



The Missional congregation in the South African context

Author:

 Attie van Niekerk¹
Affiliation:
¹Department of Science of Religion and Missiology, Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria, South Africa

Correspondence to:

Attie van Niekerk

Email:

attievanniekerk@nova.org.za

Postal address:

University of Pretoria, Faculty of Theology, Office Room 1-17, Hatfield 0028, Pretoria, South Africa

Dates:

Received: 01 Mar. 2014

Accepted: 05 June 2014

Published: 20 Nov. 2014

How to cite this article:

 Van Niekerk, A., 2014, 'The missional congregation in the South African context', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 70(1), Art. #2648, 6 pages. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v70i1.2648>
Copyright:

© 2014. The Authors. Licensee: AOSIS OpenJournals. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License.

The term *missional* has come into use over the last years in the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa and the Department of Science of Religion and Missiology of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria. This term refers to the role of the local congregation in the local community or communities and is used with, or in the place of, the term *missionary*, which traditionally referred to the sending out of a missionary to some or other place. The use of the term missional includes specific views on the goal of mission, what mission is and how it should be done. In this article it is argued that this approach can be seen as a new wave of mission within the South African context, and that it is related to developments in many parts of the global church.

Introduction

In the Department of Science of Religion and Missiology (referred to as *Department* in this article) of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria (referred to as *Faculty* in this article) the term *missional* (e.g. *missional ecclesiology*, *missional congregation*) has come into use over the last years. This term is sometimes used interchangeably with the term *missionary* that was used in the past, but it seems to be gradually replacing the older term. This article reflects on two questions: What does this change in terminology mean, and what are the implications of this change in terminology for the way that a local congregation in South Africa would engage with its own context?

What does the change in terminology from missionary to missional mean?

In an article with the title *Missionary or missional? A study in terminology*, Willem Saayman came to the conclusion that 'the clear distinctive which characterizes *missional* relates it very clearly to postmodern North Atlantic culture ... [and] emerging churches in postmodern contexts.' The problem, says Saayman, is that this theology hardly gives any attention to the demands and conditions in the rest of the world, which is the context in which the term missionary has always been used (Saayman 2010:14, 15).

The distinction between Northern and Southern theology has been made by others too. Andrew Kirk observed a fundamental difference between theology in the North and theology in the South. In the North the validity of theology depends on the answer to the question: Does it comply with the requirements of science? In the South the focus is on 'its ability to inspire people to be agents and embodiments of the life of God's new creation in Jesus Christ' (Kirk 1997:7).

Brian D. McLaren (2007), who addresses the postmodern context, came upon a related distinction. For McLaren, the term postmodern refers to recent developments in Western culture, and McLaren is particularly concerned with the overconfidence of modern Western culture:

... modern, Western, hyperconfident, no-second-thoughts, industrial-strength religion ... To attack or undermine ... that overconfidence ... we in the West focused on the field of epistemology, which explores how we have rational confidence that what we call knowledge or truth is really, truly true. (p. 44)

He acknowledged the difference between postmodern North Atlantic culture and theology in the South, after a discussion with a Congolese theologian, Dr Mabilia Kenzo, who said to him *postmodern* is only one side of the coin. '... *postcolonial* was the other side of the coin, a key term in a parallel conversation among those who had been dominated and colonized by the excessively confident' (McLaren 2007:44).

The term *postmodern* has been generally used in the Faculty before the term missional was used. The term postmodern has almost always been used in the same way that Saayman and McLaren explain above, with reference to recent developments in modern Western culture rather than to the postcolonial/post-apartheid context. And when the term postmodern is used with

Read online:


Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online.



reference to events in the country where African traditional culture is part of the cultural mix, these events are usually interpreted within Western thought patterns. For example: in a discussion on what it means that the president of South Africa has four official wives, it was said that it is a postmodern phenomenon, since there is no single norm for what is right and wrong; everything goes. This is an extension of a Western philosophical tradition into the African context. The result: 'Africa still waits to be discovered, to speak, to be understood' (cf. Hallen 2009:61, 62). The cultural mix that makes up the president's identity can also be seen from an African perspective, for example, that the most telling symbol of African culture is the circle that incorporates and reconciles all opposites, and that the African view of progress is to make the circle bigger (cf. Awoonor 1976:167). Making the circle bigger would mean absorbing aspects of other cultures into the circle without destroying the circle. In other words, it is to absorb Western culture in the African framework, and not the other way round, that Africa is absorbed into the modern global culture where progress is seen in a more linear way.

