

**THE MISSIONAL CHALLENGE OF THE HIV/AIDS PANDEMIC FOR
THE LEADERSHIP OF THE URCSA KWAZAKHELE
CONGREGATION IN PORT ELIZABETH**

by

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DECLARATION

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SUMMARY

This study is about the missional challenge of the HIV/AIDS pandemic to the leadership of the Kwazakhele congregation in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. This undertaking should be dealt with from the premise of a practical theological point of view. In this context, the HIV/AIDS pandemic aggravates the plight of those in the community with the least resources, i.e. orphans and the destitute. Very limited resources, for example financial, psychological and spiritual, are available to them. This has severely impacted on the lives of South Africans across the country. And, this impact of HIV/AIDS is being felt at all levels of the society with its ever-increasing cases of infections, deaths, rejections, stigmatization, number of orphans and households headed by children. This social reality poses a burden on ministerial health budgets, thus a dilemma for health resources.

Through her leadership, the Church, as an instrument and field for the Triune God's missional praxis, is called to respond and act upon this plight. In that sense, a clear understanding of the missional Church is central in this theological and practical undertaking. The Kwazakhele leadership's empowerment will enable them to lead the congregation in a faithful response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic while taking cognizance of appropriate theological reflections that relate to the Triune God's salvific work.

In essence, the researcher intends to investigate how the congregation of the Kwazakhele Uniting Reformed Church of South Africa (URCSA) can combat and deal with HIV/AIDS in a compassionate Christian manner while taking cognizance of biblical imperatives. In that respect, the researcher has been engaged with interviews of families in the Kwazakhele congregation, members of whom had died of AIDS. The objective was to shed light on their experiences and to determine whether the Church is doing enough to support their members regarding this pandemic.

Furthermore, this research also challenges the Kwazakhele congregation, in particular, whether she fulfills her calling, that is, crosses the boundaries to take care of the plight that the community faces regarding HIV/AIDS.

In actual fact, the discernment of God's will is possible by a critical and sensitive leadership who should determine whether the congregation whom they serve is competent enough to deal with this HIV/AIDS pandemic, or not. This, indeed, challenges their Christian consciences. The researcher believes that the information and the resource material, as well as the institution to which he referred, will be of assistance to the Christian leadership of the Kwazakhele congregation and also the entire URCSA congregation at large.

OPSOMMING

Die fokus van hierdie studie is die missionêre uitdaging van die MIV/VIGS pandemie aan die leierskap van die KwaZakhele gemeente in Port Elizabeth. Die studie word onderneem vanuit die gesigspunt van die Praktiese Teologie. Binne hierdie konteks, vererger die MIV/VIGS pandemie die lot van diegene in die gemeenskap met die minste bronne, naamlik die weeskinders en hulpbehoewendes. Baie min bronne (sielkundig, finansieel en spiritueel) is beskikbaar vir hulle. Die impak op die lewens van Suid-Afrikaners landswyd is drasties. Daar is toenemende sterftes, verwerping, stigmatisering en weeskinders, asook kinders aan die hoof van huishoudings. Hierdie maatskaplike werklikheid plaas groot druk op die nasionale gesondheidsbegroting.

Die kerk, as instrument en lokus vir die missionêre praksis van die drieénige God, is geroepe om op te tree en hierdie haglike toedrag van sake aan te spreek deur haar leiers.

‘n Duidelike verstaan van wat ‘n missionêre kerk is, staan sentraal in hierdie teologiese en praktiese onderneming. Bemagtiging van die leierskap in die KwaZakhele gemeente sal hulle in staat stel om die gemeente te lei om getrou te wees aan hulle roeping om die MIV/VIGS pandemie aan te spreek. Terselfdertyd moet hulle ook bewus wees van toepaslike teologiese nadenke oor die drieénige God se ingrype om Sy reddened genade te laat realiseer.

Die navorsing poog dus om te ondersoek hoe die KwaZakhele Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk (VGK) die MIV/VIGS pandemie kan teëwerk en daarmee op ‘n barmhartige Christelike wyse kan handel, en voortdurend bewus wees van Bybelse imperatiewe in hierdie verband. Die navorsing het ook onderhoude gevoer met familielede van persone wat as gevolg van VIGS gesterf het ten einde, aan die hand van hulle ondervindinge, vas te stel of die Kerk genoeg doen om lidmate te ondersteun ten tyde van hierdie pandemie.

Hierdie navorsing is ook ‘n uitdaging aan die KwaZakhele gemeente om te bepaal of sy haar roeping vervul, grense oorsteek, en omgee vir ‘n gemeenskap in nood.

Onderskeiding van God se wil is moontlik deur kritiese en sensitiewe leierskap wat moet bepaal of die gemeente, waarin hulle dien, in staat is om genoegsaam aandag

aan die MIV/VIGS pandemie te skenk. Hierdie oefening daag hul Christelike gewete uit. Die navorser is van mening dat die inligting en navorsingsmateriaal, asook die instelling waarna verwys word, die Christelike leierskap van die Kwazakhele gemeente, sowel as hele VGKSA, van hulp kan wees.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND DEDICATION

My thesis would have not been completed without the divine intervention of the almighty and Triune God who, through divine sustenance, kept me on track throughout my period of study. I can only humbly say, “Glory be to God.”

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I also thank the families whom I interviewed and provided me with information during my research at the Kwazakhele congregation.

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This work is dedicated to both my parents, Zanele Kibito and Maggie Nosisina Kibito. To them I owe an immeasurable debt of gratitude for their Christian teachings and

sound upbringing, while also impacting values of *ubuntu*, which formed the basis of my urge for study and research of this kind. In a real sense, these Christian values and my special calling to ministry motivated me to seek ways to equip our Christian leadership in respect of HIV/AIDS.

Therefore, this thesis is dedicated to the memory of my dearest late sister-in-law, Thembakazi Esther Poswa affectionately known as T.P., whose death from AIDS, I believe, would have been delayed if knowledge of HIV/AIDS and anti-retroviral (ARV) therapy was available at that time. Her tragic death remains, and will always be, at the heart of my interest in studying more about HIV/AIDS. May her soul rest in peace!

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS EMPLOYED

- AACC**All Africa Conference of Churches
AIDSAcquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ATTICAIDS Training, Information and Counseling Centre
CABSA.....Christian AIDS Bureau
COMESA Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
D.R.C.....Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa
D.R.C.A.Dutch Reformed Church in Africa
ECHAAGEastern Cape HIV and AIDS Group
ECCOC.....Eastern Cape Council of Churches
EU.....European Union
EHAIAEcumenical HIV/AIDS initiative in Africa
HIV.....Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IAECInternational and African Ecumenical Church
IMFInternational Monetary Fund
NGONon-governmental organizations
Net ActNetwork for African Congregational Theology
OVC.....Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PARParticipatory Action Research
PE.....Port Elizabeth
PLWHAPeople Living With HIV/AIDS
SACCSouth African Council of Churches
SADECSouthern African Development Community
SCDS.....Synodical Commission for Diaconal Services
TB.....Tuberculosis
UNUnited Nations
UNAIDS.....United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
URCSA.....Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa
WTOWorld Trade Organization
WCCWorld Council of Churches

CHAPTER ONE

1. DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.1 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Most people are not aware of the effects of HIV/AIDS and the alarming rate at which it has spread. In chapter 1, the researcher brings to the fore the statistics that are indicative of this alarming rate at which this epidemic is spreading, as well its response. The following statistics are factual evidence that the researcher deems important for each and every member of the congregation with whom he deals, which will enable them to understand the predicament that they all face. In some or other way, these projections must conscientize the leadership of the KwaZakhele congregation to do their utmost in endeavouring to curb this pandemic. Therefore, through this research, the researcher seeks ways that would enable this congregation to respond effectively to this situation. Furthermore, their identity, based on their divine calling, would assist them in a missional way to address this pandemic, while taking into consideration the following situation.

The scourge of HIV/AIDS has ravaged our South African society generally and at an alarming rate. The statistics that various institutions present indicate how this aberrant situation affects every facet of our lives. The updated November 2009 statistics of the World Health Organization of the United Nations on HIV/AIDS, projects that 33,4 million people have been infected globally (<http://www.unaids.org>- downloaded 19.01.2010).

The AIDS epidemic update (November 2009) further states: "... the UNAIDS Secretariat and co-sponsors proposed and endorsed a set of specific outcomes that the Joint Programmes will aim to work towards national responses to AIDS throughout the world." However, the recent data projections reflect a decline in the HIV infection rate in some countries thus demonstrating that it is possible to reduce sexual transmissions of HIV. It further asserts that approximately 2, 9 million lives have been spared due to the accessibility to antiretroviral therapy (UNAIDS, 2009:17).

According to UNAIDS (2009:27), South Africa is regarded to have the world's largest population of people living with HIV (i.e. 5, 7 million).

The Institute's health and development communications state that between 4,7 and 6,6 million were infected in South Africa (HIV and AIDS Prevention, Care and Treatment, 2004:11). The laboratory testing was done in accordance with national standardized survey protocol and also included the city, Port Elizabeth - the internal and external quality thus being accordingly assured. The data analysis was conducted at both national and provincial levels. According to this survey of the nine provinces, the Eastern Cape Province has the sixth highest provincial prevalence, with 29,5% (National HIV and syphilis prevalence survey 2005:11).

In his book, *AIDS the challenge for S.A.*, Whiteside *et al.* (2000:49) says, "A Port Elizabeth hospital is sending AIDS babies home to make way for children with illnesses that can be cured. It is said that every day at these hospitals at least two babies are diagnosed with AIDS." At the Kwazakhele congregation, the researcher learnt that two young girls, with symptoms related to HIV/AIDS, had passed away two and five months, respectively, after they had lost their babies at birth.

These incidences prompted the researcher to pose the questions now included in this research undertaking while, at the same time, being very conscious of his Christian conviction. As indicated, this situation aggravates the plight of those in the community with the least resources, i.e. orphans, the poor and the destitute. Very limited resources, for example, financial, psychological and spiritual, are available to them. Therefore, their needs confront the Church, i.e. the social reality of their families rejecting them, and the moral issue of their sexual conduct. This poses a missional challenge to the leadership of the Kwazakhele congregation. The following questions, therefore, arises:

Research question

How can this research provide the leadership of the congregation with the necessary knowledge to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic while in the process of addressing the pandemic move towards becoming a Missional congregation?

1.2 HYPOTHESES

If the research can describe the influence of HIV/AIDS, the role that the global and the local context plays in it and if the research can help the leadership of the congregation to listen to the suffering people and understand something of a Missional calling, then the leadership will be empowered to take meaningful action.

This will enable the leaders of the KwaZakhele congregation to lead the congregation in a faithful response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic and will, eventually, assist them to address the AIDS pandemic missionally.

1.3 JUSTIFICATION FOR THE STUDY

This study will seek to determine the impact that the AIDS pandemic has on people's lives with the intention of equipping the Church leaders to combat this pandemic in a holistic way:

- The study will empower the leaders with the necessary knowledge of what a missional Church should be in the face of the AIDS pandemic.
- The leaders should be advised to make use of the available resource books, such as those from the Network for African Congregational Theology (NetACT).
- A strategy needs to be developed to pave the way for a modus operandi among non-governmental organizations, the local government, churches and other institutions, to work together in a holistic effort to address the pandemic in Port Elizabeth.
- Empowerment will inform the leadership of effective methods to combat the HIV/AIDS virus, which includes sexual abstinence, mutual fidelity, the use of condoms, and the safe use of blood and needles.
- Support groups will ensure that pastoral intervention is part of the congregational ministry, and also address issues of stigmatization and shame that are associated with HIV/AIDS.
- An undertaking and a commitment statement issued by our General Synod of the URCSA will ensure those infected of the Church's unwavering support.

1.4 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

The devastation of AIDS has caused pain to families in South Africa and particularly at KwaZakhele. Therefore, the researcher regards this situation as the motivation for this study.

This, indeed, is an immense challenge that the entire Church has to face. This scourge is evident in our daily lives as families lose their loved ones every week. These are realities that we, as Church leaders, have to face in a macro and micro context. For example, during December 2008 at KwaZakhele, we buried two young people of the same family.

In Kampala in 1994, the African Church leaders discussed about this scourge and their spirit motivated the researcher immensely. In this historical African event, of 1996 they declared that:

... the Church is [God's] instrument to proclaim and promote life ... AIDS is contradictory to life. ... We believe that God has called us at this unique moment in history to be instruments of His hope and eternal life.

His life and hope may be seen even when sickness consumes our bodies and the virus saps the strength of those we love. We plead for God's people to engage in dialogue at all social and structural levels; [and] wrestle with the issues, so that we might understand and apply principles of truth in a way that will bring about appropriate change [which] must include some traditional cultural practices as well as some modern trends that affect the family.

We are watchmen standing in the gap, and stewards of the hope of God offered in Christ. The pain and alienation of AIDS compel us to show and offer the fullness and wholeness that is found in Him alone. In this, our time of weakness, may the rule of Christ's love brings healing to the nations (MAP International: 1996)

In addition to the above encouragement, Miroslav Volf (1998:x) says that “No church without the reign of God ... no reign of God without the church” is the basis for the divine witness and intervention that is envisaged within, and beyond, our boundaries.

1.5 SOURCES

In essence, this research deals with a real-life entity and, in that sense, intends to pursue this motive by means of a practical theological point of view while taking cognizance of continuous hermeneutical concern for methodical principles of interpretation in the light of human praxis.

1.5.1 Primary sources

The data herein was collected from primary sources, such as information derived from participant observation. This means that participatory action research (PAR) enabled information to be gathered.

Hendriks (2004:219) defines PAR thus: "Participatory action research, however, aims at developing local sustainable communities by empowering people to take responsibility for their situation and future." The researcher's experience on the Diaconal Service Commission of the URCSA in the Eastern Cape will enable him to pursue the combat against the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

In essence, through the primary sources, the support groups and other intervention organizations of the Church will attend to the plight of those living with HIV/AIDS by means of missional theology, which entails holistic healing of their spiritual dilemma. The questions raised in the hypotheses were pivotal points that enabled the researcher to deal with the research as a real-life entity, as it provided unbiased empirical evidence.

In that respect, chapter two deals with the effect of the AIDS pandemic in the macro, meso and micro contexts.

1.5.2 Secondary sources

A literature review provides the basic knowledge required with regard to the research problem, question, goal and hypotheses. This was done by employing both national and international literature that deals with the missional challenge that the Church leadership faces regarding the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Research data bases and sources employed in this literature include the Internet, journals, books, minutes and news letters from the Church archives, which are regarded as secondary sources. The researcher also visited numerous general and governmental websites that provide extensive links to South African Internet sites.

1.6 METHODOLOGY

The research was done from a practical theological point of view. Hendriks (2004:19) defines Practical Theology thus: "... a continuing hermeneutical concern discerning how the Word should be proclaimed in word and deed in the world." He further explains the meaning of hermeneutics: "... the study of the methodological principles of interpretation."

R. Ruad Gansevoor (in Heimbrock 2004:58) says that, in Practical Theology, the empirical, the evaluative (which is often called hermeneutical), and the strategic research phases or approaches are operationalized respectively. He adds that Practical Theology finds its primary locus of first order constructions in the praxis and that the interdisciplinary study of praxis involves academic dialogue with other sciences that study human praxis (in Heimbrock 2004:60). Gansevoor further asserts that Practical Theology may investigate ideas and texts as well as economic ideas and texts that are studied as elements of human praxis.

Gansevoor (in Heimbrock 2004:60) also refers to Ricoeur who says that "text" does not refer to the material, but to the theory used. Gansevoor also refers to Dreyer who defines Practical Theology as: "... usually an engaged discipline, aiming at cooperation with first order participation in understanding and improving the praxis." In this respect, Rico Ponce (1997:145) refers to practical empirical theology. He accentuated it thus: "Theology must be able to provide answers on when and how modern people have religious experiences, which religious attitudes have an impact on their individual and social life, how they participate in the life of the community, how does the relationship between Church and society take shape in the ordinary life."

In his research report in *Practical Theology*, Hans-Gunter Heimbrock (2004:286) asserts that recent developments in empirical theology should highlight new possibilities. And, in addition to that notion, he further mentions a theological concept, phenomenology. According to him, this word dates back to the 18th-century philosophy when phenomena were understood to be things as they appear to the human senses, rather than things as they are in themselves. He also pointed that the use of phenomenological methods within empirical theology invites theological assumptions that are at stake in empirical sciences, such as reality, praxis, action,

objectivity, validity and life. However, Heimbrock commends Van der Ven for employing the word “phenomena” in a methodological proceeding from phenomenological principles that does not ask people to understand phenomena as they exist, but rather to focus on their own perceptions of them. Heimbrock (2004:282) also refers to Clark Moustakas who says “Through phenomenology a significant methodology is developed for investigating human experience and for deriving knowledge ... One learns to see naively and fresh again.”

These explanations are descriptive statements that vividly illustrate that the aim behind the correct use of methodology is to reveal and arrive at a conclusive nature of the phenomena and to all that constitutes its reality, according to research. Johannes A. van der Ven (2002:07).explained this notion in the *Journal of Empirical Theology* as follows: “For science does not proceed from facts that exist independently of human beings, but from phenomena that present themselves to people as data in which the facts appear to them (experience).” In addition, he asserts that phenomena are both observed and interpreted facts, or rather data, which trigger debate and, for that reason, that every observer sees and interprets the facts differently. That is why Van der Ven, like other theologians, unanimously affirms that research in Practical Theology is an empirical normative science. This view describes this adjective as a pivotal point that sets standards or rules that need to be adhered to, to effect praxis.

Gijsbert D.J. Dingemans (1996:84) explains the praxis of Practical Theology by saying that Practical Theology is not the opposite of theoretical theology, but stands for a theoretical or theological approach to practice, which entails changes that have been prevalent in the history of both the academic and church life. This is why Dingemans mentions four paradigm shifts that the researcher intends to deal with; they are of value in this thesis as they show developmental changes in theological praxis. Dingemans listed these paradigms as follows:

- The clerical paradigm, in which Practical Theology addresses only the practice of church leaders and pastors.
- The church paradigm: here Practical Theology deals with the internal functioning of congregations. And, in our case, we refer to the different auxiliary organs, such as the Men’s Association, Christian Women’s Ministry and Christian Youth

Ministry, as well as commissions. This also includes the Church's external impact that entails its missions in witness, preaching and education.

- In this regard, the URCSA speaks of the Witness Service Commission and catechism that depict their Reformed identity.
- The liberation paradigm: This derives from the Latin American activity that sought political liberation. According to Dingemans, the theology of liberation describes itself as a form of Practical Theology and, in that sense, it is asserted to have contributed to the change and liberation of society.
- The individual paradigm: This is a move distinct from the clerical and church paradigm towards individual believers. This move emphasizes the importance of catechetical homiletics, pastoral care and that individuals should seek meaning for his or her life. This is considered to be a missional endeavour that motivates the participation of each and every member. This notion will be dealt with in the conclusion and recommendation of this thesis.

1.6.1 Design of face-to-face interviews

The design of the face-to-face interviews is included herein. A face-to-face interview is the strategy used in this process of gathering information. Theresa L. Baker (1994:188) says: "An interview involves having one person address questions to another ... responses are then recorded by the interviewer." De Vos (1998:296) asserts, "The face-to-face interview helps us to understand the close worlds of individuals, families, organizations, institutions and communities." However, the interviewees are to be approached from the premise of missional challenges that the Kwazakhele congregation have already identified in its micro, meso and macro contexts.

Fortunately, in its pastoral letter circulated in 2008, our General Synod vigorously advised congregations about the five giants, i.e., crime, unemployment, poverty, racism and HIV and AIDS.

1.6.2 Ethnography

The ethnographic research, also called interpretive research, will be employed with the aim to understand more about the identity of this specific congregation that will be involved. Mouton & Babbie (2001:148) describes ethnographic research as: "Studies that are usually qualitative in nature which aim to provide an in-depth description of a

group of people or community," which is inherent of exploratory and descriptive questions.

In essence, ethnography gathers history, description and metaphor around questions how people believe and behave with one another in congregational life, and profoundly examines this descriptive data, to discover significant patterns that either other researchers or, preferably, the congregational leaders themselves can verify. In this undertaking 24 members are interviewed.

1.6.3 The use of a voice recorder

The researcher made use of a voice recorder in his interviews to ensure authenticity and validity, but also taking ethical consideration into account.

1.6.4 Open-ended questions

Open-ended questions were used to gather information. Baker (1994:181) asserts, "Open-ended questions state a question and leave a room for the respondent to write out an answer." This type of question gives a respondent the freedom to express his or her feelings more freely.

1.6.5 Ordering of questions

However, the ordering of questions is essential. Baker (1994:182) adds that questions on the same subject are generally grouped together to keep the respondents thinking about the same material. Moreover, these questions should be "worded to encourage brief responses and a greater degree of precision" (Baker 1994:191). And, in this case, an interviewer should begin with engaging the interviewee by capturing his/her initial interest (Baker 1994:192). Baker (1994:192-93) regards this as selling the interview effectively. In essence, preparation is of importance. De Vos (1998:301) put it thus: "Interviewers should enter the world of the interviewees."

1.6.6 The art of interviewing

The researcher regards the art of interviewing as central in deriving information from the interviewees, as all of them have had nasty experiences and anxieties. Therefore, he believes that the interviews may bring back unpleasant memories if done insensitively and unprofessionally (Baker 1994:193). In this respect, De Vos (1998:301-302) asserts that a relationship of trust should be created in order to

evoke the least resistance while a cordial atmosphere for effective communication with the interviewee should be created.

In essence, the ability to handle a two-way conversation is of the utmost importance, especially when dealing with the HIV/AIDS issue. De Vos (1998:309) furthermore says: "Interviewers should constantly be aware of their own non-verbal communication and the effect it has on interviewees and what it conveys." But, in the same vein, the researcher must probe for clarity when the need arises, but must remain neutral and avoid being emotionally involved (Baker 1994:193). In this respect, De Vos (1998:310) asserts, "Probing should be done in a friendly, reassuring and non-threatening way."

1.6.7 Truthful objectives

The researcher informs the interviewee of his purpose regarding his studies and research, with the intention of deriving truthful information. The forms that the researcher distributes for the attention of the interviewees clearly state the intention of the research.

1.6.8 Anonymity and confidentiality

It is a known fact that an interviewee may desire anonymity and confidentiality (Baker 1994:186) and, for this reason, pseudonyms will be used to protect people's identities. De Vos (1998:306) says: "The principle of confidentiality implies that the dignity of the interviewees should be protected." The interviewers should always be treated with absolute integrity and honesty (De Vos 1998:307).

This research constitutes critical issues, so the interviewer should take cognizance of the privileged information afforded to him.

1.7 A RESEARCHER AS A GOOD INTERVIEWER

Baker (1994:194) believes that a researcher should follow five basic rules in order to be a good interviewer and fulfil his task. They are the following:

- To understand the interview, that is to have a good understanding of the aims of the research. This will enable the researcher to be cognizant of the motives behind the questions that he deals with.

- To be committed to complete the interview (Baker 1994:195). The researcher should stress the importance of concluding the interview despite short interruptions that may occur. This means that a technique must be employed to follow up incomplete responses.
- To practise the interview. By reading the interview and administering it to others assist in identifying the areas that may need attention or review. This practice also helps the researcher to explore his own personal attitude to ascertain whether he has biases that an interviewee's responses might trigger.
- To minimize the effects of personal characteristics (Baker 1994:196). The researcher should take cognizance of his personal characteristics and style that may affect the interview. In this case, the researcher's attire is of importance as he is known to be formal in dealing with official business of the Church, which means that he must not deviate from the norm.
- To make use of common sense. The researcher should be able to make quick decisive decisions when the situation becomes not conducive to, and dangerous for, an interview to continue. But, he must conclude in a positive upbeat style by thanking the interviewee for his/her time and effort spent on the interview.

1.7.1 Selecting the location for the interviews

The interviews were conducted in homes to enhance convenience and to enable possible discussions. De Vos (1998:318) is of the opinion that: "The location should be free from outside distractions, background music or the hum of ventilation systems."

1.7.2 Units of study

As indicated above, the researcher's units of study were the six families who were willing to share their experiences. The researcher regards this undertaking as complex by nature as he will be attending to the plight of individuals and families at large who have been affected by HIV/AIDS in more than one way.

1.7.3 The population

The Kwazakhele URCSA has approximately 450 members who constitute nine wards of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality in South Africa.

1.7.4 The questionnaire

Questions used for the interviews:

1. Please tell me how you became aware of the HIV status of.....?
2. What was his/her physical condition then?
3. What was his/her spiritual condition then?
4. When did he/she die?
5. Did you approach the Church for help?
6. Were you at peace in communicating with council members?
7. What type of help would you say was most needed?
8. How do you think the Church can help in such cases?

1.7.5 Aligning the data with the proposition

The researcher will align the data collected with the proposition set out for the research question in order to arrive at the unit for analysis and the implementation of his findings (Baker 1994:300-301). For the purposes of data collection, the researcher employed a literature review. This entails a review of the existing scholarship or available body of knowledge to ascertain how other scholars have investigated the research problem in which the researcher is engaged (Mouton 2004:87).

