission and church buildings” (Maluleke 1998a:10).

### **34.4 ENSLAVEMENT**

Maluleke (1988a:10) said:

*The good work of the white congregations enslaved the minds of many African people. They enjoyed the service of a minister but they were not responsible for his salary. The African church council became a CALLING BODY and the white congregation became the PAYING BODY. The calling body was and is not responsible for the welfare of the ministries and for the ministers. The African members of the church never accepted*

*ownership of their church. They are still like babies depending on their mother. The white ministers taught people that they must not strive for money because God will provide. The financial stewardship was not a burning issue. Some people were even paid to attend church services; some were given bread and clothes. Christians were enjoying to be served without accepting responsibility and accountability.*

*This way of doing colonized the minds of people. The majority of our African members still believe that pastors are to serve them but their salaries is the responsibility of the white church. Some are even under the impression that the pastor is paid by the government. Most of the members are not even contributing to the church. Most of those who are contributing are donating their leftovers. They spend on many things for themselves. If there is something left over, they can then give to God and His church.*

*Such a church is always dependent on donations from a white church. If the white church stops the subsidies, those African churches will collapse or remain without a pastor while its members are a community of paid people. They are not taught how to tithe because they were told God will provide, while it actually means that white churches will provide. People never accept ownership of their church. Ownership goes with responsibility and accountability.*

This is especially true of the congregations in the rural regions of which I had personal experience in the Lepelle URCSA congregation. It is also true of all the congregations of the Presbytery of Burger in Sekhukhuneland. When the members present their *Kabelo* cards (gift offerings) most members only contribute R2,00 per year. This was the situation in 1977. Most of them were very much in arrears. The missionaries realized that the people in the homelands were unemployed. Most of their spouses and children worked in the urban areas. When they came home once a month, they only brought enough money for one bag of mealie meal, some groceries, a little money for schooling and a little pocket money for the month. The women tried to produce food around their homes and on the lands, but it is a dry area with very little rain. Beans, marog, manna and sometimes also mealies were planted. The people were poor. The system of the chiefs was not based on giving *within your means*. ‘I want R100,00 from each of you as to build this school.’ Whether poor or rich, every one had to donate the same amount. This system became practice in the church. The church council decides how members should donate, whether

they are pensioners, school children, unemployed or those who have jobs. And even if you are in arrears, you must settle your debt.

Sometimes Dr Maluleke tried to change the old system by having workshops for ministers, church council members, youth, women and the men's association. In his book: *Struggle in transforming the mindset of church leadership and members* (Maluleke 1998b:3) he defines the old way of thinking as follows: We ignore the new thinking, we are not able and willing to change the situation. We only want to keep to the old way of operating. We are refusing to change our old way of thinking and to accept a new way of thinking. This abnormal understanding prevents our ability to think and even allow our discussions to fail. He pleads for a change and only a change of mindset can achieve this.

### **34.5 INEQUALITY**

The poor wages of evangelists and ministers compared with the full support of the missionaries or white ministers in the NGKA, is one of the reasons why the old system of joint mission or partnership in mission failed. Kritzinger (2007:15) remarked: "The traditional principle is that the local congregation is responsible for the sustenance of the minister and his family. This is impossible when <sup>(a)</sup>the church members are poor and cashless, of much lower financial status than the minister's expectations, and <sup>(b)</sup>the church is small. Only in more or less homogeneous middle class communities can this pattern work." When the yearly financial statements were drawn up for the synodical office, the salary of the missionary was not even mentioned, because it appears on the statement of the local DRC congregation, which received the money from the presbytery, synod or other institution or congregation to be paid directly to the missionary. Most of the black ministers and evangelists were very grateful for subsidies according to the DRC scale of subsidies, because the money contributed monthly by the local NGKA congregations was not sufficient for them to survive. The DRC realized that, and was urged to withdraw, because the situation was unacceptable.

Dr Maluleke (1998b:14) presented the following case study to us:

*The congregation where I am a member is 20 years old. It was started as a project of the white DRC (that is Mission Field). This is a black congregation. When this congregation started, there were five evangelists and one white missionary. They all received their*

*salaries from the DRC. They never asked the congregation to be involved in this project. Now they want us to accept responsibility for everything. The blacks still feel that this congregation is the project of the white DRC. The DRC is the owner of this congregation.*

### **34.5.1 Evaluation**

Dr Maluleke's problem with the URCSA is, sadly, the case in missions all over the world. 'The haves' give to the 'have-nots', often in the hope of gaining influence over them. Frequently, the result is dependence that debilitates the local church by encouraging a welfare mentality. Saint (2001:52) warns: "Anyone of superior education, technology, and superior financial ability who is attempting to help people of inferior capabilities has to guard against creating dependency." These words are from Steve Saint, son of missionary martyr, Nate Saint. He returned with his family in 1995 to the Auca tribe who killed his father together with four other missionaries on Palm Beach in Ecuador in 1956.

When Saint started his work, he wanted to say: "How could they not know who the elders are after 35 years of church planting? I began to understand just how fatal dependency could be. Faithful missionaries have given years and years of valuable time to help the Waodani spiritually. Instead of a self-propagating, self-governing and self-supporting church amongst the Waodani, they were just a group of individual believers" (Saint 2001:60).

The situation with the DRC and the inland mission was different, and much more developed towards self-dependence and self-propagating, but mistakes were made in developing a self-supporting church.

This was the situation in all rural areas. In the presbytery of Burger the situation is as follows:

#### **Lepelle**

Until 1995 there was a missionary post and three black minister's posts as well as two evangelist posts. Now, in 2010, there is only one black minister, who is a tent-maker (two retired ministers are supporting him) serving 21 outstations.

### **Burger**

Until 1995 there was a missionary post and three black minister's posts as well as six evangelist posts. Now, in 2010, there is only one black minister who is a tent-maker serving 21 outposts. There are no evangelists.

### **Sekhukhuland**

Until 2002 there was a missionary and one black minister as well as two evangelists, who retired in 2002. Now in 2010, there is only one black minister who is a tent-maker.

### **Lerato**

Until 1990 there was one missionary, two black minister's posts and two evangelists. Lebowa-Kgomo (1990) and Sebetiela (2000) seceded each with its own minister.

## **34.6 DISCONTINUANCE AND CONTINUANCE BY ESTABLISHING FORUMS**

The 1994 unification between the NGKA and the *NG Sending*, without the Reformed Church in Africa and a large section of the NGKA who remained under the old name and the DRC as a whole, came to an abrupt standstill, which ended most initiatives of the old partnerships such as the Federal Council of Member Churches. Discussions would only take place when the Moderamen of the different churches could meet. The emphasis was not on the continuance of the partnerships but on relationships with the possibility of unification. The Confession of Belhar was one of the stumbling blocks; however, the DRC tried to keep the partnership alive under the new name of *Forum*.

### **Forums**

The North and East synods of the DRC and the URCSA of the Northern Synod are involved in this partnership. With funds provided by the two DRC synods, a functionary post was created to encourage congregations, presbyteries and organizations to develop projects and joint efforts of witnessing and services.

New names for mission were found, yet still obeying the Great Commission. Kritzinger (2007:28) refers in a footnote to what Hoekendijk formulated regarding the ministry of Christ. "Jesus' life and work in human likeness was taken up by three things: He

proclaimed the kingdom of God from first to last (*kerygma*); He erected signs of the kingdom through his sacrificial caring and healing (*diakonia*); and He called and nurtured his disciples as the beginning of the new people of the kingdom (*koinonia*).” The projects of partnership between congregations, presbyteries and organizations of the URCSA and DRC, as expressed in the forums, have the character of *marturia* (witness). The main emphasis is service (*diakonia*) following the example of the Great *diakonos*. The work of these forums is formulated in short by the constitution drawn up by the first office holder, Rev ANE Louw who since 2004 has been serving on the Northern and Southern Synodical Forum. These are the guidelines:

#### **34.6.1 Values and Guidelines for Forums for Joint Public Witness**

1. A **forum for joint public witness** is a voluntary partnership formed by representatives of congregations of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church) and the Uniting Reformed Church (URCSA), for the sake of **co-operation in joint outreach**. This implies that **joint ownership** and **shared responsibility** are accepted by these congregations to bring **the good news** to the **whole local community** through **word and deed**.
2. To achieve this, a process is necessary in order to develop a **shared vision of the kingdom of God** in the local community and a **passion for sharing the gospel** with everyone who needs it. This process presupposes a **commitment by the participants** to **open, honest communication** and **willingness for reconciliation**. It should also be characterized by a **growing realization** that **God entrusted us (together) with the good news**.
3. It is all about **co-operation and partnership**. The term ‘partnership’ was also used in the past, but the term does not adequately describe the urgent need for a **new style of co-operation**. Therefore the terms **joint ownership** or **shared responsibility** is preferred to convey this **new way of co-operation**. It precludes the notion that one congregation is merely supporting the other in its outreach or that one congregation views the sphere of outreach as its own exclusive terrain. This shared responsibility and joint ownership should grow in spite of factors and influences that could hamper or even prevent it from succeeding. Therefore a **prayerful stance of bold faith** is necessary in order to succeed.