The way that the term *missional* is used in the Department is different from the way postmodern is used in the Faculty. Missional here refers to the local context as such; it is not limited to any culture, group or class. It relates to both the postmodern and the postcolonial/post-apartheid contexts, because it refers to the local context of the local congregation, which in South Africa usually includes, if local is not defined very narrowly, a spectrum of communities or residential areas. It stretches from communities or residential areas on a continuum between very rich and very poor, from modern and/or postmodern to ones that are characterised by some or other combination of Western and traditional African culture, and even, in some areas, Eastern and Muslim culture. The term *missional* relates to all of these.

Where Saayman found, as explained above, that the meaning of the term *missional* is related very clearly to postmodern North Atlantic culture, in the Department it seems to have developed a clearly theological meaning, in the sense that it refers to the calling of the congregation in its local context, irrespective of the culture or conditions found in that context.

The missional approach, as used in the Department, is in several ways different from the paradigm that is associated with the term missionary. Some of these differences are discussed below.

The goal of mission

In the book *On being witnesses* (1994) written by two of the (now retired) teaching staff of the Department, J.J. Kritzinger and P.G.J. Meiring, with W.A. Saayman of the University of South Africa, the goal of mission is formulated as threefold: 'They should serve to manifest the glory and greatness of God's grace; they should plant churches; and they should call people to conversion' (1994:36). The authors rightfully claim that these aspects are not interpreted in a narrow or one-sided way in this book. They say that the way in which

these goals can be pursued can differ from context to context (Kritzinger *et al.* 1994:39), but they also state that the threefold goal of mission can only be pursued in a holistic way. They refer to the comprehensive approach of Hoekendijk, which encompasses *kerygma* [proclamation], *diakonia* [ministry of service], *koinonia* [communion or fellowship], and they add a fourth dimension (*leitourgia*, the public worship service of God). In short: '... the radical application of Christ's kingship over the whole of life' and the goal of addressing 'people in their total environment' (Kritzinger *et al.* 1994:36). Hoekendijk's approach is here accommodated as a *method of mission* within the threefold goal of manifesting the glory of God, planting churches and calling people to conversion. It is discussed after the question: 'How is this threefold goal of mission to be accomplished?' (Kritzinger *et al.* 1994:36).

The goals of planting churches and calling people to conversion are characteristic of the missionary era. However, in modern culture these actions have been accommodated within a framework marked by the dualism between the private and public worlds, relegating religion to the private world. In this context conversion to the Christian faith has meaning for the private world, with little reference to the public world – with, of course, exceptions, such as the church's involvement in the struggle for and against apartheid.

By emphasising the 'holistic approach' as a method of doing mission, the authors of *On being witnesses* try to bring a correction to the prevailing practice of many to proclaim a privatised gospel, '... a Christian spirituality of inwardness' (Jenson 2006:3). The holistic approach makes the goals of mission relevant for the public world too. The question is: Can the radical application of Christ's kingship over the whole of life, which is a much bigger task, be accommodated within the framework of planting churches and calling people to conversion?

Relegating Hoekendijk's approach to a *method of mission*, as we have seen above, did not confront the division between private religion and public life as strongly as Newbigin already did a few years earlier. Newbigin emphasised that, in the Roman world of the early church, private religion '... dedicated to the pursuit of a purely personal and spiritual salvation for its members ... flourished as vigorously... as it does in North America today.' It was, and is, tolerated because it did not, and does not challenge the political order of the day. The early church refused such protection because it could not accept relegation to a private sphere of purely inward and personal religion. It presented itself as a '... public assembly to which God is calling all men everywhere without distinction. This made a collision with the imperial power inevitable – as inevitable as the cross' (Newbigin 1986:99–100).

In South Africa, W.D. Jonker thoroughly analysed the matter of a privatised religion in his study on the relevance of the church in the 1980s. This study was only published in 2008, more than 25 years later. In his Preface to this publication, Dirkie Smit (2008:xi) strongly confronted a Christian



spirituality of inwardness. Smit called a privatised way of being church, in which the church makes peace with its irrelevance with regard to the real questions of people's lives, a betrayal of the church and the gospel itself.