The methods included employing both secondary and primary sources to gather relevant data. The reason for the researcher to consult with different resources, such as the Stellenbosch University's library, NetACT and the Internet, was to obtain the most possible information concerning this area of research. Coffey *et al.* (1996:7) refer to Huberman and Miles who describe data analyses as having four linked subprocesses: data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing and verification. According to Coffey *et al.* they describe data reduction in terms of data selection and condensation. In this case, the data are summarized, coded and broken down into themes, clusters and categories.

The data analyses will eventually produce a solution to problems identified. Therefore, chapter five describes the strategy that the Kwazakhele congregation, in partnership with stakeholders, should adopt for the present and the future. Coffey *et al.* (1996:7) put this notion as follows: "Data display should be viewed as an

organized, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and/or action."

1.8 A PARADIGM SHIFT IN RESPONSE TO THE CHURCH'S CHALLENGES

Historically, Practical Theology focused primarily on the clergy's task or the life of the church. Fowler (1987:20) believes that attention should be directed to religious praxis beyond the church, meaning that it should cross the church boundaries and bear witness to the world. This, in turn, means moving from a clerical paradigm and ecclesio-centric models to religious praxes within the context of public life in its various dimensions, hence the following:

1.9 MISSIONAL THEOLOGY AND METHODOLOGY

Missional theology is central to this task. In this section, the question to be addressed is: How do we implement missional theology practically? The researcher is of the opinion that the way we define and practise theology should depict our methodology. It should be inherent of practical, communal, holistic and contextual missional perspective.

The main aim of this research is to discern God's will and faithfully participate in the *missio dei* that encompasses divine care, the compassionate attribute of the Triune God and the covenantal aspect of families in the light of the Old Testament dispensation, but taking cognizance of the New Testament message relating to the Good News of love.

In essence, this indicates the mission and action of God's love for people, since He is the source of love. Roxburgh (2005:12) asserts that God's mission shapes and defines all that the Church is and does, as opposed to the expectation of what the Church should be, that is, a group of people with their own needs seeking fulfilment of their own lives. This notion admonishes people to put God central in their lives as Christ puts, and gives, meaning in people's lives.

As an instrument of God, the church is called and sent to God's world, and the task of missional theology is to equip the church for its calling. As a community of faith, they are called to witness in particular places. Bosch in this instance speaks of the

distinction between *mission* (singular) and *missions* (plural) (1991:10). The first one, therefore, refers to the *mission Dei*, that is, God's mission which implies "God's self-revelation as the One who loves the world, God's involvement in and with the world, the nature and activity of God, which embraces both church and the world, in which the church is privileged to participate". Bosch is of the opinion that this mission is derived from the inclusiveness of Jesus' mission that embraces both the poor and the rich (1991:28).

Guder says (1998:4) "mission is the result of God's initiative, rooted in God's purposes to restore and heal creation." He asserted that this mission depicts a sense of sending which, in essence describes the purpose of God's action in human history, like the calling of Israel to be the recipient of God's blessing in Christ (John 20:21).

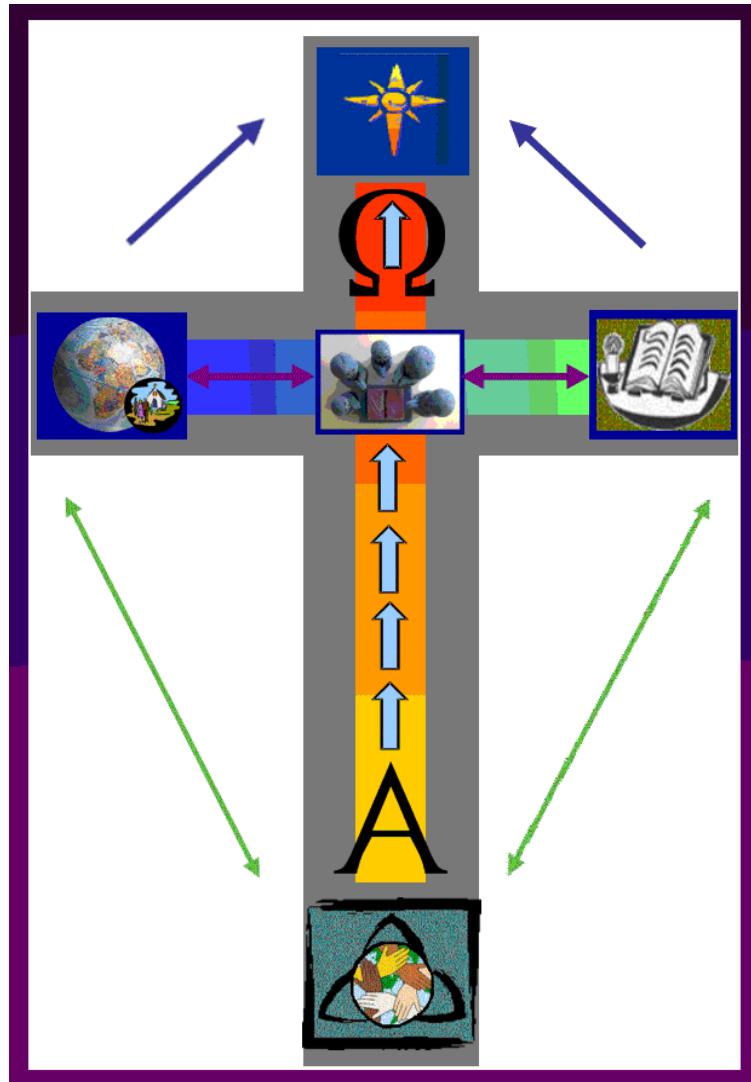
Furthermore, Bosch (1991:28) describes this mission as "one of dissolving alienation and breaking down walls of hostility, of crossing boundaries between individuals and groups". The missionary practices of Jesus is pivotal to the missional theology and it for that reason Bosch (1991:83).refers to Matthew when he asserted that "Christians find their true identity when they are involved in mission, in communicating to others a new life, a new interpretation of reality and of God, in committing themselves to the liberation and salvation of others." And it is in this sense that Bosch (1991:398) says that the church is called to mission to give witness to what God has "once for all, absolutely new, unrepeatably and finally done in Jesus Christ for the sake of the world." Guder (1998:9) concurs: "... the church should focus on and arise out of the formation of particular communities of God's people, called and sent where they are as witnesses to the gospel." In addition to this, Bosch (1991:399) says that Salvation in Christ is salvation in the context of human society *en route* to a whole and healed world."

Guder (1998:82) also brings to the fore the trinitarian character of mission and quotes Lesslie Newbigin who is of the opinion that "missionary practice must be grounded in the person and work of Christ, seeded by trust in the reality and power of the Holy Spirit and rooted in a practical faith that discerns God's fatherly rule in the events of secular history,...in the revolutionary changes which are everywhere taking place in the life of the world." In accentuating this the church arises perpetually from the church's origins in the gospel (1998:87). This gospel, according to Guder, brings forth

an eschatological community of Salvation that is derived from the preaching of the reign of God. In addition, this community belongs to the reign of God which comes as a gift that awaits our possessing (1998:94). In essence, this mission represents the reign of God of which the church is called to represent servant and messenger in order to be a blessing to the nations. He further says that this mission progressed in the sending of the Spirit to call forth and empower the church as the witness to God's good news in Jesus C1998:102).

In that sense, missional theology is said to be biblical, historical, contextual, eschatological and practical. This process of discernment is graphically illustrated below by means of a cross, which Hendriks (2004:23) has explicitly defined in *Studying congregations in Africa*. This resource book explains how missional theology and ecclesiology focuses and executes its mandate in praxis. In essence, it contains a graphic illustration that indicates a strategy employed to connect different aspects of hermeneutical correlation of dialogical theology regarding love and compassion. Furthermore, it depicts the empirical theological engagement that encompasses participatory action research (PAR).

De Vos (1998:408) defines this as "... a research process where people involved in the situation that is being studied are enabled (in partnership with researchers and other role-players) to become actively involved in collective efforts to address and solve their social problems." In actual fact, this research process enhances collaboration, mobilization, empowerment, self-realization and the establishment of community solidarity (1998:414), and this is how the concerned partners will approach the HIV/AIDS pandemic.



Hendriks elucidates this as follows:

- The foot of the cross portrays the identity of the Triune God, symbolized by a triangle.
- The left side of the cross depicts the world. We use research methodology to describe it.
- The right side of the cross reminds us of the past, of the Bible and the faith tradition.
- The top of the cross reflects the future, the kingdom of God, the eschatological reality that is already present in, and through, Jesus Christ on whom we focus our hope.
- In the centre of the cross, where the correlational input from the four points meet, is where discernment takes place. The point of doing Practical Theology is to

discern the will of the Triune God in a given situation and then do something about it.

Hendriks (2004:24) further explains this method of doing theology or this process of “participating obediently” in the Triune God’s missional praxis in the following way:

- This missional praxis is explained from the premise of our belief in the Triune God who is *the source and initiator* thereof, hence the movement or the strategic action is from the Alpha to the Omega.

According to Hendriks (2004:23-25), this mission is an extension or amplification of God’s very being. Furthermore, this faith community cannot perceive God in a personal way without participating in his missional praxis.

Hendriks refers to Bosch (1991:392) by saying that the identity of the Church, in essence, is missional by its very nature. In this sense, God’s community is called to be an eschatological sign of the new Kingdom, the new Jerusalem. The Kwazakhele congregation believes that they are called to re-instil hope to the hopeless, especially the AIDS sufferers, and to take care of God’s creation.

Hendriks (2004:25) says that God’s mission and reign involve creation, care, redemption, and consummation, that the church plays a fundamental role in these activities, and that this continuing praxis of the Triune God will continue until Christ’s second coming. Furthermore, that *an apostolic faith community* in the global realm is called out in the world to witness God’s missional intention in a wider contextual setting.

In this setting, they develop their contextual ecclesiology within the parameters of God’s overall design for the church. Initially, the focus was on the role and work of the officers of the church, especially the clergy. Hendriks (2004:26) employs Dingemans’s concept: the clerical paradigm. This indicates that congregational activities centred on the institutional role of the minister’s cognitive expository preaching and teaching during worship.

A paradigm shift that could derive from contextual changes began to place emphases on the role of the faith communities and laity. For that reason, Hendriks (2004:26) advises Christians individually, and as a faith community, to realize that they must

make ethical decisions, for example, not indulge in immoral sexual behaviour and structure their faith community and society in such a way that all enjoy a safe and healthy environment.

However, the role of the denominational and ecumenical Church structures and leadership should not be neglected, but their role, function and style must change. In the same vein, Hendriks (2004:26) refers to Hanson purporting that one cannot depend entirely on the theologians or clergy to lead the way towards reforming the Church and its ministry. Therefore, the laity should not be viewed as consumers or passive receivers of pastors and theologians' religious instruction.

Hendriks (2004:26) reiterates Hanson's argument that states that authentic communal church structures constantly develop contextually as the faith community responds to the initiative or praxis of the mission-driven God. The question of chaos is ruled out due to the prevalence of the dynamic relationship between the missional God and responsive community - a community that receives guidance by means of discernment of God's will. This process enables this community to understand her contextual realities and her response thereto.

- Theology is about a **specific time and place**. Hendriks (2004:27) mentions the Israelites' history in Exodus, where they were provided with manna to illustrate the contextual nature of theology. In this sense, in thinking about faith, John Douglas Hall defines Christian theology as contextual (Hendriks 2004:27). His argument is based on three factual evidences:
 1. that theology is a human enterprise;
 2. that it speaks of the living God who has a living relation with dynamic creation, and
 3. that theology is done as a way of discerning what the Church should confess.

Hendriks advises that, in doing theology in Africa, we must be realistic about our situation here and we should study the global social, economic, and political megatrends and how they influence our continent.

The way in which questions are asked in these circumstances is an integral part of the discernment process that accompanies the primary question: How must the KwaZakhele congregation participate in a Triune God's missionary praxis?

- Those members of this community in the local context are also involved in a vocationally based, **critical and constructive interpretation** of their present reality through the correct interpretation of the normative sources of Scripture and tradition (Hendriks 2004:29). History has proven that top-down approaches have failed as they cripple peoples' minds. This results in a dependency syndrome, as the culprits will merely wait for an already manufactured or pre-designed answer to their questions of life.

The community of believers should take into cognizance what discernment entails lest they falter in their missional calling. When Hendriks (2004: 30) explains contextual theology by alluding to Robert Schreiter, he says: "... if Christianity really wants to engage the hearts and minds of believers, it must seriously regard the context that shapes their lives and in which their communities are rooted."

In Hendriks (2004:27) Schreiter speaks of doing theology between the global and local context and also indicates that global realities influence the local situation. This interconnectedness is evident in human's spheres of life, thus the question of HIV/AIDS should be dealt with holistically. In this sense, the church is called to witness in all spheres of life.

- An **inductive methodology** must be employed to effect **correct interpretation of the faith's traditional texts**, such as, Systematic Theology and creeds.

Hendriks (2004:28) defines inductive methodology as a "from-the-bottom-up" approach inherent in the field of Practical Theology. It assists in the investigation of empirical realities. According to Hanson (in Hendriks 2004:31), these realities happen in a particular time and place where the faith community has been called to witness within the confines of their world. This means that a church should be a medium through which people can learn from one another about what is happening in the churches and in the world around us about HIV/AIDS.

In his in-depth explanation of methodology, Hendriks (2004:28) asserts that Congregational Studies makes use of different “frames or lenses that act as perspectives with which to study congregations ‘from the bottom up’” More perspectives allow insight and better understanding of the congregation. Gansevoort (2004:54) puts it thus: “Theology is not regarded as a science investigating faith, but as faith in search of scientific understanding (*fides quarens intellectum*), that is, faith seeking understanding as purported by Anselm or Augustine, and also employed by Schreiter in his analyses of global and local theology.”

In this process of discernment, the Scripture plays a normative role. According to Hendriks (2004:30), the church is an interpretative community in an ongoing engagement with the remembered patterns of God’s praxis that are evident in the church’s worship and practice. The Triune God is the One who takes the initiative in the creation, redemption and the sustenance of creation. This means that the faith community relies on the operation of the Holy Spirit in order to participate in God’s missional praxis.

In this vein, Hendriks (2004:26) condemns the people’s reliance solely on theologians or church bodies, such as synods, but encourages local faith communities and individual Christians to make informed theological decisions on more than on prescriptions of textbooks and creeds.

In reality, the faith community receives God’s guidance and his perspective and divine empowerment that enable a theological understanding and discernment for those in communion with the Triune God (Hendriks 2004:31). In support of this notion, Hendriks (2004:31) mentions De Gruchy who asserts: “Theology can be done only from within the community of the faithful.” This means that unity within the diversity of faith communities is realized through their communion with God, hence our speaking of ecumenical dimension of discernment (2004:31). In this process of discernment, God’s will is realized in people’s struggles where correlation of hermeneutics is evident.

In the micro context of Kwazakhele, discernment is realized through the process of spiritual meditation and reflection on missional literature that addresses their questions regarding AIDS. Unfounded perceptions about what AIDS entails will be

handled, as some have distorted ideas and unbiblical knowledge of the AIDS virus. In this regard, Hendriks has this to say:

- The communities that the Triune God calls, **become indicators of God's kingdom on earth** while moving forward with an eschatological faith-based reality in view that will lead to a vision and mission statement. On this view, the URCSA had make decisions that motivates its membership to attend appropriately on this issue of HIV and AIDS. (Acts of synod: Decision 41:2008).

Hendriks (2004:32) believes that missional congregations can make a difference in Africa's adverse realities, while love and care can be indicative of the Triune God's presence and his Kingdom, i.e. the God, who attends to the plight of the sick and blind, as well as those caught in the fatal grip of the HIV virus.

- While obediently participating in this **transformative action** at different levels (personal, ecclesial, societal, ecological and scientific) a doing, liberating and transformative theology should lead the Church to a strategy, implementation and evaluation of its progress. Without this undertaking, no missional congregation will fulfil her divine missional calling.

In essence, the community is called to love God and their neighbours: a life that bears witness and realization of the aspect of an eschatological future that breeds joy and hope.

The interviews that the researcher undertook will assist in the strategizing, implementation and evaluation of the congregational activities in the light of this pandemic at Kwazakhele and across the boundaries beyond their scope of operation. Hendriks (2004:33) furthermore elucidates how correlative dialogue between five points of the cross describes the action of doing theology. This, in essence, leads to action and strategies that take place at several levels of missional operation:

- 1 At a personal level, Christians are recalled to be disciples of Jesus Christ. They are to struggle and grow spiritually towards maturity in order to witness Christ's image. In this process through sanctification, they discover the gifts bestowed upon them with which they are to serve God, their neighbour and society. The indwelling and operation of the Holy Spirit transforms their whole beings into

new creatures, that is, all facets of their lives. The power of the Triune God changes them in totality, rationally, emotionally and physically. This change inspired the researcher to act and do something about the scourge of HIV/AIDS at the congregation.

2. At the ecclesial level within the faith community, the Christians are the body of Christ - an alternative community within the wider society - who are called to be the light and the salt of the world. This community is also seen as a Church with a missional calling with an inherent vision and mission that is directly related to its identity, processes and programs.

This community of faith has different ecclesial practices that evolve from its missional character. As a result, our members committed themselves in HIV/AIDS support groups.

- Worship and liturgy are of vital importance in this regard, because, here, the most intimate and profound theological reflection and meditation can occur. Prayer and worship is central in our missional engagement.
 - *Koinonia*, or the community in and through Christ and the operation of the Holy Spirit are evident through the activities of local or ecumenical relationships. Those who are HIV positive welcome fellowship.
 - *Diaconia*, or service, or ministry of the church, has many facets, such as taking care of one another, responding to those in need, ensuring that justice is done in all spheres of life, as well as caring for the earth. The equipment of leadership and support groups enables a process for pastoral intervention.
 - The facets of church life that include evangelism and witnessing about truth and justice is central in this process of empowering leadership, support groups, or caregivers to AIDS sufferers while crossing the boundaries of the URCSA.
3. At the level of secular society, the Church is called to witness about the good news of Jesus Christ and proclaim prophetically that justice be done to all human beings.

But, this must apply not only to humanity, but also to God's creation (Hendriks 2004:33). The body of Christ must be humble custodians of the creation. This is called for to unmask the pretences of secular value structures, unjust pretences and

ideologies, the seductive injustices of the capitalist market economies and destruction of natural habitat. Alternative stories, realities and hope should be proclaimed in this context. The faith community should be an example of people who live and relate to an alternative set of normative biblical values. This service should also be extended to people with no Christian commitments.

4. At a scientific level, that is, the academic-intellectual aspect of theology, the church is called to relate to other disciplines in addressing aspects of life that it faces. Kelsey indicates that academic theology should be done through the lens of the congregation and should be taken seriously (Hendriks 2004:33).
5. At the ecological sphere, the body of Christ must be custodians of the creation.

1.10 PRACTICAL BACKDROP

The researcher has been involved in the Diaconal Commission of the URCSA for more than seven years. While representing the presbytery of Port Elizabeth, he also was the chairperson of the Eastern Cape sub-region, as well as that of the Cape Regional Synod for four years. Thus, for quite a reasonable time, he was exposed to matters related to HIV/AIDS. As a result, the researcher's involvement at national and local level has triggered within himself a sense of practical responsibility, particularly in his immediate micro context, Kwazakhele. The researcher regards it as his calling to bring Jesus' unconditional love, healing, wholeness and hope to this broken society. Therefore, he views the Kwazakhele congregation as an instrument in the Triune God's hand. Volf's (1998:14) definition of the church, an "image the Triune God, *imago Trinitas*," has also motivated the researcher.

In essence, the reign of God implies social embodiment of the Gospel that we are called to reflect and live. In missional terms, the church has been called to carry on with what the Triune God started. Volf (1998:140) says that the cognitive identification of Christ should depict our personal identification with the Triune God through Christ who is the determining ground of our lives. The researcher also refers to the Gospel of Matthew (25:35 ff) that touches one's conscience:

"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me ... "When did we see you sick or in

prison and go to visit you?".... "Whatever you did for one of the least of these, you did for me."

The Kwazakhele congregation bases her theological premise on the Calvinistic tradition that purports, "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" (James 2:20 KJV). In this process of discernment, our dialogue will trigger our local theological understanding of the pros and cons of our social interrelations and activities.

In this respect, Hendriks (2004:19-34,211-234) refers to various levels of transformative actions and services in which a missional congregation can be involved, that is, in personal, ecclesial, societal, ecological and scientific spheres. Through interaction with the researcher, this congregation believes that the Triune God has called them to make a difference so as to enact the values of God's Kingdom.

1.11 THE AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The researcher regards this research as descriptive, as he seeks to determine the real effect of the AIDS pandemic in order to introduce missional theology that, at congregational level, instils a sense of hope to the hopeless.

The researcher is the facilitator of this program while, simultaneously, making use of those with expertise in this field of combating HIV/AIDS, as well as extending an invitation to theologians with insight on this issue, as this is an empirical research. Participative research is the appropriate tool that the researcher uses in this research undertaking, as it does not impose ideas on the participants or interviewees.

1.12 THE CATEGORY OF THE RESEARCH

The category is classified as descriptive that, according to Hendriks (2004:225), "describes what was observed" and the observation or study is done qualitatively. Kirk and Miller (1986:9) assert that, technically, a qualitative observation identifies the presence or absence of something, in contrast to quantitative observation that involves measuring the degree to which some feature is present.

In essence, quality denotes the nature in contrast to quantity. This stands to reason why the researcher employs an ethnographic approach as he studies the effects of

HIV/AIDS and analyses the data while seeking for a missional solution. Chapter two describes the social dilemma and the medical fiasco in the macro and micro contexts.

1.13 CONCEPTUALIZATION

Hendriks (2004:227) explains the value of knowing the definite meaning of the key concepts or constructs that we employ in doing research. Furthermore, he says that, in PAR, it is essential to employ terminology in such a way that it does not set the research group apart or above the community. In essence, terminology should be used and defined in an acceptable and understandable way for all parties concerned. The following terminology is used in this PAR:

HIV: Danie van Zyl (2003:10) says that in “HIV,” the **H** stands for Human (because it lives in people), the **I** for Immune-deficiency (the immune system does not function properly), and the **V** for Virus (akin to a very small microorganism). According to Van Zyl, this virus is found mostly in infected people’s blood, in the male semen, the female vaginal fluid and a mother’s breast milk.

AIDS: Alan Whiteside *et al.* (2000:1) say that the full name of this disease is Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome and explains it thus:

- **A** stands for Acquired, meaning that the virus does not spread through casual or inadvertent contact, like influenza or chicken pox; A person has to act and expose him-/herself to the virus.
- **I** and **D** stand for Immuno-Deficiency. The virus attacks a person’s immune system and makes it less capable to fight infections. Thus, the immune system becomes deficient.
- **S** is for Syndrome. AIDS is not a single disease, but presents itself as a number of diseases that come about as the immune system fails – the reason why it is called a “syndrome.”

Stigma: Rachel Mash *et al.* (2009:23) describe stigma as: “originally, in classical Greece, ... refers to a mark branded on members of outcast groups, such as slaves ... stigma marks and then excludes

a person as being tainted or alien, of less value, blameworthy or to be feared as undesirably different.”

Praxis: Reflective involvement in this world (Hendriks 2004:22). It means following a spiral cycle of: action, reflection (plus prayer), adjustment, action, reflection etc.

Hermeneutics: Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. (1981:47) says that hermeneutics describes the general and special principles and rules that are useful in approaching the biblical text and may be regarded as theory that guides exegesis.

Empirical: Hendriks (2004:28) asserts that “empirical” originates in, or is based on, observation or experience, *empirical* data; relying on experience or observation alone, often without due regard for system and theory; capable of being verified or disproved by observation or experiment, i.e. *empirical* laws.

Inductive: An inductive approach moves from observation towards synthesizing what was observed into a model or theory. It is a working from the bottom up (Hendriks 2004:28).

Macro: According to Hendriks (2004:76), “macro” refers to relatively large quantities, or on a large [global] scale.

Meso: Hendriks (2004:77) defines it as the middle, intermediate size or type.

Micro: According to Hendriks (2004:79), this is a small or, specified, smallest level.

1.14 UNIT ANALYSIS/POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The researcher denotes this as complex by nature. The reason is that it attends to the plight of infected individuals, affected families, and the missional intervention process that seeks to redress past events.

As an ethnographic methodology employed in this descriptive study, the interviews are of assistance in this research process.

1.15 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this personal encounter, researchers should take cognizance of the maintenance of objectivity and integrity, in their conduct of scientific research (Mouton & Babbie 2001:240). Prior to the interview, ethical considerations regarding the subjects will be taken care of, while explaining them. Mouton & Babbie (2001:243) explains this as follows:

- Have the right to refuse to be interviewed.
- Have the right to refuse to answer telephonic or e-mail questionnaires.
- Have the right to refuse to answer any question.
- Should not be interviewed at mealtimes.
- Should not be interviewed at night.
- Should not be interviewed for long periods.

Furthermore, he points out that the subjects should be informed of their rights to anonymity and confidentiality to protect their privacy and dignity. In that case, chapter two elucidates the socio-economic problems in the macro, meso and micro contexts derived from interviews. Prior to this undertaking, the researcher had to obtain two documents for consent and approval from the University for Ethical Aspects for this scientific research.

