

**LEADING TOWARD MISSIONAL CHANGE: AN AFRO-CENTRIC MISSIONAL  
PERSPECTIVE ON THE HISTORY OF SOUTH AFRICAN BAPTISTS**

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I declare that *“Leading toward missional change: an Afro-centric missional perspective on the history of South African Baptists”* is my own work and that all sources cited herein have been acknowledged by means of complete references.

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Signature

D. Henry

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Date

## LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

<b>Name of figure</b>	<b>Page</b>
1. Sources used	23
2. Leading toward missional change	25
3. DRC waves of mission	66
4. BUSA waves of mission	67
5. Relooking Africa's importance	90
6. Percentage Christian in 1910	116
7. Numbers of Christians in 2012 and the shift of gravity in the	116
8. Barrett's stats	121
9. Religion by global adherents, 1910 and 2010	122
10. Religions by continent, 2000 and 2010	123
11. Percentage majority religion by province in 2010	124
12. Jenkin's stats 1	129
13. Jenkin's stats 2	129
14. Christian growth by country, 1910- 2010	131
15. Christian growth by country, 2000- 2010	131
16. Majority religion by country, 2050	132
17. Global religious change, 2010- 2050	133
18. Religious adherence and growth, 2010- 2050	135
19. Cole Church 3.0	139
20. Marketplace needs Forgood.co.za 2012	170
21. Largest cities in 1910	180
22. Growth of cities	181
23. Number of Cities by continent, 2010	181
24. Urban Growth Rates in Africa, by region	182
25. African regional historical and futuristic urban Growth Rate Figures	183
26. Regional Continental Urban Growth Rates averages	184

27. Largest urban areas 2010	185
28. 50 urban areas with the most Christians	186
29. Urban Christians in Africa	187
30. UN-HABBITAT	193
31. African Urban Agglomerates	194
32. Comparison of BUSA Member churches and Fellowships	251
33. Comparison between BUSA membership and adherence (Trends)	253
34. Growth areas within BUSA's Fellowships	254
35. Growth areas in BUSA's church membership	255
36. Trends in local church baptisms	257
37. Number of Children on the national front	258
38. Numbers of Children's workers in BUSA	260
39. BUSA regional child distribution and growth	260
40. Numbers of youth nationwide	261
41. BUSA young adults regional distribution	261
42. BUSA young adults nationwide	262
43. Associational young adult breakdowns	263
44. Summary of BUSA trends 2006-2011	264
45. Online respondent timeline	266
46. Distribution of BUSA churches	267
47. Graphic depiction of the distribution of BUSA churches	267
48. Economic breakdown of BUSA reach	268
49. Graphic depiction of the economic breakdown of BUSA	268
50. Understanding of 'missional'	270
51. Self-identity of BUSA churches	271
52. Current missions involvement of BUSA churches	271

53. BUSA pastors personal leadership styles	273
54. Effectiveness of BUSA cell groups	285
<b>Tables:</b>	
1 Associational breakdown of BUSA churches	252
2 BUSA adherents	253
3 Children's ministry changes (Associational)	259
4 Statistical rate of return	260
5 BUSA Pastors and time management	274
6 BUSA Pastors devotional integrity	274
7 Youth ministry in BUSA	283
8 BUSA churches and discipleship	285
9 Effectiveness of BUSA cell groups	285

## RESEARCH SUMMARY

This study shows the importance of leading toward missional change within BUSA in post-1994 contexts incorporating global, afro-centric missional perspectives as South African Baptists. As my research will indicate, BUSA is at a crucial junction, and I contend that BUSA's main problem is primarily a *missiological problem*, with ecclesiastical challenges that urgently need to be addressed by BUSA's leaders. The importance of BUSA's critical self-reflection and analysis is paramount. Does BUSA and her mission have a future, or will it fade into obscurity?

Utilizing the South African Baptist faith heritage as an important interlocutor with a view to *retrospective* and *prospective* Baptist ecclesiology in post-1994 South African society. Special recognition is given to the contribution of emerging Afro-centric missional voices within the current South African/African context. In doing so, this study seeks to be *leadership-oriented*, *biblically-based* and *Afro-centric* in its approach to *missional change* with South African Baptist Union churches.

