The Sacramental Ministry in African Presbyterian Congregations in Pretoria:

A Liturgical-Theological Critique

By

Mzwandile Patrick Nyawuza

22285441

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Supervisor: Prof CJ Wepener

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Chapter One

The Research Problem

Preface

In this research study, Practical Theology is centered on the process of reflecting on a particular congregational situation and a specific ministry (administration of sacraments). Jones (2009:16) points out that 'the interactive reflective process involves scripture, beliefs of the church, the one who seeks understanding, culture, and the specific ministry context to which theological reflection is applied'.Ganzevoort and Roeland (2014:99) remind us that, 'Practical Theology is the hermeneutics of lived religion'. Wells (1994:115) points out that, the local church 'creates its own Christian culture, and policies, which because they are corporately held and practiced, become normative' and Weil (1983:20) calls this 'normative ritual patterns'. Sometimes what is considered normative may not necessarily be a good practice. According to Osmer (2008:1-29), the four core tasks of Practical Theology are descriptive, normative, prescriptive, and pragmatic. Furthermore, Huck (2003:21), reminds us that, 'the more we leave pragmatism behind, the less objective and clear in our definitions'.

In this research study, the interactive reflective process involves asking critical questions in order to understand what is going on. Uncertainty leads to obscured understanding. Jones (2009:16) points out that 'doing theology is defined by some as the process of seeking understanding'. The purpose of questioning is to clarify one's understanding, on the issues under investigation. This research is not a study on congregational analysis but a focused look at sacramental practices that cannot escape an investigation. The author is fully aware that, one cannot presume or predict the outcome of a research study. According to Neville (1982:14), 'theology is an inquiry and its results, rest upon the best case made out for them and are vulnerable to being overturned by a contradicting better case'. Indeed, the purpose of this research study is not to produce findings that can necessarily be generalized to other contexts other than the identified congregations that are under investigation.

1.1.   Introduction

The prevailing culture of liturgical worship and the administration of sacraments in the African congregations of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (and henceforth just the acronym UPCSA) necessitate this inquiry. The crux of the problem under investigation in the identified congregations has two dimensions. The first dimension is about the exclusion of some members and groups from active participation in the rituals of liturgical worship. These liturgical rituals are the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. The concern is about the enforced practice which grossly violates the rights of some members and equally deprives them their privileges in celebrating the sacraments.

Practices that raise questions about the administration of sacraments in a congregation call for an inquiry. This research project is born, not out of protest to the liturgical impasse, in the congregations under study. On the contrary, it is out of a pastoral concern and a considerate effort to engage the church leadership. The main theme or thrust of this thesis is a liturgical-theological critique of the sacramental ministry in the identified congregations.

The researcher is fully aware of the two sides of a critique exercise. A good critique is a gift to the one criticized or evaluated. It is an opportunity to bring clarity on one's theory and correction on practice. A poor critique is characterized by overstatements, misunderstanding of the subject matter and pastoral situation, judgment and so forth. Such an approach undermines the credibility of the critic and deprives the one evaluated the opportunity to improve. Long time ago Ferre (1955:21) realized that, 'to deal with a problematic situation without the dimension of depth is a calamity both for us and for those we judge'. Indeed, a bad critique is a futile exercise in the sense that it is a losing proposition for all.

The researcher will strive to apply a comprehensive methodology of critique. This methodology is focused on, proper understanding of the problem, a fair interpretation of the congregational situation, a continuous evaluation of one's position and how the critique process is handled and a consideration of alternatives of what one is critiquing.

The necessity of a research in a church context and the acceptance of its findings are well articulated by Greenwood (2002: 5-6) who maintains that:

> "Rather than taking church temperature reading as a tabulation of gloom, we should be awake to our sense of Christian confidence and well-being to recognize that a healthy and faithful Church will find courage and even humor in facing up to honest feedback".

The second dimension of the problem under investigation is the internal focus on these rituals of corporate worship without any clear understanding of their external socio-economic and cosmic implications. Weil (1983:107) points out that the sacraments 'cannot be limited to private consumption by the Christian community (individualized spirituality) but should be linked to the liturgy of the world'. Erickson (1989:32) concurs by saying 'the liturgy of the church extends to the world'.

A local congregation should have an understanding of its role in terms of social responsibility and also the capacity to engage the social issues of the surrounding community. The author contends that, the mission of the church will remain a biblical obligation (not optional, nor negotiable). Great figures in the field of missiology, such as Bosch (in South Africa) emphasize the incarnational nature of the Christian faith. A dynamic, inspirational corporate worship can empower these African congregations to engage vigorously in the Missio Dei.

Indeed, it is out of a critical evaluation that questionable practices can be challenged and corrected. It is for this reason that one is in agreement with Osmer (2008:53) in that, 'the goal of research is to shape an action agenda for change'. This necessity for change is also advocated by Heitink (1993:2-4) who argues that, 'practical theology as a theory of action must address the crisis of the local church and its faith in practice and bring the desired change'. Chapter two actually addresses specifically all the arguments in support of and those opposing the current liturgical sacramental practice. For now, it suffices to say that the commentary seeks to reinforce the reality that something is amiss in the administration of sacraments in the congregations under investigation.

1.2. Credentials of the Researcher

1.2.1. Ordained Presbyterian Clergy

The author is an ordained minister of Word and Sacrament in the UPCSA. The thirty one years of active pastoral ministry in the UPCSA has yielded valuable experience as a pastoral theologian and in dispensing the sacraments. The researcher has observed the evolution and continuation of this problem over a long period (over three decades). Indeed, the motivation emanates from the desire to probe the theological authenticity and pastoral validity of such liturgical sacramental practices. The inspiration is all about raising awareness and sensitivity in matters of liturgical rituals and pastoral ministry in general. It is the responsibility of the one who presides at the sacraments to ensure that these rituals are administered with solemnity, dignity and they add value to the life and spirituality of the congregation. In view of this, the researcher as a student of liturgics has a moral obligation to address these sacramental issues and to challenge those who are in leadership position in these congregations under study.

These observations over a prolonged period will be augmented and tested with the empirical findings as it is also the aim of this study. The researcher is interested in the circumstances that gave rise to these questionable practices which clearly violates the provisions of the Manual of Faith and Order of the UPCSA. For now, one can categorically state that there is clear discrepancy between what is approved and prescribed by the General Assembly, and what is actually appropriated in the contexts of these congregations under investigation.

1.2.2. A Reformed Liturgist

The researcher majored in missiology for undergraduate studies, homiletics for postgraduate studies, and liturgical studies for a master's degree which involved an empirical work. Together with an academic supervisor, also did field research on African Initiated Churches in a township west of Pretoria and the findings were presented at a conference of Societas Liturgica in Quebec, Canada in 2015. Furthermore, both the extensive pastoral experience and ministerial training has prepared the researcher for

this kind of academic inquiry. Pursuing further studies in liturgics will afford the researcher an opportunity to contribute immensely to the field of Practical Theology.

1.2.3. Language Skill

The author from early childhood was exposed to multi-lingual and multi-cultural environment. At home, both the maternal and paternal languages (SeSwati and Xhosa) were spoken interchangeably. From foundation phase (primary school) to high school was taught in Zulu language except certain subjects done strictly in English. Furthermore, the family lived in a predominantly Sotho speaking neighborhood. Not to mention having close friends in the community and at church who spoke other African languages. This exposure has enabled the author to engage the researched congregations without difficulty. Understanding the ethnic language and culture of the research participants is of paramount importance. It also breaks down barriers and establishes a good rapport which is necessary for any research project. According to Hall (1990:22), 'a language acts as a bridge in understanding people's thoughts, perceptions, feelings and their world of concrete reality'.

1.3. Description of the Problem

For now, it suffices to mention briefly only the different pertinent issues that constitute the problem under investigation and also point out that the arguments (supporting or opposing the current practice) and liturgical theological reflections are discussed in chapter two.

1.3.1. Children and the Eucharist

Twenty years ago, the General Assembly of the UPCSA as the highest decision-making body gave permission for children to receive Holy Communion and that was a revolutionary liturgical reform. This paradigm shift ushered in a new understanding about church and children and signaled a new era in the history of this denomination.

Though a liturgical sacramental space is provided for children to participate, in the congregations under study, children are still excluded in the celebration of the Eucharist

and that goes against the Reformed understanding of covenantal theology. In support of admission of children to Holy Communion, Holmes (1997:47) gives five solid theological reasons that speak directly to the situation in the congregations under study. These insights and the contributions of others are further explored in chapter two and in the theology chapter.

1.3.2. Customary Marriages

Customary marriages are still considered invalid and therefore children born in such marital unions are also seen as illegitimate. As parents are considered to have fallen from grace, they are suspended from receiving Holy Communion and are also required to attend a restoration class and thereafter the infants are baptized. Customary marriage is an ancient African cultural practice. The legitimacy of a pregnancy in such a marital union is, debated pastorally and theologically in many congregations across denominations and other Christian formations in South Africa. It is not within the scope of this chapter to argue the validity or incompetency of each category of marriage.

Though it is not within the scope of this discussion as well as chapter two (arguments), new trends such as co-habitation, trial marriage, and domestic partnerships are now popularized. The church cannot ignore these new challenges and their implications for pastoral ministry. Card (1988:1-11) reminds us that, 'the modern society is highly professionalized and sociological changes do affect the church'.

1.3.3. Youth Pregnancy and Church Discipline

The researcher is not opposed to church discipline and cannot promote negligence in such crucial matters of conduct. Surely, safeguarding the doctrinal and moral purity of the church and its witness to the world is of paramount importance. The church has a mandatory obligation to exercise discipline. Though exercising discipline is a standard practice in accordance with church polity, of great concern is the method and severity of it.

A narrow approach instead of a broader one creates more problems than finding solutions. The overriding question is what happens after church discipline. Is there an

adequate relevant pastoral care for those who have fallen astray or are they left alone as victims of circumstances. The concept of restorative discipline as opposed to retributive discipline together with theology of grace as expounded by Garrish (1996) and other exponents is explored in the theology chapter.

1.3.4. Women and Discriminatory Practices

The problem here in corporate worship is about women who are expected to wear a headgear in church and required of the same in order to receive Holy Communion. Strange enough, though men are expected to wear jackets there is no strict adherence, nor any exclusion from active participation in the Eucharist. This raises a serious concern about the imposition of African culture and the question of hermeneutics (interpretation of the Bible) in trying to justify the discriminatory and oppressive practice.

This discussion about women and church is rounded off by raising the concerns of Tisdale (2003:373) who draws attention to the three challenges posed by lay women groups in Reformed churches today. These are 'women's leadership, theology and ritual practices, all connected to worship'. These issues are addressed in the theology chapter with an intentional focus on African women in the African Presbyterian congregations under study.

13.5. The Sacraments and Language of Worship

The African Presbyterian congregations in Mamelodi East (Pretoria) are situated in a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual township. The context of the congregation reveals that Sepedi is the dominant language of worship. Presbyterians, who have come to Pretoria from all over the country for employment and or residence, are in a liturgical wilderness. The key elements of corporate worship such as preaching, the prayers and the sacramental rituals are predominantly in Sepedi. This diversity in cultures and languages create a tension and does not enhance the quality of liturgical worship. Instead it creates a culture of exclusion and not inclusion.

The researcher is of the conviction that there can be a unity in diversity. White (1985:31) points out that 'worship is a mixture of constancy and diversity'. So unity in diversity is a

gift from the Reformation and should be cherished. Indeed the Church of today needs to recapture the liturgical essence of the Reformed tradition. Hawn (2007:205) mentions six assertions about liturgical plurality that reflect historic and contemporary expressions and the researcher will pursue this.

1.3.6. The Sacraments and the Working Class

The urban or city life demands that people be employed in order to earn a living. The majority of those who are in different categories of employment are directly affected. Those in security agencies or services, health care, retail shops and industry are often absent on Holy Communion Sunday. The nature of their employment and the demands of the shift work system create a limited opportunity to celebrate this holy ordinance. The pertinent question is - what pastoral liturgical intervention can be used to address their sacramental need? Though a Roman Catholic, Pecklers (2003:202) argues that 'the Church must reaffirm the centrality of the Eucharist as the very heart and life-blood of its existence and face some choices'.

Doohan (1984:1-61) advocates a theology of laity which seeks to position the role and place of laity in worship. He argues that 'the teachings of the Vatican II in the sixties remain useful in correcting attitudes of those in hierarchy and challenging structures that limit inclusion in worship'. For the researcher that would be inclusive of the sacraments.

Indeed the rituals of time and space can be explored jointly with those affected. Kung (1990:80) points out that 'joint decision making is not only a timely concession to modern democratic developments, but a move rooted in the Church's own origins'. Indeed creative leadership should come up with alternative measures. A mid-week Holy Communion service can be a relevant adaptation that enhances pastoral intervention.

1.3.7. The Sacraments and Members of Outstations

Within the Presbytery of Tshwane, several African congregations do not have a full time minister and yet they have more than one outstation. The Interim Moderators are employed full time elsewhere (mostly chaplaincy). The sacraments are now administered occasionally, depending on the availability of the ordained clergy. The

researcher is interested in what is the role of the elders in the Reformed tradition in general in relation to the sacramental ministry. Elders are equally ordained as they share the same ordination vows. Weil (2003:27) argues that 'when elders are distanced from administering Holy Communion, the clergy cease to be stewards of the sacrament and become instead the primary agents'. Adair (1987:97) reminds us that 'a team is a group of people who cooperate to carry out a joint task'. The researcher will look into the proponents of a shared leadership and ministry as articulated by Uzukwu (1996:98).

13.8. The Sacraments and the Liturgy of the World

Apparently there is no clear pastoral guidance about the social implications of the sacraments. There is an overly internal approach focused on the gathered assembly. Within that there is also a tendency of private approach concentrating on the individualistic piety by members of the congregation. Bakke (1997:28) point out that 'ministry flows out of worship and toward the world in evangelism and missions'. Indeed representing Christ in the world calls for the Church to be an instrument of change and transformation. Kee (1988:149) states that 'liturgy is originally Christian social action'. Spinks (2007:251) adds to say 'liturgy must articulate and hold up gospel justice'. The author concurs with Pieterse (2001:94) that 'the church has a diaconal task to build new communities'.

1.4. Complexity of the Problem

By definition, complexity describes the behavior of a system or model whose components, interact and influence each other. A complex system is thereby characterized by multiplicity of problems. From a Western context, Pecklers (2003:197) puts into perspective the point under discussion and points out that, 'liturgical-ecclesial discontent is far more complex'.

In line with this brief explanation, the author points out that, there is dynamism, inherent in the church or congregation environment. In the identified congregations, leaders must respond to a variety of demands. The diversity of problems increases the complexity

and presents formidable challenges to church leadership. In facing this huge problem, Mitchell (2009:21) advises as follows:

> "Coping with the complexity of today's church environment is not about predicting the future or reducing risk. It is about building the capacity in leaders, the people and the organization itself, to adapt continuously and learn to maximize the chances of seizing opportunities".

1.5. The Impact of the Problem

Zakweni (2013:93-94) points out that:

> "The descriptive nature of qualitative research enables the researcher to understand the meaning attached to the experience, the distinct nature of the problem and the impact of the problem

The ongoing liturgical practices have caused much negativity in the congregations under study. Burton (1990:15) explains that, 'a deep rooted conflict lies in its degree of seriousness and this type of conflict requires major analytical and policy restricting for its resolution'. As already stated, the author has observed that the liturgical sacramental practices in the identified congregations have a long established history and the problem was never challenged or the practices corrected. A significant advice for such a a ministerial crisis comes from Burns (1987:184) who argues that to 'restore stability there should be clarity on the established procedures of accountability'.

Cunningham (1996:45,115) reminds us that:

> "Clearly the Church is as vulnerable to conflicts as any other institution. Conflict is as prevalent in the Church and thus, an understanding of conflict in the Church is necessary. The exploration of a theology of conflict and in particular the discussion of conflict in the Church opens the way for the opportunity to examine the Church's involvement in contemporary conflict situation".

Indeed, liturgical frustrations in the identified congregations (born out of suppressed aspirations and interests) are reasons enough to constitute a conflict. White (1986:74-

76) points out that, 'buried or repressed anger can be almost as destructive as anger that explodes'. For Hubbner (2001:96), 'positional power in the church can also be engaged to oppress persons or manipulate them toward that which violates their best interests or even the common good'. Indeed, congregational unity and stability binds people together and thus creating a conducive, environment or climate for sacramental ministry to flourish. Sobrino (1984:213-214) explains the dynamics of a conflict in a church environment and points out that:

"A clash of interests sometimes surfaces between the institutional element of the Church and its prophets who are rooted in the Church's community dimension. The prophets tend to expose the sin of the Church which often unsettles the institutional dimensions of the organization".

Burton (1987:16) puts everything into perspective and points out that, 'at the core of this deep-rooted conflict, is cry for recognition, identity and development'. Mudimeli (2014:270) joins the conversation and argues that, 'woman theology resuscitates and captures the reality of a black South African woman. It describes her ecclesial struggles that deny her full humanity status'. Kraybill (1991:42) drives the point home and maintains that, 'where basic human needs are at stake, it is impossible to permanently suppress the opponent'. It is for this reason that Greenwood (2002:22) argues that:

"We need to identify what the dominant voices are failing to say and who they are silencing. We hold ourselves back in church life when we do not speak the truth with both fire and sensitivity and when we punish or ignore those who do so".

In the congregations under investigation, silencing and suppression impact directly on children, young women and older women. The powerless and the voiceless are always vulnerable. Mudimeli (2014:278) contends that:

"The church needs to demonstrate solidarity with those who are hurting, marginalized and who are alienated, such as women. Leaders are to actively work to restore equality, equity and dignity to all people".

Indeed, repressed conflict works against the victim and one can only concur with Greenwood (2002:30) in that, 'politeness and misplaced kindness seem to inhibit proper and direct critique of a pastoral crisis situation'. Gilligan (1993:48) encourages a passionate search for a new way of leading that does not threaten people and Fleming (2004:158) speaks about wounded voices and broken persons that are redeemed or restored through community. Maina (2009:43) argues that:

> "There is a need for people who can make the necessary noise and action to promote adherence to the rule of law. People who can stand up to the powers that be, bring about equity and justice"

Given the current practices that sideline children, marginalize young women and de-empowers older women in the church, Mudimeli (2014:279) contends that:

> "The woman theology encourages women to speak of their experiences. It is when women begin to speak that they will find ways of breaking the silence and be able to redefine, re-evaluate and transform the patriarchal nature of the church".

Looking at this conflict problem from a different angle, Fenton (1998:117) explains the difference between concerned disagreement and conflict and points out that, 'conflict is a disagreement that keeps decisions from being made or the group from moving forward'. Given this clarity, Greenwood (2002:4) reminds us that, 'there is a need to reflect seriously on why problems of decision-making or frustrations in communication have arisen, in order, if possible to avoid repeating them'. Secretan (1997:76) warns that, 'when communications are both shallow and virtual, toxicity builds at an alarming pace'. Hill (1982:110) joins the discussion to point out that, 'avoiding a conflict is in fact a perpetuation of the status quo and thus, a possible stagnation'. Bercovitch (1984:21) cautions that, 'interactions resulting in conflict can escalate and can also be perpetuated'. For Cunningham (1996:18), conflict can be both warning and a promise. It heralds progress and growth as well as death and decay. Surely then, church leaders

as appointed authority over the local Christian community should see the situation as needing pastoral attention.

Poling and Miller (1985:11) affirm that 'there is a necessity to understand how context, structures and dynamics affect this shared life of the Christian community. It is for this reason that Robertson (2006:2) maintains that, organizational behavior is the study of both group and individual performance and activity within an organization, in this case a church group. Adair (198617) points to four challenges in dealing with a conflict situation and argues that:

> "A compromise approach may yield relatively positive results but commitment may be minimal. The middle ground approach is in the long run, counterproductive as it does not yield the desired outcomes. Avoidance approach is not effective because avoiding real issues may defuse the tension but does not solve the problem. The patronizing approach may keep the unity of the affected group but inadequate solutions are not permanent. Relational unity without any concrete agreement does not change the status quo and such an approach becomes a futile exercise".

Pastoral norms for liturgical sacramental practice are addressed in the theology chapter and this will also be the fourth core task of Practical Theology Osmer (2008) in the concluding chapter, namely the pragmatic or new theory for praxis.

1.6. Observations

According to Thomas (2001:301), 'the research environment or context provides the researcher to observe, investigate and understand the participants' experiences. Of paramount importance is the articulation of those experiences. Given the reality that what is, prescribed by the denomination is, not appropriated in the context of the identified congregations, it is necessary to make a preliminary argument based on observation over a number of years. The validity of these tentative arguments will be, tested when compared with the findings in the empirical chapter. The critical observation suggests if not point out that, there is a serious flouting of the provisions of

the Manual of Faith and Order of the UPCSA. At leadership level, the elders who are, in violation of church polity can be, divided into three groups. For some elders it may be ignorance. Others it may be misinterpretation whereas others it is just being indifferent to church law (and this is not judgment).

1.6.1. Ignorance

Jones (1980:91) argues that 'pastoral leadership requirements are knowledge of the Scriptures, and Christian tradition, general competency in theology, ability to conduct worship and proclaim the living relevance of the faith'. The Manual of Faith and Order declares that the Scriptures are the final authority on matters of faith and life. Making reference to the value of the Scriptures, Lindgren (1983:34) reminds us that, 'how, the Church Fathers interpreted both the scriptures and the essence of the Church is of great importance because the action and life of the Church spring from and are, implied by the basic beliefs of the Church'. With this in mind, Cunningham (1996:52) argues that, 'Christian theology is, bound up with the life of the Church. The Church's reflection on the meaning of life is not divorced from its acts'.

1.6.2 Misinterpretation

Peterson (19997:31) argues that elders are the custodians of the spiritual life of the church and serve as a support system for the pastor and congregation and this leadership responsibility calls for handling and interpreting church polity efficiently and accurately. The ordained leadership in the congregations under study is responsible to ensure that all liturgical sacramental decisions are consistent with the Manual of Faith and Order. Peterson (1997:34) points out that 'pastoral leadership should act as the governing authority by providing spiritual guidance, setting its major policies and exercising responsibility for its business and activities'.

The General Assembly is the highest Council in the hierarchy of structures in the UPCSA, and it makes decisions on matters of doctrine, liturgy, worship and so forth and these become denominational polity guiding its life and work. These decisions are clearly stated in the Manual of Faith and Order. Synods, Presbyteries and Sessions as

lower Councils are, expected to implement effectively the decisions of the highest Council and to operate within the liturgical framework and guidance provided thereof.

1.6.3. Indifference

Cowan (1998:74) argues that elders who are being indifferent to matters of polity cause complacency and reorientation to denominational policies. The researcher has observed that the desire to uphold an old and uncontested internal tradition has led to being resistant to change. Guma (2013:26) points out that 'institutional and personal self-interest tends to dampen people's enthusiasm for transformation'. Ware (1996:4) reminds us that one should not love an institution than he loves the people, which the said institution is supposed to serve. The author concurs with Drayton (1999:47) who points out that, 'as with any power structure, those empowered by it, will fight for it, even at the cost of their betterment'. Westermeyer (2000:36) joins the discussion and maintains that, special interest agendas are, seldom related to the community's welfare.

1.6.4. Resistance to Reforms

Given the prolonged observation, one can argue that this resistance is underpinned, by fear for a new practice. One cannot necessarily validate fear and resistance against worship renewal as Spinks (2007:230) points to unchangeable elements in the liturgy and those subject to change. What is required in the identified congregations is a visionary leadership and according Fleming (2004:129) 'incarnational leaders initiate curiosity in the hearts and minds of their followers'. Innovation and creativity are essential attributes in leadership. This problem of fear and poor communication is well described by Jones (1985:60) who points out that, 'in church we speak to each other with all our defenses up. We shout at each other from behind barriers of fear and insecurity'. Indeed, new challenges can create a crisis and change is not easy.

As a liturgist Huck (2003:21) reminds us that, tension can sometimes arise in parish liturgy between those members who understand and value the repetitive nature of the liturgy and those who believe that variety and change are essential for good worship.

This creates a worship war between the traditionalists and the idealists. Be as it may, Smith (2012:3) maintains that:

> "Ritual power can gather the worshiping community in a structure strong enough to hold many people, conflicting points of view, and varied emotions together in unity".

Expanding on Smith's statement, Fleming (2004:163) maintains that, 'leaders are in a unique position to capture communal energy and to aim that energy at creating stability'. Surely, this creates an environment wherein creativity and potency can flourish. In the congregations under study, this calls for an open discussion about corporate worship matters because the authoritative decisions of the General Assembly of the UPCSA are mutually binding to all (leadership and laity).

1.6.5. Liturgical Reforms

Clowney (1998:42) cautions against 'sentimental allegiance to old patterns of doing ministry that have no particular relevance today' and according to Florovosky (1997:142), 'readiness to listen to the voices of the past, should be in order to respond to new challenges'. Indeed, liturgical reforms that herald renewal and promote spirituality of the congregation should be supported by all stakeholders without any opposition. Pecklers (2003:210) reminds us that, 'the call to ongoing renewal in the Church and its worship involves a continual critique of its religious practices'. For the collective support to take place, Jones (1985:66) maintains that, 'renewal in the liturgical life of a congregation begins with an active discontent with things as they are'. For Bolt (1996:244), 'executives (church leaders) must learn the skills needed to achieve excellence and ongoing renewal'. The reason for a vigorous support for renewal is summed up by Senn (1983:7) who points out that, 'the celebrative character of the liturgy provides the celebrating community with an opportunity for renewal, rejuvenation, re-creation and rebirth'. Chan (2006:16) maintains that 'ecclesial renewal cannot be

achieved simply through theological arguments and reflections'. Indeed, there must also be an adequate knowledge of appropriate liturgical practices.

1.6.6. Transformation

Often in times of a crisis situation in a congregation there are two main groups that shape and determine the outcomes. Each group may go to the extremes to maintain their position. The traditionalists seek to keep the status quo which often causes stagnation in the liturgical life and spirituality of the congregation. The idealists advocate radical changes and yet a revolutionary approach can create more problems when the agenda is pushed without sensitivity and genuine concern for others. Hitchcock (2006:8) warns that:

> "Uncontrolled liturgical change in effect can pity the liturgy against itself, setting up conflicts that remain unresolved. Liturgists need to understand the deep disturbance caused by sudden often radical alterations in ritual life".

One of the reasons (not excuses) why change is not easy is the fact that, changing routine brings discomfort as it impacts on people's sense of security and stability. Wepener (2008:313-328) deals extensively with the authority of tradition in the liturgy and warns against rapid transformation. This warning finds support in Fleming (2004:115) who points out that:

> "The modulation to a new place of transformation is rarely instantaneous. Change requires space for a new form to emerge and space for the community to mature into the next place of transformation".

1.7. The Research Question

This research study is guided by a primary question and secondary questions. The central question is: How can the sacramental ministry be extended to all members of the congregation effectively and qualitatively? The central question is focused on finding practical solutions to the research problem. It will guide the direction and influence the outcome of this research project. The subsequent pertinent questions (raised in chapter

two) seek to probe specifically the different facets of the problem under investigation. As secondary questions, they are also linked to the main aim of the primary (central) question already stated.

1.8. Motivation for the Study

1.8.1. Inclusivity versus Exclusivity

The communal nature of the church should reflect in the liturgy and be entrenched in the sacramental practice in the affected congregations. In writing about the nature of Christian worship, Old (2001:35) maintains that, 'Christian worship is the function of the body of Christ and Christians are all one body'. To cement this oneness and active participation in liturgical worship, White (2000:2627) explains worship is the collective work of the people. Generational differences, gender, sexual orientation, social status and membership position cannot and should not dictate the ethics of corporate worship. Byars (2000:20) joins the conversation and points out that, 'in Christian worship Christians gather together as a body of Christ and that calls for unity of purpose'.

 Nyawuza (2013:1) brings another theological perspective on this discussion and points out that, 'the priesthood of all believers is a New Testament imperative and a cornerstone of the Reformed worship tradition'. It is interesting to note that, a common understanding that came out of a recent dialogue between Reformed Presbyterian and Roman Catholic communities in the US, clearly puts emphasis on the collective ownership of the liturgy and categorically states that, all baptized Christians share the grace of God, the freedom of the gospel, and the basic equality of the priestly people of God. Chan (2006:12) argues that, 'we need a theology of the church that gives a sound basis for the individual to be embodied in the ecclesial structure'. Surely, without mutual embracing and care for one another, the church would just remain another social organization.

Smith (2009:169) points out that 'worship is a space of welcome because we are, at root relational creatures, called into relationship with the Creator and we are also dependent on one another as a community of faith'. Indeed, members of a local

congregation are dependent on one another and such social dynamics cannot be underplayed in the context of corporate worship. Smith (2009:201) further maintains that 'the church is required to be a community of dependence, a body that cannot possibly function, let alone flourish, without the collaborative contribution of each member'.

Given the arguments for inclusion and arguments negating exclusion, one can conclude this part of the discussion by making reference to the pastoral advice of Travis (2015:177) who points out that, 'we need an understanding of sacramental ministry today that is deeply, and profoundly relational'. Pecklers (2003:198) points out that 'the clergy's genuine pastoral care and compassion for others should be demonstrable in the way he or she presides at the Eucharist'. Indeed this is an acid test. Embracing those who have done wrong but are now repentant and welcoming them to the holy table is an indication of both theological and pastoral maturity. Jesus offered grace and forgiveness to the one repentant sinner at the cross without putting him on a probation or waiting period (Luke 23:40-43).

1.8.2. Pastoral Concern and Care

This discussion on pastoral concerns and care is prefaced with a thought provoking statement from Bell (2011:14) who argues that:

> "Theological reflection becomes an ongoing contribution, and critical thinking as part of the minister's life. Theology has become more theoretical and abstract and avoided ministry. Ministry has been seduced by a functionality which trains people in methods and skills with little or no reflection".

Steinbron (1987:79) points out that 'without solid theological reflection, church leaders become more of psychologists, sociologists and social workers. For Mallison (1998:14), 'theological reflection is our single most important task in pastoral care'. With this in mind, the concern is the exclusion of some members and groups from sacramental ministry. This current practice goes against the fundamental tenets of sacramental ministry as understood within the Reformed tradition. The complexity of the problem shapes the liturgical landscape and is at the root of risk-management challenges.

Gershenson (2008:26) reminds church leaders that, 'conflicting points makes it difficult to decision-making. Increasing uncertainty makes it problematic to assess the validity of a course of action'.

Be as it may, leaders are to display ability to handle the current situation, avoid unpredictability and restore stability in the congregations. It is only then that leaders can have informed opinion, define strategies, promote common values and integrate processes that will take the affected congregations forward. Facing a similar situation in Kenya, Matano Mnene (2013:2-3) argues that:

> "We need to provoke church leaders in African mainline churches to rethink the need to revise and improve what exists already, which seems to be a barrier to mission of the church today, and help the church imagine new paths towards reforming its practices".

Reconciling these fragmented and disfranchised groups is both a challenge a pastoral priority. What Clebsch and Jaekle (1964:4) remind us that:

> "Pastoral care consists of helping acts done by representative Christian persons, directed toward the healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling troubled persons, whose troubles arise in a context of ultimate meanings and concerns".

According to Clinebell (1984:14), 'pastoral care is an instrument of continuing renewal through reconciliation' and according to Reader (2008:53) pastoral care 'is the central concern for practical theology'. Indeed, the success of such a pastoral intervention lies in understanding group dynamics and having skills in conflict management or resolution as explained by Adair (1986:3-73) and Dudley (1998:105-31). For Fleming (2004:106), embracing the dynamics of communal chaos requires leaders to reframe and reform their idea of what a community is and of the processes at work in that community.

1.9. Context of the Study

1.9.1. Point of Departure

The research is done within a field of Practical Theology. There is a wide range of approaches that practical theologians employ to address problematic congregational situations. These different approaches are determined by one's point of departure and are well articulated by Lockham (1999:72) who points out that:

> "For ministers (pastors) practical theology is a way of applying theology to their daily encounters. For academics, it is a way of looking at the theology that acknowledges the significance of practice in the process of theological reflection For the pastoral counselor, practical theology works itself out as a critical dialogue partner within ongoing conversation with contemporary psychological theories. For the politically, aware, practical theology provides a method, and a perspective within which the need for social change can be envisioned".

For the purpose of this study, the researcher's point of departure is determined by being a minister, an aspiring academic liturgist, a counselor with a pastoral heart that reaches out to all, and a religious activist with a socio-political consciousness. The points of departure as expounded by Lockham, are about theological reflection on one' theory and practice. This critical reflection is well articulated by Kinast (1990:3) who points out that:

> "Theological reflection is the discipline of exploring our individual and corporate experience in conversation with the wisdom of a religious heritage. The conversation is a genuine dialogue that seeks to hear from our own beliefs, actions, and perspectives, as well as from those of the tradition. It resects the integrity of both. Theological reflection therefore may confirm, challenge, clarify, and expand how we understand our experience and how we understand the religious tradition. The outcome is new truth and meaning for a living theology that holds theory and praxis together".

1.9.2. The Academic Context

1.9.2.1. The Four Tasks of Practical Theology

The four tasks of Practical Theology as expounded by Osmer (2008:1-29) are employed as tools and these are, descriptive, normative, prescriptive and pragmatic. Browning and Reed (1985:9) argue that, when we take this descriptive approach we are better able to depict in words, images, signs, actions in what way persons have experienced the ultimate meaning of life or how they have met the creator and sustainer of life in a particular event. As a contemporary sociologist, Beck (2002:203-206) argues against old methods of describing a context.

Browning and Reed (2006:57) reminds us that, it is impossible to be practical without making clear the norms that guide one's practice and Reader (2008:7) argues that, 'Scripture takes the normative and authoritative role because the pastoral situations are expressed from a particular perspective, that of the Christian tradition from which it emerged'. Therefore, one can argue that, any contemporary liturgical contributions should be informed by both liturgical and pastoral theologies that are underpinned by scholarly research. Hendricks (2004:29) points out that, 'any questions that are raised by the faith community must be answered by a process of discernment in which Scripture plays a normative role'.

1.9.2.2. The Three Critical Methods in Practical Theology

The theological insights of Poling and Miller (1985:31-32) are also relevant as guidance in this study. They point out that, there are three critical methods to use in Practical Theology. The researcher is using these methods to reinforce Osmer's discussion about the four imperative tasks of Practical Theology.

In a critical scientific method, a secular discipline provides the framework and norms for Practical Theology and the tradition plays a second role. A co-relational method aims at collaborative dialogue between the Church tradition and secular disciplines in which each can challenge the other and contribute both descriptive and normative statements. This helps to come to a deeper understanding through their essentially equal dialogue. Barnard etc (2014:47) argue that, 'liturgical rituals should be analyzed in terms of the

concepts and analytical reconstructions from the humanities as well as in theological concepts and frames of thinking'. It is for this reason that Haight (1988:490) argues that:

> "Without careful attention to modern scholarship, to modern science in all its forms, the Church will cut itself from the progressive and formative influences that inevitably fashion its liturgical life".

In a critical confessional method, the Christian tradition is normatively prior and the hermeneutics for its interpretation is of primary importance. The secular sciences are used cautiously in order to minimize the influence of norms alien to the Christian tradition. Barnard etc (2014:44) point out that, 'in Practical Theology we investigate carefully how a certain form of liturgical ritual is theologically informed through tradition/s and their sources'.

In view of these critical methods, this research is influenced by both co-relational and critical confessional methods. And discussions on any matter raised are characterized by a theological perspective. The researcher concurs with Wepener (2005:111) in that, 'it is imperative to rethink our research methodologies every so often as part of the task of being (practical) theologians'.

1.9.3. The Reformed Tradition

The Reformed Tradition and its understanding of sacramental ministry is discussed in the theology chapter. The aim in this space is to set in motion a discussion that is focused on Reformed theology and spirituality. It is imperative to retain one's theological position whilst open to dialogue with others from different theological persuasions. The question of identity finds expression in the words of Kitchner (1999:21) who points out that, 'the essence of who we are as Christians remains the same due to the inherent characteristics that define our identity'.

1.9.3.1. Reformed Theology

The distinctive characteristics of Reformed theology are the five key points of Calvinism namely, Scripture alone is the standard for all faith and practice, grace alone is the only

way to salvation and is obtained from God, faith alone is the only means God ordains for justification, Christ's work alone is sufficient to save and to God is the glory alone in all things. These marks of Reformed tradition permeate this research work. In this discussion, one is informed and influenced by Reformed theologians such as Olifant and White (across the globe) and de Gruchy in South Africa. Other scholars from the Catholic community and Protestant mainstream formations are only engaged in order to compare and contrast liturgical insights and theological views on the issue of sacramental ministry.

The decency and dignity of liturgical worship as practiced within the Reformed tradition needs to be highlighted. One concurs with Olifant (2002:2, 5) who points out that, 'for the Reformed theologian, the integrity of the service of God is essential'. Worship must above all, serve the glory of God. This is attested by Logan Jr. (2013:37) who maintains that 'the essence of the true religion (and that of the Reformed theology) is adoration of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit'.

1.9.3.2. Reformed Spirituality

Old, (2001:34) reminds us that, the Reformation was a reform of spirituality as much as it was a reform of theology.   Indeed, it is imperative to understand our liturgical sacramental history and heritage as they form the basis of our spirituality. Even in our day and age, the Reformed community of faith promotes adherence to a worship culture or tradition that is reformed according to Scripture Old (2001) and continues to be reformed. According to Rayburn (2004:72), 'the reformation of corporate worship is the principle means by which the spiritual health of God's people is measured'. Boersma and Levering (2015:647) join the conversation and point out that, 'the issue of the continual reforming our liturgical rituals toward an expression of Christian meaning in our sacramental practice is a primary matter'.

As the main thrust of this research activity is on sacraments, one can therefore argue that liturgical rituals should add value to the spirituality of a Christian community. Engaging in the disciplines of prayer is requires and this point is emphasized by

Hiemstra (1998:74) who maintains that, 'our theology of spirituality never rises higher than our devotional life. Our devotional life cannot go deep or high apart from the right kind of theology'. Furthermore, an African theologian Aba (1998:316) points out that:

> "The Eucharist as the source and summit of Christian spirituality means that Christian living flows from the Eucharist as its source, and that Christian spirituality is supremely realized in and ordered to the Eucharist as its summit or high point".

The significance of ritual observance in the Reformed community of faith is explained by Olifant (2002:23) who points out that:

> "Concern for the observance of the Lord's Day has always been a strong feature of Reformed worship. To remember the Sabbath Day means to observe the day, to celebrate the religious rites appropriate to the day".

Snodgrass (2006:17) argues that, God is not interested in spiritless formalism and formless spiritualism. Lindgren (1983:95) joins the discussion to point out that, 'worship must never become merely a form or practice habitually observed'. In the congregations under investigation, a great culture of worship can be created or formed as the clergy (acting as liturgist and pastoral theologian) return to the important principles of worship as informed by Reformed theology. It is time to go back to the basics and Senn (1983:6) reminds us that:

> "A celebration of past events, provide a sense of community identity, affirms the bond with the founding fathers and provide the occasion for the rededication of the community to the basic principles for which it stands for".

1.9.4. The Ecumenical Context

This research study is done with an ecumenical perspective in mind. A quality academic study calls for engaging the different view of other theologians, liturgists, denominations and Christian formations. The primary purpose of a dialogue with other scholars and traditions is to do a comparative evaluation of theological theories and liturgical

practices. In this research study dialogue is used to minimize subjectivity and to maximize objectivity on the subject matter under investigation. This exercise of engaging others (critically) is crucial in challenging one's theological position and to have a broader understanding of the issues at hand. It is with this reason that Senn (1983:xi) points out that:

> "Ecumenical perspective is crucial because mainline churches transmit a common liturgical tradition, and we must all respond pastorally to the same cultural challenges and opportunities".

An ecumenical approach is necessary given the ongoing discussions and debates on liturgical reforms. This ongoing ecumenical conversation is supported by McKee (2003:27) in that it is 'for the purpose of exchanging theological insights and cooperation in forging liturgical partnerships'. For now is it sufficient to state that, a wider consultation is necessary for a balanced ecumenical dialogue in liturgical worship and a comparative study on sacraments.

1.10. Research Gap

On a general note, Marvasti (2004:19) points out that, 'the common function of a question is to assess knowledge (evaluative) and the purpose of evaluative questioning is to assess knowledge and identify gaps'. The importance of probing in order to discover what has been researched is also emphasized by Neville (198:13) who points out that, 'questioning is often framed in terms of the interests and categories resulting from prior inquiry, and the theology positions adduced are the results of the questions asked'. The author is convinced that questioning is the key instrument in finding out gaps in what is already known in a particular research field. Questioning goes hand in glove with critical thinking. Questions radically accelerate the inquiry process and validate answers.

The author concurs with Neville (1982:14) in that, 'in the context of given theological discussion, a wide variety of previous commitments are taken for granted in order to focus on the question at issue and as the context of discussion changes, those previous

commitments (convictions) can come into question'. In writing about questions that remained unanswered from previous research and new questions resulting from previous findings, Marvasti (2004:18-21) argues that:

> "In qualitative research it is imperative to build on existing theories or findings from empirical research so as to avoid naivity in the research activity".

Surely, theories and research are inseparable and for Ganzevoort and Roeland (2014:99), 'practical theology poses generalizations or theories and compares to past experiences and literature'. Robertson (2006:2) explains that:

> "In the social sciences, theories attempt to explain observed phenomenon. These theories are tested over time and are either accepted or rejected based on accumulated evidence"

On a specific note, Catholic theologians and scholars across the globe have penned extensive literature on sacraments. This does not mean the Protestant and the Reformed community of faith in particular are silent on the issue of sacraments. For example, White (though from a Western context) has written substantially on worship practices and the ministry of Word and Sacraments within the Reformed tradition. Furthermore, Reformed theologians in the continent of Africa and South Africa in particular are involved in an ongoing academic research on this subject matter.

For the purpose of this research study, the author finds it necessary to highlight the themes and contributions of other researchers on the topic of sacraments and yet present one's approach. These theses (two on Baptism and also two on the Eucharist) are presented not in order of importance. There are other dissertations, theses, journal articles and academic papers on the topic of sacraments. It is not within the scope of this discussion or chapter to mention all researchers and writers in details. The aim here is to recognize and acknowledge the existence of a relevant research literature.

- Roy, Kevin Barry (1994) *Baptism, Reconciliation and Unity: Towards a Mutual Acceptance of Baptismal Differences*

The main thrust of this academic study is about the diversity of baptismal views and practices and that the visible unity of the Church is linked to the latter's calling to the ministry of reconciliation and healing. His approach is that, there should be diversity in authentic unity that is so critical in a broken world. Roy (1994:1) argues that, 'reconciliation and unity must rank higher than matters of baptismal rites and doctrines'. The author's approach on this issue of baptism is about the covenantal theology and its implications for inclusion in the celebration of the Eucharist.

- Groenewald, Jonanda (2007) *Baptism, Eucharist and the Earliest Jesus-Groups: From the Perspective of Alternate States of Consciousness*

First of all, the main focus of this research work goes beyond demonstrating that baptism and the Eucharist are symbolic rites with rituals and ceremonies. According Groenewald (2007:1), 'baptism is a ritual of initiation and transformation, whereas the Eucharist is a ritual of integration and participation'. The key argument is that, the Eurocentric world with its cognitive constructs, experiences these sacraments differently. The author's approach goes beyond seeing these sacraments as initiation and participation. The author's argument is that both sacraments should be guided by the concept of community and not privatized spirituality. Secondly, in the African spirituality, personal experience of a phenomenon, event, ceremony and so forth, counts more than cognitive understanding.

- Nyandoro, Rudolf (2014) *The Pastoral Role of the Sacrament of Confession: A Life Narrative Study in Masvingo Diocese in Zimbabwe*

The main objective of the research study is about the exploration of the practical therapeutic value of the sacrament of confession among the members of the Roman Catholic community. The main argument is about the disappearance of confession and the new trend of psychology and psychotherapy in pastoral counseling. The call is for an interdisciplinary strategy. The author's approach is different in such matters of connecting a sacrament and therapeutic counseling. The author's theology on this matter is informed by the Eucharist imperatives of soul searching and pre-preparation (if

need be confession to God). In principle, the concept is fine and yet the mode or how it is practiced brings out the major difference.

- Sipuka, Sithembele (2000) *The Sacrifice of the Mass and the Concept of Sacrifice among the Xhosa: Towards an Inculturated Understanding of the Eucharist*

This thesis presents logical arguments about relating the Eucharist to the Xhosa culture (with inclusion of ancestors and cultural symbols) which can revitalize the element in Eucharistic sacrifice. As a Reformed theologian, the author looks at the Eucharist from the redemptive narrative perspective and the approach is not about inculturating the Eucharist. The author's approach is established on the critical question that seeks to find out how this life giving ritual can be extended to all in the liturgical assembly without preconditions.

Furthermore, within the UPCSA, ministers have done academic studies in various theological disciplines and even those in Practical Theology have majored on other topics. Therefore, a research work specifically on sacraments will add value to the body of knowledge about sacramental ministry in this denomination.

1.11. Multidisciplinary Approach

This research work is situated specifically within the field of Practical Theology. The subject matter is the administration of the sacraments in the identified congregations. Given the multi-dimensional nature of the problem at hand, it is imperative for the researcher to use a multidisciplinary approach. Poling and Miller (1985:11) argue that, 'Practical Theology in our day and age must also attend to the empirical sciences and that should be an ongoing dialogue'. According to Thomas and Nyce (2001:4), consideration of a multidimensional approach has proven to be of considerable value to theorists.

The necessity of this approach is further attested by Reader (2008:7) who maintains that, 'Practical Theology must engage other disciplines as ways into interpreting the

demands of Christian ministry today'. This view is endorsed by Mitchell (2007:103-130) in addressing rituals in Christian liturgy and is also commended by Wepener (2005:109-127). Therefore, insights from various theological disciplines and social sciences permeate the discussions in this research activity.

According to Lovin and Mauldin (2013:xiv) 'we need a cross-disciplinary constructive approach to theological method' and this finds support from Swinton (2012:86) who maintains that:

> "The underlying methodological position within mutually critical correlative model is that theological truth is emergent and dialectical and as such requires partnering with other sources of knowledge that will enable clarify and revised ecclesial practices".

Westerholm (2018:1) calls this multidisciplinary approach partnership 'institutional alliances'. Indeed, by engaging other sources one stands to gain new knowledge and insights. It is for this reason Lovin and Mauldin (2013:xxiii) maintain that, 'there is a need for a mutual understanding and engagement across seemingly isolated, insulated disciplines'. Breslow (2016:15) points out that convergence of thoughts on the same subject matter have a potential to inspire rich research conversations. Surely, diversity of thoughts augments the research discussion and the findings are framed as shared end points of conversation. Graham (2017:7) joins the conversation and points out that, 'theological understanding emerges dialogically from many different sources, the received and historic tradition, cultural context, personal or communal experience'. For Lovin and Mauldin (2013:133), 'theological conversations that emanates from different disciplinary frameworks indicate collaborative sensibility'.