It seems that such a privatised spirituality was readily accepted in Africa as part of the circle. That may explain the widespread dilemma that the church is growing strongly in Africa, but with little impact on the urgent questions of the continent, such as poverty, violence and corruption. It is well illustrated by the experience of Brian McLaren in 2004, when he attended a gathering of 55 young Christians, mostly from Rwanda and Burundi, after the violence in which more than a million people died. One of the people at the conference said that he had attended church all his life, and he had only heard the message of personal salvation from hell – no mention was ever made of the hatred and distrust between tribes, of the poverty, suffering, corruption, injustice, the violence and killing that caused the country to fall apart – even during the killings (McLaren 2007:19).

It seems that the emphasis has shifted in the missional approach. Manifesting the glory of God remains paramount, but the planting of churches and the conversion of people are now accommodated within the goal to call for the radical application of Christ's kingship over the whole of life and the goal of addressing people in their total environment, and not the other way round. Christopher Wright, whose books are prescribed in the Department, presents fundamental elements of the mission of God and of his people in his two important books, *The mission of God. Unlocking the Bible's grand narrative* (2007) and *The mission of God's people. A Biblical theology of the Church's mission* (2010). He emphasises the all-encompassing nature of God's mission and of the mission of God's people. The whole Bible is the basic document on which mission is based:

In *The mission of God* I was arguing for a missional hermeneutic of the whole Bible ... all the great sections of the canon of Scripture, all the great episodes of the Bible story, all the great doctrines of the biblical faith, cohere around the Bible's central character – the living God and his grand plan and purpose for the whole of creation. The mission of God is what unifies the Bible from creation to new creation. (Wright 2010:17)

The whole world is the goal of God's mission: '... God's mission is for the sake of the whole world – indeed his whole creation' (Wright 2010:26).

Forgiveness for our personal sins is accommodated within this holistic vision of the goal of mission. The whole gospel must be preached, says Wright. The church often preaches a reduced gospel, but:

... the Bible itself will reduce our tendency to reduce the gospel to a solution to our individual sin problem and a swipe card for heaven's door, and replace that reductionist impression with a message that has to do with the cosmic reign of God in Christ that will ultimately eradicate all evil from God's universe (and solve our individual sin problem too, of course). (Wright 2010:31–32)

Karl Barth said something similar: he did not find conversion stories in the New Testament, but stories of people who were

called to service (as quoted by Jonker 2008:59). Calling people to conversion for the purpose of their own salvation is taken up in the bigger cause of their calling to serve the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Mission: Where?

The Dutch Reformed Church, which has been associated with the Faculty for 75 years, has a long tradition of mission work in Africa – in countries such as Malawi (beginning in 1889), Zimbabwe (1891), Zambia (1899), Mozambique (1908/1909), Nigeria (1908), and others (Cronje 1981).

Saayman (2007:9, 15–44) identifies four waves in the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) mission: the early First Wave was from 1779–1834. The mission work mentioned in the previous paragraph occurred during the Second Wave, which occurred between 1867 and 1939 and was focused on Central Africa (Saayman 2007:45–68). Within South Africa itself, mission work grew steadily from early on; it expanded significantly and became the main focus during the Third Wave from 1954 to 1976. Saayman describes the Third Wave as a time of crossing boundaries in South Africa itself, during the time of apartheid (Saayman 2007:69–99). The DRC missionary movement in Central Africa, which was the focal point of the Second Wave, started to weaken in the late 1960s. Enthusiasm for mission in South Africa itself weakened soon afterwards:

The total number of DRC missionaries (ordained as well as lay, both foreign and home missionaries) shrunk from 1078 to 551 in four short years between 1973 and 1977; and the total number of ordained missionaries dipped from 308 to 192 during the same period. (Saayman 2007:108, quoting G. van der Watt)

The rest of the movement collapsed soon afterwards; by the end of the 1980s there was little left of what once had been a strong movement.