Toward missional leadership within BUSA churches this study:

1. Uncovers the importance of an Afro-centric missional ecclesiology, taking into consideration both local and global trends and conversations.
2. Uncover a retrospective view of Baptist Ecclesiology within the Southern African context, with its relevance to the history and present-day context of ministry within BUSA.
3. Analyses existing statistical data found within the Baptist Annual Handbook, to establish denominational trends since 1994, with a view to identifying significant ministry trends operable within BUSA.
4. Collects, analyses and interprets data from a number of churches from within the Baptist Union of Southern Africa that stand out as significant in three or more 'missional indicators' in the first tier of research and analysis.

In reading through the pages to follow, you will journey alongside the researcher in:

- **Analysing and interpreting** the history of Baptists in South Africa with reference to BUSA, BCSA, SABMS and the ABK through a '*missional lens*'.
- **Critically** examining current trends visible within BUSA churches since 1994 to the present-day.
- Undertaking **qualitative** research to identify *phenomenology* of people's shared experience in BUSA

- **Interpreting and objectifying** statistical results drawn from qualitative research at local church level; making further recommendations towards an Afro-centric missional ecclesiology relevant to BUSA churches in post-1994 contexts.

## **KEY WORDS**

Africa; Missional; BUSA (Baptist Union of Southern Africa); Global South, missions, AIC, MIC, NPC, glocal

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

BUSA- Baptist Union of Southern Africa

ABK- Afrikanse Baptiste Kerk

BCSA- Baptist Convention of South Africa

BASA- Baptist Association of South Africa

SABMS- South African Baptist Missionary Society

BBC- Bantu Baptist Convention

BC- Baptist Convention

LMS- London Missionary Society

MIC- Mission initiated churches

AIC- African independent/ initiated churches

NPC- newer Pentecostal-type churches

SABH- South African Baptist Handbook

BBI- Baptist Bible Institute

BWA- Baptist World Alliance

DTI- Department of Trade and Industry

BTC- Baptist Theological College

CTBS- Cape Town Baptist Seminary

## LIST OF DEFINITIONS

**Africa:** Africa shall represent the modern day continent comprising 54 countries with a combined population estimated at 1 billion people. Africa is the second largest continent on earth with a total landmass covering 30,212,000 square kilometers and is an important contributor to our world, both economically and spiritually and will continue to grow in its influence in both sectors.

**Missional:** Being missional relates to our understanding both the Triune *missio Dei* and the ‘*sending*’ posture of the Church as it continues the work of Christ. Being missional points to the unique call of the Church to be in, with, for and against the world. Because we are the ‘sent’ people of God, the Church is the instrument of God’s mission in the world. Mission is both an originating and organizing principle.

**BUSA:** BUSA is known as the Baptist Union of Southern Africa and comprises around 600 churches of which some are members and other affiliates and fellowships of BUSA. BUSA is organized in regional fraternals and Associations, which operate independently and cooperatively with BUSA.

**Global South:** Countries within the Global South are representative of the fastest growing Christian population in the world today, and comprise countries not in the West or traditional colonizing powers responsible for early 20<sup>th</sup> Century missionary endeavors.

**Missions:** Missions shall mean the movement of the people of God (church) in concert with the Holy Spirit engaging the mission of God in reconciling the world to God. Mission is the theological anchor of missions, which represents the obedience of the saints in response to the overtures of God through the atoning work of Jesus Christ.

**AIC:** These churches are located in Africa and have adopted a syncretized view of Christianity with a primary epistemology of African Traditional Religion seen as equally authoritative and important as Scripture. They represent the fastest growing church movement in Africa.

**MIC:** Mission churches relate historically to the traditional forms of church that were introduced to Africa through missionary endeavors and represent the vast numerical base of these traditionally Western churches within the Global South.

**NPC:** NPS's are a newer variety of church movements characterized by a renewed focus on the Holy Spirit but have a definite departure point with African Traditional beliefs and values as young Africans seek a renewed, modern, Post-colonial African Christian identity.

**Glocal:** This is an important concept that defines and characterizes our age; where both global and local concerns impact issues of importance for society. Being glocal makes reference to a broader concern for both local and global issues and concerns.

