WOMEN MINISTERS IN MISSION WITH REFERENCE TO THE METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

By

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AUGUST 2014
DECLARATION

I, Rev. Fanie Solomon Mkhwanazi, declare that this thesis

WOMEN MINISTERS IN MISSION WITH REFERENCE TO THE METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

is my own work and that all sources that I have used and quoted have been indicated and duly acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signed: ___________________________ Date: _______________________

Rev Fanie Solomon Mkhwanazi
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I would like to extend my greatest appreciation to my first Superintendent Reverend C. Perry, Mama B.N. Memela, her husband and her daughter who spent much time assisting me with this thesis. To the women ministers who answered the questionnaire and enabled this research to be completed, I say a warm-hearted thank you.

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Thanks are also due to Professor Thias Kgatla, my supervisor and promoter, without whose mentorship I would surely have struggled to finish this work and to Me Margeaux Erasmus my research editor, for her valuable input.

I also thank my proo-freader and language editor, Vanessa Ashenden, who spent endless hours into the night ensuring that my work is of a high standard and is presentable for the University of Pretoria.
SUMMARY

The thesis proposes that the ministry of ordained women within the Methodist Church of Southern Africa has not fully integrated women. Although the Methodist Church Conference of 1972 had adopted a resolution to have women ordained in the ministry of the church, this has not been fully realised in the life of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. Although women form the majority of people who come to church on Sundays, they form a very small group within ministers’ ranks.

The central research questions of the study were the following:

a) What are the challenges within the Methodist Church of Southern Africa that slows down its policy on the ordination of women?
b) What are the tools that can be used to address the challenges with regard to the full acceptance of women ministers within the Methodist Church of Southern Africa?

With these research questions the results of the study were the development of a picture within the church of women functioning effectively within their own women structures. Women organisations such as the Women’s Manyano and the Young Women’s Manyano are investigated and their phenomenal growth is highlighted. What they have learnt and practice within their own women organisations is not infiltrated into the full life of the Methodist Church. The exclusion and marginalisation of women in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa continues despite the examples of the inclusion of women in the Bible and in the early church.

The thesis traces the causes of the marginalisation of women within the Methodist Church to patriarchal and cultural stereotypes that are determining the reading and the understanding of the biblical text. Human nature is a condition that needs to be checked regularly in order to remove those elements that are human-made, self-serving and limiting. Some examples of psychological and cultural elements are cited...
as a basis for reflection and launching pad for women empowerment and for the transformation of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa and its policy on the ministry of ordained women.

Empirical evidence is collected from women ministers and women who are training to become ministers. The responses are described, analysed, assessed and evaluated for what they are revealing. The responses of these women confirm the tensions that exist between men and women with regard to women serving in the ordained ministry within the church. The thesis concludes with some recommendations regarding the full integration of women into the life of the church as well as new areas for further reflection and study. It is my belief that the thesis will trigger further discussion which will lead to deeper insights of what it means to be a church that is the ‘Salt of the World’ in the changing and challenging environment of the ‘New South Africa’ which is also branded as ‘The Rainbow Nation’.
DEDICATION

To my wife, Thembeka, for her tireless support and the precious time she spent working with me in the church, which allowed the church to continue in mission whilst I completed this research outside of the circuit.
She was, and remains, a pillar of strength in my life.
DEFINITION OF WORDS

Am Elohim: People of God
Centrifugal: Looking inside
Centripetal: Looking outside
Circuit: More than one church/society
Connexional: More than one district in the MCSA
Contextualisation: To put it in context
District: More than one circuit in the MCSA
El-Shaddai: God the creator
Imago Dei: Image of God
Inculturation: To put it in the culture of the people
Male-chauvinist: Domination by man
MCSA: Methodist Church of Southern Africa
Missio Dei: Mission of God
Ordination: Lay-on-hands by church official ministers
Paradigm shift: Change of mindset
Yahweh: Hebrew word for ‘the holy one’
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION................................................................................................................................. i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.................................................................................................................. ii
SUMMARY ....................................................................................................................................... iii
DEDICATION ...................................................................................................................................... v
DEFINITION OF WORDS ................................................................................................................. vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS .................................................................................................................... vii

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................................... 0
  1.1. Background ............................................................................................................................. 0
  1.2. Research problem ................................................................................................................... 1
  1.3. Rationale of the study ............................................................................................................. 3
  1.4. Research questions ............................................................................................................... 4
  1.5. Significance of the study ....................................................................................................... 5
  1.6. Theoretical framework ........................................................................................................ 7
  1.7. Literature review .................................................................................................................. 8
  1.8. Methodology ........................................................................................................................ 16
  1.8.1. Research design .............................................................................................................. 17
  1.8.2. Data collection ................................................................................................................. 17
  1.8.3. Data analysis .................................................................................................................... 17
  1.9. Chapter outlines .................................................................................................................... 18

CHAPTER 2: THE BEGINNING OF METHODISM IN SOUTH AFRICA ........................................... 20
  2.1. Background ........................................................................................................................... 20
  2.2. South Africa became a new station ....................................................................................... 21
  2.3. Methodist beliefs and practices ............................................................................................ 24
  2.4. How the Methodist Church is organised ............................................................................. 25
  2.5.1. First schism from the MCSA ............................................................................................ 27
  2.5.3. The Methodist Church of Transkei .................................................................................. 29

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2.5.4. Racism ................................................................. 30
2.5.5. Inequality .............................................................. 31
2.5.6. Leadership ............................................................... 31
2.5.7. Introduction of deaconesses in the MCSA ....................... 32
2.5.8. Acceptance of women ministry in the MCSA .................. 33
2.5.9. Debates on women ordination within the MCSA ............. 34
2.5.10. Organisational church ............................................ 37

CHAPTER 3: WOMEN ORGANISATIONS AS AN EXPRESSION OF FULL MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH ................................................................. 39
3.1. Women’s Manyano, Young Women’s and Men’s Guilds .......... 39
3.1.1. The Manyano uniform and its significance ...................... 40
3.1.2. Tensions within the Women’s Manyano ....................... 41
3.1.3. Expression of identity in a triple oppression environment .. 42
3.1.4. Why the Manyano organisation is growing .................... 45
3.2. Observation .................................................................... 49
3.3. Young Women’s Guild .................................................. 51
3.4. Amadodana Organisation ................................................. 51

CHAPTER 4: THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS .... 52
4.1. Approaches to the reading of the Old and New Testaments .... 52
4.1.1. The Non-Evangelical Egalitarian approach .................... 52
4.1.2. The Evangelical Egalitarian approach ......................... 53
4.1.3. The Hierarchicalist approach ...................................... 54
4.2.1. The Creation story ..................................................... 54
4.2.2. The Book of Exodus and Leviticus ................................ 55
4.2.3. Ruth 1: 1-19 ................................................................ 56
4.2.4. Involvement of women in the New Testament – Luke’s Gospel ... 57
4.2.5. The Gospel of John ..................................................... 60
4.2.6. Paul’s letters to the different churches ......................... 63
4.2.7. Timothy 2:8-15 .......................................................... 64
4.2.8. Women in the early church ........................................................................................................................................ 64
4.2.8.1. Lydia .......................................................................................................................................................................... 64
4.2.8.2. Nymph .......................................................................................................................................................................... 65
4.2.8.3. Phoebe ........................................................................................................................................................................... 66
4.2.9. Calvin and equality of spouses ........................................................................................................................................ 67
4.2.10. General observations .................................................................................................................................................... 69
4.2.11. Reading the Bible from the perspective of the Non-Evangelical Egalitarian approach ................................................. 70
4.2.12. General observations .................................................................................................................................................... 73

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH FINDINGS ........................................................................................................................................ 76
5.1. Nucleus of the research project ........................................................................................................................................ 76
5.1.1. How long have you been a member of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa? ................................................................. 76
5.1.2. How long have you been in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa? ........................................................................... 77
5.1.3. What hindrances are you faced with as a woman minister? ............................................................................................... 78
5.1.4. Do you think the Bible supports women in ministry? ......................................................................................................... 79
5.1.5. Does God support women’s ministry? ................................................................................................................................. 80
5.1.6. How can women empower themselves in ministry? ........................................................................................................... 81
5.1.7. Do you believe that culture and religion can play a role in women’s ministry and why? ............................................................... 82
5.1.8. How does it feel to be a woman minister in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa? ............................................................. 84
5.1.9. What is your understanding of women ministry? .................................................................................................................. 85
5.1.10. What is the Methodist Church of Southern Africa’s approach to women ministry? ............................................................. 86
5.1.11. Is there a place for women ministers today? Why? ............................................................................................................. 87
5.1.12. Why are women ministers not making progress towards women empowerment? ............................................................... 88
5.1.13. General observation from respondents ........................................................................................................................... 89
5.1.14. Descriptive analysis ......................................................................................................................................................... 94
CHAPTER 6: EVALUATION OR ASSESSMENT OF THE RESPONSES OF THE PARTICIPANTS

6.1. Evaluation of the worth and merits of responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subsection</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1.1. What is the issue and scope of the problem within the MCSA women ordained ministry?</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1.2. What is the theological hermeneutical commitment of the respondents?</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1.3. Concluding observations</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1.4. Summary on the call to women’s participation in the life and mission of the church</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHAPTER 7: THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE MCSA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subsection</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.1. Women empowerment in the ministry</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1.1. Models of power</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1.2. Concluding remarks on the symbiosis between culture and power in the MCSA</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2. Transformation for inclusiveness for women in ministry</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2.1 Participation in mission and in solidarity</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHAPTER 8: UNDERSTANDING MISSIO DEI AS A PARADIGM SHIFT AND AS TRANSFORMATIONAL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subsection</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.1. Background</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2. Paradigm Shift of Thomas Kuhn</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3. Mission as boundary-shifting</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4. God’s mission or the church’s mission?</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4.1. Historical developments in the understanding of mission and church</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5. Missio Dei: paradigm shifts in the understanding of church and mission</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5.1. God’s historical redemptive initiative</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5.2. Missio Dei is multi-faceted</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5.3. God is mission</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5.4. Transformational, inclusive and spiritual approaches to change</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5.5. Concluding remarks</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 9: GENERAL CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD ........................................ 141

9.1. The trajectory of the journey travelled ................................................................. 141
9.2. Where to from here? ............................................................................................... 143
9.2.1. The Methodist ethos and rule of life ................................................................. 144
9.2.2. The ‘unsolicited’ women’s inclusion in the MCSA ministry .............................. 145
9.3. Towards authentic transformation ........................................................................ 145
9.3.1. Recovering true identity and discovering true vocation ................................. 146
9.4. Conclusion ............................................................................................................. 148
9.4.1. Women as ministers ......................................................................................... 148
9.4.2. Church as servant of liberation ......................................................................... 149
9.4.3. Unshackling men and women for new freedom ............................................... 150
9.4.4. The South African volatile situation ............................................................... 151
9.4.5. Troubled but not destroyed ............................................................................. 154
9.5. Research questions and hypotheses ..................................................................... 154
REFERENCES ............................................................................................................. 156
INTERVIEWS: Questionnaire ...................................................................................... 176
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

I grew up in a family of four and was raised by a single parent in a place called Daggakraal, near Amersfoort, South Africa. The homestead was founded by Dr. Pixley ka Isaka Seme, an African National Congress member, before 1912. It was the philosophy of the African National Congress to find more land for African people to own. Dr. Seme’s upbringing embraced both African and European values and from an early age he distinguished himself as a brilliant, intelligent and focused young person who was full of determination and was a force behind many young people.

My grandfather was amongst the first farm owners in the area. Life was very hard as I was brought up by a single parent. I looked at the suffering of my mother who tried her best to raise us and to ensure that we received a better education than she did. I was brought up in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) and I saw the same type of suffering among other women in the church as they struggled to make ends meet in their spiritual lives.

The recollections of my youth prompted me to ask myself many questions that led me to want to make some enquiry about the suffering of the oppressed, downtrodden and sidelined women in the MCSA. I have experienced suffering and marginalisation myself. Above all women suffer both in society and church in South Africa. This suffering has been articulated by women theologians such as Landman (1998, pp. 125-132; 2003, p. 1), Oduyoye (1995, pp. 168-176), Nostro (nd, p. 1), Masenya (2004, p. 3) and Phiri (2000, pp. 85-110). These theologians have done extensive studies on women’s struggle for liberation in Africa and their insights would help this study in the MCSA.

The first woman to be ordained as a minister in the MCSA was Constance Oosthuizen in 1986 (Methodist Minutes of Conference 1987, p. 270); after 160 years of the existence of the MCSA. In this regard, many women who wanted to be ordained as ministers had to
endure the hardship of exclusion from the ordained ministry while others had to leave to other churches such as the Pentecostal Churches (Bosch 1991, p. 482). My understanding of mission is that it means walking together with God in His mission and that it is transformational in its nature (Bosch 1991, p. 482). According to Bosch, the mission is transformational and at the same time it involves a paradigm shift (1991, p. 482). The church cannot operate as in the 18th century, but must be contextualised (Bosch 1991, p. 482). Traditions must not get in the way of the mission of God (Couture 1967: p. 121). Couture looks at the suffering of women ministers and notes that, in Africa, some men hide behind culture, which is unbecoming because culture is static. The negativity of some men towards women ministers does not emanate from tradition or culture but is due to the fact that some men know very well that women are passionate and have very strong organisational skills. Women involvement in the church, across the board, is laity and clergy. However, the oppression of women in the secular and sacred world is not perpetuated by men only but also by other women.

There have only been a few female superintendents in the Methodist Church and only one in about a hundred ordained women ministers has become a bishop.

This is what the problem in the MCSA is. The MCSA needs to try to include women in the full ministry of the church. Women should be allowed to participate in the salvific act of God as fully created human beings.

1.2. Research problem

The focus of this study is the ecclesiological need for the inclusion of women in the MCSA ordained ministry. The training of women ministers is as important as that of their male counterparts because without women ordained ministers the MCSA is not complete as the largest part of the church consists of women (Holness 1990, pp. 213-216). Because of the adverse conditions in the MCSA, such as the rejection of ordained women ministers by their male counterparts, many women ministers have left the church after their initial
training while others are have chosen not to pursue further studies after their ordination because they do not see themselves receiving any recognition despite studying further. Furthermore, those who are in the leadership of the church do not invite ordained women ministers to come and work in their circuits in order for the women ministers to gain experience through their mentorship.

In the majority of the cases, many ordained women ministers are stationed in rural circuits where they cannot cope with challenges such as traditional stereotypes against women in ordained ministry. The problem is worsened by a lack of solidarity between women to fight against their exclusion and marginalisation. More often than not, their own internal divisions make it easy for them to become victims of male-dominated societies.

There are rituals in the MCSA which are only performed by men ministers and not by women ministers even if the women are ordained. These rituals are those performed at funerals, during night vigils, before actual burials, during marriage ceremonies and even in baptisms. This happens particularly in rural situations. There are no prospects of promotion to a higher position within the church for the women ministers.

The anthropological literature points out that almost all ethnic groups in Africa are patriarchal in structure (institutions of male rule and privilege), with relatively few exceptions. Recent research from feminist anthropologists (such as Susan Kent, 1998) generally supports that assessment, with a few qualifications. The South African black people are mainly patriarchal in approach to societal issues but the matrilineal group in West Africa as well as in Tanzania are not (Oduyoye 1980, p. 2). With the total number of male-dominated cultures (languages) in South Africa reaching over ten, there is no possibility of change unless planned transformation is introduced.
If African society is patriarchal by definition, it will be difficult to find out how the reception of the roles of women can be introduced in the MCSA. Historically, patriarchy has manifested itself in the social institutions.

This research aims to investigate whether the decision of the church to involve women in the full ministry of the MCSA has gone against the grain of the hegemony of patriarchy.

The study is also aimed at determining the impact of worldwide conferences on women (such as the one held in Beijing in 1995) and of the feminist movement on the eradication of the exclusion of women in mainstream and public roles and whether it has had any impact in the MCSA. The study presents the following questions for scrutiny:

- How could the MCSA be repositioned in its mission outreach not only to include women but also to nourish and cherish their contributions?
- Is the church transformed enough not to be paralysed by a phobia for women?
- How does the MCSA handle the question of transformation as the question of transformation has a gender dimension to it?
- What is the gender ratio of ordained and non-ordained ministers within the MCSA leadership?
- How does this compare with men and women ratios in the country?

1.3. Rationale of the study

For the emancipation of women in all sectors of society it is important that the church interprets the Bible correctly because, in many instances, people quote the Bible to justify their actions. The contention in the New Testament is the Pauline theology. More and more black feminist theologians question the male interpretations of the Pauline letters, while others reject the whole hierarchical arrangement of the roles of men and women in the Bible (Hoch 1987, p. 242). This study investigates how the MCSA can appropriate the Bible in the empowerment of women for the ordained ministry. It is clear that where there is a contest for leadership roles in society, the Bible may be used to justify the position the
powerful take against those who are threatening their position. The study also serves to reveal the fears that some male counterparts may still have against women ministers, and how some men may still oppress women due to the repression they endured during the apartheid regime. Furthermore, the study would like to determine how the theory of self-hatred is still manifest in women themselves.

According to Hogan (2002, p. 3), oppressed people, like women in a patriarchal society where their interests are ignored and the status quo is taken as normal, can easily be relegated to fatalism or self-hatred. Oppressed people may easily assume that their plight is somehow ordained by nature, God or history and that there is nothing they can do about it. This seems to be the case with women members of the MCSA who attend church in larger numbers than men, and, because of their vulnerability, find the space for their existence in religion (Walter 1990, p. 73). Walter (1990, p. 74) has observed that women outnumber men in society and also in the church.

The study will also investigate the attitude of women ministers towards the church, especially towards the male-dominated church. The following questions will be addressed:

- How many men consider women to be their equal?
- How many women regard men as their equal?
- Why are women ministers angry with the MCSA?

The findings from the study should help the church leadership to review the policy on women’s role and participation in the leadership of the church.

1.4. Research questions

The following research questions are pursued in the study:

- Does the MCSA have challenges with the inclusion of women in its ordained ministry?
• Are the empowerment of women and transformation of the MCSA structures imperative to the life of the MCSA?

• What are the hypotheses of the study?

The study has three hypotheses to prove or disprove:

a) The MCSA has a policy of the ordination of women but finds it difficult to implement the policy.

b) The MCSA has a rigid male-dominated structure that is entrenched in African culture and patriarchy.

c) The Women’s Manyano (The Methodist Women’s Prayer and Service Union) of the MCSA is an outlet for women frustration within the broader MCSA.

1.5. Significance of the study

There have been several trends in women ministries in some leading countries. Unparalleled opportunities for ministry are being opened up to women in the world today (www.wardpowers.info/WOM.htm). In an increasing number of countries the decision has been taken to extend the full ministry of the church to women on the same level as that of men. Many denominations and dioceses have already begun to act on this. In the minds of many people the issue has therefore been decided. The empire has given its decision and the players must accept it. The battle has been fought and lost and won, and now the soldiers can leave the field. A policy of ordaining women has been adopted and implemented. These developments have also been announced in the MCSA. No matter what one’s opinion is on the issue, it is impossible to go back to the way it was before. One cannot unscramble scrambled eggs.

A huge number of people would be relieved to leave behind them a debate which has proven to be emotionally draining and extraordinarily time-consuming. Why, then, continue to examine this issue? The reason is simple, because what one does as the people of God must always be kept under the rigorous scrutiny of Scripture. When embarking
on new journeys along untried paths one does not abandon the use of one’s map but many Methodists are still agonising over how to act in this area. There needs to be an awareness about the number of people, especially ‘ordinary’ Christians in the pews, who are asking, ‘what are we to think of what our leaders are reported to be saying and doing – especially when they differ with each other so strongly?’ There are a great number of people who still have not come to terms with the issues and who want to do so.

In those churches where a decision has been made in favour of the ordination of women in the face of strong opposition, there is now a very real danger of extreme polarisation, with the two sides taking up positions as far from each other as they can get. Of all the unfortunate consequences of recent developments, this one is the saddest and most dangerous. In that sense many women ministers are leaving the church because of ill-treatment and gender inequality. Because of their sex, women ministers are becoming victims of sidelining daily. They have engaged in liberation struggles and have found hope, strength and courage in biblical texts and stories in which God expresses solidarity with their struggle (www.wardpowers.info/WOM.htm).

God’s commitment to justice and to overcoming the structures of sin are expressed in the Bible in verses such as Exodus 3:7-8: ‘Then the Lord said “I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their masters, I know their sufferings and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey”’ (Ashby 1998, p. 21).

The ministry which women can exercise in the church of God takes different forms from one denomination to another, but the basic issues are the same. In the Methodist Church as a whole, meaning locally and abroad, it has been accepted by the hierarchy of the church but the grassroots, the fields, have not yet been levelled. There are other societies, especially in rural areas of Southern Africa, where women have not been welcomed fully
because of different traditions. The church is required to act on gospel principles, which means that one is to confront evil wherever one sees it (wardpowers.info/WOM.htm).

The greatest corporate evil the church faces is the oppression of women ministers (Du Toit 1994, p. 37). The church should make clear choices. How can one watch the pain, the suffering, the cruelty and misinterpretation of the Bible and not make choices for justice, peace and human freedom? If that choice means that one must openly oppose those who try to protect oppression and injustice through the use of gospel words such as dignity, freedom, and reconciliation, then so be it. It is not that the unity of the church is not a legitimate concern, but that the concern is with the truth, without which the church cannot live. This concern is not so much about a common mind as it is about the church’s faithful obedience to the Lord. If the unity of the church is not built upon the passion for truth, the desire for justice and dignity, and the faithful obedience to the Lord, whatever the cost, then it is not unity. Unity that is dictated by the powerful is not unity. A union at the cost of the poor and the oppressed, at the cost of the integrity of the gospel, is not unity. A long struggle lies ahead for the liberation of all women. For the Methodists should seek true unity based on righteousness, justice, mercy and obedience to God.

1.6. Theoretical framework

The MCSA has adopted the principles of accepting women into ordained ministry. It was accepted in 1972 (Minutes of Conference 1972, 66ff) as already indicated and only implemented in 1986, almost 14 years later. On the surface the church has no problem with the ordination of women, but it does not recruit them to offer them training for ministry.

At the core of the problem of recruiting and absorbing ordained women ministers is a problem of transformation. Transformation is a missional agenda which seeks to change people’s perceptions and stereotypes about the Kingdom of God. According to Kgotla (2013, p. 3), the 9th World Council of Churches General Assembly theme was
transformational: ‘God, in your grace transform the world’. Missio Dei presupposes fundamental change that ushers in the Kingdom of God amongst the people. Transformation brings new hope and life where there was no life previously.

Mezirow (1997, p. 5) sees transformation as a process that changes frames of reference. He refers to theory frame of reference as the ‘structural of assumptions through which people understand their world’ (730). People shape and design their environment according to their prejudices and with a space of time take the creation of their reference as absolute and unchanging. These prejudices may include the exclusion of others and even a legitimisation of their oppression (Kgatla 2013, p. 4).

This study takes as its operational theory transformative theory that critically analyses assumptions in the MCSA that legitimise the exclusion or marginalisation of women in the ordained ministry and within leadership structures of the church. The study aims to cultivate a process of critical reflection that can work through beliefs and assumptions. As Mezirow (1997, p. 7) puts it: ‘Critical reflection [is the means] by which we work through beliefs and assumptions, assessing their validity in the light of new experiences and knowledge’. If assumptions on the role of women in the MCSA are not investigated and challenged, change will never take place. Transformation should work within the frame of references lest it loses its focus and should act based on new information. This study is done within the confines of transformative theory.

1.7. Literature review

The literature review concerning this research is based on the following feminist theologians’ work and some concerned Methodist female theologians:

Batliwala (1994:5) discusses how the interaction between feminism and Freire’s popular education (which completely ignores gender) produced women struggling to demonstrate how gender is constructed socially and to build alternatives. Failures in
development interventions were in part ascribed to approaches which did not recognise the underlying factors perpetuating women’s oppression and exploitation. Batliwala (libid:6) points out that empowerment is not a necessary result of economic strength. Rich women suffer domestic abuse and rape as well. The process of empowerment involves women recognising the ideology that legitimises male domination and understanding how it perpetuates their oppression. Batliwala recognises that women have been led to participate in their own oppression and therefore sees external change agents as necessary for empowerment. Women need access to a new body of ideas and information that not only changes their consciousness and selfimage but also encourages action. Empowerment is conceptualised as ‘a spiral, changing consciousness, identifying areas to target for change, planning strategies, acting for change, and analysing activities and outcomes’.

For Nelly Stronquist (1995:32) empowerment is a socio-political concept that includes cognitive, psychological, economic and political components. The cognitive component refers to women’s understanding of the causes of their subordination. It involves ‘understanding the self and the need to make choices that may go against cultural or social expectations’. It includes knowledge about legal rights and sexuality (beyond family planning techniques). The psychological component includes women believing that they can act at personal and social levels to improve their condition. It involves an escape from ‘learned helplessness’ and the development of self-esteem and confidence. For the economic component she argues that, although work outside the home often implies a double burden, access to such work increases economic independence and therefore independence in general. The political component includes the ability to imagine one’s situation and mobilise for social change. ‘Collective action is fundamental to the aim of attaining social transformation.

Rowlands (1997) considers empowerment in the context of social work and education where ‘there is broad agreement … that empowerment is a process; that it involves some degree of personal development, but that this is not sufficient; and that it involves moving
from insight to action’. She developed a model of women’s empowerment with three dimensions; personal, close relationships and collective. At each level, inhibiting and encouraging factors influence a set of core values and lead to changes. The importance of context is understood and the model is intended to be used to identify specific items within each category appropriate to local circumstances. For example, at the level of personal experience or history, the core values she identified during her Honduras-based research were: self—confidence, self-esteem, sense of agency, sense of ‘self’ in a wider context and dignity. Inhibiting factors included machismo, fatalism, active opposition by a partner, health problems and poverty. Encouraging factors included activity outside the home, being part of a group, travel, time for self and literacy. Changes were expressed as increased ability to: hold and express opinions, to learn, to analyse and act, to organise own time and to obtain and control resources.

Naila Kabeer (2005) suggests that empowerment refers to the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability. This definition makes clear that only those previously denied such abilities can be considered to be empowered and also that the choices in question are strategic. Kabeer defines strategic choices as ones ‘which are critical for people to live the lives they want’ (such as the choice of livelihood, whether and who to marry, whether to have children etc.) as opposed to less consequential choices, which may be important for the quality of one’s life but do not constitute its defining parameters. It is worth noting that this use of the term ‘strategic’ is different from that popularised by Moses where women’s ‘strategic’ interests are those which challenge their subordination as women while their ‘practical’ interests are those which help them to carry out their gender-assigned roles more easily.

Having analysed a number of studies of women’s empowerment, Kabeer (2005) goes on to argue that the ability to exercise such choice is made up of three interrelated and indivisible elements, resources, agencies and achievements – all of which need attention before assertions about empowerment can be made. Resources are identified as not only material but also as human and social and as including future claims and expectations as
well as actual allocations. Access to such resources ‘will reflect the rules and norms which govern distribution and exchange in different institutional areas’. Agency is the ability to define one’s goals and act upon them. As well as observable action, it includes an individual’s sense of agency (or power within). Usually thought of as ‘decision-making’, agency can also involve ‘bargaining and negotiation, deception and manipulation, subversion and resistance’. Kabeer (2005) recognises that many aspects of behaviour are in fact governed by rules and norms, some of which have a role in defining and maintaining social order. Prominent among such norms are those which determine appropriate behaviour for men and women. These gendered identities are developed throughout life and cannot easily be shaken off because of some relatively minor change. Nevertheless, as Agarwal (1997) points out, ‘social norms are not immutable, and are themselves subject to bargaining and change, even if the time horizon for changing some types of norms may be a long one’. Indeed, a good deal of what is socially passed off as natural and indisputable, including women’s roles and modes of behaviour, may be the outcomes of past ideological struggles.

Phiri (1997:20) said that African women theologians who are members of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, are concerned with women’s issues in the Christian faith and the traditional religions of Africa. For Phiri (1997: 20) the women’s question is a Christological one. She expresses the contradiction that is there in the way that the church in Africa has preached about the equality of all humanity and yet in practice has excluded women from the Eucharistic ministry. She writes that ‘the leadership of the ordained in our African Mainline Churches is constructed in a hierarchical order as a lid to the membership of the Church, of which the majority are women’ (Phiri 1997:21). This structure supports and reinforces the traditional gender-based society roles, ignoring the religious leadership of African women in the same traditional culture. Thus, the church selects from African culture those elements that confirm its exclusion of women from authority where men are present. Here women demand that the church return to a Christ-like understanding of authority and ministry,
so that women and men may become partners in authority. Women’s demand for inclusiveness in ecclesial ministry and authority is a search for human development, a search for wholeness. Phiri (1997: 19-20) is of the opinion that ‘it is necessary for African theology to study the question of women’s ordination to priesthood based on the history of the church and African tradition’. This approach is to be made with the awareness that both in Christianity and traditional African Religion, African women have been oppressed. Rosemary Nthamburi ( ) of Kenya has echoed this by demanding that women themselves should seek liberation. She also said that the rise of nationalism and the fight for independence in Africa should have served as a lesson for African women. The African nations came to a new awareness and rejected the role of submission to their colonial masters and affirmed their humanity, and with courage and pride, they demanded freedom from their colonial masters, just like Moses went to the Pharaoh and demanded from him freedom for the Israelites.

Nthamburi ( ) is also of the opinion that African women understand that their fight for liberation goes hand in hand with the fight for the liberation of all those who are oppressed by racism and classism among their people. This is the view of most African women theologians. They have seen the need for creating an awareness of women’s issues for all women. They have, therefore, chosen to work within church women’s groups and ecumenical women’s organisations. They have also sought to highlight the importance of theological education for women in Africa since there are very few women who are theologically educated.