The author's position in this particular research is that of mutual critical correlation and also concurs with Pattison (1989:56) who points out that, 'sources from other disciplines provide significant insights and correctives to the repositories of faith'. Surely, one cannot but concur with Wassem (2006:22) who suggests that research problems should be explored from different perspectives so that new paradigmatic questions can be

raised. Without such an exercise, one cannot engage in theological discussions, debates or dialogue that can broaden one's perspectives. Lovin and Mauldin (2013:140), 'engaging scholars from other social sciences helps one to clarify, develop, raise and improve one's theological reflection'.

1.12. The Purpose of the Study

- To furnish a thorough historical, theological and exegetical discussion of the essential points of the identified problem in the light of existing research

- To look into various models of the Church and identify one that can shape and enhance significantly the sacramental ministry in the congregations under study

- To engage the clergy, other church leaders and members of the congregation in theologizing their situation with an aim of capacity building in liturgical sacramental matters

- To critique the existing praxis which is described later and finally, to challenge the researcher's own preconceived ideas and assumptions about Christian worship and to critique one's liturgical sacramental practice so as to gain new perspectives

1.13. The Significance of the Study

Much is written on liturgical studies and about sacraments. The researcher intends contributing by raising critical questions and also bringing new insights from the conversation between liturgy and sacramental ministry. The thesis will explore and highlight the good liturgical qualities (or lessons) that can improve substantially the sacramental ministry in the congregations under study. Pecklers (2003:210) points out that, the call to ongoing renewal in the Church and its worship involves a continual critique of our religious practices.

1.14. Sources

1.14.1. The Congregations

The congregations under investigation are in fact one of the sources in this research study (a human liturgical document as it were). A Roman Catholic theologian Kavanagh (1997:189) maintains that, 'worship is the primary source and stimulus of Christian theology' and further points out that, 'there is a clear distinction between primary theology (worship) and secondary theology (theological reflection)'. Reader (2008:7) confirms this viewpoint and points out that, 'the use of corporate liturgy and the life of the gathered congregation are the primary source of theological reflection'. Polling and Miller (1985:11) attest to this and point out that:

> "Practical theology is a reflection arising out of the living experiences of communities of faith and resulting in faith-informed interpretations that serve to guide the ongoing life and actions of those communities".

1.1.4.2. Existing Literature

The author recognizes that there is a proliferation of literature on the subject matter of sacraments. The chapter on literature review serves the purpose of looking at scholarly research with a twofold aim. The first aim is to demonstrate the different approaches to the subject matter and the second aim is to highlight how the researcher is approaching the same theme from a different perspective. The accumulated knowledge is incorporated in the body of this research work. The author finds motivation to engage other researchers and the necessity thereof from Barnard et al (2014:9) who points out that:

> "No research is possible in our time without cooperation with other researchers, who may hold other views and convictions, have different points of entry to other fields, who speak other languages and understand other gestures".

Chapter Two

Liturgical Arguments and Theological Reflections

2.1. Introduction

In chapter one, the different dimensions of what constitutes the research problem are described briefly. The focus in this chapter is threefold. Chapter two deals with each facet of the problem issue in details. Pertinent questions are raised, which are, linked to the central question in chapter one namely, how can the sacramental ministry be extended to all members of the congregation effectively and qualitatively? This chapter creates a platform for those who support the current practice and for those who oppose the ongoing practice.

These arguments are, offered by liturgists, and pastoral theologians and not the leadership of the congregations under investigation. The provisions of the Manual of Faith and Order of the UPCSA on each facet of the problem are, attached as an addendum. Beyond comparing and contrasting the different views on the subject matter, it is necessary to reflect liturgically and theologically on the sacramental issues under discussion. The reflections are, offered at the end of discussion of each dimension of the problem.

For now, it suffices to point out that, the primary aim of this chapter is to prick the liturgical consciousness of the church leadership and to raise theological awareness about the sacramental situation characterized by questionable practices, thus creating an awakening for all stakeholders. The author concurs with Cunningham (1996:49) who points out that, 'for the Church to be true to its calling, must critically judge a situation and take precise concrete action'. As the main thrust of this chapter is liturgical theological arguments, it is proper to offer a brief discussion on the importance of a dialogue.

2.2. Dialogue

Dwyer (2000:11) explains that, a dialogue (or talking together) should be encouraged as people reflect critically on what is going on around them. Trokan (1997:150) points out that, 'in remembering and retelling our story we engage in the essential characteristic of all good theology, which is dialogue'. Evans (2009:11) points out that:

"The voices of others are heard and some of these voices come from texts of centuries past (biblical writers). Others are those of our contemporaries. These voices offer us food for thought. Issues are debated, improved upon or set aside as irrelevant. To engage in theological dialogue is to join and on-going conversation with others".

According to Killen and de Beer (2014:69), 'the conversation is a genuine dialogue that seeks to hear from our own beliefs, actions and perspectives, as well as those of the tradition and it respects in integrity of both'. Indeed, a bias narrative and monolithic approach to issues brings a narrow-minded understanding that is, always under suspicion. We need to look at sacramental issues through the lens of other stakeholders who have an invested interest. Maina (2009:58) points out that:

"The aim of a dialogue or communication for that matter is to promote harmony and understanding as dialogue can be used as a theological method that brings convergence of all theological thought systems".

A dialogue is not necessarily confrontational. It creates space or platform for open and vigorous discussion of different views on the subject matter. Dialogue as a robust debate is, not about imposing, one's views on others nor compromising one's own position. The purpose of a dialogue is not only to share different opinions but also to allow the debate or discussion to evaluate one's views on the issues at hand and thus gaining a broader understanding.

Indeed, a fragmented or narrow outlook to a problem creates discrepancy in understanding a problem. Dialogue and critical reflection are, used here in chapter two as a tool to compare and to contrast liturgical theological views on sacramental ministry in relation to the congregations under investigation. The challenge to clarify one's position on relevant sacramental issues and an exposure to new perspectives is a necessary risk. Surely, there is a risk in being vulnerable to criticism and correction.

2.3. Children and the Eucharist

The decision of General Assembly of the UPCSA (over twenty years ago) to permit children to participate in the Eucharist was in fact a liturgical sacramental necessity. However, children in the identified congregations do attend the Eucharist Service but they are not, permitted to partake of this sacrament. In theory, they are, allowed to be present in the Eucharist service and yet they are, not permitted to participate in the sacrament. According to Lake (2006:18), 'when children are part of Holy Communion but excluded from receiving the elements, raises theological questions'.

Not permitting children to sit at the Eucharist Table has supportive explanations and defensive reasoning as church traditions are different. Even churches within the Reformed community of faith, have different approaches with regard to children and the Eucharist. It is for this reason that Allister (1999:7) reminds us that, 'we need to re-think attitudes and practices, which have developed in recent years'.

2.3.1. Critical Questions

This debate has a theological ramification and, White (1998:48) asks a crucial theological question that is rooted in the Vatican II declaration about liturgy:

• How can the Church devise formal worship in which children take that full, conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is, demanded by the very nature of the liturgy?

Aba (1998:317) joins the discussion and asks this question:

• What are the ethical implications of taking part in liturgical actions as demanded by the second Vatican Council?

Other Critical Questions

• What is the nature of the relationship between baptism, church membership and Holy Communion?

• What is the theological justification for distinguishing between child and adult in terms of faith and sacraments?

• What is liturgically and theologically necessary for children to receive Holy Communion?

• What is the nature of the relationship between baptism, church membership and Holy Communion?

2.3.2. Arguments Opposing the Practice

2.3.2.1.   Confirmation as the Norm

The long established tradition has been that confirmation is the key or doorway to becoming a full member and consequently receiving the right to partake of the Eucharist. Confirmation is, understood as confirming those baptismal vows taken by parents on behalf of the infant and now the grown up child makes a public profession of faith. This understanding finds support in Allister (1999:4) who argues that:

"The baptized infant should be seen as a welcome but probationary member of the church, not as a full member. Only confirmation (or some institutional declaration of mature and thought-through faith) does membership become complete".

The sequential steps as baptism, confirmation and then receiving the Eucharist are so entrenched in the current tradition that changing it will be a challenge. There seems to be a confusion as to what the Scriptures declare as requirement to receive the

Eucharist and, what the local congregation has, put in place as a preparation to partake of the Eucharist.

2.3.2.2. Children's Lack of Understanding

A common concern that is raised when the issue of admitting children to the Eucharist is discussed, it is the question of understanding. It brings back to this discussion some of the critical questions already asked. What is the theological justification for distinguishing between child and adult in terms of faith and sacraments. Helepoulos (2017:3) challenges the church and points out that, 'no human (children and adults) has a complete understanding of Jesus's death for us'.

Britton (1984:29) pursues this matter and reminds us that

"Christ does not require full knowledge and understanding of the meaning and symbolism surrounding the Lord's Supper. Instead he invites all to come with the simple trust of children and with expectation".

2.3.2.3. Children's Disruptive Conduct

Stereotyping children seems to be the basic problem because not all children are noisy and disruptive. Helepoulos (2017:3) points out that, 'when children know they are part of the celebration, will concentrate and participate better'. The author argues that, the congregation can help the children learn to behave appropriately. Morgan (1989:19) points out that, 'children are welcomed and valued equally, not excluded from a key element of worship on the basis of age and behavior'. Allister (1999:2) argues that 'we need to receive children in our midst together with their kid-ness and the Bible expects us to be fa more fellowship-minded and less individualistic than most of us are today'. Helepoulos (2017:4) points out that, 'the presence of children reminds us that the origins of Holy Communion are, embedded in the Passover, a family feast where children play an essential and valued role'.

2.3.3. Arguments Supporting the Practice

2.3.3.1. The Passover and Holy Communion

There is sufficient evidence from the Scriptures and scholarly research that support the relatedness of the Passover (from the Old Testament) and the Eucharist (from the New Testament). Brennan (1990:7) points out that, 'the first Christians imagined church to be, highly relational consisting of families, and networks of families and individuals sharing word, worship and resources with each other'. Therefore, it can be, argued that the children of these families were active participants in the events.

Parent (1989:27) declares that, 'there is an equal access to the rights and privileges for all who are, initiated into the Christian community through baptism'. Given this historical rootedness of children's active involvement in religious rituals and Baptism providing accessibility to church membership with all its benefits, the author argues that, we cannot, in our day and age promote a liturgy that excludes children from the sacramental life of the church.

2.3.3.2. Baptized Children and Communicant Fellowship

It is necessary to give a Reformed understanding about baptized children and the importance of communicant fellowship. The author points out that, congregation must have a good understanding of the sacrament of baptism because they represent the community of faith. Indeed, the primary purpose is to pray for them (the children), draw them by example into the community of faith. Help them take their place within the life and worship of the church and that includes allowing them to partake of the Eucharist.

2.3.3.3. Decline in Church Attendance

Teenage or youth church attendance (across mainline denominations) indicate a very serious decline and this is, attributed to many social factors. These factors, influence youth and their attitude toward religion in modern times. However, the scenario is different in Pentecostal and African Initiated Churches in South and Africa as a continent. With this in mind, Allister (1999:2) points out that, 'for many churches the primary indicator of people's involvement is their receiving Communion and therefore children should be, allowed as the church hopes that their commitment will be strengthened and they will stay'. Allister speaks from a Western context and some of his expressed views are not necessarily applicable to the South African context and in the UPCSA in particular.

In a time of huge decline in church attendance, Greenwood (2003:11) points out that 'ecclesiastical organizations (churches) are in danger of focusing attention on youth to maintain and secure inherited patterns'. The author finds Allister's argument irrelevant and weak in the sense that, the focus is on baptized children and not teenagers or youth and besides, should already have gone through the confirmation process in order to partake of the sacrament of Holy Communion.

2.3.3.4. Loss of Confidence in Confirmation

Coupled with the decline in youth church attendance is the loss of confidence in the confirmation process for receiving Holy Communion. Given this scenario, Allister (1999:2) argues that, 'it makes sense for children to receive Holy Communion before they are tempted to stray away from church. The benefits of Holy Communion will hold

the children in the faith'. Once again, the author finds Allister's reasoning about this matter not clear enough to convince anyone. The purpose of receiving the Holy Communion has a spiritual value and is not to keep membership not declining. Furthermore, it is strange that Allister (1999:4) openly finds fault with confirmation and argues that:

"Confirmation is simply a ritual which should be judged by its current usefulness (which is open to question). Clearly confirmation is not holding young people in the church, or bringing them in".

Indeed, contradictory statements do not yield clarity on this debate, which is not an idle theological discourse. The author concurs with Helepoulos (2017:3) in that, 'it is important enough to be studying, knowing and having a conviction about this doctrine and practice of the church'.

2.3.4. Research Question

The research question is probing the extent to which children are actively involved in the Eucharist. In arguing for inclusion of children in the celebration of the Eucharist, the author would like to respond to the arguments against children receiving this sacrament.

For Morgan (1989:19), it is unreasonable to exclude children from Holy Communion 'on the basis of lack of understanding when we do not question adult members of the church about their faith'. Can we therefore legitimately draw a line across levels of understanding? In fact, a question can be posed as to how many adult members have a clear understanding of their theology of atonement? This argument does not hold water or have weight and Thomas (2007:26) maintains that 'the basis for participation in the sacraments is not knowledge but faith'. Furthermore, Fisher (1987:32) argues that:

"The major reason for taking seriously what children have to say in church life is not the fear of losing them, but our understanding of their rightful place within the Christian community".

2.3.5. Liturgical Theological Reflections

Indeed, it remains an enormous challenge and unavoidable task for leaders of these congregations under study to think theologically and reflect liturgically about the critical questions raised.

The ongoing practice of refusing children to receive Holy Communion goes against covenantal theology. No doubt, the Reformed understanding of covenantal theology has profound implications concerning children and Holy Communion. Whilst the identified congregations cannot continue with the injustice of excluding the children, great

sensitivity is, needed and such a pastoral situation should be, handled with integrity and wisdom.

Children are a precious gift from God (Psalm 127:3) that needs to be treasured. Religious instruction is a parental obligation. Specifically, the preparation course is a means of reinforcing the importance of their parental responsibility. There is a challenge in the identified congregations because these baptized children end up being, raised by grandparents (physically, emotionally and religiously). Many of the actual parents are young mothers and fathers who seem to be, indifferent on religious matters and without economic means to take care of these children. With this in mind, the church should make a priority to empower the grandparents for the congregation is indeed part of the equation.

Furthermore, baptismal vows are, made in the presence of the congregation and the latter equally promises to contribute significantly to the spiritual formation of baptized children as long as they remained within the Christian community. Given the author's argument on this discussion, Aridas (1998:44-45) contends that, the faith formation of the children should touch the heartbeat of the church and further argues further that, we would be remiss if we remained with the status quo simply because a more fruitful direction takes more time and effort.

The theological arguments in support of granting permission to children to receive Holy Communion as expounded by Holmes (1982:1-60) are incorporated in the theology chapter. In that very chapter, the author will look into the new liturgical sacramental challenge of Child Theology, which seeks to address the role and place of children in the church apart from advocating their inclusion in the Eucharist. For now, it suffices to point out that, the Scriptures have positive stories about children. For argument sake, Jesus challenged the audience of his time about faith and humility, referring to children. The statement that children are the church of tomorrow (or of the future), misguided the church in its approach to children's ministry. It also created a situation of children being present and yet invisible within the liturgical assembly. One can understand that it is an unintentional carelessness but it cannot be, condoned.

2.4. Youth Pregnancy and Church Discipline

Pregnancy among young people is a widespread social problem. This social scourge (a moral crisis) is a massive challenge facing the religious formations, community based organizations and the South African nation. Social problems among youth (emanating from moral decadence) are very disturbing. Problems such as drug abuse, promiscuity and youth pregnancy are not only widespread but escalating at an alarming rate. Social problems impacting on the church cannot be resolved by just instituting sacramental

sanctions (abstaining from the Eucharist). Dealing with the symptoms and not the root cause is a futile exercise. In the church context, pastoral care should also be guided by insights from other fields such as sociology, psychology, education etc. Pastoral intervention through preventive measures is better than addressing the after effects or symptoms.

In writing about an African challenge in the twenty first century, Guma and Milton (2013:68) point out that, 'the new South African context poses a serious hermeneutical challenge for the churches as they review and revisit their mission mandate and moral responsibility'. The concern of Guma and Milton is, also expressed by Professor Goba in a paper delivered at the Diakonia Council of Churches in June 2007. He maintains that:

"The moral wisdom which is embodied in the mission mandate of the church seeks to promote those Christian virtues, practices, narratives, traditions that shape our identity as responsible moral beings".

2.4.1. Critical Questions

Hewitt (1996:35, 39) asks the following pertinent questions:

•   Who are the people, excluded from the faith community because they do not measure up to the church's prescribed standards of acceptance?

•   How far should the church be prepared to forgive those in its community whose lifestyles have brought the church's witness to disrepute?

In highlighting the creative tension between remorse, confession and plea for forgiveness, Haight (1988:92) wants to know:

•   What is our responsibility when the sinning party acknowledges their wrong and claims repentance?

Other pertinent questions are

•   How does environment and popular culture influence the behavior of young people?

•   What is the socio-economic impact of youth pregnancy on family and society?

•   What should be the nature of pastoral care ministry for pregnant teenagers?

2.4.2. Arguments Supporting the Practice

2.4.2.1.   The Necessity of Church Discipline

African theologian Mutetei (1999:4) points out that:

"Discipline is the backbone of the church. Without discipline in the church, the church remains distorted in nature because a true biblical church is always perfected through the execution of discipline of its members who go astray".

Indeed, the centrality of discipline, in the life of the church is given. Surely, safeguarding the doctrinal and moral purity of the church and its witness to the world is of paramount importance. (1976:162) argues that 'obedience to moral prescriptions is not part of an ethical program for self-reform but the condition for belonging to a church body that emphasizes obedience'. For Smith (2012: 649), liturgical authority and moral authority are one and 'the foundations of ethical beliefs are not to be separated from ecclesial praxis'. One cannot be negligent in such crucial matters of conduct. Mutetei (1999:20) reiterates his position on church discipline and points out that, 'the early church practiced church discipline on those with moral delinquency, and the present day church is not exempted from this duty'.

2.4.2.2. Negligence and Orthodoxy

Richardson (2001:82) who contends that, 'by neglecting church discipline, the church cannot muster the resolve to make some uncomfortable decisions in the direction of orthodoxy, it will continually struggle to appear and function, as a body of Christ'. Secondly, the author concurs with Richardson that there should be no negligence in matters of church discipline. However, to suggest that God's blessings are dependent on our good behavior raises both a pastoral and a theological concern. Our conduct cannot determine God's favour with us. We cannot bargain with God for blessings based on our good performance. This should not be, interpreted as condoning a reckless lifestyle that tarnishes the image of the church. In any case, in the identified congregations it is not negligence. The core of the argument is the manner in which it is, carried out.

Whilst orthodoxy is a legacy that the church should cherish and treasure, it should not lead to conservatism and or disregard the context in which it is, practiced. The author's concern finds support from Logan Jr. (2013:67) who reminds the church that:

"We need to affirm the core of historic Reformed orthodoxy as we shape our understanding of, and response to, uniquely twenty-first century challenges. As we maintain our faithfulness to orthodoxy, however we must keep an equally strong emphasis on our theology and context"

Furthermore, this practice of excluding certain church members from the Eucharist, owing to discipline, seems to be common also in some other African countries. Mnene

(2013:1) writing from Lutheran Church context in Kenya points out that, 'the use of sacraments in enforcing church discipline is an ecclesiastical tradition practiced in mainline churches'. In support of this widespread practice, Godfrey (1997:22) contends that 'if a Christian community does not exercise and submit to discipline, then here is no true church'. It is interesting to note that whilst advocating strict church discipline, Mnene (2013:2) is aware that in practice something is amiss and thus argues that:

"The mainline churches need to explore the heritage of ecclesial discipline. The study is to create insight and awareness for African clergy on how the use of sacraments in church discipline is a challenge to mission work of the church".

Mnene (2013:1) further explains the adverse effects of withholding sacraments as form of church discipline and points out that, 'the emphasis on denial to sacraments for legitimate members is contributing to a high loss of church membership to nominal Christianity'.

2.4.2.3. Loss of Divine Blessings

Richardson (2001:93) argues that by neglecting discipline, the church stands to lose the blessings and favour of God. Aba (1998:317) maintain that a life contrary to the gospel message of Christ, contradicts the liturgical Eucharistic effect. Worgul (1976:162) argues that there that there is no birthright to membership in the church and that 'membership is a commitment, and actions commensurate to the gospel of Jesus Christ'. Sproul (1983:184) contends that we can invent a God who forgives everybody without repentance and all such avenues are, established in delusion. Mutetei (1999:107-128) further puts emphasis on the fact that God designed the church to be a true family and therefore strict discipline must exist.   Mutetei finds support in Aridas(1998:19) who argues that 'pastors would be remiss if they do not address a church's rationale and methods of discipline as part of a church's new membership program'.

For Richardson (2001:95) adherence to strict discipline is, not optional nor negotiable and the reasoning is that lack of discipline 'might breed contempt from those exempted from it and the church might be despised'. De Koster (2001:256) reminds the church that discipline due but ignored is not love but sentimentally, love's counterfeit. According to Mutetei (1999:121), 'any discipleship process that fails to introduce the importance of discipline as a guide to spiritual maturity denies the new convert a very important truth about Christian life'. For those who support strict disciplinary measures, Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ. They further argue that cheap grace justifies the sin and yet costly grace saves the sinner.

2.4.2.4. Alienation of Core Members

Richardson (2001:97) points out that faithful members might be alienated by failure to institute discipline. One can concur in that lack of discipline may be, seen, as a weakness in addressing misconduct properly, and effectively and thus putting a congregation into disarray. Aridas (1998:56) argues that 'institutional decisions may put the organization at great risk, but if ignored, the institution will fragment, suffer serious decline or fail to realize its full potential'. According to de Retz, (1997:35) that which is necessary is never a risk and Spurgeon once said, 'there must come with the decision for truth, a corresponding protest against error. Osborne (2002:43), cautiously points out that risking taking is not an option if we want to be effective in ministry. However, it is vital that those risks are prudent.

2.4.2.5. The Witness and Prophetic Authority of the Church

Richardson (2001:102) maintains that 'the church's witness before the world might be, compromised and its authority to speak to social ills might be weakened'. Indeed, respect for the church is at stake when there is an absence of discipline. Neff (2005:35) adds on to say, Christians should no longer walk as the rest of the world as they are made alive in Christ and then obviously sin should be removed. Dever (2013:67) maintains that, the church must manifest the glory of God, and display the moral nature and righteousness of God to the world. De Koster (2001:13) attests to this and maintains that, when discipline and Christian standards of living are relaxed, the church ashamedly finds itself looking no different from the world. Catherwood (1980:31) reminds us that, it is the duty of each generation to re-examine its attitudes by Christian standards.

Mutetei (1999:127) maintains that, the pastor should deliberately present the theology and benefits of church discipline, emphasizing how it works toward the purity and witness of the church, its doctrines and the testimony of God. For Frame (2006:19), theology is the application of Scripture, by persons, to every area of life and Nichols (2005:33) points out that 'both a good theology and a good ethic, both doctrine and lifestyle, constitute faithful Christianity'. Olivier (2004:89) concurs with Frame and Nichols and points out that theology is the process, doctrine is the product, a transformed life is the goal and Ryle (1998:49) adds to say, teachings of Scripture on morality and church discipline should have a sanctifying influence on the character. Neff (2005:36) also reminds the church that 'confronting a brother or sister with their sinful living is hard, but most assuredly, confronting the Lord with complicity in subduing the testimony and efficacy of His church will be much harder'. For Robertson (2007:78), the theological integrity of the church should be, maintained.

2.4.3. Arguments Opposing the Practice

2.4.3.1.   Predisposing Factors

Youth pregnancy is a widespread social illness and a challenge to both church and society. It is, perpetuated by predisposing factors (such as a dysfunctional family, peer group influence and pressure, socio-cultural environment, and so forth). These are, explored in both the theology and empirical chapters. For now, the focus is on family dynamics and peer group influence. Furthermore, it is common knowledge that circumstances of misconduct vary tremendously. It is for this reason that, Lindgren (1983:126) points out that, 'church leaders must always be conscious of the complexity and the multiplicity of forces that, contribute to every person's present condition'. This calls for flexibility without losing credibility in matters of church discipline.

Indeed, a narrow approach instead of a broader one creates more problems than finding solutions. This traditional disciplinary approach has a weakness and Pattison (1988:55) points out that:

"Use of threat and punitive measures to obtain conformity is about restrictive control. Care and control are often inseparable where one individual or group has some power over another".

There is a vast difference between a punitive discipline and restorative discipline. Mnene (2013:2) points out that, 'the practice is punitive, humiliating and denies the holy sacraments to mostly unwed women and children out of wedlock'. Of paramount importance is to keep the balance between care and discipline. That pastoral care must be, underpinned by love and compassion. Long (2001:15-24) explains the worship activity as providing time and space for communion with God and human community. The author is not opposed to church discipline and cannot promote negligence in such crucial matters of conduct. Of great concern is how discipline is, exercised in a pastoral situation. It is interesting to note Laney's definition of church discipline (1985:14):

"Church discipline may be broadly defined as the confrontive and corrective measures taken by an individual, church leaders, or the congregation regarding a matter of sin in the life of a believer".

A confrontational approach to church discipline often raises issues of attitude, sensitivity and justice in the process. In a confrontational approach, attitude is a primary factor that determines not only the outcome but also the impact of the discipline (whether it is negative or positive). Mutetei (1999:16) takes this argument further and maintains that:

"The successful outcome of church discipline is not only dependent upon the right kind of action being taken, but upon the right kind of attitudes exemplified by disciplinarians

as well as the disciplined. The question of attitudes is crucial, for it can either make church discipline work or break its redemptive power".

Concerned with the prevailing attitude in exercising church discipline, Lauterbach (1998:108) argues that, 'we are not to be a prosecuting attorney set to hold an inquisition'. Equally perturbed by the nature of discipline as of current practice, Uhalde (1997:74) reminds us that:

"There are boundaries between ecclesiastical rigor and spiritual decline, episcopal responsibility and personal liability, public humiliation and private confession, divine and worldly justice, expectation and practice".

MacArthur (2003:237) reminds us that 'the purpose of church discipline is not to embarrass people but to help them restore a healthy relationship with God'. Indeed, as restoration is the goal, then forgiveness and unconditional acceptance are consistent with the shepherd model portrayed in Christ's ministry. Joining the discussion on exclusion from active participation, in the Eucharist due to disciplinary action, White (1999:19) argues that, 'sacraments at heart are the offer of forgiveness of sin whether given in baptism or constantly repeated in the Eucharist'.

Furthermore, a question can be asked, why wait for a gross misconduct to happen in order to enforce discipline. Being proactive is better than being reactive. It is for this reason that African pastoral theologian Mutetei (1999:121) maintains that, 'the discipleship process should introduce discipline in Christian conduct as a guide to spiritual maturity'. Mnene (2013:4) also argues that, 'the church can avoid the use of sacraments in disciplining the lapsed, by engaging more seriously in the work of teaching, nurturing and counseling its members towards spiritual maturity'. De Koster (2001:255-256) joins the conversation and maintains that:

"Formative and corrective discipline ultimately converge upon the universal form of discipline as expressed in Protestantism, preaching the Word. Exposing error in the light of Scripture and helping the individual Christian to grow in godliness".

Surely, withholding sacraments as, a way of punishment does not solve the social problem that has reached epidemic proportions. According to Poling and Miller (1985:12), 'the formation of Christian community requires a facilitative style that is not hierarchical and authoritarian but inclusive and self-critical'. For Jones (1980:93), every authority exercised within the church, should be in conformity to Christ and Lindgren (1983:102) reminds us that, 'orthodoxy as commitment to formulas from the past is, now scorned in the religious world because it is seen as, chained to archaic ideologies, insensitive to human need, and enforced in history by intolerance and oppression'.

Whilst there is an element of truth in Lindgren's argument, we cannot dismiss completely the past as irrelevant whereas there is something of value that can be, retained if need be. Therefore, readiness to listen to the voices of the past should be in order to respond to new challenges in new contexts. Lindgren (1983:102) further argues that, 'if Christian orthodoxy turns the joy of the gospel into sour legalism, then it is not really orthodoxy, nor is it the apostolic proclamation'.

It is with this in mind that, Lindgren (1983:24) argues that, the church must not prejudge persons on, the basis of their past deeds, or of their present condition. This eliminates the static, fixed program or canned approach to the work of the pastor. Surely church leaders are to be in tune with the pulse and heartbeat of the congregation and serve with a purpose. Clifford (1998:76) maintains that, 'the minister's intimate and personal knowledge of the congregants is the foundation of the minister's ministry to them'. This pastoral calling to be a people's person is very crucial because it eliminates the barrier between the shepherd and the flock. Lindgren (1983:124) further argues that:

"A person-oriented approach is thus to be preferred to a program or problem-centered approach. To deal with the problem and ignore the person is like taking an aspirin to reduce fever and ignoring the inflamed appendix which caused it".

2.4.3.2.   Family Structure and its Influence

A number of sociologists agree that family is the primary unit of the meaning that shapes and defines reality. According to Browning (2007:47), 'it is the family, that provided deep secure roots in the past, holds vision for the future, a sense of purpose and a set of priorities for the present'. It is for this reason that Lindgren (1983:129) points out that, 'personality is, formed in relationships, with the family exerting the greatest influence because of the formative nature of the relationship'. However, Browning (2007:47) points out that, modernity and globalization have changed the context of human relationships.

The family is the first of all social support structures and if it is dysfunctional, the teenage boys and girls from such families become vulnerable to any kind of negative influence. Speaking from a Ugandan context in Africa, Sabika (1998:69) points out that 'vulnerable young people from dysfunctional families easily get involved in promiscuity and premature pregnancy'. It is clear that lack of open communication about sexuality within the African family context contributes to this social problem as young people who lack guidance are easily, influenced. Onyongo and Onyongo (1984:23), point out that, the constrained communication between parents and children makes the latter to be vulnerable to outside negative influence. Darling (2003:28) brings another dimension to this communication impasse and points out that:

"Social media provides a platform for young people to share what they really think, liberating them to communicate their thoughts in ways they might be uncomfortable in front of parents or other influencers".

A disadvantaged family background does contribute immensely to this social scourge. It is not surprising Clinebell (1984:32) points out that, 'human personalities are, formed and deformed in relationships'. With this in mind, one can say that, though family is the most important primary group in society, it is also the most permanent and the most pervasive of all social institutions. Smith (2012:5), argues that 'God gave the responsibility of rearing children to parents, not to the church'. Though there is an element of truth in that statement, a counter argument is that, the church is the second family structure characterized by love and care and reaching out should run in its veins. Furthermore, at times the dysfunctional element is beyond the control of parents as it is, necessitated, by external forces. Therefore, it can be argued that parenting should be, measured by the efforts of parents and not by the outcome of children.   Joan (2015:17) reminds us that:

"Modernization has put pressure on those young people who want the freedom to escape from the shackles of the family and demand rights of individuals, causing the youth to reject authority of parents to control their behavior".

Maina (2014:203) explains the gravity and sensitivity of this problem and points out that, 'the spirit of well-balanced family life that Africans used to know in the past has been shattered and thus weaker units and social disaster have been, created'. Indeed, the church must respond pastorally to this crisis as it is, expected through its prophetic voice to speak to the issues of the time and through diaconate ministries that offer practical assistance. Brennan (1990:ix) argues that we need family consciousness in parish ministries. Given this dysfunctional reality of so many family units in this country South Africa, and the rest of the continent, pastoral theology should be more developed to address these challenges. As the popular culture influences sexual behavior of young people, it remains a challenge to the church to have a holistic approach to this epidemic social problem. There is nothing more controversial and sensitive for discussion in our culture, than the issue of sexuality. Pastors and church leaders must be intentional about addressing issues confronting young people. Catherwood (1980:43) sounds a warning board and points out that:

"A church which does not grapple with these new situations is in danger of encouraging its members to lead a life of double standards, one of traditional Christian morality in the church, and another for weekdays".

2.4.3.3.   Group Pressure

It is common knowledge that peer pressure is an additional key factor in adolescent pregnancy. African sociologists, Odetola and Ademola (1985:7071) warn us that the influence of the peer group can be as powerful as that of the parents. This implies the young person must conform to the norms and values of the peer group. Young people should have a moral compass and avoid temptation to follow prevailing norms (prevailing popular culture). Indeed, if they do not stand up for something, they are vulnerable to fall for anything.

Speaking out of extensive experience as a church pastor, the author points to three explanations (among many reasons) why young people often succumb to peer pressure. On the one hand are those without a sense of individuality and moral principles. Giving in to conformity means compromising one's principles. On the other hand, are those who fear rejection or ostracism and for this group, Odetola and Ademola (1985:11) warns that, in the absence of courage, one's inner is lost. Like all other people, the young generation, have choices and those choices have consequences. It is for this reason that Trokan (1997:151) maintains that 'values are the driving force which motivates human beings and provides criteria for shaping our lives and choosing action or inaction'.

Pattison (1988:42) explains that 'when decisions of others are, imposed, a situation of power disparity is created' and further argues that 'because of disparity, the dominated often feel conflicted when deciding how to make regular choices and personal decisions'. According to Irvin (2007:61), group thinking often results in poor decision-making because the creative ideas of non-conforming people are, excluded or silenced from the group. Trokan (1997:151) points out that, 'clarifying our values enables us to unravel our core beliefs and basic worldview' and Frenz (1993:73) warns that, 'group conformity and group thinking are of the potential hazards of group cohesiveness'.

Frenz (1993:84) further contributes to the discussion and points out that, group conformity happens, when members adopt similar behaviors, in attempt to fit in or to reduce disagreements. Indeed, group thinking happens when individual group members lose the ability to think for themselves and they rely on the group to make their decisions. African sociologists Odeola and Ademola (1985:70-71) point out that, the influence of the peer group can be as powerful as that of the parents. Surely, too much emphasis on cohesiveness instead of individuality is unhealthy for any social structure (family, friends and so forth). It is unhealthy because members of a peer group are under duress to conform to the norms and values thereof. According to Houghton (2009:81-82):

"The sadness of conformity is that young people are pressured by family and friends to look and think like everyone else. Acceptance of being different and of the differences of others enhances life, intolerance diminishes it".

Small (2001:39) points out that 'it is important for young people to celebrate their uniqueness and, avoid the dangers of conformity'. The dangers of conformity are, well summed up by Houghton who argues that:

"Conformity is really a tradeoff between being, accepted by others on the one hand and losing part of your real identity on the other. Conformity is forcing a person to be someone they are not. When everyone is expected to be the same they often lose a sense of themselves".

Feigelson (2004:57) joins the conversation and maintains that, for many, to conform means denying something essential about themselves. A person who suppresses a really, important part of their self in hopes of conforming can harm themselves psychologically. One can argue that, this psychological impact can harm the creative capability of young people, thus retarding their growth into thinking critically and defending their religious beliefs and moral principles. A negative aspect of conformity is that people (young) are not to grow as much and show all that they are capable of

In putting this problem into perspective, a pertinent question is: What is the responsibility of the church in terms of preparing young people to maintain their identity as Christian and to protect their space against negative influence. One of the weaknesses of youth church program is, explained by Mabala (2011:157) who points out that:

"Youth ministry in Africa is done in the same way as development, it is not context specific and because it does not take into account the real wishes (needs) of the young people themselves".

Smith (2009:31) argues that old ways of reaching teens with the gospel are no longer effective. Times have changed and so must our methods of youth ministry. He argues that our response will dramatically affect the future of our churches. This discussion is, concluded with the words of Guma (2013:62) who reminds us that 'inspirational and transformational leaders empower people to reach their potential and destiny'. This calls for leadership creativity and the author concurs with Brennan (1990:4) in that 'imaginative dreaming is a well spring of great, bold new visions for congregations'. Lastly, the sociologists Odetola and Ademola, also mention six specific functions of influence performed by the peer group. These are discussed in the theology chapter and further unpacked in the empirical chapter.

2.4.4. Research Question

The research question is focused on members of the congregation partaking of the Eucharist without unnecessary restrictions. This does not imply a free for all without spiritual preparation as required of this sacrament. The author concurs with Mutetei on the necessity and importance of church discipline, however disagrees with him on two points. Firstly, in its very nature, the church offers a space for unconditional love and acceptance and therefore excessive discipline or disciplinary methods that go to the extremes distort the image of the church as a loving and reconciling community. Ostracizing those who go astray is in fact relegating them to the margins of church life. Secondly, church discipline is not the only effective instrument to perfect the church. There are other equally important spiritual disciplines to take into consideration.

Given this undisputable fact, church leaders need to be realistic about life and its challenges and equally exercise flexibility as guided by pastoral wisdom. Poling and Miller (1985:27) point out that 'there is a need for sensitivity in ministry, which involves deep awareness of the context, acceptance of the values and limitations of one's leadership style'. When the church is obsessed with punitive disciplinary measures without offering space for forgiveness, then justice is not done. Hewitt's question about forgiveness (raised earlier on), calls for a proper understanding of the purpose and goal of church discipline.

2.4.5. Liturgical Theological Reflections

It is, often said that a youth is the pride and precious asset of any nation because they are future leaders. In responding to Kretzschmar's earlier question about whether the African church has moral stature, the author argues that the church needs to reclaim and exercise its prophetic ministry without any fear. The church remains one of the respected institutions in the African community and therefore still has the potential to influence social mentality and guide the moral compass of the nation.

It is, often stated that the purpose of church discipline is not punishment but correction. However, in some churches, including the congregations under investigation, what is, declared on church discipline and what is practiced cannot be reconciled. Hewitt (1996:35) reminds us that 'in many societies today, the Church has lost the capacity to welcome, accept and minister to the prodigals'. The pertinent question is what happens after church discipline. What are the pastoral systems in put in place to care for these vulnerable young women? Pollard (1996:244) reminds us that:

"Our role as leaders involves more than just what people do. We also must be involved in what they are becoming as whole people and how the church environment is contributing to the process".

In a confrontational approach, the element of sensitivity is often lost if not obscured and Lindgren (1983:24) points out that, 'the pastor must respect the dignity of persons as they are, not as he wishes they might be'. In a confrontational approach, the means seem to justify the end. It is clear that, the process of church discipline needs great pastoral care and diligence. For Phillips (1986:50), the discipline of church members demands creativity. Hurtado (1999:47) maintains that 'religious enthusiasm is more effectively cultivated and maintained through collective acts of affirmations and celebration'. It is for this reason that Lindgren (1983:124,139) points out that, 'inability to relate to persons is the greatest single cause of ministerial ineffectiveness'. No pastor can adequately minister to the needs of the people without knowing them as persons and understanding them who they are. Indeed, there is a concern about those who have from fallen from grace and seek acceptance and hospitality within the Christian community.

The author argues that, though the church is a custodian of Christian morals, it is not a community of faultless or infallible beings. Acceptance and care for those who are, caught up in weaknesses should be both a leadership and congregational priority. Any church leadership needs to be, reminded that Luther once said that, grace is, given to heal the spiritually sick, not to decorate spiritual heroes. For the author, a lot of intolerance and rigidity are a failure to understand grace. It is for this reason that White (1999:22) further points out that 'sacraments are seen largely in a moralistic framework, reminding us of the past work of Christ but rarely seen as present encounter with him today'.

2.5.   The Church and Customary and Polygamous Marriages

Recognition or disapproval of the different types of matrimonial unions by the Church in Africa and South in particular, remains a pastoral dilemma and the new trends referred to in chapter one create a theological challenge. Modern day sociologists are debating this one question, who has the authority to define what family is and what are its functions and responsibilities? Given the diversity of race, ethnicity, economic background, geographical location and so forth, there can be no single definition. Given the modern times and its impact on family as a social structure, Anderson (1988:149) argues that:

"The family is not a fixed sum. It is always in the process of becoming something. Adaptability is therefore an essential characteristic of a family's capacity to move toward a future in which God is always making something new".

Uzukwu (1996:58-59,) points out that 'integration of African customary and Christian marriage is best served not by yet another study commission on polygamy, but by

ecclesial decentralization in a truly inculturated communion ecclesiae'. Theologians, a'Nzeki (Kenya) and Obot (Nigeria) (1998:63) argue that the African Church has failed to integrate traditional and Christian rites of marriage

Without disputing the arguments or points of clarification raised so far, Murdock (2003:46), gives a broad explanation in terms of types of families (categories). It is family by authority in the form of patriarchal family, matriarchal family and democratic family. It is family by structure in the form of nuclear family and extended family. Given the scope of this research, only family by authority and structure is, discussed and the focus is on customary and polygamous marriages.

2.5.1. Critical Questions

The argument for Smith is, what kinds of marriage the church should or should not bless?

In writing about customary marriage and advocating for its recognition, Ngundu (1998:35-36) raises the following questions.

•   Whose marriage would African couple have broken, since the Bible does not sanction church marriages?

•   Which of these three worlds (traditional, civil and westernized culture) has a right to declare an African Christian couple married?

•   At what point should a couple married by African custom, be recognized as married in the sight of God?

•   On what grounds do the Church leaders publicly discipline African Christian couples who consummate their traditionally contracted and celebrated marriage before a church wedding takes place?

In addressing the role of African Christian theology on matters of culture and tradition, Iwuchukwu (2006:1) raises a relevant question.

•   When will the African cultural worldview contribute to the mainstream of Christian theology?

Concerned with biblical orthodoxy in communal worship and contextual relevance, Pinson (2009:5) poses a question.

•   How do we remain biblically rooted in our corporate worship without becoming culturally irrelevant?

Having the welfare of African women at heart and seeking to address their religious challenges and struggles for social change, Oduyoye and Kanyoro (1992:11) want to know.

• What responsibilities do women have in the structures of religion?

• How does religion serve or obstruct women's development?

2.5.2. Arguments Supporting the Practice

2.5.2.1. The Legal Power of Customary Law

It is not within the scope of this thesis to engage in an expert debate on the ramifications of customary law. The main aim in this discussion is to highlight the legalities surrounding customary and polygamous marriages from an African perspective. In discussing (briefly) the laws governing customary and polygamous marriages, Green (1999:105) points out that, the purpose of law is 'to maintain peace and order, to define the rights of citizens, to secure justice, to harmonize conflict interests'.

Speaking from a Nigerian context, Narebor (1993:37) maintains that 'customary law is a rule of conduct, which is customarily recognized, adhered to and applied by the inhabitants of a particular community in their relationship with one another'. This explanation finds support in Mukoro (2004:33) who points out that 'customary law is the rule in a particular area that has attained the force of law due to prolong use'. According to Badaiki (1997:84) customary law is a body of customs, accepted by members of the community as binding upon them.

2.5.2.2. African Culture and its Benefits

Africa as a continent has many cultures, and all have something substantially common and hence the author uses the words African culture. Before engaging in a discussion about social and traditional practices of any community, it is necessary to define what culture is. According to Hofstede (1991:35), 'culture is a concrete social phenomenon which represents the essential character of a particular nation' and for Karenga (2002:79), 'culture is the totality by which a people creates itself, celebrates, sustains and develops itself'. Damen (1987:367) gives the following definition:

"Culture is shared human patterns or models for living, these patterns and models pervade all aspects of human social interaction. Culture is mankind's primary adaptive mechanism".

From these few simple explanations, one can safely say that the primary purpose of culture is, to establish guidelines for life (thoughts and practice) and to determine the destiny of a people. Only the community practicing such culture and tradition has the authority to define and shape its values, beliefs, social structures and thought patterns. It for this reason that Ensionwu (2006:12) points out that 'culture is, a community property and must therefore be community-protected'. It is with this thought in mind that Lindgren (1983:129) reminds us that, persons cannot be, understood apart from their social and group relationships.

What is of relevance to this study is the connection between culture and religion, with a specific focus on African culture. Durkheim (2008:39) as father of modern sociology points out that 'religious identities are tied to societal (or tribal) identities and vice-versa'. Phiri (2013:68) attests to this and confirms that African culture and religion are inseparable. Given this interconnectedness between culture and religion, Molefi (2009:376) argues that, 'the Western conception of African religion was a misconception from the beginning, one that added to a general misunderstanding of the nature of African ways of life'.

Wilson (2008:16) defends African culture based on what it has to offer to those who practice it and points out that, 'what makes it African culture is that it operates in the interest of African people, is, designed to advance African people'. From a theology and culture perspective, Iwuchukwu (2001:2) supports Wilson and points out that, 'African theology has substantially and successfully advocated issues that are unique to the African people as well as issues they share with the rest of humanity'. According to Ensionwu (2006:17), African culture as practiced by the community offers its members ultimate security and ideological identity. This argument of Ensionwu finds support in Cones (1990:111) who maintains that, 'every generation of Christians should find out what constitutes its identity and seek to be empowered to live out in the world'.

2.5.2.3. Socio-Economic Resources

Fuligni (2007:98) points out that:

"In Africa, the extended family is a long established institution which provides its members with sophisticated social security system, an economic support to meet their basic needs and a wide circle of relatives on whom to fall back in times of crisis".

For Tubman (1998:49) this means, 'leave no brother or sister beyond the enemy line of poverty'. Indeed, a nuclear family cannot preserve itself against unemployment, sickness, old age and bereavement without the support of the extended family. Odetola and Ademola (1985:47) attest to this by pointing out that, it is imperative, in African value to extend help to people (blood relatives). This serves as a form of social security

and social welfare. Magesa (2012:285-288) concurs by saying, 'sociability in the sense of hospitality, open-hearted sharing constitutes the primary ethical demand of traditional religion'. The role of the family, in social and economic empowerment is very crucial. For Silliman, (20012:3) family members demonstrate resiliency, when they build caring support systems, and solve problems creatively. Patterson (2009:14) argues that family capital is instrumental for the provision of physical resources (food, clothes, shelter etc) and the affective roles of the family are concerned with promoting emotional support and encouragement. Welsh (2003:12) joins the discussion and points out that, these strengths and resources enable individuals to respond successfully to crises and challenges.

2.5.3. Arguments Opposing the Practice

2.5.3.1. The Challenge of Patriarchy

With regard to African cultures and traditions, the role and rights of the father come into play. The author is, aware of the controversy and questions around African cultural and traditional practices. In writing about the role and rights of the father in a patriarchal system, Murdock (2003:51) points out that:

"Patriarchal family is father-centered or father dominated family. He exercises authority and is the administrator of the family property. In family matters, he is the final voice and opinion. All major family decisions are, taken by him. Nobody has the authority to question him".

No doubt, hierarchical and non-consultative decision-making goes against collective decision-making and mutual respect in a marriage set up. Recognition of human dignity and value of others and clear communication can bring not only convergence of family thoughts on issues but also promote harmony. In speaking against dictatorship and suppression of one's opinions, Van Belle (1999:44) argues that:

"A marriage in which one partner dictate the terms of agreement and where the other obeys without questioning lacks intimacy. Marriage is two individual personalities with differing ideas, needs and expectations of life, constantly recommitting themselves to do things together in a complementary way".

Molefi (2009:84) supports Murdock's argument and maintains that 'patriarchy is discriminatory in its control of access to power, management of resources and benefits, manipulation of public and private power structures'. The role of a father as described by Murdock, clearly indicates elements of totalitarianism. Ransby and Matthew (2003:62) argue that 'if black manhood is, defined uncritically as the right, to patriarchal heads of families, black women are by definition, relegated to a marginal status'.

Onyongo and Onyongo (1984:73) point out that the confused roles and authority within the customary or polygamous union creates marital tension. Brooks (1995:67) argues that the problem with polygamy is that it is primarily a structurally in-egalitarian practice both in theory and practice. Onyongo and Onyongo (1984:74) further argue that 'polygamy in particular as a desired measure of social success, gives males access to younger women and, promotes relegation of women to domestic labour'.