Saayman's Fourth Wave, which he discusses under the heading 'To the Ends of the Earth' (2007:100–104) started in 1990 and was still in full swing at the time he wrote his book. Before 1981, there were isolated initiatives to work outside Africa: in Ceylon, as a result of the prisoners of war from the Boer Republics during the Anglo-Boer War of 1899–1902 (Cronje 1981:272–273), in Japan (Cronje 1981:359), and among communists (Cronje 1981:373). From 1990 onwards mission in faraway places became the main activity in a large number of congregations. This dramatic change was made possible by the political changes in South Africa from 1990 onwards. Saayman (2007:110–111) argues that, in post-apartheid South Africa, for many Afrikaners, including DRC members, '... facing up to "the real Africa" served as a serious mission demotivator'. And suddenly many countries that previously did not accept South Africans opened their doors and it became very attractive for such Afrikaner congregations to go to the 'ends of the earth' (cf. Ac 1:8).

We can conclude that the difficulties of local race relations, the traditional romantic dreams of mission work in a faraway land,



and the opening up of these previously inaccessible faraway lands for South Africans combined to produce an explosion of mission work in foreign countries. Many rich urban congregations, as well as struggling rural congregations, have had their primary mission field somewhere in the Ukraine, or India, or in some other faraway country.

In the meetings of the General Synod of the DR Church, however, the calling of the church in the South(ern) African context has been emphasised, especially since the General Synod of 2002, who declared its conviction that the church has a calling and place in Southern Africa. Since God loves the world, the Church believes that God had placed her in Southern Africa and she undertakes to play a role in solving the urgent issues of the region, such as poverty, violence, HIV, and disrespect for people and the ecology.¹

The missional approach forms part of this renewed emphasis on the church's calling in the local context which can be seen, in the broader sense, as Southern Africa. In this respect too, it is different from Saayman's Fourth Wave and must be seen as an aspect of an emerging Fifth Wave, where congregations are not primarily sending missionaries to some or other mission field, but where the congregation itself is sent to its local context, where its members live and work from day to day. That is a continuation of the focus on the African context of the first three waves, but it is also a paradigm shift to a new understanding of the content and character of mission.

Mission: What?

The General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church of 2013 accepted a document, prepared by two members of the Department, Nelus Niemandt and Piet Meiring (retired) that gives a thorough description of the missional ecclesiology of the missional approach (Algemene Sinode 2013). The document says that a missional congregation is called to restore relationships in a broken world and to live according

1. ROEPINGSVERKLARING ALGEMENE SINODE VAN DIE NG KERK 2002

Tydens die vergadering van die Algemene Sinode het ons as afgevaardigdes al hoe meer oortuig geraak van die liefde van Christus en daarom ook van die NGK se roeping en plek in Suider-Afrika. Daarom:

(a) verbind ons ons opnuut aan die Here wat ons Kerk 350 jaar gelede hier geplaas het. Ons dank Hom vir die voorreg om ook nou nog deel van sy kerk te kan wees. Ons is daarvan oortuig dat net die evangelie van Christus ons op 'n pad van heil kan plaas. Daarom wil ons as Kerk die Woord van die Here tydlig en ontydig verkondig en orals getuieis af lê van die hoop wat in ons leef.

(b) verbind ons ons opnuut tot ons kontinent, in die besonder Suider-Afrika. Die tragiese verhale van die allerverskriklike vorms van geweld, die geweldige omvang van armoede en gevolglike hongersnood, die konsekwensies van die vigsyndemie, die gebrek aan respek vir mense, diere en die omgewing en ook ons aandeel daaraan, het ons ontstel. Die Sinode betuig sy meegevoel aan die talle slagoffers. Ons wil ook 'n verskil maak. Daarom verbind ons ons om mee te werk aan oplossings vir ons samelewing. Ons stel ons as Kerk beskikbaar om op elke vlak waar ons kan help, betrokke te raak. Ons verseker die owerheid van ons voorbidding en ons verbintenis tot diens aan die gemeenskap.

(c) verbind ons ons tot groter eenheid met ander kerke. Ons wil graag herenig met ons Kerkfamilie, soos ons glo God dit wil hê. Ons wil ook graag ons ekumeniese bande bevestig en uitbrei en met alle ander Christene hande vat om ons lande op te bou en pynlike omstandighede te verlig.