Not all African women theologians are concerned with women issues. Women in this circle are called ‘Concerned African Women Theologians’, because they want to get rid of the African male assumption that ‘issues of sexism are supposed to belong to a minority of disgruntled, leisure-saturated, middle-class women of the capitalist West’ (Phiri 1997:19-20). Perhaps those who made the suggestion are saying that all those women who think about God in the African context cannot avoid condemning sexism. It is not something that one can choose to live with or pretend that it does not exist in Africa.
Now that sexism is known by its name, all African women theologians should exorcise it. At the same time, there is an awareness in the circle that in Africa, women’s concerns are human concerns. Therefore, any attempts to create a whole community of God in Africa cannot afford to marginalise women’s concerns. This may also contribute to the desire of some members of the circle wanting all African women theologians to be concerned with women’s issues (Phiri 1997: 21).

Women are different and their differences divide people from one another. For example, women are clearly divided by class (Phiri, Devarakshanam & Nadar 2002: 120). The differences between privileged women who are able to exercise choices over the course of their lives and women who struggle to subsist are prodigious. Victory Nomvete Mbanjwa, who was ordained to the ministry of the Word and Sacrament at the age of 73 in the United Congregational Church in Southern Africa on 12 February 2000, is an example of this. Many women will relate to Victory’s experience as they listen to her story because it is about her struggles based on the fact that she is a woman living in a world that favours men. Our faith in Jesus Christ is also another area that unites Christian woman (Phiri, Devarakshanam & Nadar 2002:120).

The case of Charlotte Maxeke is worth mentioning under the literature review as discussed by Hofmeyer and Pillay (in Phiri, Devarakshanam, & Nadar 2002: 309) in order to illustrate the struggle of a woman against all odds to achieve what she wanted to achieve. Maxeke wished to find opportunities for further study in a world which discriminated against women. She went on to the United States and attended Wilberforce University in Cleveland, Ohio, graduating in 1905 with a B.Sc. degree. It was at Wilberforce University that she was influenced by the AME Church in the United States. It was also here that she met her husband, Marshall Maxeke.

With him she founded the Wilberforce Institute in the Transvaal in 1908, which became one of the leading secondary schools for Africans. She and her husband also worked briefly with the Tembu’s in the Eastern Cape, establishing a private college in 1912 on the
farm of the Tembu Paramount Chief, Enoch Mamba. Maxeke’s educational career shows her own, and that of her family’s, determination to succeed against the odds of a repressive system. It also demonstrates the effect of missionary school education in the development of early black leadership, a trend that was ruthlessly stifled by the later iniquitous Bantu Education. Although she belonged to a privileged group she was able to use her experiences for the upliftment of her fellow South Africans. Millard points out that her exposure in the United States ‘gave her a sense of pride in her African-ness’ (date, p. #). Maxeke made an important contribution to the development of indigenous Christianity in South Africa and to its pivotal role in political and social development. Mission education at that time had unintended effects. Black converts developed their own identity and independence, and this was expressed in the desire to form political organisations and to establish their own churches. Hofmeyer and Pillay see this as a consequence of the political developments of the period (in Phiri, Devarakshanam, & Nadar 2002:09).

Maxeke was referred to as a mother of freedom in the country by AB Xuma. She was a woman of many firsts. Among her achievements, she was the first African woman to graduate in South Africa, as well as being the founder and first president of the Bantu Women’s League in 1918. Maxeke was a pioneer in the formation of the African Episcopal Church (AME) in South Africa. She is also described as the first African woman social worker in South Africa. She was a woman of faith in Africa because of the foundational role she played in the history of women’s struggle in South Africa. She is not widely known by younger generations and thus her life has not been prominently documented in church history, exacerbating the general invisibility of women, particularly black women, in church scholarship. Maxeke’s outstanding and unique contribution to South African political, social, educational and Ecclesiastical history in the early years of the 20th century, the period during which Maxeke was growing up (from mid 1870’s), was one of political machinations and turmoil, especially in Natal and the former Transvaal. It was during this period that critical acceptance of the white Christian missionary
endeavour developed. Maxeke was growing up in an environment that was fertile for the development of forms of Christianity alternative to the predominantly Western one. She was aware of the need to shake off the yoke of colonialism with its discriminatory legal and economic system.

Mohanty (2003) also criticises the way much feminist discourse defines women in terms of ‘object status’, that is, the way they are affected by certain institutions or systems. This perspective characterises women as a pre-existing socio-political group outside such social relations instead of understanding that ‘women are produced through these very relations as well as being implicated in forming these relations’. An analysis of women’s position should therefore be based on the realities of their lives rather than on a generalised assumption that they are oppressed. Taking it as given then that a successful organisation for empowerment requires an analysis of women’s particular situations rather than an assumption of oppression, is it possible to identify any universal values? This is attempted by Nussbaum, who takes the charge of cultural imperialism sufficiently seriously to research on Women and Human Development: the Capabilities approach, for a defence of such values. In seeking to construct a universal framework to assess women’s quality of life, she recognises the objection that the particular categories one chooses are likely to reflect one’s own immersion in a particular theoretical tradition and may be, in some respects, quite the wrong ones for the assessment of Indian lives. This is a particularly serious challenge as many development interventions have failed due to a failure to properly appreciate the local circumstances.

Nussbaum (date) investigates, and refutes, the three ways that certain very general values, such as the dignity of the person, the integrity of the body, basic political rights and liberties, basic economic opportunities, and so forth, are not appropriate norms to be used in assessing women’s lives in developing countries. She calls these ‘the argument from culture, the argument from diversity and the argument from paternalism’’. The argument from culture states that Indian norms of female (both Hindu and Muslim) modesty, deference, obedience and self-sacrifice, have defined women’s lives for
centuries and should not be assumed to be capable of constructing good and flourishing lives for women.

Marie Gacambi (in Stinton 1970: 247) concludes with an honest admission of the hope and the anguish faced by African Christian women today: According to Gacambi: ‘Obviously, Jesus is really the one who is inspiring us, because we need to reflect and to theologise on the issues of women. I think our hope is inspired by the belief that Jesus came to break all barriers— no Jews and Greek, no female and male. So, I can say that Jesus has helped us a lot to forge ahead, but it is not easy. Sometimes we just wonder, really, how long are we to wait? You know, how long are we to wait?’ (in Stinton 1970:247).

As women strive for more justice in ministry, certain themes characterise the Christology’s they articulate. One of the central motifs to emerge in this research is the deep sense of Jesus’ solidarity with women in their suffering. Inherent in that solidarity is a profound intimacy with Jesus that many African women express. For example, Isabel Apawo Phiri, and Margaret Asabea marvel that God himself, in Jesus, passed through the birth canal of a woman. They commented: ‘I think Christ is more intimate with women than with men! He feels the woes, the wounds, the very heartbeat of a woman’ (Phiri & Asabea)

Locker (1964:261) contests that taboos are often gender-related, particularly with relation to women’s bodies (as if men are not bodies too) as per information on the questionnaire. Taboos become a basis for moral judgement, in distinct contrast to how Jesus related to people. They lead one to try to separate the righteous from the unrighteous (Locker 1964:261).

1.8. Methodology

This study takes a qualitative approach and general way of thinking about ground theory research. It describes, either explicitly or implicitly, the purpose of the data collection,
how the data is collected, the role of the researcher(s), the stages of research, and the method of data analysis. No statistical evaluations are employed but a few responses from fieldwork interviews are analysed and interpreted and conclusions are made.

1.8.1. Research design

This study, as already stated, follows the qualitative research approach that interprets a respondent’s life experiences, hardships and perceptions.

1.8.2. Data collection

The questionnaire was drafted and each woman minister was given a copy. Eight ordained women ministers and eight ministry women students were interviewed. Where respondents could not be reached physically a questionnaire was sent by post and a self-addressed envelope was included for the convenience of the respondent.

1.8.3. Data analysis

After the data was collected, it was analysed using the descriptive analysis method to describe similarities and have an output on explanations and predictions women may have towards ordained ministry in the MCSA. The intensive study method coupled with comparative study was employed in order to have holistic properties of the responses. A diagram was generated with columns and rows depicting the names of responses and their answers to questions posed to them. Constellations of responses were analysed. The questionnaire was used to lead the enquiry. As the research followed a qualitative analysis, the data was analysed manually (not by computer) in order to present the findings that may indicate women’s perceptions to ministry in the MCSA.

New ideas or any contributions to the empowerment of women ministers in their call will be highly appreciated. How can the church change its approach and make an effective paradigm shift for the mission? It will also be an advantage for the church to transform and change the attitudes of some men towards women to liberate those men from abuse.
At the end of the day nobody will care about tradition, culture and insensitivity. The data was divided into four categories, reflecting the interviewees’ answers.

1.9. Chapter outlines

The study is made up of the following chapters:

Chapter 1: Presents the study proposal.

Chapter 2: Deals with a historical survey of Methodism in South Africa, which includes neighbouring states such as Botswana, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Topics such as Methodist beliefs and practices, breakaway churches, racism in the church, inequality and deaconesses in the MCSA are all discussed.

Chapter 3: Discusses challenges facing women in African churches, women and their role in the MCSA, various Manyano formations, Pietism as a form of escapism and as a defence mechanism, church affiliations of women compared to men, and possible reasons for the large number of women in the church compared to the lower number of men in the church.

Chapter 4: Investigates the role of women in the Old and New Testament. The discussion looks at the creation story, especially in Genesis 1:26-31, the more male-chauvinistic approach of Genesis chapter 2, the role of Miriam during the exodus and 11 Chronicles 34: 22. The chapter also examines the New Testament, specifically the Gospel of Luke, the Acts of the Apostles, John’s Gospel and St. Paul’s letters to the Corinthians, Galatians and Timothy. The chapter also examines women in the early church.

Chapter 5: Presents the research analysis. It shows what women ministers are saying about their future, empowerment, training and stationing in different circuits. This chapter also indicates how culture and traditions have been a stumbling block for women ministry in the church.

Chapter 6: Deals with research evaluation or assessment.
Chapter 7: Discusses the empowerment of women ministers; and an understanding of transformation in the church and in the Bible.

Chapter 8: Discusses the understanding of Missio Dei as transformational in the mission of the church. The concept of a mission-shaped-church is contrasted to a church-shaped-mission.

Chapter 9: Presents conclusions and recommendations. Two statements from Nelson Mandela serve as inspiration for this thesis. The first statement was made in a letter written to Adv. Felicity Kentridge on Robben Island on 9 May 1976: ‘Freedom cannot be achieved unless women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression’. The second statement was made in The State of the Nation address to Parliament in Cape Town, on 24 May 1994: ‘I’ve never regarded women as in any way less competent than men’.
CHAPTER 2: THE BEGINNING OF METHODISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.1. Background

Methodism is the name given to a breakaway group of the Protestant Church that arose in the 18th century and was led by John and Charles Wesley and Whitefield Stevens (Nichols 1891:354). John Wesley followed Martin Luther when he broke away from the Anglican Church because of their segregation. Moreover, John Wesley felt a need to go out and preach the gospel. He also broke the everyday fasting discipline of the Anglican Church and questioned it, asking that they should instead concentrate on prayer while people in the community were dying. In 1738, John and Charles Wesley organised small societies within the Church of England for religious sharing, Bible study, prayer and preaching (Holt 1950:22). Methodism spread widely while John Wesley and Stevens travelled long distances to preach to large and enthusiastic crowds of different backgrounds. The movement spread across the borders of England and to Ireland, and, to a lesser extent, to Wales and Scotland (Minutes of British Conference of 1827:243).

To preserve personal fellowship, bands and class meetings were formed. This also helped to build spiritual maturity among their converts. It was in 1744 that John Wesley officially formed a separate church, after he was excommunicated by the Anglican Church. It must be noted that John Wesley’s aim was not to form his own church and he died as an Anglican Priest in 1779. After his death, this sect, which was referred to as ‘the people of the Method’ due to their principles, became the Methodist Church. Many lay people were ordained to administer sacraments. In 1795 the total right of administering sacraments was pronounced by the majority of trustees, stewards and class leaders and they were in favour of such practice. There were two sacraments that the Methodist Church accepted – namely Baptism and Holy Communion as in the Minutes of Conference of 1789. It is important to note that at the Conference of 1801, the question was posed whether ‘women should be allowed to preach among us?’ The generally acceptable answer was that they ought not to (Stevens 1891: 438). Two reasons were given: that a vast majority of people
were opposed to female preaching and that it was not necessary as there were sufficient amounts of preachers who God had accredited to all the places in the Connexion, as it was called for communication purposes. Here, the structure of the Methodist connexional is formed by districts, districts are formed by circuits, and circuits are formed by societies, which are formed by 50 members or more. It added that ‘if any woman among us thinks she has an extraordinary call from God to speak in public, and we are sure it must be an extraordinary call that can authorize it, we are of the opinion she should in general address other women’ (Stevens 1891: 457).

There were strict conditions to this allowance. Regulations were put in place that women should not preach to the circuits in which they reside and that they had to obtain permission from the Superintendent of the circuit where they would preach. Before a woman went to that particular circuit, she had to have a written invitation from the Superintendent of this circuit, as well as a recommendatory note from the Superintendent of her own circuit.

I will expand on this point at a later stage in my analysis of the role of women in the Bible in Chapter 4.

2.2. South Africa became a new station

From Britain the Methodism spread to many parts of the world, including the African continent. For example, George Warren left England for Sierra Leone in 1811 (Stevens 1891:540), Dr Coke took six missionaries to Ceylon and Java in 1813, Rev. J McKenny went to the Cape Colony in 1813, and Rev. Barnabas Shaw and William Shaw went to Cape Town in 1816 and 1820 respectively (Mears 1973, pp. 13-15).

The first record of a Methodist preacher in Southern Africa was that of a soldier of the 72nd regiment of the British army, George Middlemis (Holt 1950: 83). He had been stationed in the Cape of Good Hope to secure British interests there in 1805 as a result of the war between Britain and France. He soon gathered a small group of Methodists in the
Cape and it quickly grew. When Sergeant Kendrick, a Methodist class leader and a lay preacher who was sent from England arrived in 1812, the congregation numbered 142 full members, of which 128 were of British descent and 14 were of mixed race (Holt 1950:84). In 1816 Rev. Barnabas Shaw was placed at Cape Town and was deployed to Namaqualand and stationed at Leliefontein at Kamiesberg (Schoeman 1991, p. 11; Mears 1973:5). By 1820, William Shaw arrived with the British settlers and was stationed in the Eastern Cape (Holden 1877:245). Shaw concentrated on missionary among people of colour rather than preaching to the Europeans. His first link was established at Wesley Ville in 1823 and Shaw organised circuits and institutions among both Europeans and Africans throughout the province (Holt 1950:84). A Bachuana district was formed in 1837, covering the present Free State province, and Natal was entered five years later.

According to Holt (1950:84), by 1830 Shaw had planted six more stations between the Fish and Umzimvubu Rivers and had laid the foundation for strong Methodist witness in the Eastern Cape. The expansion of the Methodist mission was, however, not plain sailing. His mission stations were destroyed more than once in successive frontier wars (Holt 1950:85). Despite this, Methodism had spread into the interior of the country within a short space of time and had taken root among the indigenous people (Mears 1973:1-7). Mission continued to grow as it moved to Basutoland and part of the Free State. Samuel Mashaba was born in Sikhukhuniland and left the home of his father for Natal and championed the missionary activity of Basutoland and the Free State, especially in Thaba’Nchu in 1833 (www.methodist.org.za/heritage/south-african-history). David Makgatha from Potchefstroom took the labour to the borders of the Transvaal where he met Paul Kruger and returned with Kruger to Potchefstroom. Meanwhile, James Archbell arrived in Durban, Natal, around 1842, with a British force which was sent to counter the Voortrekkers who had set up the Republic of Natal (www.methodist.org.za/heritage/south-african-history).
Furthermore, James Allison came from the Free State and moved to Swaziland and settled there whilst introducing the gospel among Swazi people (Garret 1980, p. 26). He also moved from Swaziland to Natalia with some converts who became his interpreters. Allison settled at Indaleni, that is Richmond (www.methodist.org.za/heritage/south-african-history). In 1850, he fell out with Archbell and William Shaw and moved to Edendale, Pietermaritzburg, where he established a teacher’s training college (www.methodist.org.za/heritage/south-african-history). He was followed by his interpreters and eventually settled in Driefontein next to Mnambithi, which is north of KwaZulu-Natal (Garret 1980: 26).

Within a short space of time the mission of Methodism had spread all over South Africa, including the neighbouring African states, planting mission stations in its trail (Schoeman 1991:17-25) while membership increased rapidly. In 1869 (within a period of 60 years) Methodist mission reached what was called the Transvaal Province in the North (Theilen 2003: 26). In 1927 Methodism received its full independence (Minutes of Conference 1912:182). The independence was granted because it was too costly for delegates to move from Africa to Britain for each conference. It was during this time that many African ministers offered themselves for ministry and were ordained (Minutes of Conference, 1912: 182). Although this was a step forward for mission in terms of the empowerment of indigenous leaders in Africa, it hampered the mission of the church because the British Methodist Church withdrew their grant from the MCSA as a result of its independence.

From its inception in the Cape Colony, the MCSA was not involved in politics. However, the MCSA got involved in politics in 1913 in reaction to the notorious Land Act of 1913 (Grant 1980:29) where black people were forcefully removed from fertile land to barren reserves. At first the church was muted, probably because Tengo Jabavu, the senior and most influential African Methodist member of conference at that time, adopted an ambivalent attitude, but the church was very vocal about the unfair distribution of land and the failure of the Union of South African Government (Grant 1980: 29) to pursue the white exclusive interest in the distribution of land.
The matter of involvement in politics by the Methodist Church surfaced prominently after the Second World War. African affairs fell into the background during the Second World War, which took place between 1939 and 1945, which also included South African soldiers. From this time on the Methodist Church never retreated from opposing the policy of apartheid, which continued from 1913 to 1994, when the political prisoners were released and the first democratic elections were held.

The policy of separation was destined to force black people to live in homeland reserves, among others to provide cheap labour to white industries around big cities of South Africa. It was this policy that sowed division between blacks and whites and brought hardship on black people. The church’s boldest action was to elect the first black president of the MCSA in 1964 (Minutes of Conference 1964).

2.3. Methodist beliefs and practices

Core Methodist beliefs and practices affirmed by the Methodist Church Conference include the following (Minutes of Conference, 1960: 156):

a). God is all knowing, possesses infinite love and goodness, is all powerful, and is the creator of all things.

b). God has always existed and will always continue to exist.

c). God is three persons in one – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

d). God is the master of all creation and humans are meant to live in a Holy Covenant with Him. Humans have broken this covenant by committing sin, and can only be forgiven if they truly have faith in the love and grace of Jesus the Christ, who was crucified for the sins of all people, and who was physically resurrected to bring them the hope of eternal life.

e). The grace of God is seen by people through the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives and in the world.
f). Close adherence to the teachings of Scripture is essential to the faith because Scripture is the Word of God.

g). Christians are part of a universal church and must work with all Christians to spread the love of God.

h). Baptism is a sacrament or ceremony involving the submersion or commonly anointing of water, which cleanses the stain of original sin. It also symbolises being brought into the community of faith.

i). Communion is a sacrament in which participants eat bread and drink juice to show that they continue to take part in Christ’s redeeming resurrection by symbolically taking part in His body and blood.

j). Baptism and Holy Communion are not only sacraments, but also sacrifices to God.

k). People can only be saved through faith in Jesus the Christ, not by any other acts of redemption such as good deeds.

2.4. How the Methodist Church is organised

The present Methodist Church of Southern Africa remains the structure that John Wesley started in the 18th century. With his emphasis on holiness within the church as a kind of religious order (Attwell 2005: 17), Wesley established a different type of church organisation from that of the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England. The following Classes of about 12 members, each under a Class Leader, are recognised to this day:

a) Classes fall under the leadership of a Class Leader. A Class Leader has special responsibilities of encouraging, supporting and caring for the group.

b) The second level is a Society. A group of Classes form a Society emphasising the fellowship of believers. The Society is led by an ordained minister to form a local church. This structure is also made up of a governing body which is called a
Leaders’ Meeting and it consists of lay executive officials known as Society Stewards (Attwell 2005: 17).

c) A number of Societies within a particular area form what is known as a Circuit. Circuits facilitate wider fellowship, mutual financial support, the sharing of human resources and tangible administrative organs (Attwell 2005, p. 17). A Superintendent Minister and the Circuit Quarterly Meeting (called Circuit Stewards) form the leadership of the Circuit (Attwell 2005, P. 17).

d) A wider area under the jurisdiction of the Annual District is formed by a group of Circuits.

e) Annual Districts form the Synod which is presided over by the bishop.

f) The next level of authority after the Synod is the Connexion which is governed by the Conference. The Presiding Bishop is at the helm of this structure.

g) The Methodist Church recognises two orders of ordained ministers. These are ‘The Ministry of Word and Sacraments’ and ‘The Ministry of Word and Service’ called ‘The Order of Deacons’ (Attwell 2005, p. 17).

h) The Methodist Church has other orders of ministry opened to lay members. There is the Order of Evangelists, the Order of Bible Women and the Order of Lay Preachers.

i) The Methodist Church recognises uniformed organisations such as the Wesley Guild, The Women’s Manyano, the Young Women’s Manyano and the Young Men’s Guild. These organisations provide opportunities for ministries by lay people (Attwell 2005, p. 19).

The executive authority of the Methodist Conference is vested in the Presiding Bishop, the Executive Secretary and the Connexional Units. The Methodist Connexional Office, for example, is responsible for finance and properties. The Mission Unit is responsible for the church’s mission projects, the Youth Unit for the ministry to the children and the Ecumenical Affairs Unit is responsible for the church’s links worldwide (Attwell 2005:190). The Education for Ministry and Mission Unit provides training for ordained
and lay ministers, while the Communications Units are in charge of media liaison and publications (Attwell 2005, p. 19).

2.5. The breakaways and problems within the Methodist Church

The Methodist Church has had its own internal squabbles within its leadership circles as more black leaders became aware of racism, marginalisation of the culture and their roles in the church (Verryn 1957, pp. 1-10). Prominent people among black leaders who broke away from the Methodist church include Mangena Maake Mokone.

2.5.1. First schism from the MCSA

Mangena Maake Mokone founded the Ethiopian Church in 1892 after breaking away from the MCSA (Millard 1999, pp. 1-3; http://www.dacb.org/stories/southafrica/mokone-mangena). He was born in Sekhukhuniland in 1851 and he belonged to a royal kraal. His father was the chief assistant and was often involved in battles with other chiefs. Mokone was appointed as a ‘native assistant’ to a missionary (evangelist) in 1880. Although he exhibited exceptional talents as an evangelist, he was not treated equally to white ministers – a factor that caused him to move from the Methodist church to form his own African Initiated Church in 1892 together with his friends Tantsi, Mathabathe, Xaba, Gabashane and Dwane (Millard 1999, pp. 1-3; http://www.dacb.org/stories/southafrica/mokone-mangena).

2.5.2. African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME)

In this section the conditions and circumstances that led to the formation of the American Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) is analysed. The aim of the analysis is to draw similarities between what was obtained in America because of racial issue and led to the formation of a breakaway group. The comparison between America and South Africa is drawn here to show that the black protest and breakaway from the MCSA was not unique and that the breakaway group was not unreasonable.
The AME is a breakaway from the Methodist Church in America and the circumstances under which it was started in America inspired Mokone’s new found church. The AME was founded by the African American Reverend Richard Allen in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1816 from several black Methodist congregations in the mid-Atlantic area that were disturbed by racial problems and wanted independence from white Methodists.

The AME was organised by people of African descent. The racial problems facing the AME in America were also prevalent in the MCSA. Although the AME was open to people of all races, its members speaking the same language as all others within Methodist church the centre did not hold. It broke away for the same reasons as the Mokone group in South Africa: inequality and racism.

Similarly to the Mokone church in South Africa, the AME was born out of protest against racial discrimination and slavery. The protest and resistance were in keeping with the Methodist Church’s philosophy, whose founder John Wesley had once called the slave trade ‘that execrable sum of all villainies’ (Balia 1993, p. 124). The basic foundations of the AME beliefs of the church can be summarised in the Apostle’s Creed and The Twenty Five Articles of Religion, which are held in common with other Methodist Episcopal congregations. The church also observes the official by-laws of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The doctrine and discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church is revised at every General Conference and published every five years (Balia 1993, p. 125).

The mission of the AME is to minister to the spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional and environmental needs of all people by spreading Christ’s liberating gospel through word and deeds (Balia 1993, p. 125). At every level of the Connection and in every local church, the AME engages in carrying out the spirit of the original Free African Society, out of which the AME evolved. That is to seek out and save the lost and to serve the needy through a continuing programme of:
2.5.3. The Methodist Church of Transkei

Another schism that occurred because of racial problems and the policy of separate development in South Africa involved the Methodist Church of Transkei. The Methodist Church was one church in South Africa until the Transkei homeland opted for independence in terms of the apartheid homeland policy of self-rule in 1976. It was part of the MCSA and the Transkei homeland leader was a member.

After the Transkei homeland was declared an independent state from South Africa, there was salary imparity between members of the Methodist Church in the Transkei and those in South Africa. Economically, the Transkei homeland had difficulties because of location (errant conditions of black reserves with no natural resources). White ministers in the Transkei church had a better stipend compared to black ministers because they were subsidised by the church in South Africa.

Some ministers (in Transkei) who felt that they were not treated equally to white ministers prompted the breakaway. This inequality was evident in their stipends and lower benefits compared to those of their white counterparts. The money was always collected from local churches but was always sent to the headquarters of the church in South Africa, which is called the Connexional Methodist Office. A secret meeting was
held on 2 June 1978 at Mthatha. Amongst the senior ministers who were present were Don Dabula, Weston Zweni and T. Gum (Methodist Minutes of Conference 1981 p. 205).

The unhappiness that led to the decision to secede was exacerbated by the Methodist Church Conference held in the Transkei in 1977. The delegates of the conference refused to send greetings to the apartheid President of Bantustand, Chief Kaizer Matanzima, because the Methodist Church did not accept and recognise the homelands which the Transkei was part of (Methodist Minutes of Conference 1981, p. 205).

Chief Kaizer Matanzima was an active member of the MCSA as already said and he moved his membership to the Methodist Church of Transkei. He was offended by this act of defiance by his own church. His brother, George Matanzima, a minister of Justice in 1979, signed a declaration banning the MCSA. The church lost many properties including church buildings, schools, missionary houses and members because all people were forced to join the Methodist Church of Transkei. The church was devastated by this act. The MCSA retaliated by freezing the pension funds of all the ministers and their local churches. Kaizer Matanzima donated an amount of R 300 000 to ministers’ pensions while the MCSA continued to survive on a small scale (Minutes of Methodist Conference 1989, p. 86).

2.5.4. Racism

From inception, the Methodist Church has been regarded as having some racist approaches to many communities by the majority of black ministers. In South Africa, very few black ministers were allowed into leadership positions, except in 1964 when the first black president was elected. Ministers were stationed according to their race group. Stipends (contributions for living given to ministers in the church) were not equal for many years (Methodist Minutes of Conference 1985, p. 87). Black ministers were underpaid. Presidents of Conference were awarded to whites only, until black ministers formed an organisation called the Black Methodist Consultation (Methodist Minutes of
Conference 1985, p. 87) to promote the election of black leaders in the church. This organisation was widely criticised by white ministers as a church within the church.

In most cases black ministers would run 52 societies and a close white minister would run only 1 or 2 societies and yet, when it came to stipends, whites were earning far more than their black counterparts.

2.5.5. Inequality

Inequality contributed to racism in the church. Ministers were not paid equally and therefore most black ministers were stationed in rural areas while white ministers were stationed as Superintendents of the unviable circuits. This happened for many years until the black ministers fought the system (Methodist Minutes of Conference 1985, p. 87). When the Black Methodist Consultation, which was composed of black ministers to fight inequality, was launched, things started improving. Unfortunately, when the black Methodist ministers won this battle of inequality, there was an immediate system which was to reverse inequality in the church, which was the geographical circuit. The new system was meant to unify two circuits that operate next to each other, like a town and a location. Two Methodist ministers, one black and one white, would come together to form one circuit. However, a white minister would be a Superintendent because the other section would not have enough money and the viable section (the rich) would elect a Superintendent. They would find a probationer minister on the other side to be under the Superintendent of a black minister. Even when a black minister was running approximately 20 societies and a white minister was running only 2, travelling allowances and stipends were the same (Methodist Minutes of Conference 1994, p. 186).

2.5.6. Leadership

When black ministers formed the Black Ministers Consultation (BMC), many white ministers were upset with the move. This Consultation was to fight white supremacy in the church whereby blacks could vote for a certain individual who would stand for
election, whilst whites voted for their own individual (Balia 1993, p. 124). The idea of leadership in mainline churches is a contested space because it is always a problem for the church which was brought to Africa by white people to relinquish power and give it to their black counterparts.

2.5.7. Introduction of deaconesses in the MCSA

Deaconesses were introduced long ago in the MCSA, before 1963 (Oosthuizen 1990, p. 45). Most of them (white deaconesses) were trained overseas. Women who felt called to ministry were given positions as deaconesses. This practice followed the same understanding as that of the Methodist Church of England, where women who felt a calling could become a candidate for the ministry. They were exempt from writing the written examination to become candidates of ministry. They were only allowed to follow and fulfill the rules and regulations which applied to male candidates. Probation proceeds as it is stipulated in the rules of the church (Methodist Minutes of Conference 1964, p. 121). The woman can again be on probation for three years before she may be ordained for ministry.