In such a system power and authority resides with the leader and the aspirations and opinions of wife and family members are of no significance. It is for this reason that, Cahill (2000:31) points out that, the fatherhood of God does not necessarily have to be, understood in patriarchal terms. Indeed, it can challenge human fathers to forego prerogatives that derive from their power over their dependents. Poling and Miller (1985:23) point out that 'women are conscious of these oppressive social structures, for these groups are revealing new insights into the nature of God and God's relationship with humanity'.

Patriarchal family system offers no emotional and psychological wellbeing of its members. It works for a selected privileged few and disadvantages others. The beneficiaries of this oppressive system are clearly spelled out by Watkins (2000:ix) who points out that 'males as a group have and do benefit the most from patriarchy, from the assumption that they are superior to females and should rule over them'. Of course, male superiority and its undeniable oppression of women in marriage cannot be, left unchallenged. Baloyi (2007:80) attests to this explanation of Murdock and points out that:

"Traditionally, in African culture, headship is, connected to authority and submission. The African's view of authority can be summarized as hierarchical, centralized and according to seniority or status".

2.5.3.2. Inequality

O'Neill (2003:14) argues that polygamy and customary marriage are inconsistent with modern notions of marital equality and human rights. Cahill (2000:125) also points out that 'the authority of men as such over women is not an appropriate standard for relations within the Christian family today'. According to Walligo (2006:208):

"The African family, whether traditional or contemporary, is still very hierarchical. The father figure is, still much feared by the other members of the family. The wife is, not yet given the full rights of equality".

Onyongo and Onyongo (1984:72) point out that the confused roles and authority within the customary or polygamous union creates marital tension. Molefi (2009:395) concurs

by saying patriarchy is an authoritative male system that is both oppressive and discriminatory. It is oppressive in social, political and economic environments. Molefi (2009:397) further argues that 'this pervasive notion which patriarchy has based its assumption of superiority has left an undeniable curse on women and it has always been and still is the ultimate reason for the oppression of women in society'. Brooks (1999:54)) argues that the problem with polygamy is that 'it is primarily a structurally in-egalitarian practice both in theory and practice'. Onyongo and Onyongo (1984:57) further argue that polygamy in particular as a desired measure of social success, 'gives males access to younger women and promotes relegation of women to domestic labour'.

Nasimuyi-Wasike (1997:25) maintains that there is a need to 'recover the original will of God for equal partnership and mutual relationship between man and women. Oduyoye (1998:176) concurs by saying there is a need 'to explore traditional matriarchal values to determine which aspects might be woven into new forms of equitable relations between men and women'.

Speaking as an African woman theologian and on behalf of African women, Oduyoye (1992:10) explains the power base of authority and submission and points out that, 'equality as a concept cannot be applied to African culture, since role differentiations in Africa are clear and are not meant to be valued hierarchically'. In an age of democracy, it is not only strange but also disappointing that there are still social institutions that practice oppression. For Baloyi (2007:224-225), the solution to this problem is to deal with systematic oppression of women and hence maintains that, we need to challenge 'all systems that promote the subordination of women therapeutically and theologically'. Being a helpmate means being equal.

Walligo (2006:208) further argues that, 'we must create a vision of an African family where equality is, guaranteed, clear sharing of responsibility is, accepted, the clear option for the disadvantaged members is made, and deadly tensions are eliminated'. In the interest of emancipating African women from oppressive cultural practices in marriage, Snyder (1983:42) contends that, justice is required that women enjoy equality with men in all spheres of life. The promotion of equality between men and women appeared natural and overdue. From a woman perspective, Oduyoye (1995:82) maintains that,

"Women seek to discard these negative aspects of culture. Women seek full humanity and some principles to guide their lives in community. The meaning of full humanity cannot be, defined by only a sector of humanity. What constitutes, oppression of women should be, defined, by those who experience it".

2.5.3.3. Psycho-Social Challenges

These psycho-social challenges are characterized by emotional detachment, stigmatization and reactionary behavior. Oduyoye and Kanyoro (1992:16) highlight the fact in most African customary and or polygamous marriages the victim spouse often develops symptoms that constitute stress, anxiety and emotional detachment. Indeed, the psychological damage often leads to poor self-image or poor self-esteem and eventually lower self-confidence. Women are unique from men and their emotional response functions differently. Van Vonderen (1997:107) reminds us that 'when a person's self-esteem shrinks and finally disappears totally, the person actually disappears also'. The role of the church in reaching out to victims of psycho-social challenges is, explained by Edet (1992:36) who points out that:

"It is mandatory for the church or Christianity to address itself to African women's issues so that the liberation power of the Word, may liberate women from unnecessary psychological, economical, and political shackles".

A Kenyan theologian a'Nzeki (1998:67) points out that, traditional marriage is not recognized by Canon law in the Roman Catholic context. This is not only a Roman Catholic problem as many other Protestant mainline churches (without Canon law) are equally guilty of victimizing parents (or couples) in customary marriage and stigmatizing the innocent children who had no choice to be born in such a family system. Children born in customary and polygamous marriages are, considered by the Church to be born out of wedlock because parents are living as concubines. This is an insult when one considers the validity and authenticity of all the processes that are, duly observed within the provisions of African customs and practices.

This theological view on marriage also has impact on children born in that type of marital union. Grassow (2001:26) points out that, children in such marriages have legal rights but might be, called illegitimate by some Christian churches (including the congregations under study). Stigmatization of children borders on emotional abuse. It is strange that in the Declaration of Human Rights (2008:1), the stigma of illegitimacy has virtually disappeared but the church continues to discriminate against children that are considered illegitimate. Though Mace explains the originality of this problem from a Roman Catholic perspective, the argument points to the involvement of all denominations in matrimonial issues. Mace (1980:100) points out that:

"The serious mistake has been, to treat marriage theoretically and to make rules and regulations, often put together by celibate monks and priests, which simply do not relate to the interpersonal realities of everyday lives of husbands and wives".

With this historical problem at hand, and finding a way forward, Grassow (2001:39) maintains that:

"We need to find a new way of discovering marriage and family life in a way that gives life to broken people, rather than becoming the impossible ideal that only condemns people with its judgment of their shortcomings".

The discussion thus far, creates an unpleasant picture of a customary or polygamous marriage. These negative attitudes cause anger and emotional turmoil and give rise to unpleasant reaction in children. Onyongo and Onyongo (1984:66) point out that the negative reaction in children to polygamy is especially acute when in teenage years and more so when they need parental support through difficulties of adolescence. It is for this reason that Baloyi (2007:257) argues that:

"The church must reach out to battered women and their children in order to therapeutically work with them towards healing. The message of hope must be brought to their attention".

Furthermore, a solution to this problem of women devalued in marriage and children faced with frustrations, finds expression in the words of Cahill (2000:1) who points out that:

"A cultural ethos of narcissism points men in the wrong direction, away from mates and children. This ethos must be shifted toward greater concern for the common good, and near to home, a greater sense of responsibility for family ties".

The author concurs with O'Neill (2003:17) and argues that 'African culture does not operate in the interest of the African woman and her children when it comes to polygamous marriage'. This is, supported by Dwane (1989:127) who points out that:

"Men may not easily appreciate what it costs a woman to share her husband and the father of her children with several wives. When wives of a polygamist compete with each other and quarrel frequently, this is not a manifestation of petty jealousies, but a loud reminder, for the realization of basic human need and right, especially on gender and equality".

2.5.4. Research Question

The overriding research question is about extending the sacramental ministry to all members of the congregation without preconditions. Evans (2009:13) points out that 'it is far more difficult for those coming out of the Western context to see clearly the issues of culture and religion in Africa'. The author's pertinent question is: according to whose' ethical standards and theological prejudice are African women in customary marriage

judged and their children marginalized? The sacramental rights of these African Christian women are enshrined in the Baptism and initiation into the Christian community. Grassow (2006:79) points out that 'children in such marriages have legal rights but might be called illegitimate by some Christian churches' and further argues that.

"We need to find a new way of discovering marriage and family life in a way that gives life to broken people, rather than becoming the impossible ideal that only condemns people with its judgment of their shortcomings".

For Pinson (2009:5) the question is, 'how do we remain biblically rooted in our corporate worship of God without becoming culturally irrelevant? Evans (2009:27) argues that 'African theology has explored and examined the cultural issues and background of the African peoples' and therefore:

"The agenda is to move radically from one of changing African cultures and societies to fit Christianity as perceived from a Western perspective, to a renewed agenda of seeing Africa through the light of the Gospel.

Ela (1986:26-27) maintains that, there is a need for 'a theological reconstruction of Western theology which has failed to take African tradition into account and also a rediscovery of the wholeness and integrity of life inherent across African cultures'. Indeed, there are implications of contextual theology for understanding Christianity as a religion. In addressing models of contextual theology, Bevans (1992:26), contends that there should a clear understanding between faith and cultures. 11. According to Dedji (2003:2-3), the three key components of theology are 'adaptation (adopting African elements into Christian theology), incarnation with cultural emphasis (inculturation), a political one (liberation and as a theology of reconstruction)'.

Surely, how contextual theology works in practice is of critical importance for any pastoral-practical theologian. Gordon et al (2008:82) points out that, 'the Pauline list of sins, never contain cultural items, only moral ones (sexual immorality, idolatry, drunkenness, greed etc)'. Evans (2009:30) points out that 'by examining postmodern culture through the lens of African theology, we gain new insights in our mission to preach the Gospel afresh to this new generation'.

2.5.5. Liturgical Theological Reflections

It is necessary to state categorically that the African cultures have never sanctioned co-habitation. On the contrary, there is an emphasis on marriage that is, blessed by the two families (having met the requirements) and recognized by the community (having satisfied what culture dictates). According to Uzukwu (1996:91), 'the value formation of

African cultures has, been continuously ritualized for hundreds of years and cannot be regarded as irrelevant'. For the author, the controversy is twofold. Who decides what constitutes marriage? Is it Western cultures and their theologies or is it the customs and traditions of the African community? Of great concern is who has the authority to define and shape the values, beliefs, traditions, social structures, behaviors and thought patterns of other people as an outsider (a stranger).

Furthermore, can the church afford to support a theology of marriage that raises questions and have the audacity to stigmatize innocent souls (the children)? There is a need for a relevant contextual theology on marriage and according to Bevans (1992:1)

"Contextual theology can be defined as a way of doing theology in which one takes into account, the spirit and message of the gospel, the tradition of the Christian people, the culture in which one is theologizing, and social change in that culture".

Hopefully an ongoing academic research and ecumenical dialogues will continue address this pertinent problem. For now, it suffices to mention that the equality of all types of marriages is entrenched in the democratic constitution of the Republic of South Africa as a sovereign state. In view of this undeniable fact, Maina (2009:2) argues that, the Christian faith has to address the changed cultural setting in Africa. Indeed, it is to the changing times that theology should be conversing. Though African cultures and traditions are rooted in patriarchalism, there seems to be a paradigm shift in our modern times. In connection with these ongoing shifts in cultural patterns, Maina (2009:108) reminds the Church that 'theology has a dynamism that reflects the people's, changed attitudes and times. A critical analysis between theology and local traditions is always an ongoing process'.

Dwane (1982:19) has an insightful contribution to this discussion, and points out that, 'what is, described as the African religious heritage is, not a monolithic unchanging corpus of beliefs, ideas, practices, but something much more piecemeal and fragile'. Though speaking from a Western context, Pecklers (2003:95) points out that, all cultures need to continue to evolve and be dynamic. The elements of evolution and dynamism connote that cultural and traditional practices are not opaque or static.

2.6.   The Eucharist and Dress Code

As already alluded in chapter one, women are required to put on headgear during Holy Communion and this is enforced as something compulsory. In scrutinizing this questionable practice, one finds that it is not so much required of men and thus promotes preferential treatment, which can be, interpreted as discrimination against women. Hubbner (2001:96), reminds us that 'positional power in the church can also be

engaged to oppress persons or manipulate them toward that which violates their best interests or even the common good'.

2.6.1. Critical Questions

Clowney (1995:24) – what do the Scriptures teach about the form and function of the Church of Christ?

What constitute modesty and respect for God?

Is this act of piety, only confined to a set of liturgical time, specifically for the celebration of the Holy Communion?

Byars (1989:19) asks the following relevant questions.

•   By what authority does anyone decide what is appropriate for Christian worship and what is not?

•   What constitutes modesty and respect for God?

•   Is this act of piety, only confined to a set of liturgical time and specifically for the celebration of the Eucharist?

In writing about clothes and physical appearance, DeMoss (2003:11) raises the following thought provoking questions.

•   Who decides what I will wear and why?

•   In what way is communication of the Christian message dependent on one's appearance in terms of clothes?

•   How is reflecting the glory of God, connected to one's wardrobe?

In addressing Christian modesty as a matter of the heart, Beaver and Beaver (2010:17) ask the one question.

•   Is modesty, defined by culture, church or the Lord?

Arguing that modesty is more than a change of clothes, Peace and Keller (2015:9) ask a question that calls for a probing into this matter.

•   Who is more mysoginistic, those who treat women differently due to their feminity, or those who force women to give up their feminity?

Having the welfare of African women at heart and seeking to address their religious challenges and struggles for social change, Oduyoye and Kanyoro (1992:11) want to know.

• What responsibilities do women have in the structures of religion? How does religion serve or obstruct women's development?

2.6.2. Arguments Supporting the Practice

2.6.2.1. Religious Modesty

Beaver and Beaver (2010:31) argue that, today with sensuality permeating our culture, in a rapid advance, there has never been, a greater time for scriptural guidance, on modesty. Shalit (1999:43) joins the conversation and highlight the fact that, today's culture takes away feminine mystique and replaces it with a crudeness that is offensive to all those with decent sensibilities. Peace and Keller (2015:23) joins this debate and maintain that, if young women are not taught the truth about the gospel reasons for modesty, they often form opinions and habits that are difficult to change.

Vaughn and Vaughn (2005:26) are also protagonists of religious modesty and they point out that 'cultivating virtues in the face of vulgar culture is necessary because people have become desensitize to immodesty'. According to Pollard (2003:74), we need to embrace God's standard and to understand 'the historical roots of immodesty in modern culture'. Shalit (1999:44) continues to maintain that, lack of modesty has led to extreme disrespect or violence towards women and without modesty women feel no safety from men who feel that there is no reason to respect them. The author argues that, it remains the responsibility of women, to maintain their womanliness and feminity, without resorting to dress codes, that perpetuate self-imposed oppression. Women do not need men to validate them. Giving men that power of approval would be denying their gender identity.

Shalit (1999:43) further points out that 'modesty brings out the best in women because modest women live in a way that makes womanliness more a transcendent, implicit quality'. In writing about the delicate power of modesty, Gresh (2011:19) highlights the fact that, modesty is about revealing dignity and therefore modesty in dress is the logical corollary of an internalized ethic of good behavior. For the author, modesty should not be about gender wars. Indeed. Modesty (expressed in dress code) does not offer protection against men (vulnerability of women). The author argues that, true modesty should take into account the inescapable differences between men and women in order to protect them both. Above all, the violation of people's personal choices and invading of their privacy in the name of religion cannot be theologically justified.

The author finds it strange that, in the identified congregations, this modesty is required on Communion Sunday. A question is, then asked, is modesty as virtue that needs to be, promoted determined by a specific liturgical time and gathering? Furthermore, is this practice not encouraging a double standard whereby the women can live as they deem fit and yet put on Sunday manners to please the church leadership. Inconsistency is one weakness that the church cannot afford to promote.

The critical questions raised earlier on find answers in De Moss (2003:16) who argues that 'there is a need for framework for thinking through this issue that does not involve legalistic checklist but does involve taking seriously, what a huge responsibility women have, as they make clothing choices'. Maina (2009:58) cautions against detrimental teachings and maintains that, there is a need for a dialogue that would ensure that 'teachings in the church are not dictations from the clergy and hierarchy but that they emanate from the whole church as the body of Christ'.

2.6.2.2.   Religious Obedience

Enforcing a particular of dressing up for church for women (and excluding men) is in fact a violation of women's rights and equally an attack on their intelligence and dignity. Restricting women from active participation in the liturgical sacramental life of the church under the pretense of obedience to the Bible is a matter of pastoral concern. In arguing against unorthodox teachings that perpetuate female oppression and dehumanizing women, Snyder (1983:225) points out that:

"This unscriptural teaching that oppresses women is based on the hermeneutical understanding of certain biblical texts. These texts have been used in many a church to disempower women and silence the women's voice to the advantage of the male folk".

Men's regulations do not hold water in the light of Scripture. Mudimeli (2014:269) reminds us that 'the position of women in the church today is, influenced by perceptions that people hold, either from a religious or cultural perspective' and Lenkabula (2008:7) argues that:

"The church tends to justify its refusal of women's participation by resorting to theological arguments and biblical texts that are life-denying and promote violence against women. While others, resort to regressive aspects, of African culture that discriminate against women".

The author argues that, women need to think theologically, be resolute in their decisions and unapologetic in their actions. Assertiveness is being confident and thus challenging clerical and male domination in the church. It is a mode of communication characterized by a confident declaration or affirmation of one's point of view without threatening the

rights or positions of others and not permitting others to ignore or deny one's rights or point of view. Samuel and Sugen (1987:225) argue that 'the church must change those systems that oppress the people (women in particular) and rob them of their dignity and freedom'.

2.6.3. Arguments Opposing the Practice

2.6.3.1. Enforced Conformity

The ensuing discussion does not, in any way condone provocative dressing that is offensive. Indeed church leaders need to take note of what Beaver and Beaver (2010:18) in that, today with sensuality permeating our culture in a rapid advance, there has never been a greater time for scriptural guidance on modesty from a balanced perspective. Communal conformity is a form of mind control and for Catherwood (1980:67) there should be a combination of freedom and accountability

However, in the context of the identified congregations, the problem is, disguised as exhortation about religious modesty and biblical obedience whereas the reality of the matter, it is enforcement of men made regulations. Indeed, the women group is the most marginalized in church. According to Uzukwu (1996:26), this problem is more of a reality in churches 'whose structures can be, called the study of hierarcheology'. In explaining the term ecclesia as the people of God, Doohan (1984:1-61) advocates 'a theology of laity that seeks to position their indispensable role in worship'. The author argues that the teachings of Vatican II remain useful in correcting attitudes of leaders in hierarchical positions and challenging structures that limit active and free participation of women in liturgical worship. Long time ago Russell (1974:85) discerned this problem of manmade tradition and argued that:

"Liberation theology's aim is to search into tradition and history which is necessary to operate at all interlocking levels of investigation and interpretation in order to provide a way of escaping a fated world in which the future has been closed off by the established traditions of certain men"

In speaking against the chains of oppression (suppressed feminity) and being a religious activist, Gresh (2011:17) points out that 'modesty is not about hiding ourselves, it is about revealing our dignity'. The need for godly perspective on modesty (inside and out) and, a clear conscience on modesty in the public arena, has never been greater.

2.6.3.2. Preferential Treatment

The discriminatory practice against women needs a scrutiny seeing that it is not required of men. Special treatment and favoritism is, often informed by prejudice.

Krajewski (2012:74) explains that 'prejudice is an unsupported generalization about a category of people and being prejudice leads to stereotyping and this leads to judgment'. This stereotyping involves negative beliefs about women and seeing them as weak, a source of sexual temptation, should be submissive, attend to domestic activities and so forth. Indeed, when rules and restrictions are, applied selectively and discriminatorily, it creates division as to the advantaged selected few and disadvantaged powerless majority. The frustrations of women and other groups in the identified congregations constitute a crisis in sacramental ministry.

To enforce a practice on one group (women) and apply laxity on the other one (men) is not only strange but a clear contradiction and it promotes preferential treatment. Partiality, often result in a disjointed look at the problem and lack of acknowledgement of dissatisfaction by affected parties creates tension. This tension creates a liturgical climate that is not conducive for sacramental ministry. It is very important for church leaders to have an undivided attention and focus in order to see things as they really are. Concerned with the spirituality of a faith community and its sacramental celebrations, Schaefer (1996:18) reminds church leaders that, the Bible continually emphasizes the fact that greater the privilege, greater the responsibility and accountability (Luke 12:48).

2.6.4. Research Question

The research question also covers women who are deprived of Eucharist rights because of stipulated dress code and citing the Scripture as the basis for the practice. One must distinguish between principle and specific application and be alert to less obvious cultural differences between the first and twenty first centuries. Smith (2012:649) maintains that, 'we should do nothing to distract from the worship of God (principle), but wearing of a veil in a liturgical assembly (specific application) would certainly be a distraction'. Grassow (2006:85) points out that 'it is necessary to address what appears to be a contradiction in Scripture and how it is interpreted and Pinson (2009:6) argues that 'It is important to determine the cultural options open to a writer during the first century'. With this in mind and as a pastoral practical theologian, one can conclude that the argument about modesty or religious obedience as a biblical imperative is in fact male dominance and sexism defended in biblical terms. The author concurs with Genovese (2000:26) in that:

"Justice is required that women enjoy equality with men in all spheres of life. The promotion of equality between men and women appeared natural and overdue".

2.6.5. Liturgical Theological Reflections

The congregational policy about compulsory headgear for women and sanctions against pants (or women trousers) originates from imposition of African norms and values on corporate worship. It is also directly linked to a questionable interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11:3-6. A predominantly male congregational leadership poses a hindrance because of its great influence in decision making about liturgical sacramental matters. Indeed, this enforced arbitrary practice calls for a rectification as the women in question are, excluded from active participation in the Eucharist.

Given all the arguments thus far, one can conclude that, proof texting, biasness and lack of consistency to biblical interpretation are issues that need pastoral attention. Using Scripture for proof texting has never been a method of argumentation and cannot guide theological deliberations. Proof texting of any kind, will radically distort if not negate the Biblical tradition as a whole. Church leaders are required to bring every liturgical practice to be in accord with scriptural tradition. When there is a balanced, and a fair interpretation of Scripture, there will be harmony in a congregation and the sacramental ministry will be, held firmly together (without disintegration).

Biasness goes against the basic qualities of leadership and in the church, it does not auger well for the sacramental ministry. Church leaders cannot have a negative attitude and discriminatory inclination against individuals or groups because such a behavior constitutes unfairness. It is for this reason that Wogaman (2001:97) reminds us that 'we cannot preach about love un-lovingly, it is a self-contradiction' and Tisdale (2010:43) joins the discussion and emphasizes that 'we cannot fake love in the pulpit'. Biasness often influences decision-making and can sway church leaders in a direction that is not profitable for all stakeholders. Restricting women from active participation in the Eucharist, on the basis, of dress code is a gross violation of their liturgical sacramental rights. Greenwood (2002:20) rejects such a pastoral mentality and points out that:

"We choose to ignore parts of the scripture that do not fit our self-understanding. We give more weight to evidence that supports our view of church and consistency of belief".

Consistency of belief is only possible when there is strict adherence to the provisions of Scripture without any additional unbiblical instructions. This arbitrary practice calls for rectification. Scripture should speak for itself without being misconstrued and misinterpreted. This calls for accuracy in interpretation, without contradictions. Sound theological teaching on the abused text can yield some significant results in resolving the issue of compulsory headgear and sanctions against women wearing trousers (women pants). Indeed, literary criticism, historical reconstruction and theological analysis are the cornerstone of exegetical preaching. It is only then that, theological views and pastoral actions can be compatible to the teachings of the Bible.

2.7. The Sacraments and Village Congregations

Maina (2009:67) points out that 'small Christian communities build their members spiritually through the Word of God, the sacraments and daily prayers and any misconceived threat is due to a disconnection between the minister and the congregation in question'. Bate (1998:93) argues that there should be an explosion in collaborative and lay ministries. Dialectically related to these trends are some emerging theological perspectives, which are influencing sacramental theology. These trends are, explored in the theology chapter.

2.7.1. Critical Questions

Leithart (2003:26) has two critical questions:

•   Is these liturgical reason or support for the desecration of laity, and especially lay leaders?

•   What pastoral liturgical norms can be employed to eliminate divisions between ordained leadership and laity and between social classes in the congregation?

According to Aba (1998:317) – what are the ethical implications of taking part in liturgical actions as demanded by the second Vatican Council?

For O'Loughlin (2018:13) the question is:

•   Is sacramental ministry dependent on the vocation of the priest, who then ministers, or a community need provided from within that community in union with the larger church?

With reference to the doctrine of the Church and its practical implication for a Christian community in a specific context, Clowney (1995:24) asks a question:

•   What do the Scriptures teach about the form and function of the Church of Christ?

2.7.2. Arguments Supporting the Practice

No church can abandon its village congregation and live with a clear conscience. Therefore, there are no solid or valid arguments against providing ministry (in particular sacramental ministry) to those congregations in distant places. Often it is all about raising issues of geographical distance and availability of clergy.

2.7.3. Arguments Opposing the Practice

2.7.3.1. The Scarcity of Ordained Clergy

The scarcity of the ordained clergy and the infrequent celebration of the sacraments and the frustration of the laity constitute a sacramental ministry in crisis. Steinmetz (1983:47) points out that 'the Church exists as a covenant community before a pastor is called and Bunting (2004:36) reminds us that, 'the church does not create itself but is the community of the new covenant, rooted in the gifts of God and especially the celebration of the Eucharist'. With this in mind, Brennan (1990:ix) points out that, parish is where action is, and yet when it comes to spirituality and faith, the parish is experiencing difficulties due to shortage of priests and drop in the quality of the liturgy.

According to Boersma and Levering (2015:650), baptism and Holy Communion are essentially communal events and together with the read, preached, and sung Word of God, they continually create and mark the church. Clowney (1995:101) joins the conversation and maintains that 'the ministry of the Word and Sacraments is a perpetual mark and characteristic of the Church'. Lathrop and Wengert (2005:39-40) also explain that, a church is a coming together of God's people for a specific purpose and point out that, a gathering is church, 'by the presence of the marks of the church, namely, baptism, preaching holy supper and an ordained ministry'. The discussion so far, points to the centrality of the sacraments in the liturgical worship of a gathered assembly.

2.7.3.2. Congregation's Affordability

The financial costs of having a resident ordained minister in village congregations and the adverse impact on sacramental ministry is a serious concern. Unemployment contributes to many of the socio-economic challenges. Reader (2008:14) points out that, 'victims of the system, without stability of work are living on the margins of society'. The practical implication of this challenge is, spelled out by Talltorp (2016:220) who argues that 'the access to the Eucharistic life has turned out to become a matter of economy and it means no income, no priest and no priest, no Sacraments'. Masilo (2014:206) joins the discussion and maintains that 'unemployment should not, only be seen as a mere social problem but also as a social weakness as it undermines the people's integrity and social strength'. It is for this reason that Talltorp (2016:220) asks a very thought provoking question that:

"The poor are largely deprived of the Sacraments because priests are so expensive. The Church cannot refrain from facing the realities of pauperized Christians, who have to live in a situation of spiritual malnutrition".

Talltorp (2016:220) further argues that 'the consequences of a rigid adherence to the stipendiary system as the only possible model should be criticized' and in support of this

line of reasoning, Bate (1998:47) suggests one as he maintains that 'there should be a broadening of the field of ministry and not just a response to clergy shortage'.

2.7.4. Research Questions

The research question also considers the sacramental deficiency in village congregation where there is infrequent celebration of the Eucharist and Baptism for children. O' Loughlin (2018:79) points out that 'there is a challenge in seeking to increase the number of deployable clergy when there is a serious decline in clerical numbers'. The author argues that theological reflection and reflective practice invites us to careful consideration of what we do, and of our ministry to others, in the light of the gospel. According to O'Loughlin (2018:80)

"It is an incorrect assumption that actual communities when gathered for the Eucharist are a function of the number of clergy. The number of ministers is secondary to the location and size of the communities who are in need of sacramental ministry".

Pinson (2009:7) reminds us that 'Christians should ponder over things in the light of encounters with real-life situations'. Indeed, our theological viewpoints about clergy and laity in sacramental ministry are, constantly challenged by what we meet in real-life. According to Pinson (2009:8), 'the role of lay priesthood is straight forward and yet one of importance to the reforms of Vatican 2' and Kavanagh (1970:199) reminds us that 'all Christians share the priestly ministry through their sacrifice of self'. Dulles (1978:21) maintains that 'the subject matters on which theological reflection focuses are not the doctrinal themes of theology but great ministry problems of the day. Surely, challenges, call for constant revision, enhancement and renewal. O' Loughlin (2018:81) correctly points out that 'insufficient clergy is provoking a massive pastoral and so a sacramental reorganization'. No doubt, how we reflect theologically on this challenge depends on how we understand the importance of sacramental ministry. For Smith (2012:653), 'our pastoral practice and theological reflection nourish each other enabling us to grow both as pastors and as effective leaders in the church'.

2.7.5. Liturgical Theological Reflections

The task, at hand is, to address the acute shortage of ordained ministers and the infrequent celebration of the sacraments. Availability of the few ordained ministers is, coupled with the question of financial costs. Village congregations have no financial viability. Therefore, without financial muscles, they cannot afford a minister and consequently, financial incapacity affects frequent access to sacramental ministry. Wilkinson (2005:286) points out that 'inequalities, shame of poverty are a threat to one's social position, economic security, standard of decency and therefore damaging'.

The current situation in the identified congregations, calls for new models of sacramental ministry. A discussion on new models shall be in the concluding chapter (new theory for praxis). For now, it suffices to say these models should be a catalyst that, stand to reverse these negative trends. Billings (2010:9), maintains that 'if the church is to survive its current crisis of identity and remain viable, the ordained ministry must reconsider its priorities'. Indeed, to reinforce these new models, it will also require new concepts of pastoral leadership and ministry.

Collaboration or partnership with the laity as suggested by Bate needs to be considered seriously given the acute shortage of ordained clergy in the congregation under investigation. However, a concern about how this, collaboration works in a church context is, raised by Kung (1990:75) who argues that:

"People like to talk of the participation of the laity in the life (not decisions) of the Church. They also like to speak of the participation of the laity in the decisions of the world (but not of the Church). They do not like at all to speak, at least in official binding documents, of the participation of the laity in the decisions of the Church".

2.8. The Sacraments and the Liturgy of the Word

2.8.1. Critical Questions

In articulating the mission of the church and the theology of the social gospel, Haights (1988:15) raises two pertinent questions:

•   Does the Church have a mission to the social institutions of the political and economic spheres that structure our common life in a pluralistic society?

•   Can one justify theologically a public mission of the Christian churches to society?

In writing about Missio Dei in Word and Sacrament, Schatauer (2011:326) asks two critical questions:

•   How does worship in the local congregation enact and serve God's purpose for the whole world?

•   In what way does this shape the practice of worship?

Other Pertinent Questions

•   What are the theological sources and liturgical resources that can be used to engage the congregation in its mission task?

• Is there any justification, theologically of a public mission of the Christian churches to society?

2.8.2. Arguments Supporting the Practice

2.8.2.1. Privatized Spirituality

Haight (1988:490) points out that:

"The Church's spirituality has to change from one that separates Christian values off from everyday social, political and economic life to one that sees the spiritual value of everyday life itself".

The church does not need unreflective enthusiasm that often expresses itself in spiritual escapism or disengagement from the world. Bratchner (2001:67) argues that:

"The church cannot despair of any solution and retreat in spiritual escapism. Nor can it stick its head in the sand and attempt to retreat to a mode of operation that is problems.

Newbigin (1989:222-223) argues that, salvation in Christ is not the escape of souls from this world but the transformation of the world to become the kingdom of God on earth. Aba (1998:315) argues that in the Christian religion, there is no room for escapism and thus points out that:

"Liturgy is not an art that is isolated from the day-to-day activities of man, it is not an abstract science which has no reference to people's life situation, rather it is a culture of life that transforms and reflects the inner realities of human being".

2.8.2.2. The Gospel Imperative

Nash (1984:9) maintains that 'the Gospel of Jesus is the Gospel also for the oppressed in society, therefore, the church of Christ cannot be for other people, but for the society (for all people)'. It is for this reason Kretzschmar (1988:77), argues that 'liberation theology must be seen as an aspect of the gospel and an attempt to emphasize God's concern for the oppressed'. Moore (2015:37) joins the conversation and maintains that 'we need a church that speaks to social and political issues with a bigger vision in mind, that of the gospel of Jesus Christ'. Haight (1988:489) contributes to the debate and maintains that 'the church is defined functionally precisely as an agency that fosters the deeper religious grounds of social life'. Indeed, the gospel is precisely a social gospel. Wells (2011:xiv) who reminds the Church that:

"Every generation faces the challenge of bringing the central events of the Christian faith face to face with the pressing issues of the day, and responding to these issues in ways that are faithful to the Gospel".

Hewitt (1996:17) maintains that, it is a challenge to us as Christians to discover anew the Gospel for our times. Indeed, there has to be a conscientious conviction in carrying out the gospel imperative. This conscientious conviction should be based on the fact that, all of humanity is, created in the image and likeness of God. Furthermore, the role of church leadership is instrumental in carrying out the gospel imperative.

2.8.3. Arguments Opposing the Practice

Evangelicalism sees the Great Commission as the number one gospel priority. The danger of evangelical conservatism is that it separates salvation from the other equally important needs of humanity (thus spiritualizing the Great Commission). Newbigin (1989:227) warns us against separating personal spirituality from the way we live and the issues we address in the community. A compartmentalized approach to mission work raises critical questions because the potential disciples live in a real socio-economic-political world.

It is interesting that the very Great Commission is in fact a serious call to come out of the comfort zone of the church and reach out to the world with the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ. Willard (2012:12) points out that the church is for discipleship and discipleship is for the world. Indeed, the church exists for the sake of the world and Lindgren (1983:79) argues that 'God's mission is not primarily about getting more involved in what churches are doing, but getting churches more involved in what God is doing in the world'. In addition to introducing people to Christ, there should be a concern for serving others and caring for creation. Bakke (1987:152) points out that God heals the world's brokenness and opens the way to restore fully the original intent for the world, including humanity's role in co-creativity. According to Willard (2012:9), 'Christians participate in the mission of God through every activity of life that expresses God's creativity, sustains God's creation and cooperates with God's redemption' and Helm (1987:1) reminds us that both clergy and laity have an equally important role in God's mission. No doubt, the church's compassion for the brokenness of the world and the ethical demands of the gospel are enough motivation and challenge to play an active role.

2.8.4. Liturgical Theological Reflections

The researcher cautions against extremes of neglecting the importance of spirituality because of community social engagement on the one hand, and avoidance of social responsibility in the name of religious correctness or piety on the other. It is with this concern about balancing priorities that Newbigin (1989:222-223) warns against, 'separating personal spirituality from the way we live and the issues we address in the community'.   Leaders need to articulate a clear understanding of the nature, purpose

and mission of the church. According to Chan (2006:22), 'the creation narrative becomes the basis for understanding the nature and role of the church in God's mission'. The church needs to recover a balance, first in terms of its mission as the people of God in the world, and second, in terms of the practice of ministry considering that mission.

For Willhauck and Thorpe (2001:41), individual expression of one's faith cannot be, separated from group allegiance. Individualism is an antithesis and as such opposed to thinking and acting communally. The church needs to rearticulate, an understanding of the communal nature of our community of faith. Individuals in the community of faith cannot separate their response to God from their communal life. Fuellenbach (1995:76) points out that 'worship accepts the simplicity of faith together with the complexity of life'.

Chapter Three

Literature Review

3.1. Introduction

Literature review is a critical component of any research study. It is done through a collection of the most relevant and significant publications regarding a researcher's topic in order to provide a comprehensive look at what has been said on the topic and by whom. Indeed, a review of past work provides a researcher with a sense of what has been done in the field. Cooper (1984:9) points out that, 'there is a huge increase in the amount of research being conducted in social sciences (and related disciplines) and therefore trustworthy accounts of past research is of paramount importance'. The author's aim here is to examine how each publication contributes to the discussion and understanding of the topic and also indicate how the author enters the academic conversation and establishes one's position in the context of existing scholarships. The purpose of literature review is well explained by Creswell (1994:2021):

> "Literature review shares with the reader the results of other studies that are closely related to the study being reported. Literature review relates a study to the ongoing dialogue in the literature about a topic, filling gaps and extending prior studies".

In this research study literature review is important for a number of reasons as it accomplishes several purposes. First of all, it seeks to demonstrate that the author has a firm understanding of the research topic. Indeed, this provides credibility and integrity to the study's overall argument. Secondly, by reviewing and reporting on prior literature, weaknesses or shortcomings become more apparent. This assists in finding or arguing for a particular research question to explore and why further research is needed. According to Boote and Baile (2005:14), 'literature review identifies under-researched areas'. With this in mind, this review synthesizes the literature to provide new insights and advance the author's field of research.

3.2. The Approach and Scope

The primary focus of this literature review is on the two sacraments namely baptism and the Eucharist. The sacraments are of the most controversial aspect of Christianity. According to McGrath (2017:28), 'the two theological questions that have caused considerable debate within Christianity relate to baptism and the Eucharist'. Lee (1987:33) points out that, 'the subject of the sacraments is always difficult because presuppositions are entrenched and yet they need to be constantly evaluated'.

The main aim is to present sufficient description of similarities (convergent views) and differences (divergent views) on sacramental practices. These ancient and contemporary theologies of sacraments are incorporated in the theology chapter. The secondary focus is on worship and liturgy. Sacraments are celebrated within the context of worship and with liturgy providing structure. The author has consulted scholarly sources that provide an overview of worship and liturgy. The approach is a critical summary and its aim is to state its general findings. What follows is an attempt to summarize the worship and liturgical landscape of each historical period from New Testament era to modern times. The author concurs with Boote and Baile (2002:15) in that, 'themes work out the logical order to present information and an outline is a map with subtopics as signposts that give direction towards a conclusion'.

3.3. Other Critical Matters

Other critical matters relevant to this literature review are also discussed. White (1999:13-27) points out that, 'the Church in Africa and other major parts of the world have inherited a sacramental tradition from European countries'. The research study is focused on the administration of the sacraments in African Presbyterian congregations within the context of South Africa and within the bounds of Pretoria in particular. These congregations have a sacramental theology and a unique expression of sacramental ministry. Through this literature review, the author hopes to find relevant information on the subject matter, new insights and sustainable solutions gained on African soil. It is of paramount importance to have a continental understanding of the gains and losses related to the problem under investigation. For example, through academic research

work, Mnene (2004) has addressed the theme of sacraments and church discipline in Kenya.

3.4. A Brief Overview

The author has chosen White (1999) as the primary source in addressing the historicity of sacraments within the Protestant community of faith wherein the Reformed tradition is positioned. It is not the intention of the author to engage in an archeological reconstruction of both liturgical and sacramental history of the Church. Reeves (2001 :15) points out that, "the attempt on a history of the views on the sacraments is a great challenge given the timespan that stretches over fourteen hundred years". The author has consulted scholarly sources so as to avoid presenting a history that is not fairly accurate or give a wrong impression about the liturgical-sacramental life of the Church in ancient times. Of great importance is to gather a general understanding of the doctrinal perspectives on sacraments at that time. Chan (2006:207) argues that, 'the sacramental liturgy must be shaped by what constitutes the church so that the average Christian is not distanced from historic Christianity and from what it means to be a member of a global body of Christ'.

The focus is on a brief description of those historical periods wherein there was intense debates or discussion on the sacraments (for example the sixteenth century). Horton (2017:119) points out that, 'the debates were over the importance attached to the sacraments'. From the wide range of literature consulted, one can conclude that, the major differences were caused by theological understanding of sacraments and the practices thereof. The author is fully aware of the limitation of such a restricted probe. Weil (1983:20) argues that, "one historical period cannot offer the unquestionable model for all aspects of liturgical and sacramental practices".

First of all, the lack of detailed sources in New Testament times means there was no complete picture about Christian worship. Christianity was at a formative stage and worship practices came out of this process of development. Basden (2004:15) points out that, 'whoever looks to the New Testament for liturgical uniformity meets just the

opposite. Indeed, there can be no comprehensive understanding of the liturgical practices of any worshipping community in any historical period based on fragmented information. The scenario in early Christian centuries is different because of the increase in liturgical sources. When content and form are established, it is easy to liturgically assess and theologically analyze the worship of any given Christian community of faith. According to White (1998:14), 'the primary liturgical document in any period is the worshiping community itself'.

In the Middle Ages there were tremendous developments in and outside the church and theses impacted on Christian worship. The introduction of laborious ceremonies to the liturgy of the church drastically changed Christian worship and in fact planted the seeds of the Reformation. The danger of a ceremonial liturgy is that it can become an end to itself instead of being a means to an end. For the author, the beauty of any liturgy lies in its simplicity. What transpired in the church in the Reformation period is not without valid reasons. The liturgical practices of the past were now questionable. Heritage is good only when it provides the next generation with sound theological principles or guidelines in order to shape a liturgy that is life-giving and relevant to their own specific context and times. Heritage of any tradition should be interrogated. The good should be treasured and the irrelevant be challenged and discarded.

The twentieth century began with the waves of enlightenment and reasoning which affected all aspects of human life. In recent decades Christianity has not escaped new developments such as globalization. All of these have had an impact on Christian worship. The church is challenged to reinterpret its theology of worship and that can be done through critical reflection. This point is well articulated by Saliers (2012:289) who points out that, 'critical reflection on worship is a major form of practical theology'. De Villiers (2008:312) reminds us that, 'the Reformation was primarily concerned with the content of the theology of baptism and the Lord's Supper'.

A Roman Catholic theologian Kavanagh (1987:189) maintains that, 'worship is the primary source and stimulus of Christian theology' and further points out that, 'there is a clear distinction between primary theology (worship) and secondary theology

(reflection)'. Surely, this reciprocal relationship shows the dynamic interplay between practice and reflection. Poling and Miller (1985:11) attest to this and point out that:

> "Theology is a reflection arising out of the living experiences of communities of faith and resulting in faith-informed interpretations that serve to guide the ongoing life and actions of those communities".

This point of discussion is further explained by Maina (2009:59) who contends that, in 'a fundamental way, theology is shaped by the community of the theologian'. Reader (2008:7) confirms this viewpoint and points out that, 'the use of corporate liturgy and the life of the gathered congregation are the primary source of theological reflection'. For Chan (2006:207) 'liturgical worship must be understood as embodied worship, worship expressed through a certain visible order or structure'. Indeed, we need to restore the significance of liturgy as it gives understanding to the form and function of the worship service. Irvin (2001:45) concurs in that 'the liturgy is quite properly the first sources and norm of faith from which correct teaching is derived'.

3.5. Vatican II and Liturgical Reforms

The Sancrosanctum Concilium is an important document about active participation of laity in the liturgy within the Roman Catholic Church. The Vatican II through its Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy put in motion a process of liturgical reforms which not only challenged the Roman Catholic community of faith globally but also impacted on all other major church traditions worldwide. An African Catholic theologian Uzukwu (1996:121) points out that, 'Vatican II Council instituted revolutionary changes'. The author also recognizes that this document was a hermeneutical key in the sense that there was a paradigm shift in the theology that influenced liturgical practices in the Roman Catholic circles.

Indeed, this liturgical reform was a hermeneutical key in that it initiated a paradigm shift in the theology that influenced worship practices in subsequent decades. The author also argues that, all major church traditions stand to benefit from the critical study of this liturgical document as it seeks to give sound guidance about full involvement of laity in

corporate worship. The main focus is on two key parts or sections namely, the promotion of liturgical instruction and active participation (14-20), norms for adapting the liturgy to the cultures and traditions of the peoples (37-40).

Since the advent of the Sacred Liturgy over fifty years ago, the author is on a quest to discover what liturgical innovations have been achieved since then. The author concurs with Kung (1990:47) in that:

> "We need a church of renovation and innovation. Renovation means renewal thinking that looks backward to rectify mistakes. Innovation means renewal thinking that looks forward to the demands of a new future".

3.6. The Church Fathers

It is important to give a demonstration of the original views of Church Fathers on sacraments. The trustworthiness of the Church Fathers and consequently their sacramental theologies is affirmed by McCarthy (2017:39) who points out that, 'it was in the proclamation of the oral tradition of the early community that their understanding of the work of Christ and therefore the work of the Church was developed'. Furthermore, on the one hand, Van der Zee (2004:162) points out that the value of the early fathers is that they offer a viewpoint that is close to the New Testament and not caught up in the controversies that occupied the medieval church. On the other hand, Byars (2000:21) reminds us that, the worship of the Church stems from a tradition that has its roots in Scripture and in the communities from which our scriptures emerged'.

With this in mind, it is crystal clear that working with authentic liturgical documents, the Church Fathers crafted sacramental theologies and liturgies that have stood the test of time. Indeed, given the access to the earliest liturgical documents and a fairly accurate interpretation thereof, one can admit that the Church Fathers have left a legacy of sacramental theology. This legacy can play a key role in reconstructing liturgical history with a view of understanding ancient practices that can have a good or positive influence in shaping our sacramental theology in the twenty first century.

The Church Fathers laid the foundational theories of sacramental ministry in the early formative stage of the Church. These theories were endorsed and later improved. In our times we can challenge or reformulate them. According to Robertson (2006:2), 'theories are tested overtime and are either accepted or rejected based on accumulating evidence'. Neville (1982:14) joins the conversation and maintains that, 'the best case can be made out for theories and yet are vulnerable to being overturned by a contradicting better case'.

Of paramount importance for contemporary theologians is to engage existing theories critically with an aim of crafting a liturgy that is informed by theology. It is for this reason Weil (1983:2-3) argues that, 'we cannot discuss sacramental theory and meaning apart from liturgical practice'. The author concurs with Stander (2004:45) in that the task at hand is 'to contribute to the theoretical and epistemological foundations of sacramental theology as a branch of theology'. Nipkow (2009:37) also advocates for the necessity of this exercise and thus contends that, 'the consequences in theory building lead to practical theology as a reconstructing and critical-hermeneutical theory'..

3.6.1. Augustine of Hippo

Augustine was an outstanding forerunner to the Reformation. To a greater extent, reformers like Luther and Calvin built their theologies on his work. The researcher is of the conviction that the Augustinian theology on the sacraments is more needed in our day and age than it was in his life time. Van der Zee (2004:165) point out that Augustine established the basic concept of sacramental theology and was influential to both the Roman Catholics and the Reformers.

Nichols (1991:88) reminds us that, Tertullian was the first theologian to use *sacramentum,* with clear religious meaning. Two centuries later Augustine wrote that signs which pertain to divine things are called sacraments. According to Humphries Jr. (2017:42), that broad meaning of the word continued into the Middle Ages. Indeed, Augustine remains prominent in sacramental theology discussions because he defined a sacrament as 'an outward and visible sign of an inward invisible grace'. For McCarthy

(2017:68), this is an immensely valuable addition to the contemporary works written about the sacraments. In any case, Augustine's definition is well explained by McGrath (2001:49) as follows:

> "A visible sign of an invisible grace means a physical doorway or gate to a spiritual reality. The sign has some resemblance to the invisible reality it points to. It has an efficacy. Sacraments bestow grace"

McCarthy (2017:69) contends that, 'our contemporary rich understanding of sacraments as Reformed tradition echoes Augustinian understanding of a sign of a sacred thing'. With this in mind, the author concurs with Gilgannon (2011:xii) in that, 'our sacramental perspective gives rise to liturgy as we respond to the actions God has taken in our world'.