(d) roep ons gemeentes op om by die genesing van ons land betrokke te raak. Ons dank die Here vir die toegewydheid van lidmate en die talle positiewe aksies waarvan ons orals hoor. Kom ons wys die wêreld opnuut dat ons as 'sout vir die aarde' en 'lig vir die wêreld' God se Koninkryk wil laat kom. Ons het 'n Here. Ons is hier. Ons is Sy kerk.

Aan God al die eer. (Algemene Sinode 2007:ii)

to God's plan for his creation (Algemene Sinode 2013:9).² Two key terms are found in this formulation: the restoration of relationships, and the way we live.

This policy document resonates with documents in churches in the rest of the world, over a broad spectrum, such as the document *Together towards life* in the Resource Book of the World Council of Churches of 2013, documents of the Roman Catholic Church such as the encyclicals *Caritas in veritate* (Benedict XVI 2009) and *Apostolic exhortation evangelii gaudium* (Franciscus 2013), and documents such as *Witnessing to Christ today, Edinburgh 2010, Volume II*:

Martyria is the sum of kerygma, *koinonia* and *diaconia* ... The word missionary refers to the specific mission activities of the church, whereas the word missional is related to the nature of the church, as being sent by God to the world. A focus on the local church in mission reflects a desire to see congregations in both the North and the South become missional. (Balía & Kim 2010:119, 120)

In South Africa a broad consensus has grown amongst churches of diverse backgrounds that the church should be involved with those who suffer, people who are poor, oppressed, HIV patients, vulnerable children, gender issues, combatting crime and corruption, the destruction of the ecology – to work towards a healthy and sustainable society, beginning in the local community.

The question how this should be done requires the development of new resources – skills, knowledge, funds, networks – in order to do so in an meaningful way.

Mission: How?

In order to get involved with issues in the community, the church has to learn new strategies and new skills. How should the church get involved?

The framework document of the DR Church of 2013 says that the church should ask: 'What is God doing?' and then we should go and join in with what God is doing (Algemene Sinode 2013:9–11).³

One question to solve would be how we discern what God is doing. David Bosch's reflection merits our attention:

... it is innate to Christianity to take history seriously as the arena of God's activity... Such an affirmation then begs the question *how* we are to interpret God's action in history and so learn to commit ourselves to participation in this. (Bosch 1993:428–431)

One aspect of this task is to determine the role of the church amongst a large diversity of powerful entities (the state, businesses, NGOs) who promote, or pretend to promote, a

²'n Missionale gemeente word geroep om verhoudings in 'n gebroke wêreld te herstel en volgens God se plan vir sy skepping te leef' (Algemene Sinode 2013:9).

³'Wat is God besig om te doen?'; 'Wat wil God hê dat ons saám met Hom moet doen?' (p. 9) and: 'Wat is God besig om te doen? Op watter manier is sy Gees op die oomblik aan die werk in die wêreld? ... Wat wil God doen? Hoe sal dit wees as God alles deur sy Gees met Hom versoen en die stukkende verhoudings herstel? Hoe sluit 'n gemeente aan by dit wat God wil hê moet gebeur?' (Algemene Sinode 2013:11).



good quality of life, or, as it is also formulated, the pursuit of happiness. We have to understand how to play our part in the broad global movement to become a sustainable society within a context dominated by two deeply rooted ways of living: unbridled consumerism and chronic poverty, two very destructive patterns of conduct that often interact and strengthen each other.

In the South African context, it is rather complicated to find common ground over a broad spectrum. There are different views of the purpose of life. Postmodern culture provides a correction to modern Western culture, and traditional African culture provides an alternative to both. But in the South African context we find them in different, ever-changing combinations.

In recent South African history the liberation from apartheid has had a huge impact on people's understanding of the purpose of life. The dreams and expectations that accompanied the transfer from apartheid to democracy are often described in strong terminology, for example: 'utopian vision', 'redemption', 'the salvation of his people'; the struggle exacted huge sacrifices: of family life, of freedom, childhood, innocence, often life itself (Gevisser 2007:xxix-xxx). Nelson Mandela personified the ethos of the struggle against apartheid: sacrificing yourself, not only for the liberation and a better life for your own people but for your enemy too. This inspired very high expectations on all sides.