Constance M. Oosthuizen was the first woman deaconess to be ordained in the ministry of Word and Sacrament in the MCSA in 1976 (Oosthuizen 1990, p. 45). At that time, the Warden of the then Deaconess Order had left South Africa for Canada. The Conference did not hesitate to appoint Constance M. Oosthuizen as her successor. The following year Oosthuizen was appointed to the Lower South Coast Circuit (Port Shepstone) and she led an uninterrupted ministry in that Circuit from 1977 up until her retirement in 1997 (Oosthuizen 1990, p. 45). She was followed by Dorothy Spink, who was a candidate whilst she was a probationer deaconess and was ordained in 1978. This Order contributed to the first black woman being ordained in the South African Methodist ministry. Her name was Nikiwe Mavis Mbilini and she was ordained in 1985 (Methodist minutes of Conference, 1986). Today, this Order is being led by a man and it still working very well for the church ministry.
2.5.8. Acceptance of women ministry in the MCSA

As already mentioned, during the inception of the Methodist Church of England, no woman was allowed into ministry, and the MCSA debated this issue for many years. It was only during a 1972 Conference that women ministers were accepted into ministry. They had to be trained by the Order of Deaconess first, in which Constane M. Oosthuizen was accepted in 1976 (Oosthuizen 1990, p. 47). The second and third women to be accepted into the order were Dorothy and Mavis Mbilini. The Mbilinis were the first black women to be ordained in the MCSA. Their ordinations saw the start of many difficulties because many women offered themselves to the ministry but were turned down. Their training at the Seminary Theological Training was the same as that of their male counterparts but they were treated as second-class citizens in the ministry (Oosthuizen 1990, p. 47). For example, when the Seminary attached women to nearby churches, they were not allowed to preach but had to run Sunday Schools and participate in church choirs (information from the questionnaire). The other hurdle that kept them from being accepted into ministry was because of their stationing in circuits.

Many circuits did not want women ministers. If they were stationed, members would rule that their heads had to be covered during services. Their ministry was very restricted. If ministering sacraments, they were not fully accepted by some stereotypes, which refused to allow a woman minister to perform burials (information from the questionnaire). Many questions were raised by some chauvinistic males such as whether they may administer sacraments during their menstruation. The church is clear about the ordination of women but the problem lies with some of the church members. This ill-treatment is experienced across the colour line. From all the women that I have interviewed, it is evident that women are treated badly in both black and white societies.

This led to women ministers coming together in 1995 and forming a consultation. This consultation was endorsed by the church (Methodist Minutes of Conference 1996, p. 102). Since then, women ministers have been meeting to enhance the ministry of women. There
have been no tangible results from these meetings, not even the empowerment of women in ministry by the church leadership. The only statement that was issued by this consultation was that ‘we, the women ministers of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, express our concern that the full implications of women in ministry have not been clarified’ Women ministers are not adequately represented in leadership structures, and more information will be revealed in Chapter 7 on the empowerment of women ministry. Some churches have ordained women ministers but the power still lies in the hands of male clergy.

2.5.9. Debates on women ordination within the MCSA

According to the findings from this study, some Methodist churches are still debating the ordination of women, while others are very obstinate and focus on patriarchal attitudes. They do not see the value that ordained women may bring to the ministry. The wealth of previous experience and involvement in the church from their own perspective and context can only benefit the church that is predominantly female. This experience serves to enhance their ministry with their male counterparts in diverse ways. Some ordained women not only bring their Christian understanding of relationships to God and neighbours, but also bring particular dimensions of feminism and other liberation theologies as well. The linking of these fundamental life postures prepares the way for the gifts and graces of all women, men and children to be affirmed, utilised and developed in the mutual sharing of the gospel.

The most publicly visible changes that women ministers bring to the ministry are in the area of leadership style. A phrase that characterises this particular departure from the traditional is ‘shared involvement’. This is the ministry of participating together in the leadership and the conduct of church service, with specific gifts to uplift the spirituality of the congregation’s ‘mutual pilgrimage’. This is also very significant because the understanding of vision and the ethos of the mission is very important to women. This helps to indicate the vividness of the mission as it is easy for them to undertake such
imperatives. Because women ministers themselves have had to struggle to arrive at ordained ministry, they often bring a heightened awareness of the dehumanising experience of being ‘shut out’ from the leadership positions. The situation of women exploitation, exclusion and marginalisation has not disappeared in the Methodist Church but as Masenya says, ‘African women in South Africa remain on the periphery of the margins of our communities’ (2012, pp. 205-216). As much as women are without voice, they can draw from their own pilgrimage as a source of strength as they invite and enable others to affirm and value their own uniqueness, gifts and resources. This point will be discussed further in the next chapter along with women organisations that remain pillars of strength in a male-dominated environment.

In this thesis I argue that women ministers can be a model style of leadership that acknowledges the pain of ignored talents, because they have never been taken seriously by their societies that are patriarchal and because their roles are narrowly defined as that of subordination, quietness and lack of involvement. It is the contention of this thesis that women ministers can be more open to exploring leadership styles that are less hierarchical because of the oppression that they have endured and this can further enable them to be more fluid than the majority of their male colleagues, who have mostly been admitted to the system as a matter of fact, expectation and privilege. It is also true that the ministry of male minister leadership can greatly be enhanced by the presence of women in the ministry, many of whom bring a new understanding and new leadership style to the church. Some women ministers who have penetrated the previous walled bastions of male leadership have observed and felt the effects of the closed system and they can help remove some of the impediments towards egalitarian equitable society. The traditional disparity between leader and follower, powerful and powerless, skilled and unskilled, male and female is being challenged, while the concept of shared ministry between clergy and laity is being embraced to ensure that women ministers enter positions of clergy leadership for the benefit of all.
This open style of church administration, which appears to be more characteristic of women ministers, is bound to be perceived by some who have functioned primarily in leader-follower systems as not only weak, by traditional standards, but also ineffective. Sizable numbers of people continue to espouse the myth that leaders are born and not made and therefore do not believe that they have valuable leadership skills that can be grown, enhanced and utilised. Some persons will view women ministers as shirking their responsibilities and lacking the basic knowledge of how to acquire things and resources. Within these dimensions of structure, atmosphere, management, philosophy, decision and policy making and communication, there is considerable correspondence for women ministers, who are emerging as models of leadership style. Women ministers are in the unique position to provide training grounds for skills assessment and development for other pilgrims in ministry, precisely to the self-denial and pain of role rigidity of others.

The church can continue to be the supportive setting in which people can get the feel of visible leadership in a variety of roles, as it affirms the presence of gifts and provides opportunities for their use. Often people feel stuck in certain roles in other contexts, but the variety of tasks needing to be cared for in the church offers a continuum along which people can move as they develop and focus their leadership qualities. The understanding is that ordained ministers are entrusted to develop and use their gifts, along with and behalf of the whole community of believers, and at the same time to enable others to use and develop their gifts, skills and graces. Christ has been experienced as the comforter, the clarifier and the confronter. Likewise, in raising up other co-pilgrims, ministers and the church have a responsibility to comfort, nurture, clarify, focus, confront and question its members in love, so that women, men and children may flourish in their journey toward wholeness in all its dimension.

Women ministers are challenging traditional sources of religious authority. The very presence of women leaders emphasises the tension between Scripture and tradition and religious knowledge which comes directly from the Holy Spirit. It is true that this is not a new development in the history of the church. It is also true that women ministers were
able to command religious authority when there was popular confidence in the power of the Holy Spirit. Historically, women ministers have been denied direct opportunities for leadership in the church and this is evident from the interview with some women. At Corinth, social unrest seized women. They felt the hot promptings of the Spirit in their souls just as the men, and rose to prophesy. They too felt their intellectual life enriched by new thoughts and a wider outlook; why should they not have the right to teach in the church? They felt the emancipating sense of equality and the glad sweep of the new brotherhood in the meeting, and removed the veil, which the lustfulness of men and long-standing social inferiority had compelled women to wear when in the presence of strangers. Paul, in one of his bold, prophetic strains, asserted that in Christ, all the old distinctions of race and social standing would disappear, including the difference between man and woman (Rauschenbusch 1907, p. 134). Their gifts have been lost behind the scenes, or made auxiliary to male leadership. Women ministers have been carved out of arenas of service considered unworthy by some male counterparts. Within the separate spheres of women ministers’ work, women have exercised leadership in their own ways and have created many organisations around the church structure to lead other women. The popular organisation in the MCSA is the most successful organisation in the church and acts as a backbone of the church. It also supports male ministers with travelling and during financial difficulties. They have a deep appreciation for and experience with collaborative facilitating, shared and communal styles. The other point is that when women ministers assume positions historically held by men ministers, there is always change.

2.5.10. Organisational church

Women are missionary oriented as it can be seen in the Women’s Manyano (Women’s organisations), Young Mens’ Guild, Local Preachers Department, Young Women’s Manyano, Women’s Organisation, Wesley Guild, Fellowship and Sunday School (Brandel-Syrier 1962, p. 64). Yearly elections are dutifully held according to European democratic procedure, but the President or ‘Chairlady’, once established, shows marked
tendencies to stay. Group coherence is maintained by personal loyalty to the leader who acts, encourages, admonishes, advises and resolves quarrels. Her word is believed implicitly and she allots the tasks. In the women’s funerals societies, for instance, the powers of the president, who is generally the founder, are absolute. A man minister is a president of all these organisations as an ordained minister but women ministers are not welcome in some of these organisations (The Methodist Book of Order 2010, p. 78). The church has made these rulings but this is not accepted at grassroots level towards an inclusive Methodist Church, believing that all men and women are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26, Galatians 3:28) and believing that people with disabilities are allowed by God in order that His work be manifested in disabled people (John 9:3). Examples of these organisations are the Local Preachers Organisation, and the Young Men’s Guild. (Methodist Year Book 1999-2000, p. 172).
CHAPTER 3: WOMEN ORGANISATIONS AS AN EXPRESSION OF FULL MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH

3.1. Women’s Manyano, Young Women’s and Men’s Guilds

The inclusion of women in the full ministry of the Methodist Church through purposeful transformation may not fully be grasped without first analysing women self-initiated organisations, their resultant empowerment and support, their spirituality as well as their therapeutic value to many women who are excluded, marginalised and oppressed in their own church by their fellow Christians. This chapter focuses on the formation, skills development, management, spiritual expression, leadership development, preaching and prayer discipline of women organisations within the MCSA. This analysis should provide a sound basis for the next chapter that concentrates on the use of the Bible as a means of justifying one’s own interest and the resultant refute of that self-acquired dominant position. Manyano organisations in turn gave rise to other church organisations such as the Young Women’s Guild, and the Men’s Guild. However, the focus in this chapter is on the Women’s Manyano and, to a lesser extent, on the Young Women’s Guild and the Men’s Guild.

Almost all mainline (historical) churches in South Africa have women organisations along with the mainstream denominations. Some women scholars have done intensive research into the factors that led to the formation of these women organisations (Holness 1997). Scholars have also discussed the organisation’s expression of spirituality (Madise 2008, p. 5), their leadership desires, their frustrations with male-centred churches (Hoch 1987, p. 242) and the cultural discourses on leadership development (Mudimeli 2011, p. 92-110), church discipline (Holness 1997), preaching and support of one another (Walter 1990, pp. 73-90).

There are several uncertainties and speculations about when the Manyano (‘Kopano’ in Sesotho which means ‘the gathering’) organisation started. Madise (2008, p. 5) states that the organisation was started in 1905 by Rev. Mthembu, while Preston (2007) says that it
was started by Amos Burnett in the Transvaal in 1910. Attwell (in Preston 2007, p. 41) argues that it was started in 1926 at the Bloemfontein Conference while others such as Madise (2008, pp. 117-126), who is quoting Deborah Gaitskill (in Elphick & Davenport 1997, p. 253), states that the organisation was started in 1919 in Johannesburg.

When the Women’s Manyano was started, the Methodist Conference appointed some ministers to represent them in Conference partly because they did not trust that women would understand church doctrine and thought that they needed guidance and partly because the organisation was growing very fast and was an imposing threat to male-dominated structures. But as it became clear, the Manyano organisation had no evil intention and it was embraced by missionaries (Madise 2008, pp. 117-126). According to the Women’s Manyano, (http://www.methodist.org.za/organisations/womens-manyano) their total membership stood at 62 000 in 2011.

3.1.1. The Manyano uniform and its significance

The origin of the Manyano uniform is not known as a Manyano establishment. The uniform is used to distinguish women who are, in a sense, real mothers and praying women (Thein 2003, p. 47) from those who are not. Their uniform symbolises a serious commitment to the motto and objectives of the movement. The uniform consists of a black skirt, a red blouse with buttonholes, and a round white hat. The black skirt denotes sin (as sin is associated with blackness), the red blouse represents the anointing blood of Jesus, the buttonholes denote His wounds, and the white collar and round white hat represent the cleansing blood of Christ (Thein 2003, p. 47). Members of the Manyano organisation are expected to lead a good moral life and to refrain from any public sin.

Manyano women gather every Thursday afternoon in local church buildings for prayer and sharing from the Word of God. The organisation represents a powerful female response to Christianity in the environment of male-dominated churches and traditional patriarchal African societies (Holness 1997, pp. 21_31). Women who belong to the Manyano see themselves as empowering one another by sharing various spiritual gifts.
They enrich each other for the lay ministry within the church and together they work through challenges facing them. Their Thursday meetings are an outlet, otherwise denied in the church, to isolate, regroup and enhance their presence in the church.

3.1.2. Tensions within the Women’s Manyano

The acceptance of the Manyano did not reduce the burden and frustrations women members had in the church. Although women belonging to this organisation met for fellowship and support, they had their own internal tensions and conflict. The problems concerned leadership and financial administration (Madise 2008, pp. 117-126). Often the women would raise a lot of money for their organisation and give it to the church council who, in turn, use it for ministers’ stipends without prior approval from the Manyano leadership. Sometimes the squabbles would arise when the ministers’ wives automatically assumed that they were chairpersons of the movement purely because their husbands were chairing local church councils. In other instances there is a clause in the constitution that state that the ministers’ wives are chairpersons of the movement. This ruling is implemented regardless of the fact that the ministers’ wives may not have the necessary leadership skills to lead the movement and despite the fact that there might be other women within the movement that have the necessary skills. Madise (2008, pp. 117-126) refers to an instance when this happened at the Northern Transvaal District in the 1900s when a laity was appointed to the position of chairpersonship and was later demoted and replaced by a minister’s wife. Ministers’ wives continued to chair the organisation until 1995 when the Methodist Conference resolved the problem (Preston 2007, p. 43).

Thein (2003, p. 49) found that power struggles are a major issue among women organisations. Power struggles are common problems among and between political parties as individuals fight for positions in the organisations, and so it is not unusual to find similar tensions among Christian organisations. Power struggles are part of any democratic system (Thein 2003, p. 49). There are power struggles between younger and
older women, between traditionalists and progressive women, and between ministers’ wives and laity for leadership positions. Thein says that, ‘Power struggles start when people are receiving power to become church leaders. If you are made a church leader you’re getting a platform of power of some sort. Then, when they want to change you, you see yourself being again pressed down. You’ll find that there are some old ladies, who are quite old but still are leaders of the church because if you change them it is as if you have guillotined them altogether…’ (2003, p. 49).

The power struggles also happen among the ministers’ wives as they are posturing to be elected for District or General Society Presidents. Members of the Manyano are often co-opted into fierce battles that start with lobbying for certain positions within the movement. These positions do not require certain skills or criteria, and so the elections are open for anyone. For this reason fierce battles may ensue among the ministers’ wives; not because people are vying for a particular position but because people sometimes try to prevent a wrong candidate from taking a leadership position.

Despite all of the negative elements within the Manyano organisation, the movement plays a very crucial role for the empowerment of its members. The Manyano organisation gives black women the security, space and environment to experiment with and develop their talents in the church, an opportunity they seldom get in the patriarchal church setting. Within this organisation women are free to become responsible leaders in their own right and can attend to issues of mutual interest without competing with their male counterparts.

3.1.3. Expression of identity in a triple oppression environment

African women scholars such as Masenya (2012, pp. 205-216), Mudimeli (2011, p. 17), Aduyoye (2007, pp. 2-8), and Kapasula (2009, pp. 3) argue that women suffer from a triple oppression of being female, black and poor. According to Holness (1997, pp. 21-31, women in black societies suffer from ‘a diminished sense of personhood’. Black culture, that is itself oppressed within white dominated society, is equally oppressive in that its
outlook of women is that of seeing them as non-male and therefore non-people in their own right. The black culture, language and religion are exclusionary and male-centred (Kunin 2003, p. 138).

Women in the Manyano organisation assume dignity, pride and self-confidence that frees them from a cultural derivative identity that relates them to their husbands in order to allow them to be something (for example, they are Mma-Moruti – minister’s wife, or Mma-somebody – mother of so and so). In the Manyano organisation there is egalitarianism in terms of uniform, equality as women, sameness in terms of faith in God, womanhood and personhood. A common identity is being conferred on them all (Holness 1997, pp. 21-31). The Manyano organisation is a ‘leveler – to the extent that they are without shame’ (Holness 1997, p. 18). When women are in the Manyano organisation, they are removed from stereotypes, loneliness, poverty and otherness. The Manyano organisation is a ‘booster of confidence’ (Holness 1997, p. 18) and a sustainer of courage. Women are appreciated for what they are in the Manyano organisation, something that they do not always receive in the church.

In male-centred churches, women face frustrations on a perpetual basis as they are marginalised, relegated to specific roles and curtailed. Women are simply without voice and dignity in male-centred churches. Although women have been allowed to assume roles of ordained ministry after their training in the MCSA, they are still expected to ‘know their role’ of subordinate partners in the Lord. Texts from the Bible are construed to support that outlook of women and are used against women. In order to show compliance and loyalty to the Methodist Church or to prove that they are ‘women of worth’ (Masenya 1998, pp. 271-287), women seem forced to tolerate all indignation meted out to them. African women are therefore silenced by Christianity, culture and men.

The relationship between the Manyano organisation and church leadership remains tense to this day. In every Manyano organisation there should be a (male) minister who represents the Synod and observes whether the organisation is following the Methodist
Order. The organisation submits reports to the Synod every year and accounts for everything it has done during the recess. Ministers (often male) force themselves onto the programmes of the Manyano organisation and dominate discussions on policy matters (Mkhwanazi 2002, p. 40). Ministers’ wives are, by the virtue of their marriage to ministers, presidents of the organisation. This arrangement ensures that ministers always have a firm grip on the organisation.

The Manyano organisation’s funds are closely monitored and detailed reports are expected to be submitted to the Synod annually. The suggestions and proposals on how the organisation’s funds should be invested always come from the church’s head office (Mkhwanazi 2002, p. 41). Money collected by the Manyano organisation is regarded as a threat to the church and often the suggestions on how the money should be spent is motivated by fear rather than reason (Mkhwanazi 2002, p. 41). The Manyano organisation has the potential of helping the church to realise its mission calling, but prejudices against women and their power is holding this possibility back. There is no match between the Women’s Manyano and its male counterpart, the Amadodana Organisation. In both numbers and money, the Amadodana are behind the Women’s Manyano, yet there is no reciprocity in terms of strategies of mission between the two.

The Manyano organisation remains a credible outlet that offers women the opportunity to pray, sing, preach and share their challenges (Holness 1997, pp. 21-31). They experience healing, fulfillment and restoration through the organisation. Women organisations across mainline denominations have proved to be formidable when it comes to raising money, and this is the area in which women are more powerful than men. Women have the ability to ‘[look] after the quality of their cents (little money) – a quality that men do not have’ (Holness 1997, pp. 21-31). They can raise money such as in stokvel which is called a ‘hidden’ economy in South Africa (www.moneyweb.co.za/...south-africa/stokvel-hidde). The Manyano organisation remains the most important site for the empowerment of women.
3.1.4. Why the Manyano organisation is growing

The question of why the Manyano organisation is growing not only concerns the MCSA but other historical churches as well. Several causes have been cited for this phenomenon. Some argue that the growth is due to human piety while others argue that the growth is due to the lack of recognition of women in the church and still others refer to a need of alternative ministry within the church that is done from ‘below’. In this section, Walter’s (1990, pp. 73-90) article called ‘why are most churchgoers women?’ is analysed for some illumination on this point. Walter argues that throughout the modern world, more women go to church than men. He estimates that 55% of churchgoers are women while 45% of churchgoers are men (Walter 1990, p. 75). In England in the Methodist Church the ratio is 60:40. Walter (1990, p. 73) categorises factors that make women more religious under psychological theories, deprivation-compensation theories, and theories concerning women’s roles in society. Under psychological theories he cites guilt, anxiety, dependence and relationships as factors for this phenomenon.

a) Guilt

Citing scholars such as Cox (1967), and Simmon and Walter (1988), Walters argues that women are more likely to seek God as a refuge when they are stressed. Feminist scholars such as Reuther (1974, pp. 89-116) have also alluded to this fact by arguing that, because women bodies are associated with evil, they are vulnerable when they are facing guilt-inducing environments.

b) Anxiety

Christian faith, by its very nature, encourages guilt and confession of guilt and it also has the ability to provide comfort against guilt (Walter 1990, p. 78). Women are leading a precarious life full of life-threatening experiences because of a male-dominant environment to which they are subjected to daily. Because of the

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1 The concept ‘historical churches’ is used here to refer to churches that came over from Europe and America to do mission work. These churches came more or less during the time of the colonisation of Africa. Sometimes they are referred to as ‘mainline churches’.
oppressive situation they are living in, they are more likely than men to seek refuge under the figure of God who is all-loving and protective (Argyle & Beit-Hallahmi 1975, p. 75).

c) Dependence

Chauvanism of men over women and patriarchal culture create a dependency-syndrome on women and many years of socialisation in this environment force women to be more dependent than men. According to Walter (1990, p. 79), women are brought up to be dependent. Kang (2004, p. 7) supports this notion when he states that ‘the patriarchal socialisation of women has conditioned them to think, [and] act as second-class citizens’. Women have internalised the patriarchal message to the extent that they believe that acceptable conduct is that which is espoused by the society, institutional church and its leaders (Onwunta & August 2012, p. 14).

It is true that oppressors also know that the most effective way to keep the oppressed under control is to divide them, separate them, create fights among them or, at least, to arose suspicions of each other (Cone 1986, p. 86). As long as an oppressed people remain ignorant and suspicious of each other, they will remain open to believing what oppressors say about the others and thus will not build a coalition movement designed for the liberation of all. Divisions that feed the opportunism of leaders are not resisted, both within isolated oppressed groups and within their relationships with the oppressed groups (Jones 1984, p. 142).

Walter (1990, p. 80) also discusses deprivation-compensation theories to explain the reasons why women are more religious and go to religious sanctuaries. Under these theories he cites material poverty, social life and status as reasons for women’s greater attendance in church:

a) Material poverty
In many societies of the world, especially in poor countries, women bear the brunt of poverty and deprevation. When their husbands are away on search for migrant labour, women are left behind to care for the whole family and for the day-to-day needs of the family. Even where their husbands are at home, women remain the first line of defence when it comes to the provision of family necessities. Because they are the ones who bear the brunt of daily necessities, they often seek help and refuge in religion.

b) Social life

As shown above, often men work away from home and leave women in charge as heads of their families. Women also have a strong sense of belonging and an intimate relationship with each other and where their needs are most acute they will come together to support one another as shown with the Manyano organisations. Unlike men who tend to work more independently, women depend and value the strength of each other in fighting the common enemy. Other scholars like Roof (in Walter 1990, p. 82), allege that some men would send their wives to church because they feel that their wives are safe at the church and that the church would teach them morals which would make them faithful wives.

c) Status

Women’s exclusion from powerful positions such as leadership in the church, politics, economy and public offices deprives them of social status (Walter 1990, p. 82). Christianity, with its message of equality and love, tends to attack them especially as they feel that they are not accorded love by the world around them (Walter 1990, p.:82). The church is the institution that is expected to fulfil women’s expectations of love and belonging.
A third set of theories believed to make women more religious than men, according to Walter (1990, p. 83), concerns their roles in society. These include the sacrifice, child-rearing and work-participation factors:

a) **Sacrifice**

Women are made conscious of lives of sacrifice through their motherhood and womanhood. According to Walter (1990, 84), women appear more able to bear suffering patiently than their male counterparts because of their child-rearing and their exclusion in society. They sacrifice pleasures, careers and life itself for the sake of pleasing their husbands and children (Walter 1990, p. 84). Women are therefore more ready to ‘carry the cross’ and follow Jesus than men are.

b) **Child-rearing**

Roof (in Walter 1990, p. 84) associates child-rearing with the life of the church. The church looks after the welfare of its attendants, and so it has affinities with child-rearing. In its pastoral care and spiritual upliftment, the church serves as a model of a life-caring agent and thus attracts women who already instinctively know what child-rearing is.

c) **Work-participation**

Luckman (in Walter 1990, p. 84) suggests that some women go to church because they are not obliged to go out to secular work as they are home-based because of patriarchal settings. Attending church gives them a sense of feeling protected from the profane influences of the marketplace. It is, however, not clear as to whether irreligious women feel freer to go to marketplaces or whether work makes them anti-religious. Ross (2011, pp. 3-5) asserts that regular church attendance provides women with the opportunity to ‘build social relationships around common pursuit’ that they cannot find in
marketplaces. The church provides a relaxed atmosphere where women can organise themselves in the manner that they cannot easily do in other secular social gatherings (Ross 2011, p. 4). Church attendance functions not only to offer women with opportunities for interaction but it also provides such encounters in the presence of the ‘Holy Other’. It solidifies and authenticates their belief in God and legitimises their fellowship without which life can be unbearably difficult.

3.2. Observation

This section has provided some information that is crucial to this study. Women live under conditions that make them more dependent than men. They are likely dependent on their husbands, groups and even God for a peaceful coexistence. For vulnerable Christian women, God is more loving and caring both in their responsibilities in child-rearing and in looking after their husbands and their families.

Psychological factors such as guilt-feelings, anxiety, dependence and as viewing God as a father figure are more prominent among women than men. The unfortunate side of this is that they are often exploited by men because of their tenderness to issues. They are perceived as perpetual minors who need care and guidance – perceptions that lead to their oppression and exploitation by men. Deprivation-compensation theories have also shed some light on the condition of women. It has observed that women are deprived of many privileges and these conditions force them to readily bear the brunt of poverty, isolation, and low social status. Women internalise their suffering and sacrifice pleasures such as careers and their lives. Any empowerment programme that does not target these male-induced dominances will not produce any desired results. Any attempt to empower or liberate women should take these factors seriously and should address them in a more fundamental way.
While the reasons for any particular woman’s powerlessness (or power) are many and varied, considering women *per se* necessarily involves questioning norms and taboos of society. What is common in the powerlessness of women in society is that, as women, they are all constrained by the norms, beliefs, customs and values through which societies differentiate between women and men. The specific ways in which this operates vary culturally and over time. In one situation it might reveal itself in women’s lower incomes relative to men, in another it might be seen in the relative survival rates of girl and boy children and in domestic violence, male-dominated decisions for women and women’s inferior access to assets of many kinds. The Manyano organisation, however, remains a useful tool for the survival of women in the male-dominated church.

For an African woman, Jesus is that person who enables her to combine her authentic inner experience of the divine with her effort to harmonise her life with this divine experimentation and diversity in African Christology (Mugambi 1998, p. 124). The ‘deafening silence’ of the church in the face of indescribable cruelty to women as they are prepared to please men, must surely be an indicator that the whole church has yet to wake up to its total calling. The global challenge of the churches’ solidarity with women is particularly acute in Africa. The basis for their charge is the gospel of Jesus Christ’s teaching against the use of power in ‘lording over’ others. The concern is to break down the system and attitudes that exploit, abuse or violate others, especially those most vulnerable, like women.

This makes life a profoundly religious phenomenon to women. This religious background is what shapes the African women’s experience of Christ in mission. The supernatural is a presence, which is felt in every town and village, and it claims every new life. The African woman believes that there is an indissoluble union between the supernatural and her everyday life, and she seeks to harmonise these elements in her life.
3.3. Young Women’s Guild

But Young Women’s Guild in their circuit meetings, in Districts and in the Connexion are exceptions as that practice is not acceptable there. This practice creates an impression that women are perpetual minors and that they need guidance from men. The Connexion is the collections’ 13 districts of the MCSA. When the Methodist Church of England refused to accept women as preachers, this was also a problem in the MCSA. It took many years for the church to accept women as local preachers. It is true that many circuits do not grant women permission to preach even if they have been ordained (Methodist Minutes of Conference 1980, p. 180). There are, however, many attachments that allow women to stand on the pulpit and preach.

3.4. Amadodana Organisation

‘South Africa has produced a rich crop of eminent women who have played an independent role in our history’ – Nelson Mandela– from a letter to Helen Suzman, written on Robben Island, 1 March 1974. Amadodana Organisation is also known for its vibrancy in entertaining male music. It is also growing but not at the pace Manyano Organisation is growing. I now focus on the role women played in the Old Testament
CHAPTER 4: THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

4.1. Approaches to the reading of the Old and New Testaments

The role of women in the church is soaked with controversies and painful debates that are hard to win or end. Hoch (1987, pp. 241-249) provides an experimental hermeneutical lens that is helpful to interrogate important theories on the role of women in the Bible. The first lens he calls ‘The Non-Evangelical Egalitarian approach’, the second he calls ‘The Evangelical Egalitarian approach’ and the third lens he calls ‘The Hierarchicalist approach’.

4.1.1. The Non-Evangelical Egalitarian approach

According to Hoch (1987, p. 242), this approach rejects the Bible as an absolute, timeless revelation with a universal message. Most feminist scholars operating in this tradition are American feminist theologians who came onto the scene in the 1960s such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton (in Kunin 2003, p. 138), who argues that the very language of Scripture and scriptural interpretation is designed to uphold the systematic exploitation of women. Many discussions on the Bible, Stanton alleges, focus on the agents of power, many of which are controlled by men. The biblical texts and institutions tend to serve men (Kunin 2003, p 141). She points out that most biblical discussions are highly textually centred. These texts are usually written by men and do not express the women’s understanding of oppression.