4. Every believer is a **wounded believer** who has his/her own story of disappointment and pain, and we usually find it very difficult to share these wounds with one another. We have to realize though, that especially in our racially divided situation it is of the utmost importance to **learn to share our wounds and experiences with one another**. Some of these experiences led to the formation of **racial stereotypes and attitudes** which hamper and even block our communication with each other. Hence, for the sake of making good progress in our **joint forum**, we have to strive for the development of a **Christian healing atmosphere** and identity of the forum.
5. This is the reason why **open, honest communication and reconciliation** are regarded as **core values of a joint forum for public witness**. To establish and enhance these values requires **commitment and hard work**. In a practical way this can be achieved through the processes which are usually associated with workshops for reconciliation. Two important elements that are essential in successful workshops of this nature are **introspection** and a **new way of looking at others**. Firstly, it requires introspection on how I present myself. My stereotypes and attitudes, and even my hidden wounds tend to make my communication superficial. Secondly, it requires a new way of looking at others, especially at my partners on the other side of the racial divide. It concerns more than cultural differences, although these differences also play an important part. It is also about some other barriers and divisions which are difficult and painful to admit. Happily it also concerns **the wonderful discovery that God, amidst our weaknesses, is fully engaged in his redemptive work in my black or white fellow-believer**. God is also rejoicing in him or her. These insights and discoveries are only possible in a **joint learning experience** where we (re)discover the importance, the centrality and **the full implications of the reconciliation with God and one another that Jesus Christ brought about**. This experience can be enhanced and deepened through **appropriate facilitation**.
6. The **enhancement and deepening of our mutual understanding and intercultural communication** may lead to better co-operation, which in turn may lead to **joint ownership and the acceptance of our shared responsibility** in the formulation of **outreach goals and the identification of appropriate strategies** to meet the needs of our community. If and when we succeed in this process, the wonderful experience is shared that **‘we’ and ‘they’ just become ‘WE.’**

7. It is essential that the forum for joint public witness which is to be established, draft a **memorandum of understanding** which should be signed by the participating congregations. The act of signing the memorandum and exchanging the signed memoranda establishes the forum and paves the way for co-operation in a structured way according to the guidelines agreed upon.
8. The forum must apply for tax exemption at the relevant office of SARS and also register with the Department of Social Development as a Non Profit Organization (NPO) under law 71 of 1997. The draft constitution may be adapted in order to fit the specific requirements of the local situation, and should then be presented to the participating congregations for approval.
9. The forum for joint public witness should **communicate its outreach projects** in order to build a support base for the forum. Part of the process of communication to the supporting congregations is **regular evaluation, feedback and report**, as well as the identification of new challenges.
10. In order to work effectively, the forum may consider appointing **task groups** to do some research, and even **consider appointing a full-time or part-time functionary** to take the initiative with outreach projects. In the case of the employment of a full-time functionary, registration as employer with SARS, UIF and the commissioner of compensation is essential. **In all cases a proper service contract is essential.** An alternative modus operandi for the forum would be to contract a specific congregation to act as employer on its behalf, for the sake of utilizing existing structures. In whatever way the forum decides to structure its work, it is of the utmost importance that the right people be selected as employees, co-workers and associates. The values of good communication and reconciliation should be the decisive and determining factor.
11. **Liaison with the Synodical Forum for Joint Public Witness** is recommended for the sake of co-ordination, the exchange of information and experience as well as the sharing of management and facilitation expertise. In this way a network of forums for joint public witness can benefit society at large by spreading the concepts of good communication and reconciliation, erecting signs of the coming kingdom of

God and at the same time being in themselves living proof of the reign of God in our midst.

In the continuance of partnerships through the *Forums* one should have regular discussions to plot the way forward and define the needs in the Body of Christ. In 2008 the DRC and URCSA of the Northern Synod came together at the *Dienssentrum* to listen to the different stories of outreach projects of congregations and presbyteries. The stories were wonderful, especially rural projects together with the local congregations and presbyteries became known; evangelism, building and restoration of churches, helping vacant congregations, etc. (Note: On 17 June 2011 the URSA Northern Synod approved the discontinuance of the DRC and URCSA Forum. Rev ANE Louw also retired afterwards.)

#### **34.6.2 Evangelism and Service**

Since the post of secretary of evangelism was terminated, Rev Koos Beukes continued helping the URCSA congregations in a remarkable way with funds obtained from individual donors of DRC churches. He undertook building small ward churches in Venda and Shangaan traditional territories. The members of these URCSA churches are struggling financially. He also wrote and published seven series of Sunday school handbooks for teachers in English and Afrikaans as well as different Sunday school books for children in the vernacular. The problem is that this initiative is no longer sponsored officially by the DRC and the URCSA. He is maintaining several evangelization projects as donations permit. The need for Sunday school material in the younger churches is vital.

The Commission for Catechism Education of the Cape Synod of the URCSA brought out two catechism books in 2002 that filled the need for a contemporary catechism book that takes into consideration the Southern African context in general, and the URCSA context in particular. The General Youth Committee of the DRC and CLF co-operated in making available staff, technical skills and facilities, as well as financial sponsorship to promote the process.

#### **34.6.3 Christian Literature Fund (CLF)**

Another old partnership body is the tremendous contribution towards literature for Christian believers in the DRC family.

Still going strong after more than sixty years, the mission of the Christian Literature Fund has always tried to partner with congregations in ministry in the light of its vision, “the Message of the Bible to all.” The Christian Literature Fund supports ministry to individuals, ministers and congregations by producing and distributing free or affordable literature in various languages. This is done specifically with a view to ministering within all the member churches of the DRC family, including those beyond the borders of South Africa.

Besides free pamphlets, they also offer products for resale. These include ministry resources, such as hymnals in various languages, catechism guides, and Bible stories for children or new readers, preaching aids and marital guides. They also publish a series of books reflecting on ministering within congregations, methods of spreading the gospel and the call to congregations to get involved in alleviating the plight of communities.

#### **34.6.4 Dibukeng**

Since 1946 the Dutch Reformed Mission Bookshops in Pretoria were selling Christian books and Bibles to the public in all the languages spoken in the RSA as well as other African Languages such as French and Shona. These bookshops have lately been known as DIBUKENG with two branches in Bosman Street, one in Silverton and one in Brits.

Dibukeng was herited by the URCSA of the Northern Synod and publishes all the URCSA administrative materials, church aids and handbooks. Dibukeng is also the distributor of all CLF materials as mentioned above.

#### **34.7 A THREAT TO THE RURAL CONGREGATIONS AND WHAT TO DO**

The rural congregations of the URCSA are struggling financially. The congregations of the urban areas are much more privileged, because of greater numbers, better work opportunities and financial support by the urban DRC congregations. Many of our rural members moved to the urban areas. The congregations of the rural areas are waning. Many of these congregations previously had a missionary, some black ministers and evangelists, but these days are vacant (according to the URCSA year book approximately 40 congregations in the Northern Synodical area are vacant). In more than one presbytery every minister is a tent-maker. Many vacant congregations are served by a tent-making consulent.

Another problem is the lack of co-operation with other Christian Communities. In a certain URCSA congregation some small wards have teamed up with other small wards of the Methodist and Lutheran congregations for ecumenical services like Holy Communion, and other projects. This was unacceptable for the local URCSA minister, who only served Holy Communion four times a year.

Some church councils are not very sympathetic towards their ministers. When a dispute arises, the minister's salary is held back or no annual increments are granted or bonuses paid out. This is to let him know that he must look out for a calling elsewhere.

### **34.7.1 What to do?**

Solving financial problems in the congregations is not easy. Watching these congregations, training and trying to cause a mindshift in the leaders, received priority attention throughout the years from the executive secretary of the Northern Synod, Dr Maluleke. I was present at every workshop held at Mamelodi, providing suitable books and manuals to be studied after these workshops. The result was a remarkable change in these congregations when they placed their orders at Dibukeng. Some congregations show keenness in stewardship and management. There is still much work to be done. I admire the efforts of the staff at the *Mamelodi Dienssentrum*. I would be grateful if the DRC congregations, in partnership with the URCSA congregations in the urban areas, would team up to adopt a needy congregation in the rural areas.

### **34.7.2 Adoption of Needy Congregations**

The URCSA congregations in the urban areas have many members who still have ties with their homes; either parents or children still look after their family interests. When visiting some of the home sheds (lapas) they usually comment on the new house or rooms built by their son working in town. They always keep contact with their homes. When a relative dies, the custom is to bury the person at home or, as they usually say, at her or his 'place.' Why shouldn't these urban congregations also have a spiritual interest in assisting the rural ministers and congregations? I know of a church building at one of the wards in Sekhukhuneland and also of a church building in Lerato congregation which were built by an urban congregation. There are ample opportunities and ways in which to keep the congregations going in poor communities. There are several areas to be addressed and if

this can be done effectively, a whole new world will open up to the indigenous churches in rural areas.

### **34.7.3 My Story with Lepelle**

When I retired in April 1995 the situation in Lepelle was not encouraging. Rev Moloantoa also retired at the end of 1995 and Rev Khumalo was ill and not able to travel. He also had to retire soon. The church Council agreed that I could work for another year, provided that I paid my own transport. Since May 1995 I travelled to Lepelle to assist with the ministry in eleven wards. This continued until 2001 when the presbytery of Burger requested that I should have a proper contract drawn up if I wished to continue as assistant minister. This was done and a copy is included at the end of this section. I learned that the URCSA was not happy with anyone working with them without a legal contract.

The second matter was the use of the old mission building at Matlala Hospital. Since 1986 the young members of the DRC in Arcadia have been visiting Lepelle during Easter, showing Christian films and doing house-to-house evangelism. Their visits were agreed to by the church council every year. Some of the ministers like Rev Joel Heroldt and Rev Marthiens Swart also accompanied them.

When I retired I wanted to ensure that future visits by outreach groups could use the mission buildings and that equipment was safely stored. To ensure this on a more permanent basis, I approached the Lepelle Church Council, also asking for the formation of a *Forum* between the groups and the congregations they represent. I had a document drawn up by a Christian attorney, which is called an Association Agreement. (This document is also included at the end of this section.) The different stakeholders agreed to work together according to the memorandum of agreement. Although the church council of Lepelle did not refuse the use of the buildings, the document was not signed by the various parties. They undoubtedly found the Forum idea too strange and suspicious. The local church council of the Tsimanyane ward, however, was very grateful for the assistance received from the visitors. They visited hospitals, did youth work, even helped with Sunday services. The document also helped the groups to co-operate with one another.

The Arcadia youth group under the leadership of Rev Jan van Jaarsveldt changed their name to *Action Labourers of the Harvest* in 1990. It has its own constitution and is accredited to the Witnessing Commission of the DRC congregation of Lyttelton East. Rev Jan van Jaarsveldt was also ordained by the congregation of Lyttelton-East for Outreach, Witnessing and Service. Although I am assistant minister of the URCSA, I represent the DRC of Skuilkrans.

#### **34.7.3.1 Skuilkrans DRC Congregation**

Some of the members of Skuilkrans accompany me on my visits. Since my retirement, several of the members helped on a yearly basis with the restoration of church buildings. Apart from the maintenance of mission buildings at Matlala, consisting of the old farm house, which was the missionary's manse since 1956, and the evangelist's house which is now called *Outreach House*, and several outbuildings, ward church buildings were restored. Lepelle has 23 church buildings which are in need of regular attention. The main problem is the beams supporting the roofs, because when a leak occurs the wood gets wet and starts to rot. During the rainy season in Sekhukhuneland strong winds occur and many roofs are ripped off. A programme of regular inspection and restoration has been followed, because a 'stitch in time saves nine.' Two of the church roofs were destroyed during my time.

More money is needed for such projects. Members of Skuilkrans assist with material needs. Some financial assistance from the Witnessing Committee has been provided on a yearly basis. The yearly programme for the eleven wards of the Tsimanyane minister's ward, where I helped, is drawn up in co-operation with the minister of Lepelle, Rev MJ Moroaswi. He does not own a vehicle and all his travelling is done by taxi or with the help of congregation members. The nearby wards are grouped so that on one Sunday we take two, three to four services per day. With sixteen visits, all eleven outposts are served during the year. Each ward receives Holy Communion once every three months. I meet the minister at the crossing of the Apel, Jane Furse and Lebowa-Kgomo roads and from there we travel to the outpost where I drop him off until such time as I am able to fetch him again, or sometimes an elder would take him to the next outpost and from there again to the nearest taxi rank. He is also a tent-making minister who must report to his office in Polokwane on Mondays. Depending on the number of outposts, the distance travelled on these Sunday visits range from 100 to 200 kilometers, but never less. When an outreach

takes place in conjunction with the restoration of a church building, many more kilometers are travelled.