On a different note, McGrath (2001:49) points out that, Augustine's definition was later questionable as it included the Lord's Prayer and the Creed and according to McCarthy (2017:70), Augustine used the word sacraments to other realities he considered sacred signs. First of all, the author argues that we need to give credit where it is due and do not throw the baby with the bath water. What is good in Augustinian sacramental theology should be retained and what is not relevant discarded. Secondly, there are no theologies of the sacraments that are perfect. All of them are an honest attempt to interpret the redemptive work of God in Christ and to guide the liturgical assembly in its corporate worship.

Finally, the unfinished business or remaining challenge for the church is raised by Holcomb and Johnson (2017:1) who point out that, 'though Augustine succinctly defined a sacrament, throughout church history there has been little agreement about the means by which this grace is given'. A statement that attempts to provide an answer comes from Holcomb & Johnson (2017:1) who point out that:

> "One of the means by which Christians receive the grace of God in Christ is the sacraments. Holcomb and Johnson argue that, in the prologue of the Gospel

according to John 1:16, it is about the incarnation of the Word of God, Jesus Christ. From His fullness we have all received grace upon grace".

3.6.2. Thomas Aquinas

Pecklers (2003:202) attests that fundamental to the theology of Aquinas was the emphasis that 'the Eucharist is and must be the center of Christian life and that our Church structures relate to it in a most profound way'. White (1999:16) point out that, the sacramental theology of the Protestant Reformers was greatly influenced by the statement of Aquinas. The latter emphasized that 'the power of the sacraments is from God alone who alone can institute the sacraments'. This gave a theological explanation to the recognition of only two biblical sacraments. Indeed recovering the centrality of the sacraments and creating structures that enhance this ministry is necessary.

Only one of Aquinas' views on sacraments is summed up in this literature review. Aquinas wrote: (1952) 3.6.5.3.

> "All other sacraments are ordained to this one as their end, systematically (because the Eucharist is the sole sacrament of Christ's substantial presence) and ritually (because nearly all other sacraments terminate in the table of the Eucharist)".

The author of this literature review finds it strange that, whereas Aquinas recognizes both the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist as dominical (instituted by Christ), singles out one and gives it the greatest importance. One can therefore make an assumption or preliminary conclusion that this elevation of the Eucharist has led to it being the most sacrament within Roman Catholicism. Without giving convincing or valid reasons, Mathison (2002:71) confirms that, under a variety of titles, this sacrament has been the central act of worship ever since. Concerning Christ's substantial presence in the sacraments, Marshall (1997:23) argues that, 'this presence has been variously interpreted in actual, figurative or symbolical senses'. However, the sacramental sense, as the memorial before God, of the sacrificial offering on the cross, has always been accepted.

3.7. The Reformation

3.7.1. The Context of the Reformation

According to McKee (2003:6), 'Protestant reforms were caused by dissonance between heritage (old practices) and new insights'. Horton (2017:119-131) points out that, the Reformation was not a revolution. Differences were due chiefly to the implications drawn from other key tenets of the evangelical faith. According to Prudlo (2017:233-258), there was a counter-reformation in the history of the Roman Catholic Church that dealt with the issues arising from the rise of Protestantism. Prudlo argues that, though changes were introduced, the Council of Trent (1545-63) 'left a few areas of Catholicism untouched and that included the understanding and practice of sacraments'.

According to Gordon (2017:261), 'it was in the Reformation that the church observed the maturation and refinement of the church's theology of the sacraments'. Webber (1994:110) joins the conversation and explains that, 'the Reformation was principally a reform of theology and inevitably a reform of worship'. Gordon (2017:269) further argues that, the Reformation disagreements boiled over to other theological disputes which are still persistent even in the twenty first century and the church is faced with the challenge of situating the sacraments within the social, cultural and theological shifts taking place at this time. Flanagan (1986:341) maintains that 'we need to avoid liturgies and rites that appear to have a persisting, excluding, alien quality that makes them difficult to cope with'. We need liturgies that can engage modern man, especially the young generation. Therefore, the author is in search of new liturgical insights that can be applied and sustained in relation to the sacramental ministry in the identified African Presbyterian congregations. However, the guiding principle in this review is good tradition and not just traditionalism in the church.

3.7.2. The Reformers

Augustine was a forerunner to the Reformation and to a greater extent Reformers like Luther and Calvin built their sacramental theologies on his original work. Each specifically laid a solid foundation which shaped Protestant Reformed sacramental

theology for centuries. Many of the theories, theological convictions and liturgical patterns in different church traditions in our modern times can be traced back to them. The literature review is focused only on two reformers namely, Martin Luther, John Calvin and Thomas Cranmer. There are interesting and relevant views from other great theologians such as Friedrich Schleiermacher, Karl Barth to name a few. They each represent their own tradition (Reformed).

3.7.2.1. Martin Luther

In *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (Vol. 36) of 1520 Luther provides his profound sacramental theology. Luther wrote:

> "According to its substance, therefore the mass is nothing but the aforesaid word of Christ in Matthew 26:26. I promise you in these words the forgiveness of your sins and life everlasting. I shall give you my body and pour out my blood, confirming this promise by my very death, and leaving you my body and blood as a sign and memorial of this same promise".

A comprehensive theology of Luther on sacraments is necessary. According to McGrath (2001:62):

> "Luther narrowed the definition of a sacrament and also pointed out four key elements namely, physical sign, pointing to a spiritual reality, resemblance to the reality pointed, efficacy to forgive sins and authorization by Jesus and documented in the Bible".

According to Zweck (2015:119) Luther argues that 'in the sacrament we too become united with Christ, and are made one body with all the saints, so that Christ cares for us and acts on our behalf' and Richardson (2016:77) points out that for Luther, our communion with Christ in the sweet exchange of the gospel creates a congregational communion.

3.7.2.2. John Calvin

Chapter 19, Book 4 of *The Institutes,* give a clear Calvinist theology on the sacraments. Mathison (2002:48) explains that, for Calvin, the sacraments are an outward sign by which the Lord seals on our conscience the promises of his good will toward us in order to sustain the weakness of our faith. Surely, this does not differ from Augustine's definition. Calvin's definition is further endorsed by the Heidelberg Catechism and Louis Berkhof respectively. The Heidelberg Catechism states that:

"Sacraments are holy signs instituted by God for us to understand more clearly the promise of the gospel, and might put his seal on that promise. This is God's promise to forgive us our sins and give us eternal life by grace alone because of Christ's one sacrifice finished on the cross".

Berkhof (1972:88) declares that:

"A sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ, in which by sensible signs of the grace of God in Christ, and the benefits of the covenant of grace, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers, and these, in turn give expression to their faith and allegiance to God".

Furthermore, in *The Institutes* Calvin wrote:

"We shall benefit very much from the Sacrament if this thought is impressed and engraved upon our minds, that none of the brethren can be injured, despised, rejected, abused, or in any way offended by us, without at the same time injuring, despising, and abusing Christ by the wrongs we do"

In engaging the first part of Calvin's statement, McNeill (1960:136) points out that, 'godly souls can gather great assurance and delight from this Sacrament, as they are called into one body with Christ'. The brotherhood and sisterhood as raised by Calvin is reinforced by Pringle (2009:335) who maintains that, 'we must first of all be incorporated into Christ, that we may be united to each other. The bread in the Sacrament represents unity'. In addressing the serious concerns raised by Calvin, Richardson (2016:77) asks a critical question that, what is the practical, pastoral effect of this twofold restoration? If

the Lord's Supper confirms our communion with Christ and with each other, how should we live together?'.

3.7.2.3. Thomas Cranmer

Null (2017:209) point out that, as a theologian, Cranmer was very much influenced by Erasmus' emphasis on the authority of Scripture as the original source for the Christian faith. According to Richardson (2016:44), Cranmer was chief liturgical architect of the English Reformation and that for Cranmer 'both sacraments tangibly present the gospel to the congregation. In both baptism and the Lord's Supper we not only hear the gospel but see, touch and feel it'.

Cranmer's view on sacraments finds support in Holcomb and Johnson (2017:220) who point out 'the bread we break and the wine we drink are chief spiritual nutrients of our body'. Thus Christ has ordained sensible signs and tokens whereby to allure and to draw us to more strength and more constant faith in him. Richardson (2016:17) joins the discussion and states that, for Cranmer, the sacraments physically portray the gospel that they nourish faith. According to Richardson (2016:17), Cranmer was similar to Luther and Calvin in that:

> "The common loaf and cup of the Supper signify our spiritual union not only with Christ but with each other. The bread and wine represent unto us the spiritual union and, bond of all faithful people, as well unto Christ, as also among themselves.

With regard to infant baptism, Richardson (2016:18) maintains that, Cranmer's confession and liturgy highlight baptism's corporate, congregational dimensions. This is evidenced by Article 29 of the 39 Articles on Baptism: In it Cranmer states:

> "Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference, whereby Christians are discerned from others that be not christened, but it is also a sign of regeneration or new birth, whereby as by instrument, they that receive Baptism are grafted into the Church".

The author concurs with Richardson (2016:19) in that, 'Baptism is not a private ordinance, but the front door into the local congregation, a mark of difference between the church and the world'.

3.8. Divergent Views on Sacraments

While both Protestants and Catholics agree on many essentials of the historic Christian faith, there are key issues which continue to distinguish their beliefs and practices. However, according to Bromley (1992:238), with regard to sacraments, positions are taken and defense arguments are made ready. According to De Arteaga (2002:28) many people confuse the historic Reformed view with Romanism because they are not aware of the differences, nor do they have a sufficient grasp of church history.

For the author of this literature review, at the table of the Lord should be where Christians find unity, unfortunately it seems there is more disagreement.

With regard to the one sacrament called by different names (Holy Communion, the Lord's Supper and the Eucharist) , Smith (2008:13) raises a thought provoking comment and a critical question. For Smith, a meal that is supposed to unite followers of Christ, it appears that they cannot even agree on what to call it. Smith (2008:15) further argues that, even if full agreement is not reached, can there be a better understanding of one another and this central observance of the Christian faith? The author is of the opinion that, vulnerability to have one's views and tradition critiqued by others is good and necessary.

The author concurs with Pecklers (2003:210) who points out that, "liturgical and sacramental theologians should not be threatened by constructive criticism. On the contrary, they should acknowledge the truth inherent in the critique". Indeed, mutual respect in any conversation or dialogue on critical theological issues is a sign of maturity. The sacramental views of other denominations and church formations should not be undermined. It is for this reason that Knapik (2006:6) points out that, not reactions but openness can serve as markers for examining assumptions and prejudices.

In a book titled *The Lord's Supper: Five Views,* Smith (2008) has managed to engage five representatives of divergent views on sacraments within the Christian tradition. The Roman Catholic perspective is offered by Jeffrey Gros (Professor of Church History). The Lutheran views are explained by John Stephenson (Professor of Historical Theology). The Reformed perspective is articulated by Leanne van Dyk (Professor of Reformed Theology). The Baptist sacramental views are offered by Roger Olson (Professor of Theology) and the Pentecostal views are explained by Veli-Matti Karkkainen (Professor of Systematic Theology). Each camp representative expresses their views with conviction and makes a case for that tradition. The value of this excellent work of Smith is that, it highlights significant areas of agreement and disagreement.

Holcomb (2017) like Smith, addresses the ancient debate regarding the nature and purpose of sacraments and paves the way for developing theologies of sacraments for present and future contexts. In his outstanding work, *Christian Theologies of the Sacraments: A Comparative Introduction,* a group of renowned scholars map the theologies of sacraments offered by key Christian figures from the early Church through to the twenty first century. These scholars provide a guide to the variety of views about sacraments found throughout Christianity. They show case the variety of approaches to understanding the sacraments across Roman Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox faith traditions.

In addition, Colwell (2006) offers a robust sacramental theology for Protestant churches. Through his work (*Promise and Presence: An Exploration of Sacramental Theology)*, Colwell maintains that a doctrine of the Trinity leads us to conceive God's gracious engagement with his creation as one that is mediated through that creation. This theory lies at the foundation for understanding of the sacraments. Louis-Marie (2006:49) maintains that, 'the sacraments reveal and restore our created nature as human beings who are related in love and made in the image and likeness of the Trinity'. This view is reinforced by Thompson (2018:27) who maintains that, 'God reveals his humanity in the form of the sacraments, lowering himself into corporeal and sensible means to guide

humanity toward spiritual and intelligible realities'. Colwell (2006:52) further argues that 'the Church and Scripture confer context, definition and validity on all other sacramental events'.

3.9. The Roman Catholic Perspective

In the Roman Catholic Church, communion is the most important sacrament. Clark (2001:55) points out that, according to the Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church, the Eucharist is the source and summit of Christian life. According to Ryman (2005:17), Roman Catholics believe in transubstantiation, the doctrine that teaches when the priest consecrates the bread and wine, they become the true body and blood of Jesus. Ryman (2005:19) further points out that, Ignatius wrote against heretics who did not admit that the Eucharist is the flesh and blood of our Savior Jesus Christ. According Bruce (2006:54), 'throughout the ages, via the church, academic thought leaders and various councils, the theology gradually was refined'.

According to Ryman (2005:18), the most sacramental churches are the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions, because they place great emphasis on the sacraments and accept a total of seven. In the Roman Catholic Church, there are seven solemn rites, called sacraments: baptism, confirmation, the Eucharist, matrimony, penance, holy orders and extreme unction. It is the Council of Florence (1438 – 1445) that fixed the number for Roman Catholicism at seven. According to Mathison (2002:38), 'this definition led to a Protestant narrowing of the number of acts identified as sacraments to two – baptism and Holy Communion'. The specificity about only two liturgical rituals is well articulated by Graham (2012:5) who argues that:

> "We must not dilute the religion of Christianity. Christ established the Church and commands particular rituals and when we add other practices then we fundamentally change Christianity into something that it is really not".

As a Roman Catholic, Veeneman (2017:352) contends that:

> "It is difficult to understand the sacraments without considering them in the context of the Catholic tradition. The sacramental principle found in the Catholic

tradition affirms that God's grace is pervasive throughout creation. The sacraments are events in the church in which God's grace is made present to the community".

The Roman Catholic believes these sacraments were instituted by Jesus and that they confer God's grace. According to Thompson (2018:39) the sacraments 'confer and signify the life, death and resurrection of Christ as efficacious signs of God's grace'. They are efficacious because in them Christ is at work. According to Thompson (2018:13),

"Christ instituted the sacraments and through the Holy Spirit gathers the Church into Christ's body. In the sacraments, Christ draws near, calling, nurturing and sending his disciples to preach the good news to all end of the earth. The Church is the visible hand of Christ's invisible grace in the sacraments".

For Rahner (2012:28), 'the Church is a visible continuation of Christ throughout history, and intrinsic symbol of the eschatologically triumphant grace of God'. Thompson (2018:29) argues:

"There are three key dimensions to the sacraments. Each sacrament echoes the Incarnation, a sacrament communicates the Word of God ritually, the sacraments effects unity and resist false autonomy".

de Lubac (1950:82) maintains that, 'since the sacraments are the means of salvation they should be understood as instruments of unity. Chauvet (2006:149) defines sacrament as God's Word at the mercy of the body and further maintains that, 'the sacrament is the Word mediated under the ritual mode, different from the mode of Scripture'.

3.10. The Reformed Perspective

Fesko (2013:52) points out that, the Reformed tradition, devote a great deal of attention to Sacraments, and consider their proper administration as a mark of a true church. The Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion are the only two liturgical rituals instituted

by Christ as recorded in the New Testament (Matthew 28:19-20 & 1 Corinthians 11:23-25) and practiced in the Reformed tradition. The sacrament of baptism is given to partake of this new life in Christ characterized as a new creation. The sacrament of Holy Communion is given to commemorate not just the death but also the redemptive work of Jesus Christ on Calvary's cross. These two sacraments are the cornerstone of the Christian faith.

Furthermore, the author is fully aware of the different emphasis and or approaches on sacraments by churches within the very Reformed community of faith and other major denominations, and Christian formations. Most Protestant Churches only practice two of these sacraments; baptism and the Eucharist (called Lord's Supper). They are perceived as symbolic rituals through which God delivers the Gospel. They are accepted through faith. Lundin (1993:17) maintains that:

> "Sacraments are such an important topic and thus the Reformed understanding of the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper is based on Scripture, articulated from Reformed Confessions and the history of the church".

McGrath (2017:29) points out that, 'Christian theology has always seen baptism as the Christian equivalent of circumcision'. I the New Testament, Paul notes that baptism has replaced circumcision (Colossians 2:11-12). In this passage, Paul refers to baptism as the circumcision of Christ. Johnson (1999:xxii) maintains that, 'the Eucharist forms the center and core of Christian spirituality'. De Villiers (2008:312) reminds us that 'in the sacrament of baptism and Eucharist the salvific meaning of Christ's death and resurrection is effectively mediated to us'.

Riggs (2002:11) explains that the word sacrament derives from a Latin word that classically meant something sacred. It was also used judicially and militarily. According to Nichols (1991:87), in the early church, *sancramentum* came to apply to sacred rites and also used to describe religious ceremonies and was brought into connection with the word mystery. It is for this reason Holcomb (2017:63) argues that:

"There is a need to place theology of the sacraments into its proper socio-historical context, illuminating how the Church has used the sacraments to define itself and its overtime".

Reformed thinkers have always emphasized the importance of performing the sacraments alongside the preaching of the Word of God. Surely, alongside the proclamation of the Word, sacraments are marks of the church, vital signs of the Church's mission, and ministry. Warren and Bradley (2017:385-403) point out that:

"The preaching of the Word always has a certain kind of purity over the sacraments in our worship. We must not have a high view of the sacraments and a low view of the Scripture'.

The sacraments are a way to portray the gospel visibly, and tangibly. The risks themselves are apt to be misunderstood apart from a clear explanation of the gospel from Scripture. The Reformed Churches do not allow the Lord's Supper to be served apart from the preached Word and words of explanation. Pringle (2009:336) argues that 'Churches which place the administration of the sacraments above the preached Word are ignorant of the teaching of Scripture'. Indeed, the Word defines the sacraments. The sacraments are dependent upon the Word, but the Word is not dependent on the sacraments. A statement from the Manual of Faith and Order of the UPCSA that declares that:

"At the heart of Christian worship is the ministry of the Word. The central act of worship includes Word and Sacrament. For worship is a dialogue to us in the Word and the Sacraments"

In search of a church that follows ancient practices in our modern times and how it can be identified, de Gruchy (2009:127) a South African theologian maintains that 'the pure ministry of the Word and the pure celebration of the sacraments is, a fit pledge and earnest, so that we may safely recognize a church in every society'. Senn (2016:20) also contributes to the argument at hand in our day and age and points out that 'the liturgy is the instrument by which God addresses his people through the proclamation of

the Word and the administration of the Sacraments instituted by Christ' This finds affirmation in Macleod (2003:99-100) who points out that, the 'two marks of the church are the ministry of the Word and the administration of the sacraments'. That being the case, Lindgren (1983:99) maintains that:

> "In worship, the Word of God comes to man as clearly through the sacraments and raises a challenge that, the minister is obligated to administer the sacraments in such a way that the people may worship, through them.

3.11. Convergent Views

There is a common understanding among the Roman Catholics and Protestants, the Reformed tradition in particular about the connection of the Word to sacraments. Though there are disagreements about the authority alone and the papal authority and powers.

From Roman Catholic perspective Thompson (2018:70) points out that, 'the reciprocal penetration of the Word and the sacrament hinges on the Church's faith in God's unfailing promises of sacramental grace'. Vasilelios (1984:1) points out that, 'the liturgy itself is a word from God, a word to God and a word about God'. Priority is given necessity to the word from God, for it is God's self-salvation and self-communication. Veeneman (2017:354) maintains that, 'a sacrament is clearly mandated by God through Holy Scripture, thus always tying or connecting sacraments to God's Word'. For Thompson (2018:67) fidelity to the divine Word is lived out in sacramental practice and is emphatic in that 'in the sacrament, the Word promises the extension and perpetuation of Christ's redemptive activity throughout salvation history'.

Webber (1994:12) and van Gelder (2000:55) make reference to a liturgical sacramental practice that has had a profound impact and influence in Protestant churches, more especially those within the Reformed community of faith. According to Webber, 'the first Christians found that it was in Word and Sacrament that God engaged them in all these dimensions (heart, mind and soul)'. This practice of the early Church became an established pattern and Van Gelder (2000:55) attests to this and points out that, 'pure

preaching of the Word and the proper administration of the sacraments were maintained within the institutional church'. Therefore, the Reformed community of faith holds the ministry of Word and Sacraments with high esteem. The Word and Sacraments are not separate ministries but rather are complementary. De Villiers (2008:312) reminds us that, 'the Reformation certainly considered the right administration of word and sacrament as characteristic of the true church'. This discussion not only highlights the connection between Word and Sacraments but also the pastoral concern about proper preaching (spoken theology) and questionable practices in sacramental ministry. De Villiers (2008:309) is emphatic in that:

> "A sacramental church that does not give proper place to the Word of God, would be essentially incomplete and a church that is truly a creation of the Word will celebrate that Word liturgically and sacramentally".

3.12. Infant Baptism

Reformed churches baptize infants as well as older children and adults. Recognizing the symbolic cleansing and refreshing characteristics of water, the Reformed tradition, affirms sprinkling, immersion, and pouring as methods of baptism. And then there are the varying interpretations and practices respecting Baptism and Eucharist seen amongst the mainline Protestant Churches.

Taking up Baptism first, the major difference in practice is that some churches baptize infants, and some do not. Amongst those Protestant churches that baptize infants, the Richardson (2016:42) points out that 'Lutherans and Anglicans believe that the grace of God truly is transmitted via the sacrament'. However, it is not *ex opera operato* as the Roman Catholics claim. Rather faith on the part of the recipient is necessary. In the case of the infants it is the faith of the church that is necessary for the grace to be imparted. In no case do they believe that Baptism is necessary for salvation.

Pinson (2009:54) points out that the other mainline protestant denominations that practice infant baptism such as United Methodists Presbyterians and Baptists are more radically Protestant than the Lutherans and Anglicans in respect to Baptism. According

to Pringle (2009:337) 'those traditions consider Baptism to be a sign or symbol that the infant belongs to the fellowship of the Church or that it is a memorial supper'. Surely, the grace of God is conveyed in an inward, spiritual sense, rather than directly and literally.

Turning specifically to the subject of infant Baptism, Richardson (2016:42) points out that 'the practice is reasonable in Roman Catholic theology, because Baptism is necessary for removal of inherited sinfulness and thus for salvation'. Pinson (2009:55) maintains that 'Protestants do not believe that and therefore infant Baptism is more difficult for Protestant theology to justify'.

First of all, McGrath (2017:26) points out that, the practice of baptizing infants born to Christian parents often referred to as paedobaptism has 'received much attention and pressure for theological explanations'. Though infant baptism (paedobaptism) is practiced by both Catholics and Protestants in general, the literature review is focused on the Reformed tradition. Secondly, the objections are mainly from the Baptist tradition and the author has decided to focus on only two that appear to be generating much debate around sacramental controversies. In addition the Reformed response to such Baptist arguments is also discussed.

3.13. Reformed Infant Baptismal Perspective

Richardson (2016:17) states that, 'in the practice of infant baptism, the Reformers intended to restore the gospel's primacy and the congregation's participation'. Strawbridge (2003:14) points out that, though there is no explicit command in Scripture for the practice of infant baptism, it does not mean it is unbiblical. In the New Testament it is indeed biblical because the New Testament stands in direct continuity to the Old Testament. Schenck (2003:23) argues that, 'if baptism replaces circumcision as the sign and seal of the one covenant of grace (promised to Abraham and fulfilled in Christ) then the case for infant baptism can be clearly demonstrated from a number of texts'. Traditionally, Protestants have set forth several scriptural and theological arguments in favor of Protestant, infant baptism. This is the strongest in my opinion. It is argued that 'infant baptism represents the covenant relationship that Christians have with God in a

way analogous to circumcision under the Old Covenant'. According to Schenck (2003:26) 'as the Hebrews brought their infants for circumcision to symbolize their participation in the covenant people Christians bring their infants for Baptism for the same purpose'.

According to Beasley-Murray (1997:32) while the sign may change, there is no biblical evidence that the thing signified changes. De Arteaga (2002:27) joins the conversation and also argues that:

> "It is the Baptist who must demonstrate from Scripture that children are excluded from the covenant and its sign and seal. It is the Baptist who must demonstrate that when the sign changes from circumcision to baptism, so also the thing signified by the sacrament changes".

According to Brownson (2007:31) 'blood and knife rituals point forward to the cross and by looking at the meaning of circumcision we see the redemptive historic connection to baptism and also establish the continuity between the two'. For Fesko (2013:68) ordeal rituals through which the people of God must pass to enter into blessings of the covenant. This makes a strong case for infant baptism

Murray (1980:42) points out that, 'the relationship of Genesis 17 (the oath of malediction) to the previous covenant given in Genesis 15 is seen through the institution of the sacrament of circumcision'. Horton (2008:29) Paul interpreted the circumcision event in Galatians 3:16 as commanded by the Lord to ratify the covenant made with Abraham and all of his descendants after him, including all of those in the household. It is for this reason Riggs (2002:34) argues that, 'we need a comprehensive understanding of theology of the covenant of grace and the initiatory sacrament of that covenant, circumcision-baptism'.

3.14. Infant Baptism Arguments

Nettle (2005:22) argues that, there is a clear command to baptize believers but no command to baptize infants. In response, Trigg (2001:15) points out that, on closer inspection of Scripture, there are clear commands to baptize households. The argument

of Nettles is countered by McMaken (2013:26) who maintains that, 'while there is no command in the New Testament to baptize infants, neither is there any prohibition against baptizing them'. For Riggs (2002:35) 'there is nothing in our Reformed theology of baptism which would exclude children from receiving the sign of God's gracious covenant'. The innocence of children (though not exempted from original sin) is captured by Horton (2008:30) who points out that, infants of believers are the ideal candidates to receive the covenant sign. The Christian parents present children for baptism in fulfillment of God's command to ratify his oath (Genesis 17:7, 10, 14).

According to Fesko (2013:55), in the New Testament, heads of households were baptized along with all of those under their covenantal authority in their households. Fesko (2013:56) further argues that 'the Baptist's frames this objection upon unjustified assumption that all of the households in the New Testament were childless'. A counter argument revolves around those New Testament passages that speak of whole households being baptized. For example, in Acts 16:32-34, the Philippians jailor and his household are said to be baptized. According to Horton (2008:31) presumably, this argument, there were infants in those households; and thus, baptizing infants is both legitimate and meaningful. Of course, to say that there were infants in those households is a large, un-provable assumption. According to Ryrie (2003:40), the "household" passages do not necessarily imply infants. The biblical usage of "household" is a Jewish usage which traditionally included only those twelve years of age or older.

In the whole debate, Swain (2015:66) raises a pertinent question that, where is the practice of infant dedication practiced by many Baptist Evangelicals expressly commanded of believers in the New Testament?'. Swain (2015:66) further argues that, if the Reformed people must have an express command to baptize, Baptists must have an equally definite command to dedicate children'. Ryrie ((2003:42) argues that, Baptism is the initiatory rite into a believing community, the church. Therefore, it should only be done to believers. In response Trigg (2001:72) points out that:

> "The argument against infant baptism upon the grounds that infants cannot believe, therefore they cannot be baptized, is also unfortunately and unintentionally, an argument against infant salvation. Infants cannot believe, therefore infants cannot be regenerated. If regeneration can precede faith, why can't baptism?

Murray (1980:36) reminds us that, the Lord views small children and infants as members of the kingdom of God and the question then is: if children are part of the kingdom of God, how can they not be part of Christ's church or the new covenant? This argument is based on the saying of Jesus where he said: "let the children come to me and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven (Mt 19:14)". He certainly said that, but unfortunately, there is no indication in the context that it had anything to do with Baptism.

De Arteaga (2002:29) maintains that:

> "Belief before baptism mitigates, against the idea of God working through covenants, and propagates individualism instead of corporate solidarity, and makes 'the decision' pre-eminent and grace passive, instead seeing God's grace as pre-eminent and our reception of grace as passive".

Infant baptism is a public demonstration of God's unmerited love for all. Some people seem to believe that God loves only those who serve Him in a special way. But God loves everyone, and the baptism of infants illustrates that fact. Horton (2008:32) points out that 'infant Baptism teaches boldly that God's grace can only come from God. No human being can provide it'. And the helplessness of the infant strongly symbolizes this.

Horton (2008:72) challenges the famous objection to infant baptism as children are supposed to be brought to Christ and to a font, and points out that, this reasoning completely misses the point of the Lord's words and the concerns of the Reformed Christian. For Strawbridge (2003:47), 'children of believers are baptized on the basis of covenantal authority, not the presumption of regeneration, though it is perfectly justified

in presuming that a baptized child of a believer is regenerate until there is demonstrable evidence to the contrary'. Beasley-Murray (1997:26) reminds us that, Paul's instruction in Ephesians 6:1 (children obeying parents in the Lord) is commanded upon the principle of the covenantal authority of the believing parents. Schenck (2003:11) traces this covenantal authority back to the Old Testament and argues that, 'Baptists are misreading Jeremiah 31:31. In essence, children are included in Christ's visible church as covenant promises are made to them, and covenant responsibilities given to their parents'. For Strawbridge (2003:49) 'if infants are excluded from Baptism; it implies that they are excluded from the Church. And there is no sound theological reason for excluding infants'.

3.15. Baptized Children and Church Membership

This Reformed understanding of infant baptism finds support also in Allister (1999:6) who maintains that, the baptized infant is, received into the membership of the visible church and not of the invisible. Infant baptism does not mean children are converted. With this in mind, a question remains, what is the practical implication of receiving baptized children into communicant fellowship?

According to Browning and Reed (1985:5):

> "Infant baptism is the incorporation of the child into Christ's body in which the child is surrounded by the incarnate love of parents, sponsors and congregation, and is strengthened to participate spontaneously in the ministering community".

It is necessary to comment on the three key participants in the ritual of infant baptism as suggested by Browning and Reed. First, of all by definition, incorporation is the inclusion of something as part of a whole. In the church context, it means being an integral part of the worshipping community. Secondly, it is not only a great honor to be, parents, it goes with the responsibility of playing an integral part in the child's spiritual formation. The role of parents does not end at infant baptism, it also involves a lifelong bond of nurturing and religious development. Due to their influence, parents should be people of

deep faith, prayer and spirituality, good moral character, and have an unquestionable capacity for being a role model.

The idea of sponsors or godparents (terms also used in the UPCSA baptismal liturgy) can be, interpreted as solidarity with the parents in the ritual of infant baptism. Sponsors are special witnesses at infant baptism, an occasion of initiation into the Christian community. Sponsors do not just present the candidate (child) for baptism but also take responsibility for the child's religious welfare. That public declaration of commitment is binding on their conscience. It is therefore clear that, sponsors are not ceremonial participants at infant baptism but they pledge to be actively involved in the religious life of the child and this, calls for commitment. This commitment is not or should not be an institutional commitment.

This journey from infant baptism is, explained by Allister (1999:4) who maintains that, 'there should be, institutional programs aimed at pursuing ongoing spiritual formation and maturity in matters of Christian faith'. Indeed, the liturgical assembly does at some point in the baptismal liturgy, express support to the parents and the extended family. However, in all this, the primary role of the parents should not be, obscured because the first religious school begins at home.

With regard to the sacrament of baptism and the required preparation (parents) and the role of the congregation, Lindgren (1983:131) points out that, 'the significance of infant baptism and the preparation of parents and the church at large for the responsibility they assume in the baptismal vows takes on new proportions'. Lindgren finds support in Allister (1999:6) who points out that, 'an appropriate and serious pattern of continuing preparation should be, followed by the priest as representing the congregation and parents so that the child gains in understanding with increasing maturity'.

3.16. Children and the Eucharist

Children and the Eucharist is discussed at length in chapter two. In that dialogue space, arguments in support or against the practice are presented in details. The aim here is to build on and bring new voices on this matter. Morgan (1989:6) points out that

'how churches react to the suggestion of children receiving communion depends on what these churches believe about communion, baptism, the nature of faith, and about children'. For Fisher (1987:33) the clearest symptom of the present state of the church is the quality of discussion on the matter of Christian initiation. According to Lake (2006:15), there is a lot of prejudice against children in the very central act of the Church's worship, Holy Communion. Surely, there is a need for ongoing thought, discussion and action. There are different practices within and between denominations

Morgan (1989:10) reminds us that within the Roman Catholic and Eastern churches it is long established practice for children to receive Holy Communion. According to Fisher (1987:31) 'the insight into the Church as a worshiping community and the continued examination of the meaning of the Church' as 'community' has led some to include the children in the liturgy and communion'. It is for this reason that Boehringer (1981:91) maintains that 'we need to affirm that the liturgy of the sacraments is a unifying activity in which all, including children can be involved'. Morgan (1989:10) further points out that 'modern communion liturgies include greater congregational participation and when certain members of the community are excluded at the climax of the service, raises theological questions'. The author holds the view that, If the trend today in churches is to ensure worship is meaningful and involves all age groups, why not the same for holy communion. Two interesting questions are asked by Lake and Morgan. For Lake (2006:17), 'if baptism makes a person a member of the Christian community, then what additional qualification is needed to participate in communion?' For Morgan (1989:11), 'free churches practice 'open table' (no preconditions) how is this interpreted for children?

Lake (2006:18) points out that 'Christian faith is not individualistic and the Church is a community and the idea of excluding some members is unacceptable'. Fisher (1987:32) points out that 'there is no explicit mention of any special approach to baptism in New Testament, nor is there any mention of any baptized members being excluded from the celebration of the Eucharist'. Boehringer (1981:91) argues that, 'if we rule out infant communion, then we do so without support of logical argument and in the face of the

tradition and practice in the Church'. This discussion is concluded with an extract from the Book of Order of Presbyterian Church of United States of America:

> "Baptized children who are being nurtured and instructed in the significance of the invitation to the Table and the meaning of their response are invited to receive the Lord's Supper, recognizing that their understanding of participation will vary according to their maturity".

3.17. Eucharist Controversies

3.17.1. Theories of Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist

The focus here is a summarized version as it is not the author's intention to engage in a heavy theological debate about these different theories except to highlight that they do influence the sacramental practices of the church. Furthermore, is indebted to the work of McGrath (2017).

Transubstantiation

McGrath (2017:49) points out that this theory is based on the belief that at the moment of consecration, the substance of bread and wine change into the body and blood of Jesus. Only their accidents remained unchanged.

Trans-signification

According McGrath (2017:49) this theory was developed by a group of Belgian Roman Catholic theologians and became prominent in the 1960s. At the moment of consecration, the meaning or significance of bread and wine fundamentally changes. It no longer means or signifies food, but means or signifies Christ"

Trans-finalization

McGrath (2017:51) explains that this theory based on the belief that, "at the time of consecration, the end, finality or purpose of bread and wine changes. The end or purpose of physical nourishment is replaced by the end or purpose of spiritual nourishment.

Consubstantiation

According to McGrath (2017:52), this particular theory (Luther's view and official doctrine of Lutheran church) means, at the me of consecration, the substance of both bread and the body of Christ are present together. How they can be together is a mystery.

Memorialism

McGrath (2017:54) explains that, this theory is based on the belief that there is no real presence. The Eucharist is symbolic of Christ. It is a memorial of the suffering of Christ. and a token left by Christ to remember him by until the day he returns.

De Villiers (2008:309) the Lima text of the World Council of Churches 'points especially to the rediscovery of the real meaning of the very concept of anamnesis, the commemoration of Christ's words and deeds and his death and resurrection'. In addition, De Villiers (2008:309) also looks into concept of memorial and point out that, 'the concept of anamnesis makes it impossible to fix the presence of Christ exclusively on the elements of bread and wine. It relates these elements to the content of the whole celebration of word and sacrament'. Faith and Order Paper No. 111 of 1982:12:E.12 of Lima Document states: 'since the anamnesis of Christ is the very content of the preached Word as it is of the Eucharistic meal, each reinforces the other. Furthermore, De Villiers (2008:312) maintains that, 'the symbolic representation lies between commemoration (anamnesis) of the past (the saving work of Christ) and the expectation of the future (his coming in glory)'.

3.17.2. Efficacy of the Sacraments

De Villiers (2008:309) 'the emphasis on the interconnectedness of word and sacramental sign provides the main requirements for overcoming the old controversy about ex opere operato character of the sacraments'. De Villiers (2008:309) also points out that, the Protestants interpreted the Catholic affirmation of the ex opere operato as the affirmation of an automatic, salvific sacramental efficacy. And Catholics, conversely,

saw the Protestant denial of the ex opere operato as a denial of the efficacy of sacraments in general. Johnson (2006:37) joins the debate and maintains that:

> "The only guarantee of the sacrament's efficacy is the Church's faith in the Lord's promises, the appeal to the unfailing Word, the Church's faith that God will do what God promised to do".

According to De Villiers (2008:309), in dialogues, however, Catholics stress that the formula ex opere operato is actually intended to stress the fact that the divine offer of grace is in principle independent of the worthiness of the one administering the sacrament and the one receiving it. De Villiers (2008:309) is convinced that, by defining Christ as the active subject of the sacrament, the tendency of the formula is to contradict any view which interprets the sacraments in the sense of a righteousness of works. De Villiers (2008:309) concludes that, conversely, Protestants also stress that the sacraments depend for their existence on Christ's institution and are independent of the worthiness of the one administering them or the one receiving them. For Johnson (2006:38) 'the sacrament is far more than a visible vehicle for invisible grace, but an extension and perpetuation, in the Church's time and space, of Christ's redemptive, loving activity based upon a specific promise by the Word of the Lord'.

3.18. Observations and Conclusion

3.18.1. Tradition versus Traditionalism

Generally speaking, the word tradition has negative connotation, more especially for the modern young generation. It is often associated with nostalgic sentiments, rigidity, oppressive prescriptions and so forth. Horton (2000:13) distinguishes between tradition and traditionalism and points out the detrimental effect of the latter. The Reformed community of faith does not observe or uphold its tradition out of sentimentality. According to Old (2001:35) "this community of Christians, promote adherence to a tradition that is reformed according to Scripture, and continues to be reformed". This openness to ongoing reforming is better expressed by Boersma and Levering

(2015:633), who point out that 'the issue of the continual reforming of our rituals toward the expression of Christian meaning in our sacramental practice is a primary matter'.

3.18.2. The Value of Tradition

The author argues that, a liturgical tradition represents a critical piece of our church culture. Tradition reminds us that we are part of a history that defines our past and shapes, who we are today. This finds support in Adams (2001:36) who also puts emphasis on the importance of following tradition and points out that, 'when people have roots and knowledge of their history and heritage, they are better grounded and function together'. Therefore, we should celebrate tradition. According to Ribberio (2016:4) 'the hermeneutic of continuity refers, to the continuity of tradition that exists in the life of the Church before and after' and Kitchner (1999:16) gives an explanation and defense for adherence to tradition and maintains that:

> "Traditions heighten our awareness, cultivating a sense of belonging and stability, and acting as a guiding force in our lives. Tradition contributes a sense of belonging and enables people to reconnect with the past. Tradition reinforces values, personal responsibility and faith. Tradition offers a chance to say thank you for the contribution that others have made. Tradition enables us to showcase the principles of our Founding Fathers, celebrate diversity and bring unity. Tradition serves as avenue for creating lasting memories and provides an excellent context for meaningful pause and reflection".

3.18.3. The Danger of Traditionalism

It is for this reason that one is in agreement   with Bratchner (2002:13) points out that:

> "The way we express our faith will be rooted in the traditionalist structures associated with an earlier time, and be more a testimony to our own past than a witness to other people in the present and future".

An assumption that a liturgical practice of the past is automatically relevant for modern day generation lacks theological insight and has no substance. Westermeyer (2003:84)

is correct in stating that, 'the understanding of the faith brings different emphasis and deeper understandings from generation to generation'. The problem is familiarity which often breeds contempt. In dealing with the problem of familiarity, Fleming suggests a drastic step which some leaders may find very challenging. Fleming (2204:113) argues that:

> "The final disposition necessary in times of chaos is risk. It requires a measure of risk to let go of the familiar and embrace the new. The risk we take accompanies the choice to stay in the chaos and succumb to the temptation to avoid, deflect, blame or bail out on the moment at hand".

Reader (2008:1) points out that, familiar frameworks of interpretation that have served us well in the past continue to haunt our thoughts and analyses. The author concurs with Poling and Miller (1985:9,16) who remind us that, 'there should be an inspired interpretation of the tradition and a disciplined reflection about its continuity'. Indeed, one can argue that there can be no disciplined reflection without openness and for Fleming (2004:115) without openness and pliability, rigidity can lead to a disaster. The check and balances on the role of tradition and it practical implication in church life is raised by Adams (2001:37) who points out that:

> "Over time some traditions give way to new traditions, while others lose their value. Those who advocate maintaining the traditions cannot justify their relevance. It is important for each generation to not only know and understand the traditions handed down to them, but to evaluate their relevance to their lives".

Indeed, the way forward in these congregations under study, is to use past knowledge and practices to shape a liturgy that is contextually relevant and meaningful to all participants. Wisdom on how to deal with past and present liturgical practices comes from Whitman (2013:51) who argues that, 'we must cherish our yesterdays, but never carry them as a burden into the future. Each generation must take nourishment from the other and give knowledge to the one that comes after'. The challenge to the church

about this problem of traditionalism and how to overcome it is best explained by Westermeyer (2003:16) who contends that:

> "Christian communities of faith are always called to figure out their responsibilities to both the past and present. They are neither museums nor reflections of the current culture. They draw from both past and present and stand against both".

3.18.4. General Observations

Nick (2003:34) makes an observation that in the ancient world, a meal was a communal experience. Therefore it is a concern that in some Protestant churches (including Reformed and Presbyterian in particular), Holy Communion is something individualistic (elements individually wrapped). When there is no unity in the celebration of the Eucharist, it becomes a matter of privatized spirituality. Clark (2004:91) points out that, some Christian churches do not believe in sacraments. The Quakers also known as the Society of Friends do not celebrate Communion or Baptism, the most commonly recognized Christian sacraments. Their belief is that all of life is sacred or sacramental and it is to be lived in the presence of Christ.

According to Ryrie (2002:47), the Baptists celebrate Communion and Baptism but they consider them as ordinances and not as sacraments. They believe these actions do not bestow salvation and are strictly symbols. Many Protestant churches hold the belief that Holy Communion symbolizes the body and blood of Jesus, helping believers to be Christ's body in the world today, redeemed by Christ's blood. Most Christians, however do celebrate God's grace. Stander (2004:16) points out that, the Anglican Church in many ways is the most Catholic of the Protestant denominations. With regard to the Eucharist, the Anglicans speak of the real presence of Christ in the elements though do not make an attempt to define the holy mystery. Though they do not hold to transubstantiation, they still take Christ's presence quite seriously.

According to De Arteaga (2002:11), the Lutherans can be placed with the Anglicans since they too are closer to the Catholic view of the Eucharist than others. The Lutheran

doctrine often is called consubstantiation. The 'con' is from Latin preposition which means 'with' and that is the key to the Lutheran perspective, the body and blood of Jesus do not literally appear as in transubstantiation, but they appear spiritually 'in' with and under the elements of bread and wine. Stander (2004:19) further points out that, the Methodists and Presbyterians look upon the Eucharist as an outward symbol of the inward reality of Christ's presence. The Baptists though they emphasize the Lord's Supper as a memorial, taken in remembrance of hat Christ has done. For De Arteaga (2002:21), one of the interesting practical consequences of the differences between denominations in regard to the Eucharist is the refusal of some groups to serve sacrament of Communion to people from other groups. The sacrament is closed to all but the members of the particular group in question. Roman Catholics practice closed communion.

According to Lee (1987:34) Evangelicals and Fundamentalists generally do not devote much attention to the Sacraments, nor do they accurately represent the issues at stake. Fesko (2013:49) points out that, evangelicals and fundamentalists are deeply influenced by dispensationalism. Fesko further argues that, dispensationalists dominate the evangelical media and thus covenantal theology is frequently stigmatized. According to De Arteaga (2002:28), the discussion of Sacraments 'is often colored by an anti-Roman Catholicism and it is charged that a high view of the Sacraments is Romanism'.

3.17.5. Ecumenical Partnerships

This point is raised in chapter one as the context of this research study. For now it suffices to mention that according to De Villiers (2008:312), 'in the present ecumenical dialogue the primary starting point has been the agreement in the field of a baptismal and Eucharistic theology'. This ecumenical conversation is supported by McKee (2003:27) for the purpose of exchanging theological insights and cooperation in forging liturgical partnerships, especially within the Reformed community of faith. For the author, a wider consultation is necessary for a balanced ecumenical dialogue in liturgical worship and a comparative study on sacraments. De Villiers (2008:310) points out that, 'the growing awareness of the role of the Holy Spirit is indeed of paramount

importance for an ecumenical understanding of the sacraments and of the church as sacrament'. Colwell (2006:39) discusses the sacraments from an Evangelical perspective but with a committed ecumenical intent. Chan (2006:16) argues that 'ecclesial renewal, however cannot be achieved simply through theological arguments and reflections. There must also be an adequate knowledge of appropriate liturgical practices'.

Chapter Four

A Theology of Sacramental Ministry

41. Introduction

Norman (2013:26) pints out that:

> "Theology, the study of God, consists of a network of sub disciplines. Each branch of theology has its own distinctive object of study, methods and purposes. Each branch of theology has its own distinctive community of scholars.

The theme of this chapter is about a theology of sacramental ministry. It is necessary to define the word ministry and demonstrate its relatedness to the administration of sacraments. Various documents on corporate worship define liturgy or ministry (from the Latin ministerium) as a duty for Christians as a priestly people by their baptism into Christ and participation in his ministry. One can argue from this premise that, the ordained clergy may be the liturgist because of functional role (preaching, prayers, blessing of the sacraments and so forth). However, the entire congregation participates in and offers the liturgy to God. Long time ago Irwin (1963:23) realized the corporate nature of worship and pointed out the following:

> "In public worship, it is the people who do the worship. The minister cannot worship for them. It is his or her function to provide the form and content so that they may perform their worship".

In support of Irwin, Senn (1983:ix) maintains that, liturgy must take on a more active character for the participants if it is really to serve as a vehicle for expressing devotion to God. Given these thoughts and arguments, therefore, the role of those who presides over sacraments is crucial and demands further explanation and critical evaluation. This ministerial role is well articulated by Schwertley (2001:22) who points out that:

> "Within the Christian community, some are called to enter into and express the ministry of Christ. This calling of some to nourish, heal and build up the household of faith, in the ministry of Word and Sacraments is a particular gift".

Indeed, nourishing, nurturing, healing and equipping of the worshiping community are the core functions of pastoral ministry and hence Greenwood (2002:34) maintains that, those in positions of authority and entrusted with executive functions should take accountability seriously. Doehring (2006:49) points out that, those designated to provide ministry are accountable for the ways in which their practices reflect their beliefs. Browning and Reed (1985:10) challenge leaders in ministry, as people who are required to consider deeply the foundations of the most respected traditions of church life.

4.2. Frameworks for Sacramental Ministry

4.2.1. Liturgical-Sacramental Theology

Flannery (1988:29) points out that:

> "The agent of liturgical theology, the liturgical theologian, is none other than Christ himself and members united. Liturgical theology, considered in this way, is Christological and ecclesiological".