June O’Connor (in Kunin 2003, p. 140) suggests that the nature of biblical sources should be approached with suspicion while trying to recover the voices of women or to recreate those that have been lost. She further asserts that the notions of universality in these texts should be challenged. The biblical message, they argue, should be reconstructed in such a way that it addresses the needs of women who, most of the time, find themselves at the bottom of the victims’ ladder (Masenya 2012, pp. 205-216).
Feminist theology begins from experiences and not from the revelation event (Christifideles nd, pp. 49-5220/10/2014). It begins especially from the social experiences of women, the discrimination against them and their invisibility in male-dominated societies and churches (Buckenham 2010). It points out that women and men are shaped by different psychological and social presuppositions, which then in turn also shape their images of themselves, the world and God. However, we should not in any way understand these different thought-patterns as eternal modes of being, but regard them as being, above all, socially conditioned.

Slightly different but related to American feminist theology is black womanist theology that refuses to be guided by white feminist theology (Kunin 2003, p. 145). Black womanist theology chooses to be guided by its particular black woman cultural experience but it takes the men’s use of the Bible to their interest very seriously.

Both white feminist and black womanist theologies see the biblical texts as ‘sexist and purely androcentric requiring a hermeneutics of suspicion’ (Hoch 1987, p. 242). The biblical text is rooted in a patriarchal culture and hegemony. Thus the text should be read with the view of finding out who wrote it and for what purpose. The rejectionists in this tradition assert that the Bible is of no value for constructing theology for women. In fact, they view the entire biblical text as sinful and corrupt and beyond redemption (Hoch 1987, p. 243).

4.1.2. The Evangelical Egalitarian approach

The second approach affirms the Bible as the infallible Word of God that is capable of teaching and guiding. The approach is not negative or hostile towards the Bible. Followers of this approach, however blame the powerful (hierarchical structures that have been imposed in the name of culture) who misuse the Bible to advance their interest. They believe that the Bible teaches equality between men and women and argue, therefore, that there should be equal opportunities for the two when it comes to their ministry in the church. The approach affirms that women have been created in the image of God. But
the approach also affirms that ‘women’s role in the home and church is [to] a large extent culturally defined’ (Hoch 1987, p. 242). The approach believes that women are equally gifted members of the body of Christ and that biblical texts that require them to keep quiet are not absolute and authoritative. God’s ministry in the church is open for both men and women.

4.1.3. The Hierarchicalist approach

The Hierarchicalist approach reaffirms a traditional patriarchal relationship of viewing women as inferior to men. This approach believes that this relationship is determined by the roles men and women should fulfill in the church. Hierarchicalists do not deny women roles in the church, but see their roles as inferior or subordinate to men’s roles. Men are to lead women and the latter have to follow (Hoch 1987, p.242). Women may be appointed as deaconesses but not as leaders in the church. This approach is riddled with exclusivity and discrimination (Sprong 2011, p. 93).

4.2. The role of women in the Bible – using the Evangelical Egalitarian approach

Generally, most of the scholars working from the Evangelical Egalitarian approach try to ‘calm down the storm of radical feminist theologians’ (Hoch 1987, p. 242). The presentation in this section will follow that approach before presenting a critical observation.

4.2.1. The Creation story

The creation story in Genesis 1:26-28 says, ‘then God said, “let us create man in own image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air” […] So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created them, male and female. God blessed them and said to them, “be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it”’ (New Living Translation, 1996). After God created man and woman, He placed them in two physical houses: male and female (Tutu 1982, p. 9). According to most scholars, the Hebrew word ‘barah’ means ‘Adamah’ (human being)
and therefore the same spirit that exists in the male exists also in the female (Tutu 1982, p. 9). Therefore, male and female, according to the Hebrew word ‘Adamah’, is the essence of both men and women, and is the resident spirit within them (Tutu 1982, p. 9).

When God created male and female, He called them Adamah, which means humankind. The question is why God put His spirit into two distinct entities. The reason is that He wanted Adamah to fulfil two distinct purposes. The spirit-man has no gender. In order to fulfil His eternal duties, God used two physical forms to express the spiritual being, made in His own image (Warfield 1968, p. 30). Therefore, whether one is male or female, the person who lives inside is essentially one and the same person. Although males and females have physical differences, they are of the same essence (Warfield 1968, p. 30).

Since the spirit-person dwells within both male and female, reference is made to the male as a male person and to the female as a female person. It is also clear that men and women are both Adamah. The distinctions between men and women are physical and functional rather than of their essence (The Bible Commentary on the Bible, Old Testament Interpretation). The woman, the ‘female-person’, is not subordinate to the man, but is an equal partner with a common purpose. The man is not from woman but woman from man. She was made to be his helper and assistant (Genesis 2:18). She was to follow his lead, live on his provisions and find safety in his strength and protection through his encouragement (Munroe 2012, p. 302).

4.2.2. The Book of Exodus and Leviticus

In the Exodus narratives, Moses, Aaron and Miriam are described as the three people who led the Israelites out of bondage, yet the later tradition displaced Miriam from equal status by blasting her with leprosy for criticising Moses. It was through Miriam’s authority that the people of Israel refused to continue their march through the desert until she was restored. Miriam played a pivotal role in many circumstances of the Israelites (Ashby 1998, p. 36).
In the Leviticus Laws, a patriarchal definition of Israel prevails. The Laws are presumed to be given to male heads of family, who alone are the direct correspondents with God. Female servants and other dependents in a patriarchal family do not receive the Law directly but are defined by it through their relations with their fathers and husbands (Ashby 1998, p. 36).

Following the close of the Old Testament Canon, the subordinate role of women was hardened to a considerable degree. Women became relegated to positions of marked inferiority. In religious life, contrary to the Old Testament practice, women were excluded from participation in public worship, being considered unfit to learn and inappropriate to teach. This prevailing rabbinic attitude towards the role of women in the temple or synagogue is reflected in Rabbi Eliezar Ben Azasriah’s comment (Haggai 3).

4.2.3. Ruth 1: 1-19

The story of Ruth centres around a family of three; a mother-in-law named Naomi and her two daughters-in-law named Ruth and Orpah. This story tells of three widows whose husbands died, three women bound together in love and joined together by friendship, by family ties and by the blood of Christ. They were not a perfect family by a societal definition, nonetheless, they were united (Davis 1984, p. 160). What began as a family of six had been reduced by death to a family of three and because there were no sons or husbands, the women seemingly had nothing to live for. However, they did not lose their dignity before God.

Being left alone in Moab without any men to defend them put these women in a difficult and vulnerable position. This was especially true for Naomi since she was a foreigner with no family or traditional ties. In Old Testament times, a woman without a husband, sons or even grandchildren had no status and was considered worthless. She was unable to provide for herself and could easily be preyed upon and be victimised. Empty and without hope, Naomi wanted to return home to Bethlehem. She felt tired and defeated and was convinced that God had dealt her a bitter cup in this distant land of Moab. So
now, all she wanted to do was to return to the homeland she had been forced to leave years earlier because of famine.

Ruth loved Naomi with a tenacity that went beyond geographic boundaries. It was a love bound so tightly by family ties that it would not allow her to leave her mother-in-law. They had come too far together and had been through too many things together to separate now. For Ruth there was no turning back, so she clung to her mother-in-law and refused to leave her. From the depth of her heart she spoke some of the most memorable words in the Old Testament: ‘do not press me to leave you or turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die; there will I be buried’ (Jakes 1990, p. 163). The vulnerability that existed between these women because their lives were not complete without their husband is the same vulnerability that existed with Adam when he was without Eve.

Over the years of being together, time had built a solid foundation of mutual respect, friendship, love and commitment between these two women. Such foundations are not easily uprooted by tragedy or sorrow and remain firm and solid, not easily disrupted by the changes that accompany everyday living.


The book Luke will be discussed because Luke is in the main gospel concerned with the oppressed and downtrodden. In the first chapter Luke writes about the promise to Zechariah that his wife Elizabeth would bear a son at her advanced age. The same angel approaches Mary and announces to her that she will bear a child, and she would name Him Jesus. He will be the One who will save the world from their sins (Jakes 1990, p. 87) and God will anoint Him for the salvific act of the whole world. A few days later Mary visited Elizabeth and Elizabeth told Mary that Mary was blessed because she would bear a child, the Saviour of the world. This led to the song of Mary praising God for choosing her from all women to give birth to the Saviour of the world. The whole interaction
between the angel, Zechariah, Elizabeth and Mary indicates that God does not discriminate against people because of their gender. He interacts freely with them without being boggled with cultural stereotypes.

Luke also writes about a family in Bethany. Jesus was told that Lazarus, the brother to two sisters, had passed away. Jesus did not go there immediately. After a few days Jesus decided to go to Bethany. When Martha received word that Jesus was coming, she went to meet Him. But Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus ‘Lord, if you were here my brother would not have died’. Then, Jesus said, ‘Your brother will rise again’. ‘Yes’ Martha said, ‘when everyone rises, on resurrection day’. Jesus told her ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, like everyone else, will live again. They are given eternal life for believing in me and will never perish. Do you believe this Martha?’ ‘Yes Lord’, she told Him ‘I have believed [that] you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who came to the world from God’. Then she left Him and returned to Mary. She called Mary aside from the mourners and told her, ‘the Teacher is here and wants to see you’. So Mary immediately went to Him. When Jesus saw her weeping and saw the other people wailing with her, He was moved with indignation and was deeply troubled. He asked, ‘Where have you put him?’ They told Him, ‘Lord come and see’.

John’s account of the reactions of Martha and Mary to the death of their brother Lazarus and Jesus’ differing responses to the women further reinforces the personhood, the individuality, and the deep spiritual understanding of women. Jesus met Martha and Mary separately and each said to Him, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died’. Martha seems to have been a logical person, outward-looking, someone who saw what was needed and did it. Since the death of Lazarus she had probably been seeing to the needs of other people. But she was also able to express profound spiritual insights such as ‘You are the Christ’. He accepted her where she was, with her lack of full spiritual understanding, and He gave her new insights. Mary, however, had been inside the house, sitting with people who had come to comfort her. Here, Jesus encouraged
Mary to think and grow intellectually. She seems to have been more emotional and more inward-looking than her sister. She was crying because Lazarus had died. She needed the support and the presence of Jesus the Christ to comfort her.

Furthermore, during the crucifixion, in Luke 23:48, when the crowd that came to see the crucifixion saw all that had happened, they went home in deep sorrow. But Jesus’ friends, including the women, except Peter, who had followed Him from Galilee, stood at a distance watching.

Luke also recorded that the women came to the tomb very early in the morning, taking the spices they had prepared. They found that the stone that had covered the entrance had been rolled aside. So they entered, but they could not find the body of the Lord Jesus. They were puzzled, wondering what could have happened to Him. Suddenly two men appeared to them, clothed in dazzling robes. The women were terrified and bowed before them. They asked ‘Why are you looking in a tomb for someone who is alive? He is not here! He has risen from the dead! Don’t you remember what He told you back in Galilee, that the “Son” of man must be betrayed into the hands of sinful men and be crucified, and that He would rise again on the third day?’ Verse 8 says that they remembered that He had said this. Then they rushed back to tell His 11 disciples, and everyone else, what had happened.

The women who went to the tomb were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James and several others. They told the Apostles what had happened, but the story sounded far-fetched and so they did not believe it. Peter ran to the tomb to have a look. Stooping, he peered in and saw the empty linen wrappings and he went back home again, wondering what had happened.

Surprisingly, with the male writers of the Bible, it is mentioned that Peter first saw the resurrected Christ, while it was the women who saw Him first. It is because of these points that women were taken for granted even in the biblical interpretation. They were
the first to see the resurrected Christ and they should be praised for their participation with their involvement in the things of the Kingdom.

4.2.5. The Gospel of John

The first miracle of Jesus the Christ is recorded in John’s gospel. He records the wedding at Cana, in chapter 2:3. Jesus’ mother told Him about the disaster of having no wine at the wedding. Jesus asked His disciples to fill the jars with water. This miraculous sign at Cana in Galilee was Jesus’ first display of His glory. The whole miracle shows the great concern of Jesus’ mother and her participation in the ministry of Jesus. Nobody knew that Jesus could provide such sweet wine which everybody at the wedding praised. It was the duty of Mary to point to Jesus as the provider of new life and to change the frustration of the people to a salvific act of God.

John 4:1-42 is the story about a woman whose name we do not know. She is called the Samaritan woman, and because I have come to know her so well, I have read through this story many times and preached about it too. First of all, society had said that she was born with the wrong ethnicity, that of a Samaritan. Because she was born into this particular ethnic group, she was ostracised and cast aside. Decisions and judgements were made against her without anyone knowing who she really was. In the Old Testament, God forbade the Israelites from intermarriage with other cultures because whenever they interacted with other nations, the Israelites not only intermarried, but they also took on the gods and customs of the other culture. Therefore, God said, ‘You are separate and holy. You are mine, so you are not to entwine yourselves with other cultures or other gods. You are not to take on their pagan practices. Do you remember what happened when you arrived in Egypt? Since I know what you are prone to do, I want you to stay free, and I want you to separate unto me when you leave Egypt’ (Exodus 34:15-16; Deuteronomy. 7:3-4).

Later in the history of Israel, the Assyrians captured the Northern Kingdom of the Israelites and, as a result, intermarriage took place. The offspring from those marriages
were the Samaritans, hence every time a God-fearing, self-respecting Jew looked at a Samaritan, they were reminded of the sin, curse and shame of having been invaded, conquered and intertwined with another culture. As the years passed, prejudice grew, and eventually the Jews began to refer to the Samaritans as half-breeds, and even called them dogs. If one considers somebody to be a dog, one does not want to be near them. One does not want to be in the same temple with them. One does not want them in or close to one’s neighbourhood. So one gives them a little section of land, some place where they can form ghettos. That is why no self-respecting Jew wanted to be seen in Samaria or worship in the same temple as a Samaritan (Holy Bible, The Living Translation 1996).

The severity of Jewish prejudice against the Samaritans is what makes the story about the Good Samaritan so intriguing. Most Jews did not want to be seen in that neighbourhood, and so they had developed a way around Samaria that required travelling on a curving road which circled a mountain. Curves in the road prevented travellers from seeing who was coming around the bend, which made it easy for people to be ambushed and robbed. In Luke 10:30-35, Jesus tells the story of a good Samaritan who helped a man who had been ambushed and hurt while travelling this circuitous route, known for its treachery and peril. Understanding why a traveller would choose this dangerous route illustrates the depth of the prejudice against the Samaritans, for they chanced robbers and thieves rather than journeying through the neighbourhood of the ethnic people (Jakes 1990, 137).

Women in this culture were considered to be property. Women first belonged to their fathers, and upon marriage they belonged to their husbands. A woman’s sole purpose in life was to bear children, preferably many boys, since male children were considered to be of greater worth in society than female children. That is why Sarah, Hannah, Elizabeth and other biblical women spent hours in prayer, begging God for a child. The belief that men had greater worth than women was reflected in a prayer of God-fearing men of those times. They would enter the temple and say, ‘Lord, I thank you that I was not born a slave or a Gentile or a woman’. As though that were not enough, there were additional stigmas attached to Samaritan women. Somewhere along the line, people became so entrenched
in prejudice and hatred that they could not even notice the Samaritan’s presence (Jakes 1990, p. 137).

In the Old Testament, a woman was considered unclean during her menstrual cycle and was set aside from her community until it was complete, at which time she would present herself for cleansing at the temple. This tradition was rooted in biblical teaching that the life of all flesh within the blood was self-defiled.

Jesus met this Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well. Jesus asked for water and she refused to give Him any because He was a Jew. The woman was surprised, for Jews refused to have anything to do with Samaritans. Then she said to Jesus, ‘You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink’ Jesus replied, ‘If you only knew the gift that God has for you and if you knew who I am, you would ask me, and I would give you living water’. ‘Please Sir,’ the woman said, ‘give me some water so I may never be thirsty again, and I won’t have to come here, to haul water’ (Jakes 1990, p. 137).

It is amazing how Jesus broke the strong hatred that existed between the Jews and the Samaritans, how Jesus used the creation of God for reconciliation between God and humans. This Samaritan woman was the first missionary agent in Samaria, the nation hated by the Jews. Jesus used this poor, oppressed, sidelined woman to demonstrate His mission on earth.

In theological terms, the barriers between Jews and Samaritans and between men and women were broken down by Jesus. Jews hated the Samaritans so much that when travelling along that road they would carry their own buckets in order to fetch water from any well which was not ‘contaminated’ (Jakes 1990, p. 137). In that sense Jesus broke through many barriers, that is, between religious groups and different cultures. In doing so, Jesus first revealed Himself as a Messiah to this Samaritan woman. Jesus also revealed His knowledge of her personal life which gave her the perception that He was a true ‘prophet’. When the Samaritans returned and heard Jesus for themselves, they were
convinced that He was the Saviour of the world. Living water for the Samaritans was used here for ritual purification (Jakes 1990, p. 137).

In John 9:1-11, as Jesus was talking and teaching, teachers of religious law brought a woman, who was caught in adultery, to Him. They wanted to trap Jesus concerning the law. Instead of condemning the woman, Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust. At last all of the accusers vanished and He was left alone. He asked the woman where her accusers were and whether she had been condemned. ‘No, Lord’ she said. And Jesus said; ‘Neither do I. Go and sin no more’. This was an indication of the negative attitudes some men had towards women.

4.2.6. Paul’s letters to the different churches

1 Corinthians 14:34 states that women are to keep silent during church services, which is in conflict with other passages in the New Testament such as 1 Corinthians 11:5 and Colossians 3:16. Paul was referring to a different context in Corinth which does not apply generally. Women in Corinth were recent converts from cults in which they had played important roles and they probably disrupted meetings by making many comments during the proceedings (Holy Bible, New Living translation 1996). The idea that women are ignorant and intellectually passive and that they should not participate in theological discussions is in conflict with the practice of Jesus Himself (The Holy Bible, The Living Translation 1996). Again, the view that women are not to teach men or have any authority over them is in conflict with other passages in the Bible. In Acts 18:26, for example, Priscilla taught a man and was not rebuked by any of the Apostles. Thus the traditional interpretation is in conflict with Paul’s other teaching and his own practice. The traditional interpretation of these verses is also in conflict with the teaching of Paul on the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Romans 12: 3-16, 1 Corinthians. 12: 1-11 and Ephesians. 4: 11-16). Gifts such as leading and teaching are given to all Christians, not only to male Christians.
4.2.7. Timothy 2:8-15

The church of Ephesus had a particular problem. Many people wanted to be teachers but they were ignorant and arrogant and taught false doctrines according to 1 Timothy 1:3-7. Many of these false teachers were women. This is made clear in 2 Timothy 3:5-7, where the tendency of some women towards weakness and false teachers is mentioned. In that same chapter, verses 8-10, refer to a particular situation in which men had been quarrelling and Paul instructed them to pray in unity. The women seem to have been showing off, either their clothes or their bodies. Paul commanded them to concentrate on the quality of their characters and good works rather than to think only about their external appearances. The interpretation of these verses does not say that only men are to pray or that only women are to be modest and quiet. In many instances there is oversight of the fact that Paul wrote here that women were to be taught and to generally be the recipients of teaching. Women are not to be restricted to the home, but are to be brought into the mainstream of church education.

In 1 Timothy 2:12, Paul was not speaking of authority as such, but of a certain way of exercising authority which is an aggressive and self-willed type of authority. It is clearly stated in 1 Timothy 2:13-14 that Eve was deceived, and this is true. This was the common view of the Jews at that time and is still found in many cultures today. But it is not found in the Bible nor in the attitude of Jesus. Most chauvinistic males find such verses in the Bible and take them literally and abuse women accordingly. The Bible must be rewritten to correct such misunderstandings. It is better if non-Christians do not quote the Bible with their abusive mindset.

4.2.8. Women in the early church

4.2.8.1. Lydia

Lydia is well known in Acts as the first convert to Christianity in Europe. She was a business woman in Phillip and a supporter of Paul’s ministry. In the neighbouring cities
of Thessalonica and Berea, there were also other women who are mentioned in Acts as prominent women of the day (Acts 17:4, 12, 34). Lydia herself came from Thyatira, in Asia Minor. She was a saleswoman of purple-dyed goods, which were luxury items. She brought her goods from Thyatira to sell in Phillip. It is said that she might have been quite wealthy, as considerable capital was needed to operate her business. Paul and his companions were at Phillip looking for a place to rest at the riverside, and they talked with the women they found gathered there, including Lydia (Acts 16:13-15).

She responded to Paul’s message, and she and her household were baptised. Thereafter she invited Paul and his party to her house. Her hospitality made it possible for Paul to minister in Phillip without having to provide for his own living as he did elsewhere. Nowhere did he allow the church to support him. It is also interesting to note that Paul himself did not mention Lydia in his writings. It was in Jerusalem where Mary the mother of John Mark owned a house where the early church met (Acts 12:12). The couple about whom the most information avails is Priscilla or Prisca, and Aquila who had a house church in their home, first in Corinth, and later in Ephesus (Acts 18:18-26; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Romans 16:3-5). There were household conversions and house churches named after men in which women participated (Acts. 10:1ff; 18:8 ff; 1Corinthians1:16).

The house churches movement spread, several house churches could come together as the church of a city like Corinth. In these house churches the Christians preached the word, worshipped and celebrated the Lord’s Supper. These house churches seem to have been provided by the more affluent converts who had the space and the financial means to share with the others in the Christian community. They played significant roles in establishing and leading house churches.

4.2.8.2. Nympha

In Laodecia, Nympha had a church in her house (Colossians 4:15). The house church in the home of Apphia (Phillipians 2) may have been in Laodicea or in Colosian. Julia and
Nereus and his sister (Romans 16:15) were missionary couples like Priscilla and Aquila. The title given to the woman Priscilla or Junia or Julia, is not that of a wife but a title indicating her partnership in the gospel. Just as ‘brother’ is used to indicate the member of a particular group, so the term ‘sister’ can be understood to be a co-worker.

Priscilla and Aquila were living in Corinth when Paul arrived there on his first visit. He was a tentmaker and he lived with them and worked with them, and they participated deeply with him in evangelism and Missio Dei. When Paul left for Ephesus, they travelled with him. Later Paul went on to Jerusalem, but they remained, building the church in Ephesus (Ephesians1:1ff). It must be remembered that the list of people to whom Paul sent greetings in Romans 16, includes 10 women. Paul commended, among others, Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa and Persis for having worked hard. Euodia and Syntyche worked side by side with Paul (Philippians 4:2-3). When Paul used the word ‘work’, he did not mean to simply provide food and shelter for him and the other men; he also meant that their ‘work’ involved preaching, teaching and spreading the gospel in the same way that Paul and Clement were doing. The influence of Euodia and Syntych on the Phillipian church was so great that their dissension could bring great harm to the Christian cause. He also asked them by name to settle their differences, reminding them of their partnership and their commitment.

Priscilla and Aquila came into contact with Apollos, a brilliant, eloquent man from Alexander. Priscilla seems to have been the main one to teach him the way of God more adequately (The Holy Bible, The New Living Translation 1996; Acts 18: 26) She is named before her husband in Romans 16:3 and in 2 Timothy 4:19. Usually a wife’s name came after her husband’s name, if at all which shows Priscilla’s significance.

4.2.8.3. Phoebe

Phoebe was probably a wealthy woman, perhaps a widow, who was important in the church at Cenchrea, the seaport of Corinth. She was the only person in Paul’s writings to receive an official letter of recommendation, and she heads the list of those having
received greetings in Romans 16, where Paul gave her three titles: sister, deacon and benefactor or patron. She receives these titles because her service and office were influential in the community. However, these titles are generally downplayed and left unacknowledged, probably because she was a woman. When a man was involved, the term deacon was used, but in Phoebe’s case the word for deacon is usually translated to deaconess, servant or helper. Because the word deacon was used by a person entrusted with preaching and tending churches, Phoebe may have been regarded as an official teacher and missionary in the church of Cenchrea. Phoebe and Paul seem to have had a patron-client relationship, with Phoebe being the patron. This particular word is used in Romans 16:2, and is translated into meaning ‘a great help’. In 1 Timothy 5:9-10, a distinction seems to be made between women whose husbands have passed away and who needed support, and the order of widows who devoted their lives to serving the Christian community by making the church the centre of their lives. In the story of Tabitha, or Dorcas (Acts 9:36ff) it is apparent that the widows were banded together under their leader Tabitha, and that a distinction was made between widows and other believers. I have used the Bible and commentaries for my arguments because many people use the Bible to prove their arguments.

4.2.9. Calvin and equality of spouses

It is very important to underline that, in the thought of Calvin, social inequality of the spouses was a fact tied to history, a fact of political nature, contingent, while their spiritual equality is an essential and unchangeable quality. One finds again here this capital distinction in reformed doctrine between that which is spiritual and fundamental on the one hand and that which, is ‘political’, that is to say, fluctuating and modifiable at the will of circumstances, and adaptable to historical evolution, on the other hand. Independent articles concerning Calvin’s view of the role of women were published by David Holwerda and Andrew Bandstra in honour of John Bratt (1976) where they describe Calvin as holding a view of ‘qualified but definite subordination of woman’ to man, based on his study of passages from Calvin’s commentaries on Genesis 2, the letter
of Paul to Corinth, Ephesus, and Timothy, and a few of Calvin’s own letters. They acknowledge that Calvin believed that women should be treated with respect and dignity, that they receive spiritual gifts from God and have the hope of salvation, and even that women might be permitted to rule nations if they inherit the throne, and that women have equality in conjugal rights and the initiation of divorce. But they argue that Calvin believed that women should be excluded from all public office in the church because they are subordinate to men. Holwerda and Bandstra conclude that, ‘This hierarchical arrangement in Calvin’s estimation is to be permanently binding. It permits no alteration, modification, or cancellation. God hath set an order, says he, which may in no ways be broken, and must continue even to the end of the earth’ (1976).

What, then, does Calvin say about the role of women in church and society? If one begins with the 1536 edition, one could easily conclude that at that time he was not greatly interested in the question of women’s place. When he discusses human creation, he describes Adam as the ‘parent of us all’, made in the image and likeness of God; and it was Adam who slipped into sin. Eve is simply absent from the context, for good or for ill; Adam seems to represent humankind. In the section dealing with the Ten Commandments, there is no mention of any subordination of women; parents are to be honoured, and husbands and wives are to regard themselves as married in the Lord (Douglass 1985, p. 48).

There is no separate husband from wife or wife from husband by covetousness. And even in a summary of the duties of obedience of the people to rulers and children to parents, no mention is made of wives’ subjection to their husbands. Nor can this subjection be found in his discussion on the non-sacrament of marriage (Douglass 1985, p. 48).

Though women had certainly once been deacons, Calvin thinks women should not baptise infants. Calvin takes up this question polemically in 1543 in the context of the issue of ‘emergency baptism’; he is greatly concerned about the midwives’ practice of baptising newborn infants who seem unlikely to live long enough to be presented to the
priest for baptism. Calvin uses two basic arguments. First, that there is no ‘emergency’, no ‘danger’ to justify a private baptism because children of the covenant will not be barred from the kingdom of heaven just because they were not immersed in water. Second, that Christ linked the preaching of the word and the administration of the sacraments in the same public office, and that no one should usurp an office to which that person has not been duly called (Douglass 1985, p. 49). Calvin explicitly indicates that neither men nor women should baptise unless called to the office of pastor, and he believes that women were called to that office only among heretics in the early church. So his discussion of evidence concerning women baptising in the early church and prohibitions of it from certain of the fathers should be read not as a debate about whether women should exercise public ministry but rather as a debate about ‘emergency baptism’ since antiquity. But he appears unaware of the role of women deacons in regular baptisms in the ancient church (Douglass 1985, p. 48).

Women have made significant contributions within the early church. Their contributions are mostly unclear because the Bible was written by men and men are mentioned more often in the Bible than women. But they were among those who received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Acts 1:12-24, 2:38-40 (The Holy Bible, New Living Translation 1996). They are among the first converts to Christianity in Acts 5:14. Some of those Christians were upper-class Greek women as mentioned in Acts 17:4,12,34. Women were also among those persecuted by Saul before his conversion (Acts 8:3,9:1-2; 22:4-5) and after his conversion he preached to women as he did to men (Acts 16:13). Also, women were among those who opposed his ministry in Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:50). Women, therefore, played a key role in these developments in the early church.

4.2.10. General observations

Theologians working within the Evangelical Egalitarian context have a sympathetic view of the biblical texts that does not afford women the same status that they give to men. Some scholars such as Lita Cosner (2010) and MacArthur (2013) contest that...
affords women a higher place. There is no distinction between men and women in the Bible. It is the culture that distorts and denigrates women but not the Bible. The differences that are there are in their sexual roles as God decreed it. Because a male partner is not adequate and complete without a female partner, God created woman to fill that space. Women are not seen as spiritually inferior to men and they have the liberty of consulting God on any matter that concerned them such as Rebekah (Genesis 25:22-23), Miriam (Exodus 15:20) and Huldah (2 Kings 22:14) (Cosner 2010). According to [MacArthur,] ‘From cover to cover the Bible exalts women and ennobles their roles in society and family while acknowledging their their importance and influence’ (2013). There are divinely ordained roles between men and women even from creation stories such as childbearing and the upbringing of the children.

The Evangelical Egalitarian position lends itself towards complementary roles between the two sexes. It advocates for peace and harmony instead of critically evaluating the pain that the texts seem to be inflicting on women. The Evangelical Egalitarian approach seems to be flourishing on revivalist tickets which is more of a surface reflection rather than a deep reflection even when they treat those texts that discriminate against women with a hermeneutic of suspicion. The approach is also bent towards rigidity and self-protectiveness.