1.16 OPERATIONALIZATION

This entails direct observations, a review of official documents and a questionnaire that determines the research problem that, in turn, determines how to choose the appropriate design and how to design its operationalization (Hendriks 2004:229). This operationalization process happens in different contexts, that is, in macro, meso and micro contexts, so Kwazakhele cannot be an isolated island.

1.17 CONCLUSION

The administrative structure of our Reformed Church is thus: a local congregation, presbytery, Synod and General Synod. We can also include the World Communion of Reformed Churches as an ecumenical body. In essence, all these structures affect

each other in one way or another. Therefore, the question of the Church's context is explained in depth in chapter two. For a missional congregation to have an effective ministry, a relational contact with the above-named contexts should be realized.

This will enable the congregations to attend to this pandemic in a more effective way, while being encouraged by the collective knowledge gathered in their community. Furthermore, this collective insight will enable the leaders to lead their specific congregation in a faithful response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic in a missional fashion - being well convinced of what the crossing of boundaries entails in a biblical sense. In essence, this chapter explains how Kwazakhele should respond to the situation regarding HIV/AIDS in the light of prevalent statistics in different contexts in their proximity, with the aim of instilling hope to the hopeless through Christian leadership. This includes the operation of support groups, home based care, capacity building, and networking with other relevant institutions or organizations that are already engaged in dealing with the HIV/AIDS pandemic, such as CABSA, ATTIC and Hope Worldwide.

The researcher in this chapter has attended to the research question by bringing to the fore tools that can be employed by the leadership of the congregation that would impart necessary knowledge to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic while also in a move towards becoming a Missional congregation. This is ideally, explains what a missional church entails, and how a missional congregation could respond in addressing the HIV/AIDS dilemma, while taking cognizance of the missional theology as well as acknowledging and making use of available and appropriate resources, programmes and strategies of the institutions mentioned in the next six chapters. In this sense, the researcher in chapter 2 intends to show HIV/AIDS has an impact on the global and local contexts.

As the hypotheses indicates, the researcher describes the influence of HIV/AIDS as well as the role that the global and local context play in it. The research also helps the leadership of the congregation to listen to the suffering people and understands something of a Missional calling. The researcher believes this will empower the leadership to take meaningful action. The statistics about local and global realities are, therefore, addressed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

2. HIV/AIDS AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE GLOBAL AND LOCAL CONTEXTS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Most people cannot imagine or understand at what scale HIV/AIDS has spread globally. Their limited knowledge hampers them in re-considering their attitude or behaviour regarding HIV/AIDS. As a result, they tend to think and act locally without a global consideration.

In this chapter, the researcher aims at indicating how HIV/AIDS has influenced the global contexts, that is, in the macro, meso and micro contexts. This will enable the leadership and Christians to take note of the synergy inherent in dealing with this pandemic. Furthermore, for referral purposes, it assists them to take cognizance of the network and resource structures that may already be involved. In essence this research provides the leadership of the congregation with necessary knowledge to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic while also in a move towards becoming a Missional congregation.

The researcher has learnt that the global ecumenical Church, has not been silent about this pandemic. Hendriks (2004:27) asserts: "*In every new situation, our faith seeks to comprehend what the living God requires of us.*" In this chapter, the researcher will attempt to bring to the fore and discuss statistical evidence regarding the impact of HIV/AIDS in the macro, meso and micro contexts. The hypothesis of this study states: If the research can describe the influence of HIV/AIDS, the role that the global and the local context plays in it and if the research can help the leadership of the congregation to listen to the suffering people and understand something of a Missional calling, then the leadership will be empowered to take meaningful action.

2.2 THE MACRO CONTEXT

A declaration of commitment by the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS, from 25 to 27 June 2001, pronounced that:

... the global HIV/AIDS epidemic, through its devastating scale and impact, constitutes a global emergency and one of the most formidable challenges to human life and dignity, as well as to the effective effects on all levels of society-national, community, family and individual

Africa, in particular Sub-Saharan Africa, is currently the worst affected region, where HIV/AIDS is considered a state of emergency which threatens development, social cohesion, political stability, food security and life expectancy and imposes a devastating economic burden, and that the dramatic situation on the continent needs urgent and exceptional national, regional and international action.

[\(http://www.aprodev.net/gender/files/gender-GOOD-GRG/planofAc.pdf\)](http://www.aprodev.net/gender/files/gender-GOOD-GRG/planofAc.pdf)

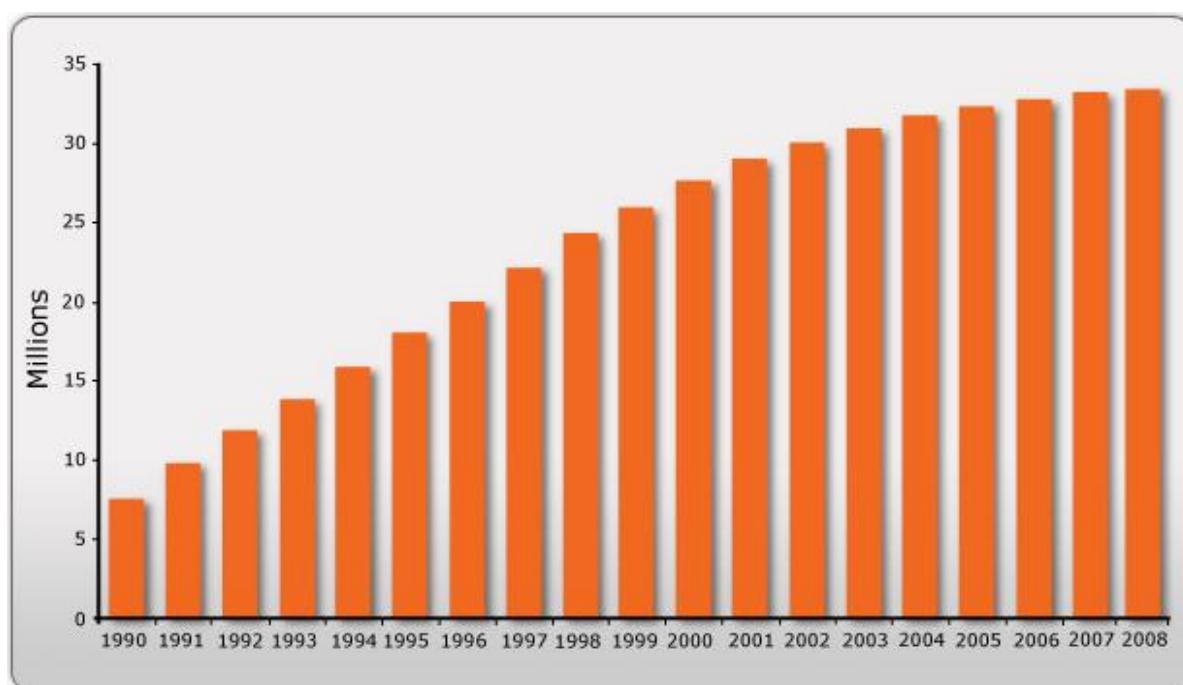
The AIDS epidemic update (2009.10) states: “*In 2009, the UNAIDS Secretariat and co-sponsors proposed and endorsed a set of specific outcomes that the Joint Programme will aim to work towards national responses to AIDS throughout the world.*” In countries, the recent declines in the HIV infection rate demonstrate that it is possible to reduce the sexual transmission of HIV. It further projects (2009:27) that approximately 2,9 million lives have already been saved because of access to antiretroviral therapy. South Africa is regarded as having the world’s largest population of people living with HIV, with approximately 5,7 million people infected with HIV (UNAIDS: 2009).

The latest statistics of the global HIV and AIDS were published by UNAIDS in November 2009, and refer to the end of 2008.

	Estimate	Range
People living with HIV/AIDS in 2008	33.4 million	31.1-35.8 million
Adults living with HIV/AIDS in 2008	31.3 million	29.2-33.7 million
Women living with HIV/AIDS in 2008	15.7 million	14.2-17.2 million
Children living with HIV/AIDS in 2008	2.1 million	1.2-2.9 million
People newly infected with HIV in 2008	2.7 million	2.4-3.0 million
Children newly infected with HIV in 2008	0.43 million	0.24-0.61 million
AIDS deaths in 2008	2.0 million	1.7-2.4 million
Child AIDS deaths in 2008	0.28 million	0.15-0.41 million

More than 25 million people have died of AIDS since 1981, and Africa has over 14 million AIDS orphans. In developing and transitional countries, 9.5 million people are in immediate need of life-saving AIDS drugs; of these, only 4 million (42%) receive the drugs.

Figure 3: The following graphic illustration reflects the global trends:



The number of people living with HIV has risen from around 8 million in 1990 to 33 million today, and is still growing. Around 67% of people living with HIV are in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Regional statistics for HIV & AIDS, end of 2008

Region	Adults & children living with HIV/AIDS	Adults & children newly infected	Adult prevalence*	Deaths of adults & children
Sub-Saharan Africa	22.4 million	1.9 million	5.2%	1.4 million
North Africa & Middle East	310,000	35,000	0.2%	20,000
South and South-East Asia	3.8 million	280,000	0.3%	270,000
East Asia	850,000	75,000	<0.1%	59,000
Oceania	59,000	3900	0.3%	2,000
Latin America	2.0 million	170,000	0.6%	77,000
Caribbean	240,000	20,000	1.0%	12,000
Eastern Europe & Central Asia	1.5 million	110,000	0.7%	87,000
North America	1.4 million	55,000	0.4%	25,000
Western & Central Europe	850,000	30,000	0.3%	13,000
Global Total	33.4 million	2.7 million	0.8%	2.0 million

During 2008, more than two and a half million adults and children became infected with HIV (the Human Immunodeficiency Virus), the virus that causes AIDS.

By the end of the year, an estimated 33.4 million people worldwide were living with HIV/AIDS. Children orphaned through AIDS are defined as people under 18 years of age who are alive and have lost one or both parents to AIDS. (Source: UNAIDS 2009, Nov.)

HIV/AIDS has had an effect on both the infected and affected communities in immensely negative ways. In some areas, they have hardly any activists on the ground to counter the indifference that they experience. Children have been psychologically challenged as they have no option but to endure their devastating negative feelings and attitudes. The infected individuals are also part of global communities and, as a result, their circumstances affect their homes and communities. In that respect, the researcher's dealings with the psychology of individuals living with HIV/AIDS is of crucial importance.

Alta van Dyk (2008:215) refers to the case study of the psycho-social experience of a person with AIDS who expressed his fears of losing his job, his love relationship, his home and all his friends. Van Dyk believes that financial concerns are the major issue for most people with AIDS. This, indeed, is relational and, as a result, has a bearing on communities as the following is exercised and experienced within the scope of communal contact (2008:216):

Fear: *HIV-positive people have many fears ... particularly of being isolated, stigmatized and rejected.*

Loss: *HIV-positive people often feel that they have lost everything that is important and beautiful to them. They experience loss of control, loss of independence, loss of their ambitions, their physical attractiveness, sexual relationships, status and respect in the community, financial stability and independence. But perhaps the most commonly experienced loss is the loss of confidence and self-worth caused by rejection by people who are important to them - people who were once friends but now reject them.*

Grief: *They grieve for their friends who die from AIDS, and they grieve with, and for, their loved ones - those who must stay behind and try to cope with life without them.*

Guilt: *Guilt and self-reproach for having contracted HIV and for having also possibly infected others are frequently expressed by HIV-positive individuals. Having to tell family members and friends that one is HIV positive often means that one has to tell them for the first time about one's sexual preferences or sexual behavior.*

Denial: *Most HIV-positive people go through a phase of denial. Denial is an important and protective defence mechanism because it temporarily reduces emotional stress. Clients should be allowed to cling to denial if they are not yet ready to accept their diagnosis, because denial often gives them a breathing space in which to rest and gather their strength.*

Anger: *HIV-positive people are often very angry with themselves and others and this anger is sometimes directed at those closest to them. They are often also angry with those who infected them and with society's reaction of hostility and indifference.*

Anxiety: *The chronic uncertainty associated with the progress of HIV infection often aggravates feelings of anxiety because of the risk of infecting the loved ones with HIV; social, occupational, domestic and sexual hostility and rejection; abandonment, isolation, and physical pain; fear of dying in pain or without dignity; inability to alter circumstances and consequences of HIV infection.*

Low self-esteem: *The self-esteem of HIV-positive people is often severely threatened. Rejection by colleagues, friends and loved ones can cause loss of confidence and loss of one's sense of social identity, leading to feelings of reduced self-worth. The inability to continue to participate in social, sexual and loving relationships also diminishes the client's self-esteem.*

Depression: *People with HIV/AIDS often experience depression because they feel that they have lost so much in life and that they themselves are to blame for it. The following factors all serve to increase depression: the absence of a cure and the resulting feeling of powerlessness; knowing others who have died of Aids; loss of personal control over their lives; self-blame and feelings of guilt.*

Suicidal behaviour or thinking: *Inwardly directed anger may manifest as self-blame, self-destructive behavior or suicidal impulses of intention. Suicide may be construed as a way of avoiding pain and discomfort, of lessening the shame and grief of loved ones, and of trying to obtain a measure of control over one's illness.*

Obsessive condition and hypochondria: *Some HIV-positive individuals become so preoccupied with their health that even the smallest physical changes or sensations can cause obsessive behavior or hypochondria. This may be temporary and limited to the time immediately after diagnosis, or it may persist in people who find it difficult to adjust to or accept the disease.*

As the researcher has already mentioned, these above-mentioned tendencies affect global communities because no one is an island. Whatever an individual does, affects those nearer to him/her, the household, the immediate community or society, and the global world or communities at large. These initiatives enable the Christian community to reach out to each other in open, honest discussions with the sole aim of being the Triune God's witnessing and confessing community.

The above-mentioned situation has necessitated ecumenical bodies for the Church, such as the World Council of Churches, to intervene in this global plight. These initiatives enable the Christian community to reach out to each other in open, honest discussions with the sole aim of being the Triune God's witnessing and confessing community. The prayer in St John 17:21, which reads, "...that all of them may be one" will be realized in the life of the confessing Church at large. Studies have shown that people suffer with fear that their HIV status will be known, due to stigmatization. This also applies in a situation where antiretroviral treatment is available for pregnant women, who often also are afraid of stigmatization. The pandemic and this situation will deteriorate until the question of stigma and discrimination of people suffering from HIV/AIDS is addressed.

Furthermore, prejudice and fear will afford them no opportunity to seek proper medical care. Moral support and acceptance of people living with the virus is essential for its containment. In that vein, Hendriks (2004:32) quotes Stark who asserts:

We believe that congregations can make a difference in Africa's harsh realities. We believe that the love and care that are typical of faith communities can be a sign of God's presence and his Kingdom. As such, we believe that our worst problem, AIDS, can also be our greatest opportunity for, and challenge to, evangelism and mission.

The above confessional statement projects an act of compassion that signifies the embodiment of Jesus Christ in the world. It reveals the Triune God who reaches out to the sick, the blind and those caught in the fatal grip of the HIV virus (Hendriks 2004:33).

Hendriks (2004:34) clearly elucidates the methodology of doing theology in an African context that, in essence, is a positive and practical response to this calamity. His relevant definition of doing theology is the following:

- Theology is about the discernment that takes place in faith communities
- That leads to their active involvement in Church and society
- This being their reaction to the presence of a Triune, missional God
- Who speaks to us through Scripture and tradition
- In our context
- And who beckons to us from the future.

Having defined the methodology of doing theology, Hendriks further explains that this undertaking takes place in, and through, the faith community's basic ministries. These ministries can encompass and be of service in propagating teachings, and combating HIV/AIDS. This means that each ministry or theological discipline can exercise its authority and expertise by dealing with this epidemic from its own perspective and its scope of operation, for example:

- Worship (leiturgia)
- Service (diakonia)
- Communion (koinonia)
- Witness (marturia)
- Preaching (kerugma)
- Teaching (didaskalia)
- Administration (kurbernesis)

- Pastoral care (paraklesis)
- Justice (dikaiosune)
- Ecumenism (oikonomeo).

Hendriks opines that the most important way of realizing God's mission, of doing theology, is through the public witness of Christians as they live and work in society - especially, in times of calamities, corruption, violence, abuse of women and children.

2.3 THE MESO CONTEXT: HIV/AIDS AND ITS INFLUENCE IN PORT ELIZABETH AND THE EASTERN CAPE

Map 1



Source: (http://www.restinations.co.za/picpreview.asp?p=-images/map_eastern_cape_lg.gif)

The scourge of HIV and AIDS has ravaged our South African society at an alarming rate. The statistics presented by various institutions indicate how every facet of our life is affected by this aberrant situation.

The workforce in the form of human resources in various industries, such as Mercedes Benz and Coca Cola in East London, and General Motors, Volkswagen

and Continental Tyres in Port Elizabeth, have a high rate of infection and, consequently, are the order of the day. However, by means of education and training, and the provision of condoms and health services, these companies anticipate that there will be a reduction of HIV infection. In the knowledge that their labour force is part of the society, they deal with the causes of the epidemic and take cognizance of their context through informative campaigns that also involves the communities in their environs.

2.4 THE INFLUENCE OF HIV/AIDS ON THE SOCIETY

It is a known fact that the deaths that result from this pandemic reduce labour forces while, simultaneously, they affect families directly, especially the parents of infected people. These rapid and abhorrent occurrences result in the establishment of orphanages. In that case, people or children, other than the parents of people living with AIDS, must manage households. An escalating rate of unemployment also aggravates this desperate situation, which becomes unbearable during this time of economic recession.

Each day things are becoming worse in the Eastern Cape as the rate of unemployment escalates. As a result, the poor are becoming poorer due to retrenchments and an escalating rate of unemployment. AIDS is causing havoc in the community of this region, while greed and self-centredness blinds people to the needs of the sick, the starving and the lonely. For an ever-increasing number of people living with AIDS, life has no meaning at all.

The laboratory testing done in accordance with the national standardized survey protocol also includes Port Elizabeth. The internal and external quality is thus accordingly being assured. The data analysis was conducted at both national and provincial levels. According to this survey, of the nine provinces, the Eastern Cape Province has the sixth highest provincial prevalence with 29.5% (National HIV and syphilis prevalence survey 2005:11).

In his book, *AIDS the challenge for South Africa*, Alan Whiteside (2000:49) says: "A Port Elizabeth hospital is sending AIDS babies home to make way for children with illnesses that can be cured. Every day at the hospital at least two babies are diagnosed with AIDS."

The Research update of Hope Worldwide Port Elizabeth, called Horizon, has this to say:

Hope Worldwide, who do extensive community work, sends patients to the Haven when the families cannot cope. St Francis Hospice has closed their in-patient care centre which has increased the demand for beds at The Haven. The fact that the professional nurses from Hospice are admitting patients for Hospice Care shows the need for an in-patient Centre to assist those in the communities who are unable to nurse their sick and dying relatives.

It is our privilege to help all of these people, each one is important, of significance and worthy of all our efforts, both nursing and fundraising since there are no other such facilities in this area, or indeed in the Eastern Cape.

The Eastern Cape HIV and AIDS statistics

Whole population	11%
Antenatal clinic estimates	29%
Adults (Ages 20-64).....	20%
People living with HIV	729, 000
New HIV infections with HIV (over a year).	81,000
AIDS deaths (over a year).....	44,000
Total people in need of ARV (mid year)... 	111,000

Prepared by Nathea Micolay, Metropolitan: Oct. 2008

Resource:(http://www.google.co.za/search?sourceid=navdient&aq=&i=UTF-8&rlz=IT4RNTN-cn_ZA327zA3_12.03.2010)

2.5 THE MICRO CONTEXT: HIV/AIDS AND ITS INFLUENCE AT KWAZAKHELE

The researcher heard of two young women in the KwaZakhele congregation who passed away, and who, prior to their deaths, had lost their babies two to five months after they had given birth. And, within four months they too passed away with symptoms related to HIV/AIDS. Their families are part of the families whom the researcher interviewed.

The engagement of the Church, specifically the Kwazakhele congregation, is a motivating factor for the researcher's theological engagement. As one of the South African townships, it remains a monument of shame due to the colonial development strategy for Africa, as well as the dehumanizing mechanism derived from the Apartheid era that left most of its inhabitants desperate; unemployment, with crime and diseases ravaging the society at an alarming rate.

In the new South African dispensation, the Church must be involved in addressing the HIV/AIDS pandemic. In that sense, Miroslav Wolf (1998:x) says that "No church without the reign of God ... no reign of God without the church" is the basis for the divine witness and intervention that is envisaged. In that vein, the Kwazakhele Christians regard it as their calling and responsibility to work hand in hand with other churches and institutions during this time of need - a precious time for witnessing and appreciating God's gift imparted to those with special gifts that enable them to deal with this health dilemma within, and beyond, our boundaries.

Karl Barth's (1949:145) descriptive meaning of the church has also triggered this congregation's ecumenical engagement, which, to him, has "the absence of self-righteous or self-satisfied isolation." We believe that, through our hope in Christ, we can help those infected and affected to realize the everlasting reign of the Triune God who, despite all odds, keeps his promise of divine love. In this respect, the Kwazakhele congregation concurs with Wolf's definition of the church, i.e., an "image of the Triune God, *imago Trinitas*." In essence, this reign of God implies social embodiment of the Gospel, which we are called to reflect and live. In missional terms, the church is called to carry on with what the Triune God started.

Wolf (1998:140) asserts that the cognitive identification of Christ should depict our personal identification with the Triune God through Christ, and services in which a missional congregation can be involved, i.e. in personal, ecclesial, societal, ecological and scientific spheres. As a congregation, they believe that the Triune God has called them to make a difference so as to enact the values of his Kingdom, which means that we must attend to this in a way that would ultimately contribute towards a change or alleviation of the health dilemma in and around the Kwazakhele congregation.

A metaphor, employed in Paul's Epistle to the first Corinthians (12:27) reads, "Now you are the body of Christ and each one of you is a part of it" - a nodal point for their encouragement. In this respect, Migliore (1998:191) says, "The community participates in One Lord, One Spirit, and One baptism and thus becomes one body." It can also be deduced that all members are mutually dependent on the congregation, the neighbouring community, and on one another, while their variety of gifts are for the enrichment and edification of the whole community.

That is why every member of the Kwazakhele congregation is encouraged to accept responsibility and be part of this initiative. In support of this fact, Dulles (1992:84) admonishes the Church to consider herself part of the total human family. As an illustration of this fact, we are urged to take care of all those in need within and beyond our boundaries.

The researcher regards this notion of caring as a pivotal point for witnessing what is central to the Gospel, which the Epistle of James (2:14-16) purports as: "What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs"

In order for this congregation to effect this caring ministry, it should start from within itself, as the old adage says, "charity begins at home." Furthermore, it is of crucial importance that this spiritual undertaking and process be taken into account. A partnership agreement exists between the Christian AIDS Bureau of Southern Africa (CABSA) and the Church Service Provider.

Volf (1998:140) relates the Kwazakhele congregation to the following theological basis on which it stands, hence the following activities. In essence, the diaconal services advocate home-based care projects by getting "Christian people directly involved in ministry and takes HIV/AIDS out of the closet" (News Letter of the Diaconal Ministry of the URCSA, 2003:7). Their task is to mobilize people of our region and keep them informed through the sub-committee of the diaconal services, called the Eastern Cape Commission for HIV and AIDS (ECCHAG).

ECCHAG's engagement with CABSA: This congregation is expected to provide literature and training and to encourage and instil hope into those members infected and affected by the HIV/AIDS virus, and who have a sense of hopelessness. As an organ of the Church, the ECCHAG is engaged in the caring ministry and, therefore, affirms what the African Church leaders decided in Kampala in 1994.

During this African historical event, and in the light of the HIV/AIDS scourge, it was declared that (MAP International.1996):

The Church is [God's] instrument to proclaim and promote life. AIDS is opposite of life. We believe that God has called us at this unique moment in history to be instruments of His hope and eternal life. His life and hope may yet be seen even when sickness consumes our bodies and virus saps the strength of those we love.

We plead for God's people to: engage in dialogue at all social and structural levels; [and] wrestle with the issues, so that we might understand and apply principles of truth in a way that will bring about appropriate change [which] must in a sense be seen as the fruit of the Spirit that witnesses the loving care of the Triune God.

St Paul commands the Christian believers to take care of one another. That is why, in Galatians 6:2, he says, "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you fulfil the law of Christ." As the members of one body, that is the congregation, we should encourage those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS by communicating and showing God's love to them.

The "giving-up-a-meal-a-week" campaign that the Church Leaders Forum and their ecumenical commission on poverty organized is, indeed, a source of encouragement to this congregation. And, this motivation is indicative of the solidarity with the poor and the vulnerable that is expected from everybody who regards him-/herself part of this congregation.

This congregation will receive the information that was received from Badisa, a Church organ dealing with diaconal service that facilitates a workshop on HIV/AIDS

and also encourages the congregation to contribute towards special trust funds, for example, an annual observation of the third Sunday of compassion in August.