Mathison (2002:87) maintains that, liturgical theology intersects with other branches of theology (e.g. Ecclesiology, Christology) particularly insofar as their own theological birth. Indeed,

First of all, the main focus of corporate worship is the worship of God through Christ by the gathered liturgical assembly empowered by the Holy Spirit. This understanding gives a Trinitarian perspective on worship. Secondly, in any congregation there is a liturgical leader who has to understand the dynamics of liturgical worship. As a liturgist this person has to articulate a clear liturgical sacramental theology. It is for this reason According to Walterstorff (2015:3) points out that:

> "Liturgical theology is that site where the church by means of the work of its theologians arrives at a self-understanding of the theology implicit and explicit in the liturgy".

The author here in this space seeks to highlight the corporate nature of worship and its content, the role of the congregation and the twofold function of liturgy. Before any

explanations, a question is raised by Meyendorff (1977:101) in that 'the Church is the body of Christ, and corporate liturgical worship is central to the life of this body and the question is: what is liturgical theology? According to McCarthy (2017:18) liturgy is defined as what communities of faith do in response to God's initiative when they celebrate liturgy. For Flannery (1988:30) liturgical theology is understood in terms of 'that full, conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very native of the liturgy'.

This discussion points to collective participation in worship. McCarthy (2017:18) Liturgy is defined as what communities of faith do in response to God's initiative when they celebrate liturgy. Tony (2007:119) joins the conversation and reminds us that, through the regular celebration of the liturgy, the Christian community as a whole makes disciples of one another through the disciplines of corporate worship. Chan (2006:207) maintains that liturgical worship must be understood as embodied worship, worship expressed through a certain visible order or structure. For Meyendorff (1997:101) beyond structure and symbolism, 'liturgical theology is both the anatomy and physiology of liturgical worship'.

Meyendorff (1997:101) further points out that it is important to fully comprehend the role of liturgical theology in the worship of the Church as it gives understanding to the form and function of the worship service and also allows us to understand the worship and prayer life of the Church as a functional whole. According to Hooker (2006:23) liturgical theology also explores fundamental theological questions relating faith and 'it is pastoral because liturgical theology always speaks from and to the Church at prayer'. Stamm (2006:11) points out that the converse movement toward the liturgy involves the return of theological insight to the Church and prayer. Ecclesial practices are captured very well by Platten (2017:13) who points out that:

> "The formative power of the liturgy is largely implicit. We learn our Christianity on our knees and our feet, through saying and singing the prayers and psalms, as well as by sitting and listening to the readings, sermons and exhortations".

Travis (2015:158) maintains that, 'the liturgy is at the center of everything as it relates to the absolute baseline of Christian identity, reflection and activity' and this is attested by Chan (2006:15) who points out that, 'the practice of the liturgy provides the basis for all other ecclesial practices'. These ecclesial practices means liturgy forms the basis for establishing a connective relationship between all participants. In practice this translates to inclusion and not exclusion in the liturgical activities of the gathered assembly.

It is also important to highlight the pedagogical aspect or dimension of liturgy. According to Meyendorff (1997:101) 'liturgical theology has ability to explain the doctrines (teachings) of the Church'. This finds support from Gilgannon (2011:27) who points out that 'liturgical theology is systematic in that it explores the doctrines of the faith which liturgy articulates in its own way (lex orandi est lex credenda)'. According to McCarthy (2017:19) 'liturgy is the place where faith is articulated. What we celebrate is what we believe therefore how we celebrate is critical in forming our belief'. This finds support from Gilgannon (2011:XI) who maintains that liturgical theology works to ensure that the action and the words we say and rituals we perform, are adequately informed by the beliefs we express.

Gilgannon (2011:26) reminds us that, 'liturgical theology draws on the history of Christian worship, the disciplines of dogmatic and systematic theology and on the literary function of the canon of Scripture as a liturgical fact'. According to Antlitz (2017:17), liturgical theology explains the fundamental propositions of the Christian liturgy by marking theologically exploit what it is implicit in what the church in public worship. Schmemann (1966:18) maintains that 'the task of liturgical theology is to decode and to translate what is expressed by the language of worship – its structures, its ceremonies, its texts and its whole spirit into the language of theology'.

In pursuit of this discussion on liturgical sacramental theology, Kelleher (2007:202) cites Schmemann as saying the Church's liturgical tradition is the subject of liturgical theology. Indeed understanding the link between practice and theory is crucial in liturgical studies. White (1998:43) also quotes Chupungco who attests that the theological content (theory) is constant and the liturgical form (practice) undergoes

changes or modifications. Webber (1994:65) argues that when theology is divorced from liturgy, theology becomes abstracted from the life of faith. Stamm (2006:28) Liturgical theology seeks to understand the effect liturgy has upon faith and finds support in Felton (2006:31) who points out that 'liturgical theology evolves upon faith, liturgical event, and reflective theology. These can be specified as: faith related liturgy and liturgy related to theology'.

Indeed theology is instrumental in explaining the actions of the Christian community. Saliers (1994:69) adds to say that the liturgical problem of our time is a problem of restoring to liturgy its theological meaning and to theology its liturgical dimension. Flannery (1988:31) echoes the same sentiments in that 'theology's return to worship is the final task of liturgical theology'. Stoutzenberger (1984:33) points out that 'the role of rituals in life and their relationships to worship and sacraments are the subjects of liturgical theology'.

Flanagan (1986:341) argues that we 'need to avoid liturgies and rites that appear to have a persisting, excluding, alien quality that makes them difficult to cope with. We need liturgies that can engage modern man, especially the young generation'. Weil (1983:22) supports the foregoing arguments by saying 'the area of liturgy and sacraments is connected to the understanding of the Church and therefore need to relate liturgy and sacraments to the Church's essential corporate nature'.

4.2.2. Ritual Studies

The field of ritual studies as initiated by anthropologist Ronald Grimes and expanded by other scholars is explored in this chapter. Farhadian (2007:197) points out that sociological research about worshiping communities reminds us that worship is something that is practiced and not just discussed. Mitchell (2007:105) joins the conversation and maintains that the insights from studies by anthropologists and sociologists can help reshape our understanding of the rituals of Christian liturgy and symbols. Wepener (2005:111) also points out that 'the modern view of liturgists is that the study of liturgy is the study of Christian rituals and symbols'.

The main thrust of the discussion here is liturgical worship and its rituals. In that regard, Smith (2009:152) reminds us that, all Christian worship is liturgical in the sense that it is governed by norms, draws on tradition, includes rituals or routines, and involves formative practices. Liturgical worship as governed by norms also finds expression in the words of Kaiser and Hubner (2005:250) who explain that:

> "Norms are a set of behaviors and beliefs shared by members of a society, community or groups of people. Routines means norms are transmitted by social systems".

One can argue from a sociology perspective and maintain that, the church is a social organization because it has all the characteristics to qualify it as a social institution. This argument finds support in Haights (1988:480) who points out that, each person participates in social groups, has responsibility for social arrangements, and is in turn shaped by the institutions in which he or she exists.

By definition a ritual is any act or procedure that is followed consistently. According to Huck (1999:28), rituals are by definition what we do over and over and also points out that those who do rituals have to know their liturgy. It is interesting to note the interconnectedness between rituals and liturgy. Levenson (2015:31) points out that, ritual is something that we purposely do over and over again. In a church context, ritual celebrates and intensifies our humanity. It is for this reason that Enns (1997:13) argues that, 'rituals are a practice of the faith that provide structure for our spiritual lives'.

A pertinent question from Reed (1985:18) is: are these rituals constructive, open, life giving or are they empty, dead or legalistic? A similar concern is raised by Peterson (2009:180) who reminds us that Protestants are highly ritualized and yet the question is: how do communal rituals and liturgies transform?   Levenson (2015:32-33) answers this pertinent question and argues for life giving rituals and cautions against dead rituals:

> "Life-giving rituals can create unity out of estrangement, support out of isolation, and hope out of fear and despair and therefore we should be concerned with an ethic in rituals which fails to proclaim or mediate life to all".

The author argues that rituals can indeed become empty when performed habitually and thoughtlessly, without regard to their meaning and the ethic that is supposed to be associated with them. In writing about the pastoral power of Christian ritual and caring liturgies, Smith (2012:17) challenges church leadership in that:

> "Pastors can discern what kind of ritual action may be of loving spiritual assistance to another. Pastors can shape the processes by which ecclesial ritual can be created to give life, enable growth, and strengthen ministry".

Indeed, a disconnected ritual can actually impede worshipers' connection to the holy and the concern is that sacramental ministry is supposed to enhance the spirituality of the congregation and not stifle it. It is for this reason Mauck (1994:45) argue that 'we should getting out of the way of ritual and letting its inherent power transform the liturgical assembly's life and sense of identity'. According to Peterson (2009:182) 'communal ritual bankruptcy comes when rituals have become disembodied from the community narrative from which they were birthed'. Douglas (2003:2) maintains that there is a difference between ritualism and rituality. 'A ritualist is one who performs external gestures without inner commitment to the ideas and values being expressed'.

Schwertley (2012:162) contends that the Reformed view of the sacraments must be 'defended against the assaults of ritualism, sacramentalism and individualism'. According to Douglas (2003:2) the loss of ritual memory results in a loss of the ecclesial transformation, it become a civic ritual and no longer a sacramental Christian symbol. Flanagan (1986:342) explains that when this occur, 'the objective given qualities of liturgy, its mysterious elements, become obscured or lost'.

4.3. The Centrality of the Sacraments

Given the centrality of the sacraments in the life of the Church the author concurs with Havenga (2000:19) in that 'the sacraments make the Church different from other social institutions and religious organizations in society'. Chan (2006:15) sets the tone for this discussion and points out that:

"The nature of the Church cannot be understood apart from its calling as a worshiping community. It is thorough worship that the Church is decisively shaped as the ecclesial community".

The primary role of the sacraments in the liturgical agenda finds expression in the words of Boersma and Levering (2015:645) who point out that, the sacraments make a large part of the core of Christian liturgy, and they involve communal action and participation. This communal ritual activity is also explained by Clowney (1995:273) who points out joins the discussion and points out 'the unity and corporate nature of the fellowship of the sacraments provide the setting in which the body of Christ is not only present but active and functioning together'. This corporate nature as necessitated by the sacramental liturgy is further articulated by Senn (2016:51) who maintains that, the Eucharist has served 'as a means of communion, of bonding with Christ and with one another in the body of Christ, the church'. Davison (2013:5) attests that a covenant or testament is a form of bond, and so are the sacraments. The sacraments continue to forge and strengthen that bond down the centuries.

Long time ago Von Harnack (1972:436) pointed out that, the common worship, with its center in the celebration of the Supper, is the cardinal point because it is here that every experience, every spiritual need finds nourishment. Talltorp (2016:214) reinforces the necessity of nourishment in the local congregation and yet cautions about the lack of it and thus reminds us that, without sufficient sacramental nourishment in the local church, there will be no growth in faith. Sacramental starvation can never result in mission expansion. This simply means that, sacramental nourishment is the key to spiritual growth and the latter is instrumental in growth in mission (cause and effect).

4.4. The Essence of the Sacraments

In writing about the essence of the sacraments Schwertley (2012:162) offers a profound statement:

"A sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ in his Church to signify, seal and exhibit unto those that are within the covenant of grace, the benefit of his

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mediation, to strengthen and increase their faith, to oblige them to obedience, to testify and cherish their love and communion with one another".

Mauck (1994:45) joins the discussion and points out that 'in the liturgy the sanctification of the people of God is manifested by signs perceptible to the senses, and is affected in a way which is proper to each of these signs'. Smith (2012:49) combines the two sacraments and demonstrates their relevance to spirituality:

> "In Baptism we are united to Christ as members of his body. At Communion we join with the Church in every time and place to give thanks for salvation in Christ. In Baptism we are washed and welcomed by the grace of God. At Communion we are nourished and strengthened by that same grace".

Boersma and Levering (2015:463) concur with Smith and point out that the sacraments communicate divine life. They inaugurate it (Baptism), nourish it, heal it and order it (Eucharist)'. This divine life and spiritual nourishment call for an extended discussion. At the core of the sacramental event is the experiencing of God's grace and fellowship. According to Stoutzenberger (1984:18), we encounter God's presence and grace in the sacraments. Therefore the primary message of the sacraments is that God is with us and for us. This sacramental encounter is further explained by Davison (2013:1) who maintains that 'the sacraments are solemn occasions when we encounter Christ, when Christ reaches out to us.

Long time ago Von Harnack (1972:436) pointed out that:

> "The common worship with 'its center in the celebration of the Supper is the cardinal point because it is here that every experience, every spiritual need finds nourishment'. Travis (2015: joins the by the disciplines of public prayer and the liturgy".

It is for this reason Donghi (1997:65) maintains that:

"To pray in the liturgy becomes an exercise of our baptismal priesthood that expands, develops and communicates and thus creates the process of maturation in faith that is the goal of our communal prayer".

Talltorp (2016:214) reiterates the necessity of nourishment and yet cautions about lack of it and reminds us that without sufficient sacramental nourishment in the local church, there will be no growth in faith. Sacramental starvation can never results in mission. Indeed, sacraments are not there not to reenact the redemptive narrative, but also to nourish and sustain the spirituality of a congregation. Therefore, the role of those who preside over the sacraments in the liturgical assembly become crucial. White (1999:15) reminds us that, the sacraments, were the chief system of ministering to the people and of sustaining their religious life.

Peterson (2009:84) explains the sacraments as signs of God's gracious promise and seals for God's life. Reed (1985:71) is quick to point out that 'sacraments are not ends in themselves but always point us to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross as the only ground for our salvation'. Chan (2006:22) cautions that participating in the sacraments without faith only invites judgment (1 Cor. 11:27) and 'to administer the sacraments without preaching is to invite those who may not have faith to incur judgment on themselves'. According to Chan (2006:11) attitudes can be reshaped only by a strong Christian community that understands the sacramental essentials that are cherished and preserved in tradition of the church. Levenson (2015:39) concludes this conversation by pointing out that:

"The Sacraments unite past, present and future. We remember the history of God's saving work and proclaim the mystery of the faith, the dying and rising of Christ for the salvation of the world (Rom.6:3-4, 1 Cor. 11:26)".

Martin (1982:93) connects Baptism with liturgical timeframe and reminds us that:

"Baptism puts us into direct touch with the fountain of our historic faith, and unites the present day Church with its first century origins and roots in a way that few religious ordinances do".

Webber (2008:29) also links worship and Holy Communion and points out that:

> "Through worship the community of God, become actively involved in the redemption story of God. Christians can speak of the cross and the Eucharist as participants".

4.5. Sacramental Ministry and Problem Issues

4.5.1. The Church and Children

4.5.1.1. The Covenantal Theology

Helepoulos (2017:2) reminds us that, 'the Reformed theology maintains a bi-covenantal system and this has great implications for the sacrament of baptism (children) and Holy Communion'. Helepoulos (2017:2) further explains that:

> "Children in the Passover were counted among the people of God in the Old Testament dispensation. This inclusion is, never repealed in the New Testament dispensation. Old Testament children received the sign of this inclusion, circumcision therefore children are to receive the sign of this inclusion in the New Testament dispensation, baptism. Circumcision and baptism are the rights of initiation for their respective dispensations".

The continuity of this covenant is, also pointed out by Bromiley (1992:238):

> "The new covenant is, based upon and is the unfolding of the Abrahamic covenant. There is the basic identity of meaning attaching circumcision and baptism. In view of unity and continuity of the covenant of grace administered in both dispensations, we can affirm with confidence that, evidence of revocation or repeal is, mandatory if, the practice or principle has been, discontinued under the New Testament".

4.5.1.2. Liturgical Position of Children

Collective participation (children and family) in religious festivals in the Old Testament and New Testament times, is summed up by Trokan (1997:146) who reminds us that:

"The biblical experience of Exodus and Resurrection provide witness to the essential truth that we are covenant people who experience God within our history and in time recognize, retell, and celebrate this presence together".

According to Jesson (2001:55) the Sacraments help identify the church as a community of the covenant. Thompson (2018:67) points out that, sacraments 'concretely extend God's covenantal relationship and entail a certain death to self- conforming the Christian to the Paschal mystery of Christ that culminates in the resurrected life'. With this understanding, Thompson (2018:68) concludes that 'God's essence is relational. By participating in the sacraments, we participate in being as fundamentally relational'.

4.5.2. The Youth and Church Discipline

4.5.2.1. Issues of Morality

In addressing Christian ethics and matters of religious morality, Catherwood (1980:45) reminds us that, the church has a duty not only to preach the gospel, but also to preach the moral law. Machen (1996:28) argues that the gospel does not abrogate God's law. According to Wells (2001:13) the laxity on morality in church comes from the fact that the legacy of Protestant orthodoxy has been surgically altered to fit modern standards of pleasantness. Rainer (2011:18) points out that the profile of people opposed to discipline has reached epidemic proportions that have paralyzed many pulpits. Catherwood (1980:12) argues that:

"Others in the hope of keeping the church in fashion are prepared to make almost every conceivable concession to contemporary philosophy until what is left is unrecognizable Christianity".

Hewitt (1996:17) joins the discussion and points out that conformity to the dominant forces of our culture has resulted in a spiritual weakening of Christian leaders and their local congregations. Rainer (2011:18) further maintains that, lack of public conversation about church discipline has paralyses many pulpits. Lawson (1998:45) who maintains that, the spiritual life of any congregation and its growth in grace will never exceed the high-water mark set by its pulpit. Using the pulpit as a platform to preach about morality

and the arguments around is, addressed under discussion on discriminatory practices against women.

Indeed, there is a tension between modern culture and morality as understood by the Christian community. Church discipline is with the authority of Scripture and for church leaders it is not just a functional exercise. A pertinent question is, do the disciplinarians have moral stature to execute this pastoral responsibility. If not, then their moral authority can be questioned and bring the whole disciplinary process into a disrepute. Therefore, one can argue that, within the church, those who administer discipline must be above reproach. In the community must be people of good character and commendable reputation.

4.5.2.2. Grace and Forgiveness

Gerrish (2002) in his book *Grace and Gratitude: The Eucharistic Theology of John Calvin* has captured the theme of grace so profoundly It is a theme that is prominent in the writings of both Calvin and St Augustine. This book indeed offers a Calvinistic view of the Eucharist from the Reformed perspective. According to Felton (2006:39) 'we need to cherish and treasure this Protestant heritage regarding the Lord's Supper'. Gerrish (:) points out that:

> "The theme of grace and gratitude presented in the words of the Eucharist, shapes the entire theology and makes it from beginning to end a Eucharistic theology".

According to Felton (2006:40) 'the true religion of Christianity is exemplified by the cardinal tenets of grace and gratitude. Hooker (2006:19) points out that God is the Father and fountain of goodness. Indeed, God graciously created us and then redeemed us through faith in Christ alone. The author concurs with Stamm (2006:34) in that we need to acknowledge God in gratitude for his gracious justification of us unworthy sinners. As transgressors saved by grace are we justified to demonize those who are weak in faith? Surely, a judgmental spirit does not exhibit warm piety. It is for this reason that Jesson (2001:58) maintain that 'we need to come to the Supper with a

whole new appreciation for God's goodness'. No doubt, grace is in fact unmerited favor. Peterson (2009:82) reminds us that:

> "God is a loving Father with a message of free adoption. Adoption leads us into a household where e are fed at the family table having been received in baptism".

In addressing the issue of forgiveness, Turnbloom (2019:58) points out that 'liturgical mercy is the practice of refusing to exclude from Eucharistic sharing those considered to be sinners'. Levenson (2015:37) argues that:

> "By overcoming the biases that cause communities to exclude sinners, the practice of liturgical mercy facilitates the bodily encounters that are necessary for the self-transcendence of conversion".

According to Turnbloo (2019:60), there is an unavoidable risk inherent in liturgical mercy. In the end, sustained by the theological virtue of hope, Christian communities must engage in the risk of liturgical mercy. It is for this reason Boersma and Levering (2015:653) caution that:

> "Admission to Communion is always a paradoxical matter of warning and contradiction. Pastors, teachers, and liturgical leaders have a responsibility to guard and heighten this paradox, not to flatten it into either legalistic refusal or easy access consumerist admission".

Wyngaard (2014:58) joins the debate and points out that 'the church is in the unique position to demonstrate the love and grace of God. The church should take up the challenge and be a vessel of love and grace'. The necessity of love and unconditional acceptance (without condoning sin) is, summed up by Gallagher (1984:14-15) who reminds us that:

> "To give our undivided attention to another person is to do two things: It is to give of our very life, and it is to begin to enter that person's world. In this attentiveness, we put aside our preconceptions, preferences, and preformed judgments, as Christ put aside his divinity. To pay such attention is to follow the

path of Christ and to serve as he did to connect people more deeply with the presence of God".

For Bentley (   ) 'grace is never manipulative, though it is always constitutive. It allows a measure of cooperation'. Cooke (1999:218) maintains that the most basic sacrament of god's saving presence to human life is the sacrament of human love and friendship. Shifting from the angle of human love (horizontal) to divine love (vertical) Stoutzenberger (1984:14) argues that:

> "God's presence in our friendship and generally in our lives is referred to as grace. God's friendship as grace is released to us in the words and stories of scripture, in the inspiring lives of church heroes past and present as well as in encounters in friendship".

McQuilkin (1975:9) puts everything in perspective in pointing out that discipline is designed as a means of grace, not destruction, as an evidence of love, not of hate or fear. For Mutetei (1999:9) the primary motivation for discipline is love for the fallen brother or sister. 'Therefore, a forgiving attitude should dominate our exercise of discipline towards fallen brothers'. According to Thyren (1974:59) to restore and forgive a brother is an excellent test of one's spirituality. Phillipes (1986:50) cautions that 'the discipline of church members demands creativity as the discipline of children if not more'. Richards (1985:365) maintains that the faults of others are to occasion forgiveness, not condemnation. For Bradley (1999:11) 'the effectiveness of church discipline is in direct proportion to trust and love that has been established between the members of the body of Christ'.

Hulbert (1999:25) correctly points out that 'any discipline should be clearly established as a means of restoration and not of retribution'. According to Mutetei (1999:26) leaders who follow the divine example, will guard against discipline that is an expression of anger rather than love, and discipline that has no goal other than retribution. Mutetei (1999:26) also points out that 'oppression mentality' is present in some disciplinarians when they feel their positions are threatened. Such leaders suffer from an inferiority

complex. Lines (1982:24) it is wrong for a church to vindictively hold anything against a member who has erred. Rather 'Christ like attitudes compels the church to continue loving the person and pray for the speedy recovery'. For Wray (1981:17) anyone who goes about to practice any of the modes of discipline without earnestly desiring the true repentance and forgiveness of the offender, is attempting to serve God with a false heart.

According to Mutetei (1999:28) we should avoid the lame reasons for not doing restoration and also avoid those extremes. Thus 'the church of Christ must cultivate the redemptive view of the church discipline today'. Kurian (2015:25) contends that 'forgiveness is one of the defining concepts of Christian Theology and forms the heart of the Christian message'. These concepts include: reconciliation, mercy, justice, repentance, grace, confession and repentance of sins. Indeed, we need a sensible compromise in order to restore the unity of the Church. With regard to sociability and in the name of embracive spirit, Maina (2009:43-44) points out that 'the sacramental life of the church has a social dimension, since all people are invited to share in God's grace'.

4.5.3. The Church and African Cultures

The important issue of cultural relevance in the continent of Africa is argued by Badiako (1997:432) who points out that:

> "The African culture was diluted, traditions were taken away and their ways of life destroyed. The African tradition religion was also destroyed due to the introduction of Christianity. People were forced to learn a foreign language, food and dress code".

Bujo (1995:125) echoes the sentiments of Badiako and points out that:

> "The colonizing powers and the Christian missions came to Africa and found a well-ordered and functional society which while not perfect, did enable its members to enjoy wholeness of life. The missions, by and large worked hand in hand with the colonial powers, and took part in the radical disruption of traditional African societies".

According to Badiako (1997:427) 'the cultic religion of Europe was set to displace the primal religions and cultures of Africa, with the intent of the establishment of European cultic religion and associated cultural values'. Pears (2009:18) in writing about doing contextual theology, points out that 'Christian theology like all forms of knowledge, thinking and practices, arises from and is influenced by the context in which it is done'. According to Bevans (1992:1) contextual theology can be defined as 'a way of doing theology in which one takes into account: the spirit and message of the gospel, the tradition of the Christian people, the culture in which one is theologizing, and the social change in that culture'.

Evans (2009:31) argues that, 'the methodology applied by many African theologians over the four decades in exploring how the Gospel relates, in particularity, to their own situation has much to offer the West'. Badiako (1997:438) joins the conversation and points out that, 'to the extent that the African endeavor has achieved a measure of success, it may hold promise for a modern Western theology which is now also asking seriously how the Christian faith may be related, in a missionary sense, to Western culture'.

Badiako (1997:432) maintains that 'the task of African theology came to assist, not in indigenizing Christianity or theology as such, but rather in letting the Christian Gospel encounter, as well as be shaped by the African experience'. Western traditions did not enshrine universal norms. Mbiti (1979:68) maintains that, 'to speak of indigenizing Christianity is to give the impression that Christianity is a ready-made commodity which has to be transplanted to a local area'. Of course, this has been the assumption followed by many missionaries and Western theologians. For Ela(1986:26) 'safe theology is a travesty of the Gospel. Safe theology promotes a religion which avoids encounter with the cultural issues that face the people and in Africa. The author concurs with Bard (2019:71) in that life experiences challenge people's fundamental understanding and adherence to faith.

According to Badiako (1997:426) 'the broad aim of African theology is to achieve some integration between the African pre-Christian religious experience and African Christian

commitment in ways that would ensure the integrity of African Christian identity and selfhood'. Evans (2009:32) argues that, God was not a stranger in Africa prior to the coming of the missionaries. They did not bring God, rather God brought them. It was not a meeting between Western missionaries and Africa, but rather a meeting between Africa and Jesus. Bujo (1995:122) joins the discussion and argues that, we need to be critical of a theology of inculturation that fails to address solid issues and seeks to appeal to an academic public outside the continent rather than to the African in his or her own need and context. Furthermore, Bujo (1995:122) points out that, the 'liberative and cultural aspects of theology must be wedded'. There is a pressing need for the African to rediscover roots, and this will enable an African to relate ancestral religion to modern society. In so doing the African must not idealize the past as a lost paradise nor denigrate it as idolatry.

Parratt (1997:ix-x) points out that, in earlier stages of African Christian theology, conservative evangelicals had been reluctant to become involved with their African brothers in dialogue about the need for and shape of an African theology. Furthermore, according to Parratt (1997:ix-x) many evangelicals have adopted onto their agenda political, social and cultural issues which did not feature strongly in earlier African conservative theological writing. This may well indicate that 'to label African Christians as conservative or liberal is to import western categories which are not at all helpful to the church in Africa'. For Evans (2009:33) the pertinent question is, 'how can we rediscover the Gospel aside from the baggage of Christianity seeped in the culture of a fading past?' Evans (2009:33) points out that the Gospel has survived encounters with culture. 'African theologians are calling for a return to core values of identity, of a God who wholly identifies himself with his creation, in the Incarnation, in space, time and culture'.

It is for this reason Oraegbum (1997:89) argues that, 'churches must be made to reflect African sensitivities'. Greenwood (2002:12) points out that, 'historic African churches, founded by Westerners, now faced with a complex and worrying new society, are discovering the strength, anger and determination to change their theology and identity'.

Pursuing the matter further, Greenwood (2002:12) points out that there are Black theologians writing of 'the courage and energy required for African churches to recover from their colonial history and recent cases of severe mismanagement, in order to find new credibility in addressing the position of Christianity in Africa'.

For Musopole (1994:117) theological meaning can only be derived by 'beginning with the African people's own self-understanding and definition. The question of identity and historical consciousness are crucial'. Ng'weshemi (2002:37) maintains that, 'African theological anthropology links the African with the Christ symbol' that provides the normative picture of what it means to be human. Mbogu (2012:96) points out that, our proclamation of God in Africa will be seriously deficient without an adequate Christology. Lartey (1996:31) contends that 'to deny the reality of one's cultural experience is to rob the human community of the gifts that experience can potentially offer to our understanding of one another as human beings'. For Bevans (1992:1) 'theology is conceived as a process of bring to speech who I am as a person of faith, and as a product of my historical, geographical, social and cultural environment'.

4.5.4. A Critique of Customary Marriage

4.5.4.1. The African Family System

Odetola and Ademola (1985:47), point out that traditional African values, put more emphasis on the group, rather than on the individual, more on solidarity and more on communion of persons. In theologizing the African family system, Molobi (2014:208) says 'the Bible never speaks of the family in isolation, it exists in the larger context. Old Testament Israel is a model of extended family'.

Ensionwu (2006:22) argues that, the Africans emphasize community life and communalism as a living principle of which the basic ideology is community identity. This argument finds support in Molefi (2009:92) who points out that, the superstructure of the Western world elevates the individual over the society and therefore enshrines an ethic of one against others in a situation of existential tension. Mveng (2009:61) argues that 'the African notion of the person is dynamic' and one is all the more a person

insofar as one is integrated into the world and society and calls it 'communitarian anthropology'. Ensionwu (2006:28) further maintains that living together and the sense of community of brothers and sisters are the basis of and the extension of the extended family system in Africa and therefore:

"The institutions of the West predicate their existence on the assertion of the individual as unique even without the group. This is in direct contrast to what often happens in African context where the person gains his or her meaning in the midst of community".

Fuligni (2007:102) says the family plays a key role in preventing social alienation. It is the one structure individuals are part of by birth rather than choice. O'Neill (2003:37) argues that 'African anthropology parts company with Western (individualism) to insist that communicability is of the very essence of the person'. Indeed, there is danger in seeing a nuclear family as a totality on its own and not part of the larger social networks. A family that is divorced from its religious and social context has weak support structure. Nothing grows when in isolation, instead of being part of the kinship. According to O'Neill (2003:38), 'damaging issues that affect family life thrive in the fertile soil isolation provides'. Social scientists and family practitioners agree that family isolation leads to social evasion, which carries a stigma. Given this, understanding Ensionwu (2006:38) points out that, individualism as an ideology and principle of life, is not encouraged in Africa and further maintains that goodwill and brotherly atmosphere inspire unity and fosters solidarity. The family solidarity is, further attested by Onyongo and Onyongo (1988:13) who point out that:

"The importance of the larger kin group (extended family) goes beyond the nuclear family. The dedication of the extended family is visibly manifested in the raising and supporting of family children".

The beauty and value of the extended family is that, it is the primary source of assistance and establishes family traditions for the younger generation. Extended family

also provides emotional support and stability in life as it is often part of the major events in a child's life.

4.5.4.2. The Negative Elements

Wiersbe (1989:50) speaks against enforced submission as slavery in the marriage context and should be, opposed as a questionable practice, because headship is not dictatorship. The root cause of this problem of domination in customary and polygamous marriages, emanates from misunderstanding the meaning of submission. Snyder (1983:227) explains that, man and woman were, created for each other. God intends a relationship between men and women of equality, complementary and mutual submission, not of domination. According to Warunta and Kinothi (2000:124):

> "The question of women's submission to their husbands has made the husbands to assume the superiority complex and make women to obey the Bible even out of context". Snyder (1983:225) explains that, submission does not really mean inferiority or inequality".

Greenwood (2002:30) speaks against voluntary submission to abusive leaders (family and church). It is, clear that, this emotional anguish, mental torment and spiritual challenge in customary marriage is, perpetrated by male dominance. According to Baloyi (2007:224-225), the solution to this problem is to deal with systematic oppression of women and hence maintains that, we need to challenge all systems that promote the subordination of women therapeutically and theologically. Being a helpmate means being equal. Snyder (1983:225) explains that, submission does not really mean inferiority or inequality and according to Warunta and Kinothi (2000:124) the question of women's submission to their husbands has made the husbands to assume the superiority complex and make women to obey the Bible even out of context. Watkins (2000:ix) reiterates the concern of Warunta and Kinothi and points out that, males as a group have and do benefit the most from patriarchy, from the assumption that they are superior to females and should rule over them. For the author, it is not only strange but

also disappointing that in an age of democracy, there are still social institutions that practice domination.

In concluding this point on submission as part of the arguments against dehumanizing practices in African cultures, Rush (1989:70) points out that:

> "The person dominated begins to avoid conflicts. The personality of the individual being, dominated is, suffocated. The dominated person's creativity is stifled. The oppressed person eventually becomes the slave of the dominator. The person under domination eventually, moves to isolation style. Both parties lose respect for the other".

4.5.5. Redefining Marriage

It is interesting that Witte (2003:40) points out that the 16th century Protestant Reformation was 'a watershed in the history of Western theology and the law of marriage'. According to Witte (2003:40) the Reformation produced three significant models of marriage: The Social model of Lutheranism, the Covenant model of Calvinism and the Common Wealth model of Anglicanism. These three models continue to have their influence in parts of the world informed by these religions traditions. It is not within the scope of this discussion to include these three models. The focus here is the modern trends and the challenge facing the Church and how practical theology can be a catalyst in resolving the issues.

As mentioned in the discussion about customary marriage in chapters one and two, the typical patriarchal family and its extended family component is disintegrating in urban areas and this new trend seems to be gaining momentum even in rural villages. Each different context has its own internal and external factors contributing to the radical changes to family structure and its functionality. McAdoo and McAdoo (1997:7-15) point out that, 'families of all types are found, and often exist within supportive networks of extended kin and community support, rather than only within nuclear families'.

For the author, reference to all types of families is important given the new trends such as cohabitation, trial marriage, domestic partnerships, single parents, high rate of

divorce and so forth. Writing from a North American context and perspective, Bunting (2004:19), attests to this as a global phenomenon and points out that 'the last twenty years have been years of dramatic change and the diversity of family structure'. Cherlin (2013:376) concurs with Bunting and points out that 'the law and public opinion have changed dramatically over the past centuries, greatly altering the way in which marriage is, viewed'. These new trends have changed the demographics and hence the result is blended families. It is for this reason that Cohen (2014:29) argues that:

> "The increasing complexity of families means people do not fit into one category of married parents. Different families have different child-rearing challenges and needs, which means we are we no longer well served by policies that assume most children will be raised by married couple".

McAdoo and McAdoo (1997:11) points out that in attempt to respond to changing patterns of behavior there is no longer a consensus as to the place or indeed relevance of marriage within society. Secondly, there is a need for a paradigm shift in pastoral theology and pastoral ministry approach because of the drastic changes in the nature and understanding of marriage in modern times. Bunting (2004:34), reminds the church that, the conventional nuclear family is already a thing of, the past. 'The challenge for twenty first century theologians is dealing with the results of its disappearance'.

4.5.6. The Church and Gender Issues

4.5.6.1. Oppressive Structures

Fiorenza (1992:17) argues that the official church teaching argues that women cannot fully participate in the leadership of the church because Christ and Apostles did not ordain women. Florenza (1992:17) maintains that the tension between the democratic-charismatic and the patriarchical-hierarchical model of the Church comes to the fore in the linguistic notion of the word 'Church' Tutu (1982:149) points out that the church has lost something valuable in denying the ordination of women. According to Greenwood (2009:8) 'the time is running out for inherited patterns of the Church, theologically, spiritually, pragmatically, emotionally and financially'. The critical question for

Greenwood (2009:9) is: – what instruments of change are available and likely to be acceptable to sufficient church members to allow for transition without total collapse?.

For Mtetemela (1999:13) there is a need for the search for sustainable ways of imagining and nearing conditions for face to face Church communicating God's abundance. Greenwood (2009:13) maintains that the task of bishops and others, who share church leadership, is to find out how to create in the institutions conditions for fruitful ministry. For Ronald (2000:9) churches faced with adjusting theology, and strategy should learn from the clarity and determination of the 21st century Pan-Africanism. Cedar et al (1991:77) contends that there is a need to transform inherited patterns of ecclesiology and hopefully to contribute to the permanent constructive developing of a theology of the Church and open up the possibilities for rethinking how we do Church together. Ward (1996:5) argues for mechanisms that will contribute to our moving away from outworn models and to create optimal conditions for the Church to thrive in serving God's purpose.

4.5.6.2. .Woman Theology

Mudimeli (2014:270) joins the conversation and argues that 'woman theology resuscitates and captures the reality of a black South African woman and it describes her ecclesial struggles that deny her full humanity status'. Indeed, women are the most marginalized group in the church. It is for this reason that, Maina (2009:43) argues that 'there is a need for people who can make the necessary noise and action to promote adherence to the rule of law. Surely, such people can stand up to the powers that be and bring about equity and justice. Mudimeli (2014:279) further contends that:

> "The woman theology encourages women to speak of their experiences. It is when women begin to speak that they will find ways of breaking the silence and be able to redefine, re-evaluate and transform the patriarchal nature of the church".

Kung (1990:76) points out that, women as members, they share a common dignity from their rebirth in Christ. Hence, there is in Christ and the Church no inequality on the

basis, of race or nationality, social condition or gender, (Galatians 3:28, Colossians 3:11). Cook (1985:242) reminds us that, the church should be the place of greatest freedom for all God's people (males and females), to be and to become part of a royal priesthood that we may declare the mighty deeds of God. Fiorenza (2000:9) explains the reason why it is difficult to attain freedom for all God's people, especially women, and therefore argues that:

> "Harmony will not be found within the confines of the patriarchally defined theologies of the past, which took very little consideration of the perspectives of women and certain other disenfranchised groups spoken of in the Biblical tradition".

Isherwood and McEwan (2007:48) join the discussion and maintain that, 'patriarchal theology stands in need of critical reassessment so as, to make visible the richness of scripture, the all-inclusiveness of teaching and the all-embracing vision of participation by everybody'. According to Schattauer (2011:32), a way out of this hermeneutical wilderness is in a worship-centered community of critical theological reflection.

According to Young (1986:74), the traditions that are promoting the oppression of women were created by men and can also, be abolished by men. Baloyi (2007:251), concurs with Young and maintains that, the oppression, made forcible by men needs to revisited and corrected by the very same men who created it.

4.5.6.3. Unscriptural Teaching

Keck (19988:101) cautions against moralizing preaching and Long (2001:2025) shares the sentiments of Keck and points out that, preaching is a ministry and that the purpose is to proclaim the Word and not to provide platform for the preacher to express his or her own opinion about what is best for the congregation. Maina (2009:110) joins the discussion and maintains that, the theologian's role is not to dictate what people's beliefs, understandings, and practices should be. Jones (1980:63) maintains that, preachers forfeit their authority when they disrespect people's freedom and personal dignity, bypass their intelligence, and make decisions for them.

Church leaders should avoid moralizing preaching as per pastoral wisdom of Long and one can add to say, they must also refrain from demonizing members and see them as redeemed people of God though not perfect. This calls for reading and studying the scriptures through a different lens. For this to happen, Hewitt (1996:20) argues that:

> "An urgent task for leaders seeking transformation in their life and work must begin with learning to read and listen to the scriptures through methods that will free them from amnesia, apathy and short-sightedness and empower them, instead, with a new vision of what God would have them be and do".

In addressing the question of collective interpretation of Scripture as a Christian community, Maina (2009:58) further argues that, there is a need for a dialogue that would ensure that teachings in the church are not dictations from the clergy and hierarchy but that they emanate from the whole church as the body of Christ. When collective Bible interpretation is cultivated, nurtured and promoted, and the ministry of teaching shared as a communal responsibility, there will a broad based knowledge of the Bible and members can hold one another accountable for accurate communication of the message. reminds the church that preaching and teaching is spoken theology. According to Jones (1980:54) knowledge of the Bible and alertness to the modern world would help in the exercise of producing a living a living theology and that is the essence of Christian preaching.

Jones (1980:74) argues that preachers forfeit their authority when they disrespect people's freedom and personal dignity, bypass their intelligence, and make decisions for them. O'Neill (2003:61) says ecclesial structures, moreover often neglect or minimize the rich repository of women's wisdom, even on issues that most affect them. McClure (1995:58) promotes an interesting approach to preaching and points out that, collaborative preaching brings more perspectives on the sermon and broadens the influence of the group. This particular approach activates not only interest to sermons but also promote ownership for the message that is, preached. Doehring (2006:23), makes an observation that, there is a reluctance in the church to accept these new roles of authority for women.

O'Connell (2002:19) supports Doehring and advises that for women to have full rights win the Church, they must be, given new tasks, and above all, their dignity as persons must be acknowledged in the Church's teachings and preaching. McClure (1995:58) maintains that, collaborative preaching respects differences as well as similarities in relationships and generates a more participative communal process of prophetic discernment in a congregation. Maina (2009:50) attests to this by saying the praxis of Christian teachings and pastoral praxis is, seen as an effective way to bring about positive social transformation at grassroots level.

Jones (1980:76) argues that no theories about the way the Church should be ordered, moral principles for Christian conduct, rules for spiritual or devotional life can be, constructed in isolation of other passages. Long (2001:20-25) points out that preaching is a ministry and that the purpose is to proclaim the Word and not to provide platform for the preacher to express his or her opinion about what is best for the congregation. Maina (2009:110) argues that the theologian's role is not to dictate what the people's belief, understandings, and practices should be. Long (2005:125) argues that, just as preachers at their exegetical desks finally claim for themselves the meaning of the text, so hearers (women) in the pew should be empowered to claim for themselves the meanings of those texts. For collective or corporate ownership of a sermon to take place, McClure (1995:58) is convinced that collaborative preaching yields a truly participative form of persuasion in the pulpit.

Keck (1998:101) cautions against moralizing preaching. Jones (1980:74-75) further argues that the preacher must be thoroughly aware of the nature of the biblical literature and the character of the times in which it was first formulated. Indeed, one cannot build a theological case, moral position or a doctrine on one or few passages of scripture as that would be a hermeneutical suicide and serious distortion and contradiction of the message of the Bible. According to McClure (1995:58), collaborative preaching promises to overcome the problems we have, associated with sovereign and inductive forms of preaching and to support a mutual and empowering form of congregational leadership.

4.5.6.4. Legalism

Manmade policies are unscriptural and are, perpetuated by legalism and Cole (1997:31) points out that, there is probably no sin more tolerated or more widespread in the Christian world than legalism. The ugliness of legalism is, well described by Lutzer (1999:68) who points out that:

> "Legalism elevates mere human preferences to the level of biblical absolutes. Legalism reduces the broad, inclusive and general precepts of the Bible to narrow and rigid moral codes. Legalism is the wrong use of laws and rules".

Oduyoye (1992:2) points out that, the Bible is, often used for sanctioning certain attitudes and practices to which women are subjected. The use of Scripture to give a theological justification to a practice that promotes exclusion of certain individuals and women does not necessarily make it right and therefore unacceptable in the church of Jesus Christ. Having observed a homiletic practice that pushes the agenda of the preacher, Long (2005:131) points out that:

> "A preacher can nourish rigidity or openness, legalism or graciousness, inclusiveness or exclusiveness, adversarial or conciliating mentality, willingness to discuss or demand immediate answers"

In view of dictatorial teachings, that constitutes injustice to the interpretation of Scripture and gross violation of people's conscientious freedom and choices, Willhauck and Thorpe (2001:9) argue that the church should move away from the command and control structure and leadership that has, de-capacitated it. It is very interesting to note that, according Sweet (1999:19), even some male clergy are disillusioned with the traditional chain of command leadership. Heitink (1993:2-4) says the authoritarian culture in all spheres of life including the Church, was challenged in the Western world in the 1960's through democratization. He argues that practical theology as a theory of action must address this crisis of the Church and its faith in practice and bring a renewal.

Greenwood (2002:1-6) says institutionalized religion has no credibility in modern times. He argues that for the church to be transformed it needs liberating structures that will promote effective ministry. Indeed the chain of command and how institutions and organizations are, run has changed in our day and age. Poling and Miller (1985:27) point out that there is a need for sensitivity in ministry, which involves deep awareness of the context, acceptance of the values and limitations of one's leadership style. Catherwood (1980:50) to be aware of the force of intolerance beneath the thin veneer of official tolerance – official impartiality

4.5.7. Models of Ministry

4.5.7.1 The Challenge of Clericalism

Tracing the historicity of this problem of clericalism helps to understand its impact on the liturgical life of the church today. In tracing the origins of clericalism, Orabator (1997:9) points out that, African theologians are unanimous in their observation that the Church in Africa continues to be, confronted by the serious problem of clericalism as a missionary inheritance. Uzukwu (1996:120) joins the discussion and attests that, the Church in Africa inherited this pattern of clericalism from the missionaries, who naturally communicated the post-Tridentine image of the Church.

In raising the issue of governance and future of the church, Lakeland (2004:886) points out that, the connection between clericalism and lack of accountability seems unarguable. It is for this reason that Orabator (1997:10) argues that:

> "A truly African church cannot be imagined or constructed in a situation of ingrained clericalism. The structure of leadership and authority must be subjected to a radical assessment".

This radical assessment may, be opposed as Lakeland (2004:886) points out that official ecclesiology attempts to enchain the theological imagination in the fetters of the status quo. Greenwood (2002:3) cautions that, understandings of the nature of the Church and its ministry are, currently influx as assumptions built on previously persuasive models are rapidly losing credibility. The question of church authority and its

abuse by the leadership remains a problem. Heitink (1993:2-4) points out that, the authoritarian culture in all spheres of life can be challenged and removed through democratization. According to Parent (1989:7), the tension between church leadership and laity is about distribution of power. No doubt, when the church leadership becomes a separate group that is almost detached from the laity, it creates divisions among clergy and laity. Parent (1989:20) argues further that, ecclesiastical identity elevates the clergy as subjects and laity as objects of the church. Surely, a practice that promotes leadership prominence and subordination to it cannot be theologically justified. It is for this reason that Greenwood (2002:30) points out that:

> "At all levels of church activity still pervaded by the expectation of respectful subordination, we are often inhibited from creatively and honestly offering appropriate critique of senior figures".

In speaking against legalistic expectations in liturgical worship, Stagaman (1999:35) argues that the changing times demand that this authority be reinterpreted and Greenwood (2002:1-6) maintains that, institutionalized religion has no credibility in modern times and for the church to be transformed, it needs liberating structures that will promote effective ministry. It is for this reason that Brachtner (2001:26) argues that:

> "A theology of church rooted in the baptismal calling of the whole people of God requires us to pay attention to the wisdom of the learning community and to offer all Christian adults holistic opportunities".

Clowney (1995:113) reminds us that, a great gain of the Protestant Reformation was its recognition of the place of the laity in the Church. Reformers taught that all believers have priestly access. Ugandan theologian Walligo (2006:208) argues that, the theology of the church as family is a double-edged sword. It can be, profitably used but it may also lead to paternalism. We must be careful not to end up again with a pyramid structure of the Church instead of the circular one of communion. Fuellenbach (1995:42) reminds us that:

"If churches are intrigued with internal arguments about who is responsible for what and putting limits on people's power, the chances seem slim of reaching a mature, fresh understanding of Church that resonates with what we know of God's mission for a Christian community".

Governance, accountability, leadership, authority and vision are all key points that are relevant to this study given the current situation in the identified congregations. Orabator (1997:12-13) further argues that, the ordained minister exercises not a solitary authority but authority in concert with the community of all believers in everything that concerns the life of the church as family. In promoting the family model repositioning the laity in the liturgical assembly, Orabator (1997:14) argues that:

"The fact that the priest is called an elder (presbyteros) in Africa should not necessarily amount to a consolidation of clericalism. This functional vocation extends to all members of the church as family, old and young alike. It is not restricted to the privileged few, the clergy".