4.2.11. Reading the Bible from the perspective of the Non-Evangelical Egalitarian approach

Susan Brayford recognises three feminist approaches to reading the Bible (1991). These feminist approaches have different opinions regarding what the biblical text says about men and women with relation to the divine. Brayford also suggests that an appropriate response to what the Bible says must be found in order to reduce male domination and remove obstacles from women’s participation in the reading of the Bible. She identifies the following varieties of feminism:

a) Class issues;
b) Male power and male-dominated cultures – patriarchal problems; and  
c) Androcentric (male-centred) issues.

As a result of male-dominated positions of the Bible, readers, especially women, must approach it with an amount of hermeneutic suspicion and pose questions. An important question to pose is: whose interest is the Bible serving? Further feminist theologians who work from this tradition caution that biblical interpretations are biased and full of prejudices against women (Brayford 1991). Women are victims because of their biological makeup. Moreover, feminist theologians argue that the entire Bible is rooted in a collective unconscious that has become paranoid (Bourdieu 1980). The structures of the androcentric unconscious is so entrenched in the Bible that it is almost impossible to change it.

According to Korean feminist theologian Yu-Fen Lin (2010, pp. 1431-1458), the biblical texts were written by male priests and prophets and they therefore ‘represent the religious norms of those priests and prophets’. Any view expressed outside these circles was outlawed and rejected as deviant (Brayford 1991, pp. 1431-1458). Biblical texts are, according to Yu-Fen Lin, shaped by historical, social, and political factors that are hard to change. Women in the Bible are always subordinate to men and sometimes are not even mentioned by name (Klein 1993, p. 32). Sources of biblical texts are arising from the androcentric context where women voices are silenced or simply ignored (Kunin 2003, p. 140). Women serve passive roles and are always in the subordinate relationship of father-daughter and husband-wife (Brayford 1991). The biblical text tends to support the values of men and perpetuates powers that serve the interest of men (Kunin 2003, p. 141). A radically transformative and liberated agenda is essential for the eradication of the male stereotypical portrayal of women as inferior to men. Feminist theologians such as Rosaline Shaw (Kunin 2003, p. 139) are pleading for the ‘voice from below’ instead of the voice from above.
Klein (2003, pp. 111-115) observes that in the Hebrew Bible women are often nameless, and without genealogies and are thus ‘non-somebodies’ and without existence. Women are found in the margins of society and without dignity and voice. There are always boundaries for the interaction between women and men. There is no mention of daughters in biblical narratives but sons occupy centre stage (Klein 2003).

Feminist theologians such as Fiorenza operate from the rejectionist tradition (they reject the Bible as the norm) and plead for the hermeneutic of reconstruction. They make it clear that the Bible is not the point of departure as normative, but the experience of women is. Women get the source of their struggle from their experience in a male-dominated environment. The Bible is not the ‘canon but their struggle’ (Scholer 1987, pp. 407-420).

All of the interpretations of the Bible have been skewed and advocate a particular point of view (Scholer 1987, p. 410). The hermeneutic of suspicion approach, which questions all male domination and patriarchal texts, paves a way for authentic biblical interpretation (Scholer 1987, p. 411) because both the text and the interpreter have been conditioned and they need to be liberated first before the authentic meaning of the text can come forth. The power of patriarchy, androcentrism and misogyny should be annulled before the true message of the biblical text can be retrieved (Scholer 1987, p. 414).

Texts such as 1 Timothy 2:12 and 1 Corinthians 11:7, are highly problematic and are examples of how the biblical text has been skewed, corrupted and conditioned to suit androcentrism. 1 Timothy 2:12 says that, ‘I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man’ And 1 Corinthians 11:7 declares that women must cover their heads while man ‘ought not to cover his head’ and the reason given to support this is that man is created in the image of God ‘but woman is the glory of man’. The question that rejectionist feminist theologians pose when considering these verses is ‘what about Genesis 1:27 that states that both male and female were created in the image of God?’ This is clearly an issue of sexuality and it is selectively ordered to deny women status (Scholer 1987, pp. 407-405). From this point, the feminist theologians working within this
context argue for a hermeneutical agenda that says that clearer texts should interpret less clear texts (Scholer 1987, p. 417).

4.2.12. General observations

The sidelining of women by certain male counterparts creates many problems for the mission of the church within the MCSA. The important point to note is that mission remains God’s prerogative but not humans, and God has the right to exclude humans from His field of mission. In other words, to accept women as co-workers in Christ’s mission and as equals shows great humanity to His call for mission.

In a parallel passage (1 Peter 3:1-7), Peter uses the same two words ‘gune’ and ‘aner’, as Paul does, but they are translated in these verses as ‘husband’ and ‘wife’. Peter is known to have been a married man – he would therefore write about a husband and wife. But Paul was not married at the time he wrote 1 Timothy. Therefore, he would write about the church, not marriage, and so it is read as referring to ‘church’, which is not what Paul actually wrote. Also, they ignore the context and translate it as ‘man’ and ‘woman’ instead of ‘husband’ and ‘wife’. Interpreters interpret it as meaning the forbidding of women, in general, to minister in church, instead of seeing what it is actually saying – that a wife should not take over the headship role in marriage.

When Jesus healed a mute man, what the man said when he spoke was irrelevant, it was the fact that he spoke that mattered. Without exception, the word used for the mute man speaking is ‘laleo’, the same word Paul uses when he refers to women speaking in 1 Corinthians 14:33-35. Paul says: ‘As in all the churches of the saints, women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. What! Did the word of God originate with you, are you the only ones it has reached?’ (1 Corinthians 14:33-36). In this section Paul cannot be prohibiting all public speech by women in the church, for he clearly allows them to pray and prophesy in the church in 1 Corinthians 11:5. Therefore,
it is best to understand this passage as referring to speech that is the spoken evaluation and judging of prophecies in the congregation (see v. 29: ‘Let two or three prophets speak, and let the other weigh what is said’). While Paul allows women to speak and give prophecies in the church meetings, he does not allow them to speak up and give evaluations or critiques of the prophecies that have been given, for this would be a ruling or governing function with respect to the whole church. This understanding of the passage depends on one’s view of the gift of prophecy in the New Testament age, namely that prophecy does not involve authoritative Bible teaching, or speaking words of God which are equal to Scripture, but rather involves reporting something which spontaneously springs to mind. In this way, Paul’s teachings are quite consistent in 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2 – in both cases he is concerned with preserving male leadership in the teaching and governing of the church.

What does Paul tell these women to do instead of ‘laleo-ing’? (verse 35). Is it to ask their own husbands at home? This is the right alternative to whatever it is that they are doing. But asking one’s husband something at home is not an alternative to teaching or preaching in church, if that is what one is doing. It is an alternative, though, to asking the woman next to one in church, or one’s husband on the other side of the building, if that is what one is doing. Therefore, the context of what Paul is dealing with in this section of 1 Corinthians 14 is very specific. In verse 33 Paul says that, ‘God is not a God of disorder but of peace’ and in verse 40 he says that ‘everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way’.

Therefore Paul, in this passage, is not discussing ministering in church. He is discussing chattering, conversing, and disturbing the peace and good order of the assembly. But what does Paul say about women speaking in church, in the sense of participating and ministering? In 1 Corinthians 11:5, he recognises the role of a woman in prayer and prophesy (or preaching). Then in 1 Corinthians 12 he shows how God’s gifts of ministry are distributed by the Spirit to all members of the people of God, without regard to gender. This was made explicit by Peter in Acts 2, in announcing the fulfilment of Joel’s
prophecy. The criterion for preaching, teaching, and ministering generally, is not whether one is male or female, but whether — male or female — one has been given such a gift by the Lord. Then it is the responsibility of the church to provide an opportunity of training and then one is allowed to use that gift (Powers nd).
CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1. Nucleus of the research project

In this chapter the concepts of respondents, participants and informants are used interchangeably. The Descriptive Analysis method was selected to consider the operations in the case study and the input and output of the study. The desired output of the case study is to find out how ordained and training women view their role in the church and what prejudices they often suffer from male members of the MCSA. The output end of the case study should provide valuable information for the next chapter on how to embark on a transformation process within the MCSA to enable the empowerment of ordained and would-be ordained women. A sample of 20 women from the MCSA were chosen on qualitative purposive sampling without due regard to random sampling found in quantitative study. The information from the respondents is first tabulated as received and thereafter transferred to a diagram that helps with comparative analysis. Out of the 20 questionnaires that were sent out, 16 were returned with 3 questionnaires returned blank. The analysis on Table A and Table B are based on 13 respondents.

The interview method chosen was that of a questionnaire created to collect data from 20 women ministers, probationers or senior student ministers. There were 13 questions to guide the process of gathering information. The questions and answers were as follows:

5.1.1. How long have you been a member of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa?

a) Since 2002.

b) I have been a member for 15 years.

c) I was born a Methodist Church member.

d) I have been a member since 2002.
e) I have been a member for more than 30 years.

f) I have been a member for 3 years.

g) I have been a member since birth and it has now been for more than 50 years.

h) I have been a member for 20 years.

i) I have been a member for 2.5 years.

j) I have been a member for 40 years.

k) I have been a member for 19 years.

l) There was no response.

m) [Answer]

n) [Answer]

5.1.2 How long have you been in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa?

a) For 4 years.

b) For 5 years.

c) For 6 years.

d) For 1 year.

e) For 3 years.

f) For 5 years.

g) For 8 years.

h) For 3 years.

i) For 2 years.
j) For 3 years.

k) For 7 years.

L) For 5 years.

m) For 2 years.

n) For 3 years.

5.1.3. What hindrances are you faced with as a woman minister?

(a) Lack of support from colleagues, male ministers and sometimes from female ministers.

(b) Being considered a sex object and not a competent minister like a male, it is as if you are there to amuse your male counterparts.

(c) The perception that women are not as competent as men. Men dominate power structures, which makes it difficult to feel welcome and affirmed as part of the leadership structures, even though we may feel called to lead alongside.

(d) Not all Methodist members accept women ministers. Therefore I can say that being a woman is a hindrance on its own.

(e) Not many problems. People are beginning to accept women ministers. The problem women have is a lack of confidence in themselves and allowing men to think they are God-sent angels on earth.

(f) Women are treated like sex objects and as being incompetent.

(g) As a woman minister in training there are no hindrances I have faced thus far.

(h) There is space as a woman minister, especially as an African Christian.

(i) Lack of awareness.
(j) They do not accept us in ministry, even though they claim to have accepted us.

(k) Some men feel uncomfortable [with] women ministers.

(l) Men treat women as sex objects.

(m) Poor recognition of woman, culture issues, gender issues (equality). Male domination and power struggles.

(n) Being undermined by male colleagues and some of the congregation.

5.1.4. Do you think the Bible supports women in ministry?

(a) Yes it does.

(b) It depends on how you look at it in terms Jesus giving women a voice to proclaim the good news or to engage with them intelligently without looking down on them. In this case I would say yes. He gave a platform to women ministry.

(c) Yes, but we need to read it well and understand the call of Jesus. If we understand properly, we see that Jesus affirmed women and used women in His public ministry even though Scripture sometimes seems to contradict this. Culturally women were considered to be less than men and so writers of the Bible reflect this context, but the truth of the Scripture shows that women have a role to play in both pastoring and leading, but we need to wrestle with Scripture to see this.

(d) The Bible is beyond gender issues when it comes to ministry. However, there are Scriptures that seem not to support women ministry, when read out of context.

(e) Yes, women played a huge role in the Bible, especially in places where men do not know what to do, for example, the story of Esther, Veronica and Mary.

(f) I would say yes, He gave a platform to women ministry.
(g) It does – the woman at the well, she was the first missionary to the Samaritan. Ruth, a starting point for the history of David, whose ancestor-figure in the story, Esther, gave courage to Jews in times of persecutions.

(h) Yes, e.g. Deborah, Miriam and Mary Magdalene.

(i) Your point of departure will determine and direct your direction.

(j) Oh yes, the Bible does support women in ministry.

(k) Yes, it does. God views everybody equal.

(l) Yes it does, if used in the correct context.

(m) It does indeed.

(n) Yes, the Old Testament is patriarchal, but Jesus recognised the importance of women.

5.1.5. Does God support women’s ministry?

(a) Yes, because all people are created by God therefore any person can be called to proclaim the gospel.

(b) I believe I am called by God, so I will say yes, because if He did not support us He would not even bother about calling us into ministry.

(c) Yes, yes, yes.

(d) Yes, because He called me and I am a woman, therefore God strongly supports women ministry, otherwise He would not have called me.

(e) Yes, the fact that they are present in most controversial cases and win shows that God supports and allows them to succeed.

(f) If He did not support us, He would not even bother about calling us into ministry.
(g) Yes, all people are made in the image of God, Proverbs:31:30 ‘Charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting, a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised’.

(h) Yes, we are his authentic image.

(i) Yes, indeed.

(j) God supports women’s ministry.

(k) Yes, women are His creation.

(l) Yes.

(m) Yes.

(n) God would not have called women into ministry if He did not support women ministry. Yes, God supports it.

5.1.6. How can women empower themselves in ministry?

(a) By first accepting themselves as a woman without trying to imitate males.

(b) Women need to be sure about their calling first. Secondly, they need to know how they fit into ministry without trying to act like their male counterparts and to use the gifts God has given you without being in male ministers’ faces. You need to remember that you are not doing it for them but for God.

(c) Women can own their power, authority and anointing from God and work with confidence and courage by pushing against boundaries which say we are not welcome. We can work together, united and in numbers we can achieve much.

(d) I think the empowerment will need the involvement of both men and women.

(e) They must love themselves and respect their bodies. They are not in ministry to warm another man’s bed. They are independent and unique, nothing else.
(f) Women need to be sure about their calling.

(g) By supporting one another and accepting their different opinions when debating issues.

(h) Keep sharing their experiences and listen to those of other women.

(i) Special treatment.

(j) By being trained in skills, knowledge and character to become effective in ministry.

(k) By standing together firmly.

(l) I like contextual Bible study; it is a huge help.

(m) Furthering their capacity for education and community development and by active participation in debates and workshops etc.

(n) Women should believe in themselves and challenge the mindset that tells them they are worthless. They should be courageous.

5.1.7. Do you believe that culture and religion can play a role in women’s ministry and why?

(a) Which role? For me culture has a negative impact because some cultures, especially African culture, considers women as inferior to men, which is not true because God created male and female in His image.

(b) Culture is [a] bit difficult because women are not looked upon as people who can say or do anything intelligent and there is a belief that women need to be at home. Religion can if you look at Jesus’ assertiveness as opposed to males who still think the Bible does not allow women ministry. Not that their opinion counts but they can make your life a living hell sometimes.
(c) I believe that they do. Culture is what originally informed and influenced the writers of the Bible and so our understanding of what culture/truth/God’s intention for humanity is should always be changing us, forming us and pushing us to be different.

(d) It will depend on how culture and religion are presented. If they are presented in a just and positive way, then yes. Because those evil patriarchal systems will be addressed.

(e) Yes, it does but with a good education and patience people will change. If a woman is good in the kitchen, good in raising children, she is good in ministry. In fact, men are jealous because women are good and they hide behind culture.

(f) Culture is bit difficult because women are not looked upon as people who can say or do anything intelligent.

(g) Yes it does play a role. Men, especially rural men, still have to be taught that women are their equals. In the city women ministers are being accepted, but not in all churches.

(h) It has limited our ministry and needs repentance and transformation.

(i) Yes, women can make a contribution of better understanding.

(j) No, culture limits most women in leading positions, hence it becomes hard for the two to work hand in hand.

(k) Yes, by changing perceptions.

(l) Yes, because all have different cultural beliefs and some do not accept women.

(m) Yes it does. Because women in ministry meet with people of different religions and cultures, which influences their way of exchanging with the world.

(n) Culture oppresses women.
5.1.8. How does it feel to be a woman minister in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa?

(a) Challenging.

(b) Not sure yet; with the challenges at the seminary now it makes me wonder how many of them I am going to face outside the male patriarchal.

(c) I feel proud about being a female Methodist minister.

(d) Mixed feelings; Good that Methodists are allowing women in leadership. But bad that they do not prepare people in societies to be ready to be led by a woman.

(e) I do not have much experience but I feel I am coping well. In fact, I am a much better preacher than a man.

(f) Not sure yet current with challenges at the Seminary.

(g) I feel great. There are many hands that reach out to help.

(h) I am never sure of what is expected from me. Honesty, integrity or hypocrisy and submission.

(i) I do not have any experience.

(j) I feel proud because I am God’ servant.

(k) Good and acceptable.

(l) Empowered because I can make [a] difference in other’s lives.

(m) I am content with my position in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, because this is where God called me to serve Him and His people.

(n) It is basically quite scary because I do not know how people will react towards me when I am stationed in that circuit.
5.1.9. What is your understanding of women ministry?

(a) For me there is nothing like women ministry because both men and female were created to proclaim the gospel.

(b) Women ministry is about being compassionate and moved beyond circumstances; to have that motherly, womanly sensitivity even to the Holy Spirit and to be able to transfer that love and compassion to the congregation.

(c) Teaching, preaching, outreach and social justice.

(d) Women involvement in church purpose or mission.

(e) There is a difference between men and women ministry. Their task of ministry is the same. The bonus of being a woman minister is parenthood, care and unconditional love.

(f) Women ministry is about being compassionate and moved beyond circumstances.

(g) Exactly the same as men to their ministry, so we have to work twice as hard as our male counterparts.

(h) Women as disciples of Christ experiencing and expressing newness of the Baptism and resurrection, celebration worship and proclamation of Good news.

(i) Dealing with the affairs of women in the church or community.

(j) When a lady is given a position to serve others, including men, and leading them to know Christ.

(k) Being a woman and making a difference in the lives of others.

(l) The female individual involved in practical ministry and mission.

(m) Nothing much besides the fact that I am called by the same God that has called a male minister. Whatever they can do, I can do too.
5.1.10. What is the Methodist Church of Southern Africa’s approach to women ministry?

(a) I am not sure.

(b) So far it is still acceptable, depending on the district you find yourself in.

(c) There may be policies in place but they are not reflected as much in the reality of our church structures. There are too few women represented at leadership level.

(d) The Methodist Church of Southern Africa is trying to keep up to date and be fair to women but there is lot to be done.

(e) They are welcoming. They are striving for a balance between men and women in leadership. But women are not ready to take up senior positions because they have no support from other women.

(f) It is acceptable.

(g) There is equality with the church understanding.

(h) Dualistically ordained, yet there is limited space.

(i) All are called equally by God.

(j) All women are accepted into ministry.

(k) I am not sure.

(l) Not answered.

(m) The Methodist Church does allow female ministers although there are still challenges in terms of male association, where in some areas they do not accept women ministry.
(n) The Methodist Church of Southern Africa embraces women in ministry and the church can send us anywhere.

5.1.11. Is there a place for women ministers today? Why?

(a) No. Women are capable and can be sent anywhere. It is just a matter of transforming certain minds towards women ministers.

(b) Yes, because female are the ones who are abused and therefore a voice is needed to rebuke this unjust act.

(c) Yes, yes, yes, because we do not minister the way men do. We have our own sensitive womanly way of ministering that has a place in our society, especially with a lot of wounded women and children out in the society.

(d) Of course – women represent one half of the world. We should be fully representative in ministry too.

(e) Yes, with challenges.

(f) Yes, more than ever. Men’s place is in the garden. They use manse to rape women and children. The manse is the place of hope and women are good administrators.

(g) They minister to wounded women and children in our societies.

(h) Definitely, Esther 4:14, ‘God’s will fulfilled through woman!’

(i) Wise; women have an alternative vision embracing the humanity of all and are empowering and life-giving.

(j) Yes. All genders are called by God into the ministry.

(k) Yes, because God has called everyone into the ministry.

(l) Yes, as all have different roles.
(m) Yes, because of technology and academic studies we can learn to make a difference.

(n) Yes, there is a place. The world needs women to be on the forefront of the nation. A woman has the capacity to balance where there is chaos.

5.1.12. Why are women ministers not making progress towards women empowerment?

(a) Are they not making progress? To me they are because they are equipped with knowledge as ministers and secondly they have Women’s Manyano, where they empower each other.

(b) Probably because we drag each other down instead of motivating each other.

(c) I am not sure, but I think it is due to the following: Our structures need to work consciously to rectify gender inequalities.

(d) There are so many challenges that hinder women ministry.

(e) The problem is the lack of support for each other and for empowerment.

(f) Probably because we drag each other down instead of motivating each other.

(g) They are; our church had a few Bishops and very soon we will have a Presiding Bishop.

(h) Social oppression creates [a] vicious circle. The oppressed becomes the oppressor. Need a feminist theology theories for grassroots.

(i) I do not know.

(j) It is because the opportunities that are given to do so are unusual.

(k) Because they are separated.

(l) I believe they are not using the correct platforms, such as women organisations.
(m) I disagree with the statement, unless it has been proven. They may be they might be limited in numbers. As far as I am concerned, women are making progress.

(n) We need to be empowered properly by our senior women ministers so that we can stand firm and believe in ourselves. It is a pity we do not have that and it seems that everyone is for themselves.

5.1.13. General observation from respondents

It is important to indicate that many of the respondents who replied to the questions were not following the sequence of questions and answered in a haphazard manner of dissolution and disappointment towards the church for not taking a radical stand against gender discrimination. Moreover, when given these questions one of our senior woman ministers was charged for not respecting her society steward, who happened to be a man. Others also expressed a lot of victimisation because they were answering these questions. This also developed a feeling of distrust towards the study, until the respondents were convinced that their names would not be revealed to anybody. However, the information will be used in the last chapter of the thesis where the contribution made by people who have been interviewed will be acknowledged.

According to the answers that were given by the respondents, it is clear that women ministers in the church are not free. They have expressed their anger at not being accepted in the church by some male counterparts in the Missio Dei. There are some respondents who did not even answer the questionnaire due to the fear that this will end up somewhere in the top offices, but they did show a lot of discomfort with the church as a whole. Despite the church’s statement that it does accept women ministers, some men ministers are still unfriendly towards women ministers, while other women ministers feel that they are not welcomed by the congregation (as one of the respondents revealed) In 2000, the Women Ministers’ Consultation of the Methodist Church issued a statement of concern that although the ordination of women has been accepted in the church for more than 20 years, some problem areas remain. Some examples are that women are not
being adequately represented in leadership structures, and that the stationing of women ministers is affected by sexist attitudes while other issues pertaining specifically to women are not being addressed (Methodist Minutes of Conference 2000, p. 173).

The two tables on the following pages capture and summarise responses and acronyms given represent the responses. Responses were summarised into acronyms to facilitate comparisons. The analysis and evaluation are based on the responses given.

What follows is analysis of Table A by means of agronomyms summarisd from responses:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>5.1.1</th>
<th>5.1.2</th>
<th>5.1.3</th>
<th>5.1.4</th>
<th>5.1.5</th>
<th>5.1.6</th>
<th>5.1.7</th>
<th>5.1.8</th>
<th>5.1.9</th>
<th>5.1.10</th>
<th>5.1.11</th>
<th>5.1.12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. 12yrs</td>
<td>4yrs</td>
<td>LSP</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES C</td>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>NOR</td>
<td>CHAL</td>
<td>NOTHIN S</td>
<td>NSURE</td>
<td>YESR</td>
<td>DISA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 15yrs</td>
<td>5yrs</td>
<td>SXO</td>
<td>DPO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>SURC</td>
<td>NOR</td>
<td>NOTS</td>
<td>MOTHER</td>
<td>DEPENC</td>
<td>YESR</td>
<td>DRAGD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Birth</td>
<td>6yrs</td>
<td>NC M</td>
<td>REB L</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>CAG</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>PROUD</td>
<td>TPOSJ</td>
<td>POLITIC</td>
<td>YESR</td>
<td>NOTSUR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. 12yrs</td>
<td>1yr</td>
<td>NAC</td>
<td>GIS</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>INVM</td>
<td>NOP T</td>
<td>NOTS</td>
<td>WINVOV</td>
<td>CHALLE N</td>
<td>YESR</td>
<td>CHALL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. 30yrs</td>
<td>3yrs</td>
<td>NMP</td>
<td>YESE R</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>ASST</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NOEX</td>
<td>PARENT H</td>
<td>NOTREA D</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>LSUPP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. 3yrs</td>
<td>5yrs</td>
<td>SXO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>SUTC</td>
<td>NOR</td>
<td>CHAL</td>
<td>COMPAS SI</td>
<td>ACCEPT AB</td>
<td>YESR</td>
<td>DRAGD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. 50yrs</td>
<td>8yrs</td>
<td>NHF</td>
<td>YESE</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>SOAT</td>
<td>NOR</td>
<td>GREA T</td>
<td>SAMEAM</td>
<td>EQUALIT Y</td>
<td>YESR</td>
<td>GOINTH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. 20yrs</td>
<td>3yrs</td>
<td>SPW</td>
<td>YESE</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>SEPS</td>
<td>NOR</td>
<td>NOTS</td>
<td>NEWSNE S</td>
<td>LIMITSP A</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>SJTHO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. 2.5yr</td>
<td>2yrs</td>
<td>IGN</td>
<td>DPO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>SPTR</td>
<td>WCT</td>
<td>NOEX</td>
<td>WOMEN A</td>
<td>ALLEQU AL</td>
<td>YESR</td>
<td>NOTSUR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. 40yrs</td>
<td>3yrs</td>
<td>NAC</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>SKTR</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>PROUD</td>
<td>SERVICE</td>
<td>WOMEN A</td>
<td>YESR</td>
<td>CHALL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. 19yrs</td>
<td>7yrs</td>
<td>FUN C</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>STTG</td>
<td>YES C</td>
<td>GOOD</td>
<td>MDIffer E</td>
<td>NOTSUR E</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>SEPAR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. 5yrs</td>
<td>SXO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>BSTU</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>EMPO W</td>
<td>MISSION</td>
<td>NO ANSWE</td>
<td>YESR</td>
<td>MANYA</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table B below contains reactions evaluated and assessed to get the meaning. Again agrononyms are used to summarise the reactions from the respondents.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>YES=</th>
<th>YESC=</th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>NOR</th>
<th>CHAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LSP = Lack of support from Colleagues</td>
<td>YES=</td>
<td>Yes it does</td>
<td>YESC=</td>
<td>Yes from creation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SXO = Regarded as sex objects</td>
<td>DPO=</td>
<td>Depends on interpretation</td>
<td>YES=</td>
<td>Surc</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCM = Not competent as men</td>
<td>REBL =</td>
<td>Read Bible in context</td>
<td>YES=</td>
<td>Cag</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PROUD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAC = Not accepted as such</td>
<td>GIS=</td>
<td>Beyond Gender Issues</td>
<td>YES=</td>
<td>Invm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NMP = Not many problems</td>
<td>YES=</td>
<td>Yes with examples</td>
<td>YES=</td>
<td>Asst</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SXO = Sex objects</td>
<td>YES=</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>YES=</td>
<td>Sutc</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHF = No hindrances for women</td>
<td>YES=</td>
<td>Yes with examples</td>
<td>YES=</td>
<td>Soat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPW = Space for African women</td>
<td>YES=</td>
<td>Yes with examples</td>
<td>YES=</td>
<td>Seps</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IGN = Ignorance/unaware</td>
<td>DPO=</td>
<td>Depends on point of view</td>
<td>YES=</td>
<td>Sptr</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAC = No acceptance - claiming is there but not real</td>
<td>YES=</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>YES=</td>
<td>Sktr</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PROUD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FUNC = Men feel uncomfortable</td>
<td>YES=</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>YES=</td>
<td>Sttg</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SXO</td>
<td>YES=</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>YES=</td>
<td>Bstu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EMPOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRCW</td>
<td>YES=</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>TES=</td>
<td>Cape</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CONT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDM</td>
<td>YES=</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>YES =</td>
<td>Bith</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SCARY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.1.14. Descriptive analysis

It is important to indicate that many respondents were not following the sequence of questions and answered haphazardly in the manner of dissolution and disappointed about the church for discriminating against them as women. Others also expressed that they were experiencing victimisation because they agreed to answer these questions. This developed distrust among the respondents about the survey until they were convinced that their names would not be revealed to their authority. After being assured that the information will not be used to publish their names, they consented to answering the questionnaire.

According to Table A, there were 14 women who responded to the questionnaire and they have been members of the MCSA from between 2 and 50 years collectively. Only 6 of the respondents have been in the ministry of the church for more than 5 years whereas only 2 have been in the ministry of the church for less than 20 years. The majority of the respondents were well aware of the teachings, practice and doctrine of the church. They were also aware of gender issues within the church. It can be construed that their responses are coming from ‘insiders’ who are knowledgeable about the life of the church. Several questions were asked about their experiences in the church. These questions include: how they perceive the hindrances they face as women ministers or trainers, how they view the Bible’s message on women ministry, how they view God with regard to the ministry in the church, how they feel that they can empower themselves in a hostile church and African cultural environment, how they understand women ministry and self-empowerment, and how they view the progress of women in leadership positions in the MCSA. The respondents’ answers were as follows:

a) Hindrances women face in ministry

All respondents agreed that women are facing hindrances that form challenges in their ministry. These hindrances range from a lack of support from the church leadership, a lack of support of their own male counterparts to a lack of support
from fellow women who are victims of the system as well. The respondents feel that they are viewed as incompetent and as sex objects. Ignorance from fellow believers cause women ministers to not be taken seriously as people who can contribute meaningfully to the growth of the church. Many members in the church, especially male members, laity and clergy, feel uncomfortable with women in official church offices. Some women, 3 out of 14, felt that there were no hindrances for women in the church. One respondent indicated that there seems to be an awareness from church members that women can also contribute towards the life of the church.