The researcher is convinced that we cannot deal with the HIV/AIDS issue without referring to poverty and, in that respect, under the objectives of the Sunday of Compassion as observed nationally by members of the DRC family since 2005, the researcher lists as follows:

It is an opportunity:

- as a congregation, to listen to God's teaching about compassion;
- as a congregation, to listen to the pain and suffering of the poor;
- during the services, Bible study groups, youth groups, children's groups, to join in discussions and prayers for those who are living in poverty and suffering due to xenophobic attacks;
- to note, with compassion, the need in the community and the bodies and community organizations working locally;
- as a congregation and Church family, to come together in discussing the causes of poverty;
- as a congregation and Church family, to join hands in planning to become positively involved in fighting poverty;
- to call upon the members of the Church to become volunteers in a congregational action or community initiative striving to end poverty;
- to collect funds for local efforts of compassion.

This call on Compassion Sunday assists indirectly in supporting those affected and infected as their socio-economic situation may be addressed in some or other way. This relation between the AIDS pandemic and poverty cannot be denied, as poverty, in terms of resources and knowledge, affects people. Through worship services, members of the churches as well as societies are conscientised in the process.

The liturgy that is always prepared and distributed to the congregations helps us during these two annual special services.

Personal interaction through this theologically formulated formula heals the internal wounds that result from the HIV/AIDS scourge, as most members are affected

directly or indirectly and include some traditional cultural practices as well as some modern trends that affect the family. The following sentiments indicate the pain derived from this pandemic:

We are watchmen standing in the gap and stewards of the hope of God offered in Christ. The pain and alienation of AIDS compel us to show and offer the fullness and wholeness that is found in Him alone. In this, our time of weakness, may the rule of Christ's love brings healing to the nations (MAP International: 1996).

This declaration depicts the Triune God's love that Christians are called to show to those afflicted by HIV/AIDS. That is, to love by deeds (James 2:14; John 3:18; Matt. 25:34-40). And, the real need is to train, inform and encourage believers to behave with compassion and care as Jesus would, no matter what the origin of their sickness is. Furthermore, compassion should be central to this activity.

The HIV and AIDS group should assist more in distributing preaching material and other guidelines that the DRC family provides. This would help the participants in this undertaking to move freely beyond what may haunt them. This liturgical exercise inspires the victims through their participation to become survivors and ultimately be victors. Nevertheless, this is a process that needs a follow-up. As the researcher has already pointed out, everybody should be involved in this venture as we are all part of the same body, that is, the church.

The Diaconal Services Commission of our Regional Synod is aware that some congregations have projects that focus on HIV/AIDS, but do not share the information. This data would help to finance the existing project in places of need, while, on the other hand, the planting of personal or community food gardens is encouraged.

In the Eastern Cape, discussions have been held regarding the “farming-God’s-way” concept of food production. In support of this notion, HIV and AIDS Prevention, Care and Treatment (HIV/AIDS PCT) says, “Maintaining a healthy and nutritious diet is important for all people, but particularly for people living with HIV” (HIV/AIDS PCT, 2004:31).

In that vein, a supportive environment must be created to enable people living with HIV/AIDS to be more productive. This notion also motivates their friends and relatives to take care and give support by ensuring that those living with HIV/AIDS do take their medicine as prescribed every day, and make sure that they go for check-ups at the HIV service point or with their doctor (HIV/AIDS PCT 2004:42).

Furthermore, this motivates us to relate to each other and to cooperate with one another while working together in perfect harmony and in unison - each part exercising its own particular function in order to make the body work as one unified whole. This, in essence, means that everyone has a role to play, or function to fulfil, in the church (1Cor. 12:12-30). In short, the passive receivers and listeners are encouraged to take responsibility.

In this respect, the researcher is inspired to do research regarding his Church leaders' involvement in this pandemic. The information that he has acquired will inspire the leaders to do more, while being aware of their responsibility as a missional congregation. Despite this congregation's efforts that they have undertaken, they still experience the impact of this pandemic. This is due to the fact that some of those who passed away from AIDS, died without revealing their status even to their family members until the eleventh hour.

Secondly, the researcher's aim is to ascertain whether the leadership is doing their utmost to attend to this health dilemma effectively. In that vein, the researcher has been prompted to do research and interview the affected families. The following chapter deals with how people view this situation.

2.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has dealt with different contexts as the Kwazakhele congregation situation cannot be handled in isolation from other contexts, as expatiated in greater detail in chapter three. The cultural influence of Kwazakhele's identity also plays an important part as each congregation is called to make a difference in both their immediate community and at large.

In this thesis, the researcher has also consciously listed and explained the involvement of the numerous institutions and church organization that deal with HIV and AIDS in this chapter, with the intention of conveying their vision and how they

view this situation. As a result, some, such as the URCSA, have produced written statements in this respect. The purpose for doing this was explained by the hypothesis: If the research can describe the influence of HIV/AIDS, the role that the global and the local context plays in it and if the research can help the leadership of the congregation to listen to the suffering people and understand something of a Missional calling, then the leadership will be empowered to take meaningful action. These activities include their declarations that, in essence, depict the Triune's God's love that the Christians are called to show to those living with HIV/AIDS.

With regret, the researcher has also learnt that some of the congregations have not supplied or even read the URCSA statement on HIV/AIDS; therefore it is included in this thesis. And that stands to reason why this research describes the influence of HIV/AIDS as well as the role that the global and local context play in it. It helps the leadership of the congregation to listen to the suffering people as well as to understand something of a missional calling. Hopefully this will empower them to take meaningful action. Chapter 3 will thus deal about the macro and meso context of URCSA congregation, Kwazakhele regarding the spread of HIV/AIDS and the response thereof.

CHAPTER THREE

3. THE MACRO AND MESO CONTEXT OF THE URCSA CONGREGATION KWAZAKHELE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Although most people pretend to know about HIV/AIDS but, in reality are not aware of the actual extent and rapid spread at which AIDS is ravaging the social realm within various contexts. Furthermore, they know very little about the impact that it has caused. And, as we know, a little knowledge is a recipe for disaster. Therefore, AIDS education has to reach the greater part of the community, most of whom are to be informed about the impact it has already caused.

Therefore, it is evident that the HIV virus thrives so rapidly in these situations due to this lack of knowledge. And a greater evil is the fact that HIV positive people deliberately target educational institutions to lure unsuspecting young people into having sex with them. They intentionally pass on the virus!

Therefore, in this chapter, the researcher's intention is to indicate, in detail, the impact that this pandemic has caused in various contexts, so as to enable the leadership to respond effectively in dealing with HIV and AIDS. In relation to the research question and hypotheses, the research will provide the leadership with the necessary knowledge to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic while helping them to move towards becoming a Missional congregation. This research therefore, describes the influence of HIV/AIDS as well as the role that the global and local context play. It also helps the leadership to listen to the suffering people and hopefully empowers them to take meaningful action. The researcher also is of the opinion that this should be viewed and attended to in relation to chapter 1.

3.2 THE MACRO CONTEXT THAT HAS AN IMPACT ON THE CHURCH

According to Hendriks (2004:77), the "macro context" implies: "the global village of which we are all part." Furthermore, in the African realm, the unity across traditional borders has been realized through the establishment of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). According to Hendriks, these establishments bridge traditional

boundaries and areas of protection. That means that the Africans' market was encouraged to compete in the global arena while taking into consideration the electronic age of information and the influences of world events that influence local congregations on a daily basis.

Hendriks asserts that the inherent urge and drive in global democracy influence our local congregation's perspectives regarding the role and place of women and children in congregations and communities. This gives rise to human rights and individual freedom.

The scourge of HIV and AIDS, already alluded to, has ravaged our African society at an alarming rate. However, the global ecumenical church has not been silent about this pandemic. Rachel Mash *et al.* (2009:13) have this to say:

When HIV first began to be recognized as a problem in Africa, the response of the church was mixed. Generally the response initially was stigmatizing, AIDS was seen as the result of promiscuity, a sexual behaviour that is outside the accepted norm for the church of heterosexual, monogamous relationships. The taboo on sex and death removed any discussion on HIV/AIDS from the general discourse of the church and created a barrier between those living with the disease and the rest of the community.

3.2.1 How has the global ecumenical church reacted?

In response to the above question, (Hendriks 2004:27) says that, in every situation, our faith seeks to comprehend what the living God requires of us. In this chapter, the researcher will bring to the fore the magnitude of this calamity, as well as discern how the ecumenical church responds to this health dilemma. When the HIV/AIDS pandemic struck and touched the African context, in their book, *Our Church has AIDS*, Rachel Mash *et al.* (2009:13) say:

In more recent times, and especially in Africa, churches have responded to the challenge in many ways. This is seen in the increased care of HIV positive people and orphans that is supported by churches. The Catholic Church is estimated to be providing 25% of care worldwide through home based care, clinics and hospitals. In a study of South African NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations), of the 1582 entries in the national AIDS database, 162

identified themselves as faith based organizations. Many churches have made fine statements at the level of synods and conferences.

The World Council of Churches (WCC) has been involved in combating this pandemic since 1986. This ecumenical church body encourages the member churches in:

- sharing lessons learnt;
- developing policy guidelines;
- initiating and sustaining theological discussions on HIV;
- developing and applying strategies, methodologies and tools for education;
- mobilizing churches to action both internationally and regionally;
- mobilizing resources for churches for HIV related work;
- advocating on HIV issues in the international arena; and
- mapping and monitoring the churches' involvement around HIV.

The statement of the June 1986 WCC executive consultation contained herein, urge the church to be a healing community, expressing her solidarity with those affected by HIV by means of pastoral care, education for prevention of HIV/AIDS and social ministry:

- In the mysteries of life and death, we encounter God; this encounter calls forth trust, hope and awe rather than paralysis and immobilization. Those we cannot cure we can support and sustain in solidarity: "I was hungry..." (Matthew 25).
- The AIDS crises challenge us profoundly to be the church in deed and in truth; to be the church as a healing community. AIDS is heartbreaking and challenges the churches to break their own hearts, to repent of inactivity and of rigid moralisms. Since AIDS cuts across race, class, gender, age, sexual orientation and sexual expression, it challenges our fears and exclusions. The healing community itself will need to be healed by the forgiveness of Christ.

(<http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/mission/ehaia-html/executive-committee-1986-e.html>)

In the light of what has been said, Rachel Mash *et al.* (2009:14) assert that, in recent years, the churches have done much to establish practical programmes, but disregarded an act of repentance and confession of their initial failures. That left ground for the feeling of exclusion and judgmentalism toward those living with HIV

and AIDS, hence their reluctance to acknowledge their status in the church. In that sense, the Lutheran Church met in Nairobi in 2002 and acknowledged that: "Our Churches have not always been safe or welcoming places ... We repent of these sins." Furthermore, they pointed out that the church has a potential to make an immense and positive impact on the reduction of HIV transmission and care of those infected and affected for the following reasons:

- Christianity promotes a culture of respect for the sacredness of life.
- Our faith promotes respect and care for fellow human beings, especially those who suffer. This prompted extensive care for the infected and the orphans.
- A religious community promotes a strong sense of social cohesion amongst its members.
- Churches are located in all areas, including rural areas where often there are few other services.
- Members of churches meet regularly which enables education to take place.
- Christianity combines faith with a code of conduct (morality); this can lead to behaviour change.
- Christianity emphasizes the importance of the family and of faithful marriages.

In 2001, Church leaders of Africa and the international and African ecumenical church organizations developed a coordinated Plan of Action in response to this pandemic. At the WCC's Global Consultation on Ecumenical Responses to the Challenges of HIV/AIDS in Africa, at Nairobi Kenya, a Plan of Action was adopted (2001:5), which reads as follows:

The plan is part of the response, by these groups of partners, to the urgent challenge presented by the epidemic of HIV/AIDS: a challenge to which all religions have been struggling to respond, which is depopulating Africa faster than any calamity since the slave trade.

Since 2001, a number of churches and faith-based organizations committed themselves to break the silence around HIV and attend to the challenge of stigma and discrimination of infected and affected people. However, this does not mean that all people are automatically empowered with skills and knowledge to deal with HIV/AIDS. Some churches still struggle to understand the basic facts of HIV, as they

have had no training besides their inadequate theological training that is devoid of theoretical and practical components in HIV/AIDS care and management.

In 2002, the Ecumenical HIV/AIDS Initiative in Africa (EHAIA) was established as a joint venture of African Churches, Northern Churches, agencies and the WCC. This was cemented when the WCC and 30 related networks, like PLWHA and Communities Responding to the HIV/AIDS Epidemic (CORE) signed the Code at the end of October 2004. This undertaking confirmed their commitment to the norms contained in the Code.

The lessons derived from the partnership from the above initiatives have been:

- PLWHA need to be part of both the planning and governance of initiatives in HIV.
- Faith-based organizations have to be accountable not only to their own constituencies but also to governments, NGOs and international bodies. This means faith based organizations need to be more transparent in their workings and open to guidance from a broader spectrum of stakeholders.
- Specific measurable mechanisms, including for monitoring and evaluations, have to be in place to ensure that organizations are held accountable to the stated principles.

3.2.2 The HIV pandemic in the South African context

A book titled, *The church in an HIV+ world*, edited by Daniela Genrich (2004:5), asserts that: “South Africa is one of the countries worst hit by the HIV/AIDS epidemic; but it is by no means alone ... HIV/AIDS knows no boundaries and is devastating people in every country across the globe.”

The South Africa Council of Churches, an ecumenical church body, was vocal in opposing the Apartheid system and regarded combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic as its new challenge. The situation in South Africa is complex as a result the SACC is not alone in involved in combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic. For instance, the Anglican Church has been using their Fikelela AIDS Project in the environs of Cape Town. All over South Africa, in all nine provinces, there are HIV/AIDS coordinating offices, such as the Diakonia Council of Churches in Kwazulu-Natal and a desk dealing with HIV/AIDS in the Eastern Cape Council of Churches, based in East London. The Uniting Reformed Church made use of the Christian AIDS Bureau of

South Africa (CABSA) at the Huguenot College in Wellington, which the DRC in South Africa had initiated. Various churches have engaged this organization for the training of their members. The Anglican Church has an extensive training and support programme called *A step by step guide to HIV/AIDS planning in the Anglican Community* - a manual that provides clear and easy to follow steps in a strategic planning process of a church/local congregation.

Hendriks also refers to the disappearance of absolute values and norms and the fact that, in this postmodern era, traditional concepts of truth and revelation, as well as the authority of the Bible, are questioned. He also alludes to the growth of Pentecostalism and Independent Churches in the global arena that are no longer regarded as sects. This contributes to the decline of the Mainline Churches. He concludes by indicating that everything is constantly changing immensely.

3.2.3 Manuel Castells on global trends

Manuel Castells (1997) concurs with this notion of a changing world, therefore he says: "Whether on a global or local level it is one of the most fundamental changes in our world ... Business is done and the people are brought together through informational networks thus a terminology networks society." On pages 6 to 7, Castells further argues that all is constructed and based upon people's experience and the meaning they give to it, since they are the primary actors in their world. According to him, social actors develop a primary usage of the term "collective identity" that is self-sustaining across time and space. He also speaks of the project identity that develops out of this collective identity. Castells further asserts that this develops when societal actors build a new identity that defines their position in society and by doing so seek the transformation of the overall social structure. Alluding to globalization, Castells believes that globalizing has led to the dislocation of people's tradition and security that has forced people to negotiate their lives under a whole new set of influences.

In his view, the networking of society takes place in the capitalist global economy, as well as on the ground, where people are trying to establish networks of trust and meaning from where to voice their anger and frustration about what life is throwing at them. This search for meaning, for security, is sought in a defensive way leading to the formation of a resistance identity that derives from communal resistance. This

resistance identity may develop towards project identity, with the assistance of religion or ideology.

In Castells's perception, this above-mentioned situation brings the resulting social change to all that is related to religious fundamentalism and cultural identity. Furthermore, Castells (1997:12) believes that, with their human nature, people need God's consolation. He perceives religious fundamentalism essentially as follows:

Religious fundamentalism is not really seeking God – it seeks something else to construct identity in our network society. They say they are adopting the whole of the pure past, of the religion that they defend, but in actual fact they are selectively employing those features of religion that they need to construct the identity that is needed to keep their movements together, to pursue the ideals they have set for themselves as a form of resistance identity reacting against the power and influence of globalization.

However, Castells (1997:13) defines it as "The construction of collective identity under the identification of individual behavior and society's institutions to the norms derived from God's law, interpreted by a definite authority that intermediates between God and humanity."

Castells's analysis of religious fundamentalism leads him to believe that the construction of contemporary Islamic is a reaction against unreachable modernization, evil consequences of globalization, and the collapse of post-colonial national projects, such as the Shah of Iran.

Castells elucidates more about these forces for change, by referring to the local communities as "urban movements that are developing defensive identities and an identity of retrenchment of the known against the unpredictability of the unknown and uncontrollable."

Having explained the power of change, he points out the connection between science and technology that is a basic means of economy and society. He also indicates the existence of a conflicting power between the space of flows and the space of place. He explains these movements as follows:

Space of flows: Is characteristics of the new social structure of the network society where power, wealth and information metaphorically flow together and reconstruct reality from a virtual basis.

Space of place: Acts locally and physically by being involved on the ground, literally ... It favours grassroots democracy as a political model to take care that things go right in my back yard.

Furthermore, he points out that, for us to consolidate power and effectively attend to globalization issues, super-units must be formed, such as the following:

The European Union: This entity was created to put Europe on a more competitive par with the USA and Japan.

The World Trade Organization: This was established to make free trade possible and to regulate it.

The G7: are countries that regard themselves as the supervisors of the global economy.

The IMF and World Bank: Their function is to discipline financial markets and currencies.

These movements lead to changes in identity (a new society) while, at the same time, contrasting themselves from the worldview of power (*macht*).

Castells reiterates and refers to resistance identities that emerge, resulting from fundamentalist religion, proactive social movements, such as women's movements, sexual liberation movements, and environmental movements. He concludes by asserting that social movements and prophets are symbol mobilizers and that their words and deeds echo hope, and mirror the situation and feelings of the multitudes.

3.2.4 Thomas Friedman's views on globalization and influence of change

Thomas Friedman's (2007) examination of the influences that shape business and competition in a technology-fueled global environment is a call to action for governments, businesses and individuals who must stay ahead of these trends in order to remain competitive.

In a narrative, punctuated by case studies, interviews and sometimes surprising statistics, Friedman's (2007) message is clear: be prepared, because this phenomenon waits for no one. Without rhetoric or scare tactics, he paints a picture of a world moving faster than most can keep up.

As we explore America's place in the fast-evolving world economic platform, Friedman (2007) presents not only the problems we face, but preventative measures and possible solutions.

The world is flat (Friedman 2007) is an historical and geographical journey, with stories and anecdotes from the days of Columbus to a modern day Indian call centre; from the Great Depression to the home office of a Midwestern USA housewife demonstrating the pervasiveness of the world-flattening trend. Spanning a broad range of industries, cultures and schools of thought, the real-world examples presented as evidence of his theory are undeniable.

From teleconferencing to podcasts and manufacturing to restaurant order-taking, *The world is flat* leaves no stone unturned in a quest for answers to a problem that most cannot even define. Friedman's (2007) dissection of globalization is a valiant attempt at explaining and understanding the forces driving the flattening of the world, though he admits that the very nature of the beast prevents one from having all the answers. This candour is in keeping with the theme of the entire book, in that we must learn how to learn, teach ourselves to stay curious and innovative, if we are to excel in a global economy.

As he moves towards the end of this presentation of his theory, Friedman (2007) warns of the forces that could seriously harm or slow the flattening of the world, particularly the threat posed by terrorist networks such as Al-Qaeda. His perspective is refreshing in a media, driven largely by scare tactics and fear mongering, as he encourages a realistic and objective approach to this threat.

As people become more able to collaborate, compete and share with others of different cultures, religions, educational backgrounds and languages, *The world is flat* (Friedman 2007) is a necessary reality check to bring these factors into perspective and offer, if not answers to every problem, the drive to uncover working solutions.

3.3 THE MESO CONTEXT: THE EASTERN CAPE AND PORT ELIZABETH

3.3.1 Economic policies of the local government

The researcher has learnt that the socio-economic climate in the Eastern Cape is complex due to its geographical structure and its multi-ethnicity. This situation affects the delivery of services by the local government as the economic policies are not conducive to the diverse local contexts. The case in point is: the villages in the remote areas of the former Transkei, especially, in the eastern part could not be serviced as the roads are in an appalling state. This prevented any kind of development and some in remote places are in need of good economic capacity and good governance.

The graphic illustration by Hendriks (2004:78) vividly depicts the local government's economic policies as the vital component amongst various entities that have an influence on the church. The meso level of influence on the church could be explained by asking the following considerations that Hendriks put to the fore:

3.3.2 The agricultural means being supplied for the researcher's area

The researcher has learnt from experience and reliable sources that most of the parts of the Eastern Cape are rural. This stands to reason why its economic strength derives from commercial farmers. It is a known fact that, in the rural areas, large tracts of land have not been used for many years due to the past political situation. In 2009, the Minister for Rural Development, Gugile Nkwinti's announcement and financial backing of the small corporations (managed by groups), encouraged the communities of this region to initiate agrarian projects, such as vegetable gardening in order to curb the escalating unemployment rate and poverty.

Furthermore, the communities in cities, such as Port Elizabeth, are also encouraged to engage in agricultural development to alleviate poverty and to curb the increasing crime. As a result, parts of this metropolitan area, that is, Motherwell and Uitenhage, are engaged in gardening projects - proof of their development strategy.

This is also in response to the urge to alleviate poverty, as it relates to HIV/AIDS. The researcher has also learnt that Eastern Cape Diaconal services have already attended to this above-mentioned issue and that some congregations have been

financially assisted in this matter. This is done in the light of the decision taken at the General Synod of the URCSA (Act of Synod decision 91:2005), which stipulates the following:

- That synod calls on congregations to make their buildings available as one-stop health centres where professionals and volunteers can provide a variety of services, especially in the fight against HIV/AIDS.
- That Synod calls on all Church structures to mobilize public opinion in support of campaigns, e.g. the “Make poverty history and millennium development goals.”
- That Synod requests the leadership to be actively involved in forums with government or all other bodies where the voice of the Church can be made public on issues including poverty.

What the researcher stated above indicates how the agricultural entity has influenced in our congregation and the Church in its meso context.

3.3.3 Political climate in the country and the region

The researcher has also learnt from personal experience and documented information that the political tide of the Eastern Cape has impacted heavily because of its multi-ethnicity, diverse geographical position, diverse political influence, and circumstances due to three governments that were the powers of the time (South Africa, Transkei and Ciskei). However, the prevailing democratization could not change the unjust polarization and inequality that the politicians had envisaged. As expected, implementation of the decisions undertaken for development was a fiasco as the reality became complex. In essence, the political will could not, and still cannot, produce a solution to the socio-economic ills in the Eastern Cape and Port Elizabeth without taking cognizance of a holistic approach.

Most importantly, the people of this region should understand democracy as a means that encourages each and every individual to take part in shaping the destiny of this region. They have to examine the mechanisms that ensure that democracy is not merely a theory, but is realized in practice, which influences community members to be actively involved in combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic with vigour and compassion.

3.3.4 The involvement of the political parties work in this community

During the discussion with the secretary to the counsellor at the local counsellor's chamber, it was clear from the perspective of the researcher that some of the incidents in this region are indicative of the lack, or absence of, political tolerance among political parties. She also indicated that people are, as a result of this situation uncooperative. She is, therefore, of the opinion that some of the people who are engaged in some social projects in these communities, one can assume that they have political agendas. The researcher had also gathered that few community members had observed that, most of the time, counsellors are passive, but when elections approaches they become actively involved in their community.

During this period, various political parties scramble amongst communities in order to gain political points, but do not care about the people's social plight. That is why people still struggle to make ends meet. Moreover, a venerable person then becomes a political instrument. The political parties are not involved in combating HIV/AIDS and this brings to the fore the question of their moral obligation. However, their greatest interest lies in the distribution of food parcels and the most powerful party helps people to receive grants. (A saying goes thus: It is good to teach a person how to fish) The researcher perceives their action as not having the combating of HIV/AIDS as a priority. It was also clear from the discussion that the local political structure don't even make use of the local NGOs as expected hence the following:

3.3.5 The involvement of the NGOs in this community.

In anticipation of his engagement and the task before him, the researcher has learnt that in the Eastern Cape and Port Elizabeth, there are various, and numerous, NGOs that offer training concerning HIVAIDS. Some organizations complement others because of their differing expertise, financial capacity, background and approach. The Red Cross Association of South Africa and Hope Worldwide are well-known organizations that have been involved in South Africa for decades.

As an ecumenical body, the Eastern Cape Council of Churches (ECCOC) with its offices based in East London has been engaged in training and awareness campaigns in this region for many years. The meaningful influence of the HIV/AIDS Provincial Council of the Eastern Cape (i.e. the regional government established in

2006, with Rev. Lulama Mthanjiswa Ntshingwa as its head) was appointed to oversee this government-supported structure with the sole aim of combating HIV/AIDS in this region. ATTIC has been actively involved in Port Elizabeth and its environs.

The Synodical Commission for Diaconal Services Eastern Cape has been making use of CABSA's services in congregations situated in this part of the region. Most of the Churches and congregations extend invitations to these organizations, especially, the ATTIC which always avails herself at any time when requested. Furthermore, the researcher had also eluded the question of unemployment and poverty in the light of the victims of micro loans and the corruption thereof.