### **34.7.3.2 Evangelism Needs**

The need, particularly for spiritual ministry, in each of the different congregations of the presbytery of Burger is huge. Some elders are doing their utmost at their own cost, because they realize that the members yearn for a visit from the minister and for regular services. Yet, the loss in membership is continuing. Members just disappear without anyone knowing where they have gone. In 1995 I once met a man at one of the shops where I had to wait for a group from Pretoria who wanted to do an outreach in order to guide them and introduce them to the leaders of the community. He asked me: “Who are you?” I replied: “I have been the moruti here since 1977.” He told me that he was baptized by a Dutch missionary in the forties but he had never heard of me. I asked him how this was possible. I had been working there for 18 years, during which time he never visited a church service.

I experienced that *materialism* is one of the more serious problems of most members. Once they have a good job, their spiritual needs are not very high on the agenda. Another problem is that when people are *ill*, they are well attended to by the Apostle and ZCC members, with the result that gradually they are drawn to these denominations. The pressure that the church council is placing on members for financial *contributions*, and the threat that services would be withheld, especially with regard to funerals, have caused many members to leave the church. There is a great need for evangelism.

### **34.7.3.3 Continuance in Serving the Body of Christ**

Christ gave His Body to the church and the church became His Body. Geysler (s.a.:20) says: “The command to the church, in the image of the body of Christ, in the Holy Communion, and in the command to go out and preach the Gospel to all nations, just as the promise to the church when it was founded, defines and confirms the unity of the Church – as a visible unity – as a characteristic of the church.”

The two churches have a lot in common which should enable them to continue helping each other to fulfill Christ’s command, caring for each other as ONE Body in Christ. I hope that the idea of a *Forum*, perhaps calling it something else to explain its purpose and

vision, could take root. The idea of partnership since the Federal Council of DRC member churches is well-known and perhaps joint Communion Services could be held.

The problem is that the training institutions due to a shortage of funds, will never be able to produce enough highly trained ministers to serve the church, and at the same time reaching unbelieving people groups.

Kritzinger (2007:57) suggests that “these well-trained ministers should be deployed as specialists and trainers in the church.” The problem of unequal salaries as it existed in the old partnership era among white missionaries, black ministers and evangelists could be overcome by well trained teachers, preachers, administrative specialists and leaders in each small Christian community. An institute like Nehemia is already fulfilling this need as partner with congregations, specifically within all the member churches of the Dutch Reformed Church family, but also includes other churches.



**34.7.3.4 SERVICE CONTRACT LEPELLE CHURCH COUNCIL**

*Verenigende  
Gereformeerde Kerk  
in Suider Afrika  
Noord Transvaal*



*Uniting Reformed  
Church in Southern  
Africa  
Northern Transvaal*

**BURGER PRESBYTERY : LEPELLE CONGREGATION**

**SERVICE CONTRACT**

1. An agreement between

LEPELLE CHURCH COUNCIL  
(CHURCH COUNCIL)

and  
Gabriel Jacobs Jordaan  
(NAME OF MINISTER OF THE WORD)

2. The service contract endorses the Bible as the holy and infallible Word of God, together with the creeds and confessions which the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa confesses. It further endorses the Church order, the synodical resolutions and supplementary stipulations binding in the regional synod of Northern Transvaal.

3. I, Gabriel Jacobs Jordaan, hereby endorse statements mentioned in paragraph 2 above and further declare:

3.1 that I will abide by and implement the resolutions of the Lepelle Congregation.

3.2 that my services in the congregation will be done on voluntary basis and that I will not receive any remuneration or honorarium from Lepelle Congregation.

3.3 that this contract is valid until the 31 December 2001 and may be renewed if need be.



### **34.7.3.5 ASSOCIATION AGREEMENT**

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT ENTERED INTO BETWEEN:

THE NEDERDUITS-GEREFORMEERDE KERK ASSEMBLY: MARBLE HALL;  
(hereinafter referred to as the FIRST PARTY)

And

THE NEDERDUITSE GEREFORMEERDE KERK ASSEMBLY: SKUILKRANS  
(hereinafter referred to as the THIRD PARTY)

And

THE NEDERDUITSE GEREFORMEERDE KERK ASSEMBLY:  
LYTTELTON-EAST (hereinafter referred to as the FOURTH PARTY)

And

The organization known as ACTION LABOURERS FOR THE HARVEST (AKSIE  
ARBEIDERS VIR DIE OES (hereinafter referred to as the FIFTH PARTY)

And

UNITING REFORMED CHURCH: LEPELLE (hereinafter referred to as the SIXTH  
PARTY)

WHEREAS the FIRST PARTY is presently the legal occupier of the property as indicated  
on Sub Division Diagram LG. No A 272/80, attached hereto as Annexure 'A' (hereinafter  
referred to as THE PROPERTY) on which property certain buildings including a  
parsonage, study, outbuildings, church building, evangelist house and other buildings have  
been erected (hereinafter referred to as the BUILDINGS)

AND WHEREAS the parties have decided to form an effective control body (hereinafter  
referred to as the TRUST BOARD) shall comprise as follows:

1. A member from the local territory Church Council to a member from the  
NEDERDUITS-GEREFORMEERDE KERK ASSEMBLY: MARBLE HALL;

2. A member from the NEDERDUITSE GEREFORMEERDE KERK ASSEMBLY:  
LYTTELTON EAST;
3. A member from the NEDERDUITSE GEREFORMEERDE KERK ASSEMBLY:  
SKUILKRANS;
4. A member from the organization ACTION LABOURERS FOR THE HARVEST;
5. A member from the UNITING REFORMED CHURCH: LEPELLE.

The Chairman and Treasurer shall be elected from the above mentioned members.

AND WHEREAS the parties are desirous to record their respective interests and duties in this agreement;

NOW THEREFORE the parties agree as follows:

1.

#### DUTIES OF THE TRUST BOARD:

The Trust Board shall be compelled to make available the relevant buildings and facilities to work groups for weekend housing as well as household facilities during the week, depending on the duration of the projects contemplated by working groups.

2.

The Trust Board shall effectively manage any funds and monies entrusted to them and for this purpose, shall be compelled to open a Trust Account at a reputable financial institution. Available funds shall be exclusively utilized as follows:

- 2.1. Payment for water and electricity;
- 2.2. Maintenance of the buildings;
- 2.3. Maintenance of the site;
- 2.4. Costs incurred to communicate and associate with the relevant hospital authorities;

- 2.5. The Trust Board is also mandated to appoint a caretaker with all the normal general duties and to take effective measures to prevent burglaries and theft as well as monitoring of all activities and to take proper care of the site.

3.

DUTIES OF OUTREACH GROUPS AND VISITORS:

- 3.1. Outreach groups and visitors shall consult with the Trust Board and shall give their full co-operation to the Trust Board;
- 3.2. All outreach groups and visitors shall acknowledge the rights and duties of the local Church Board, Hospital Management, patients, occupants and other relevant authorities of the site;
- 3.3. To co-operate with the Board of Trustees;
- 3.4. To see to the conservation of bird life, trees and fauna and flora in general;
- 3.5. To co-operate with the caretaker regarding dates of occupation, keys and other relevant issues;
- 3.6. To adhere strictly to rules regarding safety. In this respect it is specifically recorded that the Board of Trustees shall under no circumstances be liable for any loss or damage of property, or injuries of any kind;
- 3.7. To maintain the site at all times and keep it in excellent order for the next visitors;
- 3.8. The units are self-catering and any visitors/groups will be expected to supply their own relevant furniture, apparatus and instruments for their own use:
- 3.9. Any new groups excluding those known to the Board of Trustees, shall be compelled to apply to the Trust Board in writing for the use of the facilities, specifying the date and purpose of their visit. As a result of limited space only one group can be accommodated at a specified time.
- 3.10. Keys must be handed back to the caretaker after use of the facility.

4.

As a result of poor electricity supply to the property, only a few rooms may be considered for renting, including accommodation to be provided for the caretaker who has to stay on the property. It is recorded that the facilities must be used strictly for church and related activities.

The reservation of groups or any one person is not transferable and must be cancelled if the group or a person in the group is not able to keep an appointment. New bookings must be approved by the Board of Trustees.

The Board of Trustees has the sole right to allocate the various accommodation facilities to groups or any one person.

### 35. THE DRC MISSION SINCE 1994 AND FUTURE PROJECTIONS

The question asked by Crafford (1982:589): “Will the DRC still play a role in Africa?” could be answered with a “Yes.” “In which way?” could be asked, especially since 1994. In this chapter I would like to evaluate existing tendencies and our mission dream for the future of the church. The change in government and the unification of the NGKA and *NG Sendingkerk* in 1994 caused the DRC to rethink its position and vocation as a missional church in Africa. Saayman (2007:106) also referred to the change in mission motivation, pointing out what he characterized as *The Fourth Wave: 1990 – To the ends of the Earth*. He quoted the new DRC vocation as follows:

“This motivation was verbalized thus at a DRC mission’s conference in 1938:

The church (DRC) is deeply convinced that God in his wise counsel ordained it that the first white citizens of this southern outpost in this dark continent of Africa would be men and women with deep religious convictions, *so that they and their progeny would be the bearers of light for this continent*, and therefore regards it as a special privilege and responsibility of the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa to bring the Gospel to the pagans of *this country*.” (Quoted in Scholtz 1984:85 – my translation and emphasis.)

The change in DRC missionary motivation becomes clearer if one compares this official definition of DRC mission with the official version as accepted in 1998:

“Mission is the salvific action of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit with the world through which He gathers for himself from the whole of humanity a congregation through his Word and his Spirit.

“Through this congregation God

- lets his Word be proclaimed to the fallen world;
- brings into being the communion of saints from all nations;
- provides ministry to a world in need;
- gives visible form to his command to protect and utilize creation; and
- his justice is proclaimed to the nations.

“In this way God makes his kingdom come to the ends of the world.

“For this reason the DRC accepts being used by God in his interaction with humanity and the world as the aim and motive of its existence.

Believers from every tongue and nation must be gathered thus to form a unity with all believers in true faith in Christ” (Die Kerkorde 1998:67; my translation).