**Urban:** This term shall be used in conjunction with the term ‘city’ as it relates to the modern phenomenon of gathered people in specific locations for economic furtherance and benefit. Urban refers to larger groupings of populations encompassing urban-fringe, suburban and inner city contexts.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

RESEARCH SUMMARY	6
KEY WORDS	9
ABBREVIATIONS	9
LIST OF DEFINITIONS	10
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	13
1. Background/ Rationale	20
2. Research Problem Defined	23
3. Research Questions	25
4. Hypothesis	26
5. Goals and Objectives	29
6. Motivations	31
7. Methods and Approach	32
8. Scope of Study (Limitations)	36
PART ONE- THE SOUTH AFRICAN BAPTIST FAITH HERITAGE	37
CHAPTER ONE	
SOUTH AFRICAN BAPTISTS	39
1.1 A Brief History of the Cape of Good Hope	39
Chapter Summary	40
CHAPTER TWO	
THE SOUTH AFRICAN BAPTIST HERITAGE	47
2.1 A brief history of South African Baptists	47
2.2 The formation of BUSA	58
2.3 Historic Baptist structures and policy	65

Chapter Summary	69	
CHAPTER THREE		
UNDERSTANDING BUSA'S MISSION DEVELOPMENT		71
3.1 Waves of Baptist Mission and Development	71	
3.1.1 Wave One (1820- 1877)	73	
3.1.2 Wave Two (1877- 1950)	75	
3.1.3 Wave Three (1960's- late 1980's)	78	
3.1.4 Wave Four (1970's- 1980's)	81	
3.1.4.1 Years of reflection	83	
3.1.4.2 Years of structural change	85	
3.1.5 Wave Five (1990's- 2000's)	85	
3.1.5.1 Years of transformation	85	
3.1.5.2 Years of new development	87	
3.2 Chapter Conclusion and Questions posed	91	
Chapter Summary	95	
PART TWO- TOWARDS AN AFRO-CENTRIC MISSIONAL ECCLESIOLOGY		97
CHAPTER FOUR		
THE IMPORTANCE OF THE AFRICAN CONTRIBUTION		99
4.1 Africa- the world's powerhouse	99	
4.1.1 From Colonial domination to independent rule	105	
4.1.2 African resurgence or redundancy; which shall it be?	106	
4.2 Africa's enriching heritage	117	
4.3 Africa in the twenty-first century and beyond	122	

Chapter summary	123	
CHAPTER FIVE		
GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY		124
5.1 Historical paradigm shifts and African Christian dominance	124	
5.1.1 Western Christianity?	124	
5.1.2 Christianity's Southward Mega-shift	130	
Chapter Summary	146	
CHAPTER SIX		
A SUMMARY OF THE TIMES WE LIVE IN		148
6.1 Rapid change	148	
6.2 Ever-changing contexts	159	
Chapter Summary	168	
CHAPTER SEVEN		
THREATS TO AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY		170
7.1 Threats to the African situation	170	
7.2 Important global trends impacting Africa	174	
7.2.1. Globalization	174	
7.2.2. Reactionary Theologies	184	
7.2.3. Urbanization	189	
7.2.4. Christian Churches	215	
7.2.5. Leadership Enigma	217	
7.2.6. Emerging Grassroots theologies	220	
Chapter Summary	224	

PART THREE- THE NEED FOR AN AFRO-CENTRIC MISISONAL ECCLESIOLOGY	226
CHAPTER EIGHT	
THE ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF AN AFRO-CENTRIC MISSIONAL ECCLESIOLOGY	227
8.1 Setting the record straight	227
8.2 Missional's menacing and misunderstood meaning	236
8.3 Missional makeover	245
8.3.1 What does the missional church look like?	248
Chapter Summary	249
PART FOUR – CONTEMPORARY BAPTIST WITNESS IN SOUTH AFRICA	252
CHAPTER NINE	
MINISTRY AND MISISON IN THE RAINBOW NATION	254
9.1 Understanding South Africa's urban tribes	254
9.2 Brief outline of the 12 urban tribes	258
9.3 Implications of Chang's approach to BUSA	261
CHAPTER TEN	
BAPTISTS TODAY	263
10.1 Denominational trends since 1994	265