However, Thabo Mbeki, who became vice-president in 1994, remained cautious. He took part in the idealistic language of Mandela, often writing the scripts for him, but he also remained sceptic and aware of all the hindrances to be overcome (Gevisser 2007:653-658).

One of these hindrances was the lack of a strong value framework that could give direction to all and keep this divided nation together. After an interview with Mbeki, his biographer Gevisser explained it as follows, interpreting and quoting Mbeki, who in turn quoted 'the Zambian':

The bleak picture he painted of a decultured South African society was one not only of dislocation, but of amorality too. Urban Africans had had their 'cultural base' destroyed, 'and there was no value system which in fact replaced it, except Christianity. But Christianity unfortunately was understood as [*no more than*] going to church on Sunday. So whereas the Zambian would say, 'You know, the culture of my people does not allow that I do this or that', here that connection to the culture is gone.' And nothing has been put into place to replace it. 'There is no alternative value system, except to the extent that the priest might object or the police might arrest you.' Nothing emanating from within. (Gevisser 2007:324)

Mbeki tried to fill this void with the notion of the African Renaissance, without success. The void has been filled by the consumer culture, where consumption becomes a goal in itself. This culture dominates large parts of both the public and the private sectors. Zwelinzima Vavi, former Secretary General of Cosatu, the organisation that represents a large number of labour unions and forms part of the governing alliance with

the African National Congress (ANC), repeatedly referred to the leaders of the ANC as hyenas, as a 'corrupt political elite', saying they are turning the country into a 'full-blown predator state'. 'We're headed for a predator state where a powerful, corrupt and demagogic elite of political hyenas are increasingly using the state to get rich,' said Vavi. Just like the 'hyena and her daughters' eat first in nature, the 'chief of state's family eats first' in this predator state (Steenkamp 2010). This is a far cry from the self-sacrifices made during the struggle against apartheid.

The consumer culture is shared by the rich, who can afford it, and the poor, who cannot, but still desire to be part of it. But it is not a culture that brings together and unites those who share in it; it is by definition a culture where you turn into yourself, where your own gratification is a goal in itself. And that is a good definition of sin: being curved into yourself (cf. Jenson 2006:1-5). And its victims on the other side of the spectrum, those who eat last, often turn into themselves too.

Within this context, the missional congregation wants to engage with these communities with a life-giving ministry. How can that be done? What role can it play?

An interesting feature of our present context is that it is not only the church that is changing its understanding of the way it should function in the broader social context. The same is happening in many businesses and industries. To give one example: In a recent study by the Santam Group and partners it was stated that 'we live in a time of unprecedented risk.' There is:

[E]vidence of dramatic increases in global environmental risk ... caused by the interaction of a number of systemic factors, including climate change which was identified as the top risk by likelihood and impact combined. (Santam 2011:5)

The Eden District Municipality in the Southern Cape was taken as case study. It was found that the number of extreme events such as wild fires and flooding has increased in recent years, possibly caused by higher winter and spring temperatures in this area. The second major finding was that local human-induced changes, such as the density of invasive alien trees and 'changes to land cover and the buffering capacity of ecosystems was of equal or greater importance in driving increasing risks, when compared to climate change' (Santam 2011:5).

The study concludes that the insurance industry should complement its risk assessment with effective proactive risk management, targeted at the drivers of risk. For such risk management the industry would have to convince the authorities, businesses and civil society to acknowledge the existence of a shared risk, and to move towards a shared response or towards creating shared value. Corporations should:

... move beyond their schizophrenia of 'maximising profits for shareholders' on the one hand, and 'corporate social responsibility' on the other, to a more unifying concept of creating 'shared value' with society. (Santam 2011:2, quoting Porter & Kramer)



Reducing risk would benefit all parties exposed, be it clients, communities, the insurance industry or governments.

Such initiatives may provide the church with opportunities to take part in the transformation of society, to fill the void in values that Mbeki saw in decultured South African society, to ensure that the Christian faith is more than going to church on Sunday, that we do not have a privatised way of being church, in which the church makes peace with its irrelevance with regard to the real questions of people's lives.

The same can happen with the response to crime, one of the biggest destructive forces in contemporary South Africa. A number of communities have discovered that the answer to crime does not lie in withdrawing into your own house or in fencing off your neighbourhood. The answer lies in getting involved with each other, in opening up (Zinn & Kelder 2011:46, 54).