In the first place the 1998 version is, as can be expected, far more comprehensive and detailed than the 1938 one. It is very clear that the pronounced evangelistic Africa-directness of 1938 has disappeared in 1998, to be replaced by broader ministry in *the world* and to *the whole of humanity*.

Many DRC congregations are involved in mission work both inland and abroad. The DRC Synod of Western Transvaal supports mission projects in Botswana, Sri Lanka, India and China (*Ned Geref Kerk Jaarboek* 2010:118). I would like to refer to two congregations only, namely Miederpark in Potchefstroom and Skuilkrans in Pretoria.

### **35.1 POTCHEFSTROOM – MIEDERPARK**

The congregation has a full-time secretary and a part-time manager to administer and co-ordinate the different mission projects inland and abroad.

#### **Inland Mission Projects**

1. A retired minister and his wife are doing hospital evangelization. They are supported by a team on Sundays doing ward visits.
2. They also have an inter-service as well as a special mission called TUG (The Ultimate Goal) which is a special project to reach out to people involved with the FIFA world soccer tournament.
3. *Emmanuel Tent-ministry*, for evangelization: This tent is active in different villages; cell groups are formed and the teaching of discipleship and church planting is the ultimate purpose.
4. A fully trained URCSA minister is doing part-time service in the industrial and mining areas.

5. Sunday schools are conducted on different farms with the assistance and co-ordination of one of the members of the congregation.
6. The DRC congregation of Potchefstroom supports a full-time evangelist in Tshepisang, one of the villages.
7. Multi-cultural services are held in the DRC church every Sunday. This is mainly for foreigners.
8. The Nehemia Bible School material is used in classes presented in the Potchefstroom Correctional Service.
9. The Timothy leadership courses are also followed for three years, by several students.
10. A job-creating service bureau is run and training of workers in some skills is taking place at different factories.

### **Mission Abroad**

1. Support for a full-time person to assist Egreja Evangelica International in equipping church leaders with the aid of Timothy Bible material.
2. A full-time person who is stationed on a certain unknown Arabic Island is supported financially.
3. The Reformed congregation of Wapadrand has a full-time missionary in Burundi, who is supported financially in partnership with Miederpark.
4. The Botswana Short-term Outreach Programme is a project to assist missionaries of different churches in Botswana which also include mission work among the San people. It is *Called Joining Hands to Reach Botswana for Jesus*.
5. Veritas College International is training believers in church planting in different French-speaking countries in Africa.
6. A full-time person is supported in assisting the church in Malawi with church planting, youth evangelism and adult literacy classes.

7. A mobilization service has been started to motivate other churches to send out missionaries to other countries.

### **Miederpark Missions Commission**

It is still known as missions commission as in previous years. This commission meets once a month and is divided in two sections, one for inland witnessing projects and the other for foreign mission projects. They then have a joint meeting to discuss the different points on the agenda (Ned Geref Kerk Miederpark Sending 2010).

### **35.2 DRC CONGREGATION OF SKUILKRANS**

The motto of the congregation is *Everyone a Witness*. A married couple, both ministers at Skuilkrans, is co-ordinating the different projects which are financially assisted from the Faith Offering fund. Some projects are financed by the church council. The congregation has several service groups actively reaching out. Some of the projects are being done in partnership with other organizations such as *PEN, MES, CMR, JIREH, Zama-Zama, Action Labourers of the Harvest* and *Hartklop*. Many children's and old age homes of the DRC and others are also financed.

The URC of Mamelodi, Ekangala and Lepelle are assisted by groups who visit them. Other congregations such as the RCA Shalom in Durban also receive assistance. Various aid programmes are financed and food parcels are also donated.

The after-school care centre on the grounds of the Silverton Church building called Silverton Crux cares for 50 children. A small committee, known as *Getuienisbediening* (Witnessing Service), manages the congregation's mission activities. A monthly mission newsletter is sent out to various groups and supporters.

### **35.3 EVALUATION**

What do we learn from these two congregations and from other congregations in the regional synods?

The DRC congregations are equally involved in mission in 'Jerusalem, Judeah and the ends of the earth.' Since 1994 the DRC has been involved in mission work abroad, but the ends of the earth has moved nearer home. Millions of people have flocked to this country

in search of a better living. Some left their homes to work in the city, which enables them to send money and necessities to their families.

### **35.4 A FUTURE PROJECTION**

When *God's Smuggler* (Brother Andrew) visited the RSA in 1971, I travelled with him and his organizer, Francis Grim, visiting different major cities in the RSA. I was responsible for selling his book published in Afrikaans, *God se Smokkelaar*. I heard him saying on various occasions that South African Christians should awaken and spread the gospel to Africa and the world before these nations settle in the RSA. Ironically, this warning has come true after 1994 with the change of government in the RSA. The world has come to 'Jerusalem.' Unbelievers (non-Christian people) from many countries flocked to squatter camps right at our doorsteps in the urban as well as the rural areas, looking for employment on farms, in the cities and in factories. Thousands of South Africans emigrated, most of them permanently. Many South Africans travel abroad for holidays, outreach and mission work. Modern techniques have brought the world very close indeed. Internet and television techniques opened new doors for the propagation of the Gospel. Saayman (2007:122) describes this scenario so well that I would like to quote him fully:

“It seems to me that there is not sufficient theological clarity on the relationship between mission in ‘Jerusalem’ and mission ‘to the ends of the earth’.” Throughout the history of Christian mission it seems to me that we generally understood this relationship in terms of strictly linear progression from Jerusalem to Judeah and then on to Samaria and ultimately on to the ends of the earth. I would suggest that one should rather understand it in terms of the progression of a never-ending spiral, where involvement in Jerusalem spirals on through Judeah and Samaria to the ends of the earth and back to Jerusalem, on through ... etc. The members of the body of Christ are therefore always equally involved in mission to Jerusalem and to the ends of the earth. The specific context may prescribe specific changes in accent from time to time, but it is not as if we complete our mission in Jerusalem and then move on to Judeah while the ends of the earth have to wait until we have finished in Samaria. And once we arrive at the ends of the earth, we never have to return to Jerusalem again! The ends of the earth can therefore not become a *substitute* for ‘Jerusalem’ – as it indeed seems to have become in DRC mission in the fourth wave. Some serious rethinking of priorities seems to be called for. An awareness of this necessity seems to be evident in the Vocation Statement taken by the General Synod of 2002

(*Roepingsverklaring* – DRC 2002). It contains four important affirmations and commitments:

1. Gratitude for the past 350 years of church history and the commitment to continue witnessing.
2. A renewed commitment to the continent of Africa and especially Southern Africa.
3. A commitment to greater unity with other churches as well as a special desire to unite with other churches in the DRC family.
4. A call to members, in whatever countries they are living, to be involved in healing our lands (Saayman 2007:117).

### **35.5 A NEW BEGINNING**

I would like to take some points from Van Niekerk's (1997:408) article: *Einde of Nuwe Begin vir die NG Sending?* (End or new beginning for the DRC Mission?) He says in his abstract that:

*A new South Africa and a new century require new structures, which can build on the good foundations of the past, but also make the necessary corrections, and respond to new challenges. The mission work of the past century was directed from the Synod and was especially carried out by missionaries. This structure has terminated. In the meantime there are signs of new life, new interests, and new enthusiasm for new initiatives everywhere. The missions committees of local churches are doing new planning for outreaches. Groups of young people go to neighbouring countries and even abroad. Many churches support young people who are working in our country, and in countries like India, Turkey, Russia and Europe. The last ten years the mission initiative has shifted from Synods to local churches, from trained missionaries to lay members, from a local and Africa-focus to a global vision, from central control to a wide variety of approaches, from own church structures to partnership in different para-church organizations (Van Niekerk 1997:414 – author's own translation).*

He continues to say that although there is much good in this, there is also a danger that many of these are not long lasting. The question is whether the energy which the local congregations are putting into these projects will last in the new mission era. This requires

research. Van Niekerk says that information must be based on three points of research fields:

### **1. The Bible**

*The rich information obtained through Bible Study has to be applied functionally to develop and to drive the new missionaries.*

### **2. History**

*Both white and black people have a rich pool of experience obtained through many years of partnership during the past mission era. How is this experience to be disposed of functionally in the new mission era in order to build on the good we have managed and to learn from each other?*

### **3. Context**

*We must find a way in the difficult and uncertain future. How must we understand the context in order to provide the correct answers?*

Without the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit none of our efforts could accomplish the comprehensiveness of the field research. Van Niekerk is sure that a mechanism could be created in which all who have gained experience and insight could find a way to communicate their knowledge and experience with others. This indeed would be a new movement in the church, so that each member of the church could obtain a better idea in a more dynamic and meaningful movement which could also be shared with other churches and groups (Van Niekerk 1997:414).

### **Another Mission Congress**

When I read this, I was reminded of the very fruitful mission congresses of the past. Hasn't the time come for a new congress to confer about mission work in the new era? The mission conferences during the old mission era have contributed much in the form of guidelines and motivation to the DRC family. In the past, these conferences were mainly attended by ministers and missionaries of the DRC.

## Delegates

If another congress or conference should be organized, the attendance scenario is going to be different. The delegates will be from the local congregations of the DRC through their Witnessing Committees and many part-time and full-time lay workers, of whom most are women. Many are tent-makers. Kritzinger (2007:50) refers to them in two categories:

- a) He/she devotes only part of the day to direct congregational ministry and
- b) his or her salary is derived from another occupation or source.

The congregation does not (in any case, not fully) assist the tent-maker financially. There are also some service organizations like SAAWE, where several of its personnel belong to the DRC and where retired DRC ministers are employed full-time. SAAWE (The South African Action for World Evangelization) provides a link between churches, organizations and evangelistic and church-planting needs. Representatives of the DRC family should also participate.

## The Agenda

1. **Borders:** I have already previously mentioned the problem regarding the concept of Jerusalem, Judeah and the utmost ends of the earth. Which are these borders in a post-modern era?
2. **New Terminologies:** When reading the book of Nelus Niemandt – *Nuwe drome vir Nuwe Werklikhede*, I was struck by the new words and notions; no longer can words like *heathen* and *uncivilized people* be used; these have been replaced by such words as *non-Christians*, *unbelievers*, *strangers* and *less evangelized groups*.
3. **The methods:** It is a long time since Roland Allen published his book *Missionary methods St Paul's or ours?* Another important publication is Kritzinger's *Rethinking Ministry – New Wine in new Wineskins*. This book gives the necessary information to be considered. It is a handbook for future mission work and church planting.
4. **Relationships:** Missional congregations and their relations with churches regarding witnessing; relations between older and younger churches, new churches and faith movement partnerships.