10.2 Implications and importance of the trends in BUSA	280	
10.3 Current trends in BUSA churches	282	
10.3.1 Delimitations of my study	282	
10.3.2 Threats BUSA need to address and recommendations	287	
10.3.2.1 Leadership and critical, contemporary scholarship	288	
10.3.2.2 Youth & children's ministry	297	
10.3.2.3 Spiritual growth (discipleship)	299	
CHAPTER SUMMARY		301
CHAPTER ELEVEN		
PHASES OF MISSIONAL TRANSITION (PERSONAL CASE STUDY)		303
CHAPTER SUMMARY & CONCLUSION		325
FURTHER RESEARCH INTERESTS	331	
WORKS CONSULTED	332	
INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED		351
APPENDIX A		352

## 1. BACKGROUND / RATIONALE:

The Church is a beautiful gift from God to the world, but has often been a reproach in society rather than a blessing - especially in Africa. This is evidenced in the growth of Christianity under the guise of Colonialism and the current marginalization of the Church and mission being experienced within South Africa (despite the country's majority Christian populace). I often wonder; if we were to close the doors of our local Baptist church ministry in the foreseeable future, would our immediate community really care or notice? Have we, as Baptists, done justice to what God expects of us in terms of God's mission and purpose? Have Baptists (BUSA) come to terms with the Biblical truth regarding the centrality and priority of mission?

I firmly believe that we are living in a critical time in history where those both within and outside the Church are questioning why we exist, and what we ought to be doing. This time in history will be remembered as a time of re- evaluation of all things 'church'. This, I hope, will lead people to uncover God's intent for His people rather than simply resigning themselves to Nominalism.

I recently read a book with a provocative title "*The Christian Atheist*" by Craig Groeschel (2010). This title seems to be an oxymoron; after all, how can any Christian be an Atheist? Well, if truth be told, there are many who believe in God, yet who live as if God does not exist. That's the definition of a Christian Atheist and I suspect that in Africa, as in the rest of the world, we have a preponderance of Christian Atheists.

Groeschel is not the first to write a book on this subject. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) wrote on this at the end of nineteenth century, from his experience of people's attitude towards God in Europe. It seems that the 'God is dead' thinking may have infected Africa!

To further illustrate the above point; within sub-Saharan Africa the predominant religion is Christianity, yet the HIV prevalence rate is one of the highest (if not the highest) in the world. The further north you go in Africa, the lower the Christian following and the lower the HIV prevalence rate goes. There may be many valid reasons for this; however, one cannot deny that perhaps one of the greatest reasons why this is so relates to the fact that, even within a continent known globally for the fastest Christian growth rate in the world, there are many who claim to believe in God, yet who live as though God does not exist.

I argue that the problem is primarily a *missiological problem*, with ecclesiastical challenges that urgently need to be addressed by this generation of African scholars. I fervently believe that BUSA needs to reflect on its own relevancy going into the foreseeable future; will BUSA survive the next 25 years, or will it fade into obscurity?

There are various reasons why the focus of my thesis is on Africa, specifically BUSA. Firstly, I am an African; I am a young white, male, South African who has recently returned home after working in an international church in Botswana for around four years. I have a deeply-rooted passion for seeing the Kingdom of Christ established in Africa, and seeing it grow and develop as it seeks to continue

Christ's work on earth in this age. I am committed to reaching *all* of Africa with the *whole* Gospel; yet recognize that it will take the *whole* Church to accomplish the monumental Trinitarian task of fulfilling the *missio Dei*.

We can no longer assume that there is *an African Christianity*; rather, there is a plurality of *African Christianities*. Therefore, there is a need to engage one's specific (local) political, religious, socio-economic and geographical context with timely missiological perspectives. This should be an urgent undertaking of African church leaders and members.

Secondly, over the last century the centre of gravity in the Christian world has shifted inexorably southward, to Africa and Latin America. Today, some of the largest Christian communities on the planet are to be found in those regions (cf. Jenkins 2007:1; Johnson & Ross 2009) Therefore, Jenkins asserts, we should be careful about making blanket statements regarding beliefs and views from a western perspective. After all, the largest proportion of believers lies south of the equator within the Global South, and the views of the West (Global North) are representative of an ever-shrinking remnant of Western Christians living within the sphere of global Christianities. This fact needs to be celebrated and cultivated simultaneously through partnership in mission, as equals.