3.3.6 Agencies and institutions that are involved in micro finance and loans

The researcher enquired about the agencies and institutions that are involved in micro finance and loans in this area. City life has its challenges hence the situation that people becomes victims of micro finance and loans institutions. People who are unprincipled and poor managers of their financial resources become victims of the micro finance and loan lenders, as they are charged exorbitant interests. The researcher and the secretary are also in agreement that it is worst when people make use of the unregistered loan institutions in the black communities, as unemployment and poverty is the order of the day. This has a bearing on the Church as most of these people are Church members.

In that regard, the Diaconal Services of the Eastern Cape decided to write a booklet on stewardship to inform them of their Christian responsibility concerning methods of making use of available resources. On every corner of our city and in every hundred square metres of our communities, there is what is called *matshonisa*, meaning one who leads a person to bankruptcy. These agencies, micro finance and loan institutions contribute negatively to families' livelihood and lower moral standards.

3.3.7 People's attitude towards agencies that assist with development

The researcher had also found that a negative attitude exists towards agencies that assist with development, but this differs from area to area. Factors, such as historical experience, cultural and traditional understanding of issues being discussed, are the reason for this.

The resistance of the aMampondo clan in the south-eastern coast, known as the Wild Coast, is a case in point whereby the community base their argument on cultural grounds. The situation in small villages is more complex. Not only foreigners from abroad are not welcome, but also black Africans who do not bear the same clan name of the affected area. These foreign agencies are always suspected of exploiting their natural and human resources. Furthermore, these agencies are compelled to employ local people and this discourages some development agencies that are engaged in special kinds of work that need a specially trained labour force.

This attitude proves how ethnicity plays a major role in tribal authorities/areas. However, as already indicated about the Eastern Cape's complexity and multi-ethnicity, these various ethnic groups act differently, since they are positioned differently. When this ethnicity is examined critically in the light of democracy, it is regarded as a source of discrimination that destroys basic principles of human rights entrenched in the democratic constitution of South Africa.

3.3.8 People's attitude towards agencies that deal with HIV/AIDS

The Red Cross believes that the awareness campaign has done enough to make people aware of the causes and implications of HIV/AIDS. During the past three years, various agencies and government departments have been involved in enlightening their staff members on HIV/AIIDS. The communities have benefited indirectly in this process as these staff members belong to these families.

On the contrary, there are unfortunate persons who do not have the full information about HIV/AIDS, and it stands to reason why they regard these agents as the cause of this pandemic. This perception derives from political ideology propagated as a result of De Kock's political saga and their beliefs in witchcraft. The researcher has learnt that some people believe that this virus has been manufactured through scientific means by those who had the means to do so, especially those who were regarded as privileged during the old South African political dispensation.

3.3.9 Relationships with other churches in the town/city

The researcher, having been involved in the ministers' fraternity is of the opinion that the local ministers' fraternity helps to facilitate cooperation amongst the churches on important relevant socio-economic issues affecting the communities.

As already mentioned, the Eastern Cape Council of Churches was spearheaded for political change in South Africa and in various regions. The URCSA, like other churches, was also part of emancipation for socio-political change and, in that sense and in a certain way, all local congregations in our region were involved and had relationships with other churches for the common cause. On the other hand, they were forced to prove to the communities that they were part of the social struggle for change, as they were branded as collaborators with the Afrikaner Church. Nevertheless, in an amazing way, the spirit of ecumenism cemented relationships amongst believers, abrogating denominationalism that is inherent to self-righteousness.

3.3.10 Functioning of the Town Council or committees

The researcher has observed that over the past decade the performance of the Town Council regarding HIV/AIDS has been dismal. Budget allocations have not come close to the huge amounts of money that are required to implement an HIV/AIDS programme in every ward of the metropole. As a result, the Town Council was incapacitated to deal effectively with HIV/AIDS. The irony is that the Eastern Cape government could not utilize the budget that the national treasury had allocated to them. The non-functioning and unsolicited attitude of the Town Council concerning HIV/AIDS needs urgent attention.

3.3.11 The conditions of local the hospital or clinic

The *E News* media in 2008 report revealed the pathetic state of the hospitals in the Eastern Cape, including those in Port Elizabeth. This situation impacts negatively on the present situation, as many citizens are in dire need of health services. The researcher will explain this fact in due course.

3.3.12 Missionaries in this area

The researcher is aware that the missionaries are no longer engaged in this region. This concept no longer bears the same connotation as in the past. Evangelization is no longer the primary motive, as there is no *terra incognita*, i.e. unknown places. The resident ministers have actively served in this vicinity since the change of the socio-political climate.

3.3.13 The political viewpoint of the chief, headman, ward councillor and mayor

The researcher had learnt from history that the political viewpoint of the chief has contributed immensely to the life of the church in the rural and tribal areas, as he/she is the highest authority by virtue of his/her position in the area. In his absence, the headman represents a chief. As the researcher indicated, a ward councillor and mayor's political viewpoint may have a bad influence if people cannot differentiate between positive and negative issues discussed in the communities. The researcher observed that the leader's passiveness in matters of social concern impact negatively on the community at large, for example the case of HIV/AIDS and all related thereto.

3.3.14 The pastor's involvement

The researcher had learnt that pastors occupy an important and crucial position in the life of the church and communities. The Reformed tradition regards them as the first among equals. This notion could be understood only from a doctrinal perspective, while their ecclesiastical position and role differs from denomination to denomination. Missional theology views the role of the pastors as a leader in the church. In essence, the pastor's responsibility is to help church members to make use of available instruments to reveal the Gospel's secrets. This also relates to how they should deal with the HIV/AIDS issue. The pastor's involvement and responsibility is not to spoon-feed but facilitate and encourage members' involvement in seeking theological solutions to their problems.

3.4 CONCLUSION

HIV/AIDS has had an enormous impact on the Church's global context and this is evident in the ecumenical sphere of the Church's operation. However, it is encouraging to note that the Church was not silent about this pandemic. Consultations were the order of the day, hence the prevalent reduction of HIV transmission and care of those infected and affected.

In this thesis, the researcher lists various agents and NGOs that have been involved in the process of effecting fundamental change and in transformation of the social structure by influencing people in the regional and local levels. Through workshops, they are assisted to negotiate their lives from the new set of influences derived from

super-units, such as the EU, WTO and G7 countries that are capable of permeating all structures of human existence.

The researcher intends to ensure that this congregation will not be alone in dealing with this scourge, as networking within the scope of different contexts will be affected in due course of this study period and the implementation of its recommendations. Furthermore, strategies in the agricultural sector must also be dealt with, as they impact on the social sphere. Therefore, an alleviation of poverty must be regarded as another solution to this plight, as a number of agencies or institutions are involved in micro finances and loans.

The researcher's goal is to motivate the leadership of Kwazakhele and assure them that they are not alone in this fight against HIV/AIDS. He aims to assist them to forge working relations with people who have expertise in this regard. By means of this research, the researcher wishes to bring home to the leadership that the time for spoon-feeding had long passed, with many resultant casualties. That is why he urges them to utilize the instruments that the researcher has provided in responding to this plight, while in the same vein, taking cognizance of the accurate methodologies employed. The research question was: How can this research provide the leadership of the congregation with the necessary knowledge to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic while in the process of addressing the pandemic move towards becoming a Missional congregation? This was further explained by the hypothesis:

If the research can describe the influence of HIV/AIDS, the role that the global and the local context plays in it and if the research can help the leadership of the congregation to listen to the suffering people and understand something of a Missional calling, then the leadership will be empowered to take meaningful action. The researcher believes that this has been attained by describing the macro en meso context and how it influences the local situation. The research will now turn towards the micro context and deal with the identity of Kwazakhele.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. THE MICRO CONTEXT: THE URCSA KWAZAKHELE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Kwazakhele, one of the oldest congregations in Port Elizabeth, was established in about 1958 as a result of the South African DRC's missionary zeal. This congregation is situated in the centre of the area that was zoned for Blacks during the old political dispensation of South African and, after New Brighton, it is the second area - the oldest and nearest to the city.

However, in chapter 3, the researcher intends to bring to the fore the statistics of Kwazakhele regarding HIV/AIDS, as no one is an island. He also intends to explain its unique identity in the light of its immediate context. The Kwazakhele situation regarding HIV/AIDS cannot be dealt with in isolation, as her neighbouring community and also global circumstances influence it. The local theological insights, as well as a congregation's identity and culture, also have an effect in dealing with HIV/AIDS. So, it stands to reason why the researcher must deal with these issues in this chapter. In reality, these matters play a pivotal role in this issue at hand. In this respect, Hendriks (2004:79) also mentions this.

The researcher will report his findings derived from the interviewees to the leadership of the Kwazakhele congregation and also indicate influences at micro-level. This chapter is of importance to the hypotheses because it will help the leadership to listen to the suffering people and hopefully empower them to take meaningful action. In the same vein, he will encourage them to respond honestly to the following questions with the aim of doing introspection. Therefore, an ethnographic research is employed to extricate information on how these members have described their spiritual life as a congregation. This undertaking of interviewing 24 members will assist the congregation to strategize and to employ a relevant methodology:

1. The present

- What do you see around you?
- How do you experience what is happening?
- Do you make sense of what is happening?

- What do you experience in the congregation?

2. The past

- What, in your opinion, are the causes of the problems that we are facing?
- Why did it happen?
- What did we do wrongly?
- What can we learn from the past?

3. The future

- How shall we get through this time?
- What must be addressed to change the future?
- Where do we want to end up?
- What do we need for the future?
- Do we have a strategy and plans to get there?

The above questions are asked as they are also relevant to the history of the Kwazakhele congregation as it has undergone gradual transformation over the years. However, this congregation has faced numerous challenges and has experienced hardships outside and within herself. In essence, the different circumstances have influenced and shaped the identity of this congregation in a remarkable way.

4.2 PROFILE OF THE CONGREGATION

This congregation resorts under the Reformed faith tradition and, in practice, under the Presbyterian governance. To understand the depth of this congregation, one must examine her background in the wider context of this regional operation. This congregation has a complex economic income, as there are professionals, such as teachers, nurses, lawyers, and those working in industries and factories, as well as unskilled labourers and pensioners.

As indicated, our Church was the result of the DRC's missionary zeal. In those days, missionaries actively evangelized the black and coloured communities adjacent to their localities. Their Church personnel, such as the ecclesiastical missionaries, medical doctors and professional nurses and even teachers, built and managed hospitals and educational institutions in the Transkei region. Although these members faced adverse geographical as well the socio-political situation of the time, they established hospitals, despite the current challenges, in the following areas:

Silimela, Rietvlei, Bambisana, Madwaleni, Zithulele and Thafalofefe, as well as Nompumelelo at Peddie in the former Ciskei region (Gerrit ter Haar 1999:171-75). The DRC was also involved in the establishment of educational institutions, such as the Arthur Tsengiwe Teachers' Training College at Cala and the Cicirha Teacher's College at Mthatha, adjacent to the Decoligny Theological Seminary of the URCSA (no longer operational). Their involvement contributed immensely to the improvement of people's lives and this notion was carried and known by all congregations of the then DRCA; therefore our characteristics are defined from this background.

Furthermore, the researcher also learnt that professors, such as David Bosch, Du Preez, Peter P Kamfer, Hendrik Pretorius and Phillip MacDonald, and ministers, such as Jeremiah Ngxoxo, Pieter van der Westhuizen and Lennox Thobile Buso, laid the foundation as they were involved in the theological education of the black isiXhosa African ministers in the Cape region. In a way, these institutions afforded opportunities to their theological students to do practical training at congregations in the Cape region, and Kwazakhele was no exception. The missionary history and the conservative stance of the Church Council members regarding the Church's doctrine and teachings were very prominent in the past and, consequently, have contributed to this congregation's growth.

The DRC's social involvement also contributed immensely in many ways, for example in the organization of bazaars and their engagement in Sunday school activities that captured parents' attention in this vicinity. Ironically, in 2004, the resistance against the Church's unification and transformation was initiated at the Kwazakhele congregation. This unfortunate resistance resulted in a Church schism and the present uncertainty. This conflict forced some members to become passive, as they could not resist these challenges.

However, on the contrary, these two Church schisms that took place after the Church unification process, kept the members well focused. That is why they are so sensitive when dealing with important matters regarding all constitutional matters related to unification and similar issues.

Hendriks (2004:42-43) indicates that, for corporate-sized congregations like Kwazakhele with educated people as members, it is important to remain informed

about people's needs and attitudes. In that respect, we have general meetings and encourage members to communicate through their Church Council members. We also use a suggestion box in order to generate a sound relationship and enhance a sense of belonging.

The information that the researcher received from the minute book and register shows that the Kwazakhele congregation is corporate-sized and has a scattered membership of about 360. The researcher has also been informed that some of its members live within the boundaries of other Uniting Reformed congregations, as boundaries have not been considered. Kwazakhele has a unique relationship with other URCSA congregations through an existing bond called *Ikhonkco lamabandla* in IsiXhosa, i.e. a unifying force among affected congregations after the unification process.

Our legal confrontation with the DRCA led to the formation of the *Ikhonkco* (bond), as they threatened to take over and occupy the Church buildings by force. When they tried the legal course, they were unsuccessful, as they had no legal grounds to apply. That is why we, the affected congregations, opted for co-operation within the scope of our religious contact.

Hendriks (2004:42) puts it thus: "We can handle complexity and diversity and shared values and commitment to keep people together." Furthermore, to such a situation, he relates the following: "Corporate-sized congregations create a sense of belonging, security and celebration in a larger group setting" (2004:42). Their combined Easter week-end services and a fund that was initiated for existing legal costs prove their commitment to each other.

Hendriks's (2004:43) following words are very encouraging: "This also helps one to realize that the worship services play an absolutely crucial role in the church, simply because worship has the potential to bring us into the presence of the living God from whom all forms of life flow."

Language: The majority of the membership speaks IsiXhosa as their first language, while the minority speaks Sesotho.

The researcher was informed that, in the past, translation during Church services was the order of the day and, due to the compromise of Sesotho members, translation was stopped as they know both these languages. The congregation's interaction prior to various functions has provided information regarding the demographic situation in relation with the members' economic power.

The demographic analysis: Gender: men 25%; women 75%.

Ages:	0-15 = 9%
	16-31 = 11%
	32-48 = 40%
	49-64 = 28%
	65-75 = 11%
	76-90 = 1%

Economic class:

Low income/government grants.....	58%
Working class	41%
Middle class.....	1%

This demographic analysis of Kwazakhele indicates that most members are of a mature age while the steady growth of the youth shows an expected continuation of the congregation.

The ministers who have served the Kwazakhele congregation

In his investigation, the researcher was informed verbally and through available records and registers of the ministers who had served this congregation in the past years. The installation of ministers has been an important event in this Church and, in particular, in the Kwazakhele congregation. This was also viewed as a sign of growth and maturity since the ministers would serve them on a full-time basis, rather than visit them on a quarterly basis as relieving (*konsulent*) ministers.

The following people were installed and became active ministers in this congregation:

- Sentso: He was installed in 1960 as the first resident black minister and left this congregation at the end of 1964.
- Jaap Durand (Prof): He served from January 1965 to 1973, then moved to the Theological Faculty of the University of the Western Cape.
- Jonas: He was installed in 1974 and left the congregation in 1976.

- Bennie Fourie: He was installed in 1977 and was called to the Nyanga congregation in 1980.
- Wessel MJ Odendaal: He was called and installed in this congregation in 1980 and retired in 1999.
- Mziwoxolo Enoch Kibito: He was installed in February 2003 and left in June 2009, when he was called to the Mhlangeni (Rietvlei) congregation.

4.3 THE IDENTITY AND CULTURE OF THE CONGREGATION

Hendriks (2004:105) asserts, “Every person has an identity and lives in a culture ... identity is your unique personality that comprises a number of characteristics, which distinguish you from other people ... in very much the same way a congregation has an identity.” Furthermore, he adds that the relationship or covenant that exists between this group of people and the Triune God moulds the group in very specific ways and, as such, they develop a sub-culture within the wider culture in which they live. The congregational culture is mainly formed through the way leadership interprets Scripture and how the congregation responds to that interpretation.

It lets people, both inside and outside the congregation, respond by leaving or entering the boundaries of membership. Forming a congregational culture takes a long time and even longer to change and, to change a congregation, you need to change the culture. There are elements that constitute congregational culture, such as:

- The Christian paradigm - interpreting of Scripture
- Control systems
- Congregation
- Power structures
- Symbols
- Stories
- Rituals.

4.4 A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF CULTURE

This entails examining the culture objectively and analytically in the light of signs and symbols, especially in writing. In this process, various dimensions should be examined, such as the cultural mode of message transmission, language dynamics

and how sign systems are created, understood and described. In his book, *The sky is falling*, Alan J Roxburgh (2005:132), describes culture as comprised of three dimensions that are lenses: "We see, understand and evaluate the world outside ourselves, or distinguish our group from others."

In this sense, he presents the three dimensions of culture, as:

- the cognitive ideals (ideas)
- the affective (feelings)
- and the evaluative (values).

Roxburg further explains the afore-mentioned as follows: "Culture represent the core values, ideas, and experiences shaping our perception of the world and gives it meaning ... culture provides us with the symbols, rituals, and narratives that make sense of our lives."

Hendriks defines identity and culture thus:

- **Identity:** Describes the personality.
- **Culture:** Describes the world, values and ways of doing things that we created for ourselves.

Hendriks expatiates with the notion that believers are depicted in the Bible by means of metaphors that summarize both identity and culture, for example, the body of Christ, households, and people of God. According to him, an identity of a congregation can and should grow continuously in maturity to become and do what the missional God intended for believers in the time and place where they live. In reality, the identity and culture should depict what their Creator envisages for the Kingdom of God.

Hendriks also cautions congregations that are immersed in the world and its ways and, as a result, lose touch with the Lord and eventually die spiritually. The maturity to which Hendriks refers is only possible through the operation and intervention of the Holy Spirit and this process may take a generation or more. In this regard, the researcher regards the Kwazakhele congregation as a case in point, as its history proves.

4.5 WHY SHOULD THE IDENTITY AND CULTURE BE STUDIED?

Hendriks raises the reasons for studying identity and culture. He also regards this undertaking as of the utmost importance and value, as it tests whether the congregation still portrays what God intends it to be. In that vein, Hendriks (2004:106) advises a congregation to ask the following question constantly: "Who am I and what my purpose in life is?" According to Hendriks, this congregational analysis is a methodology that helps a researcher to analyse his world. Another reason that he lists is to inform new members, and especially the new clergy, about a congregation.

It is a known fact that all new members would like to understand their new congregation's way of worship and what is expected of them, while a new pastor would like to be familiar with its stories, idiom, ways and expectations, roles and personalities, insiders and outsiders. The researcher has personal experience regarding this fact as he was installed in a new congregation that is far more different in terms of its historical background, its geographical position, new ethnical groups and language, than isiMpondo, isiBhaca and isiZulu.

In addition, an identity analysis may assist a congregation and a church to attend to difficult theological issues. A case in point is the minority group who feels threatened and who, as a result, resort to clinging to their traditions and identity like, for example, the Afrikaner communities of South Africa, some Uniting Reformed Church minorities, and Chewa-speaking Malawians in Zimbabwe, to name but a few. As already mentioned, the Kwazakhele congregation experienced this situation prior to its schism. Hendriks adds that a congregation that is engaged in theology always asks: "Who are we? What is our purpose here?" Therefore, it is clear that an analysis of a congregation's identity and culture can lead to an in-depth process of discernment that eventually brings forth new life.

4.6 METHODS FOR STUDYING IDENTITY AND CULTURE

Hendriks believes that researchers should take time to discuss what identity and culture mean. Moreover, they should find words in their own vernacular that help to elucidate culture: words such as tradition, way of life, behaviour, culture imbedded in stories, proverbs and myths, the tribal or village history; while comparisons with

other congregations and inputs from outsiders or consultants may strengthen one's observations. He describes the congregation's identity and culture as static or always in flux - always in a process of being affirmed, or very slowly being adapted or even recreated. Hendriks (2004:107) further explains the different purposes of analysis in the following manner:

- **A contextual analysis:** for a better understanding of a congregation's place and role that it plays, or should play, in the light of its contextual situation.
- **An identity analysis:** to get to know a congregation and its culture.
- **A process analysis:** When one wants to know more about how a congregation communicates, about its relationships, and its decision-making procedures.

Process analysis may also be employed where there is conflict and tension between factions in a congregation. Hendriks adds that a congregational profile is derived from all its facts and figures, its resources and programmes. These include the following: questionnaires, a study of pictures, bulletins, agendas, minutes of meetings and literature. Hendriks regards the involvement in the investigation of congregational members as of crucial importance. Through their engagement, they learn about the congregation while, at the same time, taking ownership of the results and also being motivated to be involved in the outcome of the investigation, while taking into account that when the culture changes, this can have a major impact.

4.7 THE IDENTITY OF THE REFORMED TRADITION

As previously mentioned, the members of the URC Kwazakhele align themselves with the Reformed tradition with its pivotal creed sentiments that say that the Scripture is the Word of God (1Timothy 3:14,15). This Reformed notion of the Scriptures calls for true interpretation that is only possible with the help of the Holy Spirit. In that sense, it rejects tradition as a base for primary authority.

The Calvinistic ideal of predestination is at the forefront of their teachings. However, it is evident that Jews had their traditions of elders; but the Lord confuted these traditions, showing that their keeping hinders God's law (Matt. 14:8,9). The Reformed teachings entail the grace of the Lord in regard to calling, i.e. sanctification. Therefore, it is clear that self-righteousness has no place in the lives of those whom are called. This calls for humility and avoidance of exclusivism.

The Lord deals with us in our totality; that is why we are cautioned not to imitate others who do not worship in the way we do. We are also cautioned not to exaggerate and lose sight of what our Lord expects of us, that is, to worship in truthfulness.

Martin Luther said that faith is God's gift, not man's achievement. In that regard, we are expected to preach now and again with courage, knowing that God is involved through the operation of the Holy Spirit enabling our effort to bear fruit according to the divine will. Through our charismatic nature, the Lord guides and uses us for the benefit of his Kingdom.

Church history taught us that the Reformation abrogated and scrapped all church symbols, as they were aligned to Catholic teachings. As a result, the members were discouraged to wear necklaces with a crucifix, or have a statue of Mary. Such pictures, a cross depicting Mary, and a crucifixion were non-existent in the church buildings and homes of church members. Moreover, these symbols were aligned to the gods or idols, hence members were disciplined if they had these images in their possession. Keeping these symbols was regarded as a practice and form of heathenism.

4.8 LOCAL THEOLOGY THAT REFLECTS IDEAS AND CRITICAL ELEMENTS FROM TRADITION AND CRITICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE GOSPEL

The researcher has already indicated that many events and experiences have shaped this congregation's local theology. The very fact of its establishment through missionary endeavour has contributed immensely to the members' thinking and attitude. It is evident that the material support from the DRC had both positive and negative effects. Its positive effect derives from the fact that this meant that preaching and practice should go hand in hand. Unfortunately, the daughter Churches (as they were called) were not taught how to fish; as a result they become dependent on the mother Church, i.e. the DRC.

At that time, there was nothing sinister about this, because our members regarded themselves as non-growing children, i.e. people with no sense of self-sustenance. So, the researcher calls this an attitude of dependence, or a dependency syndrome.

In this regard, members have been struggling to understand what their thanksgiving entails. This could also be aligned to the teaching as regards thanksgiving (*dankoffer*) whereby the converts were encouraged to give as they wish, but not according to biblical imperatives. This proves that injustice that was done to the Old Testament message. Therefore, after many decades, this congregation, like other former DRCAs, has started reflecting seriously on this issue. This, indeed, is a sad state of affairs, as the Church's ministers, having undergone six years of theological training, unfortunately now happen to find themselves in this theological predicament.

However, Schreiter (1985:18) regards "theologians as an important resource, helping the community to clarify its own experience and to relate it to the experience of other communities past and present." These unfortunate historical circumstances have dictated the economic classes, as reflected in the demographic analyses. This reflects how and why people joined this Church and reminds the researcher of his ministry in the Transkei where he noticed that people were leaving the Church to go back to their previous churches.

This situation indicates vividly the actual fact that most of them who joined the DRC then, did so only as a means of finding employment, because this Church built and managed their hospitals, schools and tertiary institutions. This also applies to the fund-raising bazaars that also captured people's attention. This critical analysis of events shows how complex the situation was regarding mission and how people could take advantage of the Church, including the KwaZakhele congregation. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, the living God speaks and uses his people. That is why the KwaZakhele URCSA is open to reforms, in the form of ecumenical engagements and working with the community with regard to issues such as HIV/AIDS, unemployment and crime.

The fact that there were members (e.g. the youth brigade that was unknown prior to unification) who resisted unity or reforms was unfortunate. Their intention was to retain their identity derived from the Apartheid structure. By means of emancipation of reforms, this congregation has adopted a "theology of adoption," which means that they are prepared to learn and adopt some things that the former Mission Church did. Contrary to their practice in the past, they have now adopted the use of liturgical

symbols as part of their worship, for instance, the use of candles, the crucifix and the washing of feet during Holy Communion.