5. The old terms *missio Dei*, *marturia*, *kerygma*, *diakonia* and *koinonia* are to be re-defined.
6. The task of the Synod and Core Commission for Service and Witnessing should be attended to.
7. The necessity of a national mission magazine like the old *Sendingblad* should be reconsidered.

### **35.6 A NEW DREAM FOR THE EMERGING CHURCH**

Niemandt (2007:158) states that the missional church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is focusing on the world and its needs; no longer is the individual's needs in the centre. Now the individual believer is becoming a member of God's crisis-control team. This is to share God's mission of atonement, restoration and salvation in the world that needs grace. The world is God's purpose for mission – for God so loved the world. Warren (1995:53) says “Strong churches are not built on programmes, personalities or gimmicks. They are built on the eternal purpose of God.” The mission work which was previously done by a small section of the congregation has moved to the whole congregation as God's mission (Niemandt 2007:156). The urge is for Christian leaders to help members of a congregation by equipping, empowering and sending them out with a missional identity. This is also known as discipleship training. Jesus made disciples by taking them on a mission journey to practise daily the newfound knowledge they have gained through his teachings. They were taught to be devoted to service in God's Kingdom, to preach, to heal the sick and to care for those who are in need of food (Niemandt 2007:161). The emphasis is on training. Kritzinger (2007:58) calls it: *The enhancement of an every-member-ministry*.

*Every member has a ministry ... and this means every woman, man and young person. It is this ministry – a ministry based on the gifts of the Spirit – which needs to be <sup>(a)</sup>acknowledged, and <sup>(b)</sup>enhanced. It is of the utmost importance that the believers should not only be told that they have a ministry, but that they should be taught to understand it, and be trained for their ministry. And here we should take heed of the words in Ephesians 4:12: Exactly that is the most basic task of the 'some' that are set apart and trained. It is their calling to enable, to 'prepare', to assist the members to execute their (the people's) ministry.*

### **35.6.1 Evaluation**

The use of the term *missionary* is being redefined. There is a wide range of meanings and usages of this term.

Ott and Strauss (2010:222) refers to Brian McLaren, a prolific and popular voice of the emergent church who declares, “every church a mission organization, every Christian a missionary and every neighbourhood a mission field.” Ott and Strauss (2010:223) stated “that the churches must include the sending of individuals for cross-cultural ministry as an essential part of their overall mission in the world ... the challenges of communicating the gospel across cultural and linguistic barriers ... demand long-term commitments and exceptional gifts that not every Christian possesses.” The DRC has a long history of experience in mission work. The church must reconsider its vocation for the cause of Christ’s global mission. “The nature of the world Christianity has dramatically changed over the last century, making a reassessment of the role of missionaries necessary. The distinction between sending countries and mission fields has broken down, requiring greater co-operation. International partnership in mission is no longer an option; it is an imperative” (Ott and Strauss 2010:236). The DRC also has a long history of partnership. Missionaries, evangelists and black ministers worked together each with their specific calling.

### 36. PARTNERSHIP – AN ANSWER TO PROBLEMS AND TENSION?

At this stage it is necessary to ask what happened to Whitby's *Partnership in Obedience*. What was the influence of the Ecumenical Movement in the history of mission? Was partnership an answer to problems and tension?

The Bible has much to say about the importance of obedience; the world is the field; go into the world and preach the Gospel to every creature; you shall be my witnesses to the ends of the world; the good news of the Kingdom must be preached all over the world so that all nations can receive the truth. Our duty is to finish what God has commanded us to do. Every Christian has been called and must be mobilized. The believer who obeys God will receive great rewards (Mark 10:29-30).

Obedience of Jesus' great command was also the theme at Whitby, where the International Mission Council gathered to give new hope to the mission of the church after the tragedy of World War II. *Partnership in Obedience* helped the church to expect that new things will happen and to believe that the Church is God's way to change the world to become a better place for mankind (Bosch 1979:178).

The relationship between the DRC and the daughter churches was not influenced only by the forces which were stipulated in Chapter 30: *NGKA and the DRC Partnership – a summary*. There were also other latent forces at work within the Federal Council of the Dutch Reformed Churches. The DRC as mother church could not control the strong influence of the ecumenism in the younger churches.

A timely book, *Reflection on Mission in the African Context*, edited by HL Pretorius, AA Odendaal, PJ Robinson and G van der Merwe, was dedicated to the memory of the late Prof Lex van Wyk, "our respected colleague who, having written part of the manuscript, did not live to see its completion" (Pretorius, *et al.* 1987:viii).

These authors stated that: "The Ecumenical Movement (EM) is therefore concerned with the manifestation of the essential unity of the church, the one body of Christ, with the solidarity and co-operation of the churches constituting a common witness in the world. Thus it is the movement that provides an opportunity to express that unity which is given in the common calling of all churches and Christians by the same Lord Jesus Christ. Though this unity does not yet find its fullest expression in the way the NT envisions, still

the EM remains a dynamic spiritual force” (quoted Visser ‘t Hooft 1970:180 in Pretorius, *et al.* 1987:163).

### **36.1 UNITY AND MISSION**

The first International Missionary (IMC) conference was held at Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1910. Pretorius, *et al.* (1987:164) say: “Under the chairmanship of John R Mott, it undertook the task of surveying the world mission of the non-Roman churches. Edinburgh was of major historical importance for Protestant participation in the modern EM.”

In the 1920s it developed into three main ecumenical organizations which came together in 1948 in Amsterdam, where they formed the World Council of Churches (WCC), which put a lot of energy in politics. Rightfully Pretorius, *et al.* (1987:165) ask what happened to the unity-mission discussion. This quest for spiritual integration between missions and unity went on, however the practical expression of this relationship in the life of the churches and of the Ecumenical Movement (EM) created many problems. “This is perhaps best illustrated in the search for the right relationship between the IMC and the WCC which were ultimately integrated in 1961 at New Delhi” (Pretorius, *et al.* 1987:165).

Many churches, even the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) and evangelicals worldwide, became participants in the ecumenical discussions on unity and mission. For South Africa and the churches of the DRC family, the South African Council of Churches (SACC) played a role of ecumenical involvement. It could be said that: “No other church body has attracted more attention due to its involvement in and comment on social ethics in South Africa” (Pretorius, *et al.* 1978:166).

The younger churches were drawn into discussions with the sending churches. Pretorius, *et al.* (1987:166) say: “As an example of an ecumenical organization on a regional or continental level the All-Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) can be mentioned. It is significant that two South Africans, Prof ZK Mathews and Dr DJS M’Timkulu, played vital roles in the pioneering and implementation of this conference.”

### **36.2 ECUMENISM IN THE YOUNG CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Churches which were the result of the Protestant missionary enterprise, also called indigenous churches, became conscious, after one century, of their important position as

church of Christ and their unity with the missionary bodies and their missionary calling together with the older churches.

These younger churches realized that the Western churches were divided. It was also called ‘the scandal of Western denominationalism’ (Pretorius, *et al.* 1987:167). The influence of the EM in the young churches could be summarized as follows:

- 1) The young churches were in a dilemma. On the one hand they had the desire to break through the traditional forms of denominationalism; on the other hand they had deep respect for and loyalty towards the transmitted forms as visible ties with the church universal.
- 2) The context was different. One result of the context being different was that the indigenous churches did not always respond to their milieus as the Western mission agencies ‘expected’ them to respond. This developed an attitude of paternalism in mission – the view that in many cases the missionaries held on too long to a position of authority over and control of the indigenous church.
- 3) Another factor was that paternalism went hand in hand with dependency on the support of the home mission in the West and the younger churches were unable to function on their own. Pretorius, *et al.* (1987:168) state that: The concerns discussed above, as well as many others were present in all younger churches. Frequently ecumenical bodies were used as a forum to grapple with these common problems. Slowly the younger churches became conscious of their important position as church of Christ and they became active in ecumenical relationships.

### **36.3 WHITBY (CANADA) 1947 – PARTNERSHIP IN OBEDIENCE**

It all started with the meeting of the IMC at Whitby (Canada) in 1947. Pretorius, *et al.* (1987:168) summarize the outcome as follows:

*The churches of the Third World were virtually voiceless in the early international ecumenical meetings. Of more than 1 200 representatives at Edinburgh only 17 came from the younger churches, not even one being from Africa. But the tables were gradually to turn. The meeting of the IMC at Whitby (Canada) in 1947 was confronted with the need to break down the distinction between older and younger churches in the face of world-wide*

responsibilities. In principle the move was from missionary paternalism to partnership in mission.

This development was later to be hailed as introducing a new missionary era, despite the great reluctance by missions to take seriously the call of Whitby to 'partnership in obedience'. (My emphasis.)

Today the prevailing attitude is that a justifiable dependence of a younger church can go hand in hand with interdependence of the different members of the body of Christ. Once again the necessity is demonstrated for the whole church to bring the Gospel to the whole world, in which both the West and the Third World are included.

The factors and problems concerning the unity and mission of the church in other regions of the world were also present in South Africa. Pretorius, *et al.* (1987:169) summarize it as follows:

The denominational variety; the young churches' ambivalent attitude toward their own denominations; the fact that different issues are addressed by the two types of churches; the influential role of non-theological factors; the mutual embarrassment and failure to meet expectations; the tensions involved in the process from paternalism to partnership and from independence to mutual interdependence. (My emphasis).

The situation in South Africa is further complicated by three unique elements. These could be stipulated as follows:

- 1) The older and younger churches share the same area.
- 2) The denominational division has been worsened by division along racial lines.
- 3) The three different Reformed churches of the white people have not been involved in the EM. As a result, the ecumenical search for unity in mission went on. However, the DRC itself has tended to become more isolated since the 1960's. The three younger members of the DRC family positively became more involved in the EM.

This resulted in the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Reformed Ecumenical Synod taking disciplinary steps against the DRC. However, these movements were very

positive towards the younger churches of the DRC family. These younger members of the DRC family also had a positive attitude toward the SACC (Pretorius, *et al.* 1987:170).

#### **36.4 WHITBY 1947 TO WORCESTER 1975**

What happened to Whitby's *partnership in obedience*? The General Synod of the NGKA at Worcester 1975 agreed to continuing partnership, even called partnership in obedience (*Kerk en Wêreld* 1978:45). However, the Synod's resolution of agreement with the Federal Council of DRC Churches' statement on partnership, a new foundation for future joint co-operation with the DRC and understanding was decided on (30.6). This was reflected at the DRC Mission Congress (24.4) in 1978. The theme of this congress was *The Execution of the Mission Calling in a Changing World*. The DRC was requested to adapt its policy on missionaries due to the end of the old mission era. In this regard, Kritzinger, Meiring and Saayman (1984:89) state: "Many things which were previously accepted as self-evident are no longer self-evident ... the days are past when a missionary or his society could automatically step in and settle in a place of his choice."