Willard (2012:25) reminds us that, when we assume the task of the church to belong primarily to clergy, we make appropriate arrangements for that elite few. Patton (2004:120) cautions that, the autocratic style of leadership can be, aptly characterized as a cork in the bottle, containing and suppressing the gifts of the body. Bujo (1992:147) maintains that, a church that proceeds from the idea of community and family can no longer tolerate anonymous power structures in its bosoms. Orabator (1997:14) contends that:

Uzukwu (1996:105) joins the conversation and argues that, the laity do not simply want to observe what the clergy are doing, rather they want to participate and make their contribution to the building up of the church community. McKenna (1997:25) points out that, the energy of the laity will always be disengaged if attention is given only to the surface, practical routines of church's activity. In writing about subversive spirituality, Peterson (1997:37-38) encourages that, the laity should be committed to doing real ministry of the church and the pastor should be committed to the spiritual direction of

the laity. (Nouwen (1996:42) suggests a solution for this clergy-laity tension and maintains that:

> "The church could benefit from improvisation as opposed to bureaucratic, highly structured chains of command. Improvisation could allow the church more freedom to explore cutting-edge ministries, and the opportunity for clergy-laity distinctions to go away".

There is a need for visionary leadership that, will chart a way forward. In writing about shifting images of church and leadership frames, Van Gelder (2000:47) points out that a vision or image of church is linked to the kind of leadership required to bring the image to reality and for Callahan (2002:56), how one images church influences how one leads within it and leader style match their models or visions of church. Weems Jr. (1993:25) sums up this argument and reminds us that:

> "Leadership can, never be understood apart from, its mission and vision. Leadership exists to make possible a preferred future for the people involved, which reflects the heart of the mission and values to which they are committed".

4.5.7.2. Redefining Church Leadership

(2005:99) argues that the explanation of Christian as servant 'distinguishes the role of lay priesthood from the ministerial priesthood and this vocation crises is still persistent today'. Leithart (2003:27) points out that by dividing the church between sacred priesthood and secular laity, 'foundation stones were laid for modernity and constructed the ecclesio-theological framework of modern theology'. According to Kavanagh (1965:221) the minister is the servant of those who serve God. Therefore the proper perspective of this role is one who publicly serves the Church. For Flanagan (2001:84) both ministerial and lay priesthood are offices in the church. The ministerial priesthood's major function in its service to the servant people is to 'preside of the center of the Eucharistic celebration'. Bondi (2006:72) points out that the conversation calls us to bring the intellect and emotion, memory and hope, action and contemplation, wounds and prayer, in order to live out our common calling. According to Flanagan

(2001:84)'theological reflection provides the formal or informal context for us to notice and articulate the underlying assumptions which ground one's faith, hope and love'. Whitehead (2005:99) points out that 'in every age the community of faith must discover the shape of its ministry'. Indeed, theological reflection is an essential tool in this discerning of contemporary ministry.

4.5.8. The Church and Mission

4.5.8.1. The Gospel Imperative

According to Moschos (2018:32) when the church is not involved in socio-political issues, 'politics become devoid of spiritual content and consequently theology loses its feedback from social experience and its penetration into society'. Williams (2005:31) points out that there is a need for a fresh approach to Reformed Calvinist covenant theology. Indeed we belong to God by virtue of the creation narrative and also the redemptive work of Christ. For Franke (2005:206) 'the task of theology is to reflect on the beliefs and practices of the church and the purpose of theology is to assist God's people in their cultural context to live out their missional vocation'. Villa-Vicencio (1994:11) points out that doing theology begins with reflection on the Scriptures and through an analysis of what is happening in the world, and finally it seeks to inform Christian witness so that it may be both faithful to the gospel and more relevant to the needs of the world

According to Evans (2009:31) African theology is a theology of liberation, 'exploring and highlighting the themes of struggle, oppression and inequality, and seeking the theological dimensions of these issues'. Moore (2015:67) maintains that our mission is to advocate for person's dignity, for religious liberty, for family stability, let's do so as those with a prophetic word that turns everything upside down. Moore (2015:83) argues that we need a church that 'speaks to social and political issues with a bigger vision in mind, that of the gospel of Jesus Christ'. Maina (2009:44) cautions that it is imperative to keep in mind that political problems require in most cases inclusive political actions and solutions (2009:42). For Osborn (1987:98–99) there is no question about Christian

response to poverty, oppression, violence, social abuses, and economic problems posed', much less whether the sacraments themselves have helped Christians to transform the injustices within their neighborhood. Maina (2009:42) argues that 'praxis as the transforming action in any society should move Christians to work for good governance as well as helping realize a just society' where no one is excluded from sharing in the common good. Maina (2009:42) concludes the 'Christian faith and teachings are inseparable from Christian action'. Christians as people living in the world, have an indispensable role of promoting the quality of life in their respective communities.

4.5.8.2. Socio-Political Challenges

Nolan (1988:212) argues that, the sacraments and the liturgy are always ethical imperatives and quotes Isaiah 1:11-17 in deploring an empty ritualism in sacraments and worship, which is not linked to a sense of action for justice. Bakke (1987:140-141) points out that the mission of the church must be rooted in the character and purpose of God. That mission flows out of worship and toward the world in evangelism and social action. Speaking from a Zambian context, Bishop, Mbala-Mpika (2009:73) points out that the way of life and evangelization in Africa embraces a spiritual compassion with the suffering, a social solidarity to empower the poor and oppressed, a political effort to change unjust structures and a cultural commitment to non-violence.

Kung (1990:3) joins the conversation and points out that, radical Christianity calls for a reform that is, formulated with an eye to the needs and hopes of the people today. Hewitt (1996:34) carries the argument further and maintains that, a church whose ministry and mission is disabled, also runs the risk of being, rejected by society. In reconciling the unavoidable responsibility in the two worlds, namely church and society, de Gruchy (2009:117) reminds church leaders that:

> "Calvin as a Christian humanist and evangelical reformer, engaged in both the reformation of the Church and in civic responsibilities which, for him could not be separated from his ecclesiastical tasks".

Indeed, apathy has paralyzed some churches (including the congregations under study) and thus pastoral concern for community issues is not a priority. This inward-looking spirituality (focus on internal church issues) is deplorable. Occasional involvement is not a good reflection of genuine socio-political consciousness. Lindgren (1983:132) argues that the pronouncements of the social creeds of the churches make good reading, but the practice of the church too often betrays its pronouncements. De Gruchy (2009:148) rejects such a polarized attitude and argues that, the gospel simply cannot be contained in, or reduced to, propositions or prescriptions. Indeed, the prophetic traditions emphasize social justice and ethics practiced as compassion. The church, both corporately and individually, must not only advocate a lifestyle of service, it must practice it.

Indeed, there must be a genuine commitment to socio-political issues for the church cannot abdicate its social responsibility and action for justice in the world. The credibility of the church lies in active involvement in God's agenda for the whole of humanity. It is for this reason that Erickson (1989:84) reminds us that the liturgy of the church extends to the world. McKenna (1997:21) maintains that, the sacraments belong to Christians, to the Church, and it is in the choices and lifestyles of Christians in the world, that the ethic of Jesus and the sacraments of Jesus find their meaning and power. The critical question of Kretzmar (2006:349) remains: does the African church have the moral stature, spiritual discernment and managerial competence to contribute to the liberation and reconstruction of the continent?

Maina (2009:30) argues that for Christianity to be meaningful, it has to address issues in social justice and bring about social transformation. For Fuellenbach (1995:234) transformation is an ethical imperative for it talks to the nature of social arrangements that advantages some and disadvantages others. Reader (2008:48) says a political approach to pastoral care raises questions about policies and decisions that support the power structures, which hold people within enclosures of poverty and economic insecurity. Maina (2009:48) says solidarity with those in any form of need is about bringing into mainstream the people who have been, relegated to the margins of

society. Patton (1983:59) says if we realize the importance of healthy social structures for community life, then we are, unavoidably caught up in the world of political action.

According to Hewitt (1996:19,21), this transformation can only happen when church leaders rediscover the transforming power of the Word of God and further argues that church leaders need to develop a missional hermeneutic and action in their reading of scripture that will lead to new social responsibilities. For the church, this challenge of social responsibility and political involvement is not optional. Surely, the clergy have a pastoral obligation to both the church and the surrounding community. The expectation will always remain that they exert their religious influence in civic affairs. It is for this reason that Hewitt (1996:19) argues that:

> "There is an urgent need for Christian leaders to re-equip themselves in order to respond effectively to the challenges of the age. Renewal among leaders is a necessary pre-requisite for transformation within the Church and society".

Chapter FIve

Research Methodology

3.1.   Introduction

First of all, the purpose of this research study was to probe and explore the research problem which is the administration of sacraments in African Presbyterian congregations, in Tshwane (Pretoria). Probing is the key instrument in finding out more about the subject matter under investigation and that calls for critical thinking and not speculative thinking as the latter is opposed to critical reflection. According to Paul and Elder (2000:49) 'critical thinking is not driven by answers but by questions' and Nipkow (2009:77) points out that 'investigative questions are part and parcel of the conditions of practical theology'. Indeed, the ability to express one's views and thoughts is generated by questioning them and consequently questioning radically accelerate the inquiry process and validates or rejects the researcher's assumptions. Surely, questions are asked in order to validate answers. Secondly, probing and critical reflection necessitate exploring how the affected group or community is coping with the challenges. It is for this reason Zakweni (2013:93) points out that:

> "In qualitative research the objective is exploratory and descriptive rather than explanatory. The descriptive nature of qualitative research allows the researcher to provide a description of the experiences of the participants, which will either sustain or confront the theoretical assumptions on which the study is based".

Furthermore, (as already stated) this research explored the challenges faced by some congregants in relation to sacramental ministry in the identified African Presbyterian congregations. In chapter one, the author introduced and described the research topic and its guiding research question. In chapter two the multifaceted research problems were theorized, presenting a logical argument and asserting a position, explained as liturgical-theological critique. With this in mind, the author argues that, the thesis was clearly stated, the main ideas put forth. The purpose of a problem statement was to

introduce the reader to the importance of the research topic being studied. The reader was oriented to the significance of the study and the research questions were anchored.

According to Vosloo (:15) 'the purpose of a research is to obtain reliable and valid data, in accordance with the research problem and the accompanying research aims'. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to explain in detail the research methodology that guided this study and the justification for the use of this particular research approach. The research design describes the different sequential stages of the research process such as selection of participants or sampling technique and other related aspects. Data collection strategies describe the specific research methods used to produce results that meet the aims and objectives set by this thesis. The advantages and disadvantages (or strengths and weaknesses) of the chosen research tools are also incorporated in the discussion. The research instrument design describes the framework how the different data collection strategies were practical implemented. Data analysis describes the methods used to process and interpret the collected data. Other matters given attention are the critical role of a researcher in relation to presuppositions and biases, objectivity and subjectivity, and the role of the research questions. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the pertinent issues of quality assurance (validity and reliability in qualitative research), ethical considerations and problems encountered during the research.

2. Empirical Research in Practical Theology

This qualitative research project was undertaken within the field of Practical Theology and therefore the discussion on empirical research and practical theology sought to set the stage for this research methodology chapter (as the introduction has already set the tone). The primary aim was to highlight the scientific dimension of Practical Theology and to reinforce the relatedness of this study to critical theological issues at congregational context. Nel (2012:26) argues that 'empirical research is an inescapable part of responsible congregational analysis' and for the author reflecting on the strength and weakness of a church practice is necessary for the well-being of the congregation. According to Franke (2005:206) 'the task of theology is to reflect on the beliefs and

practices of the church and the purpose of theology is to assist God's people in their context'. In this research project, the church practice under investigation is sacramental ministry in African Presbyterian congregations.

It is for this reason Graham (2017:8) points out that, 'enquiry into specific ways of life at the grass-roots feeds back into scholarly traditions of hermeneutics and interpretation'. According to Neville (1982:13) the culture of theology as an inquiry, involves questioning and probing challenges, and articulating and testing of its answers to questions. In previous chapters, the author has introduced the research topic and theorized the research problems (multifaceted). This chapter is focused on further exploration and according to Finch (2017:33) qualitative research is a type of scientific investigation that aims to provide answers to questions without bias.

The ensuing discussion on empirical research and practical theology is as follows: According to Flanagan (2013:89):

> "Scientific research is the most powerful tool for discovering truths about the world, for exploring new theories and performing empirical validation. Therefore, scientific research is the process of performing systematic and intensive inquisitions, which aims to discover and interpret the facts".

According to Canada (2009:36), researchers in social sciences and humanities, have 'a common belief in the desirability of trying to understand human life experiences and actions through systematic study and analysis'. Westerholm (2018:67) points out that, analytic thinking has emerged as the most concerted attempt to develop a new form of theological inquiry and this new wave has growing prominence within the field of practical theology. Indeed, the two components (systematic study and analytic interpretation) are the cornerstone of a good qualitative research. Systematic study is an effective way of researching issues to in a synthesized manner. Resnik (2000:163) calls it 'a coherence approach' and Shamoo (2003:183) names it 'a structured narrative'. A clear pattern gives a direction and leads to logical conclusions in a

research activity. According to Shepard (2002:169), a methodical and explicit approach is the fundamental principle of systematic study.

Furthermore, according to Theron (2015:3), 'there is a movement among research scholars, (nationally and globally) towards a more empirical approach in Practical Theology'. Westerholm (2018:68) points out that, practical theology appears to be in a transitional phase that brings with it a search for forms of thought that can support practical theology's ongoing work. According to Nipkow (2009:), this new approach implies a new emphasis on qualitative research in relation to qualitative interpretations in order to understand the life experiences of a Christian community (in this project the identified congregations under study). Hans-Gunter (2011:2) argues that, 'the empirical interest of theology and of research in religion refers in manifold ways to the focal issue, people's experiences'.

According to Grab (2014:103) 'Practical Theology employs a general, formal-functional understanding of religion and the methods of empirical social research' and Graham (2017:8) maintains that it is accurate to claim that that practical theology values the concrete, empirical and contextual and undertakes qualitative inquiry using social scientific tools. Pederson and Hefner (2007:46-47) point out that:

> "Science is now an irreplaceable source of knowledge and has reshaped our view of the world and ourselves, and in some aspects its knowledge is normative"

Cambell-Reed (2013:88) joins the conversation and points out that, 'empirical or descriptive theology has been understood as an indispensable moment in practical theology and yet dependent on social science models'. The use of empirical research in practical theology is summed up well by Wigg-Stevenson (2014:ix) who maintain that: 'a theology constructed at the intersection of church, academy and everyday life produces creative theological insights and proposes fresh alternatives for Christian thought and action'. Pederson and Hefner (2007:46) contend that without radical reformation of theology, there is little chance that we can even begin to work on the agenda that

science poses to Christian faith and life. Jackelen (2008:44) reminds us that we need to subject the Christian tradition to critique and reforming its images and modes of thinking.

Theron (2015:4) further argues that, there is a need for 'an empirical approach to Practical Theology so that practical theologians can generate their own data by investigating the church practices (ecclesiological praxis)'. For Campbell-Reed (2013:69), beyond description or empirical data gathering, practical theology needs a reimagined research practices. It is for this reason that Christiaan (2014:114) argue that 'there is a need to develop a new form of methodology to build theology on practical reasoning, namely practice-oriented methodology'. According to Dingermans (1988:83) more recently, practical theologians, under the influence   of   social   studies   have changed their approach. Pederson and Hefner (2007:48) argue that 'theology must be reformed and reshaped if it is to be capable of taking science seriously'.

For Hans-Gunter (2011:2) the formal object of Practical Theology as Empirical Theology is Christian praxis as action. Pieterse (1991:6) argues that, 'Practical Theology should take theory and praxis into consideration and that the actions and activities of the church should be analyzed empirically'. Grab (2014:102) points out that, an empirically based Practical Theology contributes to professional religious praxis within the Church and according to Hans-Gunter (2011:2):

> A contemporary life oriented theology opens up towards an analysis and description of religious life as rooted in lived experience and this is a fundamental category for a refreshed understanding of human behavior".

Zaaiman (2017:33) points out that 'Practical Theology interprets the functioning of the church. Therefore practical theologians should also be knowledgeable about empirical approaches to investigate these matters'. Immink (2014:128) the discipline of Practical Theology is precise in description and analysis of religious practices. Grab (2014:102)) maintains that, 'an empirically based practical theology contributes to professional religious praxis within the church'. Graham (2017:8) says enquiry into specific ways of

life at the grass-roots feeds back into scholarly traditions of hermeneutics and interpretation of church life. Hans-Gunter (2011:2) joins the conversation and also points out that, 'Practical Theology is devoted to reflection on religion, life and faith and that can be identified as the empirical dimension of practical theology'. For Miller-McLemore (2012:5), Practical Theology is an activity of a community of Christians seeking to sustain a shared life of reflective faith and therefore the empirical and experiential are foundational.

3. Conceptual-Theoretical Framework

The conceptual framework outlined here provides infrastructure for the entire research project. It is the researcher's own position on the research problem (sacramental ministry in African Presbyterian congregations) and gives direction to the study. As the author's approach to exploring the research problem, ideas and theories are grouped together into an overarching framework. These ideas and theories are based on the author's perspective and assumptions and do influence the approach into the research problem. These assumptions can be challenged and tested.

Furthermore, it is necessary to adopt an appropriate paradigm and theoretical framework that fits the research objective and research subjects. Wassem (2006:23) points out that, it is possible to use theoretical frameworks borrowed from different disciplines to address a specific research problem and this often results in the emergence of new dimensions. According to Thomas and Nyce (2001:4), consideration of a multidimensional approach has proven to be of considerable value to theorists.

The author wrestled between three paradigms namely, transformative, interpretive and critical. A transformative paradigm gives voice to the marginalized groups and makes them subjects of research as opposed to objects. The author concurs with Morris (2018:34) in that 'we need to give privilege to the voices on the margins'. This paradigm was appealing to the author because in this research project, the subjects are marginalized groups. Gibson (2017:134) argues that 'inability to address issues of those at the margins compromises the efficiency and effectiveness of practical theology'. We

need to promote redemptive social activism in a congregation context. However, a researcher should not be the sole authoritative voice for participants but rather motivate them to express their own thoughts. Critical paradigm is based on the premise that, reality is shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values and therefore socially constructed. This research project is underpinned by both interpretive and constructivist paradigms and motivation is given here below.

3.1. Interpretive Approach

This thesis makes use of qualitative research strategy, where the research approach implemented has been that of interpretivism. Wills (2007:18) defines interpretivism as 'an approach which is implemented by the researcher in order to synthesize facts which are derived mainly from secondary sources, and which are qualitative in nature'. He also observes that one characteristics of interpretivism is that these facts are abstract in nature, and governed by a variety of factors which are non-tangible and difficult to measure. The author concurs with Ajith (2001:9) in that, a clear statement of what is intended to be investigated helps to identify research objectives and the key abstract concepts involved in the research.

Therefore for the purpose of this research, the author chose the interpretivist approach, rather than the positivist and pragmatist approaches, because abstract, non-quantifiable variables such as perceptions, beliefs, experiences and so forth. These are all elements, which are not easily quantifiable (measurable) and between which different and complex connections were found to exist, therefore interpretivism was found to be the most applicable. Comparing church practices and analyzing whether qualitative research techniques and their application into practical theology, can have positive influence on church practice were part of the objectives of the thesis.

3.2.　Constructionist Approach

According to Thomas (　:301), 'constructivism is closely related to interpretivism as it addresses essential features of shared meaning and understanding'. Canada (2009:61) points out that, knowledge is interpretive, and hence, dependent on social context.

Denzin and Lincoln (2003:) points out that, qualitative research involves an interpretive approach to its subject matter, attempting to make sense of the meaning participants bring to their life experiences. According to Boudry and Beukens (2011:93):

"The theory of social constructivism and knowledge, evolves through the process of social negotiation and evaluation of the validity of individual understanding. Every conversation or encounter between people (in exchange of ideas) presents an opportunity for new knowledge to be obtained or present knowledge expanded".

Indeed, social constructivism emphasizes the importance of social interactions in the construction of knowledge. It is a perspective that is founded on the assumption that active involvement of research participants is crucial. According to Palinscar (1998:260), points out that:

"The central idea of social constructivism is that knowledge is constructed collectively by all members of the research group. Therefore, social constructivism is in contrast with passive transmission of information".

This active involvement of research participants is well articulated by Johnson (2006:3) who points out that, social sciences are concerned with life experiences of participants. Therefore, quest for meaning are the new scope and sequence. Relevance and personal meaning are the new standards for which researchers should be held accountable. Jackelen (2008:43) maintains that 'intelligibility and meaning one foremost on theology's agenda'. Given the socially constructed nature of reality, the author has chosen constructivist approach because the thesis' problem focuses on the meanings, perceptions, and descriptions of the subject matter. Thomas (:301) points out that, 'the researcher can take a position within the parameters of a constructivist epistemological discourse as the research environment provides the researcher to observe, investigate and understand the participants' experiences. Surely, all understanding of experience is

social constructed as different communities can construct different interpretation of their shared experience.

4. The Role of the Researcher

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005:), qualitative research requires the researcher to become the research instrument and Canada (2009:37) points out that, the personal perspective of the researcher as an observer and analyst, do shape knowledge. The author is of the opinion that, a researcher cannot impose personal viewpoints and or exercise undue influence in the research process. Graham (2017:5) argues that 'in the interest of integrity and transparency, the researcher as one who brings particular presuppositions, questions and interests must be prepared to invite themselves in to the text of their research'. Whilst there is, room for description of the researcher's own biases and ideological preferences, Graham (2017:5,7) warns that, researchers cannot inflict their personal life histories on a captive audience and in fact within practical theology, researchers must declare their theological presuppositions and objectives. Scott (2017:29) argues that 'any scholarly (research) discussion should not operate to colonize the experiences of others'. Kogler (1996:117) maintains that, the logic of dialogue (constructive discussion) reveals its creative potential precisely in what it is unexpected, in opening up unforeseen possibilities of understanding. This introductory remarks are summed up well by Walton (2014:xii) points out that:

> "Reflective processes are characterized by acute observation and analysis of roles and context. Reflexivity takes this critical work a step further and also interrogates the position of 'self' who observes".

4.1. Adaptability and Flexibility

Kampenes (2005:733) simply defines flexibility 'as the capacity to adapt' and also argues that in a research encounter, it is difficult for the researcher to predict constraints and expectations. According to Head (2016:72), researchers have to accept that some unpredictable changes may be beyond their control. Graham (2017:5) points out that, 'qualitative research involves being aware of one's pre-commitment and how the

practices of research may in themselves be challenging or reshaping one's perspective'. Surely, navigating unchartered water is not easy exercise and yet Graham (2017:6) argues that, 'in practical theology, the location and subjectivity of the researcher and a commitment to broadly transformative, collaborative and egalitarian ends are clearly stated'. Furthermore, Kidd and Finlayson (2006:423) point out that:

> "Co-constructing narratives with participants, the researcher also faces unexplored ethical issues that arise out of the emotional intensity and professional responsibility inherent in the relationship".

Of course, in social research, relationships play a major role. Golden and Powell (2000:373) also attest that research can take unanticipated directions and that demands the researcher to be flexible. For Knapik (2006:8), flexibility means understanding that participants frequently uphold differential rights and opportunities to influence the course of the conversation. Kogler (1996:117) points out that, conversation can be called productive to the extent that 'it is not subject to the conscious control and prognostic anticipation of the researcher'. The author admits that in trying to adapt to the unforeseen research circumstances, was compelled to make some changes in some of the features of the research design. Knapik (2006:8) argues that, in the research situation, participants should feel free to challenge either the question itself or the understanding the researcher appears to be formulating. Indeed, changing patterns of interacting, redefining assumptions about the research project and taking into account multiple contextual factors was necessary. Though that was challenging and problematic but finally the author managed the situation. According to Neville (1982:14), refining the strategy helps manage the process, and conduct a methodologically sound research and that yields trustworthiness in the study. For the author, flexibility reduced the problem of fixed approach and unnecessary rigidity which counterproductive in a research process.

4.2. Presuppositions and Biases

Out of the several types of biases in research as addressed by Scott, only three are relevant as they offer guidance and in fact are informative about the pros and cons of partiality versus impartiality. Scott (2017:19) gives a general definition of bias as 'a particular tendency, trend, inclination, feeling or opinion, especially one that is preconceived or unreasoned'. According to Thomas (:304), the researcher should study the research situation without predetermined constraints or conditions that control the study or its outcome.

Social Desirability Bias

According to Scott (2017:25), social desirability bias is about 'asking questions on sensitive issues in a way that makes participants uncomfortable or ashamed' and thus out of self-protection respond by making socially acceptable choices and decisions. One of the angles in this research study was to focus on sensitive issues of customary marriage and youth pregnancy. The lead researcher asked that were not offensive or despising participants. Furthermore, some questions were reframed indirectly so as to allow participants to project their real thoughts and emotions without feeling ostracized. One can only concur with Scott (2017:26) in that, questions should be written in such a manner to minimize bias and focus on unconditional positive regard.

Confirmation Bias

Scott (2017:29) explains confirmation bias as 'using a previous assumption or hypothesis rather than letting the research results drive conclusions'. According to Macleod and Hockey (1981:19) a hypothesis is a statement or explanation that is suggested by knowledge or observation but has not yet, been proved or disapproved. The author holds the view that it is necessary if not imperative to put one's theological claims into questioning and critique its relativity to other religious claims and this, calls for vulnerability. Without vulnerability one cannot engage in theological discussions, debates or dialogue that can broaden one's perspectives. Kidd and Finlayson (2006:423) join the conversation and point out that, researcher vulnerability adds depth and complexity to human inquiry.

To counteract this acceptance of predetermined assumptions and allegiance thereof, Neville (1982:14) suggests that deductive argument is helpful in the context of established premises. The author avoided imposing preconceived notions so as not to diminish the value and impact of the research activity. Imposition of one's viewpoints (intentionally) is something unacceptable in qualitative research. The author was open to a discovery of new perspectives and thus evaluated participants' impressions, attitudes and beliefs. According to Gottschalk (1995:62), a researcher should take the opportunity to step back, reassess and reinterpret the data collected and Scott (2017:29) argues that, it is necessary to have good moderation practices that dissuade the researcher from promoting personal desires and preconceived ideas.

Irrational Bias

Scott (2017:31) explains that irrational escalation bias is about ignoring new research findings, more so when they override or undermine research decisions already made. Cote (2016:32) encourages researchers to attend to the empirics of change and to reexamine their beliefs, especially under conditions of increasing complexity. For Lefort (1993:58), objectivity and willingness to listen to new research results is the key to promoting non-biased interpretation. Graham (2017:5) argues that, objectivity calls for a greater degree of transparency on the part of the researcher and that forms of reflective practice are closely charted and interrogated. In addressing the concern about impartiality, Harding (1991:28) points out that, neutrality and objectivity implies insisting on critical attention to the material and ideological circumstances within which claims to the truth are constructed.

This discussion on biases is concluded with a thought provoking statement from Scott (2017:33) who argues that:

> "The best insurance against a costly bias decision is to leverage research professionals who can deliver carefully designed projects that are expertly executed".

5. Ethical Matters

In qualitative research, ethical considerations cover a wide range of issues such as, ethical procedures, institutional permission, informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and handling of data (accessibility, protection and dissemination. These key points are in fact compulsory guidelines and therefore remain the chief cornerstones on which to build good and unquestionable research work. The author observed these sound and solid research principles.

Canada (2009:82) points out that, issues of consent, privacy and confidentiality have a unique manifestation in qualitative research. Knapik (2006:2) raises a legitimate concern about the potential vulnerability of participants in research project and for Denzin and Lincoln (2005:96), 'qualitative research design incorporates informed consent decisions and is responsive to ethical concerns'. This concern is also adequately addressed by Noddings (1984:77) who points out that, early approaches in qualitative research promoted or included the development of an ethics of care. Kidd and Finlayson (2006:423) remind researchers that, 'sensitive research necessitates routine ethical practices of confidentiality, anonymity and worthiness'.

Finch (2017:23) advocates for training in research ethics before beginning the preliminary work of data collection of qualitative research. The author argues that, social anthropology and sociology are complementary studies that yield a deeper understanding of group dynamics, group ethics and group interaction. No doubt, both individual and group behavior does impact on the research activity. Therefore, it is imperative in a research situation to have an honest pre-understanding of oneself (strengths and weaknesses) and that a constant check on one's behavior within a group is crucial. It is for this reason Knapik (2006:5) maintains that, preferences and expectations should be negotiated early in the research process.

Williams (2009:22) points out that, whilst the researcher may have the freedom to make decisions, however with freedom comes the responsibility to act in ethical ways. Mouton (2001:238) the ethics of science refers to what is wrong and what is right when conducting research. According to Kidd and Finlayson (2006:423) there is a professional responsibility inherent in the relationship between a researcher and

participants. The author argues that research ethics speak honesty and integrity in carrying out the project and this obligatory responsibility leaves no room for (or does not allow) hidden research agendas. Vosloo (:20)

> "All researchers, regardless of research design, techniques and choices of methods, are subjected to ethical considerations'. Researchers should hold standards that do not diminish the prospect of a research study".

2. Applied Research Ethics

There were several ethical issues which the researcher had to take into consideration for this project. The most important one was related with the informed consent of the participants. All of the participants were informed in advance about the purpose of this project, and gave their informed consent to participate in writing. Their identity as well as names of the families, community or congregation they belong to has been kept in strict confidentiality, thus meeting the requirements of the code of ethics of the University of Pretoria.

In addition, the privacy and confidentiality policy of the pilot congregation had to be taken into consideration as well, as congregations have very strict policy for access to their members for research purposes. Therefore the researcher had to sign consent forms for confidentiality and privacy with the research participants and leadership of the congregation as people who agreed to participate in the study. Indeed perceptions of participants' with regard to a research project are of paramount importance. The researcher in this project guarded against unauthorized violations of privacy and misuse of collected data. Finally, all the information collected in the course of the research project has been used only for the purposes of the study, and will be kept confidential and also safe in the archives of the University of Pretoria. The research work has been conducted according to the required ethical standards. Above all, the author avoided any unethical behavior that could bring the whole research project into disrepute.

6. Research Methodologies

3.6.1. Genealogy of Research Methodologies

There are differences in research approaches and the historicity of the different research methods is explained by Wassem (2006:22) who points out that, the emergence of functionalists in the last century led to a great deal of criticism of qualitative research. Thomas (:301) points out that, 'quantitative research methods were originally developed in the natural sciences to study natural phenomena. And qualitative research methods were developed in the social sciences'.

According to Tenopir (2003:15) in the past, researchers focused on systems rather than humans using those systems. Therefore, the research methodologies employed seemed to be inclined or favorable towards more quantitative methods. According to Jarvelin and Vakkai (1993:65) case studies and ethnographic strategies were not in wide use. Greater emphasis or focus was on organizational level rather than on the individual level. That has tended to create two distinct schools of thought about the conduct of research, one supporting qualitative research, the other supporting quantitative research.

3.6.2. Common Classification

There is a variety in research methodologies. Canada (2009:42) points out that some researchers use quantitative research approaches, others opt for qualitative research methods. Thomas (:301) confirms that, 'there are different research perspectives or paradigms but the most common classification is qualitative and quantitative research methods'. The major differences between these major research perspectives are discussed later. It suffices to point out that others use a combination of both. Brysman and Burgess (1999:45) confirm that some researchers use a mixed method approach in a given research project, depending on the type of study and its methodological foundation. Mixed method is self-explanatory as it employs what is relevant from these two major research approaches.

Mixed methods are also called hybrid research method. According to Albanese (2013), by capitalizing on the synergy of both qualitative and quantitative approaches, researchers are able to unpack research questions and answers to permit concept

comparison, facilitate data collection and data analysis and foster the process of determining where and how the research can best focus. According to De Vault (2019:62), some of the strongest and most credible research uses multiple approaches to a research problem. The confidence in that research is increased when the research outcomes are confirmed through multiple methods.

In fact, according to Bergman (2008:11) there is a growing interest in mixed methods and the latter has now gained prominence in the research field. Furthermore, Johnson et al (2007:112) points out that, mixed methods are increasingly articulated, attached to research practice, and recognized as the third major research approach or research paradigm. Neville (1982:13) explains that, the appropriateness of a particular method or combination of methods thereof, rests on the research problem and its related factors. For Patton (1999:189) 'the important challenge is to match appropriately the methods to empirical questions and issues, and not to universally advocate any single methodological approach for all problems'.

3.6.3. Major Differences

It is not the intention here to be elaborate on the numerous differences between qualitative research and quantitative research. It suffices to mention a few of those that indicate or depict the major differences and are not presented in a table format so as to save space. According to Thomas (:302):

> "The basic distinction between qualitative and quantitative research is the form of data collection, analysis and presentation. Quantitative research presents statistical results represented by numerical data. Qualitative research presents data as descriptive narration with words".

Systematic observation (quantitative method) uses clearly-defined categories (often with operational definitions) and collects quantitative (numerical) data. Guba and Lincoln (1985:31) point out that, qualitative research 'employs inductive data analysis to provide a better understanding of the interaction of mutually shaping influences and to explicate the interacting realities and experiences of researcher and participants'. Quantitative

research is deductive and starts with a hypothesis, which is identified before research begins. Qualitative research is inductive and usually uses research questions to guide and narrow the scope of the study. Quantitative research looks at the general case and moves to the specific. For deductive approach, the emphasis is generally on causality. It considers a potential cause of something and hopes to verify its effect.

Qualitative research explores, it begins with the specific and moves toward the general. The aim is usually focused on exploring new or looking at previously researched phenomena from a different perspective. The conclusion on major differences is well summarized by Stake (1995:37) who points out that, the differences between the two research perspectives, are about, 'explanation and understanding as the purpose of the inquiry', the personal and impersonal role of the researcher, and knowledge discovered and knowledge construction.

3.6.4. Competition

Indeed, there are fierce supporters and defenders of the different research methodologies (in particular between the quantitative and qualitative perspectives). Both groups often point out the limitations of the alternate method. Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2005:267) point out that, instructors, of quantitative and qualitative research often view themselves as being in competition with each other. This polarization has promoted narrow minded researchers, namely researchers who restrict themselves either exclusively to quantitative or qualitative research methods. This tension is summed up by Collins (1991:26) who points out that:

> "A qualitative researcher asserts that the whole is more than the sum of its parts. Reducing observations to mere counts, results in loss of information. A quantitative researcher points out the arbitrariness of personal descriptions of events and how they are subject to bias".

According to Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2005:270), quantitative theorists believe in a single reality that can be measured reliably and validly using scientific principles. Qualitative theorists believe in multiple constructed realities that generate different

meanings for different individuals. Furthermore, Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2005:271) point out that, quantitative researchers believe or argue research should be value-free and qualitative researchers understand that the research is influenced to a great extent by the values of the researcher. This point is further discussed under ethical considerations as a matter that demands critical attention.

3.6.5. Complementarity

Both sides raise critical points or research concerns and reveal that no single approach has a corner on the truth and therefore, no single technique can monopolize the field of research. Bryman and Bell (2007:32) point out that, 'the fields of social and behavioral sciences emphasize the coexistence of quantitative and qualitative aspects in the research process'. Curry and Wells (2006:34) concur in that that, quantification and qualitative description are not, mutually exclusive, both are possible and useful instruments in research.

According to Soiferman (2010:3) 'these methods often address the same question using different methods'. Therefore, one can argue that these two methodologies are an integral part of the process in applied settings. Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2010:271) maintain that, there are similarities between the two orientations and propose the terms qualitative and quantitative with exploratory and confirmatory to more clearly reflect the relationship between the two methodologies. The interconnectedness of the two methodologies is further explained by Gal and Ogra (2010:67) who point out that, 'familiarity with the logic and mutual influences of qualitative and quantitative methods is imperative'.

Of course, each method has its own strengths and weaknesses. It is for this reason Reissman (2001:63) argues that, multiple methods are more likely to produce an accurate view of human behavior. Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2010:272) give a warning that a separation of the two paradigms can lead to becoming one-dimensional with regard to knowledge of the research process. To avoid this narrow-mindedness, Wassem (2006:220 argues that:

"A review of various quantitative and qualitative methods would help both researchers and practitioners to develop a broader understanding of the usefulness of these methods in relation to particular research problems".

This discussion on different research methods is concluded by the statement from Batner and Booms (1990:71) who maintain that, qualitative methodologies are the most effective tools that can enhance traditional qualitative research. Price (2002:) points out that, in fact, qualitative approaches are becoming more widely used as analysis methods improve and people search for better ways of gathering data about a problem Indeed, a vigilant researcher selects the method most appropriate to the problem at hand. Guba (1981:76) advises that, it is proper to select that a research paradigm whose assumptions are best met by the phenomena being investigated.

7. Qualitative Research Methodology

7.1. The Research Problem

A choice between research methods rest fundamentally on a set of decisions about the questions a researcher wants to answer and the practicality of gathering the kind of data that will answer those questions. Qualitative research methodology was chosen to best answer the research problem through the proposed framework. Given the interpretive position adopted in this research and the nature of the research question, the author concurs with Thomas (:75) in that, 'the qualitative research methodology is considered the most appropriate approach to employ because it provides a systematic way to collect data, analyze information, and report the results, thus understands a particular problem or situation in great depth'. Qualitative research approach was chosen because the interpretation of research stems from the underlying theoretical assumptions that guide and inform the type of data that is collected and the methods used to gather and analyzed the information.

According to Vosloo (:15), 'the nature of the research problem and research aims necessitates a purposeful research method to meet the requirements of those research intentions'. Jarvelin and Vakkari (1993:67) point out that, the choice of research problem

then leads to a choice of research method. Vosloo (:13) also confirms that, 'the research problem determines the methods and procedures to be used for the proposed research'. Wassem (2006:22) attests that, the use of some particular research methods can be related to the choice problems and hence different research agendas use different approaches.

The specific issue or problem under scrutiny is the sacramental ministry in African Presbyterian congregations. The main focus is on people's life experiences in a concrete social context, and therefore the researcher has chosen this approach as necessitated by the nature of the research problem under investigation. According to Vosloo (:15), based on the scope and complexity of the research problem and aims, one decides on a research methodology. This choice is also supported by Frankfort and Nachmias (2000:28) who point out that:

> "Researchers adopt qualitative methods in attempt to understand complex phenomena by getting to know the behaviors or cognitions of persons, teams, or social groups involved, as well as their values, rituals, symbols, beliefs and emotions".

7.2. Motivation for Qualitative Research Method

The motivation for the chosen research methodology is based on some of the key points raised by Wassem (2006), Denzin and Lincoln (2005), and Maxwell (1998). These key points are grouped together and the aim here is to engage them and built a solid foundation for arguments in favor of qualitative research methodology. The motivation has to do with interrogating the values and assumptions that influence the research study. This is an argument for justification for using this particular research method. The relevant insights of other qualitative researchers are incorporated in this discussion as further support for the chosen research methodology.

7.2.1. Social Context

Qualitative research was chosen as suitable because the author had to critically examine and define the beliefs and values of the research participants within a socio-

cultural context as part of studying their life experiences. French and Swain (2011:4) point out that such an approach takes into account the viewpoints of all the affected people and therefore it is characterized by social inclusion. Taking into consideration all the viewpoints is crucial and for Breslow (2016:15), 'convergences of thoughts on the same subject matter have the potential to inspire rich research conversations'. No doubt, diversity of thoughts can augment the research discussion. French and Swain (2011:6) also maintain that, a broader consultation of affected people is essential as it indicates explicit recognition of all participants and heightens awareness against exclusion.

According to Thomas (:302,306), 'qualitative research studies the life experiences of different groups of people and communities in their natural setting and this 'qualitative study involves thick narrative description'. Zakweni (2013:93-94) maintains that, 'the descriptive nature of qualitative research enables the researcher to understand the meaning attached to the experiences, the distinct nature of the problem and the impact of the problem'. Curry and Wells (2006:17) point out that, qualitative method does not permit generalizations and therefore narrative qualitative descriptions provide depth and richness to our understanding. Indeed, in qualitative research, understanding people's social setting and challenges is a key to understanding their worldview.

Myers (2009:47) points out that, qualitative research is designed to enable researchers understand people, and the social and cultural contexts in which they live. The human element is important as Denzin and Lincoln (2005:83) point out that, qualitative research looks at the relationships within a system. For Kinmond (2012:23), qualitative research is about exploring the significant experiences in people's lives. No doubt, people's experiences (frustrations, problems, challenges and so forth) can be understood and articulated through qualitative method which is underpinned by a personal encounter approach.

According to Merriam (1998:23), a researcher plays a dynamic role in constructing an understanding of the research environment. Thomas (:304) points out that, in social setting the researcher engages the situation, makes sense of the multiple

interpretations, as multiple realities exist in any given context. A research approach which simply replicates and promotes an established socio-cultural perspective diminishes the value or impact. With this in mind, Graham (2017:4) argues that, a practical theological researcher needs to take context seriously.

7.2.2. Holistic Approach

Another effective feature of qualitative method as pointed out by Wassem (2006:22) is that qualitative research is holistic. This holistic element in qualitative research is further supported by Denzin and Lincoln (2005:84), who maintain that, qualitative research is holistic as it looks at the larger picture and begins with a search for understanding of the whole. It is for this reason that Thomas (:308) argues that, 'it is difficult if not impossible to predict with accuracy the behavior of complex organisms'. According to the author, it is unscientific to entertain an educated guess or speculation about a research outcome

Given this understanding, the author argues that, qualitative method is outcome based as it begins with the end in mind. Denzin and Lincoln (2005:84) point out that, 'qualitative research focuses on understanding a given social setting, not necessarily on making predictions about that setting'. Thomas (:303) further points out that:

> "Qualitative research allows for a design to evolve rather than having a complete design of the study. It is difficult if not impossible to predict the outcome of interactions due to the diverse perspectives and value systems of the researcher and participants, and their influence on the interpretation of reality and the outcome of the study".

7.2.3. Power Relations

According to Wassem (2006:22), qualitative research is non-controlling and this calls for a brief discussion on power relations in a research situation. Indeed, the privileged position of the researcher and the inherent power over the researched can create imbalance between the parties (if not checked). No researcher should exercise undue control of the research situation. This concern is also endorsed by Raheim (2006:74)

who also argues against authoritative relationship between researcher and the researched and asks a critical question: who rules the research agenda?

Using power and authority to control does not contribute significantly in a research situation. Johnson (2006:3) refutes an authoritative, top-down relationship based on power and encourages an approach that creates equality in research relationships. For the author, this equality should be based on principles of respect. Detectable patterns of power imbalance cannot go unnoticed or normalized. Surely, sensitivity to interpersonal relations in a research environment diminishes superiority syndrome. It is for this reason that Dahlberg and Nystrom (2008:31) remind researchers that trustworthiness, integrity and power relations are given primacy in the qualitative methodology.

7.2.4. Exploratory Approach

Philip (1998:267) points out that, qualitative research allows the complexities and differences of worlds-under-study to be explored and represented. Domegan and Fleming (2007:24) maintain that, qualitative research aims to explore and discover issues about the problem on hand. Surely, there are dimensions and characteristics of a research problem. Gal and Ograjensek (2010:31) argue that, any exploratory research, has by default a qualitative core. Wassem (2006:23) points out that:

> "Context exploration may lead to findings that may not only help in theory building, but also can help in developing those research problems that are varied and multi-dimensional and include different perspectives.

Indeed, the research problem under investigation (the sacramental ministry in African Presbyterian congregations) has different layers. These different facets of the same research problem demand that there be a broader outlook from different dimensions.

7.2.5. Complex Problems

The author argues that, complicated problems cannot be quantified and according to Gal and Ograjensek (2010:63), qualitative method and techniques in general builds on the core assumption that there are important phenomena or processes of a social or

behavioral nature that cannot be measured quantitatively. Indeed, many human interactions can be hard to quantify and qualitative methods help precisely uncover the right approach in dealing with and understanding complex research issues. Zakweni (2013:92) points out that, 'qualitative research approach reinforces an understanding and interpretation of meaning as well as intentions underlying human interaction'.

According to Thomas (:307), 'qualitative approaches can better account for the complexity of group behaviors and reveal interrelationships among multifaceted dimensions of group interactions'. Sauro (2008:69) maintains that, when something is not well defined, qualitative methods become an effective tool. Qualitative methods can be more fruitful in explaining linkages that cause things. According to Wassem (2006:23), qualitative methods explore not only the information needs or information behaviors, but also explore the intricacies that compose the context, of that particular information need or behavior.

Surely, there is a need to describe the complexity of a research problem and qualitative methods can distill the complexity into more manageable parts. Wassem (2006:24) maintains that, 'researchers need a lens, a paradigm that can be used to see deeply not only into the issues, but also into the causes of the issues. This strategy would result in a coherent, vibrant, and visionary discipline'. According to Thomas (:306): 'qualitative research is a systematic inquiry into the nature or qualities of complex social group behaviors by employing interpretive and naturalistic approaches'. According to Vosloo (:15), 'qualitative research clarifies the underlying logic, explains unique circumstances, opinions and practices and enhances the significance of interpretation'.

For Ritchie and Lewis (2003:52), complexity speaks to or refers to the multiplicity of perspectives which are rooted in a specific context. It is for this reason Graham (2017:4) points out that, 'given the specific complex problems in a particular context it is perhaps inevitable that practical theologians should argue that no single methodology or interpretive framework is able to do justice to such a process of enquiry'. In this research study, the complexity has been documented in chapter one where the research problems (multifaceted) were theorized in detail.

8. Qualitative Research Design

A research design is the researcher's general approach in carrying out the research project. The thesis' problem is focused on the participants' perceptions about the research problem, expressed meanings, and descriptions of the subject matter. Therefore the nature of the data to be collected and analyzed dictated the choice of qualitative research design. According to Crotty (1998:13), research design refers to strategies, plan of action and processes in the choice and implementation of specific methods, to achieve the desired aims. For Welman et al (2009:46) research design is an overall plan of a proposed study, as well as the means of data collection and Merriam (1991:6) calls it an architectural blueprint. Thomas (:308) points out that, 'research design is the logic or master plan of a research, displaying how the study is to be conducted' and for Yin (2003:19), research design is an action plan, focused on some set of questions and some set of (conclusions) answers. Mouton (1996:175) maintains that, the research design serves to plan, structure and execute the research. Vosloo (:13) points out that, 'the manner in which the research design is structured will be a direct function of the purpose of the research.

8.1. Research Participants

No research topic and its related problems can be explored without willing or voluntary participants. Therefore, recruitment of participants is one of the most important tasks in qualitative research. Davis (1997:34) makes a distinction between quantitative and qualitative research participants and points out that, the first being distant and the latter being engaged. The target population in this particular research project was members of an African Presbyterian congregation, geographical situated in a Black township East of Tshwane (Pretoria). A detailed demographic description of this community is discussed in the empirical chapter.

8.2. Sequential Steps

It is necessary to discuss (briefly) the question of accessibility of participants, availability of time and resources, and attainability of saturation. According to Williams (2009:18)

there are three important components of research participants. These are gaining entry into the location the researcher wishes to study. Secondly, it is establishing a rapport, with the research participants under investigation. Furthermore, it is spending sufficient time with the research participants in their context in order to get enough good quality data for one's study.