There are also instances when some members ask their ministers to bless and consecrate their newly acquired motor vehicles and homes. This practice was non-existent in the past as it was related to Roman Catholicism, which was regarded as taboo. This congregation then adapted to an indication of transformation regarding their identity, by no longer adhering to the conservative ideas that were not in favour of symbolism related to their worship and liturgy.

The researcher has observed that these members are willing to adapt to the new situation by means of their unification with the Afrikaans-speaking community. Their new identity affords them the opportunity to express their emotions in the Triune God's service while taking into cognizance their diversity in unity. Now, their quest for unity and co-operation with other denominations is gradually superseding the exclusivity that was central to their activities. As Schreiter (1985:102) puts it, this means that most members no longer regard unity as uniformity. Moreover, this unity in diversity is viewed as a sign of the Church's transformation that is biblically founded. Their local theology was inherent of traditional values that undermined women's capabilities but they are no longer tolerated. Those theological stereotypes have been transformed through the exchange of ideas and new theological rethinking. Now, women are as active as their male counterparts, although not in the extremes of feminist theology purported by Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza.

It is also a fact that there was a time when people had to worship without any movement of limbs and thus became emotionally passive. As time went by, this has changed due to African theology that promotes the African identity, therefore a charismatic dimension seems to take shape. The question of positive syncretism receives attention in this act of trying to contextualize the biblical message.

4.9 THE MEMBERS' VIEWS ON THE IDENTITY AND SPIRITUAL LIFE OF THEIR CONGREGATION

In this section of chapter 4, the researcher wishes to include the ethnographic research that he has conducted, to bring to the fore the members' insights on the congregation's identity. The researcher regards this undertaking of interviews as

well-intentioned, as it will yield light on the interviewees' understanding of their identity and therefore relate to their present circumstances.

The researcher views their perception and understanding as a gateway that will enable them to deal with this pandemic in unison, lest they perish without knowing from whom their identity is derived. For the researcher, it is worthwhile to take the trouble to interview 24 people with the aim "to provide an in-depth description of a group of people or community" (Mouton & Babbie 2001:148). The random sampling was done taking cognizance of the size of the membership of the congregation. Mouton asserted that "in considering the sample size, factors such as costs and desired level of accuracy will be taken into consideration" (Mouton: 2001:186).

Other people than the researcher could be physically involved in doing the interviews. All those who were capable of doing the task were engaged in work. This resulted in the researcher doing the interviews. An analytic induction shall also be employed so as arrived to a conclusive identity of the congregation. (Mouton: 2001:148). The following graphic illustration contains their views regarding the identity of their congregation in response to the researcher's eight questions.

4.10 ETHNOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Question 1. Describe the congregation to a new person.

1	F	I	4	A warm congregation with some challenges. A welcoming congregation with encouragement that is derived from members.
2	F	F	6	A congregation that has remnants of missionary influence, thus change is not easy.
3	F	O	3	A Reformed congregation, full of action with representation of different sexes, gender and age groups.
4	F	F	3	There is a chance for freedom of expression and a sense of ownership.
5	F	I	2	A congregation that is spiritually mature because there are auxiliary bodies, Bible studies and everybody is welcome to show her/his gift.
6	M	O	4	A caring congregation because, if you are ill or in bereavement, they visit you.
7	M	F	5	A congregation that could stand the test of time.
8	M	I	2	A congregation that listens to the Holy Spirit.
9	M	F	6	They are a strong force that works in harmony.
10	M	I	6	A congregation with gifts that are evident through members.
11	F	1	6	A striving congregation in all aspects of life.
12	F	F	6	A congregation with a majority of women who are actively involved for the well-being of the congregation.
13	F	O	5	A congregation led by caring leaders who are mostly unemployed members.
14	M	O	6	A financially struggling congregation because few are supportive with any contribution.
15	F	I	3	A congregation that practises <i>uBuntu</i> , hence a caring congregation.
16	F	I	4	A congregation full of activities especially in youth affairs. We help each other - especially those in need.
17	F	I	4	A moderate backward congregation with progress, and constituted of three types of people.
18	F	O	4	A congregation that attracts by means of its activities.
19	F	I	4	A congregation that reaches people of all ages and backgrounds.
20	M	F	3	A congregation that is composed of different characters with different ideas.
21	F	O	2	A congregation reachable to all people, regardless of their background.
22	M	I	3	A friendly and welcoming congregation.
23	M	I	2	A vibrant congregation! Full of action!
24	F	I	4	People with ideas based on biblical principles.

Question 2. How do members learn what it means to be a follower of Jesus?

1	F	I	4	People should have inner peace that forgives in case you stumble in relation to others.
2	F	F	6	They don't live up to Christian norms, although they are taught how to behave according to Christian principles.
3	F	I	3	Belief in faith with works, thus people are encouraged to bear fruits.
4	F	F	3	They teach other people to imitate Christ through the preaching of the Gospel.
5	F	I	2	Through Bible studies and Catechism one learns more about who Christ is.
6	M	O	4	They practise love as in the commandment: "Love your neighbour as you love yourself."
7	M	F	5	They learn to know what sacrifice means as a follower of Christ.
8	M	I	2	Through the preaching of the Word of God.
9	M	F	6	They are taught the Word of God through Catechism classes and are taught how to behave.
10	M	I	6	Through teaching and Catechism so that they know Christ better.
11	F	I	6	They are taught through Catechism classes, auxiliary organizations and preaching.
12	F	F	6	The Bible studies are of assistance in this regard.
13	F	O	5	The catechism class helps them to follow Christ accordingly.
14	M	O	6	Through auxiliary bodies and spiritual revivals.
15	F	I	3	Through catechism, they learn to know more about the Word of God.
16	F	I	4	Through Bible study to equip members to know more about Christ.
17	F	I	4	Bible study and open discussion that equip one to follow Christ.
18	F	O	4	Through the Word of God.
19	F	I	4	They are encouraged to attend Church services and to receive teachings about the Lord.
20	M	F	3	Through the Word of God that teaches them to follow and know Christ better.
21	F	O	2	You are taught the Word of God at the Catechism class.
22	M	I	3	By means of catechism and Bible study.
23	M	I	2	By means of Bible study.
24	F	I	4	Through the preaching of the Gospel and Bible study.

Question 3. Tell a story about how you sense God's presence and activity in this congregation

1	F	I	4	The congregation has survived the storms because we are the last ones to release a white missionary.
2	F	F	6	Despite the challenges, the present spiritual fruits are evident especially in events, functions and worship services.
3	F	I	3	In preparation of events, we pray as a congregation and most of the time we witness fruits that witness God's presence.
4	F	F	3	Our minister educates and preaches by examples of showing love and sacrifice.
5	F	I	2	Our prayers have proved God's intervention, because some sick people have been raised from their beds.
6	M	O	4	Their prayers gives you comfort in times of sorrow.
7	M	F	5	The congregation cares about the senior members and those who are encouraged to bring them to the attention of the Church.
8	M	I	2	They always come with new developments, new things - for instance, women are so active.
9	M	F	6	In times of bereavement, members show support in big numbers.
10	M	I	6	During the Apartheid era we could withstand the pressure through prayers as our Church was branded a collaborator.
11	F	I	6	Our visitation to the sick and the aged has shown God's presence, since our prayers mostly were answered by those arising from their beds.
12	F	F	6	Through prayers, those members who left the congregation during the transition are returning.
13	F	O	5	Most of the members witnessed to God's intervention as their prayers bear positive fruits.
14	M	O	6	Members could contribute materially in support of their fellow believers
15	F	I	3	Through a prayer group, members get to know and are eager to help each other.
16	F	I	4	Those who were unemployed found work through prayers.
17	F	I	4	When one is sick most of the times, one is cured through prayers.
18	F	O	4	Through the witness of its members.
19	F	I	4	Most activities indicate the presence of the Lord as things are done accordingly.
20	M	F	3	Members are inspired by the Holy Spirit. As a result, they work with efforts that witness of their eagerness.
21	F	O	2	Members show love and co-operation.
22	M	I	3	In our activities and when some of our members get sick.
23	M	I	2	How they are attending services.
24				Co-operation and unity amongst the members.

Question 4. Describe an experience of profound worship that you have had.

1	F	I	4	The message that we can survive despite storms that call for sharing of pains.
2	F	F	6	Bible study motivates me more. It is not a one-way communication, but revives.
3	F	I	3	During divine services when Holy Communion is served - that peace - shaking of hands.
4	F	F	3	Funeral service: How it is conducted especially during register call in erasing the name of the departed.
5	F	I	2	When I experience someone's conversion in the acceptance of God ... I became so touched/emotional.
6	M	O	4	During funerals they can sing and do anything that lessens your pain.
7	M	F	5	When an old man and a physically handicapped were cloaked during an emotional divine service.
8	M	I	2	One day when we were asked to close our eyes and you said some words and asked questions that were so appealing and touching.
9	M	F	6	I experience God's touch through music when our choir sings during our worship.
10	F	I	6	Teaching through preaching led me to know Christ. And I feel my Christ within myself and that is possible through Christ.
11	F	I	6	The whole sermon/preaching and inspiring music always touch me.
12	F	F	6	During the Holy communion institution: It becomes so appealing when one is called to do introspection.
13	F	O	5	Bible study appeals to me immensely as I regard it as a form of worship.
14	M	O	6	Relevant topics in any topical sermon or function, such as banquette, where people enjoy unity.
15	F	I		The new liturgy invites all the members to participate.
16		I		Praise and worship inspires me.
17	F	I		During prayer, I am always touched because I always do introspection during that period of intercession.
18	F	O		The sermon blesses me most of the time.
19	F	I	4	Most funerals are so arranged and done so appealingly and touch one's spirit.
20	M	F	3	The service at Easter where seven words of the cross are preached.
21	F	O	2	I like choir singing in our worship.
22	M	I	3	Songs in our hymn book are so motivating and inspiring.
23	M	I	2	Preaching and music.
24	F	I	4	The choir singing.

Question 5. Tell about how people fight in this congregation, about situations where you and others were involved in a problem at Church, and how it was handled

1	F	I	4	Sometimes people seek positions and destabilize the Church if not elected. I approach those involved.
2	F	F	6	People seem to have no inner peace and some resort to verbal abuse (can't hold their mouths!).
3	F	O	3	Verbal exchanges that are overtaken by reconciliation. I intervened when one member tried to force the cloaking of her daughter. Resolved peacefully after explanation of its importance.
4	F	O	3	Verbal abuse when people want to distort decisions in order to enforce their agendas.
5	F	I	2	Verbal abuse and actions. Resolved through reconciliation.
6	M	O	4	It is not a serious matter as far as I know, as I have not witnessed a fight.
7	M	F	5	Fighting does not become very serious, due to interventions. I just approach anybody, as in the past.
8	M	I	2	Some fight for positions and, as a result, one had to stay at home, because she was so disappointed. I did nothing.
9	M	F	6	Not a fight as such, but members always challenge and argue when there is an issue for discussion. During the time of the unification process, people had to express their differences of opinion.
10	M	I	6	They don't fight but argue when there is a misunderstanding or reprimand. In the initial stages of the new dispensation and transition for unity, we could resolve differences amicably.
11	F	I	6	Verbal clashes during the unification process were resolved by allowing those who were dissatisfied to leave the Church if they so wished.
12	F	F	6	When they do not agree with anything, they fight through disregarding instructions from those in charge. I don't remember being involved in any problem, because I don't wish to do so.
13	F	O	5	Some utter words that disturb. I could not be involved in any problem at the Church.
14	M	O	6	Some undermine others. As a result there are those who regard themselves as authorities. Resolved amicably through discussions.
15	F	I	3	Sometimes, some use preaching as an instrument for their fight - a situation where gossip played a role in dividing members but it was resolved.
16	F	I	4	Through preaching especially in the past before the schism. Not at all.
17	F	I	4	Through verbal and non-verbal communication. Not as yet involved in any problem.
18	F	O	4	No, there is no fight. I was not involved in any thing of that nature.
19	F	I	4	Through gossiping. Not at all.
20	M	F	3	Through their actions. During unification, I was involved with another brother, but it was resolved as we were called and reprimanded.
21	F	O	2	Through verbal signs. I was never involved.
22	M	I	3	Although I have not witnessed any fight, I presume that they fight by means of verbal expression. Not at all.
23	M	I	2	By verbal means. No! I have never been involved.
24				In auxiliary organizations, some members when not in favour of any development, they become passive. When other members were ignorant of the constitution, it was resolved.

Question 6. Tell about a memory that causes anxiety about the future of this congregation and about a memory that gives hope.

1	F	1	4	The question of tolerance. The active involvement and relationships boost the morale of the members.
2	F	1	6	The members, especially Church Council members, don't contribute financially according to the biblical command but there is a gradual change of mindset.
3	F	O	3	People tend to personalize the work of the Church. As a result, they hurt themselves. God sent a leader that always preaches hope.
4	F	F	3	People are not so committed to contributing according to biblical injunctions. Improvement of administration.
5	F	I	2	People with bad influences. With the exception of the youth, auxiliary organs are so involved.
6	M	O	4	The members are not committed like other denominations when it comes to thanksgiving.
7	M	F	5	Members don't spare time for Church activities. Gradually people are taking responsibilities seriously.
8	M	1	2	Members are very busy attending to Church affairs (during the week). Motivation from our leader is encouraging.
9	M	F	6	The economic situation has affected some families who happen to be in our ward. We are always motivated through preaching and Bible study.
10	M	I	6	I could sense that some members do not have the strong assurance to face challenges, and are easily swayed.
11	F	I	6	Often when there is a difference of opinion, people are not prepared to compromise. The co-operation during functions indicates a bright future.
12	F	F	6	Some do not attend the services regularly. Women are eager to work for the glory of God.
13	F	O	5	Some members are doing part-time work in the Church. The congregation has new activities that accommodate all.
14	M	O	6	The congregation can't grow in numbers. An improvement of the congregation's financial position.
15	F	I	3	Some members are no longer that committed. Although we are a small congregation, those attending play a major role for its livelihood.
16	F	I	2	The youth are not committed. Women's ministry is so involved and has many activities to that effect.
17	F	I	4	Sometimes, due to personal clashes divisions seem to be amongst members. Progress is indicated in terms of our financial and spiritual standard.
18	F	O	4	Members like to discuss and talk before the start of a service and do not do praise and worship. During the service, people just keep quiet and listen attentively.
19	F	I	4	Members are not committed and they do part-time in the Church. Women are more actively involved than other auxiliary organizations.
20	M	F	3	Those who don't take thanksgiving seriously disturb me. I am encouraged by the assurances that Christ gives us.
21	F	O	2	The members do not attend the services as expected. Those who are engaged are very actively involved and are committed.
22	M	I	3	When one has a problem or misfortune, it sometimes is not communicated properly .Our leader is supportive, indeed!
23	M	I	2	Attendance is not what it should be. The way this problem has been dealt with gives hope.
24	F	I	4	Some members tend to personalize Church matters. The few committed members have passion for the work of the Church.

Question 7. Tell how you and others feel about the changes in this congregation over the past 3 to 5 years.

1	F	I	4	Positive changes! Women's involvement and their election to the Church Council.
2	F	F	6	Immense changes! No clashes, not untrustworthy, as in the past.
3	F	O	3	Positive changes are evident in all activities.
4	F	F	3	Positive changes because there is order in everything, freedom of worship and the auxiliary bodies co-operate.
5	F	I	2	Positive changes because women are well represented and members are motivated to own the congregation.
6	M	O	4	Changes have resulted in one feeling at home.
7	M	F	5	In these years, everybody feels part of the congregation.
8	M	F	2	Many changes, because we celebrated Heritage Day for the first time, which reminds us of who we are.
9	M	F	6	Changes are acceptable since women and the youth have a say in the congregation.
10	M	I	6	It is satisfying! There are signs of development.
11	F	I	6	The fact that women are engaged, and the working relation with the Afrikaans speaking congregations.
12	F	F	6	There is development with regard to involvement of the youth. As a result, those who were not attended to, i.e. ages 12 to 16, are now called followers of Christ.
13	F	O	5	The women's auxiliary organ always has new developments.
14	M	O	6	A period that encourages one to take care of each other.
15	F	I	3	Members are serving through different commissions/committees.
16	F	I	4	During bereavement, people no longer are burdened since refreshments during the week of prayers have been discouraged and stopped.
17	F	I	4	We could withstand financial obligations and are able to work in unity.
18	F	O	4	People are given a chance to express themselves.
19	F	I	4	Progress is an indication of positive changes.
20	M	F	3	The congregation involves the congregants in any decisions.
21	F	O	2	Changes are good! As a result, the youth are encouraged to become involved in discussing relevant issues.
22	M	I	3	The senior members receive attention.
23	M	I	2	The Church Council includes youth members.
24	F	I	4	There are acceptable changes because of new developments.

Question 8. Tell about how you and others feel about the changes over the past 3 to 5 years in this community.

1	F	I	4	Favour that they get??? from our congregation as funerals and the HIV/AIDS project are accommodated.
2	F	F	6	The situation is no longer violent. This helps our congregation's security.
3	F	O	3	Interaction with the community helps us to grow together.
4	F	F	3	Co-operation because of our working relation.
5	F	I	2	There used to be violence, but now there is harmony.
6	M	O	4	Most of the time, there are meetings for development.
7	M	F	5	There are good working relationships with organizations and other denominations.
8	M	I	2	The community guards each other's property.
9	M	F	6	Has led to a non-racial community, as the children can attend any school of their choice.
10	M	I	6	There is now a sign of respect for the Church.
11	F	I	6	The community helps each other especially during HIV/AIDS deaths.
12	F	F	6	There is a soup kitchen that helps the poor and sick.
13	F	F	5	Children are encouraged to be involved in sport activities.
14	M	O	6	Our congregation is secured through community commitment.
15	F	I	3	Children are disrespectful as they do things in view of parents.
16	F	I	4	Crime has started again!!!
17	F	I	4	The community is respectful of our congregation.
18	F	O	4	The community is not what it used to be due to the political transformation.
19	F	I	4	Some community members are jealous of each other's progress and this result in demotivation.
20	M	F	3	We work harmoniously with the community in these times of democracy.
21	F	O	2	There is nothing I can see as a change in our community.
22	M	I	3	Our councillor is communicative.
23	M	I	2	Our congregation has a working relation with the community. As a result they make use of our Church hall for their meetings and funerals.
24	F	I	4	The municipal services have improved.

4.11 ANALYSIS OF THE INTERVIEWS

Question 1: Describe the congregation to a new person.

Most of the interviewees approached this question in the light of the congregation's activities and its experience, which give them an identity that witnesses and acts as a centripetal force for a missional church. One interviewee almost mentioned the *missio dei* notion when he referred to the Holy Spirit's work. According to them, the involvement of their congregation in the social life of the community is a distinct fixture that every community member in this vicinity could easily pinpoint. The well-known centripetal force that brought people to this congregation was the bazaar and the distribution of Christian literature, including Bibles.

This proves that this Church was more advantaged than other churches in the vicinity, due to the financial and material support they received from the DRC. The historical circumstances of the times, in essence, favoured this Church locally and in a wider context. The existing Church building structures are material evidence of that fact. A silly but truthful comment is that most members derive their identity from their building structures that are identified by a sharp, long, pointed and horn like and protruding portion out of the building structure called the porch with a long spire that ends with a cockerel on top of the weather-vane. It stands to reason why community members refer to these congregations as *entakeni* - it gives them their identity.

In all, the interviewees attached no theological connotation to the congregation's identity that is descriptive of it, as such, but they all tell about their organizational and worship activities. And, according to the researcher, these activities are entry points for discussions regarding the health dilemma in respect of HIV/AIDS. Some of their approaches related to the bazaar may need a re-visitation as they deal with the question of the destitute. This means that the orphans and vulnerable children due to this pandemic must be taken care of. However, in the process, the leadership of Kwazakhele will capture and understand this congregation's theological correct identity and eventually disseminated it through the workshops to the membership at large, instilling a missional urge related to what they experience in their social realm.

Question 2: How do members learn what it means to be a follower of Jesus?

In responses to this question, most interviewees mentioned how they are equipped after accepting the Lord, that is, the meaning of walking with God. Cathecism is regarded as the process that assists new converts to understand more of what is expected of them in relation to Christological principles. And, in that sense, Christian believers in this context are expected to behave in a Christ-like manner. Furthermore, this shows that people are judged in the light of biblical injunctions to ascertain whether they are, indeed, walking with God, hence the interviewees' responses revolving around belief and their related actions. However, if their belief truly derives from the *missio Dei*, their action towards their fellow Christian believers will depict the caring love of their Lord Jesus Christ.

The researcher opines that the following scriptural verse is their motivation: “Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers ... If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?”

This question of “walking with God” will be encapsulated in the activities of the Kwazakhele congregation’s leadership through their pastoral engagement, especially during their house visitations (*huisbesoek*). They must deny themselves for the sake of the Kingdom of God when witnessing about the divine Love of Jesus Christ and cross the human-made boundaries to reach the community that is in dire need of this love.

Walking with God will reveal to the community the God who cares for humanity. The leadership’s compassionate action, which encompasses the general revelation of God, is evangelization to the broken world that seeks healing and hope. This is possible through walking with God who directs believers in the course of life that is plagued with challenges.

Question 3: Tell a story about how you sense God’s presence and activity in this congregation.

The majority of the interviewees’ gave different explanations of all that they regard as signs of God’s intervention; they mentioned various signs. The presence of God in

the light of the congregation's historical circumstances and hardships that they had experienced, particularly the schism that originated in this congregation, became prevalent in the Church in this region. According to the interviewees, their survival derives from the presence of their living God who sustained them through all the odds.

The researcher regards this divine intervention as an opportunity that could be explained and seen as a source of inspiration in the context of HIV/AIDS as the congregants have already experienced God's intervention in their socio-political circumstances. Furthermore, their experiences should cement their faith in God who cares about the well-being of humanity. John (13:16) puts it thus: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." The researcher believes that this loving God will also inspire the leadership through the Word, the operation of the Holy Spirit, and the reading of this thesis, to do introspection and do what is expected of them regarding this scourge of HIV/AIDS.

It stands to reason that the whole congregation will experience the presence of the living God in their related total activity. Their programmes should be designed in a holistic manner as the issue of HIV/AIDS is interrelated to poverty, unemployment, morals and values. Their positive response to this missional challenge will materialize in the micro and macro context of glorifying the Lord who calls people to act on his behalf. In that regard, people experience this love through other compassionate people. Jesus vividly illustrates this notion when He says, "The King will reply, I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matt. 25:40).

Question 4: Describe an experience of profound worship that you have had

How most Christian believers explained God's direct intervention in their lives, as well as their interaction with the Divine, whom they regard as central to their worship activities, is of theological interest. The interviewees indicated that they had been touched by different Church worship activities, such as during Bible studies, singing during some funerals, during the institution of Holy Communion when people are

called to shake hands as a symbol of reconciliation, love and acceptance of each other.

The researcher has learnt that this congregation has adopted a new liturgy that enables the members to participate in the worship service. Moreover, the special worship services, e.g. the candle memorial and HIV/AIDS memorial, as explained intermittently, cement the fellowship and a sense of belonging. Therefore, the researcher believes that this attitude will help them to realize more about their given missional task in a profound manner, while taking cognizance of what “neighbour” means in the face of HIV/AIDS. The use of the symbols in their worship services will remind them of their missional calling at all times.

Question 5: Tell about the ways people fight in this congregation and about situations where you and other people were involved in a problem at Church and how it was handled

It is so disappointing to realize the extent at which verbal abuse is prevalent in this congregation’s life without the Church Council members being aware of it. But, it is commendable that members could contain and prevent it from spreading. This situation reflects human weakness and the sinfulness that seeks to destroy the very fibre that enhances harmonious relationships amongst fellow Christian believers.

The researcher views this situation as a phase that indicates an inclination towards maturity. It reveals that nobody accepts any view without testing its validity, hence the arguments prior to the final adoption. The history of two schisms in this congregation is proof of this fact. Nevertheless, this has led this congregation’s members towards independent thinking. And this, of course, harbours some discomfort for the leadership as well the ministers in charge. As a result of this attitude, they are notorious in their presbytery, as they refuse to accept any decision without a concrete explanation and adequate information of what it entails.

However, it is a fact that it is not pleasant for authorities’ decisions to be challenged. But, time changes and attitudes about demands change. Our country’s socio-political climate that has afforded education to the South Africans, who happen to be Church members, motivates this notion. That is why the researcher believes that these heated debates benefit the Church, although the minority that seeks cheap fame or

pursues their own selfish interest, sometimes abuse other members. That is why the Church experiences instability and prevalent court cases. The worst is that, when instability and ill-feeling persists, there is no time to think about family members who need caring hearts. Love will definitely not be central to their worship, but disciplinary meetings, bad-mouthing, caucuses and hate-groupings. In all this, no implementation of the congregation's missional vision will take place due to a lack of time, as the leadership will be occupied with disciplinary hearings.

Question 6: Tell about a memory that causes anxiety about this congregation's future. Relate a memory that gives hope

The majority of the interviewees expressed how sin spreads like a cancerous growth if it goes unchecked; for example, most members don't give offerings or thanksgiving according to biblical instruction. They don't even practice what other neighbouring congregations do in relation to thanksgiving. Thus, this congregation cannot perform its missional duty as expected. Thus, the destitute are not, as yet, cared for.