The DRC in Sekhukhuneland as described in this dissertation, lost its function regarding mission hospitals, mission schools and institutions. This is true of all the DRC mission projects in Africa and South Africa. Regarding evangelization and support for the younger churches, the DRC was willing to continue with the partnership. Foreign missions were debarred in many countries, but in South Africa the situation, with so many unreached, caused the DRC to be willing to co-operate further with younger churches of the DRC family in order to complete the unfinished task. However, the general feeling of sending mission churches and organizations in the Western world is "the euthanasia of mission as the ultimate object" (Kritzinger, Meiring & Saayman 1984:157).

#### **36.5 WHAT HAPPENED TO THE *MISSIO DEI* CONCEPT?**

In the light of the discussion of the Ecumenical Movement, Jennings (2007:219) states that *missio Dei* involves three interrelated themes which will be summarized as follows:

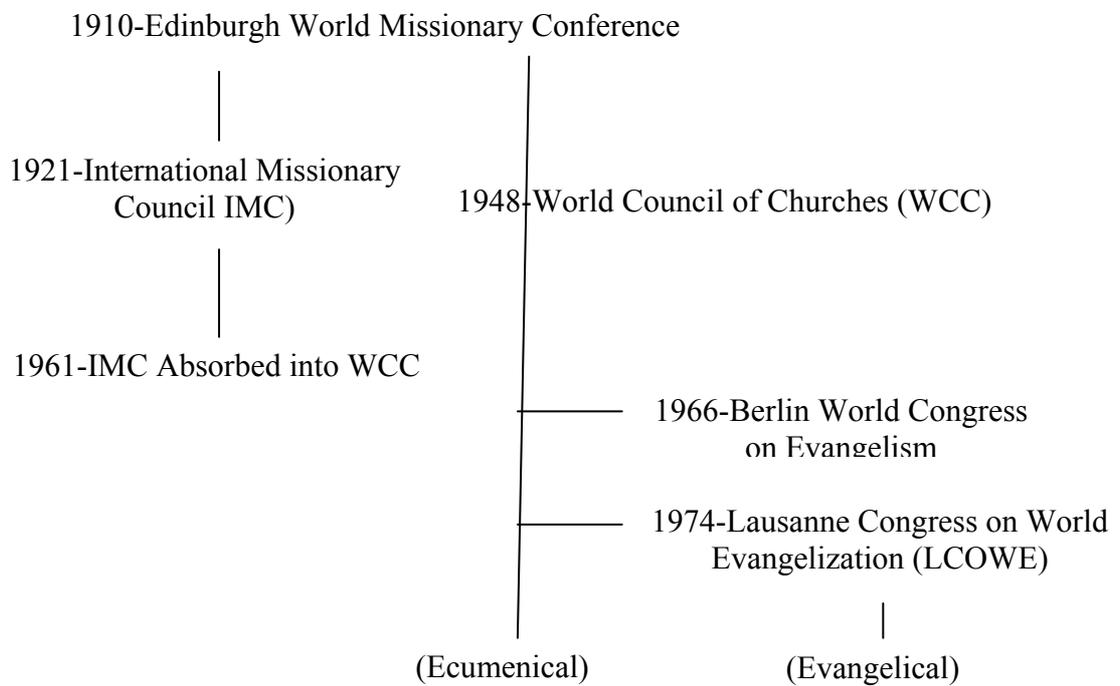
- 1) "Christian missions spread the Christian faith, by contrast *missio Dei* focuses on the triune God's initiative and activity.

- 2) God does not work alone through the church to save the world, but also directly in world events, i.e. non-ecclesiastical, social, political, and economic realities.
- 3) The church, in its one mission, under God had to find new ways of outreach – co-operative action, reconciliation, interfaith encounter.” Evangelicals, however, who were involved in mission sending organizations did not agree with replacing them with the evangelical activity of the existing national churches. For them it was a shift from mission to mission.

### **36.6 EVANGELICALS SEPARATE AND CONSOLIDATED**

As a result, the *Lausanne movement* was started with the evangelicals gathering in Berlin in 1966, convened by Billy Graham. This led to the 1974 Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization (Jennings 2007:222).

**Figure 2: TWENTIETH-CENTURY UNIFICATION AND FRAGMENTATION OF THE MODERN MISSIONS MOVEMENT**



The stated purpose of the LCOWE is to further the evangelization of the world by building bridges of understanding and co-operation among Christian leaders everywhere to

mobilize the whole church to proclaim the Gospel to the whole world. It shows how evangelicals were seeking to co-operate positive elements of certain emphases of the *missio Dei* concept outlined above.

### **36.7 EVANGELIZATION AND MISSION**

The following is an analysis of the purpose of LCOWE as summarized by Jennings (2007:222):

- 1) **Evangelization of the world:** First, the purpose is for ‘the evangelization of the world by ... proclaim[ing] the whole Gospel.’ The term *evangelization* is intended to be more holistic – including both word and deed – than the term *evangelism*, which is ‘proclamation’: ‘World evangelization requires the whole Church to take the whole Gospel to the whole world.’ The fact the WCC understands *mission Dei* as God’s activity in the world outside the church is still acknowledged. The focus, however, must be on proclamation and the need for people to express their Christian faith.
- 2) **Building bridges:** *Second is the stated purpose of ‘building bridges of understanding and co-operation among Christian leaders everywhere to mobilize the whole church.’ Evangelicals recognized and rejoiced in the church’s growth outside the West. To carry out the task of world evangelization, ‘co-operative action’ between Western and non-Western Christian leaders was seen as strategic and even necessary. At the same time, evangelicals (at least Western evangelicals) did not concur with such ‘new ways of outreach’ as the type of ‘interfaith encounter’ that ecumenicals in the WCC were advocating. Christians were to be mobilized not to dialogue but to ‘proclaim ... to the whole world’ salvation in Jesus Christ alone.*
- 3) **The whole world:** The stress on proclaiming the gospel to ‘the whole world’ points to a third distinctively evangelical emphasis. The absorption in the early 1960s of the IMC into the WCC was based on the belief that God’s mission involved the servant church around the world more so than Western-based mission agencies. The evangelicals were concerned about the still-unreached areas of the world. Missions centered in preaching Jesus Christ to the world’s unevangelized. With the more all-

encompassing *mission* of the church possibly losing that cutting edge, the vitality of Christian missions needed to be protected and emphasized in its own right.

The above distinctives do not differ much from Kritzinger (1988:34), who stated that “mission is evangelization because evangelization is communication of the Good News of salvation of Christ to all who are outside the field.” This emphasis is on winning souls, but a broader view is that man is more than *soul*. Mission is directed at the *whole person* and on his *whole situation*. Mission is involved in the needs of people. The three dimensional view of mission is involved in the *whole person*, in his *whole situation* in answer to the *whole Gospel*.

To be a witness is preaching (*kerygma*), which means evangelization, which is the proclamation of the Name of Christ through whom salvation comes. This evangelization is taking place through word and deed. *Diakonia*, on the other hand, is involvement in the social needs of people while *Koinonia* is the building up of the church in view of God’s mission. Kritzinger (1988:35-36), Figures 2.1 and 2.2 explain Bosch’s (1979:227) metaphors of the prism and a pair of scissors.

### **36.8 PARTNERSHIP ECUMENICAL VS EVANGELICAL MISSION(S) DISTINCTIVES**

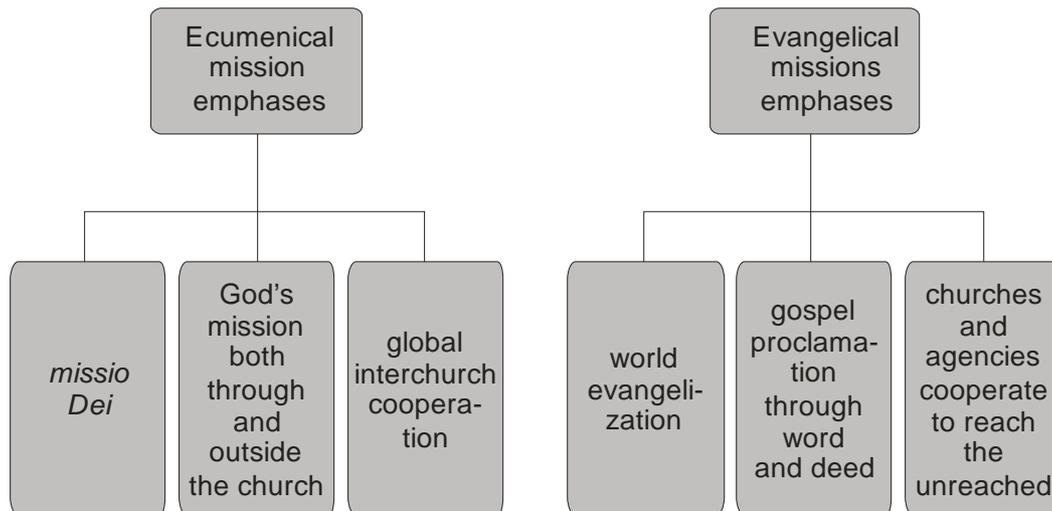
*The ecumenical mission emphasis is on global inter-church co-operation. The Evangelical missions’ emphasis is on churches and agencies co-operating to reach the unreached. Ecumenicals see God’s mission both through and outside the church. Evangelical missions’ emphasis is mainly proclaiming the Gospel through word and deed. Jennings (2007:224) remarks that:*

*Ecumenical missionaries and church leaders, therefore, became inclined to focus on such issues as peace, justice, and inter-religious dialogue. What happened with apartheid in South Africa, for example, was a major concern of the WCC.*

*Evangelicals, on the other hand, had channeled their energies toward identifying the world’s unreached peoples and mobilizing churches to send missionaries to those peoples for evangelization and church planting. Being strongly tied with the pietism era of mission history the DRC supported the Evangelical missions rather than co-operating with Ecumenical movements.*

**Figure 3: THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY DEVELOPMENT OF MISSION AND MISSIONS**

## Ecumenical vs evangelical mission(s) distinctives



According to Jennings (2007:225) (figure above) profound differences exist. There is also an overlap. Jennings suggests that organizationally they must stay separate – “the difference between those emphases is a big deal.” Further reflection by other missiologists follows below.

### **36.9 PARTNERSHIP AND DIAKONIA**

Kritzinger (1995:95) states in a paper read at the *Mission's Consultation on Trends in Mission Sending from South Africa* (Cape Town, 5 December 1995), that “the kind of partnership that preferably should be endorsed, is one steeped in the Biblical notion of service (*diakonia*). The emphasis should not be on the rewards of partnership, but on the privilege and necessity of serving each other. When a partnership lacks this serving spirit, it will not succeed. It is important to evaluate the above statement in the light of the context and circumstances in which the church has fulfilled its witnessing task.”