Another respondent said that there are no hindrances for her in ministry, but she might have misunderstood the question because she was responding to the questionnaire as a woman in training. She stated that there are no hindrances in her training. On the whole, it is clear that the respondents feel that there is still a measure of discomfort and uneasiness among church members, especially for male members, about women ministers. They believe that women should not be allowed in the ministry despite the fact that their inclusion in ordained ministry is the decision of the Synod. Being a woman, according to one respondent, ‘is a hindrance on its own’ – a form of embarrassment in the church. One woman alleged that the acceptance of women in ministry is more of a verbal acceptance than a real acceptance.

b) Biblical support of women ministry

The second question that enticed some reaction from the respondents was about the Bible. They were asked whether the Bible teachings support women ministry. All 14 women agreed that the Bible teaching on ministry does not exclude women, but 3 of the respondents tried to qualify their response. Although they said that the Bible supports women for ordained ministry, they added that the voice of women in the Bible is often subjected to subjective interpretation. The Bible is the
most ‘theologised’ book and is subject to many interpretations. But in terms of their reading of the Bible, it does support women ordained ministry. One respondent argued that the Bible needs to be looked at through the theoretical lens that is provided by Jesus Christ. In His dealing with women in his public ministry, Jesus affirmed women. The respondent adds that the Bible was written in a specific culture and that Jesus has transcended all cultures and shows that women have a role to play in both ‘pastoring and leading’. She further argues that it is not easy for the average Bible reader to recognise this truth but that hermeneutical tools are needed to unravel the truth. The rest of the respondents agreed that the Bible affirms women ordained ministry.

c) God’s support of ordained women ministry

The third question asked whether God supported ordained women ministry. All 14 respondents agreed that God supports women ministry in the church. Some respondents gave reasons for their answer. One referred to the creation where God created both male and female and endowed them with His Spirit. Because of this foundational fact, anyone of the two (male or female) may be called by God to ordained ministry. Five women personalised their reason and said that they knew for sure that God had called them to ordained ministry and argued that God supports women’s ministry because He called them to ministry. The other respondents simply stated that God supports women ministry. One of the respondents even repeated the word ‘yes’ three times to emphasise her conviction.

d) Women empowerment in ministry

The fourth question was a direct challenge to respondents. It asked how women could empower themselves for ministry. This question was responded to well, revealing the plight of women in the MCSA. The answers ranged from the suggestion that women should accept themselves as women and affirm themselves to the call of God, to the suggestion that they should challenge
‘mindsets’ that tell them that they are ‘useless’. Women should never mimic but assert themselves as people called by God to serve Him. They should use their unique gifts in the service of God. Another respondent suggested that women have a unique power of authority emanating from God that should inspire their confidence to go beyond boundaries set by people to limit them. The secret of their success, they maintain, lies in their unity and numbers in the church. By accepting one another as women, working together for a common goal; and sharing their experiences while listening to one another, they will become a formidable force against opposing forces that try to quell them. One respondent suggested that both men and women need to be involved to empower and transform them. One respondent suggested capacity development as another way of addressing their inadequacies. From all of the responses it became clear that women are aware of their plight in the ordained ministry and that they want to empower themselves to transcend the limitations that are there.

e) Culture and religion in women ministry

In response to a question about the role of culture and religion as impediments to women’s ordained ministry, all of the respondents casted doubts on culture playing a positive role in their emancipation. Some respondents indicated that culture has a negative impact on them because (African) culture considers women as inferior to men which has no basis in the Bible as God created male and female in His image. One respondent said that ‘their opinion … can make your life a living hell’. Another respondent argued from a pragmatic point of view. She said that ‘if a woman is good in the kitchen, [and] good in raising children, she is good in ministry’. She further said that, ‘men are jealous because women are good’. Men hide behind culture in order to oppress women. Some indicated that the African patriarchal system is evil and needs to be addressed urgently. African culture, especially in rural settings, is more oppressive. But the situation is better in urban areas although, even there, it still needs some attention. In general, respondents
regard (African) culture as more problematic and said that it needs radical transformation. Culture is blended as the main enemy of any progress towards ordained women ministry. Culture, they affirm, oppresses women. One of the crucial undertakings that women should address in the ordained ministry is to change cultural stereotypes against women.

f) Experiences of women ministers

One question asked the respondents how they feel about being women ministers. The answers can be divided into two equal categories where one category states that the respondents are not sure how they feel yet while the other category states that they are proud of being women ministers. The two positions suggest a problem and yet pronounce hope. Those who are not sure could be so because they do not trust the system and those who are feeling great express a sigh of relief about something that they were never sure that they could achieve. Both responses still express unacceptable treatment of discrimination against women in the church. Some respondents added that God wanted them in ordained ministry while others expressed doubt as to whether they would be accepted in their circuit after their training.

g) The understanding of women ministry

There were mixed reactions about the question of their understanding of the concept of women ministry. Some respondents said that there is no such thing as women ministry because there is only one ministry. A few respondents said that women ministry is a ‘fresh new approach’ while others said that women ministry refers to being compassionate and being moved beyond the ordinary into authentic ministry. Some respondents said that women ministry deals with the affairs of women in the church. One respondent said that women ministry is different from men ministry because men and women are different. It is ‘the bonus of parenthood and unconditional love’ that involves ‘teaching, preaching,
outreach and social justice’. One respondent equated women ministry to ‘making [a] difference in people’s lives’. There was more protest in response to this question than there was to the other questions. The protest could be against the exclusion of women that has been around signaling the loss that has been incurred because of it.

h) The MCSA’s approach to women ministry

The question about what the MCSA’s approach to women ministry is attracted some relaxed but generally cautious responses. Some respondents said that they were not sure what the MCSA’s approach to women ministry is, while others applauded the MCSA for taking a step in the right direction. Some of the respondents who said that they were not sure about the approach of the MCSA went further to cast some doubt on the MCSA’s policies. As women the respondents were not sure about the MCSA’s approach to women ministry because women are not represented at leadership level in this church and this raises questions as to whether the church really affirms women ministry or whether it is only succumbing to a form of pressure to include women in ministry. Yet some respondents praised the church for allowing women into ministry although they conceded that there is still much to be done to have a normal conducive environment for women ministers in the church. Among those respondents who were positive about the developments within the church as far as the inclusion of women in the ministry is concerned, one respondent raised a concern about women. Although women are not taken up in the leadership of the church, many women are not yet ready (prepared) to take up those positions. It was not clear here whether the respondent was blaming women for not being willing to take up the positions or whether she was blaming the system that continuously kept women out of leadership positions. But the fact that women are
not taken up in leadership positions is a real concern from the majority of the participants.

Two of the respondents questioned the MCSA’s duality of propagating a policy for women ministry and yet making no concerted effort to ensure that the policy yields desired results. Examples cited in their responses include separate minister associations where ordained ministers are not accepted and where men ministers strive to keep women ministers’ numbers low in order to minimise challenges. The final remark which was made by one respondent was that, since the MCSA ‘embraces women in ministry’, they should relocate them anywhere in the church including in leadership positions (my emphasis).

i) The place for women ministers today

A question on whether there is a place for women ministers today was also asked. The responses were overwhelming and precise. The responses were loaded and full of suspicion on why such a question was asked. The respondents seemed to wonder whether the question was aimed at arguing that women ministers have no space in the church today. The respondents answered in a ‘reactionary’ and ‘defensive’ manner. The first respondent said that ‘women are capable and can be sent anywhere’. As if the question suggested anything on the contrary, the respondent further argued that transformation is needed to ‘change mindset[s]’ in order to understand the importance of women ministers’ roles in church ministry. The second respondent said ‘Yes, because female[s] are the ones who are abused and therefore a voice is needed to rebuke this unjust act’.

The exclusion of women in church ministry is unjust and requires strong radical action from the ‘powers that be’ to eliminate it. The third response stated that women ‘do not minister the way men do’. Women have a necessary sensitivity
and womanly way of ministering to people in society. The respondent added that there are ‘a lot of wounded women and children out there in society’ that could only be cared for by women. Another respondent made an argument based on numbers. She argued that women represent more than half of the world’s population and that means that they should be able to represent their own.

One respondent stated that women are needed in ministry more than ever before. ‘Men’s place is in the garden. They use manse to rape women and children. The manse is the place of hope and women are good administrators,’ she argued. Although the response is emotional and uses obscene language, it nevertheless conveys the anger women feel and any attempt to exclude women from church ministry is likely to meet resistance, even protest. The seventh respondent echoed the sentiments expressed by the sixth respondent. She argued that women ministers are needed in order to ‘minister to wounded women and children in our societies’. Although the respondents did not expressly indicate who has ‘wounded their community’, men are implied as the perpetrators in respondents six and seven.

Another respondent refers to women in the Bible such as Esther, Veronica and Mary as examples of women who were called by God into ministry and performed exemplary work. The ninth respondent claims that women are wise and have ‘alternative vision that embraces humanity, [and is] empowering and life-giving’. One is not able to deduce from the responses whether women are merely fed-up with the status quo or whether they are genuinely convinced that they have more and better ministry to offer than men. But there is no doubt in their minds that God has called them into ministry, and that they are capable of performing as their counterparts; and even better than them in some ministries. There is a strong feeling that women ministers will bring synergy into the church ministry.
j) The lack of progress in women ministry

To the question that sought to probe why women ministers are not making progress towards women empowerment, the following responses emerged. Two respondents were amazed that the question stated that women are not making progress. According to these respondents, women are making progress in their quest for empowerment. They mentioned examples of the Women’s Manyano and other women organisations within the MCSA and said that they are empowering one another in those structures. Women organisations within the broader church remain a site for struggle and empowerment (Phiri 1989, pp. 1-16). The issue of empowerment and transformation is important and will be discussed in the next chapter as an assessment of the responses made. Three of the respondents blamed women for the lack of progress as they are suffering from ‘crab mentality syndrome’. One respondent blamed social oppression that creates a vicious circle where the oppressed becomes the oppressor. For this reason she argued for the introduction of teachings based on feminist theology at ‘grassroots’ level.

Others argued that women have themselves to blame if they are not making any progress towards self-empowerment. They have numbers, skills and the space to organise themselves for total liberation. Some blamed gender inequality that permeates the whole society and renders women ineffective in their bit to empower themselves. Still others blame challenges (without naming them) that are there. A few others blamed a lack of support ‘for each other’ and a lack of motivation. Women remain divided and ‘separated in their struggle for liberation.

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2 The term ‘crab mentality’ is used to describe a kind of selfish and short-sighted thinking that runs along the lines of ‘if I can’t have it, neither can you’. This term is used to refer to people who pull other people down, denigrating them rather than letting them get ahead. This concept references an interesting phenomenon that occurs in buckets of live crabs. If one crab attempts to escape from a bucket of live crabs, the others will pull it back down rather than allow it to get free. (What is Crab Mentality?).
from male dominated structures’ another one of the respondents argued. The last respondent stated that women are not using the correct platforms to emancipate themselves. She too mentioned the Women’s Manyano as the correct platform for their liberation. ‘Senior women ministers should provide leadership so that we can stand firm and believe in ourselves’ the respondent argued.

k) Observations

All respondents were aware of the challenges facing them within the women ministry in the MCSA. They are able to articulate these challenges and pinpoint their sources and they cherish hope that the obstacles will be removed if the church leadership can address them. At the moment, the MCSA has a policy for the ordination of women and their involvement in the full ministry of the church, but the church fails to come up with rigorous strategies to address challenges that are impeding the progress of women. In the next chapter an assessment or evaluation is done to synchronise the observations of the respondents with existing theories on women ministry as a means to pave a way for a transformation or empowerment agenda that the MCSA may embrace in its enhancement of women (ordained) ministry.
CHAPTER 6: EVALUATION OR ASSESSMENT OF THE RESPONSES OF THE PARTICIPANTS

6.1. Evaluation of the worth and merits of responses

This study aims at assessing the involvement and contribution of women ministers in the mission of the church in the MCSA. The responses received should assist the researcher (and the final readers of the research findings) to map the road ahead in perfecting the system that is in operation or to suggest ways of improvement. Having done some descriptive analysis on the responses, the next step is to evaluate or assess the worth or merits of the responses.

Trochim (2006) defines evaluation or assessment as the systematic assessment of the worth or merit of some objects. The objects in this process, according to Trochim, are ambiguous and may refer to anything under investigation. In this research the ‘objects’ of evaluation are the responses from the participants as far as their relevance is concerned towards the empowerment of women and the responses potential to assist policy makers within the MCSA towards improving or attending to factors that are not conducive in the development of women ministry. The goal of this evaluation is to provide necessary feedback, strategies and methodologies of arresting the negative impacts on women ministry within the MCSA while trying to effect positive change to the process. There are two major questions that are asked here to assist the evaluation:

i. What is the issue and scope of the problem within the MCSA women ordained ministry? (What is the problem and how serious is it?)

ii. What is the theological hermeneutical commitment of the respondents?

These questions will be discussed within the framework already provided in Chapter 4 under section 4.2 because theoretical issues raised there are surfacing in the survey undertaken.
6.1.1. What is the issue and scope of the problem within the MCSA women ordained ministry?

All of the respondents articulated concerns about inequality and exclusion, especially among African women who are struggling for the bare necessities. Their lives are full of severe hardships. They work hard, carry heavy burdens such as firewood, fetch water from far away rivers and wells, plant, weed and harvest crops, care for children, grind corn and prepare food. The women in rural settings, especially those who take on the status of ‘bread-winner’, tend to work for long hours. They look after their children, work in the field, and sometimes look after livestock.

There are also some cultural hardships that women experience. In African ethnic groups there are taboos which restrict women. For example, a woman should not talk when men are having a conversation. Women are not taken seriously and at times they are belittled by men because of their intelligence. They are customarily looked upon solely as child bearers and servers and are often cruelly oppressed when they have failed in childbearing or when their child dies. Despite their nurturing, maintaining and serving of life for the survival of human communities, women are always marginalised and given an inferior status. In their oppression, African women have learned tolerance (which they may not sustain for long) and they fatalistically accept the given conditions. They try to integrate all their experiences so that they can appreciate the wholeness of life. The rural pastoralist or agriculturist woman stands at the centre of the life of the clan. She becomes the matrix that holds the whole society together. She gives birth to life, maintains it and continues to nurture it. Her understanding of the universe and her empirical participation in this universe is imbued with religion (Mugambi 1998, p. 124).

The marginalisation of women is continued through stereotypical prejudices emanating from African culture, the misuse of the Bible to favour male interest, the failure of church leadership to address the problem adequately; and women’s failure to use their own resources to combat inequality and exclusion. This problem will be articulated in this
section using what respondents have said and scholarly literature that supports this notion.

a) African culture and women in and for ministry

Listening to the respondents and their portrayal of their oppression within the church and real experiences, it becomes clear that more efforts should be made to address the situation. If Jesus’ promise in John 10:10 that ‘he has come that all should have life’ should take root, deliberate agendas that address women’s plight in the church should be introduced. Women dominate pews in the MCSA in the environment where they are absent from the power structures as it was seen in the Women’s Manyano organisations. Their contribution to the church cannot be overemphasised. The MCSA has a policy on the ordination of women but the ambivalent role the church is playing is that it does not use the policy as a catalyst for women empowerment but is complacent in their subordination instead. Women oppression and exclusion are taking place under the church’s watch according to the survey.

The situation portrayed by the respondents is not unique in their church but is widely spread in all African churches regardless of their theological tradition (Scholer 1987, pp. 407-420). Realities facing women in the church that motivate them to register ‘silent’ protest and resistance (which was also pronounced in the survey) has to do with how they are perceived in a male-dominated society. According to Scholer (1987, pp. 407-420), these realities include sexuality, power and personal identity. The powerful in positions of authority (men) are unlikely to succeed to tell the powerless (women) to accept the promise that things will eventually go well. Unless the powerless are directly involved and are in control of the programmes that address their plight, they will never be content. If women have the perception that their sexuality and identity determines who they are and what they should be in the church, they will remain insecure and suspicious (Scholer 1987, p. 418). This is particularly true if the patriarchal tradition is dominant in society and manhood is
taken as the norm and womanhood as a deviation. Women will always refuse to be controlled by definitions of who they are and what they should be (Bons-Storm 2005, p. 46).

Scholer (1987, p. 418) further argues that if women are viewed as ‘sex objects, temptations, distracters and those responsible for sin’, men’s identity is also at stake. There is no way men can lead women if they are discontent and suspicious of men’s agenda. It is not enough to try to ‘shout at [the] hill tops’ that the church has changed and embraced women ministry, a total turn-around strategy is needed. In such a situation men will need to listen carefully and speak less and let those who are oppressed drive the agenda of emancipation.

Scholar (1987, p. 418) further argues that church management should go through role reversals and that the introduction of new role expectations should be introduced in order to usher in a new authentic partnership ministry. The inability of the church to have an empowering partnership between women and men ministry is an ‘indictment of male dominance and insecurity’ (Scholer 1987, p. 418). The moment women and men are equal in ministry, a new power dimension will come on board. The ministry of servant leadership will emerge because all (men and women) will be servants in the mission of God who created them equal. According to Pope John Paul VI’s 2nd letter to women (http://www.vatican.va/holy-father/john-paul-ii/letters/docu), once this equilibrium is achieved there is ontological complementariness because through the duality of men and women true humanity finds its true realisation.

6.1.2. What is the theological hermeneutical commitment of the respondents?

The background of the participants was considered when a purposive selection, non-random procedure was considered. Participants were also teased to show their theological bias towards the hermeneutical position they use in their interpretation of Scripture. All of the participants read the Bible and its depiction of the role of women in the church from an Evangelical Egalitarian position (as discussed under sub-section 4.1.2
in Chapter 4). In sections 4.1.1, 4.1.2 and 4.1.3 the three biblical hermeneutical lenses used by the feminist theologians in interpreting the Bible with regard to the role of women in ministry was differentiated. In the responses from the participants there was no one who seemed to be operating from the Non-Evangelical Egalitarian position. The respondents view the Bible as the infallible Word of God that is often misused by hierarchical structures that have assumed a dominant position in the church. They all affirmed that the correct biblical position with regard to women ministry affirms women and puts both sexes on the same level.

a) Loyalist approach to reading the Bible

The respondents believe, without reservation, that the Bible exalts women and acknowledges their roles in the society. From the books of Genesis to Revelation, the Bible teaches equality between men and women and that both were created in the image of the Creator God. The questionnaire, however, did not ask the respondents to define the different roles women and men play in ministry. Women are the image-bearers of God as men are. The respondents argued that women are never caricatured as evil in the Bible and that interpretations that make the Bible not appear ennobling towards women are not correctly interpreted. Examples of women of outstanding character in the Bible such as Rebekah, Miriam, Deborah, Veronica, Esther, and Mary are mentioned as affirmations that God willed men and women to be co-workers in His vineyard.

Men who are misogynistic are victims of their cultural prejudices and stereotypes. Jesus, the head of the church, had a high regard for women. The respondents argued that anyone who views women as inferior to men is demeaning towards women. A true biblical understanding of God is not anti-female (Cosner 2010) but pro-humanity. Borrowing from Hoch’s terminology (1987, p. 242), the respondents can be classified as loyalists. They maintain that the Bible teaches freedom and equality of all persons. The biblical texts that teach female submission should not be viewed as the norm.
They should be ‘interpreted in line with norms of freedom and equality’ (Hoch 1987, p. 243). The attitude and words of Jesus Christ are normative to the church and do not cherish any hint of discrimination against women (Christifideles nd).

b) The rejectionist or liberationist reading of the Bible

The Non-Evangelical Egalitarian approach to studying the Bible is discussed under section 4.1.3 and shows its rejectionist approach. This approach asserts that the Bible is of no value for constructing a theology of liberation for women as it is hopelessly corrupt and sinful (Hoch 1987, p. 243). According to this position, the Bible cannot be used as a norm for the life of contemporary women. The critique of the rejectionist approach of the loyalist reading of the Bible is that it tends to read the biblical text as ‘an innocent and transparent container of a message’ with a universal meaning (Mosala 1989, p. 41). The rejectionists, however, argue that the Bible should be read with the intention of discovering ideological agendas of the powerful who wish to keep the working class under their tutelage. The Bible is, therefore, not innocent when it comes to the true liberation of women who are triply oppressed (www.saha.org.za/women/women_speak_out_again).

An attempt was done to assess whether the respondents were aware of the rejectionist or liberationist pronouncements but there was no trace that they were aware of the pronouncement or that the respondents subscribed to them. It is therefore proper to restrict the assessment of their responses to a loyalist tradition and to limit any suggestive corrective remedies to this tradition for now.

6.1.3. Concluding observations

The evaluation of the responses from the 14 participants has yielded important insights that the church can use in addressing the plight of the women in the MCSA. There are
problems that are gender-based and are causing pain to women in the ministry. Some of the problems are discussed below:

a) The ordination of women ministers

Historical legacies from churches and mission societies that first established and continue to support churches here in Africa have not changed. This especially includes interpretations of the Bible and ways of being a church that they have passed on, sometimes in opposition to positions of their own churches. Such interpretations deeply affect how they read Scripture to legitimise positions that may have arrived on the grounds. Whether or not to ordain women has depended largely on the practices, visions and wish of the ‘mother church’, as well as the local perception of leadership in society, access to theological education and interpretation of received traditions.

Tradition, which equates to what is customary in a society or a church, has not included women as co-workers. Theological or biblical arguments against the ordination of women are typically lodged. Culture is often set forth as a reason for not allowing women into the ministry. Culture sustains people and is therefore good, but it can also protect or legitimise sinful practices, such as excluding or abusing women, and this is not fair of the church. Those who are abused by cultural assumptions and practices are usually not those who defend the factor of ‘culture’. For Christians, culture can never be the last word, but is continually being transformed in light of the gospel. It must be clear that the main contention is that the church betrays the heart of the gospel if it prohibits women from being ordained into ministry (Methodist Year Book 2004, p. 27). For many centuries of church history, women were not ordained to public ministry of the church. For much of history, women simply did not seem to matter. They have been uneducated and excluded from public roles. The ministries women were carrying
out, although extraordinary to those affected, were often overlooked by the official church authorities or leaders (Methodist Year Book 2004, p. 271).

b) Taboos and sacraments

Taboos are often gender-related, particularly with relation to women’s bodies (as if men do not have bodies too) as per information on the questionnaire. Taboos become a basis for moral judgement, which is in distinct contrast to how Jesus treated people. They lead us to try to separate the righteous from the unrighteous. Taboos operate at deeply emotional levels that cannot be countered through rational arguments. Those who have often been stigmatised because of taboos, or discriminated against in society, may in reality be those through whom the message of God’s free grace and transformative love break through. Pastoral ministry involves entering into the intimate arenas of life where people are most vulnerable, and doing so as public spokespersons for God, whose ultimate vulnerability was revealed on the cross. Unvarnished vulnerability, and this needs to become a public ministry, is what ordination is about (The Methodist Book of Order 1920, pp. 4;78-83), making public how God is transforming our lives and world. Women, too, are bearers and proclaimers of this grace of God. If gender is part of what it means to be created in the image of God, and we value the skills, gifts and abilities of all, regardless of their gender, then it is an offense to God and to many people in church and society to view women as taboos, especially when men say that women are not ready to lead in order to restrict women who feel called to serve in the church.

c) Patriarchy

‘Patriarchy’ is the word often used in the context of cultural dogma. According to feminists, like all Abrahamic faiths, patriarchy elevates men above women. Patriarchy is not about women in leadership positions in churches. It is about a deeply grooved pattern of male-dominated leadership that damages women (men,
too, although sometimes that is not as easy to see). It is strongly embedded into culture, even in Christian culture. Patriarchy is even stronger in some other cultures around the world, and in some cases it is not only strong, but life-threatening (Igbelina-Igbokwe).

Sexism is prejudice directed against women, undergirded by the structures of patriarchy. Based on the Latin word for father, ‘pater’, literally means the rule of a father or fathers. Unfortunately, patriarchy has come to mean that man is the norm and that woman is inferior in every way: biologically, intellectually, anthropologically and socially (Butler nd). According to this system, in Africa women, all women, are inherently of lesser value than any man. Striking at the root of women’s humanity and finding it totally deficient, patriarchy is an ideology, a way of thinking, feeling and organising of human life which legally, politically, socially and religiously enforces male dominance and power. Culture, society and religious bodies, including the Christian church, are structured on this principle. Patriarchal society or culture ‘initiated by men in positions of power, continues to be maintained primarily by men, and has men as its principal beneficiaries’ (Butler nd).

Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza (2004, p. 11) has coined the word ‘kyriarchy’, which is a stronger word than patriarchy. Derived from the Greek words for ‘lord or master’, ‘kyrios’ and for ‘to rule or dominate’, ‘archein’, kyriarchy is a ‘socio-political system of domination in which elite educated propertied men hold power over women and other men’. In the same way that an individual black person in South Africa, who experienced the full impact of the power of apartheid in every aspect of his or her life, would be totally in error for saying ‘it is all my fault’, so also will the recognition of the ideological force and power of sexism, patriarchy, androcentrism and kyriarchy help women to stop blaming themselves for the oppression they experience. An important phrase of feminism is that ‘the personal is the political’, which means that ‘my experience of oppression is joined to that of
other women’, ‘we experience oppression and injustice because we are women’ and ‘we also experience the power of liberation together’ (Schussler Fiorenza 2004, p. 11).

Cultural practices frequently harm people, so one has to ask whether they are worth preserving. Also, one might add that it is not clear whether there is interesting diversity in the practices of male dominance that feminists have most contested. Getting beaten up and being malnourished have depressing similarities everywhere; denials of land rights, political voice, and employment opportunities do too. The argument from paternalism says that when universal norms are used as benchmarks for societies, people are being told what is good for them and shown too little respect for their freedom as agents. Being aware of this danger gives people a good reason to prefer a form of universalism that is compatible with the most significant freedoms and choices. However, any system of law is paternalistic in keeping some people from doing some things that they want to do and this is not a credible argument against law itself. Also, many existing value systems are highly paternalistic towards women. For ‘their own good’ they treat women as equal under the law, as lacking full civic capacity and not having the same rights of association, property ownership and employment as men (). It is necessary for the church to engage in a vigorous discussion of the many issues that feminists are raising and to encourage an informed participation by both clergy and laity on issues related to women. Feminist theology raises complex questions about church doctrine and the way they are expressed and articulated. It is also critical of institutional practices which may be contrary to the real beliefs and doctrines of the church. Many of the questions that feminists are raising cannot be decided by majorities in church Synods, with all the dynamics and politics of radical decision-making that one finds at these types of gatherings. Further, these are not only related to the ordination of women but to patriarchy and its effects, and power at large.
d) Culture and tradition as stumbling blocks for mission

In many societies, as is the case in African culture, women are symbolised as ‘closer to nature’ than men and thus fall in an intermediate position between the culture of the male sphere and uncontrolled nature (Ruether 1993, p. 72). This is due to woman’s physiological investment in the biological processes that reproduces the species rather than in processes that enhance her as an individual and to the ability of male collective power to extend woman’s physiological role into social roles confined to child nurture and domestic labour (Ruether 1993, p. 73). Female physiological processes are viewed as dangerous and polluting to higher (male) culture. Her social roles are regarded as inferior to those of males, falling lower on the nature-culture hierarchy. It is important to lay out several key elements in male-female relations that contribute to the devaluation of women in the analogy of devalued nature. Ultimately, the question is why nature itself comes to be seen as devalued and inferior to the human. One cannot criticise the hierarchy of male over female without ultimately criticising and overcoming the hierarchy of humans over nature (Ruether 1993, p. 73).

According to Ruether (1993, p. 72), male consciousness towards women and nature must be seen in the male puberty rite that uproots the male from the female context of early socialisation and forcibly identifies the pubescent male with the male community and its roles and functions. This happens in matrilineal-matrifocal societies as well as in patriarchal societies (Ruether 1993, p. 73). It is inherent in the extension of the female childbearing role into early childbearing and in the segregation of the sexes into parallel communities that play complementary roles. The mother’s world thus becomes the settled domestic circle of childbearing, lactation, early child nurture, the transformation of the raw into the cooked, the making of domestic implements, and so on. Female social mobility is thereby restricted. Women work in groups gathering food, hunting small animals, and transforming these products, as well as those of male hunting, into
food, clothes, and artefacts for the whole society. All this is a formidable work of culture of the human transformation of natural processes. How, then, does it come to be defined as inferior because it is ‘closer to nature’?

Man’s ability to define woman’s realm as inferior depends on the success of male hunting and warfare in becoming the link for the domestic units of society. Men then become the lawmakers, ritualists and cultural definers of society. The male puberty rite brings male socialisation out of the mother’s sphere and into the father’s sphere and defines the process hierarchically. In the words and rituals of the male puberty rite, the female sphere, which has been the primal matrix and encompassing world of the male child, becomes devalued and repudiated. Unlike the female, who goes through puberty as an initiation back into the mother’s world on an adult level, the male must become an adult through a psycho-cultural revolution. This accounts in part for the much more violent character of male puberty rites than that of female puberty rites (Ruether 1993, p. 73).

Older males tell the boys, who are being uprooted from the female into male sphere, fearful tales of how women once controlled the instruments of culture but were defeated by men. Men now control the symbols of cultural power (sacred flutes or holy bundles) (Ruether 1993, p. 75). Women must not touch them under pain of extreme retribution. The young male is taught to identify with the male sphere as higher than the female sphere, the place of an earlier, lower self that he has now ‘transcended’. The establishment of this relationship between male and female spheres depends not only on men as definers of culture but also on the burdening of women with most of the tedious, day-to-day tasks of economic production. Men become a leisure class with relatively little to do but decorate themselves, sharpen their weapons, and prepare for the occasional great excursions of hunting and war. The domination of women throughout most of human history has depended on the freeing of men for cultural control by filling
women’s days with most of the tasks of domestic production and reproduction (Ruether 1993, p. 75).