The church must join forces with initiatives such as these, while maintaining its own identity. How should it be done? It will require high quality research, innovative thinking, good management, dedication and bringing different parties together in working together towards life-giving goals that benefit all.

Conclusion

The possibility of a Fifth Wave in the mission of the Dutch Reformed Church is to be welcomed and supported. It resonates with what is happening elsewhere in the global church. The whole church is the agent of God's mission (Wright 2010:28–30). The whole church refers to all God's people in all their actions and occupations. God's mission extends to the whole of creation.

The Department of Science of Religion and Missiology, as well as the Faculty of Theology, has the opportunity to promote this movement with good theology, good research and good teaching. It must do so in a context where the theologies of the North and the South can meet and where the wish comes true: 'If Africa is finally to speak for itself, in self-critical philosophical terms as well ...' (Hallen 2009:136–137).

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced him in writing this article.

References

- Algemene Sinode, 2007, 'Agenda deel I: Dokumentebundel vir die 13de vergadering van die Algemene Sinode van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk', Pretoria.
- Algemene Sinode, 2013, Raamwerkdokument oor die missionale aard en roeping van die NG Kerk, Oorkoepelende verslag, finale kopie(2), Pretoria.
- Awoonor, K., 1976, 'Tradition and continuity in African literature', in R. Smith (ed.), *Exile and tradition*, n.p., Longman and Dalhousie Press, London.
- Balia, D. & Kim, K. (eds.), 2010, *Edinburgh 2010. Volume II, Witnessing to Christ today*, Regnum Books International, Oxford.
- Benedict XVI, 2009, *Caritas in veritate, Encyclical letter of the Supreme Pontiff Benedict xvi*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
- Bosch, D., 1993, *Transforming mission. Paradigm shifts in theology of mission*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY.
- Cronje, J.M., 1981, *Aan God die dank*, deel 2, N.G. Kerkboekhandel, Pretoria.
- Franciscus, 2013, *Apostolic exhortation Evangelii Gaudium of the Holy Father Francis*, Vatican Press.
- Gevisser, M., 2007, *Thabo Mbeki. The dream deferred*, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg.
- Hallen, B., 2009, *A short history of African philosophy*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington.
- Jenson, M., 2006, *The gravity of sin. Augustine, Luther and Barth on homo incurvatus in se*, T&T Clark, New York, NY.
- Jonker, W.D., 2008, *Die relevansie van die kerk*, Bybel-media, Wellington.
- Kirk, A., 1997, *The mission of theology and theology as mission*, Gracewing Publishing, Valley Forge, PA.
- Kritzinger, J.J., Meiring, P.G.J. & Saayman, W.A., 1994, *On being witnesses*, Orion, Halfway House.
- McLaren, B.D., 2007, *Everything must change*, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, TN.
- Newbigin, L., 1986, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The gospel and Western culture*, W.B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Saayman, W., 2007, *Being missionary – Being human. An overview of Dutch Reformed mission*, Cluster Publications, Pietermaritzburg.
- Saayman, W., 2010, 'Missionary or missional? A study in terminology', *Missionalia* 38(1), 5–16.
- Santam, 2011, 'Insurance in a changing risk landscape: Local lessons from the Southern Cape of South Africa', a report by the research partnership between the Santam Group, the WWF, the University of Cape Town and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative.
- Smit, D., 2008, 'Voorwoord', in W.D. Jonker (ed.), *Die relevansie van die kerk*, bl. xi, Bybel-media, Wellington.
- Steenkamp, L., 2010, 'Political hyenas in feeding frenzy – Vavi', *News 24*, viewed from <http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/Politics/Political-hyenas-in-feeding-frenzy-20100826>
- Wright, C.J.H., 2007, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's grand narrative*, Intervarsity Press, Downers' Grove, IL.
- Wright, C.J.H., 2010, *The mission of God's people. A biblical theology of the church's mission*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI.
- World Council of Churches, 2013, *Resource book*, World Council of Churches 10th Assembly, WCC Publications, Geneva.
- Zinn, R. & Kelder, N., 2011, 'Basic framework for an efficient community safety network', research project commissioned by Afriforum.