Bosch (1979:227-228) discusses the relationship between *diakonia* and the other two dimensions, *kerygma* and *koinonia*. He says that since the twenties with the emergence of a *comprehensive approach* mission and the realization that mission is more than *kerygma* only; the all-inclusive Biblical approach is as follows:

*Every aspect of one's existence is involved. It therefore does not suffice to think or speak of our witness in terms of the proclamation or preaching of the Gospel only. Witness is more than kerygma (proclamation). The Biblical term which is appropriate to express the all-inclusive nature of our witness is the Greek word marturia (witness). Marturia means to witness by word and deed, even if it may bring suffering and opposition of the witness. Marturia includes kerygma (proclamation), koinonia (fellowship) and diakonia (service).*

This was affirmed by the Missionary Conference at Willingen (1952) (Pretorius, *et al.* 1987:97).

A fourth dimension *leitourgia* (worship) was added later (Bosch 1979:227). In discussing the relation between the three dimensions, Bosch (1979:227) states that *kerygma* and *diakonia* belong together as the witnessing of the church. The Word is the spoken Word of God and God's deeds are seen and tangible. The salt and the light in Matthew 5:13-16 do not explain the difference between the *kerygma* and the *diakonia* of the church. Such is the *Great Commandment* (Matt 22:39) to be interpreted. It is like the blades of a pair of scissors held together by the *koinonia* – the stem. This stem is the cement which is keeping the *diakonia* and *kerygma* together. The primary task of the church is neither the one nor the other.

Bosch (1979:228) warns that the above interpretation should not put us back in a balance theology. The Bible speaks of various gifts, and different Christians fulfill different tasks in witnessing. The World Council of Churches of 1959 put it as follows: “There is no single way to witness to Jesus Christ. The Church has borne witness in different times and places in different ways. This is important. There are occasions when dynamic action in society is called for; there are others when a word must be spoken; others when the behaviour of Christians one to another is the telling witness. On other occasions the simple presence of a worshipping community or man is the witness. These different dimensions of witness to the one Lord are always a matter of concrete obedience. To take them in isolation from one another is to distort the Gospel” (Bosch 1979:228). This confirms

Bosch's statement that in a definite context it will be shown where the accent should be placed and the circumstances will dictate how our witnessing should be carried over. The main issue of *marturia* however, is genuine solidarity in our trustworthiness.

Not only the WCC but the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization and the World Evangelical Fellowship under the title *Evangelism and the social responsibility* in its paper: *An Evangelical Commitment* (1982) agreed that the church's struggle with social evils like poverty, oppression, violent injustices and suffering challenged congregations to take a firm stand on social, political and economic issues. Great emphasis is put on the righteous deed (*dikaiōma*) as a further inseparable part of witness (*marturia*). Evangelism means doing justice and preaching grace (Pretorius, *et al.* 1987:97).

This confirms Bosch's statement that genuine *kerygma* has an inherent social dimension and *diakonia* an inherent proclamation dimension (Bosch 1979:228).

### **36.10 PARTNERSHIP AND MISSIO DEI AFTER WHITBY**

What happened with Whitby's partnership of 1947? The shock of World War II caused the realization that younger churches in the non-West serve Christ along with the older churches of the West. Jennings (2007:219) states that the Christian leaders were grappling with how to understand this new post-World War II world of the 1950s. For them, a traditional 'West-to-the-rest' programme of missions would no longer do. That approach was too church-centered, and it was too *based in the West* as well. For many the more God-centered *missio Dei* was becoming a more satisfactory concept to use in understanding Christian mission. It would, in fact, become the single most influential concept in wider (ecumenical) twentieth century Christian mission theology.

Fortunately we had and still have mission strategists in our country and in the DRC and the younger churches as well, to guide us along in the struggle to apply God's purpose for the church in South Africa. Their views were mentioned above and reflected with regard to partnership in obedience.

Pretorius (1987:99, 100) ask whether missionaries are still needed, seen in the light of the emphasis on every congregation as testimony ... "the answer is a definite but qualified no ... from what we have said, it is evident that missionaries as specialized witnesses are still necessary. It is, however, a prerequisite that they should be sent out and placed only with

the co-operation of all churches or congregations concerned. When used as staff for specialized ministries, missionaries will not replace ‘the testimony of the congregation, but extend and deepen it’.”

The situation in the NGKA was different compared to the presence of large numbers of missionaries from foreign countries in Africa and Asia. The partnership of the DRC family of churches made provision for white DRC ministers to pastor the congregations and to be supportive of black ministers and evangelists. The South African situation was different. Kritzinger (1979:13) mentions that the missionary has created a mighty machine and it is his responsibility to see that it functions effectively, an expensive machine with a team of co-workers to be paid, and with many activities. He must therefore keep contact with individuals and institutions and ensure money flows in at the right time. He is no longer the chief of the mission, but in practice he is still doing the same things. With the independence of the NGKA, his position in comparison with those of his black colleagues, and considering the background of the political situation in the country, is cause for tension and problems. The missionaries in the homelands would remain, with specific responsibilities and in no senior position above black ministers. In the transition from mission to church, it was expected that the black ministers had to take over the role of the missionaries for which they did not have the necessary training and experience (Kritzinger 1979:14, 15).

### **36.11 PARTNERSHIP: AN ANSWER TO PROBLEMS AND TENSION**

Before we can answer this question, one should look at another aspect which also emanated from the WCC. The WCC initiated a study on the subject *The Word of God and the Living Faiths of Men* (Kritzinger, et al. 1984:51). In 1967 at a conference in Kandy in Ceylon, of Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant representatives on *Christians in Dialogue with Men of Other Faiths*, dialogue was studied against the background of the unity of mankind and of a very universalistic concept of redemption. At this conference dialogue was also linked to the love of God, which obliges us to communicate with our fellow men. The following statement was made: “We believe that Christ is present whenever a Christian sincerely *enters into dialogue with another man*; the Christian is confident that Christ can speak to him through his neighbour, as well as to his neighbour through him. Dialogue implies a readiness to be changed as well as to influence others” (Kritzinger, et al. 1984:51).

Evangelicals feared that dialogue would oust mission altogether. The report at the WCC in Nairobi in 1975 included the following words: “We all agreed that the Great Commission of Jesus Christ which asks us to go out into all the world and make disciples of all nations, and to baptize them in the Triune Name, *should not be abandoned or betrayed*, disobeyed or compromised, neither should it be misused. Dialogue is both a matter of hearing and understanding the faith of others and also of witnessing to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

In the discussion that follows Kritzingler, *et al.* (1984:52) say that there are more than one form of dialogue: “Verkuyl distinguished three forms: Dialogue aimed *at better mutual understanding* (in other words, to *remove misunderstandings*); dialogue aimed at *better co-operation* on social problems between people of different faith; and dialogue as a *medium of missionary communication.*”

Important aspects to ascertain whether the principles of dialogue could also be applied to a working agreement of partnership as a method for proclaiming the Word in missionary work could be evaluated as follows:

The attitude must be one of openness and humility. Every dialogue must be open to God and his address to us. True dialogue must always be open to becoming *trialogue*. Kritzingler, *et al.* (1984:54) state that Verkuyl, in particular, has pointed to an important, but often neglected element:

*Every dialogue aimed at facilitating missionary communication must be open to the participation of another partner, the Holy Spirit. Dialogue thus becomes ‘trialogue’? He quotes a statement of the conference in Mexico City which described dialogue thus:*

*The partner in dialogue who does not listen to the other is arrogant and irrelevant. But if in the dialogue we do not interpret the Gospel, we are turning dialogue into a superficial conversation. In the dialogue our concern must be that we, together with our partner, should be involved in God’s dialogue with us and with our partner, in which he moves both us and our partner to listen and respond. Thus dialogue can never be a free-wheeling conversation between people.*

A further aspect is partnership and unity. Kritzingler (1995:96) states that one of the fundamental reasons why partnership should receive priority attention in mission is the *Biblical notion of unity*:

*Sadly, evangelical missions are often marked by intolerance, tensions and divisions. Could the failures of mission be ascribed to the lack of unity within the missionary community?*

*Historically speaking, the missionary movement of the previous century provided the main impetus for the growing ecumenical awareness in world Christianity. However, sometime during the present century the evangelical wing of the mission enterprise withdrew from the ecumenical movement and found itself in the role of the adversary. Ecumenism came to be regarded as apostasy, a backsliding from the true evangelical calling. What a pity! We should recapture the indicative of Jesus' prayer, namely that mission and unity are inextricably intertwined.*

The situation within the DRC family could be described as disunity. The partnership between the *NG Sendingkerk* (DR Mission Church) and the DRC were divided on the DRC's mission statement of *self-governing and independent churches*. The DR Mission Church requested the DRC to change this policy, because it was not willing to work together in mission work if common ground is wanting (Kritzinger 1988:37). The result was that a workshop was called for in April 1986 and a new work definition for mission was drawn up. It was clear that, at that time, the DRC was not regarded as trustworthy.

The historical facts regarding dialogue between the DRC and the younger churches, and the development of further dialogue did not bring any solutions. After the unification of the two churches, the NGKA and *NG Sendingkerk in Suid-Afrika*, to form the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa, the dialogue about unification continued. The approval of the partnership for mission in 1975 by the NGKA General Synod and the DRC General Synod in 1978 opened up other aspects which caused division, such as the mission policy of the DRC as described above.

One shortcoming according to Crafford (1982:571) was that little emphasis was placed in the partnership on the existence and the functioning of joint commissions which could function as an instrument for the execution of the work. Perhaps, if joint commissions had functioned, the partnership would have continued in spite of division and tension.

#### **36.12 EVALUATION OF PART FOUR**

This phase was not easy for both churches, the DRC and the URCSA. However, this move was important because the leaders of the URCSA realized that their members had to

undergo, as Maluleke called it, a mindshift (34.4). Each church had to consider its position, some to survive, and some DRC congregations considered new fields for mission work.

After the unification of a section of the NGKA and the *NG Sendingkerk* in 1994 in forming the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa, several DRC congregations are still supporting the URCSA in some way or the other, but one cannot call it partnerships. The ideal of partnership has largely disappeared. The ideal of church unification has not been reached. In many local areas new relationships are being formed.

### 37. IS PARTNERSHIP A PARADIGM SHIFT IN MISSIONS IN MODERN TIMES?

Partnership as it arises from the DRC Mission in Sekhukhuneland has been discussed as a model that has developed gradually. In my research of this history I have discovered that partnership was an underlying issue during the development from mission to church.