Woman’s body, her reproductive processes, becomes owned by men and defined from a male point of view (Ruether 1993, p. 75). Women are seen as reproducing children and producing cooked food and clothes for men. Men regard this work as beneath them and they see themselves as dominating and controlling it from above. Woman then becomes both the mediator and the symbol of the domination of ‘lower’ material processes by ‘higher’ cultural (male) control. The structure of female inferiority is the reduction of women to silence. The male monopoly on cultural definition makes women the object, rather than the subject of that definition. Men define both male and female spheres from the male, hierarchical point of view and restrict or eliminate interpretations that come from the female point of view. More highly valued cultural activities are monopolised by men. These often have more to do with ritual and leisure functions than with daily necessities (Ruether 1993, p. 75). Men occupy the sphere of freedom and confine women to the realm of necessity. The female then comes to be seen from the male point of view as a threatening lower ‘power’ who seeks to deprive him of his freedom and drag him down into the realm of necessity. Male transcendence is defined as flight from and warfare against the realm of the mother, the realm of body and nature, all that limits and confines rather than being controlled by the human (male) (Ruether 1993, p. 75). It is clear that the form of man contradicts the form of Christ, for the form of man is a tower with its top in the heavens. The Christian view of some men looked upon the religious life of women only negatively, while the theology of the stigma of Christ requires us to take a careful and humble look at the lives of religious women (Koyama 1977, p. 43).

e) Constructive dialogue
There should be open and enabling theological discussions where laity and clergy explore the wide range of issues involved; it is important that the clergy, in particular, are stimulated to develop a critical faith, since the laity in the churches often take cues from the clergy. There should also be more opportunities and resources for the laity to consider the many issues that emerge from time to time in relation to church life. Although some radical feminists see Christian theology as being irredeemably sexist, I believe that the church’s fundamentally prophetic character is compatible with the spirit of critical and reconstructive feminist thinking. There is a need to emphasise this critical and restorative purpose of feminism in a Christian context. Christian feminists, who engage in a critique of all oppressive social, cultural and ecclesial structures, speak from within the Christian tradition that has shaped them. They call for rigorous re-reading of Scripture, of church doctrines, practice and church history, to expose the discrepancies and inconsistencies both within the church and society. There should be a concerted effort from both women and men to make the existing journey of retracing their historical steps, to re-read the narrative of faith and to do serious realignment.

6.1.4. Summary on the call to women’s participation in the life and mission of the church

The call to follow Jesus has a fundamental objective: to participate in the mission of Jesus. This mission is described through the imagery of fishing. Jesus was not the first to use such a metaphor (Costas 1979, p. 20). The Old Testament sees Yahweh as a fisherman. Thus, for example, Yahweh tells Egypt: I will put hooks in your jaws, and make the fish of your streams stick to your scales’ (Ezekial 29:4). He swears that he will do the same thing with Gog (Ezekial 38:4). Yahweh makes people ‘like the fish of the sea, like crawling things that have no ruler’. He brings all of them up with a hook, He drags them out with His net, and He gathers them in His seine (Habbakuk 1:14-15). These and other Old Testament passages use the imagery of fishing to describe God’s judgement on the
nations. They portray God as the mighty judge, from whose ‘hooks’ no fish, even big ones such as Egypt and Gog, cannot escape. The essence community at Qumran, which existed during the lifetime of Jesus and produced the now famous Dead Sea scrolls, kept alive the fishing metaphor from the Old Testament prophetic tradition. But whereas in the prophets God was seen as the Fisherman who judges the fish of the sea, in Qumran this task was promised to the Messiah.

It is necessary to go beyond the traditional interpretation of Jesus’ fishing metaphor. Far from being a simple play on words, appropriate to the situation of the four Apostles, Jesus’ promise was an affirmation of profound theological significance. He inverted the traditional understanding of this imagery. Rather than identifying it with God’s judgement, He related it to God’s saving grace. The waters of the Nile had been, as it were, already infested by God’s impinging judgement upon the present age. In His great mercy, however, He was providing opportunity to every ‘fish’ to be rescued from those waters. Jesus had come for this purpose and He was calling the disciples to follow Him and that He may turn them into ‘fishers of men’. This is reminiscent of the words of the fourth Gospel, ‘For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. He who believes in Him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already’ (John 3:17-18a). It is also reminiscent of Jesus’ priestly prayer recorded in the same Gospel: ‘Father, the hour has come; glorify thy Son that the Son may glorify Thee, since Thou has given Him power over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom Thou hast given Him. And this is eternal life, that they know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou has sent [...] As Thou didst send Me into the world, so I have sent them into the world’ (John17: 1b-3,18) (Costas 1979, 20).

To be incorporated into the new community is not only to be led to follow Jesus, but also to be enabled to become a channel of His grace. The promise to transform Simon, Andrew, John and James into ‘fishermen’ made implicit the continuation of Jesus’ mission through the Apostles, and through those who would become disciples after them. For as Jesus had been sent as the channel by which God’s saving grace was to be
made available to the whole of mankind, so the disciples were themselves to become the channels through which God’s message of grace would reach the ends of the earth. Nowhere does it say that they were to become by themselves instruments of God in the salvation of women and men. It was Jesus who would enable them to become fishers. Some would feel incompetent. Others would get 'cold feet' when the going got rough. Others would feel discouraged and would be tempted to give up in defeat and go back to their old trade. Jesus, however, would make it possible for them to continue (Costas 1979, p. 23).

What an extraordinary reminder for the church in traditional Christian lands during this last quarter of the 20th century! A church assailed and tossed about by a defeatist inferiority complex, a church filled with guilt about its past short-comings, discouraged by the seeming impotence of its present ministry, physically and psychologically tired, traumatised by the prospects of a substantial decrease in its future role in society and in the lives of its members – to this stagnant church (Costas 1979, p. 20), which appears to be retreating from the frontiers of history and entering into a new 'religious isolationism' Jesus says, ‘Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men’. The way out of the present crisis in the church does not lie in the church itself, in more relevant programmes, up-to-date methods and techniques, the efficiency and talent of its leadership or in a return to old patterns (Costas 1979, p. 20). Rather, the way out of the present situation lies in a renewed insertion into the mission of Jesus Christ. It lies in the disposition of the church to humble itself before Him, in its willingness to let Him take control of its life and ministry, to let Him set its agenda for mission and transform its members, by His Spirit, into effective vessels of His grace and its willingness to allow women to also be called (Costas 1979, p. 20).
CHAPTER 7: THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE MCSA

7.1. Women empowerment in the ministry

The empowerment of women has become a frequently cited goal of development interventions (Mosedale 2003) and more often than not it is a confusing concept. Different people use the word ‘empowerment’ to mean different things. However, there are four aspects which seem to be generally accepted in the literature on women’s empowerment. There is also a significant body of literature discussing how women’s empowerment should be undertaken that has been or might be evaluated, but there are still major difficulties in doing so (Kang 2004; Masenya 2004; Haddad 2003; Onwunta & August 2012). Furthermore, many projects and programmes which espouse the empowerment of women show little, if any, evidence of attempts to define what this means in their own contexts. Much is said and written about empowering women in church but concrete steps that ensure tangible results need to be elucidated. Instead, traditional development goals, such as better health or increased income, are cited as evidence of empowerment. In such cases it is not clear what is added by using the word ‘empowerment’. To be empowered, one must have been disempowered (Mosedale 2003). It is relevant to speak of empowering women because, as a group, they are disempowered in relation to men in society and in church.

A third party can help with the creation of a conducive environment in which women can empower themselves. The old saying that one can take a horse to water but one cannot force it to drink applies here. Agencies may be able to create conditions favourable to their empowerment but they cannot make it happen if they do not participate in it (Mosedale 2003). Accordingly, to Mosedale’s definitions of empowerment can be added the sense that people can make decisions on matters which are important in their lives and have the ability to carry them out. Reflections, analysis and actions are involved in this process, which may happen on an individual or collective level.
There is some evidence in the literature that while women’s own struggles for empowerment have tended to be collective, empowerment-orientated development interventions often focus more on the level of the individual rather than on structural establishment. Empowerment should be viewed as an ongoing process rather than an end product that could be achieved within a specific time. One does not arrive at a stage of being empowered in some absolute sense. People are empowered, or disempowered, relative to others or, importantly, relative to themselves at a previous time.

7.1.1. Models of power

Power is central in any societal relationships (Rowland 1997). Rowland (1997) identifies three models of power. There is power that is top down and often conditions those who are powerless to accept it as their God sanctioned reality. In this situation power is related to conflict in that the powerful ‘wins’ and exercises power over the defeated. This type of power relates to one-on-one relationships and is prevalent in families and institutions under the control of one leader.

The second model of power is seen as the ability to deny women (in this case) from getting to the level of decision-making (Rowland 1997). In this case leaders decide who gets what, when and how. It is regulatory in nature and is concerned with the rules and methods of legitimising and discrediting some voices. This type of power model is prevalent in churches as the the fifth and sixth chapters of this thesis have shown. Often this type of power operates undetected and can easily become a norm and accepted practice (Rowland 1997).

Longwe (in Rowland 1997) gives five helpful hints to enhance empowerment:

a) The welfare ‘degree’ where the basic needs of those who are on the underside of history are met. This gesture does not temper with structural causes of disempowerment and tends to take advantage of the affected as passive recipients.
In this case those in power are acting out of arrogance and think that they know what the powerless need.

b) The access ‘degree’ where equal access to power and privileges are ensured.

c) The conscientisation and awareness raising ‘degree’ where structural issues affecting the powerless are discussed.

d) The participation and mobilisation ‘degree’ where structural and institutional discrimination and exclusion are addressed in a fundamental way.

e) The control ‘degree’ where equal decision-taking is established and recognised.

Armed with this kind of awareness and commitment, the MCSA should go a long way in not only empowering women within its midst but also transforming the oppressive structures for the welfare of all and advancement of God’s Kingdom on earth.

The third model of power, according to Rowland, refers to a situation where the powerful succeed in making allies with the powerless by preventing dissent and yet not transcending the limitations imposed by the inequalities. Here the situation is manipulated to the extent that the powerless see the underlying conflict of interest. The oppressed come to a situation where they accept the legitimised wrong practices and live with them (Mosedale 2003).

Mosedale (2003) proposes ways of empowering people who find themselves in the three models of power stated above. She proposes what she calls a ‘non zero model of power’. This includes ‘power within’, ‘power to’ and ‘power with’.

a) ‘Power within’. Oppressed and marginalised people may develop a syndrome where they internalise the feelings of their worthlessness and succumb to the manipulation of the powerful (Mosedale 2003). In such conditions self-esteem, self-confidence and self-assertiveness may serve as effective empowerment tools. Although these forms of recognition and assertiveness are difficult to come by, they are the cognitive models that need to be exploited for the emancipation of women in church ministry.
b) ‘Power to’. Mosedale uses the example of learning to illustrate this point. If a person gets involved in studies such person increases his or her level of skills without diminishing the skills of others. This approach creates new possibilities to the ‘oppressed’ in such a way that the boundaries of the oppressed are increased without the threat of ‘domination’ to the ‘boundaries’ of the oppressor (Mosedale 2003).

c) ‘Power with’. According to Rowland (1997) power with refers to ‘collective action’. Once people have realised that all humans have been created in the image of God and bestowed with God’s power to be co-creative agents of His purposes on earth, equal opportunities can be created to empower all for the common purpose. Women should be given ‘space’ where they can develop themselves and be provided with role models to enhance their ability and creativity to break ‘passivity in oppression’ (Mosedale 2003).

All three models of women empowerment listed above should be set as measurable objectives. Women empowerment should be ‘outcome based’ (Mosedale 2003). Continuous assessment should be made in order to monitor the process of empowerment of women and corrective actions be employed where the objectives are not met. Evaluation should be made to determine why the outcome was reached or not reached and new strategies should be designed to keep the process focused and effective.

7.1.2. Concluding remarks on the symbiosis between culture and power in the MCSA

As I have argued earlier, gender refers to expected roles for women and men that are constructed and reinforced through culture. This is also reflected in many passages of Scripture, which were written when a male-dominant gender understanding prevailed in patriarchal cultures of the time. The problem is that these assumptions about the relationships and appropriate roles between men and women, which are human constructions, are often mistaken as being the will of God for all time.
Power is a central theme running through each of the above factors, often in covert rather than in obvious ways. Matters of power are perhaps the most pervasive reason why those who hold power in churches have excluded women from the ordained ministry. Here the reference is to understanding power as the control or domination over others, a fixed quantity, something that ‘I’ will have less of if someone has more. There is, of course, another understanding of power that is shared with others, and is thus empowering. According to the New Testament, Jesus Himself lived out and referred to many different ways of understanding and living out power. The inclusive power of the Spirit of the Risen Christ empowers the church and its ministry at its best. Yet, as we are painfully aware, conflicts over power, who has it and how it is used, are all too present in the church, as expressions not of God’s will but of human sin.

It must be clear that the main contention is that the church betrays the heart of the gospel if it prohibits women from being ordained into ministry (Methodist Year Book 2004, p. 27). According to a Methodist understanding of the Priesthood of all believers, proclaiming the gospel and presiding over the Lord’s Supper are the central tasks for which some are ordained for the church’s public ministry. Then why, for so many centuries of church history, were women not ordained to the public ministry of the church? For much of history, women simply did not seem to matter. They have been uneducated and excluded from public roles. The ministries women were carrying out, although extraordinary to those affected, were often overlooked by official church authorities or leaders (Methodist Year Book 2004, p. 271).

Even in the Roman Catholic communities of women only, many are carrying out roles and responsibilities associated with the clergy, pastoral care, administering parishes, theological reflection and spiritual life. Male priests are brought in only to celebrate the Eucharist, as if this is the only ‘holy’ act that matters in the life of the community. If the Eucharist is central to what it means to be the church, why do some churches still prohibit women from celebrating it, other than for reasons of keeping a monopoly on such life-bestowing power? There is a need to have an honest discussion about the prejudices
against the ordination of women and about what is at stake if these prejudices are not overcome. In other words, the reasons women were excluded from ordination were not for biblical or theological reasons, but for the kind of reasons that can and must be questioned if not challenged on theological grounds. Societal notions of power are applied to the church, rather than the church challenging how power operates in societies and culture. Such a challenge should be grounded not by secular reason, but in what Jesus said and how He related to the people and cultural norms of His day. He called for the first to be last, not to be ruled. The church of the Reformation should be focusing on the ongoing reformation of the church when it falls into patterns of control and negative use of power contrary to this. Anna Mghwira, a Tanzanian woman theologian who was never able to become a pastor said that, ‘we need believers to become pastors more than we need to guard special positions for pastors’.

7.2. Transformation for inclusiveness for women in ministry

Daszko and Sheinberg and Ravindran (in Kgatla 2013, pp. 1-5) warn that transformation has become a buzzword that is both overused and misunderstood in today’s world. Women hear the slogans of transformation in their churches, but they see no change in their lives. It is easy for church leaders to ‘talk the language’ and may even try to take action in pursuit of what they understand to be transformation, but can often show no tangible benefits (Kgatla 2013, p. 5). In some circles, ‘transformation talk’ can become a mere catchphrase used to lull women into believing that those who use the language are indeed serious about their lot in the church. Transformation is a missional agenda of the church as dictated by the triune God as He changes the church shaped by His mission (). It is about asking and allowing God to transform the church and usher in His Kingdom, and His rule that would negate human designed ‘kingdoms’.

The mission of God through the church to the world involves transformation that brings new hope, life and prosperity for all. Transformation involves a radical change that brings
about new hope for all and change that involves pain that goes with uncertainties for those who are in privileged positions. It ‘disempowers’ those who were wrongly empowered and brings those who were ‘disempowered’ in history to their rightful position in the church. Transformation is a process of radical social change in which old dehumanising practices are replaced with ‘purposive’ strategic intervention with a view of creating a new community of God where Christ is the Lord.

Haddad (2003, p. 430) in Onwunta and August (2012) views transformation as a social change that is ‘the heart of the mission of God to the world’ where both men and women are ‘restored’ to full humanity. Transformation, as empowerment, presupposes participation in mission, freedom, partnership with self-reliance, relationships and transparency, self-emptying and solidarity, accountability and responsibility, equality and justice, love, peace and dignity. The study now tackles the six prepositions to mark a transformative path within the MCSA mission and embracement of women in ministry.

7.2.1 Participation in mission and in solidarity

Onwunta & August (2012) argue that God’s mission through His church is participatory and in solidarity for both men and women. The participation of men and women on an equal basis in His mission is both empowering and transformative in its nature. In the mission of God all participants should be aware of its nature, demands, obligations and social reality (Presbyterians Do Mission in Partnership). In the participatory mission both sexes are equal and self-reliant where they themselves feel that they are contributing in their own rights. It is only when both genders are engaged in true partnership in the mission of God that the historical divisions may be addressed and corrected.

Gender is part of what it means to be created in the image of God, and the skills, gifts and abilities of all should be valued, regardless of gender. It is an offence to God and to many people in church and society (especially when men say that women are not ready to lead)
to restrict women who feel called to serve in God’s mission and in the ordained ministry of the church. Discrimination on the basis of gender does not enhance the mission of God or comment on it as good news (Neill & Anderson 1970, p. 44). ‘It does not glorify Jesus the Christ, but rather, is a stumbling block, a scandal made by some ill-informed men’s decisions, not God’s’ (Neill & Anderson 1970, p. 357). This goes to the heart of the gospel: subordination is very critical in countries of rape and women and child abuse because some men take for granted that women were created for them and think that they can do as they please with women, who are regarded as their property (Neill & Anderson 1970, p. 357).
CHAPTER 8: UNDERSTANDING MISSIO DEI AS A PARADIGM SHIFT AND AS TRANSFORMATIONAL

8.1. Background

In the preceding chapter I have argued for women empowerment and transformation in the MCSA in order to advance God’s Kingdom through the authentic incorporation of women in the full life of the church. Transformation accompanied by the process of women empowerment constitutes a paradigm shift – a radical change that brings life in its fullness to those who are marginalised and excluded. In this chapter the paradigm shift theory of Thomas Kuhn is used to argue that in every transformative agenda there is a paradigm shift.

8.2. Paradigm Shift of Thomas Kuhn

The paradigm theory was suggested by natural scientist Thomas Kuhn to illustrate that knowledge does not grow cumulatively but rather ‘by way of revolution’ (in Bosch 1991, p. 184). Scholars may perceive reality in ways different from their predecessors. Some scholars may realise that the existing theories are not really helpful in explaining reality and may begin to look for new ways in which the same realities are looked at differently from their predecessors (Kuhn in Bosch 1991, p. 184). Bosch calls this ‘facing out’ and ‘facing in’ of new models of understanding the same problems as paradigm shifts which he borrows from Thomas Kuhn. Thomas Kuhn used the duck-rabbit optical illusion to demonstrate the way in which a paradigm shift can cause one to see the same information in an entirely different way (Kuhn in Bosch 1991, p. 103). According to Kuhn, a ‘scientific revolution occurs when scientists encounter anomalies which cannot be explained by universally accepted paradigm within which scientific progress has thereto been made’ (in Bosch 1991, p. 103). In scientific enquiry there are anomalies for all paradigms that are ignored and brushed away as new insights are made.
In support of Thomas Kuhn’s paradigm shift, Kung (1987, p. 157) identifies six epochs of paradigm shifts in Missiology. These are: a) The apocalyptic paradigm of primitive Christianity, b) The Hellenistic paradigm of the patristic period, c) The medieval Roman Catholic paradigm, d) The Protestant (Reformation) paradigm, e) The modern Enlightenment paradigm, and f) The emerging ecumenical paradigm. Bosch uses these paradigm changes to make a point about what mission meant to different scholars over the years in their particular contexts.

8.3. Mission as boundary-shifting

In this chapter I add another dimension in arguing that the mission of the church should be a ‘boundaries shifting exercise’ that incorporates women fully in the ministry of the church. The church is an imperfect institution and it needs a continual renewal through the Word of God and His Spirit. The correct understanding and interpretation of the biblical account of the role of women in God’s mission should become good news to women (Croft & Gooder 2013, p. XI). The full participation of women in the mission of God to the world alongside their male counterparts is good news because human stereotypes are dismantled and a new dawn of liberating experience is ushered in. The involvement of women in the ministry of the MCSA without cultural and patriarchal dominance is good news because a paradigm shift radically liberates women from subjugation or from a human-made environment that is life-stifling.

My contention in this chapter, as it has been the case in the whole thesis, is that the inclusion of women in church ministry should not be predetermined by men holding high positions in the church. The argument here is not merely for the legalisation of women to be trained for ministry but is also for the way they are viewed in the church and the assumptions made about them based on the tradition of the church and the wrong interpretation of Scripture (Croft & Gooder 2013, p. XI). My contention is that much of what is said and done to women in the church is influenced by what society does outside of the church. The world is more in the church than the world is in the world or,
differently put, the world is in charge of the church agenda. The MCSA has made good decisions about the role of women in ministry but those decisions, as promising as they are, are more of a lip-service than a fundamental paradigm shift from past practices. Women are still assigned works in the church that are clearly inferior and gender defining. Leadership positions are, theoretically, as open for women as they are for men, but in practice this is not the case. The good news for the women and men in the church will be when their relationships are redeemed and all barriers of role separation are broken down and annulled.

8.4. God’s mission or the church’s mission?

God’s mission is by definition transformational and life-giving. This will be illustrated by a developmental achievement of what mission meant in a particular context to the church. These insights should also help the MCSA’s complex units and structures, for its work to the world was discussed in Chapter 3. In that section I discussed the MCSA structures that include among others: Classes, Circuit Meetings, Circuit Stewards, Districts, Connexion, The Order of Ministry of the Word and Sacraments and organisations such as the Women’s Manyano, the Young Women’s Manyano and the Young Men’s Guild. These structures are involved in what Methodism stands for: Inner Holiness (Attwell 2005, p. 9).

The debate of what comes first between church and mission has occupied the ecumenical bodies and organised church for many years. In this chapter I am arguing that the concept of Missio Dei is transformational and empowering to the mission of the church. In the context of the MCSA, the benefit of the clarification of Missio Dei as a paradigm shift fitting to the unconditional inclusion of women in the ministry is imperative. Mission has its origin neither in the official church nor in special groups within the church but it has its origin in the heart of God (Commission of Mission and Evangelism 2013, p. 1).

Below is a brief survey of the debates around who is responsible for mission, the ‘church or missionary society?’ The debate should illuminate the fact that people often occupy
themselves with debates that do not matter or take themselves nowhere in terms of the extension of God’s Kingdom on earth. What is important in any undertaking that benefits humanity should be undergirded by justice, love, integrity and full participation by all, men and women. The discernment of God’s will and His involvement in any human affairs should be paramount. This will be explained further when I discuss Missio Dei as God’s involvement in human affairs for their transformation. As it is implied in the Lord’s prayer that ‘His Kingdom be done on earth as it is done in heaven’, mission means stopping among people that which is not from God but ushering in that which is His will and liking.

8.4.1. Historical developments in the understanding of mission and church

The debate of missionary societies or the church being responsible for mission in the world is as old as early Protestantism (Bosch 1980, pp. 34-35). These missionary societies were either inter-denominational, non-denominational or simply anti-denominational (Bosch 1991, p. 327). Reasons for the establishment of missionary societies, some of which had no ties with the church or did not see the relevance of the church in mission, were either that the official church was not very eager to do mission, that people were fed-up with bureaucracy within the church or that people who undertook mission work felt personally called by God. Most of the societies were sponsored by people who sympathised with their cause (Bosch 1980, p. 35).

Although there is no place for missionary societies in the New Testament, the establishment of these societies served a good cause as the official church did very little about mission. Often the official churches remained institutional, confessional, and turned in on themselves for their own survival (Bosch 1980, p. 32). In this context, mission is seen as primarily church-planting and all its energy is spent on self-preservation (Bosch 1980, p. 35). The following are some of the arguments in favour of mission by missionary societies which, in my argument, has direct consequences for the MCSA in its quest for ‘Inner Holiness’:
a) The historical facts state that because of the lukewarmness and blindness of the churches, missionary societies have arisen and have done good work (Bosch 1980, p. 34).
b) The institutional church practice does not go far enough to realise what God has called it to be (Bosch 1972, pp. 178-180).
c) If the official church gets involved in anything tangible there are problems around the stiffness of the bureaucracy and the inflexibility of administration. Church leaders are more like politicians than prophets of God (Winter in Bosch 1980, pp. 180, 189).
d) The missionary societies created room for variety and special interests. The official church can pose problems of being too big to be disciplined, focused and adaptable. To this end the first International Missionary Council at Edinburg in 1910 described missionary societies as ‘pillars of the church in the advancement of the Kingdom of God’ (Bosch 1980, pp. 160-161).

The supporters of missionary action on the part of the official church had the following to advance their position:

a) The church is the only logical institution on earth sent by God to represent Him in His mission on earth. Mission should thus proceed from the organised church (Bosch 1980, p. 180).
b) Missionary societies which often operate as faith mission movements have weaknesses of becoming romantic. Their preoccupation with the narrow agenda of ‘personal salvation’ may lead to the self-glorification of actors and may operate with a very shallow theology (Bosch 1991, p. 333). Like faith-healers and prosperity gospel leaders, the focus is on the leader rather than God. A church grounded in solid theological insights has less chances of becoming abused as movements run by like-mindedness and fundamentals.
c) Missionary societies act illegally if they perform church responsibilities such as sacraments and church discipline. Many missionary societies had to transform
themselves into the official church, which created further problems in the area they were operating in and made it appear easy to multiply denominations. This factor led many indigenous people to start their own churches whenever they had problems with historical churches. The lesson to be learnt here is that an official church should always be progressive and visionary in discerning the will of God in the world.

d) The missionary societies are ecclesola in ecclesia (churches within churches) that hampers the true realisation of what church ought to be in mission (Bosch 1991, p. 166). The unity of believers which has its basis on their incorporation into Christ through baptism can only be realised in the true official church (Bosch 1991, p. 167).

e) The responsibility of the church should never be removed from the church and handed over to the society. Bosch (1982, p. 181) argues that if missionary intention that belongs to the church is handed over to the missionary society, the church loses its missionary dimension.

As I have indicated earlier, there are tensions and debates on a number of things including the role that women should and ought to play in the church. The preceding arguments highlight the importance of always stretching forward for theological or missiological solutions to the problems. History, as outlined above, can help the MCSA learn from the debates of the past and can help the MCSA in facing out and facing in paradigms that can restore the church relevance in the world today.

8.5. Missio Dei: paradigm shifts in the understanding of church and mission

In chapter 12 of Transforming Mission, Bosch (1991, pp. 368-510) discusses 12 elements of what he calls Emerging Ecumenical Missionary Paradigm with some subheadings under each element. He prefixes all 12 elements with the words ‘Mission as’. All 12 sections and their subsections are interrelated and hinge on the idea of Missio Dei (God’s Mission). After the devastating events of the Second World War (Bosch 1991, p. 389)
missiologists started taking note of new developments within the church and the world. Kim cites the developments within the International Ecumenical Movements Conferences since Edinburgh 1910 as a paradigm shift which was forced on the church to re-define its mission to the world (2010, p. 351).

Paradigm shift in mission cannot fully be grasped without considering ecumenical missionary conferences since 1910. Before that period, mission was understood in a variety of ways ranging from soteriological, cultural, and ecclesiastical to salvation-historical (Bosch 1991, p. 389). The paradigm shift model is a fairly recent notion first articulated by Karl Barth in 1932 (Bosch 1991, p. 389) and Karl Hartenstein in 1934 (Tennent 2010, p. 55). Considering the whole life of the missiology conference since 1910 to 2010, Tennent (2010) and Bosch (1991) conclude that there has been a fundamental shift in the understanding of mission. They both agree that the different emphasis of mission and church over the years was simply true to that particular context and new understanding has emerged without implying that the previous phrases used were in anyway wrong (Bosch 1991, p. 349). Bosch says that ‘Mission is no longer primarily the activity of the church but an attribute of God’ (1991, p. 390), and that, ‘Mission is understood as being derived from the very essence of God (Bosch 1991, p. 390). In Missio Dei, God the Father sends the Son, and God the Father and Son sends the Holy Spirit. The God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit send the church into the world with a specific mandate. The mission is understood as a movement from God to the world wherein the church is participating in grace and love (Bosch 1991, p. 390).

8.5.1. God’s historical redemptive initiative

In the new paradigm, mission is understood as God’s redemptive, historical initiative on behalf of the creation (Tennent 2010, p. 54). Mission is not about church but about God who initiates, intervenes and directs without the help of the church or some individuals. For this reason, Tennent (2010, p. 55) makes a pertinent call for the renovation of the word mission. In all International Conferences since Edinburgh 1910 to Ontario 1947 very little
effort was made to understand what mission was (Tennent 2010, p. 55). It was only at Willengen 1952 that a new model of mission was proposed and that was later used to popularise the Missio Dei. The idea was taken further by Vicedom who declared that one can no longer speak of the ‘mission of the church’ but of the Missio Dei. The implication of this new concept frees mission from the control of the church and puts it squarely in the hands of God. The church can only be a servant in the service of God and has no agenda of its own. It can only serve or render itself irrelevant to the Kingdom. Mission should always be God-centred and church-focused (Tennent 2010, p. 59).

8.5.2. Missio Dei is multi-faceted

Kim (2010, p. 352) argues for a Missio Dei paradigm that is multi-faceted with its dimensions shown in a number of ways. First, dimension puts mission at the ‘very heart of Trinity’. Putting mission in this way underlies the importance of utter dependence of all human (including the church) actions on God’s initiative. In this understanding human mission is a second activity that is preceded by God’s initiative. Mission is not about what the church can do but about how meaningful the church can participate in the mission of God.