Nevertheless the researcher learnt that there is glimmer of light after the minister's series of sermons about love, hope, and all that relates to reconciliation and progress in the Church's life. As a result, a support group has been established to be instrumental in this congregation in all matters pertaining to HIV/AIDS. As regards this congregation's attitude about matters pertaining to this pandemic, the future seems to be bright, as, for this cause, members have committed themselves by initiating a special collection that aims to ignite hope in those overwhelmed by hopelessness.

The biblical message of James (2:14-17) has been accepted more than ever before, as it has become a practical measuring rod for this congregation's membership. It reads thus: "What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? ... Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well ..." but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?

The researcher comments that the Kwazakhele congregation is steadily but surely on its way to sustain itself like other congregations and, due to their commitment, they

have a resident minister who is solely dependent on them for his stipend. This gives hope as they are no longer dependent on the DRC and on the missionaries' services.

Question 7: Tell about how you and others feel about the changes in this congregation over the past 3 to 5 years

It is very encouraging to note that people are very emotional due to the positive changes that they have experienced and cherished within this period of time. The political situation that resulted in numerous changes has contributed to the change of attitude and approaches to ecclesiastical administration of the Church's affairs. The question of ordination and the installation of women to the ministry, the full participation of the youth in the worship services and administration of Church affairs was addressed and adopted within this period of time.

Initially, the senior members were not comfortable with these changes. Consequently, within the different presbyteries of the Regional Synod, numerous workshops were organized with the aim of convincing members on biblical grounds. This decision included womenfolk as stewards in the leadership or Church Councils. This was the basis called the DRCA by members of the splinter group who rejected the unification of the Church. And, it's a known fact that changes are challenges as people always want to keep the status quo.

The researcher observed that some senior members do not favour inclusivity as they feared for the positions that they had occupied for many years in the Church. Furthermore, as a product of this new dispensation, members of this congregation much appreciate the transparency and, as a result, their financial contributions have increased immensely. The researcher attributes this to a growing sense of ownership and fellowship amongst members who seek to instil a caring character in the lives of Christian believers. This is an attribute of a missional congregation that brings forth hope, courage and harmonious relationship amongst fellow-believers – the reason why all the members are in favour of the new changes which, they believe, raise a spirit of *ubuntu*, a communal responsibility towards their fellow-humans.

Question 8: Tell how you and others feel about the changes in this community over the past 3 to 5 years

Although they could not boldly explain the community changes in detail, the fact that Kwazakhele congregation has a working relation with the community stands to reason - there is a change and understanding of their calling. And, their perception as regards their involvement in the community could help as a catalyst in dealing with this scourge of HIV/AIDS. The researcher considers this congregation's history as of importance regarding this matter, as already explained in chapter three, which tells that this congregation has been involved in the service of the community by means of its bazaars, the distribution of Christian literature, and the evangelization campaigns (*veldtoge*).

During the initial stage of this research, interviewees could see minimal changes but, as time went by, development became the order of the day, due to the *Ngqura* development that encompasses industries, as well as the harbour for the export of vehicles manufactured in Uitenhage and Port Elizabeth. The clashes between the political parties led the interviewees to fail to recognize what the community had achieved, because they lost interest in the community's political matters, its meetings and in any issue that dealt with community projects. It was worse when it was revealed that many of the HIV/AIDS projects had collapsed in the Eastern Cape, due to the immense corruption that ravaged this region.

A working relationship between the community and this congregation was mutual, because the community could make use of the Church hall for free, while the community could assist in taking care of the whole building complex. Consequently, there has been no theft or burglaries during this period of time.

4.12 CONCLUSION

This chapter describes how this congregation's micro context has undergone changes that enabled the leadership to respond to current challenges that include HIV and AIDS. In this process of contextualization of the biblical message, a new theological rethinking should bring forth a Christian response to this calamity. Furthermore, this is an inclusive undertaking that calls for each and every confessing Christian member, regardless of sexual orientation, social or marital status, or his/her

position in the congregation. Nevertheless, congregational culture cannot be accepted as a matter of fact. The assumptions and beliefs forming the culture are not readily questioned.

Members always defend their culture because of their emotional investment in it. Should the culture change, their comfort zones will change, which will lead to resistance. This responds to the problem question of this thesis, as it calls every member to own and be involved in congregational affairs. This chapter also empowers members to know their identity. David Bosch (1991:83) provides a good explanation of this identity, from whence it derives and what it entails when he says, "Christians find their true identity when they are involved in mission, in communicating to others a new way of life, a new interpretation of reality and of God, and in committing themselves to the liberation and salvation of others."

The researcher has already alluded to what Hendriks (2004:106) says, i.e. that the identity test is whether the congregation still depicts what God intends it to be, hence the research is set to assist the leadership of the congregation to listen to the suffering people and to understand something of a Missional calling. It will also hopefully empower them to take meaningful action. In chapter 4, the researcher intended to examine the micro situation of Kwazakhele and, in the process, provide projections of the statistics and a graphic illustration of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the macro, meso, micro and global spheres. In the next chapter the voice of the people should be heard.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. LISTENING TO THE PEOPLE

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher intends to determine whether the leadership of Kwazakhele was doing enough to address the plight of its members regarding HIV and AIDS. In that respect, a qualitative study methodology was employed; this implies a descriptive as well as an explorative methodology. This chapter is of key importance to the research question: How can this research provide the leadership of the congregation with the necessary knowledge to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic while in the process of addressing the pandemic move towards becoming a Missional congregation? What did the people say?

5.2 THE INTERVIEWS

The interviewing method was a strategic pattern that was employed to expose or unravel HIV and AIDS as a missional challenge to the Church. Views derived from the interviews of six families, who were willing to share their personal experiences, would eventually determine whether the leadership was responsible enough to take care of the Kwazakhele membership. The interviewees were informed, in essence, of the purpose of the interview. Moreover, their personal experiences would clearly determine the leadership's attitude towards those infected and affected through HIV/AIDS, thus leading the congregation in a faithful response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

These interviews were also conducted in the interviewees' private homes, taking into account the fact that the interviews might have brought back unpleasant memories. De Vos (1998:318) advises that the "location should be free from outside distractions, background music or the hum of ventilation systems (which will make the tape recordings of discussions nearly impossible)."

Tape-recordings and notes were made in this process of interviews to enhance reliability and validity (De Vos 1998:326), while ethical considerations were practised, meaning that their consent and confidentiality in all respect were ensured. However,

each family's written permission determined the ethical consideration of this undertaking.

De Vos (1998:306) says, "The principle of confidentiality implies the dignity of interviewees should be respected. For obvious reasons it is difficult for interviewees to disclose personal and confidential information that could harm their reputation." Each family's written permission ensured the implementation of the ethical code for these interviews. As the interviewer was dealing with a critical and extremely sensitive issue, assurance regarding confidentiality was doubly assured to effect a freer and more secure interaction with the interviewees. Hendriks (2004:35) believes that "there is a real need for transformation as the church faces new challenges that require radical changes to the way we minister and witness." He adds: "The church in Africa was a missionary CHURCH that has become bogged down in a mental and ministry framework that has difficulty handling transformation and enculturation." This means that people at grass-roots level should determine the direction that is necessary to transform the congregation, hence the following interviews.

Question 1. Please tell me how you became aware of the HIV status of ?	
Family 1	The symptoms that were evident led me to advise him to go for an HIV test that revealed his positive status.
Family 2	First, she phoned me informing me that she was sick and the second time she confided to me, as her Aunt, that she was positive.
Family 3	When he arrived from Jo'burg we could see that he was sick as he had lost some weight. After a few weeks when it was obvious that he was sick and suffering, he eventually revealed to us, his family, that he was gay and HIV positive.
Family 4	She went to hospital for tests and when, after counselling, she was told that she was HIV positive, she later called her family together and informed them of her positive status.
Family 5	On a certain day, we had a lengthy discussion on HIV and AIDS symptoms. On conclusion of our discussion, she voiced her concern and she said that she suspected that she was positive as she had been feeling sick with symptoms related to HIV.
Family 6	She asked me to accompany her to the HV/AIDS testing centre (ATTIC) and was tested but, unfortunately, she said nothing to me then. But, on the same day after arriving at her flat, she became so sick that she had to be admitted to hospital, when she confided in me.
Question 2 What was his/her physical condition then?	
Family 1	He had lost weight and grew limp.
Family 2	There was nothing that could be observed in her body. She was just as fat as she used to be.
Family 3	By nature his physical appearance was slender and small, therefore we could not notice a change before he eventually told us.
Family 4	There was no change in her physical appearance. So, we were so taken aback when she informed us that she was HIV positive. We, as the family, could not believe her. So we asked her to undergo more and more tests but, after the third test, we became convinced.

Family 5	She had a swollen mouth and lips and also lost weight. She also mentioned that she was weak.
Family 6	She had lost weight.
Question 3	What was his/her spiritual condition then?
Family 1	Although he was not an active and full member of the Church, he had faith in God.
Family 2	Because of her health condition, she was mentally disturbed and could sometimes speak of things that are not related. She did not attend Church at all.
Family 3	He liked singing and discussing spiritual things. He could jokingly speak as if he understood the situation in the Church.
Family 4	She was not afraid to face death. She could even tell people of her status and repeatedly pronounced: "I am not scared of what is foreign in my body - a thing that I never invited in my body." She further said, "I have trust in God."
Family 5	She loved God. Because she had shown signs of spirituality, one of the nurses bought her a devotional prayer book and said: "I believe that is why she forgave her father who didn't support her while growing up."
Family 6	Oh! She couldn't accept her situation and was, therefore, emotionally distressed all the time!
Question 4	When did he/she pass away?
Family 1	He passed away three years after he was diagnosed positive. He struggled with his health condition which fluctuated now and then.
Family 2	She passed away after twelve months.
Family 3	He passed away a year after he informed us of his situation.
Family 4	She passed away 15 years after we became aware of her status.
Family 5	She survived for eight months after she was diagnosed.
Family 6	She passed on only seven months after she was diagnosed HIV positive.
Question 5	Did you approach the Church for help?
Family 1	No, because he was not actively involved in the Church. On the other hand, I assumed that the professional members of the Church who are conversant in the symptoms, and who at times visited us, would in a way intervene, without us explaining the situation.
Family 2	Nothing was said to the Church.
Family 3	We could only inform a deacon who was working with Red Cross. He could supply medication and some medical advice to this effect.
Family 4	We had approached a deacon. As a result, she was part of the support group.
Family 5	As she was not a full member yet, I didn't feel like telling the Church, but only told the minister's wife.
Family 6	During those days, the Church was quiet about HIV/AIDS.
Question 6	Were you at peace in communicating with council members?
Family 1	I was not at peace as such but regarded his status more as his business and I was also aware of confidentiality.
Family 2	Most of the members were aware.
Family 3	We informed our Church leader.

Family 4	I did inform some of the senior Church members as we do not have parents.
Family 5	I only communicated with one individual; therefore, as I was not afraid.
Family 6	I did not communicate at all, but as I indicated, the doors were not open for us to communicate about our situation regarding HIV/AIDS.
Question 7	What type of assistance would you say was most needed?
Family 1	It was counselling. He was very concerned about his own family.
Family 2	We needed moral support.
Family 3	We needed expertise as this gay issue was new to us all as a family. The fact that there were two youth suffering from AIDS under one roof with unemployed family members was unbearable.
Family 4	Support through prayer so that I don't become overloaded alone!
Family 5	Emotional strength because her own biological father neglected her.
Family 6	As I have said, there was nothing in place.
Question 8	How do you think the Church can assist in such cases?
Family 1	The Church could have done more through HIV/AIDS support groups and by attending to the plight of the individuals and families.
Family 2	During visitation to the infected, doing counselling and praying for them.
Family 3	The Church members should support the affected families by visitation (<i>huisbesoek</i>).
Family 4	I believe that most people who attend the Church services are already educated and equipped about HIV/AIDS, but those who distance themselves from the Church cannot receive any help. Unfortunately, instead of adhering to the health stipulations, they indulge in alcohol and drugs - that are contrary to one's well-being.
Family 5	The support group should be actively involved, e.g. soup kitchen-support systems should be in place. And they should accept that the virus exists.
Family 6	To provide moral support through the diaconal service organ that, I believe, is there to help the destitute and the vulnerable.

5.3 ANALYSIS OF THE INTERVIEWS

Question 1: Please tell me how you became aware of the HIV status of?

In these interviews, it was painfully evident that, in most cases, people found it difficult to reveal their HIV status to their family members from the very beginning, but their prevailing health circumstances eventually forced them to approach a confidant who happened to be a family member. This attitude may have been attributed to stigmatization that prevailed in our black community, which derives from a lack of education regarding the cause or transmission of HIV, as well as the absence of openness and lack of trust amongst the Church and community members.

Van Dyk (2008:136) says, “Eighty-four per cent of the participants said that they would disclose their HIV-positive status … while women’s fears were based in powerlessness, loss of security and the possibility of violence.” Having said this, it shows how family members found it difficult to disclose their status as well as face this health dilemma.

The propagation of myths regarding the spread of HIV had contributed immensely to this health dilemma, especially in the traditional villages of the Eastern Cape Province as most people in Port Elizabeth are from these areas. Thus, every opportunity had to be utilized to encourage an open conversation, both through workshop discussions and the congregation’s general meetings for discussion.

Question 2: What was his/her physical condition then?

Four of the six family members interviewed became aware of their family member’s positive status after they had been cautious but concerned about their change in physical appearance. They all spoke of weight loss. Van Dyk (2008:76) says that weight loss of 10% of their usual body weight happens at clinical stage three, when signs and symptoms are prevalent due to the growth of fungal infections and activation of old infections, such as TB and herpes over some of the body’s natural flora. At this stage, malaise, fatigue and lethargy become prominent (2008:54).

Question 3: What was his/her spiritual condition then?

The interviewed family members said and observed that all of their members infected with HIV/AIDS, in spite of their health dilemma, were conscious of their dependence on the divine and supernatural Being. Van Dyk (2008:320) asserts, “Spirituality is seen as a broader category within which religious beliefs may or may not function.” According to Van Dyk?, this kind of spirituality entails the following:

- A feeling of connectedness and belonging in the universe.
- A belief in some kind of power or spirit outside of oneself.
- The belief that life has a purpose and meaning and that a person can therefore search for ultimate and personal truths while experiencing transcendence and immanence.

- The conviction that a person can have an internalized relationship with the divine and, through this relationship, experience love and move towards a personal wholeness.

In these circumstances, the Church could have received an opportunity to exercise its calling and assist those living with HIV/AIDS to search for meaning and purpose of life, which Van Dyk (2008:320) regards as unique.

Question 4: When did he/she pass away?

Five of the six interviewees' family members had passed away within seven to nine months after their status was tested. In a certain way, this proves that the results were not accepted. Contrary to this, one member of an interviewed family lived for 23 years after she had been diagnosed positive with HIV.

As indicated in an interview, she joked with all whom she came across, especially those who knew about her HIV status. With pride and conviction, she said "I am not afraid of death as I have not invited this foreign virus that is within me because it has no authority over me." In essence, this attitude welcomes moral and resource support, which provides encouragement.

In this regard, Van Dyk 2008:291) asserts, "Positive living is an extremely powerful morale booster for an HIV-positive person. It contributes to a better quality of life and has a positive effect on a person's immune system." Victory, indeed, is what our brothers and sister must look forward to, therefore, Paul's encouragement should be central to their lives as he says:

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? ... Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?... No in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us (Romans 8:31-39).

In times of the scourge, this biblical periscope, as a source of encouragement, gave hope to those in desperation. The leadership of Kwazakhele should, therefore, have taken it as their sole responsibility to ignite hope through their intermingling with their membership by means of house visitation (*huisbesoek*), which is central to our Reformed traditional teachings.

Question 5: Did you approach the Church for help?

Although most interviewees could not speak openly about the question of stigma attached to HIV/AIDS, but also could not, simultaneously, take the initiative to inform the Church, but rather took it for granted that the Church member knew about his/her family member's health condition and, therefore, the Church should also have been aware of it. This, indeed, may be attributed to the question of communication, as well as the lack of confidence in the leadership placed in their wards. In reality, in these cases, no Church council member could in any way act on anything without the family's permission, as confidentiality would have been at stake.

Van Dyk (2008:319) also believes that "negative attitudes towards sexuality are the issues of stigmatization and stereotyping ... fears and unresolved complexes often override compassion and theological principles and bring out unexpected negative reactions."

This situation creates a barrier that manifests itself in times of need. In that regard, Van Dyk (2008:319) refers to the psychological and physical barrier that is evident between the community's non-infected and positive members. Furthermore, four of the six cases with which the researcher dealt were non-active Church members and this had a contributing effect on how they responded to this question. The interviewees were aware of some of the attitudes.

Steinberg (2008:140-141) expatiates this notion of stigmatization by referring to a situation whereby people at Nomvalo village at Lusikisiki district in the Eastern Cape were instructed not to touch the girl who had AIDS. They therefore used a blanket to hold her and she was also left alone in the hut. After she died they carried her body on her mattress so that they would not have to touch her body. They buried her with her mattress. Although this seems to be a question of not knowing how the transmission occurs it also indicates the reality of stigmatization.

Van Dyk (2008:319) expounded this fact by saying that other people consciously or unconsciously label HIV-positive people as "unbelievers" or "sinful individuals." As a result, they distance themselves from HIV-positive people. In most cases, members of the Church did not even communicate with people living with HIV, when they paid a visit to their homes, as was relayed to the Church leaders. Steinberg (2008:1)

quotes Edwin Cameron's book, *Witness to AIDS* asserting that people they choose to die, rather than face the stigma of AIDS and find treatment...not because the plague was stoppable, but because they were mortally ashamed.

These are theological issues that need to be addressed through leadership workshops. The researcher's aim was to provide the leadership of Kwazakhele with study resources that could equip them more profoundly, with the intention of filling up the gap that existed between the HIV-positive people and other members. Van Dyk (2008:326) says, "Many HIV-people avoid approaching their religious leaders for advice or consolation because they fear that they may be condemned rather than supported."

The researcher intended to provide the leadership of organizations with information about HIV related matters that, in due course, may have been of importance.

Question 6: Were you at peace in communicating with church council members?

It was striking to note that most of the interviewees pronounced that they were not afraid to approach the Church as such, but thought that Church members were quite aware of what had taken place regarding their family members (even if they had not informed them). This was a complex and critical response that needed in-depth consideration. It brought forth questions such as:

Were the doors for communication between the affected families and the leadership wide open enough?

- Did the affected families recognize the open doors?
- Had the leadership done enough to encourage the affected families to take cognizance of the open doors without any hesitation, but with the encouragement and conviction of unwavering moral support?

The researcher trusted that these questions would bring light to what may have been the reason behind the interviewees' response of passiveness. The aim of this study research was to facilitate and motivate the leadership to seek means that could encourage members to take the opportunity in both hands without any fear of

discrimination, insecurity, or otherwise. The biblical injunction regarding HIV/AIDS that will be available in this study research will assist them to attend to this problem.

Question 7: What type of assistance would you say was most needed?

All the interviewees were of the opinion that counselling and moral support of the families were mostly needed, especially in cases where the situation became complicated. For example, in one of the families there were two young members who were HIV positive, while one was gay.

This kind of situation needed a professional intervention as most of our community members were not at all conversant with this situation. In his book, *Hopeful compassion*, when he speaks of emotional support, André de la Porte (2003:13) says, “The counsellor can expect intense emotional behaviour, varying from outburst of anger to total despair ... counsellor must be present and available to focus on listening and sharing empathy.” He adds that denial, withdrawal, isolation and grieving that are part of this phase of grief can be assuaged by imparting the correct information.

Van Dyk (1999:230) says, “One of the values underlying counselling should be the desire to empower clients to take responsibility for themselves and to identify, develop and use resources that will be effective agents of change.” In a way, this process helps the affected families to take responsibility for themselves, while also taking cognizance of what this intervention entails. In this sense, referral may be essential.

In this vein, Van Dyk (1999:242) says: “It is sometimes necessary to refer clients to another professional for specialized help ... referral should be done with great sensitivity to the feelings of the client.”

Question 8: How do you think the Church can assist in such cases?

In essence, they believed that continuous intervention would be a catalyst that permeates all the avenues that could eventually address this health dilemma in a holistic fashion. They included negative attitudes toward the HIV/AIDS positive people through combating stigmatization, isolation, stereotypes and discrimination. Furthermore, hope should have been instilled in people’s minds, as it would have

given them courage to deal with stigma, dysfunctional relationships, systems and traditions that placed vulnerable person at risk. Human rights and social goals, such as education and empowerment of women's human rights that needed to be promoted, should have been synthetically considered. This, indeed, would have required the congregation to respond with competence to all the contemporary challenges regarding HIV and AIDS. However, through this continuous intervention, Christian members would have been agents of positive change. It also entailed the empowerment of leaders to be champions in their own wards (*wyke* or *inqila*).

This intervention was possible only through training, so as to enhance spiritual and practical support to the effected family members of the Kwazakhele congregation. In fact, information alone did not make one change one's behaviour; skills should have been implemented to effect such change?. They would also have considered making use of available mentoring programmes that aimed at building trust relationships between the leadership and the affected families, as well as strengthening Christian responses to the AIDS pandemic.

5.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the interviewees' views or concerns will eventually assist the leadership of Kwazakhele to revisit their approach in dealing with this pandemic, while taking into consideration the missional identity of the Church that they serve in dealing with the HIV and AIDS pandemic.

In this process, their missional hermeneutical approach should assist them in discerning the Word of the Triune God in a most practical way - witnessing and crossing manmade boundaries in macro, meso and micro contexts. In essence, this will help the leadership of the Kwazakhele congregation to respond appropriately to the pain of its membership and guide them to rise above the HIV/AIDS pandemic and truly experience the love of their living Lord Jesus Christ.

The interviewees' input in this research undertaking will benefit not only the leadership, but also the congregation at large, as it challenges each member's attitude and behaviour regarding HIV/AIDS. Thus, all members will be engaged in this undertaking in a missional and communal fashion, while taking into consideration the *ubuntu* concept. Moreover, they will look retrospectively, and weigh their

responses in the light of the new information that they have obtained in the process of the interviews and through the resource material provided in this thesis. The researcher believes that the content of this thesis will assist the leadership with the necessary knowledge to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic while it also will assist them towards becoming a Missional congregation. To effect this notion, the research described the influence of HIV/AIDS, the role that the global and local context play in it and helped them to listen to the suffering people. Hopefully this will empower them to take meaningful action. The next chapter will deal with the missional response of the Kwazakhele congregation to HIVAIDS.

CHAPTER SIX

6. THE KWAZAKHELE CHURCH'S MISSIONAL RESPONSE TO THE HIV/AIDS PANDEMIC

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher's goal is to explain the KwaZakhele Church's missional response to HIV/AIDS. In this process, the leadership plays a vital part due to their ecclesiastical responsibility and divine calling. The research problem will be addressed as the destitute and vulnerable plights regarding HIV/AIDS will receive attention from a practical theological perspective while employing an inductive methodology and taking into consideration the following sentiments.

In the past, many questions have been asked as to the Church's silence and passivity, while the situation in our country and the world at large deteriorates daily. Most countries in the so-called Third World are ravished by famine and civil wars. Human rights are being trampled in the face of the public world, but without any intervention from the Church.

Only a single lonely voice can be heard, especially when a denomination happens to be affected directly. This indicates the fact that people are trapped in a web of self-interest and, therefore, have become self-centred in dealing with issues for their attention. Ecclesiastical clashes - the result of this attitude - impede the Church from being a witness to the world. This means that the Church cannot be vociferous while her house is not in order and while the Church does not heed God's will.

The hypothesis of the research is: If the research can describe the influence of HIV/AIDS, the role that the global and the local context plays in it and if the research can help the leadership of the congregation to listen to the suffering people and understand something of a Missional calling, then the leadership will be empowered to take meaningful action. This chapter deals with a Missional calling.

In the book, *Discerning God's will*, Danny E Morris *et al.*, (1997:12) believe that the time has come for redefining the church. Furthermore, they say that the church must heed its stories, be able to talk about its direction and identity, and patiently discern

the shape of its future life and ministry. Moreover, they say that the church must draw on its best traditions of faith and practice for new ways of interacting and decision-making.

In this respect, Morris *et al.* refer to a process of “prayerful spiritual discernment” that is so vital for the life of the church. In that regard, the church should be attentive and never rush into decisions and judgments regarding crucial issues. In essence, in order for the church to be truthful and be God’s ambassador, she should make use of two important disciplines, that is, *examen consciousness* and *lectio Divina*. An *examen of consciousness* would help this congregation to increase their sensitivity to the Spirit’s working in their life and provide them with the necessary enlightenment to cooperate and respond to its presence. *Lectio Divina* implies an act or skill of listening? (*lectio*), meditation (*meditatio*), and interpretation (*oratio*).

This theological undertaking helps the church to find herself in the light of God’s will related to her calling in the world. Morris *et al.* (1997:12) assert: “This process of spiritual discernment draws us beyond our limited reason to seek divine presence and insight.” This relationship, or awareness of God’s intervention, will result in the church being more conscious of her responsibilities, weaknesses and shortfalls that demand dependence and reliance on the Triune God.