Thirdly, I am a Baptist pastor and identify myself with our South African Baptist heritage as well as Baptist beliefs and principles. I am indebted to the Baptist Union of Southern Africa (hereafter referred to as BUSA) for my heritage of faith and the opportunities of service provided to me within BUSA over the years as a

young pastor and scholar. This study is both retrospective (in as much as it helps me to interpret present-day traditions and trends) and prospective (in as much as I look into the future of BUSA ministry). My prayer is that this study will add great value to our union of churches as we are His witnesses from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth - fulfilling the Christological, teleological, imperative.

## **2. Research Problem defined**

The indispensability of the Church of Jesus Christ is the primary motivation for writing this dissertation. Jesus instituted the Church to be His witness, in 'Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth' (see Acts 1:8). An example of how our witness is to be carried out is illustrated vividly within the narrative of the Acts of the Apostles - both locally and globally. As Acts describes, missional church is a partnership between the individual Christian, congregation (and denomination), church leader and the Holy Spirit fulfilling the *missio Dei*.

As long as the Great Commission remains unfulfilled (as it does within Africa particularly) missiological perspectives will never be out of season. Adding Afro-centric voices and concerns to the discussion should be viewed as an urgent undertaking of African scholarship in the new milieu of the exponential growth experienced within the Christian world in the Global South. This is an important consideration for African Christian leaders/ pastors within Africa's burgeoning Christian population. Additionally, the urgency of the imminent return of our Lord should not be easily disregarded as the Church fulfils the *missio Dei*.

The purpose of this study is to utilise the South African Baptist faith heritage as interlocutor (dialogue partner) with a view to retrospective and prospective Baptist ecclesiology. Special attention will be paid to the contribution of emerging Afro-centric missional ecclesiology within the current South African context. The focus of this study will be directed towards a *leadership-oriented, Biblically-based, Afro-centric* approach to *missional change* with South African Baptist Union Churches in mind.

### 3. Research questions

Leading toward missional change within BUSA churches is the final outcome of my research and lies behind each of the enabling outputs within the corpus of this study.

1. What is the overall significance/ importance of an Afro-centric missional ecclesiology, taking into consideration both local and global trends and conversations?
2. What is the present-day impact of historical BUSA ecclesiology?
3. What relevance does the history and present-day context have for BUSA churches?
4. What denominational trends have occurred within BUSA since 1994?
5. How have the trends of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries differed from the trends experienced within the late nineteenth and mid- twentieth centuries of BUSA's history?
6. Which number of BUSA churches stand out as having experienced significant, holistic growth, through a missional renaissance since the end of the twentieth century to the present day?
7. What hope does a missional ecclesiology offer local churches?
8. What can be done towards equipping local church leaders for missional change?

9. What does it look like to lead towards missional change - what is required from a pastoral perspective?
10. Which Trends within BUSA are constructive, and which are destructive.