Accessibility was not a challenge because the author has had good relations with the church leadership and members of the congregation. Permission was solicited from the church leadership. Ethical considerations were taken into account (including explaining the rights of research participants and the question of confidentiality). The author had adequate resources to conduct this research project and budgeted time to be at the research field as per agreed appointments with co-researchers. Furthermore, given the number of visits to the congregation (four times for participatory observation) and private interviews with a few identified groups, the attainability of saturation has been reached.

8.3. Sampling Technique

There are many reasons why researchers are careful and intentional in choosing participants. The author was intentionally selective in the choice of participants because the primary task at hand was to find potential participants who have had experience with the research problem under investigation. Indeed, the overall aim of the sampling strategy was to find participants who were willing to share their experiences and thoughts. This was at the heart of this research study.

For this research, a description of ideal participants was formulated. These were then identified or chosen according to types based on the required information for the research. This was followed by arranging them by relative importance. The demographics of the congregation provided guidance in selecting participants according to categories as necessitated by the problem under investigation. However, Finch (2017:29) cautions that, 'people should not be selected based on a desire to prove a specific research objective'.

For the purpose of this study, the author had to examine eight different groups of participants. A method of stratified sampling has been used, as the relationships between different sub-groups had to be observed. Furthermore, a particular group of the total population was invited to the interviews, forming a sub-group of the original population. Also, the participants were selected on the basis of specific criteria, such as knowledge of the subject matter under investigation. Gal and Ograjensek (2010:29) point out that, the sampling process is intended to ensure that the conceptual insights would be applicable to a broad cross-section of the total population. According to French and Swain (2011:6), a broader consultation of affected people is essential as it indicates explicit recognition of all participants and heightens awareness about their valuable or significant contribution.

8.4. Diversity of Participants

Diversity in research simply means the participation of people of different ages, gender, socio-economic background and so forth. This approach is, supported by Allmark (2004:185) who points, out that, the body of research evidence must reflect population diversity. According to Finch (2017:28), bias occurs when certain groups are left out and therefore researchers should avoid any omission. Surely, lack of diversity indicates a predisposition to avoiding the perspectives of others who could contribute immensely in the research project. Allmark finds support in Medin (2012:26) who maintains that, diversity in qualitative research should be essentialized because diverse perspectives on the subject matter makes better scientific findings.

Given this caution, the author made an effort to include everyone not just those in privileged positions of authority and power in the congregation. This procedure was adopted so as to optimize the quality of data collected in relation to the research problem. The importance of diversity is also supported by Breslow (2016:15) who points out that, convergence of thoughts on the same subject matter have a potential to inspire rich research conversations. Surely, diversity of thoughts augments the research discussion and the findings are framed as shared end points of conversation. This critical point is summed up well by Basurto (2015:21) who maintains that:

"We create better solutions to problems we face in common. Social research is about the practices and processes through which we ensure our interconnectedness and collective decisions that lead to action".

9. Research Questions

First of all, Flick (2007:16) points out that, 'a research interest and research perspectives are necessary steps in formulating a research question'. For Bloom (:) the major purpose of constructing a research question is to facilitate inquiry. Trochim (2006:49) maintains that, the context, purpose and types of research questions asked will define the methodological foundations of a study. Indeed, a research question is an answerable inquiry into a specific concern or issue. According to Reneker (1993:487), 'research questions influence the research process and ultimately impact on the findings or conclusions'. Wassem (2006:23) argues that, the nature of the research questions should complement or match the nature of the research problem that have been declared to be worthy of exploration. Marvasti (2007:33) maintains that, clarifying research question helps explain the topic under study or investigation. This question can be refined or reformulated. According to Vosloo, (:11 'the rationale for formulating research questions is to express the essence of the research problem in question format that indicates a delineated, focused and specific inquiry'. It is a specific inquiry because the essence of the research problem is sacramental ministry in African Presbyterian congregations.

Secondly, questions have a variety of purposes often related to the type and stage of the research process. Sullivan (2012:36) explains the difference between research topic question and research problem questions. The research topic question provided a theoretical framework or model to conduct this research and the research problem questions focused on the critical issues under investigation.   Hjorland (2002:430) points out that, problem questions should correspond with the reality of the research problem and according to Wassem (2006:23), the nature of the research problems and the nature of the questions being explored should contribute to building a theory. With this in mind, it is clear that there are two types of questions guiding this research, namely

central question and sub-questions. Central question is a broad question that asks for exploration of the central phenomenon. That is why the author has used the exploratory verbs such as discover or describe. Sub-questions narrow the focus of the study. In this research study, both the central question and sub-questions relate to the strategy of inquiry.

The primary research topic question remains as introduced in chapter one and reiterated several times in chapter two. The question is: how can the sacramental ministry be extended to all members of the congregation effectively and qualitatively? In addition, some of the pertinent questions for each facet of the research problem are mentioned in chapter two. Questions for clergy and lay leaders, parents, women, young adults and members of the congregation are specifically addressed in the empirical chapter.

10. Data Collection Strategies

Qualitative researchers collect data in several different ways or from several different sources and Gal and Ograjensek (2010:1) point out that, from a research perspective, qualitative methods are a very useful approach to collect data needed to address specific research problems. According to Creswell (2003:) in qualitative research, different enquiry strategies, and data collection methods and analysis are employed and Sprinthall et al (1991:101) confirm that data is derived from direct observation of behaviors, from interviews, from written opinions, or from public documents. Furthermore, Gal and Ograjensek (2010:31) maintain that, pilot data has to be collected via interviews and focus groups to sharpen the sense of what is important to study and how it can be systematically studied.

Myers (2009:63) points out that, qualitative data sources include observation and participant observation (fieldwork), interviews and questionnaires, documents and texts, and the researcher's impressions and reactions. For Robertson (2007:11), 'field work also referred to as qualitative sociology is more of an approach than a single research method and a good qualitative sociology truly captures a sense of the people and the

activities and events studied'. Indeed, the data collecting process in qualitative research was personal, field-based, and iterative. In this research project, field work involved extensive field notes, describing events and impressions and this kind of data was qualitative in nature and Thomas (:302) concurs in that, 'written descriptions of people, events, opinions, attitudes and environments, or combinations of these can also be sources of data'.

For the purpose of this research project, the author made a choice to use only five data collection strategies. These are survey questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, participatory observation and documents collection. These classical social sciences research tools are highly recommended by many qualitative researchers, for example Winchester (1999), Greenfield (2002), Silverman (2004) and Sarantakos (2013). A detailed description and solid motivation, for the chosen data collection strategies was necessary. In addition, it was imperative in this research study to highlight the strengths and weakness (advantages and disadvantages) and also the researcher's intervention for each particular strategy was addressed.

10.1. Questionnaire

Zaaiman (2017:42) points out that, 'surveys are an important tool in empirical investigations and questionnaire construction forms an integral part of this process to ensure collection of quality information'. According to Hittleman and Simon (1997:31) qualitative research makes use of questionnaires to gather data that is revised and tabulated in numbers and the data is characterized by the use of statistical analysis. For the author, a questionnaire is an instrument containing or outlining the questions designed to obtain answers or information that is necessary for a research project. Gall (2007:230) and Neuman (2011:309) also confirm that, researchers collect data by means of a questionnaire from respondents about their views, beliefs and current experiences.

A survey questionnaire was more appropriate for exploring a problem under investigation. In this particular research project, a qualitative survey was chosen

because it explores the softer measures of research such as opinions that are expressed in an open-ended fashion. A questionnaire was used to elicit the information that will be analyzed to answer the research questions. Respondents were asked open-ended questions. Due to open-ended questions, respondents supplied their own answers such as those for qualitative in-depth interviews. These questions are easy to quantify because of the uniformity of the responses, a factor that makes the question correct.

Questionnaires were chosen for this research study because they are reliable and quick method to collect information from multiple respondents in an efficient and timely manner. This is especially important where time is one of the major constraints (Greenfield, Silverman and Bell). This study was no exception and questionnaires were a quick and effective way for the researcher to reach multiple respondents within several weeks. Furthermore, through a survey questionnaire, it is easy to generate quantitative data and easy to analyze. It is also convenient as the researcher does not need to be present, and respondents have time to consider answers.

Wassem (2006:24) points out that, repetitive emphasis on surveys and questionnaires has simply created monotony in research literature that is saturated with such studies. For the author, a general disadvantage of the questionnaires however is their fixed and strict format, which eliminates the possibility for more in-depth or abstract observation Again this study was not an exception from this rule, as the questionnaires provided linear and clear results, but some elements from the research were left uncovered. Wassem (2006:23) argues that, the overuse of surveys and questionnaires has tended to create snapshots of behavior that do not lead to a general theory of information behavior. For De Vault (2019:88), surveys may be overused by those who lack confidence in other research strategies. According to Zaaiman (2017:43), 'questionnaire construction can be challenging since it involves human communication and interpretation that is fluid and unique by nature, but attempts to generate data from its standardized and controlled responses'

The convenience referred to above, (under strength) can be a weakness as the researcher not being there can affect the quality of answers. Equally true is that, postal or email surveys may have low response rate. At times, there is difficulty to phrase questions clearly for a particular target group and the researcher may obtain different interpretations of questions. In addition, people may not give accurate answers, especially on sensitive issues such as sexual behavior. Attitudes and or perceptions may change after specific events or after the questionnaire has been completed by respondents and this creates a problem.

According to Vosloo (:20), 'questionnaire validity can be optimized by the conduct of a pilot test to verify the relevance and representativeness of the various items to the intended setting'. Given these guidelines, the researcher aimed to achieve the collection of high quality data in order to validate the results. Indeed, an effort was made to improve the output of the survey questionnaire in terms of its, relevance, accuracy, coherence and comparability. Following are the concrete actions taken in pursuit of validity and reliability.

- There were no changes in the written questionnaire for all participants. This was because that could result in data that is not a true measurement of the research question or data that cannot be statistically analyzed.

- The author voided questions that would bring ambiguity and also omitted easily misinterpreted questions and minimized the use of yes or no questions.

- In addition, pilot questions were circulated before a final script was distributed (after revising, refining and reformulating questions).

10.2. Interviews

Interviews are face to face conversations and can be informal or formal. The two basic interviewing strategies (semi-structured and structured) with pre-determined questions were used in this particular research project. Marvasti (2004:14) explains that, 'interview

is the most basic (elementary) form or strategy of collecting data and this mode of communication involves asking questions and finding answers'. According to Gal and Ograjensek (2010:29), among all qualitative research methods, interviews are the most familiar and most acceptable 'orthodox' approach. Conner (2009:65) concurs in that, most qualitative data is collected through interactions with participants through the use of interviews. Edwards and Potter (1992:68) encourage face to face interactions so as to arrive at informed findings and according to Finch (2017:26), qualitative research uses pre-determined procedures such as interviewing participants to collect information and produce findings.

In order to cover more abstract aspects of the research, the author chose these complementary methods, namely semi-structured and structured interviews. The primary purpose of using the two types of interviews was to elicit in-depth information about the participants' experiences in relation to the research topic. Knapik (2006:1) points out that, interviews bring about interaction-oriented perspectives and the participants' account of experiences or events should finally motivate the researcher to explore more. It was necessary to explore their understanding about the pertinent issues involved and also to know more about their beliefs, perceptions, and opinions.

Koshy (2005:92) points out that, interviewing is one of the most powerful ways of understanding human behavior. Surely, when we want to learn about people's habits, problems, values, beliefs, we ask appropriate questions. Asking questions is a natural feature of communication and also one of the most important tools which researchers have at their disposal. The answers provided to these questions served as input into scientific analyses. Indeed, the interview method was effective as the author discovered themes and patterns at a time of qualitative data analysis. De Vault (2019:77) confirms that, the outcome of interviews is clarity on major themes and that makes research findings robust.

No doubt, in-depth interviews are one of the most flexible ways to gather data from research participants. Probing questions are good for gaining clarification and in fact another strategy to ensure finding out more detail. Argarwal (2005:209) points out that,

semi-structured interviews, allow for more clarifying, probing and cross-checking questions and creates an opportunity and freedom to rephrase questions according to the responses of participants. In a research situation, cross-checking questions ensures understanding a given statement or story before drawing a conclusion. In this research project, it was necessary to ask in-depth questions and probe effectively more so when some of the respondents were reluctance to provide quality answers. For the researcher it was about investigating the evidence or proof of what is said or probing reasons or rationale behind the answers.

Furthermore, many qualitative researchers are in agreement that, an effective way of probing is to use the five w's method (what, who, when, where and why) which can help get to the root of the problem. An added advantage (out of probing) is that participants' non-verbal language could be observed, as well as other attributes about them that contributed immensely to the research project. According to Zakweni (:95), the advantage of face to face interviewing is that, 'the method allows the researcher to interact with the participants and to observe non-verbal clues during the interview process'. Moloney (2010:60) also points out that, body-based information (feelings, intuition) are vital aspects of human experience and therefore important in both data collection and analysis. In fact, it is Goffman (2001:) who has addressed and developed the concept of impression management, which is exhibited or displayed through verbal and non-verbal means.

For the author, interviews yield detailed information and avoid oversimplifying complex issues. They encourage openness in answers and greater attention is given to the opinions of all participants and thus increasing convergence of different viewpoints on the research topic. Almeida et al (2017:377) point out that, structured interviews offer a high response rate because the interviewer is present to explain the question to avoid misinterpretation from respondents. According to (Potter, 2002, Winchester, 1999, Sarantakos, 2013), interviews are often used as complementary research method in the social sciences because they give the opportunity for a more in-depth, open discussion, and more informal, free interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. The

flexible format of the interviews was a major advantage for this study, as some nuances of the research such as exploring emotions, and creating memorable experience, were properly captured (which was the case with the questionnaires).

The first argument advanced against interviews is that it produces subjective results. Of course the results from the interviews are not generalizable, because of the subjectivity of data obtained. On the other hand, their flexible format contributed for a deeper explanation and understanding of the issues under investigation. The face to face aspect of an in-depth interviewing can result in exposure to interview bias and therefore training became an important component of this research project. In-depth interviewing can be time consuming and requires logistical considerations. In this research study arrangements were made to meet with participants within the church premises and at a time convenient to all stakeholders. Indeed, interviews were not only about accumulating information about participants' past experiences, but equally important was to explore the implications of such experiences for the research project. Therefore the interviews were a reflexive engagement of all participants in the sharing of information and exchange of opinions. This in turn had a potential of establishing relevant data for the qualitative research. Once again in a quest for credibility and reliability the following actions were taken.

- First of all, participants were encouraged to take responsibility as co-contributors to the quality of the research. Relegating research participants to the margins would be treating them as objects and not as subjects.

- As the central figure, the author avoided abusing the center position. The aim was, not to create an impression that would impact negatively on the interviewing process. Power imbalance diminishes the credibility and reliability of the research activity.

- Through interactive discussion, participants narrated their experiences and the author gained a deeper understanding of the issues affecting and thus increasing the quality of data collected.

- Apart from verbal expression of participants' experiences, there was a capturing of the embodied or enacted reflexive nature of exchanges between them and the researcher. This provided the author with more insights that contributed to the reliability of the research encounter.

- Another strategy was to recruit others who could contribute to a more diverse understanding of the phenomenon being studied or researched. Through diversity more thoughts or viewpoints were presented. That was effective because participants were not misinterpreted or misrepresented and this strategy increased the issue of trustworthiness.

10.3. Focus Groups

For the author, a focus group is a gathering of deliberately selected people who participate in a planned discussion intended to elicit perceptions or viewpoints about a particular topic or area of interest and the area of interest remains constant. Focus groups are done in receptive environment and members are allowed to interact and influence each other during the discussion and consideration of ideas and perspectives. De Vault (2019:86) confirms that, just as in the dynamics of real life, participants are able to interact, influence and be influenced. Yin (2014:38) points out that, 'group interviews enable a researcher to create a dialogue among participants and that helps to extract thematic data for accurate group representation'. According to Almeida et al (2017:377), focus groups are an assessment method design to get and compare responses from all the interviews. Campbell and Scharen (2013:79) point out that, focus group interviews can efficiently collect data and mitigate substantive misunderstandings.

Focus groups were chosen as data collection tool because they are flexible by design, capitalize on the ability of participants to express viewpoints and share information. Therefore, focus groups were useful for in-depth research and very much suited to this inquiry. Surely, people's attitudes, beliefs, expectations and opinions are best addressed by in-depth interviews in such groups. Hans (2001:) maintains that, self-reports and opinions from focus groups are the dominant method of data collection in

the social and behavioral sciences and for Knapik (2006:1), focus groups in qualitative research play a key role in the sense that it is about the participants' responsive participation in knowledge making. This active involvement and freedom of expression is well articulated by Johnson (2006:3) who points out that:

> "Social sciences are concerned with life experiences of participants. Curiosity and quest for meaning are the new scope and sequence. Relevance and personal meaning are the new standards for which researchers should be held accountable".

Denzin and Lincoln (2005:61) point out that, focus groups allow the researcher to understand the complexity of the situation without imposing any prior categorization. The other advantage as pointed out by Moloney (2010:59) is that, focus groups tend to be non-hierarchical, with the power base favoring participants. Surely this raises consciousness and enables new information to be aired.

This data collection strategy was used to explore how people in a given context cope with a specific challenging situation. The context here was the African Presbyterian congregations and the specific problematic situation was the challenge in relation to the administration of sacraments.

Almeida et al (2017:377) point out that, the effectiveness and popularity of focus groups render them a good research tool to investigate complex issues (like the complex sacramental issues in the identified congregations). According to Acocella (2012:23), there are two main characteristics that differentiate focus groups from other techniques. First of all, the information source is a group and it is for this reason that, Thomas (:306) maintains that, 'focus groups are an appropriate method to achieve a deep understanding of how people think about a topic and to describe in great detail the perspectives of the research participants'. According to Johnson (2006:3), the group dynamics theory reinforces the notion that humans have the capacity to think reflectively and imaginatively. Sociology helps understand group dynamics in terms of group ethics

and group interaction and that these do impact on the research activity. It makes sense then, that these dimensions be included in social research studies.

Secondly, Acocella (2012:24) points out that, the heuristic value of this technique (focus group) lies in the kind of interaction that emerges during the debate. The author prefers to call it a dialogue because qualitative research is a collaborative inquiry. The author concurs with Brinkmann (2005:157) who points out that, 'collaboration has been a recurring theme in scientific studies. Researchers should take the opportunity to focus on the empirical grounding of diversity, which often gets lost in the larger research conversations'. In addition, in a collective or group discussion, Vosloo (:11) points out that, 'asking the right questions is at the heart of effective communications and information exchange'. Kinmond (2012:23) confirms that qualitative research is about exploring the significant experiences in people's lives and therefore requires asking relevant questions. In this research project, all the groups were asked specific questions that relate to pertinent issues that affect them directly.

Broad Information

In this research project, focus groups provided an effective means to investigate a complex situation with multiple variables under analysis and this was a significant learning curve for the author. These groups offered a broader range of information and indeed, openness to other perspectives leveled the plain field. No doubt, different opinions simply meant there were other perspectives to be considered and that enriched the whole research activity. This point cements the idea that equal partnership in generating knowledge makes the research activity efficient and the author argues that it also created collective ownership of the research findings. The author concurs with Macran and Ross (2002:9) in the explanation that 'to the degree that co-researchers play an active participative role in knowledge making, is understood (construed) as a key function of what research activity yields (affords)'.

Clarification

Furthermore, the focus groups offered the author an opportunity to seek clarification (when necessary) and Schwwarz et al (:) also confirm that, self-reports and explanation of opinions by focus group members are the dominant method of data collection in the social and behavioral sciences. Space for innovation was another advantage offered by the focus groups. In addressing research creativity, De Vault (2019:77) argues that, research must be innovative and keep up with the creation and sharing of information, including research information.

Challenge

These focus groups also offered the author opportunity to challenge his theoretical assumptions and the challenge was motivated by the guidance from Scott (2017:32) who points out that, an audit of previous research studies provide a reliable check for misdirected assumptions. The author revisited his own position on the research problem and his theoretical perspective was enriched. Indeed, the focus group discussion was a fruitful exercise that made it necessary for the researcher to adopt an appropriate theoretical framework that fits the research objective and research subjects. Finally, as focus groups are contextual, the author had a rewarding encounter in the sense that these groups provided a rich context for generating relevant data.

Sensitive Issues

Moloney (2011:58) describes a focus group as potentially liminal space, which enables the discussion of taboo subjects by breaking the ice and giving people permission to comment. In this research project, the author investigated the prevalent social problem of young people becoming young parents and the church's disciplinary actions. Disciplinary action includes sanctions from partaking of Holy Communion, coupled with restrictive pre-conditions for baptizing the newly born infants. Women in African customary marriage face exactly the same challenges because such matrimonial ties are not recognized by the church.

The focus groups were necessary and effective because participants were enabled to speak in their own voice, to express their own thoughts and feelings. As pointed out by

Wilkinson (2004:58), focus groups are a valuable method for exploring the construction and negotiation of meaning. Therefore, the focus groups were suitable given the exploratory nature of this research project. Indeed, participants were encouraged to seize the opportunity to brave issues normally censored or not discussed. Morgan (1988:21) confirms that focus groups have the potential to bring forth material that would not come out in the participants' own casual conversation or in response to the researcher's preconceived questions.

The focus groups enabled the author to gain an insight into what others saw as key issues and potential sensitive areas. They also raised the researcher's awareness of the not-yet articulated dimensions of women's experiences and young people in the church. The groups yielded an overall perspective on some features of this unexplored terrain. Gergen (2001:21) argues against standardized measures which underscore the value of the experience and knowledge of research participants and thus promotes a focused learning on people's personal experiences. In summary, the focus groups offered an incredible rich context for generating relevant data for the research project. It was a rewarding encounter with the participants and can conclude the groups were occasions of empowerment and transformation for both participants and researcher.

Sometimes focus groups can be difficult to control and manage and the following reasons offer explanation. Oyserman and Schwarz (2001:   ) point out that, it is unfortunate that participants' reports can be profoundly influenced by other contextual factors and a researcher needs to be vigilant of such undue influences. Schroder et al (2003:103) remind researchers that, it is important to acknowledge that the participants' own answers may be inaccurate. Knapik (2006:2) warns that inaccuracies may have a negative impact of research findings and therefore cannot be underestimated. With this in mind, participants were permitted to share their beliefs or thoughts on the issues and to test them for viability when compared and contrasted with the views or opinions of other participants. Furthermore, as facilitator, the researcher questioned participants' responses and asked for more explanations or clarity.

The overall impression is that, it was an open-ended investigative exercise. First of all, there were sharp differences of opinions and contradictions.   Other participants (more especially the extroverts) were often tempted to conclude that there is only one right answer. The researcher ensured that the discussions were not dominated by some and was aware Finch (2017:260) points out that, becoming focused on one viewpoint when observing participants, endangers the impartiality of the research. In order to maintain partiality, the researcher allowed a space and encouraged introverts to share their ideas and understanding of the theme under discussion.

Secondly, sometimes it can be difficult to encourage quiet persons to participate in a focus group discussion. When the domineering group members are allowed more voice than others, Almeida et al (2017:377) warns that the views expressed may not be representative of all participants. Given this possibility, an atmosphere of freedom was created for other participants to air their views without feeling intimidated as Finch (2017:35) contends that research participants are independent thinkers and should be treated with respect so that they are protected from exploitation. Though focus groups were a time intensive method, the in-depth interviewing contributed to reliability and validity.

10.4. Participatory Observation

Almeida et al (2017:376) point out that, participatory observation is a reliable method of collecting data simultaneously with the occurrence of the event, without interference. It is an unobtrusive and flexible method, oriented to the discovery of information. Robertson (2007:27) explains that, participant observation is a qualitative research method in which the researcher not only observes the research participants, but also actively engages in the activities of the research participants. Indeed, this requires the researcher to become integrated into the participants' environment while also taking objective notes about what is going on. Carlson (2009:11) points out that, participatory

observation extends beyond naturalistic observation because the observer is a 'player' in the action.

Participatory observation was also an appropriate method because it deals with studying actions and behaviors of research participants. This research method was appropriate because in essence, the focus was on exploring and describing the behavioral elements contained in this research. This choice is supported by Zakweni (2013:93) who points out that:

> "In qualitative research the objective is exploratory and descriptive rather than explanatory. The descriptive nature of qualitative research allows the researcher to provide a description of the experiences of the participants, which will either sustain or confront the theoretical assumptions on which the study is based.

According to Stewart (2010:69), the strength of participatory observation is that, the researcher is able to get an insider viewpoint and the information may be much more, rich than that obtained through systematic observation (quantitative method). Waseem (2006:23) points out that, studies that have used participant observation and case studies have revealed that these specific methods result in deeper understanding of the issues involved.

Through this systematic process of participatory observation, the researcher was able to study the events and activities in their natural environment. In this qualitative research project, the richness of the description of activities and events was very crucial and therefore participatory was relevant. First of all, participatory observation was relevant for this particular research because it provided the researcher leader with access to different types of information that could not be easily accessible to outsiders. Secondly, participatory observation was effective because integration into the group and its culture reduced the likelihood that research participants would modify their behavior because they are being observed. Thirdly, as pointed out by Robertson (2007:32), participatory observation was effective in helping the researcher decide which questions were relevant, and what language to use.

Fergusson (2010:68) points out that, reliability and reactivity are always a problem in participatory observation. With regard to reliability the explanation is that, its weakness is its dependence on the experience of the participant observer. Nicholson (2009:34) argues that, it is unusual to have independent observations of the same event. According to Scott (2011:72) a potential problem is interpreting events through the single observer's eyes. Almeida et al (2017:376) also raise a concern that, this method is dependent on the independence of the researcher's analysis, since the interpretation of the data is done exclusively by the researcher.

Indeed, these explanations and the arguments clearly indicate that this method is (to some extent) subject to the biases of the observer. However, what seems to be an apparent weakness does not necessarily mean participatory observation it is not an effective tool. It is therefore necessary in this research project to indicate what action steps or precautionary measures were taken to address the problem of reactivity. Reactivity here refers to influencing other people's behavior and also influencing what is being observed. Therefore the discussion under intervention (below) addresses the issues of validity and reliability.

10.5. Document Collection

Generally speaking, liturgical documents reflect the theological tradition and worship practices of a congregation (inclusive of the administration of sacraments). Scrutinizing these documents was also one of the relevant strategies in data collection. For the purpose of this research study, only the Sunday Order of Service and the Liturgy for Baptism and Eucharist were collected. These are analyzed and discussed in the empirical chapter.

11. Narrative Data Analysis

Graham (2017:5) points out that:

> "Dealing with the realms of human value, meanings and understanding recognizes that levels of interpretation are unavoidable. Research methodologies take into account of the 'storied' and hermeneutical nature of human culture".

Scott (2017:22) argues that 'data needs thoughtful interpretation because without it, there is a risk of making decisions using imperfect or incorrect information and therefore there is a reason to guard against disaster'. According to Morse (2002:17) data are systematically checked, focus is maintained, and the conceptual work of analysis and interpretation are monitored and confirmed constantly. Nowak (1994:72) points out that, 'the integrity of data analysis can be compromised by the environment or context in which it was collected' and further cautions that 'researchers should take into account this influence when conducting data analysis'. Gal and Ograjensek (2010:27) point out that:

> "Researchers should use various processes to establish or improve the reliability and validity of analyses, interpretations, and conclusions based on the information collected through qualitative channels".

In this research study, the author as research leader observed behaviors, situations, interactions and environments and scrutinized these observations for patterns and categories. The aim was to answer the research questions based on what can be deduced from the findings. As data were collected and organized during analysis, patterns emerged. Throughout the data collecting process, the researcher typically recorded thoughts and impressions about the emerging data patterns. According to Vosloo (:17) the aim of qualitative data analysis 'is to clarify the concepts and constructs, and to identify patterns, themes according to the stated research aims'.

Themes

Data set was considered to be large or sufficient enough to begin the process of interpretation. The author analyzed data to form themes or categories. He looked for broad patterns, generalizations, or theories from themes or categories. Gal and Ograjensek (2010:30) point out that:

> "Themes emerging from analysis of critical incidents can be quantified when the sample size (of incidents) is sufficiently large, allowing for analysis of frequencies

of identified themes as well as associations with background variables is possible, lending further potential to qualitative studies".

Triangulation

Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2008:67) point out that:

"Various triangulation techniques, based in general on collecting and comparing data from different sources or methods, may also be used to increase the breadth of the available data and improve the soundness of the emerging conclusions".

Also, the research makes use of triangulation because triangulation gives the opportunity to approach the research objectives from different viewpoints (obtaining a balanced view).For this research study triangulation was very useful because the researcher aimed to find the intersections between different variables. This expanded view of relevant data is called triangulation and is very important way of ensuring that data can be verified. Gal and Ograjensek (2010:26) point out that, with all research, 'data are used to derive conclusions or conjectures that respond to certain research questions'.

Questionnaire

The analysis of the questionnaire results took place via thematic analysis. Given the small number of respondents and the diverse design and answer set of questions, and because of the qualitative research approach of the study, the author did not use any of the statistical software available. The results from the questionnaires were presented in the format of tables and charts. The major findings of this thesis will be discussed in details in the empirical chapter.

Interviews and Focus Groups

The results of the interviews were also analyzed manually, where the author aimed to detect common words, phrases, and group or cloud them together, in order to be able to

determine trends and tendencies in the answers of the respondents. All of the above key components of data analysis are reported in the empirical chapter.

13. Quality Assurance

According to Patton (2001:14), validity and reliability are two factors which any qualitative researcher should be concerned about while designing a study, analyzing results and judging the quality of the study. Eisner (1991:58) points out that, the important test of any qualitative study is its quality and Gardner (2018:2) defines quality assurance as a process that is used to ensure that a product is of high quality standards. Indeed, quality assurance is a proactive approach to detect defects or shortcomings before research findings or outcomes are published. Winter (2001:1) maintains that, validity is a contingent construct, inescapably grounded in the processes and intentions of particular research methodologies and projects. Golofshani (2003:600) argues that researchers need to test and demonstrate that their studies are credible and Johnson (1997:283) concurs in that, more credible and defensible results are crucial in qualitative research. For Golofshani (2003:600) credibility provides the lens of evaluating the findings of a qualitative research. In this particular research project, the author devoted a great deal of attention to demonstrate the trustworthiness of the findings using a range of methodological strategies. These different collection strategies were used to obtain data that would ensure validity and reliability.

13.1. Terminology

Guba and Lincoln (1985) have substituted reliability and validity with a parallel concept of trustworthiness. Within this concept are three key dimensions, namely credibility, transferability and dependability. According to Seale (1999:465), this paradigm shift involved substituting new term for words such as validity and reliability to reflect qualitative concepts. Golofshani (2003:604) argues that, for reliability and validity to be relevant research concepts, have to be redefined (from a qualitative perspective) in order to reflect the multiple ways of establishing truth. In support of this parallel concept, Strauss and Corbin (1990:250) argue that, when judging (testing) qualitative work, the

usual canons of good science require redefinition in order to fit the realities of qualitative research.

Consequently, as pointed out by Golofshani (2003:600), many researchers have developed, their own concepts of validity and have often generated or adopted what they consider to be more appropriate terms such as quality and trustworthiness. Morse argues (2002:16) that, introducing parallel terminology and criteria marginalizes qualitative inquiry from mainstream science and scientific legitimacy and therefore reliability and validity as pertinent in qualitative inquiry should be retained. Golofshani (2003:604) confirms that, reliability and validity are conceptualized as trustworthiness and quality in qualitative paradigm.

13.2. Researcher's Choice

In this particular research study, a choice was made to concentrate on reliability and validity. This choice finds support from Morse (2002:14) who maintains that, the broad and abstract concepts of reliability and validity can be applied to all research because the goal of finding plausible and credible outcome explanations is central to all research. Furthermore, Golofshani (2003:600) points out that, while reliability and validity are treated separately in quantitative studies, these terms are not viewed separately in qualitative research. Instead, terminology that encompasses both, such as credibility, transferability and trustworthiness is used. A brief discussion of these key concepts as applied in qualitative research is necessary.

Seale (1999:266) points out that, trustworthiness of a research report lies at the heart of issues conventionally discussed as validity and reliability. According to Golofshani (2003:602), to ensure reliability in qualitative research, examination of trustworthiness is crucial. For Johnson (1997:282), trustworthiness is defensible and Guba and Lincoln (1985:26) point out that, it establishes confidence in the findings. Patton (1999:1189) argues that, there can be no enhancing the qualitative research without dealing with related inquiring concerns and these are credibility, validity and reliability. Canada (2009:45) points out that, qualitative research (similar to quantitative research) has

reliability and validity as one of its core tenets. Morse (2002:14) points out that, a great deal of attention is applied to reliability and validity in all research methods and without reliability and validity, research becomes fiction and loses its utility. For Vosloo (:19), validity points to the correctness without which research measurement becomes meaningless. Guba and Lincoln (1985:316 concur in that, since there can be no validity without reliability, a demonstration of the former (validity) is sufficient to establish the latter (reliability). De Vaus (2000:53) and Singh (2007:77) also share some valuable insights on the essence of validity. Steinbacka (2001:551) points out that:

> "Reliability is a concept to evaluate quality in quantitative study with a purpose of explaining, while quality concept in qualitative study has the purpose of generating understanding".

13.3. Verification Strategies

A concern about inadequate standards of verification and a directive how methods should be implemented to ensure credibility and trustworthiness are raised by Morse (2002:14,17) who points out that:

> "There is a tendency for qualitative researchers to focus on the tangible outcomes of the research rather than demonstrating how verification strategies were used to shape and direct the research during its development. Researchers should reclaim responsibility for reliability and validity by implementing verification strategies that are self-correcting during the conduct of inquiry itself.

The discussion that follows aims at describing the different strategies used so as to demonstrate how the author achieved validity and reliability. Gal and Ograjensek (2010:27) point out that:

> "Researchers should use various processes to establish or improve the reliability and validity of analyses, interpretations, and conclusions based on the information collected through qualitative channels".

13.4. Complementary Strategies

In order to enhance validity and reliability preparatory steps are necessary. Without such preparatory steps, it is not possible to develop a proper measuring instrument. Creswell and Miller (2000:39) point out that, the validity in a research study is affected by the researcher's choice of instruments (strategies), given the nature of the research problem. Consistent interventions helped to maximize trustworthiness. Every stage of the research process, consistency was applied in terms of ensuring validity and reliability. The interventions in all the stages were precisely aimed at achieving credibility and trustworthiness. Prolonged engagement helped to improve research quality. The author as the chief investigator in this research project spent a considerable time with the congregations under study (three years). Joppe (2000:1) points out that, 'the extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total target population under study is referred to as reliability'.

For this research study, the author had worked with the leadership of the congregation in different capacities and interacted with its members over a long period as part of the Tshwane Presbytery. Therefore the researcher was not a stranger but a known Presbyterian pastor with a good rapport with them. Open lines of communication and relating to the participants in a friendly manner averted the superiority-inferiority problem. Indeed, reflexivity is all about self-awareness of researcher's experiences, reasoning and overall impact throughout the research process. Member checks was used in order to increase credibility. Morse (2002:15) points out that, standards 'are comprehensive approach, to evaluating the research as a whole. They remain primarily reliant on procedures or checks by reviewers to be used following completion of the research.

Professional immediacy is another strategy used. According to Patton (2001:14), while the credibility in quantitative research depends on instrument construction, in qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument. Morse (2002:18) points out that, it is the researcher's qualities or actions that are crucial to the attainment of optimal reliability and validity. Indeed, to establish credibility, the author approached the research work with professionalism. Golofshani (2003:600) maintains that, quantitative researchers

speak of research validity and reliability referring to a research that is credible, while the credibility of a qualitative research depends on the ability and effort of the researcher.

14. Conclusion

This chapter has outlined and justified the research methodology implemented in this thesis and its validity and reliability. Given the nature of the research, the author, opted for the qualitative strategy, bound by interpretivist approach. The key research tools were questionnaire, supplemented by interviews with eight groups of participants. The participants were carefully targeted and recruited through stratified sampling technique. The results were analyzed manually, due to the small sample of participants. The major results and findings of this thesis are discussed in the empirical chapter.

Chapter Six

Empirical Study

61. Introduction

According to Robertson (2007:11), "field work also referred to as qualitative sociology is more of an approach than a single research method and a good qualitative sociology truly captures a sense of the people and the activities and events studied". Indeed, the data collecting process in qualitative research was personal, field-based, and iterative. In this research project, field work involved extensive field notes, describing events and impressions and this kind of data was qualitative in nature. Thomas (2013:302) concurs in that, "written descriptions of people, events, opinions, attitudes and environments, or combinations of these can also be sources of data". This chapter presents the description of the empirical research process and demonstrates the methods used for data collection and its analysis. In this research project, all the groups were asked specific questions that relate to pertinent issues that affect them directly. Johnson (2006:3) who points out that:

> "Social sciences are concerned with life experiences of participants. Curiosity and quest for meaning are the new scope and sequence. Relevance and personal meaning are the new standards for which researchers should be held accountable".

6.2. The Demographics

6.2.1. The Township

The name of the township is Mamelodi which means 'Mother of Melodies'. It is situated east of Pretoria and one of the five townships. Mamelodi is predominantly populated by the Pedi people, an ethnic group from the Limpopo province north of Gauteng province where Pretoria is. Other ethnic are also present and makes this township multicultural, and multilingual.

	Male	Female
Gender	173 912	160 685

Table 1: Gender Statistics

Source: Census 2011 Vol.1 No. 3 (Stats SA)

	Afrikaans	English	IsiNdebele	IsiXhosa	IsiZulu	Sepedi
Spoken Languages	2 752	6 965	29 483	7 392	40 614	141 511

Table 2: Different Spoken Languages

Source: Census 2011 Vol. 1 No. 3 (Stats SA)

	Black African	Coloured	Indian or Asian	White	Other
Race	330 875	1 351	746	462	1 142

Table 3: Population of Different Races

Source: Census 2011 Vol. 1 No. 3 (Stats SA)

	Married	Living Together	Never Married	Widow or Widower	Separated	Divorced
Marital Status	71 846	34 379	124 546	7 309	1 877	3 496

Table 4: Indications of Marital Status

Source: Census 2011 Vol. 1 No. 3 (Stats SA)

	No Schooling	Some Primary	Completed Primary	Some Secondary	Grade 12	Higher

Level of Education	10 069	18 083	8 097	84 504	88 841	21 996

Table 5: Indications of Levels of Education

Source: Census 2011 Vol. 1 No.3 (Stats SA)

	Employed	Unemployed	Work Seekers	Economically Inactive
Employment Status	117 442	57 590	9 615	61 966

Table 6: Employment Status Statistics

Source: Census 2011 Vol.1 No. 3 (Stats SA)

	0 - 14	15 - 34	35 - 64	65+
Age Breakdown	77 898	146 237	100 375	10 067

Table 7: Indications of Age Breakdowns

Source: Census 2011 Vol. 1 No. 3 (Stats SA)

6.2.2. The Congregation

Remarks: One of the research ethics requirements is confidentiality and that was promised to all the research participants. With this in mind, the author is under obligation not to mention the name of the congregation. Even pictures that would enhance the data collected are not included due to the possibility of the people and congregation involved.

The congregation was established at Vlakfontein in 1950's at the house of a now late elder. On 21st May 1961 the congregation moved to Mamelodi East. Soon thereafter a church sanctuary was built and has been a place of worship over fifty years now. Since

its inception, this community Reformed Presbyterians has been served by twelve ordained ministers and twenty one ordained elders (all names withheld).

The current leadership is composed of seven male elders and four female elders in the main congregation. This number includes a young man considered to be a youth elder. The Rathoke branch has five elders (all male) and the Almansdrift branch has eight elders (all male). These branches are in fact referred to as outstations (a preferred Presbyterian terminology). The age breakdown ranges from twenty five years to sixty years. All elders have undergone compulsory eldership training provided by the Presbytery of Tshwane.

	Main Church	Rathoke	Almansdrift	Total
Membership (Adults)	287	23	41	351
Sunday School	40	16	11	67
Youth	14	16	11	41

Table 1: Breakdown of Membership Statistics

Church Group	Membership	Meetings
Uniting Presbyterian Men's Fellowship	19	Sundays before church service
Uniting Presbyterian Women at Work	47	Thursdays afternoon
Junior Branch of Women at	2	Sundays before church

Work		service
Uniting Presbyterian Youth Association	41	Fridays afternoon
Association of Church Choir and Musicians	13	Tuesdays evening
Emmanuel Women's Fellowship	16	Sundays after church service

Table 2: Church Groups Statistics and Activities

6.3. Sunday Worship Service

6.3.1. Pre-Worship Service Observations

The following observations are not from a once off visit but several visits to the same congregation over a period of three years. Each visit the author would pick up something not seen the last time. The presentation here is more of a summary of those many visits.

Long (2001:11) points out that "the conduct of worship is the mirror of the character and ethos of the congregation". What a congregation does at worship speaks volumes about its liturgical practices and also the core tenets of its faith and spirituality.

. There is a popular statement that says 'show me your friends and I will tell you your character' and for this congregation it means, show me your liturgy and I will know how you worship. Chan (2006:15) sets the tone for this discussion on observations and worship and points out that:

> "The nature of the Church cannot be understood apart from its calling as a worshiping community. It is thorough worship that the Church is decisively shaped as the ecclesial community".

The two elders on duty arrived early to ensure that the church sanctuary is opened and there is enough ventilation and the liturgical furniture is in place (baptismal font, Eucharist table and so forth). They were also responsible for putting up the hymn numbers and scripture readings. The following objects were very noticeable. A cross was hanging on the wall above where elders sit and facing the main entrance. It was visible to all who were to come into the sanctuary. The embroidered flags of the different church groups with scriptural messages were hanging on the side walls. The author observed that the liturgical space was divided into a special place for choir, children, youth, women of prayer and the general membership.

The church bell was rung three times within a space of fifteen minutes before the start of the worship service (the third time louder). On enquiring about the church bell rung three times, the author was given the following explanation. The first bell is to remind the community around the church that it is Sunday, the day of the Lord. The second bell is to encourage members of the congregation who are on their way to church to hurry up. The third bell is to indicate that public worship is about to begin.

Some members of the Men's Fellowship also arrived early for their Sunday sessions before worship service. A few other members of the congregation came early and the author observed an interesting behavior. There were those who waited in their cars and those who stood in small groups and had a conversation. In addition, the author observed that, it was the women folk who seemed to have a natural instinct to warm up to new comers or strangers. This was very important to the author for three reasons. On the one hand, it demonstrated the social skills of the men folk (distant and not warm towards new faces. It also indicated how women find it easy to reach out to strangers, embrace them and make them comfortable. The saying that first impressions last, will always hold water whether in church or any other social institution. Members are in fact the face of their congregation. Sometimes people are not attracted by the beauty of the church building but rather the welcoming atmosphere created long before the start of the worship service.

Furthermore, there was no billboard displaying the name of the congregation, times for the different services throughout the week and even the name of the current resident minister and contact numbers. People in the neighborhood might know it is a Presbyterian congregation but for an outsider it might be difficult to locate this local church. The manse (church house) is within the church yard and very close to the church building and some of the members who came early were coming in and out. The author wondered about the privacy of the pastorate family. In addition the church is situated next to a tavern and the music noise was so loud and the situation was made worse by the noise of taxis hooting and other private cars as they drove past. The size of the church yard is very small and only a few could park inside and all others were parked on the pavement outside. To ensure safety, two young people were standing as car guards. The last observation is strange in the sense that the people walking past the church were asking the members to pray for them and that one day would join them for worship or for membership. The one thought that crossed the author's mind was in fact a question: What is the congregation's impact in this community? Was it a challenge to engage in aggressive evangelism?

6.3.2. Description of the Worship Service

The minister and church elders met in the vestry for prayers and as they come into the sanctuary the congregation stood up. The Session clerk was leading the procession with a bible raised high in his hands. Through this observation the author was reminded that Presbyterians as part of the Reformed Christian community, believe in the supremacy of Scripture as the final rule in matters of worship, faith and life. The Bible was placed on the pulpit where the Word would be preached. However the Bible was obscured by some objects next to the pulpit and was no longer visible. Through this observation, the author was reminded of other Presbyterian congregations who put the open Bible on Holy Communion table for the entire congregation to see. Visibility of the Word in the gathered assembly is of paramount importance. Secondly, putting the Bible on the Eucharist table cements the connection between the Word and sacrament.

At the beginning of the worship service the minister greeted all who were present and extended a word of warm welcome. Those who were new comers or strangers were asked to stand up and to introduce themselves. Those members sitting next to them were asked to make them find it easy to follow the order of service and a second special welcome for these visitors was accompanied by the choir singing a song for them. The minister read a lengthy Psalm which was an invitation to come and behold the majesty of the Lord and to ascribe glory and praise to God. The opening hymn was announced and was followed by the opening prayer. The author observed that the Reformed tradition of a threefold prayers was followed namely prayers of praise and adoration, confession and assurance of forgiveness. These prayers were followed by the singing of the Lord's Prayer in English.

The author observed the English version was sung by the choir and young people whereas the elderly and others sang in vernacular language. In preparation for the reading of the Scriptures a hymn was sung. The reading of the Word was from the Old Testament only and there was no Gospel and New Testament reading. The readings were followed by the singing of "Siyakudumisa Wena Thixo" (We Praise You O God). It's a traditional prayer in most mainline churches such as Presbyterians, Methodist and Anglicans. It is divided into four parts. It speaks to the Trinity and lastly the people of God asking for grace and mercy. This was then followed by a children's address. The author observed that it was a Bible story not necessarily related to the message of the day. A hymn was sung and the sermon was delivered. The sermon was topical and there was an interpreter. The author as a multi-lingual person observed that the interpreter was not doing justice to the content of what was preached. Someone once said, 'sometimes an interpreter can be a traitor' (unintentionally). Besides, interpretation prolonged the sermon and the author realized that the listening concentration of some members was beginning to decline. Research tells us that the listening span of an average adult is twenty to twenty five minutes and whatever is said beyond this timeframe is not captured or registered in people's minds.

The sermon was followed by reaffirmation of faith through the reciting of the Apostles Creed in Sotho language. Prayers of intercession were then offered and thereafter offering (commonly called plate collection) was taken. The author observed that it is good practice to reaffirm faith and bring offerings to the altar as a sign of gratitude to God for the preaching of the Word.

After the sermon the Eucharist was served and only adults participated. Children were excluded as the current practice does not permit that. It amazing how children, who by virtue of baptism are part of the church are excluded from this sacrament. The Eucharist was followed by announcements, closing prayer and benediction concluded the worship service.

6.4. The Survey Questionnaire

A survey questionnaire was more appropriate for exploring a problem under investigation. A questionnaire is one of the effective instruments in empirical investigations and the author crafted one that would ensure quality of data. A questionnaire was used to elicit the information that will be analyzed to answer the research questions. Respondents were asked open-ended questions and they supplied their own answers and the information was used to answer the research question.

There were no changes in the written questionnaire for all participants. This was because that could result in data that is not a true measurement of the research question or data that cannot be statistically analyzed. The author voided questions that would bring ambiguity and also omitted easily misinterpreted questions. Furthermore, the author minimized the use of yes or no questions. In addition, pilot questions were circulated before a final script was distributed (after revising, refining and reformulating questions). Further discussion is covered under research instrument design.