The second dimension of mission that Kim pinpoints is the fact that mission is God’s and so it is the centre of what it means to be a Christian and to be a church (2010, p. 353). This understanding puts emphasis on the witness of the whole church without any exclusion or discrimination, rather than on church designed programmes. This does not mean that the church has become unnecessary for the Missio Dei but that the church has no business on ‘speaking’ on behalf of God (Bosch 1991, p. 392). Missio Dei means that God articulates Himself without any need of being assisted by the church through its missionary endeavours. Mission has its origin in the heart of God and God is the fountain of sending love (Bosch 1991, p. 392).

A third dimension Kim (2010, p. 353) indicates in Missio Dei is that mission takes place everywhere - in the church and outside the church. Mission is God giving up Himself,
His becoming human, His laying His life down for the world (Bosch 1980, p. 239). Missio Dei also signifies that God’s mission is one, it stresses unity in mission to the divided world and church. Finally Kim (2010, p. 353) sees Missio Dei as affirmation of God’s concern with the whole of humanity. Mission is empowering and transformative of everything of human experience.

8.5.3. God is mission

Bevans (2010, p. 202) sees God as mission; not that God has mission, but that God is mission. This is what God is at a fundamental level: love, freely creating, redeeming, healing, and re-creating. According to Bevans, God is like an ever-flowing fountain of living water for all humanity (2010, p. 203). God in His freedom calls men and women to share in His mission. Mission calls the church into being, the church does not call mission into being because the church does not have mission, but the ‘mission has a church’ (Kim & Anderson 2010, p. 150).

God has been self-disclosure, ever present and fully active in His creation. He loved the world to the point where He gave the world the last ‘possession’ He had in order to save the world. According to Bevans (2010, p. 203), the Spirit of God is ‘God inside out’ in the world for the sake of the world. Through His complete ever-present love He spoke to His people through the law, prophets, kings, plasters and, finally, through His Son who brings God’s self-disclosure to fullness. Bevans (2010, p. 204), as he argues that God is mission, sees God’s incarnation as a further manifestation of His ministry. He says that ‘God is a God who reigns, and reigns by forgiving, healing, saving, reconciling and being in relationships’. Through the sacrificial life of Jesus Christ on earth one sees how God acts in His mission. God teaches us through His life. Jesus is the message of joy (Bevans 2010, p. 205) and the good news for the world. In Luke 2:11 the angel calls the baby Jesus ‘Saviour’, the Greek word ‘Soter’, which means one who rescues, saves, delivers and preserves.
The phrase Missio Dei is relevant for the empowerment of women and the transformation of the MCSA ministry strategy of authentic inclusivity. The Trinity is the starting point for the church’s understanding of mission and how it relates to the mission of God (Newbigin in Tennent 2010, p. 67). The Trinity, in the face of many faiths, pluralistic nature of societies and worldviews remain the only authority on which the church proclaims the gospel to the world (:67). Newbigin (in Tennent 2010, p. 67) sees the old Christendom, which replaced Trinity authority with cultural, institutional and pragmatic authority, as no longer the source for mission because those sources have been discredited. It is on this point that Bosch (1991, p. 427) warns against the dangers of absolutism and relativism. The world and all that is in it, and all that live in it belong to God (Psalm 24).

8.5.4. Transformational, inclusive and spiritual approaches to change

The Missio Dei paradigm shift presupposes a new understanding of mission from Christendom to the present day. The Oxford Dictionary defines transformation as a complete change in how things have been done to date. If a change has been effected in ministry one can say that ministry has undergone a complete ‘transformation’. ‘Inclusivity’ has the property of having all concerned elements in the process included without attaching any advantage or preference on or over others. In this thesis, inclusivity means taking care of totality in the equal participation of men and women in the ministry. The Westminster Dictionary of Spirituality defines ‘spirituality’ as that which ‘describes those attitudes, beliefs, practices, which animate people’s lives and help them reach out toward super-sensible realities’ (Kourie & Kretzschmar 2000, p. 12).

a) Transformational leadership in the MCSA

The challenge facing MCSA leadership is its ability to acquire a leadership style that identifies needed change in the church, creates a vision to guide the change through inspiration, and executes the change with the commitment of the members of the church to change mindsets about women in the church
Without clear vision, commitment, love and the ability to motivate members, the desired goal of the holistic participation of women in the life of the church may not materialise. The quote from Einstein that ‘no problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it’ (Parameshwar 2005, p. 1) is apt here. Authentic transformation is the key to any positive developments within the organisation. According to Schmitt (1995, p. 80), real social transformation can only take root if the private space of the privileged and powerful is evaded and occupied by those who were always excluded. Though it is painful and life-threatening, it is a necessary therapeutic.

b) Inclusivity

The inclusion of women on the same level as men in patriarchal society can be a nightmare. In such societies men have been socialised to believe that they are not equal with women and for them to change their attitude is a near miracle. As I have argued earlier in the previous chapter, no compromise should be entertained at the expense of women’s integrity, justice and equality. Regardless of the hardships that ensue when this point is presented, the tenet of Scripture should be maintained. The inclusion of women in the full ministry of the church is a legitimate development, fully consistent with Scripture (Cottrell 2013, p. 19). ‘In Christ there is no male or female, all of humanity is redeemed in and all belong to Christ and are heirs according to the promise’ (Cottrell 2013, p. 19). The categories of being Jew, Greek, Gentile, male or female change forever.

c) Spirituality

Spirituality impacts on the totality of life and it is neither exclusively secular nor sacred (Kourie &Kretzschumar 2000, p. 13). Spirituality is both ecological and human. Spirituality is post-patriarchal and anti-androcentric; it is holistic and it effects change and it appreciates the complexity of human life without compromising any person. It is expressed at all levels of social, economic and political life (Kourie &Kretzschumar
True spirituality ‘energis, vitalises, invigorates and liberates’ (Kourie & Kretzschumar 2000, p 16). It is typified by self-giving love, by the cross and it is in union with Christ and it goes against the inspiration and ideals of those who love power (Kourie & Kretzschumar 2000, p 16). The process of Christian maturity and change has a component of spirituality, transformation and inclusivity.

8.5.5. Concluding remarks

The theme of Missio Dei is best articulated in the World Council of Churches document ‘Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in a Changing Landscape’ published by the General Board of Global Ministries (Kemper 2014, p. 189-190). God’s mission to the world is taking place in changing contexts hence the words ‘changing landscapes’ in the title. The document discusses two important themes: mission from the margin and mission and health (Kemper 2014, p. 189). The lesson the MCSA can learn from the discussion is that mission is no longer done from a privileged position and therefore by the powerful but is done from the margins and by the poor and powerless. As mission is grounded in the Spirit (Holy Spirit) as the initiating, sustaining, and re-creating presence in Missio Dei, the emphasis falls on mission as participation of love to the poor, powerless and marginalised. Within the MCSA structures, ‘victims’ are women in terms of my thesis thus far. Mission is no longer a movement from the centre to the periphery but from the periphery to the centre (:2). The revisal of roles in mission envisioning has a biblical foundation because God chooses the poor, the foolish, and the powerless to further His mission (Kemper 2014, pp. 189-190; 1Corinthians1:18). Bishop Duleepde Chickera coined a phrase a ‘victim theology’ (Kemper 2014, pp. 189-190) that is done by the people on the margin to illustrate the point.

Women in African churches, including the MCSA, are on the margins of the society and yet they are vocal for God’s mission. It is high time that they should be heard and accorded their rightful position in the life of the churches where they are always filling the pews every Sunday. Women are also victims of health problems. They need healing,
justice, liberation, as well as the opportunity to shape the discussions in the church that affect their lives. They can only effectively do so if they are given their rightful position as co-workers of Christ together with men to work for the advancement of His Kingdom.

In this chapter I have argued that mission precedes the church. Mission calls the church into being (Bevans 2010, p. 207). God shares His mission with all people including women. The church does not have mission and it cannot boast about the position given to it by the owner of mission or exclude those it wishes to exclude. The church can only give thanks and appreciate the ministry of women (Croft 2013, p. 31). With openness it should receive the women into the ministry of the church as Paul is commending women into ministry in Romans 16:1-16. In that Scripture Phoebe is celebrated as ‘benefactor’, ‘deacon’ and ‘sister’ understandably because of her gifts in the early church. Full participation of women in church ministry should be welcomed as a gift without which the church remains incomplete.
CHAPTER 9: GENERAL CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

9.1. The trajectory of the journey travelled

The thesis started off with a chapter outlining the general elements of the research methodology to be followed. It was structured into nine chapters that flow from each other. The Literature review was made up mostly of books or articles on women empowerment. The central research questions of the study were the following:

c) What are the challenges within the Methodist Church of Southern Africa that slows down its policy on the ordination of women?
d) What are the tools that can be used to address the challenges with regard to the full acceptance of women ministers within the Methodist Church of Southern Africa?

Three directional prepositions or hypotheses were formulated to guide the enquiry:

a) The Methodist Church of Southern Africa finds it difficult to fully implement its 1972 policy on the ordination of women.
b) The Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) has a rigid patriarchal structure that is incompatible with the teaching of Scripture with regard to women ministry.
c) The Methodist Women’s Manyano organisation exhibits women’s frustration with male-dominated structures.

The route taken to pursue the research questions and hypotheses took the researcher through chapters two to eight. Chapter 2 focused on the origin, development, beliefs, teachings and practices of the MCSA. Some time was spent on issues such as the establishment of the Methodist Church in the Cape, how it settled in the Free State and other parts of the interior of South Africa. Church schisms that took place were highlighted until the formation of the Transkei Methodist Church and the political
tensions that led to such decisions. The chapter continued to discuss issues such as racism, inequality, leadership and women ordination within the MCSA. The chapter concluded with a section on the priesthood of all believers as understood by the MCSA. An observation on the issues within the chapter was made before moving to Chapter 3.

Chapter 3 was based on the account of the black Women organisation called Manyano. The psychology of the formation and modus operandi of the organisation was discussed. Men’s control of the organisation through church structures such as the District, Connexion, Synod and Conference was highlighted. Tensions within the Manyano organisation and its control by ministers’ wives was briefly discussed. Pietism and factors responsible for its phenomenal growth was observed. Psychological reasons playing their role in the life of the Manyano was also discussed. These reasons included factors such as guilt, anxiety, dependence, material poverty and work-participation which exert some pressure on the human psyche to submit to men’s direct and indirect influence. The Young Men’s League (Amadodana Manyano) and the Young Women’s Manyano were briefly discussed. The chapter concluded with some observations.

In Chapter 4 a survey about the roles women played in the Old and New Testament as well as women in the early church was sketched. Theoretical lenses such as the Evangelical Egalitarian, and Non- Evangelical Egalitarian of reading the Bible were used to highlight women’s responses to the biblical account of their role and worth.

Chapters five and six addressed the empirical research, descriptive analysis and assessment or evaluation of the research findings. The results of the findings were juxtaposed with some cultural and patriarchal practices in society in order to contrast biblical narratives with the actual dominant culture in which women find themselves. A long conclusion was made to punctuate the dilemma women face in the institution where they constitute a majority.

Chapter 7 prescribed theoretical tools that are needed to address the problem of the exclusion and marginalisation of women in the church. Empowerment and
transformational theories were discussed and recommended to be implemented in the MCSA for the eradication of male dominance in church affairs. The chapter builds up to the next chapter which deals with a similar process but is slightly different. The concept of Missio Dei is introduced to further the discussion on the modalities of allowing God to be in charge of the church agenda for the betterment of women and men in ministry.

Chapter 8 took the debate of transformation further by employing the concept of Missio Dei. Mission originates with God but not the church and the agenda of mission is driven by God. The paradigm shift (change in how the same reality is viewed) was the focus of the chapter. The change that takes place should be informed by the agenda of God for the world. The church can only function as the servant (slave) to God’s mission. Mission from the perspective of the concept of Missio Dei is transformational, seeking inclusivity of humanity without discrimination and is spiritual. The chapter ended with a concluding summary.

Chapter 9 carries general conclusions and directional indicators on how the MCSA can embark on its God-called mission in the 21st century. First the trajectory of the path followed in the thesis is sketched followed by the path of the process of change. Statements are also made that the research questions and hypotheses set in Chapter 1 have been proven and affirmed. The chapter ends with a concluding summary.

9.2. Where to from here?

Objectives of the study emanate from MCSA ethos, rule of life and praxis of women ministry within church ministry. The unconditional involvement of women in the mission of the MCSA is met with issues of integrity and biblical justice. Radical change is a prerequisite in the empowerment of women and transformation of structures that deny them life in its fullness.
9.2.1. The Methodist ethos and rule of life

For members of the MCSA, the spirit and practice of Christian love is an indispensable condition for membership. MCSA members are constantly urged to seek to be made perfect in love (The Methodist Book of Order 2014, p. 25). The standard set by the Apostles is the high vocation of the Methodist Church. It is thus incumbent upon every member of the church to share his or her gifts wisely (The Methodist Book of Order 2014, p. 25). The Methodist institutions such as the Class Meeting and the Connexion units are based on the assumption that all its members who love Jesus Christ will love one another.

The Methodist Book of Order argues that the Methodist rule of life is also based upon the same foundation of Christian love (2014, p. 25). Members have ‘social and ethical obligations and the sacrificial service for the Kingdom of God, to which those who confess Christ commit themselves after the example of their Lord and Master’ (The Methodist Book of Order 2014, p 25). The Methodist Rules as drawn by Charles Wesley in 1743 still enforce the social responsibility in the spirit of fellowship to all people. ‘Doing good and avoiding all harm of every kind, doing good by being merciful after one’s power’ are the pillars upon which the life and mission of the church is built.

It is against this backdrop that the participation of women in the ministry was investigated, assessed and evaluated. Imperfect as the church might be, one would expect attempts from the side of the male members in particular to be seriously engaged and one would expect a fierce struggle to eliminate any form of discrimination against women in the church. The law of love is the law of Christ for all His disciples and these should be guiding principles in the manner in which other members of the church are treated regardless of impeaching cultural norms. ‘Where two elephants were fighting there are traces of smothered grass’ as an African expression says.
9.2.2. The ‘unsolicited’ women’s inclusion in the MCSA ministry

Murphy (2013, p. 57) contests that Jesus had male and female followers who were His co-workers supporting His ministry without raising the question of gender. His message of God’s Kingdom ‘extends loving acceptance to women and men alike’ without regard for social standing, ethnicity or cultural background. Various gifts of believers expounded by Paul in Scripture are not based on gender preference. Apostle teaching, as is the case with Jesus’ teaching, demands unquestionable and total surrender. Love and compassion overpower those who are involved in the ministry to empower while at the same time transform structures of death in mission (Murphy 2013, p. 61). Women who experience painful rejection by male or other female members and who are humiliated need a ‘big hug’ from church leadership and a sincere apology that they will never leave things the same (Murphy 2013, p. 61).

9.3. Towards authentic transformation

In this thesis I have argued for the empowerment of women through transformation. In his compelling book Walking with the poor: principles and practices of transformational development, Myers (1999, p. 115) presents seven helpful metaphors on how to deal with the situation of abject poverty. Although the metaphors are applied to the poor, they resonate well with the situation of women exclusion in society. Under the sub-section of his book entitled ‘Recovering true identity and discovering true vocation’, Myers argues that both dignity and vocation have biblical perspective. People should know who they are and the purpose for which they were created. The restoring of identity and the recovery of the vocation of women in the church must be the focus of the church and the biblical understanding of transformation (Myers 1999, p. 115). Myers further argues that ‘the transforming truth is that the poor and non-poor are made in the image of God (identity) and are valuable enough to warrant the death of Christ’ (1999, p. 115). The same statement can be made about the women and men in the MCSA. The metaphors raised by Myers with regard to the poor and how they relate to women are discussed below.
9.3.1. Recovering true identity and discovering true vocation

a) Just and peaceful relationships

Myers’s contention is that identity and vocation are expressed through relationships. In section 7.1.1 in Chapter 7 I argued that power and the misuse of it destroys relationships. God, in His mission, seeks to restore relationships between Himself and His creation. In restoring a relationship with His people, He transforms them and makes them new creatures. Being in a healthy relationship with oneself, fellow human beings and God is an important frontier according to Myers (1999, p. 119). I also have argued in Chapter 7 that the worldview of a cultural group can legitimate the oppressive status quo and perpetuate ungodly practices in the name of God. To move towards a healthy church, it is necessary to develop relationships that empower and give life (Kemper 2014, pp. 189-190). Relationships are core elements in any institution.

b) Keeping the end in mind

In pursuing true identity and vocation of women in ministry one needs to remain focused and to the point. There are many things in the transformation process that can distract one’s attention. Some are done purposefully and some are by accident. Measurable objectives should be set and regular checks should be made to ensure that everything is still on course. Envisioning and purpose-driven strategies should be employed for the purpose.

e) Affirming the role of God

Myers (1999, p. 121) maintains that any Christian process of change ‘must begin with an affirmation that the transformation takes place because God wants it’. All involved should buy in because it is their vocation and fundamental belief. Transformation is the work of a Triune God who ceaselessly is at work in the world with His mission. As Newbigin (1995, p. 29) has alluded, the key features of true
Christianity cannot be conformed to the worldview but it is sometimes countercultural. God’s transformation is never easy but causes unrest and uncertainty to the privileged.

d) Women affirming their role

Myers (1999, p. 121) affirms that change belongs to the one who needs it. Women in the MCSA need change and they should own the process of transformation. Through the spirit of reconciliation and repentance they should work for their meaningful inclusion in the full ministry of the church. They should work hard on the marred image imposed on them by cultural stereotypes and, as it were, ‘hatch’ themselves out of their cultural incubator into full ministry.

e) Addressing the real causes

Situational analysis should be made on a regular basis to determine the causes and the extent of the problems. In no way should one work on assumptions or imagined problems. There are people who play god in the lives of women (Myers 1999, p. 123) and are working under delusional assumptions.

f) Recognising pervasive evil

With all intention of participating in God’s mission for transformation, there is always a danger of slipping into a romantic optimism about the success of one’s efforts (Myers 1999, p. 122). Getting where one wants to go in pursuance of justice and fairness is not easy. In human society that has a tendency of pursuing self-interest one should always be on high alert of being busy without realising what one is aiming at. Human greed and self-interest that prey on the weak will not allow any change that deposes them from their powers and advantages. One should therefore check and guard against those forces that are opposed to true transformation.

g) Pursuing truth, justice, integrity and righteousness
Myers (1999, p. 123) argues that human relations are often marred with sin based on the web of lies that promote the disempowerment and misery of the poor. In seeking the truth in the transformation of the MCSA, it must be established how women contribute towards their own misery and how slave-mentality is induced by the ‘god-complexes’ of the powerful in the church. The deceptions in worldviews, cultures and how the society is structured should be detected and confronted. Only when the truth is discovered can justice and peace be restored.

Human existence is shared experience, and it closely depends on sound relationships. Hence the church as a social institution is a fundamental bedrock on which its members are intrinsically anchored and sustained by justice (Fraizer 1975, p. 131). Altmann (2013, p. 1) defines justice as a ‘common walk’ for a people for common destiny. Justice seeks common good for all by confronting privileges, injustice, political and ecological exploitations and evil powers. Integrity is a guiding principle for Christian living. The Webster Dictionary defines integrity as ‘the quality or state of being of sound moral principle; uprightness, honesty and sincerity’. Christian integrity is the hallmark of Christian living. Every Christian practice and process should be tested for its contribution to truth, justice and righteousness (Myers 1999, p. 123).

9.4. Conclusion

9.4.1. Women as ministers

In this thesis I have argued that women can be very spiritual in their service. Being spiritual does not refer to the narrow definition of seeing spirituality as dichotomous: secular or sacred. It refers to their being purpose-driven when it comes to the issues that promote life and its facets. In this respect they are often more spiritually minded than men. There is no dispute that women can more effectively reach the hearts of children.
and women and minister effectively to them (). Women are better at recognising the needs of the impoverished and their suffering than men are. This point is clearly visible in South African communities. In South Africa there are government and private child-care centres where women occupy the centre stage with regard to community service ()

9.4.2. Church as servant of liberation

Boesak, supporting this line of argument, states that, ‘to preach the gospel as it relates to the total meaning of history revealed in Christ’ (1977, p. 68). This discovery of the mission of the church requires a concern for identification with the people who are involved in revolutionary struggles to change existing power structures. This approach presupposes that the work of Christ and His Kingdom is discernible in the secular, social religious and political revolutions of our time, and that the church’s function is to discern it and witness to it and to participate in God’s work in changing the world” (Boesak 1977, p. 68).

The church is therefore not an end in itself but ‘a servant of liberation announcing the coming Kingdom of liberation’ (Goba 1978, p. 95). Therefore, accepting women ministers to participate fully in the ministry of the MCSA is to be human in the salvific act of God’s mission for the mission of Christ is the liberation of the whole of humankind, including women members of the church. The time has come in the MCSA for women ministers to participate fully in all structures of the church without any hint of discontentment from their male counterparts. As I have argued, the Missio Dei concept is all-inclusive. There is no male or female, no race, colour or gender. Inequality, exclusivity, discrimination, in fact all forms of power-play have been annullled on the cross for all are the creation of God. Liberation, therefore, should be understood as being a complete transformation of attitude and expectation. ‘And do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your minds that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God’ (Romans 12:2).
9.4.3. Unshackling men and women for new freedom

Both women and men need to be made aware of the good and perfect will of God regarding their sexuality. God created them as women and men in God’s image and women have a vital place in God’s creation, which only they can fulfil, complementing that of men, who are at the same level as they are. Women are to be convinced about the mutuality of their relationship with men whether they are economically independent or not. Liberation should not be understood in abstract terms but in terms of service to God, so that women also carry out this mission to others. This transformation, therefore, is meant to unshackle women and men so that their newfound freedom puts them in a situation where they can reach their highest potential in their service to God and others. Women liberation theologians take up the model of praxis as the most effective way of theologising, thus translating Christ’s liberation through His birth, life, death and resurrection into the lives of oppressed women at grassroots level. However, taking into account the cultural, political, religious and social experiences of women, one cannot be a woman liberation theologian without being involved in the lives of people with a passion that ‘things can be better’. One needs to understand the role of being committed to the will of God for women and men regarding their being on equal terms and in the image of God. This also involves taking the initiative to translate this belief into action as women empower each other at all levels to challenge any structures that put women in definitions and situations that are contrary to the meaning of the Missio Dei (Phiri, Devarakshanam & Nadar 2002, p. 392).

In 1972, the MCSA Conference reaffirmed its decision to ordain women ministers, but a clause was added that women candidates shall, as a general rule, be unmarried. This clause which is still maintained to this day is the tip of the iceberg. A woman minister, who is married, may herself apply to be classified as ‘without appointment (marriage)’ if conditions arising out of her marriage cause her to be unable to discharge the duties of the ministerial office (Methodist minutes of Conference, 1973, p. 260). Married men are not subjected to the same condition implying that men are freer in their marital status.
than women are. The underlying assumption in this rule is that women (especially married women) are commodities to be negotiated for the ministry of the church.

9.4.4. The South African volatile situation

South Africa has inherited a legacy of barriers from colonial rule and also from African traditional religions. There are racial barriers erected by political policy and African worldviews that have fed on people’s racial prejudices. Some of the appalling injustices have been highlighted in this thesis. There can be no meaningful search for church community that does not strive to remove those barriers. There is also discrimination against women as stated already. It is the duty of all Christian communities to work for true equality between men and women in the life of the church and society. Discrimination, whether based on race or on sex, is found not only in society but also in our church communities. In pursuing the theme of community serving, humanity must give special attention to demolishing these barriers, removing discrimination and fostering a genuine experience of equality before the Lord (Catholic Bishop’s Conference 1989, p. 24).

Women continue to contribute to the survival of communities in the church and in the wider world. The immense contribution that women have made as educators, caregivers and in their endless sharing of their human and financial resources cannot pass without recognition. Yet these are the women who continue to face increased exclusion from participation in leadership and decision-making in both church and society.

The world is in an age of unrest, sit-ins, stay-aways, violence, protest marches and above all, negotiations. In view of this prevailing situation, all women should be fully aware of belonging to the church of today, rather than the church of yesterday or that of tomorrow. Put differently, an African Christian woman needs to be an African Christian woman of the time. It is therefore the task of African Christian women to listen to the questions asked in the Christian community, to reflect calmly and courageously on the church handed over to them by the missionaries of the West and on the current problems of
today’s society. Today’s African Christian women need to participate fully in all decision-making within the churches. For a long time, in the wake of the missionaries, African Christian women could not recognise and appreciate the church in which they found themselves today. However, the truth is that women have a legitimate place in the church today because they belong to the church.

African Christian women should stop being mere spectators. In order to play an effective role in today’s African church and society, they need to be fully committed to the struggle of promoting peace in both. Involvement must not be limited to the lowest, most naïve level, such as singing a lot, dancing with zest, praying with fervour and preaching with eloquence. Church and society in Africa needs women who can take a firm stand, hold clear cut positions regarding education, liberation struggles and formation on the part of the church. What women discover in singing, dancing, praying and preaching is what is important for the transformation of society. African Christian women must be willing to fight a good fight, that is, to fight against their own alienation, their timidity and for their influence within church and society. They must be willing to fight at the side of their brothers, whose struggles would thus become efficacious. However, this will only be possible if women can get rid of timidity and excessive shyness.

African Christian women should no longer allow themselves to be slaves of uncomprehending and intransigent husbands and brothers, nor of a retrogressive society, nor of alienating church structures. The struggle should not be left to men. There is no reason why women should subordinate themselves to men. It is their right to fight for total liberation for all. African Christian women need to be part of the historic process of making freedom real for all. They must not just wait for ‘the day after’ to achieve freedom. And they should not just wish to be like men because men are also alienated beings; instead, they should want to be whole human beings and aim at a totally new society based on true human foundations. Women are not auxiliaries and therefore they should stop seeing themselves as somehow owned by the men who support them. They must fight against this view that they are economic attachments to men. Their wage is still seen
by some as supplementary. This means a woman is not really regarded as a full human being in her own right. Women’s mission is not only to uplift men, but also to uplift male institutions to higher standards.

Women, as educators of children and as mothers, should fully support the ‘go back to school’ campaign. It is indeed the role of every Christian woman to make children realise that education is for the good of both themselves and the future of South Africa. The struggle for liberation should go hand in hand with the desire for education. The future of South Africa will definitely need many educated people. Furthermore, women should fight for the building of more schools and orphanages and, as the keepers of cleanliness, should campaign against dirt and disorder in society. Their role, in other words, is to work hard for a new society which will be characterised by honesty, purity, cleanliness and above all, peace. The nature of a woman has the potential of bringing about peace and love. Thus it is a woman’s role to crush egoism, racism, strife and violence which prevail in both today’s churches and society. The oppression and exploitation of women in South Africa operates at gender, national and class levels. It is, therefore, the duty of every Christian woman to study each of these three levels fully in order to bring an end to the oppression and exploitation of women and women in ministry. Decisions are at the centre of power. Any person who can make a decision holds power. Thus the deliberate absence of women from decision-making within our churches means that true control is in the hands of men only and that they do not want to let it go. Women ministers qualify for the roles of decision-makers and they should be in them. They must cease to play the role of figureheads and pawns who men push around at will in the effort to show that they are forever incapable. In other words, women ministers must not only fight for leadership but for being leaders in their own right who are capable of leading (Moila 2000, p. 120).
9.4.5. Troubled but not destroyed

An All Africa Council of Churches (AACC) report states: ‘It is women’s faith that continues to sustain communities in the face of unfairness, personal hurt, frustration, stress and horrors at a grand scale. It is due to this active faith that, though troubled, they are not destroyed’ (AACC Women’s Pre-Assembly Report 1997). Women know that there are many obstacles that prevent them from participating actively in the life and work of the church and that they have to overcome them. Women believe that they have been silent for too long and that action on their part would convince everybody of the seriousness of the matter. Women of faith felt that they should never give up on issues of justice but continue to wrestle with them until they are ‘Troubled but not destroyed’ (2 Corinthians 4:8-9): ‘they are often troubled but not crushed; sometimes in doubt, but never in despair; there are many enemies, but they are never without a friend; and though badly hurt at times, they are not destroyed’ (Phiri, Devarakshanam, & Nadar, 2002, p. 349).

9.5. Research questions and hypotheses

The two research questions and three hypotheses formulated for the study have been proven and validated. The bulk of the thesis was focused on the research questions and hypotheses. It became very clear that further research should be undertaken as the present one only highlights a few problem areas in the MCSA. The thesis has its own limitations which can be attended to in further study, say in post-doctors’ research.

I started this thesis by referring to the work of Pixley ka Isaka Seme and I want to end it with his words to honour him. Dr. Pixley ka Isaka Seme was an orator, lawyer, intellectual and author.

With reference to his eloquent and timeless essay entitled ‘The Regeneration of Africa’, this seminal piece was the first real conceptualisation of the African Renaissance. It earned him the university’s highest award for oration, known as the George William Curtis
medal. In the introductory paragraph he said (describing his African-ness): ‘I am an African, and I set my pride in my race over a hostile public opinion’ (overcomingapartheid.msu.edu).

Dr. Seme wanted to see unity beyond ethnicity, gender and tribalism and he made a notable contribution to the development of our consciousness and national spirit.

‘The demon of racialism and gender oppression, the animosity that exists between every native must be buried and forgotten. We are one people.’

It is to the vision of Dr. Seme that we are indebted for the unity of the African people.
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INTERVIEWS: Questionnaire

1. How long have you been a member of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa?
2. How long have you been in the ministry of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa?
3. What are the hindrances that you are faced with as a woman minister?
4. Do you think the Bible supports women ministry?
5. Does God support women ministry?
6. How can women empower themselves in ministry?
7. Do you believe that culture and religion can play a role in women ministry?
8. How does it feel to be a woman minister in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa?
9. What is your understanding of women ministry?
10. What is the Methodist Church of Southern Africa’s approach to the women ministry?
11. Is there a place for women ministers today, why?
12. Why women ministers are not making progress towards women empowerment?