#### **4. Hypothesis**

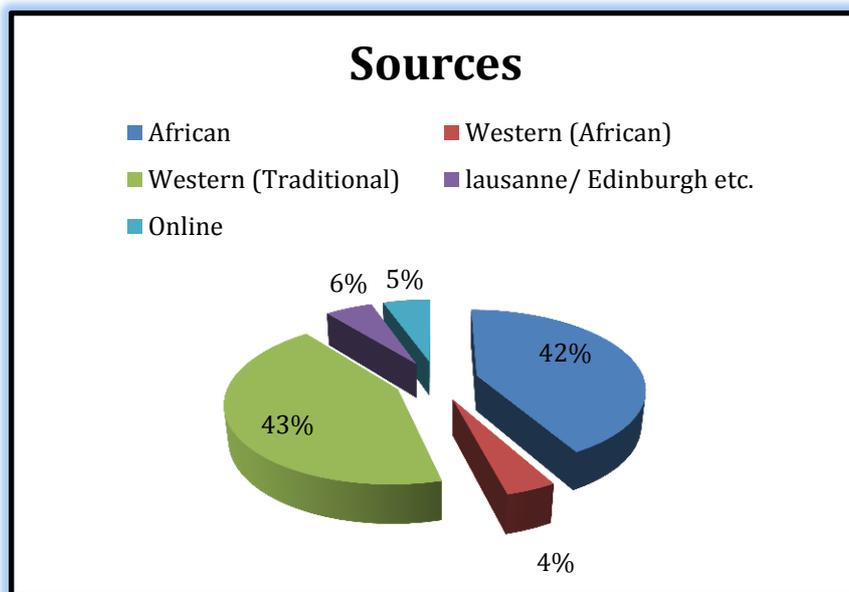
The overall purpose of this study is to utilise the South African Baptist faith heritage as interlocutor (dialogue partner) with a view to retrospective and prospective Baptist ecclesiology. Special attention will be paid to the contribution of emerging Afro-centric missional ecclesiology within the current South African context.

The focus of this study will be directed towards a *biblically-based, Afro-centric* approach toward *missional leadership* with BUSA churches in mind.

The aim of this study is to gauge the overall significance of an Afro-centric missional ecclesiology in the specific context of present-day BUSA ecclesiology and praxis. Taking into consideration both local and global trends which influence, in some or other way, ministry within the South African setting with all the challenges and opportunities it poses. The focus of my thesis is the local BUSA church within the broader missional conversation - understanding historical shifts within BUSA to engage present-day challenges with the unchanging *missio Dei*.

This has various implications for local church ministry and leadership in moving toward an Afro-centric missional ecclesiology.

In the light of the above, I have tried to be 'influenced' by both the Global North and South in this research project, to maintain a healthy balance throughout. Figure 1 (below) indicates the numbers of sources used in this thesis with reference to their context and value as an interlocutor. I have referenced approximately 148 sources in this dissertation that are representative of the following:



*Figure 1 Sources used*

There is a balance in sources between traditional Western and African sources (which include primary research into BUSA). There are also a number of African writers referenced that now consider themselves 'Western' or write from the West primarily.

In summary, the hypothesis of my study is simply: BUSA's future will be undeterminable without an *intentional, missional re-orientation* in congregational life. This reorientation should be *Theo-centric, biblically-based* and *Afro-centric* in approach toward *missional leadership*. BUSA's current growth trajectory is indicative of the *urgency of a missional re-orientation* taken seriously by the leaders of our Union- the problem is missiological with ecclesiological implications and challenges.