The DRC Mission did not draw up a blueprint for partnership during this time. Long after the DRC started with mission work in South Africa and in Africa, the first concept, *church and mission*, was coined at Tambaram (1938) which discussed under this term in a more theological manner the relationship between church and mission as well as between *older* and *younger* churches. The shift was from a church-centered mission (Tambaram) toward a mission centered church. Bosch (2006:463) states that, “Willingen (1952) began to flush out a new model. He recognized that the church could be neither the starting point nor the goal of mission. God’s work of salvation precedes both church and mission.” At a conference in Ghana (1958) a new consensus had been reached.

<sup>(a)</sup>‘the church is the mission’, which means that it is illegitimate to talk about the one without at the same time talking about the other; <sup>(b)</sup>‘the home base is everywhere’, which means that every Christian community is in a missionary situation; and <sup>(c)</sup>‘mission in partnership’, which means the end of every form of guardianship of one church over another (Bosch 2006:464 quoting Newbigin 1958:25-38).

Nothing is said anywhere that this theological development has influenced the DRC to establish an independent church and that partnership with the NGKA as from 1963 would be the basis for reaching out to other ethnic groups. This partnership was a natural development. The terms *mother* and *daughter churches* were often used and the missionaries and evangelists were the paid workers of the DRC in this partnership. When black ministers were placed, they also came onto the pay sheet of the sending body, the mother of the daughter.

In discussing the influence of the Ecumenical Movement, the term *partnership in obedience* (Whitby 1947) was often used in the dialogue between the DRC and the younger churches. Nussbaum (2005:119) in discussing Bosch’s book, *Transforming Mission* (1991) makes the following remark regarding this partnership:

“In the mid-twentieth century a number of ‘marvelous phrases’ were coined to point to the new goal of partnership between Western churches and those churches that had resulted from Western-based mission” (465.9).

The hollowness of these phrases is best summed up in a comment an Indonesian pastor made about the slogan of the Whitby missionary concerning in 1947, ‘Partnership in obedience.’ He said to a Dutch professor, ‘Yes, *partnership* for you but *obedience* for us” (466.1). Things have improved in the last fifty years, but there is still a long way to go. “We need new relationships, mutual responsibility, accountability, and interdependence” (466.4).

Partnership has become an important issue in missiology. The DRC and the new Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa have terminated their discussion on missions. The issue of *unity* remains which is still on the agenda of the dialogue between these two churches, although certain projects and work agreements still exist. In future, other partnerships may be considered. I hope that the partnership in reaching unevangelized ethnic groups could become an important issue on their agenda.

### **Partnership a Paradigm in Missions**

It seems that partnership will become an important model in future and particularly in a cross-cultural situation. Ott and Strauss (2010:219) reckons that there are several reasons why the sending of cross-cultural missionaries remains a biblical imperative:

1. *In many countries the church is still weak and welcomes foreign missionary assistance.*
2. *In many countries the church is small and inadequate to the task of evangelizing their nation.*
3. *The need for cross-cultural pioneer missionaries continues because of unevangelized people groups. Often within the same district one ethnic group responds to the gospel, while a neighboring ethnic group does not. Countries such as India, Indonesia, and Nigeria are composed of hundreds of ethno linguistic groups, many having no indigenous church or witness to the gospel. Due to historic ethnic rivalries, one ethnic group may reject the witness of Christians from another nearby*

*neighbor ethnic group. Culturally distant pioneer missionaries will be more effective in such situations.*

4. *Outside missionary personnel are needed to perform diverse tasks such as computer programming, literacy education, Bible translations, agricultural development and community medicine.*
5. *Long-term cross-cultural missionaries who have mastered the local language and culture can serve not only directly as relief workers but also as culture-bridge persons facilitating communications and ensuring that aid is given in culturally appropriate ways.*
6. *The Great Commission is mandated with the promise of Christ's presence 'to the very end of the age' (Matt 28:20).*

These reasons mentioned above prove that partnership is a close working relationship between denominations and/or organizations, who agree to work together for a specific purpose, because they can achieve more together than by themselves. The role of missionaries is necessary even when indigenous churches have become independent. In many situations *interdependence* still exists. Missionaries can play a key role in partnership in collaboration among members of the Body of Christ who are working together in functional unity and mutual respect to effectively achieve common goals in the advancing of God's Kingdom.

However, questions regarding the missionary vocation are complex, but Ott and Strauss (2010:236) find a strong biblical case for the following theses:

*The nature of world Christianity has dramatically changed over the last century, making a reassessment of the role of missionaries necessary. The distinction between sending countries and mission fields has broken down, requiring greater cooperation. International partnership in mission is no longer an option; it is an imperative. Nevertheless, the Great Commission has been neither withdrawn nor fulfilled. There remain yet many peoples unreached by the gospel of Jesus Christ. No church faithful to its Lord can cease to give, pray, and send its daughters and sons for the cause of Christ's global mission.*

Each member, his or her congregation and their denomination must realize that missionaries are still needed. Kritzinger, *et al.* (1987:99, 100) agree by saying: “from what we have said it is evident that missionaries as specialized witnesses are still necessary. It is however, a prerequisite that they should be sent out and placed only with the co-operation of all churches or congregations concerned. When used as staff for specialized ministries, missionaries will not replace ‘the testimony of the congregation but extend and deepen it’.”

Partnership, whether missionaries are involved or not, is designed to take joint collaborative action and to achieve things together that one cannot achieve separately. The co-operation of the churches or congregations is a prerequisite. Their focus is on a partnership which is being formed to reach an unreached ethnic group or the people of a country, region or city with the Gospel. Partnership, however, does not function on the contract or agreed-upon goal only. Partnership is also connected with the notion of *missio Dei*. For this reason I close with a remark from Bosch (2006:492):

“On the other hand, it cannot be denied that the *missio Dei* notion has helped to articulate the conviction that neither the church nor any other human agent can ever be considered the author or bearer of mission. Mission is, primarily and ultimately, the work of the Triune God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, for the sake of the world, a ministry in which the church is privileged to participate” (cf LWF1988:6-10). Mission has its origin in the heart of God. God is a fountain of sending love. This is the deepest source of mission. It is impossible to penetrate deeper still; there is mission because God loves people.

It is true that God has honored man with an exalted place of co-operation and partnership with Himself in mission.

### **Partnership in the Bible**

Partnership must be essentially functional, says Sinclair (1988:219). All projects need to be watchful over their continuing usefulness. “Some forms of partnership are graciously impeccable: a kind of ecclesiastical diplomacy with a missionary flavour, but the issue appears to be nothing more significant than the struggling survival of the institutions themselves. Undoubtedly partnership is not just for partnership; nor should structures be for structures. There is a kind of ecumenical partnership which is so bureaucratic and self-

absorbed that it strangles any useful action. There must also be a place for an agile response to the urgings of the Holy Bible. There are many structures that serve their time. Some continue a little longer than they should. At best they are mother of pearl; the costly stones of *koinonia* love out-price them.

### **Koinonia**

The New Testament word *koinonia* is grounded in the Triune God. This New Testament word is related to relationship. When Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath day he responded to the Jewish leaders by saying: “My Father is always at work to this very day, and I too, am working (John 5:17). God’s work in creation and redemption shows partnership between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Paul’s share in the Lord’s service also shows great intimacy with God. But Paul also identified him as partner with others. For Paul missionary partnership was a very personal, intimate and local thing working with Jews and Gentiles. The gift of the gentile churches of Macedonia and Achaia to the famine stricken church of Judeah was an act of Christian compassion, which Paul eagerly encouraged. For him it was a mutuality of giving and receiving in material and spiritual gifts” (2 Cor 8:14).

### **Partnership of Reconciliation**

I agree with Sinclair (1988:210) in saying: “So in Christ the global partnership is intact after all. The bonds are unbreakable. Because Jesus identified with all, sinned against and sinners, all have the possibility of identifying with each other. Through the grace of Christ all, black and white, military and revolutionary can see themselves in each other. They can say: ‘If I had walked in the other person’s shoes, I could have so easily done the same.’ This is no trite formula; it requires a new kind of obedience, a shared exploration of faith, a costly entry into other people’s worlds, and a demanding co-operation in missionary service. Like all else, the global missionary partnership is the fruit of the reconciling dying of the Saviour.”

### **Give-and-take Partnership**

Sinclair (1988:211) quoted Robert Ramseyer in asking: “How can we truly be partners when one side is strong and wealthy and the other is poor and weak?” It assumes that

because the churches of the First World are wealthy, have elaborately developed institutions, a highly trained ministry, and a long history, their contribution to any missionary partnership must completely overshadow anything that the Third World churches might provide.

“Robert Ramseyer believes that we, as Christians, need new attitudes: An understanding that ‘we are strangers and pilgrims even in the land of our birth.’ Only as we achieve a measure of personal detachment from what we have always considered our native socio-cultural settings do we become capable of perceiving both our own needs and the resources which God provides to and through our fellow Christians.” *Partnership is not also understanding* that others should repent, rather it requires the esteeming of the others more highly than ourselves.

### **Partnership in Prayer**

Prayer can change and transform other relationships, however difficult or distorted. Yet it is also an indispensable part of missionary support.

Sinclair (1988:214) further mentioned that *suffering in partnership* when doing missionary work is to be as surely experienced as fellowship in Christ’s sufferings. Together with the partnership of suffering is the *partnership of reaping*. One could not always see success, but in mission work every witness counts as part of the harvest at the end.

### **Structures for Partnership**

Sinclair (1988:215) says the authentic features of the Christian *koinonia*, or partnership, that we have described as reconciliation, understanding, mutuality, prayer, suffering and reaping, cannot produce these results itself. The structures can, however, stifle the desired relationship or allow them to grow. Mission requires partnership; partnership requires structures (Sinclair 1988:216).

### **CONCLUSION**

It seems that ‘partnership’ will always be an important dimension in mission strategy. As shown above, the DRC and the DRC family partnership was characterized with much tension. The drive for unity was placed at the top of the agendas.

We need to strive for unity, because this is indicated in the prayer of Jesus, namely that mission and unity are intertwined. But if full unity is not within reach, we still have to consider forming partnerships as a form of unity, and a necessary way to obey the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20).

Partnership is usually seen as a mutual agreement on contractual base between two or more partners in accomplishing a purpose. However, God's mission involves each congregation as a co-worker (*mission ecclesiae*). All congregations which are co-workers of God should at least co-operate with other churches in the same area, possibly in a Church-Church partnership.

Mission remains a call from God which is to be obeyed. He initiated mission and his church is called as humble partner by grace in this great commission. That means that each DRC congregation and the congregations of the old DRC family have to consider their position in reaching out and becoming witnesses in a world that is fast becoming post-Christian.

If we do not do this with other congregations called by the same God, we may fall short of our calling.