Secondly, according to Ustun et al (2012:79), the quantity of questions asked needs to be considered in relation to general time constraints and the need to maximize respondents' contribution. Indeed, with regard to questioning technique, it is not the quantity but the quality and value of questions that is important. Devault (2019:86)

points out that, one of the techniques that improve the quality of a survey questionnaire is to develop dynamic survey research questions. Such questions operate through a fundamental logic and that logic is launched by the criteria. Researchers design questions that use single or multiple criteria to determine the next action.

The questionnaires were distributed among the church leadership and other purposefully selected members of the same congregation. A number of people agreed to participate in the survey for this project. The response rate was determined by the number of people who returned the survey, also known as the completion rate. The return rate was determined by the percentage of questionnaires that have been returned of all the questionnaires sent or distributed

6.5. The Interview Process

According to Vosloo (2015:11):

> "The rationale for formulating research questions is to express the essence of the research problem in question format that indicates a delineated, focused and specific inquiry".

Indeed, the way questions are phrased can have an important impact on data quality and direction of the research process. Asking the wrong questions can influence negatively the research process and ultimately impact on the findings or conclusions. Hjorland (2002:430) also points out that, proper questions should correspond to the main research question. Bloom (2008:89) points out that, "there are three types of research questions and these are descriptive, observational and contextual questions". For the purpose of this particular research project, focus is on descriptive, observational and contextual questions only. Nipkow (2009:11) maintains that "empirical questions are part and parcel of the conditions of practical theology".

6.5.1. Interview Groups

Given the nature of interviews as interactive engagement between researcher and participants, they provide a space or platform for a constructive dialogue. It is of

paramount importance to arrive at informed findings and conclusions. No doubt, in-depth interviews are one of the most flexible ways to gather data from research participants. Probing questions are good for gaining clarification and in fact another strategy to ensure finding out more detail. In a research situation, cross-checking questions ensures understanding a given statement or story before drawing a conclusion.

In this research project, it was necessary to ask in-depth questions and probe effectively more so when some of the respondents were reluctance to provide quality answers. For the researcher it was about investigating the evidence or proof of what is said or probing reasons or rationale behind the answers. Indeed, interviews were not only about accumulating information about participants' past experiences, but equally important was to explore the implications of such experiences for the research project. Therefore the interviews were a reflexive engagement of all participants in the sharing of information and exchange of opinions. This in turn had a potential of establishing relevant data for the qualitative research. Bloom (2008:90) points out that "questions: designed to elicit participants' prior knowledge and to check their comprehension of the research topic and to guide the researcher into recognizing patterns".

6.5.1.1. Church Leadership

a. Composition

Of the twenty four elders of the congregation, the author managed to meet with only thirteen. It was a mixed group in terms of age brackets, marital status, level of education and economic status. Others could not attend due to ill-health and distance (elders in the two branches). Therefore the views presented in this space are those of the main church.

The questions for the leadership were designed to discuss in detail leadership as (performance) responsibility. The author restricted questions to the research topic so as to avoid accumulating irrelevant data. Surely, questions have a variety of purposes often related to the type and stage of the research process. Good questioning provides

a model that promotes correct and intelligent questions from participants. The core questions were for clarity, such as length of their experiences in the congregation, position and responsibility in the congregation. The purpose was to address the main objectives of the research, through the perspective of the leaders. More importantly, these questions were designed to address the core questions and research aims, established in the previous chapters.

b. Questions

- What are your views on children and Holy Communion?

- What are your reasons for giving children sweets during Holy Communion?

- How do you deal with youth pregnancy?

- How do you view customary marriage?

- How do you handle baptism of children born in customary marriage?

- What are opinions as leadership on women wearing headgear?

- What are your views on godparents?

- What is the frequency of celebrating the sacraments and why?

- What is the congregation's involvement in the affairs of the neighboring community?

c. Responses

"…in the tradition of our church children do not receive Holy Communion".

"…Holy Communion is for adults who understand".

"…giving children sweets is a substitute or consolation for not receiving Holy Communion".

"…those in customary marriage are encouraged to get a marriage certificate".

"…some couples are not transparent about their marital status and hence the discipline".

"…customary marriage does not have the same status as home affairs registered marriage".

"…the wearing of headgear is a tradition from the Old Testament".

"…tradition is there for order and stability in the congregation".

"…godparents are allowed though in fact is a practice from Roman Catholic Church".

"…church elders can act as godparents as they know the infant".

"…Holy Communion is celebrated once a month and quarterly for outstations due to distance"

"…maybe elders should be given authority to give Holy Communion to the sick and elderly at home".

"…there are no planned programs to help the community around except in times of crisis".

"…sometimes the church is abused by the community when they always reach out".

"…community people want help from the church and not the church".

"…some boys are in church for wrong reasons".

"…boys in church like to date girls and the end result is pregnancy"

"…boys and girls should be encouraged to use condoms and contraceptives.

"…boys and girls who are dating should be prepared to get ready for marriage".

"…sex education is sinful and it creates temptation for young people".

"…restoration class is the church program that helps young women".

"…not receiving Holy Communion during pregnancy is a good discipline".

"…church discipline will teach young people not to have sex before marriage".

d. Patterns and Themes

There seems to be a tendency on legalism and authoritarian leadership. These are emerging as patterns. The argument is, seeing everything through the lens of judgment does not auger for the spiritual wellbeing of the congregation. As pointed out in chapter two that church leaders should know the heartbeat of the congregation. Pastoral leadership should strive for transformation and not condemnation. Perfectionism is an ideal but is such an approach pragmatic? No wonder then from these patterns there is emphasis on tradition and discipline. Much has been said about discipline in chapter two and tradition in chapter three. The comments on sex education are a mixed bag of divergent views. Whilst some see the value of sex education others see it as something not good at all.   The church must be relevant to young people and part of that responsibility includes empowering on matters pertaining to sexuality. A church that does not address the sexual challenges faced by youth is doing them disservice.

6.5.1.2. Members of the Congregation

a. Composition

This was not a purposive selection of participants but rather a random one. As a result there was fluidity in the composition. Only interested parties responded. The questions for congregants consisted of combined open and closed questions. The questions were addressing the objectives through the prism of the congregants, and addressing individual narratives on important concepts such as perceptions, beliefs about the thorny issue of youth pregnancy.

b. Questions

- What are your opinions (or views) on youth pregnancy or young parents?

- How does the television, social media and entertainment industry influence youth's decision about sex?

- How can sex be treated differently in popular television shows and movies?

- How does youth pregnancy affect the socio-economic life of young people?

- What kind of programs can have impact on reducing the numbers and likelihood of youth pregnancy?

c. Responses

"…Youth pregnancy needs all stakeholders to work together".

"…youth pregnancy affects girls more than boys as girls remain care-givers".

"…it is taxing for young women to carry unborn baby to full term without emotional support of boyfriend".

"…boys often get away with it without being summoned for accountability".

"…it is fashionable for girls to fall pregnant because of the social grant".

"…girls get pregnant because they want to prove a point of fertility".

"…boys impregnate girls because they want to prove their manhood".

"…girls know about contraceptives and yet choose to please boyfriends".

"…premarital sex is defiance against parental and religious instructions".

"…discouraging or scaring the youth drives them even more to sexual escapade".

"…Abstinence does not work so give them contraceptives and condoms".

6.5.1.3. Parents of Young Children (the Eucharist)

a. Composition

Interesting enough, only a few parents (mothers) came out for the discussions. It was mothers of young children. Even so, they were not that much engaging the questions raised. In short, the conversations were not that robust. Nevertheless the author could capture at least the basic beliefs, perceptions and thoughts about children and Holy Communion from a parents' perspective.

b. Questions

- What is your understanding of baptism of children and church membership?

- In what ways are the children actively involved in the life of the congregation?

- What is the role (or purpose) of the Sunday school in your congregation?

- In your opinion, what are the strengths and weaknesses of Sunday school?

- What are your thoughts on children receiving Holy Communion?

- What does the church policy (UPCSA) say about children receiving Holy Communion?

c. Responses

"…children are not full members until after confirmation".

"…children stand in front and hold the offering plate as adults come to give their offering".

"…children sing songs and read messages when it mother's day or at Christmas".

"…Sunday is there to give bible knowledge to children".

"…Sunday is about religious instruction as it used to be in public schools in the olden days".

"…Sunday children form long lasting friendships".

"…Sunday school keeps children growing in the church environment".

"…there are few educational outings like going to a zoo".

"…we do not know what our church says about children and Holy Communion".

"…the church leadership is silent on this matter of children and Holy Communion".

"…it is better for the church leadership to give clarity and guidance to parents and congregation".

6.5.1.4. Parents Affected by Youth Pregnancy

a. Composition

A sizeable number came (twenty nine) and from all married, unmarried with adult children, divorced and widowed. They all a common concern of youth pregnancy and how they are indirectly affected. The tone of the discussions was not judgmental or condemning but seeking ways of dealing with what they consider a social problem that is destroying the future of their children.

b. Questions

- How often do you talk to your children about sex?

- Have you set any rules or standards to prevent a possibility of youth pregnancy?

- What are the factors that influence youth not to use contraception (prevention)?

- What are the consequences of parenthood for young mothers?

- What role should the young father play?

c. Responses

"…it is a taboo to talk about sex with young people".

"…rules are not taken seriously by this young generation".

"…it is a time of disobedience against rules as prophesied in the Bible".

"…youth do not collect contraceptives at clinics out fear and stigma attached to it".

"…contraceptives are available but youth have a careless mentality".

"…young mothers especially lose out on educational opportunities".

"…girls drop out of school and forfeit their potential".

"…most young mothers cannot cope and therefore get help from own parents".

"…some girls feel frustrated as they miss out what friends are doing out there".

"…very few boys have taken their fatherhood responsibility seriously".

"…a majority of boys do not care".

"…some boys find a new girlfriend and forget about baby's mother".

'…the young father should visit and bond with the child".

"…according to African customs the young father must pay damages".

6.5.2. Focus Groups

Almeida et al (2017:377) points out that, focus groups are effective research instrument 'to investigate complex issues'. By definition, complexity describes the behavior of a system or model whose components, interact and influence each other. A complex system is thereby characterized by multiplicity of problems. Focus groups were chosen as data collection tool because were useful for in-depth research and therefore very much suited to this inquiry. Surely, people's attitudes, beliefs, expectations and opinions are best addressed by in-depth interviews conducted in focus groups. Of great importance is the participants' active involvement (responsive participation), and freedom of expression. Of importance is the participants' perspective on the issues discussed collectively (collaborative inquiry).

According to Johnson (2006:3) "the group dynamics theory reinforces the notion that humans have the capacity to think reflectively and imaginatively". According to Bloom

(2008:91) "questions are designed to provide information, give an opinion, explain or clarify. Questions form the basis of brainstorming a topic, generating interest and topic-related vocabulary". For this research project, a choice was made to use open-ended questions for a reason. The explanation is that, open questions elicit longer answers because they engage the participants, challenging them to tell their story or describing the phenomena under investigation. These questions are good for developing an open conversation, finding out more detail, finding out the other person's opinions or issues. A closed question usually receives a single word or very short factual answer. They are good for testing others' understanding, concluding a discussion or making a decision. These questions are useful in verifying and summarizing.

6.5.2.1. Women of the Church

a. Composition

The wearing of headgear and other discriminatory practices in the church affect all women. Therefore this group was composed of who had an interest in the discussion and only fourteen attended the discussions. It was a mixed group of married, unmarried and divorced women. It is not surprising that this group was made up of professionals (teachers, nurses and others in government departments. These are very much opinionated women who are always questioning that which they do not understand or affect their rights and privileges in the church.

The questions for the women of the church were designed to reflect their experience as recipients of the practice under investigation. Apart from verbal expression of participants' experiences, there was a capturing of the embodied or enacted reflexive nature of exchanges between them and the researcher. This provided the author with more insights that contributed to the reliability of the research encounter.

b. Questions

- What are your opinions on wearing headgear during Holy Communion?

- What are your views on modesty in relation to church women

- What is your understanding of modesty in terms of Scripture?

- What do you know about the teaching of modesty from other churches?

- What are your thoughts on sexism and male dominance in the church?

c. Responses

"…being treated differently in church makes one feel a second class Christian".

"…a tradition from ancient times cannot be applied to modern times".

"…this teaching is not consistent because it is silent about men".

"…this teaching is not fair but disturbing".

"…perpetuation of patriarchy in the church is a problem".

"…deciding for women is unfortunate imposition of rules"

"…God cannot set women free in Christ and put them in bondage again".

"…culture of the Bible belongs to old times and cannot be enforced now".

"…modesty has nothing to do with outside appearance"

"…religious modesty is a wrong teaching".

"…character and modesty is more important".

"…if modesty or conformity to headgear is for all Christian women why it is not happening in White churches?

"…charismatic churches are progressive – women wear trousers and let alone headgear".

"…men have no right to dictate what women should wear or how to be presentable".

"…enforcing tradition in the church is unacceptable".

"…sexism and male dominance are the main problems".

"…discrimination is wrong in the church".

"…imposed tradition for women inhibits their worship".

"…conformity to a culture of centuries ago demands examination".

"…enforcing headgear for women is injustice in the church".

"…traditions in the church are not liberating but oppressive".

"…using scripture to defend discriminatory practices in the church is wrong".

d. Patterns and Themes

The one pattern that is consistent throughout the answers given is ascribing to Scripture what it does not say or impose on women in the church in modern times. Discrimination, sexism, male dominance all work out to reinforce masculinity and degrade the dignity of women in the name of the Bible. What is normative in Scripture remains and ancient cultural practices cannot be imposed on others. Furthermore, why is religious modesty as argued in chapter two only meant for women? Preferential treatment is all about discrimination and favoring men at the expense of women in the church.

6.5.2.2. Women in Customary Marriage

a. Composition

The author met with only six women who are currently in customary marriage. They were between the ages of fifty and sixty five. Four had post matric qualification and working full time and have children. Two had matric qualification and were housewives with children.

As the central figure, the author avoided abusing the center position. The aim was, not to create an impression that would impact negatively on the interviewing process. Power imbalance diminishes the credibility and reliability of the research activity. Through interactive discussion, participants narrated their experiences and the author

gained a deeper understanding of the issues affecting and thus increasing the quality of data collected. Another strategy was to recruit others who could contribute to a more diverse understanding of the phenomenon being studied or researched. Through diversity more thoughts or viewpoints were presented. That was effective because participants were not misinterpreted or misrepresented and this strategy increased the issue of trustworthiness.

b. Questions

- What are your opinions on customary marriage?

- What are your experiences of customary marriage?

- What are the positives and negatives of customary marriage?

- What are your comments on children in customary marriage?

- Are the new trends such as co-habitation and domestic partnership the same as customary marriage?

c. Responses

"…culture is good when it works for the good of humanity".

"…it is a marital union is done according culture and ancestors are happy".

"…customary marriage is not good for modern professional women".

"…most women in customary marriage are housewives dependent on husbands and are trapped".

"…opinionated women cannot survive in customary marriage".

"…there is a tendency of in-laws interfering and that creates tension".

"…economic security of children is at stake if they not included in the will".

"…customary marriage is not exempted from emotional and financial abuse".

"…men often use culture to oppress women".

"…there is no personal freedom in customary marriage".

"…customary marriage is enslaving women".

"…subjugation of women in customary marriage is wrong".

"…patriarchy promotes what is wrong and makes it right".

"…financial dependence gives men control over women".

"…customary marriage takes away self-identity and independence".

"…equality is a foreign concept in patriarchal institutions like customary marriage".

"…there is no joint decision-making in customary marriage".

"…customary marriage does not protect the dignity of women".

"…customary marriage degrades the dignity of women".

d. Patterns and Themes

For author, three themes stand out vividly and these are oppressive practices, the question of survival (emotionally and financially) and inequality among the partners in marriage. One can form something (a new thing) or reform what already exists (improvement) but not deform (giving it an ugly appearance). Oppressive practices are deforming on the part of women in customary marriage. A theology of liberation reminds us that God is always on the side of the oppressed and that includes women in such marital unions. It is easy for the church to condone oppressive practices because its own structures are oppressive. Women are not yet fully liberated in the church. The task of practical theology is to address such social institutions of oppression and bring hope to those who are marginalized.

6.5.2.3. Young Males (Fathers)

a. Composition

The author met a group of eight young males who have become young fathers. They were all post matric in terms of education status. Some were casual workers whereas others were unemployed. An atmosphere of open discussion was created for these young men to express their thoughts on the subject of youth pregnancy. The author avoided convergent (or closed) questions and also leading questions. Closed questions require little reflection or originality. Leading questions channel the participants to respond to the researcher's way of thinking..

b. Questions

- What led to a situation of impregnating a girl?

- What are your views on prevention and condoms in particular?

- What are your opinions on masturbation as alternative way for sexual release?

- What are your thoughts on abstinence?

- What is your responsibility as young father?

c. Responses

"…girls should always be on the pill".

It is not my responsibility to avoid pregnancy".

"…we were overcome by sexual feelings".

"…we were caught in a compromising situation".

"…I wanted to see whether my seed (sperm) is powerful".

"…it is not a problem because we are not the first ones".

"…boys cannot resist when sexually enticed by girls".

"…it is difficult what to do when sexually pressed up".

"…sexual urges are so strong and end up falling into temptation".

"…condom takes away the personal feeling".

"…condoms from government clinics and hospitals are not reliable".

"…some of us cannot afford expensive condoms bought from shops".

"…when a condom breaks and the girl gets pregnant who is to blame?

"…masturbation is a waste of sperms".

"…masturbation is dangerous".

"…abstinence is impossible".

"…abstinence is wishful thinking".

"…abstinence creates more desire for sex".

"…loving your child is very important"

"…when you are separated the girls refuses to let you see the child".

"…the mother of the baby must also contribute".

"…social grant is there to help raise the child".

"…cannot babysit because it is un-African".

"…I am not comfortable to bond with baby girl because of father-child incest or rape".

"…fatherhood cannot be measured in terms of material provisions".

d. Patterns and Themes

From the answers provided two patterns come out clearly. It is blame game and misinformation. It takes two to have a sexual intercourse and therefore the one partner cannot blame the other. Boys seem to always want an easy way out by shifting the responsibility to the girls. Seeing social grants as a social security speaks volume about

how boys can shift responsibility to either parents or some government agency or institution. This tendency is explained by Rosenberg and Wilcox (2006:34) who point out that "boyfriends do not have a normative commitment to the child's welfare".

This unfortunate situation is not well addressed in many communities and Vargas and Charlton (2017:393) points out that, "pregnancy prevention efforts focus primarily on young women, with minimal attention to young men". Secondly the comments on masturbation and abstinence indicate a lack of better understanding. Masturbation is an alternative method of sexual release (though excessive practice can have undesirable effects). Abstinence is considered old-fashioned or good for those who are religiously inclined. Brieger and Delano (2001:436) point out that "abstinence is ineffective due to not understanding the conceptual and theoretical framework".

6.5.2.4. Young Females (Mothers)

a. Composition

The author met with a group of nine young women who have become young mothers. Five are working casual jobs and have some steady income whereas the other four are still dependent on parents to provide for their children with an occasional contribution from boyfriend. They participated actively in the discussions. They also demonstrated an above average ability to discuss issues with maturity and insight. There were divergent views but none were defensive of their actions that led to an unwanted pregnancy.

b. Questions

- What led to you fall pregnant?

- How are you coping with the child?

- What role is the baby father playing?

- What are your dreams and goals for the future?

c. Responses

"…I was not thinking straight".

"…I embarrassed to ask my boyfriend to use condom".

"…contraceptives failed me".

"…I wanted to show I love my partner".

"…contraceptives make me sick".

"…I had no access to contraceptives".

"…I was pressured into having unprotected sex".

"…we were caught in the heat of the moment".

"…I was afraid of losing my boyfriend".

"…other girls are doing it and did not want to lose out".

"…I am coping because of help my mother who is a single parent".

"…my boyfriend is not consistent with financial help".

"…I am sometimes emotionally drained out".

"…the baby demands a lot and at times it is exhausting".

"… I hope I will make it for the time lost".

"…it is not the end of the road and I still hope for the best".

"…I want to improve my situation by getting a job".

"…I would love to further my studies".

d. Patterns and Themes

From the above answers one can deduce three things. First of all, it is the instigative role of boyfriend in this whole drama of youth pregnancy. Boys are instigators in the sense that there is a discrepancy in using condoms and pressurizing their partners. Starr (2013:5) advises that boys should be actively involved in any discussions about prevention of pregnancy and for Reynolds (1998:4) it is all about 'elevating the importance of involving boys. Indeed, without coaching boys about sexual matters, they will continue with risky sexual behavior. Secondly, it is young people's attitude towards contraceptives. In cities and towns availability of contraceptives and accessibility thereof is no longer a challenge. Indifference leads to carelessness and the latter comes with a price.

Furthermore, the two themes emerging from the answers given are fear and indecisiveness. Fear of losing a boyfriend puts the girl in precarious predicament. Pleasing a boyfriend whilst compromising one's moral ethics constitutes an unhealthy relationship. Pleasing a boyfriend at whatever cost, including the possibility of a pregnancy is giving in to sexual demands that have regrettable consequences. Reynolds (1998:4) refers to empowerment whereby young girls can make wise decisions in situations they do not have control. In addition, these young mothers have not given up on their hopes and dreams for the future and that is important for them and their children. Positivity and not negativity is the right mental attitude.

6.6. A Reflective Discussion

The author has intentionally, decided to focus on youth pregnancy because the fabric of society is torn apart by this scourge. The Church also is affected when those who are to be its future leaders are now victims of circumstances. This does not mean other raised and responses received are not important.

6.6.1. Clergy and Lay Leadership

The sense of belonging is very crucial in corporate worship. Does the church demonize young fathers and mothers and relegate them to the margins of the church life? Long (2001:11) reminds us that "there is no authentic Christian worship without a genuine

welcome and hospitality". The author argues that where there is no collective embracing of one another, what goes on in corporate disintegrates.

6.6.2. Young Women

Some of the reasons young women fall pregnant is because of pressure from boyfriends and out of fear of losing them. This fear is paralytic in the sense that it makes young women to succumb to the pressure. This is confirmed by Brieger and Delano (2001:437) that due to peer group pressure young people "participate in sexual activity in order to gain acceptance and approval". It is common knowledge that boys are ones urging girls into promiscuous sex and therefore the author argues that adult men must come to the party and discuss the dangers of unprotected sex and the heavy responsibilities of parenthood.

 Reynolds (1998:8) reminds parents that "effective use of contraceptives must begin at an early age because for some girls puberty comes early". This opinion finds support in Jacono and St Onge (1992:197) who point out that:

> "At puberty, cognitive and emotional developments lag behind physical development, making young girls less aware of the risks of sexual activity".

6.6.3. Young Men

Youth pregnancy does not only affect girls but boys as well (young fathers) and this eliminates gender stereotype that it is a girl problem or challenge. Reynolds (1998:6) points out that "young fathers are at high risk of not finishing school" because they have to seek a job so as to support their children. Surely, taking care of an infant is not an easy task. In addition, seeking a job without a qualification or a skill worsens the situation. Starr (2013:16) argues due that lack of educational qualification or job skill "chances of suitability for employment are minimized". When chances for employment are reduced, young fathers cannot carry out their responsibility and the care of these children rests on the shoulders of the family, more especially grandparents. Rosenberg and Wilcox (2006:13) maintain that "unemployed or low-income fathers are not necessarily disengaged and uninvolved with their children". Furthermore, given the high

rate of unemployment in South Africa, it is not surprising that some young fathers fall into depression.

6.6.4. Parents

Most parents in the African community in particular do not sit down with their young boys and girls and discuss the dangers of sexual intercourse. The reason is that, discussion on sexual matters is considered sensitive and a taboo. Others believe it will encourage young people to have sex. There is a need to deconstruct this myth because young people are sexually active with or without discussion with parents. Brieger and Delano (2001:437) argue that "communication between parents and young people about sexuality and contraception is of paramount importance". According to Jacono and St Onge (1992:198) "parents should provide a family system that has good and effective communication about sexuality and sexual matters".

Research shows that girls at puberty age are also at risk of falling pregnant and Reynolds (1998:7) points out that "sexuality without social maturity often leads to pregnancy". The author argues that these young girls cannot have social intelligence if they are not empowered and therefore it is imperative to teach them on this subject. This capacity building and nation building where young girls learn to make wise decisions and take calculated actions and responsibility for their lives. Indeed, this capacity building aims at harnessing or developing the full potential in both genders (boys and girls). According to Jacono and St Onge (1992:196) argue that this "comprehensive discussion should become the norm". The author concurs with Starr (2013:17) that "we need intervention strategies that are on the cutting edge".

6.6.5. The Challenge of Social Media

The author argues that there are several predisposing factors that make the youth to engage in sexual activities. One of them is social media. Whilst it is a necessary platform for communication and sharing of information, it can become a problem than a blessing at times. A majority of young people constantly receive text messages about sex from boyfriends and girlfriends. The social media plays a huge role in transmitting

information about sexual issues. Brieger and Delano (2001:438) correctly point out that "unfortunately there is nothing texted about birth control as a way of eliminating unwanted pregnancy". Indeed, there are some television shows such as Pregnant at 16 and Teen Mom that leaves much to be desired. Starr (2013:18) argues that "the youth are given the idea that it is alright to have premarital sex and become pregnant". This is clearly a way of condoning youth pregnancy.

6.6.6. The Social Grant

The social grant for children in South Africa has created a dependence syndrome on the welfare system. Whilst it is good and necessary to reach out to its needy citizens, the current abuse by young mothers cannot go unnoticed. Though social grants do offer some financial support, the amount is not sufficient to meet the needs of a child. If there is no other means of augmenting the social grant the children suffer. At a time when there is so much talk about women empowerment, dependency syndrome in young women works against the concerted efforts to rebuild the image, dignity and capacity of women in general. In some communities a young person dependent on the state for survival is seen as a failure and that itself carries a stigma. How the social grant saga can be handled is a challenge to the whole South African nation.

6.7. Conclusion

This empirical study reached its main objective and that is to answer the research question. With this in mind, the author points out that, in the identified congregations, leaders must respond to a variety of demands. The diversity of problems increases the complexity and presents formidable challenges to church leadership. In facing this huge problem, Mitchell (2009:21) advises as follows:

> "Coping with the complexity of today's church environment is not about predicting the future or reducing risk. It is about building the capacity in leaders, the people and the organization itself, to adapt continuously and learn to maximize the chances of seizing opportunities".

Be as it may, leaders are to display ability to handle the current situation, avoid unpredictability and restore stability in the congregation. It is only then that leaders can have informed opinion, define strategies, promote common values and integrate processes that will take the affected congregations forward. Facing a similar situation in Kenya, Matano Mnene (2013:2-3) argues that:

> "We need to provoke church leaders in African mainline churches to rethink the need to revise and improve what exists already, which seems to be a barrier to mission of the church today, and help the church imagine new paths towards reforming its practices".

Chapter Seven

New Theory for Praxis

Introduction

Indeed, the choices we make shape the character of the church. Choices have consequences and therefore should be based not on impulsive decisions. Choices made by church leadership affect everyone and in the congregations under study, such choices have a negative impact on sacramental ministry. If theology (among other things) is the study of religious beliefs, surely there should be a critical approach to the problems facing the modern church. Of paramount importance, is to approach challenges with pastoral intelligence and seek solutions that are satisfactory to all affected parties.

The author argues that, perpetuation of hierarchy often has adverse impact on sacramental ministry when certain individuals and groups are excluded from active involvement. For Lindgren (1983:85), "church administration should have a predetermined objective to provide opportunities for every member to minister to the congregation".

7.1.   Chapter Summary

In chapter one the research problem was introduced as sacramental ministry in African Presbyterian congregations in Pretoria. In essence an explanation was given that the approach is a liturgical-theological critique. The nature and complexity of the research problem was presented in details. In chapter two a platform was created for arguments on the different aspects of the research problem. Those supporting the current practice offered solid arguments and those opposing the ongoing liturgical sacramental practice were convincing. The arguments for inclusion of children in the Eucharist hold water and must be encouraged in congregations where it is not happening. In chapter three an extensive literature review was done. There were many insights gained which can be applied to enhance the sacramental ministry in the identified congregations. In chapter four a qualitative research methodology was presented and argued why it is appropriate

for the research problem. Of paramount importance was the description of data collection strategies and data analysis. In chapter five a theology of sacramental ministry was discussed with emphasis on its frameworks, the essence of sacraments and the centrality of sacraments. Chapter six as the empirical chapter presented the field work done and noting how it was done and the valuable lessons gained by the author. This chapter then is all about new theories and recommendations for further study or research.

7. 2. New Theories

7.2.1. Leadership and Authority

Greenwood (2002:32) contends that, confusion about leadership roles has unfortunately "damaged the effective handling of authority in some congregations". In response to this dilemma, one is of the opinion that can raise their concern about leadership tendencies without being aggressive. Aggression is often confrontational and characterized by retaliation. As a behavioral scientist, Marlise (2010:26) view aggression as a social crime. Indeed, uncontrollable actions are inappropriate and undesirable for social interaction, more so in a church context. In addition, church leaders should listen to the concerns and liturgical needs of the congregation. In this way, church leaders can serve with a renewed sense of purpose. The author has observed that, effectiveness and efficiency are commonly misused and misinterpreted. Being effective is about doing the right things, while being efficient is about doing things right. Kung (1990:42-43) points out that:

> "Repression is the crushing of people by people through a specific system and its representatives. In the church there is a threat from a system that turns free Christian men and women into conformist followers".

Indeed, we cannot reject freedom in favor of the familiarity and safety of captivity. Clowney (1995:146) argues that, "rigid authoritarian control exploits the fellowship of believers in a sectarian caricature of the church". According to Willhauck and Thorpe (2009:33) this situation is prevalent and sustainable because, "in the hierarchy of the

church, the clergy are the ultimate owners of positional power". Snyder (1983:225) joins the protesting voices and points out that "the church has restricted authority and leadership to the clergy, rather than to the whole people of God, and to men rather than women".

Indeed, the current debate in many Christian circles is on the clergy's control of offices and functions. The author argues that, the foundation of our modern doctrine of ministerial responsibility lies in the proper exercise of power and therefore accountability. Surely, effective leadership is all about influence not authority. Theologically speaking, all authority begins with God and therefore any authority in the church should be used wisely without causing any hindrances in the liturgical worship of the gathered assembly. According to Lindgren (1983:29):

> "Those in authority may become so engrossed in preserving the church as an institution, as well as their positions in it, that the mission of the church is forgotten or violated".

7.2.2. Clergy-Laity Tension

According to Jones (1985:120), this sharp distinction between minister or pastor and congregation, has caused a crisis for both clergy and laity in their understanding of their roles. Indeed, there is a clear divide in what is understood as clergy responsibility and what constitutes church life inclusive of the laity. According to Hewitt (1996:13):

> "A major part of the root problem with the ineffectiveness of local congregations lies with the dysfunctional and disempowering ministerial leadership that is present".

This creates division and contributes to mutual suspicion. Suspicion spreads speculation, misgiving, doubt, uncertainty, mistrust, mental and uneasiness, and that can polarize the sacramental ministry in the congregations under study. Church leaders need to develop capacity to build relational trust and thereby have a community of mutual support and not suspicion. There is a need to shift perceptions about what is clerical (individual) and what is corporate (communal). Indeed, internal factors that

causes a congregation to be dysfunctional, impacts negatively on tis liturgical worship and sacramental ministry. According to Greenwood (2002:36), consequences are that:

> "Worship can be oppressively monochrome, encouraging passivity, inviting little depth of imagination or thought and deliberately avoiding risk or profundity".

Clowney (1995:114) explains that, this false divide emanates from the fact that, "the bane of clericalism has been the definition of the church, theoretically or practically, in terms of the clergy". For Jones (1985: 119-120), this points to the problem of clerical dominance, and the false view that the ministry of the church, is confined to bishops and priests. This kind of situation does not auger well for sacramental ministry and therefore change is the way to go.

Jones (1985:110) maintains that"

> "What matters most of all, is the growth of interdependence where the clergy and laity reject the false divide of the past and share in establishing a sacramental ministry in which every member is needed".(13)

Clowney (1995:114) reminds us that, "when we assume the task of the church to belong primarily to the clergy, we make the inappropriate liturgical and sacramental arrangements for that elite few". This wrong assumption is corrected by Billings (2010:8) who reminds us that, the fundamental task of ordained ministry is to help make God possible. Joining this point of discussion, Jones (1985:112) argues that:

> "Nowhere does the New Testament show the Church's ministry being the prerogative of a privileged clerical class, or an apostolic college, or in the hands of those with special rights of access to God".

Iwuchukwu? (1996:4) echoes the sentiments of Jones and explains that, the ministry of worship has been giving to all Christians. None of the words for service or ministry is restricted to the ordained clergy. For Haight (1988:490) "the task of the church within itself is to equip itself to deal with challenges and this demands changes". Indeed, the challenging task now is to deal with this sacramental situation in a pastoral way. The

effectiveness of the African Presbyterian congregations as it stands now, lies in addressing the problem of clericalism in the administration of the sacraments more especially the Eucharist. Greenwood (2002:24) cautions that "choosing to be Church in particular ways as an alternative to loyally maintaining our supposed inheritance is more than nostalgia, it can be actively to oppose Christ". Van Gelder (2000:19) points out that:

> "Defining the church functionally, in terms of what it does, can shift our perspective away from understanding the church as a unique community of God's people. Defining the church organizationally, in terms of its structures can shift our perspective away from the spiritual reality of the church as a social community".

7.2.3. New Patterns of Ministry

Ellingsen (1981:339) points out that "by studying how the Reformers employed each view of the ministry, we can learn lessons about when it is best to exercise authority and when best to function as facilitator'. According to Schattauer (2011:322), sharing ministry responsibilities is of paramount importance and points out that:

> "The ordained exercise faithful worship preparation, evangelical preaching, and sacramental leadership. Associates (laity) in ministry serve faithfully in their areas of call in relationship to the worshipping community".

It is not about maintenance of ministry whereas there is a deficiency in the sacramental ministry. Hewitt (1996:13) challenges leaders to cross over from maintenance mode of comfortable Christianity in the local church to the more interruptive truth searching mode. Observing traditional patterns of pastoral ministry without flexibility as necessitated by the contemporary context often leads to traditionalism which is not good. Schattauer (2011:323) reminds us that, "traditionalism is rigid and exclusive, is narrow and oppressive". What gives birth to rigidity and how it works out is explained by Greenwood (2002:20) who points out that, "to locate too much unifying, rigid, monolithic

authority with senior church leaders, is asking more of them than a fully adequate ecclesiology or sheer common sense".

Jones (1985:105) maintains that, the health and expansion of the church is directly, related to its teachings. It is for this reason that, Greenwood (2002:21) argues that, we need to re-examine the existing ministerial theology, practice and attitudes. Anthony (2009:2) argues that we need a new conceptual framework for ministry and according to Haight (1988:490):

> "A change is needed in the concept of leadership and ministry in the Church, away from traditional and pious persons to modern, and progressive types, who are intellectually equipped and who are movers, practitioners, and organizers".

In arguing for a paradigm shift in pastoral ministry, Smith (2009:26) maintains that:

> "Times have changed and so must our methods in ministry. An open and honest approach is essential as we face these challenges. Our response will dramatically affect the future of our congregations".

In this whole debate of moving into new patterns of ministry, Billings (2010:9) cautions that, if the Church is to survive its current crisis (of identity) and remain viable, the ordained ministry must reconsider its priorities. Kung (1990:47) shares the same sentiments of Smith and Billings about adjusting to changing times and contexts and points out that:

> "We must observe the 'signs of the times' and enter into new experiences, needs, and hopes of men and women in critical-creative adoption and application of new ideas, models, and methods in the most varied domains, for the realization of previously unexercised possibilities'.

In support of Smith and Kung, Jones (1985:105) maintains that:

> "In a period of profound transformation, exploration must precede discovery. But exploration involves risk. The Church cannot be expected to learn from its mistakes unless it is bold enough to make some".

For Cukrowski (2012:86) what is required is a change mentality and fearlessness in making decisions and therefore argues that:

> "Change requires taking a risk and making decisions. The decision may result in criticism, pain and loss. Nevertheless, faith implies some level of risk. There will not be a time in our congregations when risk is eliminated. Our churches need leaders who will make brave and faithful decisions".

Indeed, ministerial theology will help the church to have a healthy frame of mind to operate from. No doubt, transformation calls for a critical look at current patterns of ministry. The author contends that lay theology should be part of the equation in solving this liturgical impasse. In writing about bringing hope to situations that demand remedial interventions, Bruegemann (1986:25) points out that, people are not changed by ethical urging but by transformed imagination. Imaginative pastoral thinking has to do with coming up with creative solutions. Part of that analytical pastoral reasoning is to embrace the theology of the laity. Lay theology is a bridge to ministerial theology as long as the laity is allowed to continue to learn and to grow liturgically and sacramentally. Indeed, we need to examine openly, the problem inherent in unexamined religious conservatism or traditionalism in a rapidly changing world.

7.2.4. Repositioning the Laity in the Liturgy

Given this tension, Kung (1990:3) explains the necessity of transformation and liturgical position of the laity and argues that:

> "Demands for reform (17) do not stand alone and isolated but are part of a consistent general understanding of the church. The laity share, in the priestly, prophetic, and royal office of Christ. They have their own role to play in the mission of the whole people of God".

In support of Kung's position on laity, Clowney (1995:113) reminds us that "one great gain of the Protestant Reformation was its recognition of the place of the 'laity' in the church. Reformers taught that all believers have a priestly access". For the author, the priestly vocation of the laity is a gift to the church and it should be treasured and

guarded against any abuse. Indeed, those who are familiar with the provisions of Second Vatican on liturgical reforms can attest to its eloquent exposition on the position of laity in the corporate life of the church. The potential and remarkable strength of the laity is crucial. In explaining the practical implications of post baptism and initiation into the Christian worshipping community, Aba (1998:316) points out that "the sacramental character received in baptism and confirmation is to be seen as a sharing in the priesthood of Jesus Christ and the ability to offer worship" Olifant (2002:22) concurs with Aba and points out that:

> "Baptism is the presupposition and basis of all Christian worship. Baptism consecrates us to the priestly service of prayer and praise (1 Peter 2:4-10, Revelation 1:5-6). In baptism, we are set apart for God's service. At the center of that service is the service of worship".

Indeed, the laity has a crucial role to play by virtue derived from baptism. The author maintains that, in the congregations under study, there remains a fundamental lack of understanding of the position of the laity and its role in the liturgical worship. The notion that the laity is good for auxillary ministries negates the integral role of the laity in the mission of God. This notion is not consistent with the basic tenets of the Reformed theology. For Moltmann (1978:19) "the church is an open institution where all members have a crucial role to play in its liturgical sacramental life" and therefore warns those in leadership about falling into the trap of the 'getting-used-to-it syndrome'. lwuchukwu (1996:4) argues that, the laity should advance a discussion of how they want the priesthood to be defined and structured. The clergy are champions of the ecclesial organization and can thus effectively communicate the church's mission and vision instead of maintaining the status quo. The author argues that, consistency with Scripture in this particular case (African Presbyterian congregations) has to do with being fair without contradictions. Consistency is marked by adherence to principles, holding firmly together in a coherent way so that there is consonant harmony in the liturgical sacramental life of the congregation.

Most churches operate on a hierarchy with church leaders at the top and laity at the bottom. It is often argued that the clergy is there to guide, nurture and guard the laity. The clergy is the shepherd of the flock that is the laity. For McKee (2003:19) the theme in Psalm 23:1 "expresses the pastoral role of God with his people. The pastoral role from a biblical perspective is primarily concerned with the minister's ability to shepherd". According to Willard (2006:77):

> "Shepherding involves protection, tending to needs, strengthening the weak, encouragement, feeding the flock, making provision, shielding, refreshing, restoring, leading by example, comforting and guiding".

Sweet (2004:13) clarifies the liturgical sacramental rights of a congregation and maintains that:

> "Within the scope of sacramentology or more specifically liturgy (it could be argued that) the sacraments and their celebrations do not belong to the theologians, they belong to those who celebrate them".

Boersma and Levering (2015:646) highlight the ministerial role, position of the laity and purpose of the sacraments and point out that:

> "The assembly is the celebrant of the sacraments, that priest or pastors preside and serve, rather than dominate, in the assembly's celebration, that full, conscious and active participation of all the baptized in the mystery of Christ, and so in the sacraments, is a goal of renewal".

At the core of renewal is newness. It is for this reason that Robinson (2006:13) says "understanding our liturgy is understanding our newness as Christians". For the author, there is need for an opportunity for church leaders to reflect in an honest way on the liturgical practice and also reconnect with the purpose of sacramental ministry so that the community can be nourished accordingly. Indeed, in liturgical celebrations, each person (clergy and laity) gives meaning to this profound experience expressed by the body of Christ. The very word liturgy as a description serves to emphasize the corporate character of the Eucharist. Individualistic approach to the Eucharist goes against its

communal nature and leads to monopoly. In simple terms, monopoly is about control, dominance, exclusive rights and exclusive possession. In speaking against sacramental monopoly, Boersma and Levering (2015:651) argue that:

> "The sacraments ought not be protected, as if they were religious rituals meted out only under clergy control, without reference to the heart of the sacraments, that is Jesus Christ, and his gracious identification with outsiders and sinners".

It is out of a pastoral heart that Foster (2013:ix) laments that "the contemporary amnesia of a theology of the sacraments within some parts of the Church must be a matter of concern".

The priesthood of all believers remains the cornerstone of the Reformed tradition. Travis (2015:181) brings to our attention the fact that, it is difficult for priests to maintain a healthy liturgical involvement and to have the resilience necessary to exercise their sacramental ministry in an un-hospitable environment. For Jenkins (2006:1), becoming a priest involves "re- learning the tradition and re-imagining the role one has been called to represent. It is for this reason that Smith (2012:22) argues that ministry must be evaluated on how well it leads people to a commitment to Christ. Indeed, whenever the corporate nature of liturgical worship is overlooked, a crisis is created and sacramental ministry suffers. African theologian, Onaga (1997:28) argues that:

> "When you cannot function with altruism, transparency, honesty and judicious sense of responsibility and accountability, you have no reason parading around as a church minister".

Responsibility and accountability are not only two sides of the same coin but are enhanced by transparency. Research shows that lack of accountability has eroded respect and trust in most public institutions including the church. For the author, the fundamental lack of integrity that undermines effectiveness of church leadership, when left unchecked, can destroy the liturgical sacramental life of the congregation. Church leaders have a moral obligation to conduct themselves in ways that command respect, trust and dignity. Schaefer (1996:), reminds us that the Bible continually emphasizes

the fact that the greater the privilege the greater the responsibility or accountability (Luke 12:48). The researcher concurs with Ramsey (1988:111) who argues that, the sacramental priestly vocation is to reflect the priesthood of Christ and to serve the priesthood of the people of God. According to Greenwood (2002:14):

> "There would be an increase in satisfaction for clergy and laity if there is an honest recognition that, in the field of the Church, each separate place truly contributes to the whole".

Though the fact that the clergy need to understand and appreciate the values of people (laity) cannot be overstated, yet it remains to be reemphasized. The author is of the view that, acknowledgement and recognition of a person and acceptance thereof validates the person, and this leads to approval and confirmation that this person is of equal value. Contribution has to do with helping with an aim of producing the desired result or outcome. Unfortunately ecclesiastical authorities often downplay if not ignore lay contribution in liturgical sacramental matters. Indeed, this ideal congregational situation calls for a conducive, liturgical climate in order to flourish. It is precisely with this in mind that, Willhauck and Thorpe (:31) remind us that, in the church, the ministry of those on the edge (laity), the leading edge, is truly effective and follows a ministry model that is most consistent with the teachings of Jesus. Saunders (1997:?) supports the latter statement and argues that, we need a liberation model for ministry where the marginalized lead the way.

Undoubtedly, church leaders need to explore these new edges or frontiers so that sacramental ministry can be a shared ministry. A definition and understanding of collegiality reminds us that, it describes an environment where there is a sharing of ministerial responsibility by all stakeholders. Willhauck and Thorpe (2009:42) suggest that, improvisation could allow the church more freedom to explore cutting edge ministries, and the opportunity for clergy-laity distinctions to go away. Ellingsen (1981:342) affirms the latter view and maintains that:

"Minimizing the difference between clergy and laity promotes collegiality, shared ministry. The pastor represents all Christians and aims to facilitate the sharing of the priestly activities by all".

The author is not advocating a revolutionary replacement of the clergy by laity in the sacramental ministry. On the contrary, it is an argumentative effort to promote cooperative interaction. The clergy and laity should have a common purpose and respecting each other's ability to work toward that purpose. Lasch (1979:313-314) has long argued that, social analysts have noted that participatory leadership has become dominant in institutions. For the author, the sacramental life of the church is foremost in the Reformed tradition, the center being the celebration of the Eucharist. This view is supported by Ellingsen (1981:36) who points out that:

"The Church does not create itself but is the community of the new covenant, rooted in the gifts of God and especially the celebration of the Eucharist'.

7.2.5. Liturgical-Pastoral Care

Greenwood (2002:8) reminds us that, there is a need for pastoral and liturgical skills contribute to a high quality of worship service. No doubt, there can be no creation without creativity. Thoughts must be translated into action otherwise, they just remain a theory. Surely, strategic thinking has to do with how to make ministry better and in this particular case, sacramental ministry in the African Presbyterian congregations. Furthermore, skills (pastoral and liturgical) come from learning and one can echo the words of John F. Kennedy (the 35" US President) who once said, 'leadership and learning are indispensable to each other. Greenwood (2002:39) argues that, leaders should have the natural confidence, the sense of permission and enough vision for ministry to be effective.

It is common knowledge that pastoral ministry is often difficult and the pastor's confidence is always under attack. Coleman (2013:17) points out that, pastors can weather the storms of ministry by rooting their identity in Christ. The author has observed that, often, lack of confidence, prevents church leaders from seizing

opportunities. Church leaders need to confront challenges, overcome obstacles and not be discouraged by fear of failure. Indeed, confident people inspire confidence in others and the group faces the challenge and finds solutions. Furthermore, purpose driven leadership is important as someone once said, 'when vision lacks, everyone gets distracted'. Being visionary has to do with planning the future with foresight and imagination and wisdom. Often visionaries are ahead of their time, always thinking creatively and focusing on workable strategies and not impractical ideas.

The author supports the understanding that transformation in an organizational context is a process of profound and radical change that orients an organization in a new direction and takes on a different level of effectiveness. For the author, transformational leadership is a style of leadership where a leader works with subordinates to identify needed change, creating a vision to guide the change through inspiration and executing the change with committed members of the congregation. For Hollis (1997:44) "God's will is the priest's touchstone, God's will is his driving force for inspiration".

For Smith 2012:39) "leadership is the art of accomplishing goals through other people and this is social intelligence". However, one should caution that, being optimistic also involves balancing decisions to attempt new things in a methodical manner. Despite of the latter comment, indeed, action centered leadership takes into account achieving the task and developing the team. Coleman (2013:18) (26) reminds us that:

> "In devising or planning liturgical worship, we need an expression of radical commitment to collegiality in that we express our truest beliefs in our orchestrated communal activity".

3. Recommendations for Further Study

The author would like to recommend the following two recommendations:

- A study on the tension between confirmation as a requirement for Holy Communion and baptism as a qualifying factor in receiving the same sacrament

- A study on the Church and African customary marriage and its implications for practical theology and in particular pastoral ministry

- New models of shared ministry which will entrench the position of laity within the within the UPCSA

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