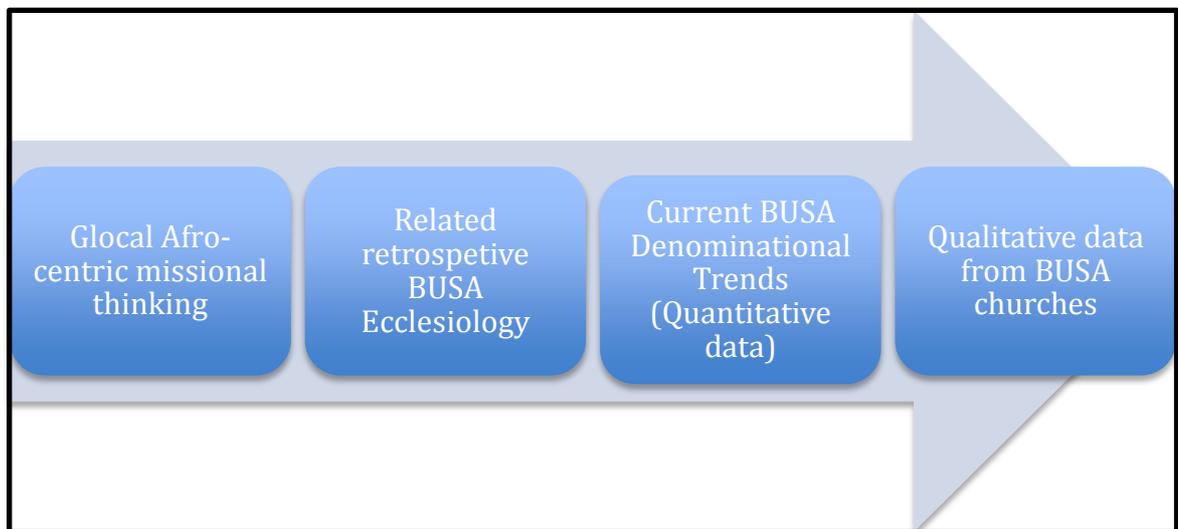
## 5. Goals and Objectives

Missiologists are often accused of lack of practical aids for the practitioner on the ground and have not, in many respects, not won the confidence of the local church leader regarding the vital role and reorientation of what can be termed missional church. Far too much of the missional conversation is restricted to academia. Thus, equipping local church leaders for missional change needs to take priority if any sustainable growth is to take place in the foreseeable future. Leading towards missional change, in this context, should be an important focus throughout my dissertation. In order to achieve this goal there are a number of enabling outputs that are of great importance (figure 2 below graphically illustrates my process). Toward missional leadership within BUSA churches I intend to:

- 5.1 Uncover the importance of an Afro-centric missional ecclesiology taking into consideration both local and global trends and conversations.
- 5.2 Uncover a retrospective view of Baptist Ecclesiology within the Southern African context, with its relevance to the history and present-day context of ministry within BUSA.

5.3 Analyse existing statistical data found within the Baptist Annual Handbook, to establish denominational trends since 1994, with a view to identifying significant ministry trends operable within BUSA.

5.4 Collect, analyse and interpret data from a number of churches from within the Baptist Union of Southern Africa, that stand out as significant in three or more 'missional indicators' in the first tier of research and analysis.



**Figure 2** *Leading toward missional change*

## 6. Motivations

The purpose of this research is:

- 6.1 To **analyse and interpret** the history of Baptists in South Africa with reference to BUSA, BCSA, SABMS and the ABK through a 'missional lens'. To **critically** examine current trends operable within BUSA churches since 1994 and point out differences from the inception of BUSA in the nineteenth century.
- 6.2 To undertake **qualitative** research and seek to identify phenomenology within people's shared experience within BUSA. Additionally, to investigate the development of missional theory within BUSA.
- 6.3 To **critically analyse** trends within BUSA since 1994 and identify a reasonable sample of churches for qualitative research and surveying. A **qualitative** research approach will be utilized in finding facts and causes of behaviour and rationale behind the ministries of many important BUSA churches.
- 6.4 To **interpret and objectify** statistical results drawn from qualitative research at local church level and make further recommendations towards an Afro-centric Missional Ecclesiology relevant to BUSA churches.

## 7. Methods and Approach

I have chosen a *mixed methods approach* as my research methodology for this study. This choice has been made, primarily, because of the benefits such an approach offers a study such as my own. Einstein, quoted in Roberts (2010:143), rightly states: “Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.” I have chosen a mixed method approach in this study due to the nature of the problem being investigated; the purpose of this study itself necessitates a varied approach.

Roberts (2010:144) helpfully outlines the elementary differences between the two approaches:

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH	QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH
Naturalistic designs	Experimental designs
Descriptive in nature	Explanatory
Inductive analysis (generate hypothesis)	Deductive analysis (test hypothesis)
Observations/ interviews	Standardised measures
The researcher is the instrument	
Trustworthiness depends on researcher’s skill and competence	Validity depends on careful instrument construction

Depth (collection of intensive data)	Breadth (limited set of variables measured)
Small samples (purposeful samples)	Large samples (random sampling)
Discovering/ exploring concepts	Testing/ verifying theories and concepts
Extrapolations	Generalisations

The table immediately below unpacks some important elements in my methodology:

<b>QUALITATIVE RESEARCH</b>	<b>QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH</b>
Data are words that describe people's knowledge, opinions, perceptions, worldviews, emotions and actions.	Inquiry in this approach will begin with a detailed survey of various respondents.
Descriptive in nature- in that the research is set in real-world settings where little or no attempt is made to manipulate the environment.	Data is explained on the basis of the facts derived from the statistical analysis.
Inductive analysis (generate hypothesis from data and observations)	Deductive analysis (test hypothesis over various samples and compare results to inductive analysis for variations)
Researcher as participant-observer is an important aspect to this study. Informal interviews with various stake-holders are also an important element.	Standardised measures will assist this component of the study to further substantiate qualitative research claims and perhaps explain unresolved interpretative problems.
A focus on depth (collection of intensive data) is an important element of my study insofar as understanding context and behaviour is concerned.	The focus on the breadth of this component of the overall study (where a limited set of variables is measured) will assist in understanding the wider spectrum of Baptist

	beliefs and practices.
This study will focus on smaller samples (purposeful samples) of BUSA churches.	The purpose of this study is not to obtain a large base of membership samples from BUSA Churches. Rather, my approach will lean towards random sampling over a larger geographical, social, ethnic, racial base.
Discovering and exploring concepts with other participant-observers is an important aspect of my study.	The qualitative approach should complement the quantitative research and verify the various theories and concepts.
Outcomes will be extrapolated from data collected and analysed.	Generalisations will be avoided as this can often give rise to confusion and misinterpretation. However, the results of both approaches should reveal elements of truth which may be generally applicable within BUSA churches across all regions and spheres of society.

Admittedly, the mixed methods approach is a relatively new approach that combines qualitative and quantitative research (approaches grounded in different paradigms) into one interpretive whole. However, mixed-methods research is a viable methodology and highly applicable to my study purpose. “The mixed-methods approach is expanding as a viable methodology in the social and human sciences, evidenced by a variety of books and journals reporting and promoting mixed-methods research” (Roberts 2010:144).

More recently, Creswell & Clark (2011:1) observes that the mixed-methods approach has been called the “... third methodological movement.” It has also

been named the “third research paradigm” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004:15) and “a new star in the social science sky” (Mayring 2007:1). Creswell & Clark (2011:1f) argues that a mixed-methods approach is an intuitive way of doing research that is constantly being displayed through our everyday lives. A prime example of a mixed-methods approach is “*An Inconvenient Truth*”, the award-winning documentary on global warming featuring the former U.S. Vice-President and Nobel prize winner, Al Gore (Creswell & Clark 2011:1). This example brings together both qualitative and quantitative data to narrate the story in a provocative and powerful manner.

I have adopted Greene’s (2007) definition of mixed-methods research as it is a well-balanced approach to both the methods and philosophy behind and beyond definitions of research. For the purposes of our study, the mixed-methods approach shall be interpreted as *multiple ways of seeing, hearing, and making sense of the religious and social context within which BUSA churches are located.*

It is my desired outcome to:

- Collect and analyse persuasively both quantitative and qualitative data.
- Link the two forms of data concurrently by embedding one within the other and also having one build upon the other.
- Give priority to qualitative research data due to limitations of quantitative research.

## **8. Scope of Study (Limitations)**

- Data availability (gaps present in BUSA Annual Handbooks, hereafter SABH).
- Data accuracy and consistency.
- Willingness of participants in mixed-methods approach.
- Relative general ignorance on missional matters within BUSA churches.

## **PART ONE**

### **THE SOUTH AFRICAN BAPTIST FAITH HERITAGE**

#### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What historical events led up to the 1820 settlers in the Eastern Cape and what significance did this have for BUSA mission?
2. What is the present-day impact of historical BUSA ecclesiology?
3. What relevance does the history and present-day context have for BUSA churches?
4. How have the trends of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries differed from the trends experienced within the late nineteenth and mid- twentieth centuries of BUSA's history?

#### **PURPOSE STATEMENT**

Within part one a foundation will be laid with regards to the establishment and growth of the Baptist movement and denomination within South Africa and beyond. Priority will be given to this section, as it will set the context within which the Baptist faith heritage has taken shape. This section is divided into three distinct chapters dealing with various components of the Baptist heritage. Chapter 1 will commence with a brief historical overview of the Cape of Good Hope. Chapter 2 will deal with unique aspects relating to the formation of BUSA and events that led up to this occasion. The events recorded within this chapter will serve as an overview stretching into contemporary times. Chapter 3 utilizes the concept of

‘waves of mission’ (borrowed from Willem Saayman) to describe the events detailed in Chapter 2 in a more systematized manner with historical observations listed in point form.