The notion of the *missio dei* that elucidates the interrelation of the Triune God, i.e., God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, will consciously cement this responsibility. This interrelation of the Triune God is indicative of all that constitutes divine revelation. The Reformed tradition refers to God’s general and special revelation; the former_meaning revelation through nature. “Special revelation” refers to God’s special revelation through the work of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:8).

6.2 THE *MISSIO DEI* AND GOD’S KINGDOM IN THE LIGHT OF THIS PANDEMIC

The notion of the *missio dei* should be seen from the premise of God’s revelation to humankind, meaning that God reveals his being as the Triune God, who is in action in the cosmos. In that sense, in his book, *Christ plays in ten thousand places*, Eugene H Peterson (2005:04) explains this notion as follows. The researcher regards the divine intervention in this book as the “conversation” that Christ has in the

cosmos. Peterson asserts that “conversation implies back-and-forthness, several voices engaged in considering, exploring, discussing and enjoying not only the subject matter but one another’s company.”

Peterson (2005:05) employs the concept “spiritual,” of which he says, “[It] is the insistence that everything that reveals God himself and his works is capable of being lived by ordinary men and women in their homes and workplaces.” The researcher relates this to Kwazakele’s state of affairs regarding the church’s calling to the world. That is why the congregation regards it as their responsibility to motivate all members to be involved in the Church’s missional work. This all-inclusive notion is indicative of the divine intervention that is evident through all God’s people, regardless of their academic background and social standing.

Furthermore, Peterson (2005:06) says, “If God’s presence and work are not understood to define who we are and what we are doing, nothing we come up with will be understood and lived properly.” Knowing our origin and all that revolves around us enables us, as human beings, to know what is expected of us. However, we must take cognizance of what the *missio Dei* and God’s Kingdom entail in relation to what is around us, as all creation belongs to God, the Creator (Ps. 24).

A sense of stewardship should be central to our interaction with God’s nature, that is, the *fauna* and *flora* (including human beings). Peterson (2005:22) approaches his arguments regarding creation from the premise of three important texts, as seen below. According to him, these texts “serve as signposts in the muck of imprecision in which we find ourselves.” Furthermore, these texts contain the following beginnings: the beginning of creation, of salvation, and that of the Church. He, therefore, refers to these entities as the holy creation, the holy salvation and the holy community.

6.3 BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE *MISSIO DEI*

Genesis 1:1-3. According to Peterson (2005:22), this pericope indicates God’s first act of creating *ex nihilo*, that is, out of nothing (Rom. 4:17). He further mentions that the Spirit of God moved and still continues to move and create. He considers the state of the earth that was without form and void as having significance in God’s salvific history. He regards this creation as our personal home in which we live.

Daniel L Migliore (*Faith seeking understanding*, 1991:80) asserts, “Creation of the world is the first of the majestic and gracious acts of the Triune God.” In addition, he says, “The creation of the world, its reconciliation in Jesus Christ, and its promised renewal and consummation are all acts of the Triune God and they all exhibit the astonishing generosity and beneficence of this God.” This means that, in creation, God’s grace is a sign of his divine love. In support of this fact, Hendriks (2004:25) says, “God’s mission and reign involve creation, care, redemption and consummation.” Peterson further explains this as follows:

Mark 1:9-11. According to him, this constitutes the second beginning whereby Jesus is baptized and identified as God’s beloved Son. The book of Genesis speaks of watery chaos, while that of Mark speaks of a local named river where Jesus was baptized. However, in Mark, the descending dove has a link with Genesis because the verb used can also be translated as “hovering,” which provides our imaginations with an image of the Spirit of God.

Peterson (2005:24) concludes by saying, “The God-breathed-into-life of Jesus, the God blessed person of Jesus, at this moment begins to work out the consummation of salvation over death.”

Acts 2:1-4. In this third pericope, God breathes on 120 followers of Jesus, thus initiating the Holy Communion or creation of the Church. In this instance, the continuity of God’s life-giving breath in Genesis and the baptism of Jesus are evident through this “rush of a violent wind” (Peterson 2005:25). These texts show how the Triune God revealed Himself.

6.4 GOD’S CREATIVE MISSION

God reveals his beauty in the person of Jesus. This Good News (or *kerugma* in Greek) is a reality, therefore, John (1:14) rewrites Genesis when he speaks of “Word that became flesh.” Peterson (2005:137-38) asserts that nature calls human beings to adoration, since man cannot even create a louse, let alone a fly. According to Peterson, the general revelation that Genesis depicts is just a warming-up exercise that denotes the main event that is in store.

For Peterson (2005:182) creation itself cannot furnish us with spirituality. He implies that, through the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, God provides the kerugmatic centre for

all the world's experiences, in which we receive the revelation of God that Christ reveals in creation.

However, we are in a world infested and governed by corrupt politicians, birth defects, floods, volcanic eruptions, divorces, deaths, starvation and famine. All this happens in history that deals with past, present and future events.

Jesus' life is explained as an historic event that depicts the humiliation of his birth and painful experience of his ministry. All of this is evident in the Christian history, which seems to be disappointing. Peterson's encouragement is that Jesus provides our entrance into the reality and responsibilities of history - a history that is inherent with failed plans, disappointments, skewed relations, political disparity and racial tensions (2005:186).

In this respect, Peterson sees Jesus' life as not being a happy or success story, but a story of salvation. Furthermore, Peterson (2005:188) regards this history as being "lubricated with tears." But, at the same time, he encourages us by saying, "Jesus descended into the depths of history, took it into his very heart and in that action became the source of eternal salvation ... Jesus' suffering and death, his passion is the fuel for salvation."

This, indeed, means that Jesus' death is our only way to salvation and that his death renews our history; also that the history of the Old Testament's dispensation has been fulfilled through his death. According to Peterson, the Exodus event becomes "the basic revelation of the pattern of divine salvific activity in all ages since it is a historical reality."

The researcher has already indicated that, in Genesis, Adam was instructed to till the soil and this human activity also describes our social dilemma that faces us. In response to this, Peterson (2005:231) asserts that the answer is Christian communal life, to which he refers as "the community of the resurrection," meaning that Jesus' resurrection is the kerygmatic lift-off for living in the community of the Holy Spirit. So, it stands to reason that the researcher is very concerned about the Church's passive involvement in social ills.

According to Peterson, this resurrection should be realized in our lives through our intervention as the community of the risen Lord, who is the head of the militant church that is called to witness to the world. He further puts it thus: “For Jesus’ resurrection is a matter of living in a wondrous creation, embracing a salvation history and then taking our place in a holy community” (John 20:22).

Peterson’s encouragement further reads, “The more we get involved in what God is doing, the less we find ourselves running things; the more we participate in God’s work as revealed in Jesus, the more is done to us and the more is done through us.”(2005:232). The Triune God will, at the same time, inspire and immerse us in a relationship with our brothers and sisters whom we never knew we had. This is a historical fact that was evident in our Church unity, as well as our unity talks that we engaged with the DRC.

He further explains (2005:237) Jesus’ priestly prayer well: “May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you loved me.”(Jn.17:23). This elucidates that unity is God’s imperative through Christ with the help of the Holy Spirit, meaning that the Triune God creates his community to discern his divine will. This being the objective of talks and conventions on Church unity, as we believe that we are one body and community that is called to profess and live to the standard set for us by the Triune God. Klaas Runia (*Reformation Today*, 1968:54) says, “This unity never means uniformity … Christian is not identical with uniformity.”

This unity does not allow division. Runia aligns this unity to the fellowship that is possible in Christ, as depicted in the Triune God, hence John’s (17:21) reference to this unity as “the spiritual unity.” He also believes that the unity of the church should be visible – the reason for negotiations and unity conventions between the DRC and the URCSA.

Kwazakele’s history proves that there have been some struggles and strife and, unfortunately, ultimate unity has not yet been realized. Surprisingly, Runia (1968:61) believes that this tension “will always be part of the life of individual Christians and also that of the church. As long as the individual Christian and the church as a whole are in this world, this tension will be with them.” In support of this, George Eldon Ladd

(1975:350) says, “Through unity, fellowship could be realized … the early Christian was conscious of being bound to Christ.”

This communal bond or fellowship should manifest in the form of sharing, for example, resources that might curb the spread of HIV/AIDS and, the awareness of their communal responsibility by the community of saints. When Ladd alludes to “this community,” he adds, “We do not choose to be in this community by virtue of the resurrection of Jesus, this is the company we keep.” He also is of the view that this community had to, and still has to, continue with what Jesus began. Therefore, he prepared them by endowing them with the Holy Spirit to enable them to witness to his cause. Furthermore, this “witness” is thus: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

This biblical injunction explains that, through the help of the Holy Spirit, they will be able to do everything that Jesus had done among them. Therefore, it was their task to continue and spread the Gospel unto the ends of the world. Moreover, as ambassadors of Christ, they felt they had to live according to God’s will, that is, be prayerfully minded and spread the Good News to the people in bondage of sin, and take cognizance of those in need, such as the orphans and widows.

In this regard, Peterson regards prayer as the communities’ common language with its frequency and persistence. The Gospel narratives explain the effect of prayer in many instances, for example, Peter and John’s release from the prison led to joyful prayer. According to Peterson, prayer is “the natural, unselfconscious language of the community.”

In his book, *After our likeness*, Miroslav Volf (1998:280) says, “Communion of the whole people of God can be anticipated only if one lives in such communion … her inner constitution must be determined by an ecclesial community.” This communion should interact through Christian fraternity and reflect on theological issues so as to produce rules and procedures to regulate order and stability.

This is possible through “the process of spiritual discernment that draws us beyond our limited reason to seek divine presence and insight.” According to Danny E Morris

et al., (1997:)this “spiritual discernment” “recognizes the gifts and insights of individuals and looks at the wisdom of the community as people talk to one another.”

Patrick Keifert (2006:64) says that this communication and the interrelations of Christian believers “reflect the very nature and being, movement and action of God.” This means that the Father sends the Son, the Son sends the Spirit, while we as believers are called, gathered, and sent within the life of the Triune God. Also, through this spiritual discernment, the Kwazakhele congregation is now involved in the HIV/AIDS awareness program. The process of discernment helps them to become conscious of their God-given task in a meaningful way.

Special days, such as the AIDS candlelight memorial Sunday in the second week in May and on 1 December annually, are observed internationally in cooperation with the task group of the Cape URC and the Western and Southern Cape DRC. The HIV support group that comprises compassionate members, also takes responsibility for whatever concerns this issue. Our networking with the NGOs also indicates our congregation’s commitment to this social cause.

In fact, a sign of caring prevails in the light of the following biblical truth that reads, “If one part of the body suffers, all the other parts suffer with it” (1Cor 12:26). As a confessing congregation, Kwazakhele is also undergoing a process of discernment, being aware of our obligation that calls for sharing what we have. This is evident as some of the infected are unemployed, while they also live with poor families.

This gesture of this communal responsibility triggers a sense of *Ubuntu* - our African identity that instils an urge to care for our brothers and sisters in the awareness that, one day, we will be asked: “Where is your brother?” (Gen. 4:9). A “probing question” from JNJ Kritzinger, needs a missional response.

It calls us to be responsible, accountable human beings, which means one must know what befalls one’s brother at all times. Our scriptural reflection, as well as spiritual meditation, assists us in this process of spiritual discernment.

The Taize music that the researcher had the privilege to learn about will be another source of inspiration in this process of spiritual meditation. Although most of our senior members are not familiar with this exercise, the researcher hopes that they will

become used to its soothing sound in due course. However, their financial position deprives them of full-scale practising as they do not have a sound system. The researcher hopes that the Church Council will approve it for inclusion in their Church services. A handbook, *Church in HIV world*, says, "God's call to love His people also means assuring the dignity of every person." (Gennrich:2004:46).

Gennrich 2004:46 says. "We are called to tell people about God's love for them." He also refers to the connectedness depicted in Corinthians 12 that deals with the parts of the body that, in a sense, indicate dependence and coordination, which is expected of Christian believers. We are also biblically commissioned to raise the consciousness of the destitute by advocating that our hope is real and that it is not based on optimism that comes from empty promises, but is rooted in the Triune God.

In chapter eight, Jeremiah's despairing hope should also serve as a source of encouragement. In the following pericope, Jeremiah's cry of hopelessness, hurt, sickness of body and spirit reads thus:

*O my Comforter in sorrow,
My heart is faint within me.
Listen to the cry of my people
From a land far away:
"Is the Lord not in Zion?
Since my people are crushed, I am crushed;
I would weep day and night for the slain of my people (Jer.8:18-21,9:1b).*

Nevertheless, chapter 32 says he buys a piece of land as an investment for future hope against prevailing circumstances. This means that we should remain close to God, not only in triumph, but also in grief and despair.

6.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the researcher dealt with the missional response of the Kwazakhele congregation regarding HIV/AIDS. His aim is to assist the leadership of this congregation with the necessary knowledge to address and cope with the HIV/AIDS pandemic in an effective manner, taking cognizance of the most practical methodologies and strategies explained in this thesis. Through spiritual discernment the church leadership should become conscious of their Christian responsibility

towards their fellow brothers and sisters in the Lord. This is indeed possible through the intervention of this research undertaking which intends to provide the leadership of Kwazakhele with necessary knowledge to address the HIV/AIDS while also move towards becoming a Missional congregation.

The researcher is of the opinion that two theological disciplines, that is, *examen consciousness* and *lectio Divina* should be employed to effect discernment and enable members to be truthful in their divine calling to be God's ambassadors in this world faced with the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The notion of *missio dei* adopts a central position in this missional activity. The researcher provided biblical illustrations to clarify this notion of the *missio dei*, taking into cognizance our practical and missional responsibility towards other human beings. In that sense, this chapter encompasses the commemoration of the HIV and AIDS days and the biblical texts that deal with this issue, expressed in an appealing mode. In that regard, the researcher will attend to the strategy employed to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic at Kwazakhele in chapter 7.

CHAPTER SEVEN

7. A STRATEGY TO ADDRESS THE HIV/AIDS PANDEMIC AT KWAZAKHELE

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Sue Parry (2008:17) says that the very relevance of churches will be determined by their response and that the crisis also challenges the churches to re-examine the human conditions, which in fact promote the pandemic, and to sharpen their awareness of people's inhumanity to one another, of broken relationships and unjust structures, and their own complacency and complicity. He further says HIV/AIDS is a sign of the times, calling us to see and understand. The researcher concurs with these sentiments as this is relevant to Kwazakhele context. The responses from the interviewees in chapter five indicate the need for an effective strategy that the leadership at Kwazakhele could employ to address this scourge. This concluding chapter, therefore, provides the leadership with necessary knowledge to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic and in the process addressing the pandemic while moving towards becoming a Missional congregation.

The research also describes the influence of HIV/AIDS as well as role that the global and local context plays in it aiming at helping the leadership of the congregation to listen to the suffering people and understand something of Missional calling, while in the process being empowered to take meaningful action.

7.2 Revisiting the plot of the study

The previous chapters of this study have been employed in order to lay a foundation for the current one. The researcher believes that a comprehensive resolution to the HIV/AIDS could be derived from a multi-faceted strategy. The research and the researcher's ministry tried to equip the leadership with the necessary knowledge regarding this pandemic. Furthermore, the understanding of missional theology is in the process of unlocking the congregation's identity, which is derived from the *missio Dei*, that is, the mission of God that is depicted through a Trinitarian hermeneutic. As indicated in chapter 1 the old reality of an institutional church is overtaken by a sense

of a missional enterprise that encompasses an all-inclusive participation of the members in the congregation.

The researcher has in the previous chapters shown that leadership has taken a leading role in dealing with challenges that face the congregation. They acknowledge how this scourge has impacted their local context. They are set to positively engage it on a sound theological footing that advocates a missional praxis in the congregation. A missional theology in this missional endeavour shall reflect normative values of God's word and to a realisation of reign of triune God through the active participation of the faith community and the creation of HIV support groups. The interaction between congregational auxiliary bodies and the partnership with non-governmental entities shall in the process effect a holistic approach to this health dilemma as different approaches are engaged.

Innovative leadership will facilitate the effective strategy and influence the desired change while discerning God's will and encouraging membership for full participation in congregational ministry. This interaction between leadership and membership should empower the membership to grow towards spiritual maturity. In this process we believe that selfishness and stigma associated with HIV will be addressed. A sense of communal responsibility towards each other and becoming a missional congregation will grow. All this is an indication that the hypotheses is true, that the research can help the leadership of the congregation to listen to the suffering people and understand something of a Missional calling while in the process empowered to take meaningful action as their context demands.

7.3 Suggested and employed strategies

Strategic planning assists an organization to excel in its endeavours and ensures that its membership is working towards a common goal. It assesses the organisation's direction in response to a changing environment. This planning helps the leadership to competently manage HIV and eliminate silence, stigma and discrimination while it also deals with the values of the reign of God. It thus leads to a holistic theology that encompasses care and compassion depicting the attributes of the triune God.

Bevans *et al.* (2004:369) says, "Christian communities shared faith, friendship and worship." The Kwazakhele congregation should take seriously what He then

(2004:370) refers to the Roman Empire's situation, where Christians took care of the sick during a number of plagues. He further admonishes the contemporary Church to "participate in that aspect of God's mission that speaks to and for the world's poor and marginalized."

Maluleke (1999:3) asserted that the church is a community of faith that is formed by people who are called by God to participate in the struggle for more justice and more humanity in order to establish God's reign in all spheres of life. In addition, he says "without social service, Christianity will seem irrelevant to needy individuals and needy communities".

The researcher has dealt with what the identity of the missional church entails in chapter 3. He had explained it in relation to its calling in the cosmos, and that stands to reason that the Kwazakhele congregation should make a difference in the context in which she finds herself. And, in order to effect this, all its members should strive for reconciliation at all levels, such as personal, cultural and political reconciliation. This should be taken into consideration while, at the same time, attending to the missional imperative of the Gospel.

The researcher is of the opinion that this congregation's members are biblically admonished to cross over their man-made ecclesiastical boundaries, meaning that, they must reach the unreachable and the destitute.

The regards communication strategy as of importance in the propagation of the gospel and it is with the same vein that Daniel Shaw speaks of the communication as that which is prevalent in the proclamation of the Gospel in the light of what believers pronounce and do, which, at the same time, explains their relationship with their Lord. This is possible through liturgical integration of the message of hope during Church services, especially on the AIDS Candlelight Memorial Sunday and World AIDS Day.

The researcher relates this propagation and communication in the light of the Belhar confession. Inherent in this confession are four concepts: justice, peace, love and reconciliation. They should be viewed in relation to God's intention, as envisaged on four horizons within a text, that is, the author, text, communicator and the receptor (Shaw *et al.* 2004:76).

This emphasizes theologically appropriate communication, which is only possible through an accepted hermeneutical approach to the text; the exegetical analysis of the text brings forth its theological intent. In the view of Shaw *et al.* (2004:80), “the spiralling process of missional hermeneutics begins with missional intention.” This spiralling motion helps us to dwell on the Word and reread the Scriptures for “a new missional perspective” to assist us to appreciate reality (2004:81).

This attitude triggers our minds to accept new challenges that we come across within our various human contexts, including that of HIV/AIDS. Shaw (2004:92) illustrates this fact by alluding to Luke 4:21-30, where four horizons are at play depicting missional communication. This pericope contains the signs drawn from the Old Testament, with the intention of bringing to the fore the meaning of the divine mission that was, and still is, directed to all Christians regardless of their culture, nationality or race because this pandemic affects all, directly or indirectly.

Those called and commissioned by divine grace, have the responsibility to read and interpret the Bible amidst diversity, to give witness to the wondrous attributes of the Kingdom of God with its inhabitants inspired to do wonders in spite of adversaries and agents of darkness. This congregation believes that God intends to free people infected and affected from fear and all that is related to abandonment and humiliation.

Through their willingness and engagement in the *missio dei*, the never-ending and indiscriminate love of the Triune God reaches all the destitute in new and divergent contexts, as the great commission admonishes, “... go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt. 28:19-20).

The current knowledge about HIV and about future conditions has created a positive response and a need for cooperation with other key players in the field. The researcher has enlisted organizations in this chapter in order to assist the leadership of Kwazakhele and the congregation at large. This cooperation with other organization resulted to effective empowerment of leadership at our workshops on HIV/AIDS.

Recently, Dr Sue Parry [a regional coordinator for Southern Africa for Economical HIV and AIDS Initiative in Africa (EHAIA)] published a book, *Beacons of hope*, to promote the concept of HIV competent Churches. She describes a competent church as:

A Church that has developed an inner competence through internalization of the risk, impacts and consequences and has accepted the responsibility and imperative to respond appropriately and compassionately. In order to progress to outer competence, there is need for leadership, knowledge and resources. Outer competence involves building theological and institutional capacity in a socially relevant, inclusive, sustainable and collaborative way that reduces the spread of HIV, improves the lives of the infected and affected, mitigates the impact of HIV and ultimately restores hope and dignity.

In this publication, the definition of an HIV competent church is described as one that:

- Understands the HIV and AIDS challenge at hand
- Has the ability and corresponding skills related to HIV and AIDS, and
- Is able to respond to the pandemic.

These competencies are further expounded into the following 13 categories:

- Facts
- Sexuality
- Prevention
- Stigma
- Advocacy
- Empowerment
- Leadership
- Healing Liturgy
- Sacraments
- Counselling
- Testing
- Networking
- Caring.

These 13 categories are good indicators to appraise a specific church or congregation's HIV competence and can be employed as motivation that leads to growth in competence. This notion of competence should act as an anchor that instils hope and impacts a missional view of what the Church is, in the face of this health dilemma. The following poem contained in the newsletter of the diaconal ministry of the URCSA dated 17 November 2003 with an appealing and touching sentiments captures one's attention as it reads thus:

He is God, the one who heals and gives life...

When I am hurt, He heals me!
When I am broken, He mends me!
When I am blind, He leads me!
When I am hungry, He feeds me!
When I face trials, He is with me!
When I face problems, He comforts me!
When I face loss, He provides for me!
When I face Death, He carries me Home!
Every time, and every way.
He is God, He is faithful.
I am His, and He is mine!
So, if you're wondering why I feel so secure, understand this...
He said it and that settles it.
God is in control, I am on His side, and
That means all is well with my soul

BECAUSE GOD IS!

This inspirational poem re-instils hope, courage and a sense of re-invigoration to those in a desperate situation due to this epidemic.

The strategical planning workshop at Kwazakhele congregation facilitated by CABSA members resulted in the adoption of the following HIV/AIDS mission statement. The statement concurs with what the congregation's members produced at the workshop. This statement serves as a source of encouragement, as it examines the cosmos holistically, while taking into consideration the socio-economic-political and environmental injustice. Furthermore, this URCSA statement on HIV/AIDS is informative and educational as well as challenging to the membership and leadership of the URC. It calls for a positive response from all its members, regardless of their ecclesiastical position.

The researcher also advises congregations to display this statement on the walls of their church buildings to signal a visual sense of commitment.

This URCSA statement on HIV/AIDS reads as follows:



The Church of Jesus Christ must come to terms with the HIV/AIDS pandemic. As a Church we have no choice. No community that claims to be founded on the principles of the ministry of Jesus Christ has a choice. In obedience to our Lord, the head of the Church we will follow Him where He will lead us in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

The URCSA ACKNOWLEDGES

- That the HIV/AIDS pandemic is having a disastrous impact on thousands of individuals and families in Southern Africa and in the URCSA. What pain, suffering, loneliness, rejection and prejudice people living with HIV/AIDS must endure!
- That HIV/AIDS is not only somebody else's problem, it is also ours.
- That we, the body of Christ, also have HIV/AIDS.

The URCSA BELIEVES

- That Christ came that all may have life in abundance.
- That Christ calls his Church to be the Light and the Salt of the world.
- That Christ calls us His Church to be a caring and compassionate community.

The URCSA CONFESSES

- That we have not always showed support and love for people living with HIV/AIDS as we should have. We ask for forgiveness for our lack of love and understanding.
- That the Church as God's possession must stand where God stands ... with those who are living with HIV/AIDS and against discrimination, rejection and prejudice against people living with HIV/AIDS (*Belhar Confession*).

The URCSA therefore declares ourselves a Church friendly to people living with HIV/AIDS

The URCSA calls upon Church leaders and congregations to

- Create an environment in each congregation and institution of the URCSA conducive for members living with HIV/AIDS to freely and without condemnation, declare their HIV/AIDS status.
- Empower themselves to deal effectively and compassionately with people with HIV/AIDS, by doing the following:
 - Speak openly about the HIV/AIDS pandemic
 - Set up support-groups and home based care
 - Arrange training sessions on HIV/AIDS, especially on counselling
 - Address the issue of AIDS-orphans
 - Encourage voluntary testing
 - Pray regularly for people living with HIV/AIDS and those who are affected
 - Cooperate with relevant stakeholders in the fight against HIV/AIDS

As a matter of prevention the URCSA calls on Church leaders and members to

- Abstain from irresponsible sexual activities
- Respect the Christian view of marriage and be faithful to their (marriage) partners
- Follow safer sexual practices

The URCSA ASSURES all people living with HIV/AIDS that we will

- Support and love them with sincere Christian compassion
- Provide counselling
- Attend to their physical needs

The URCSA is making this statement, conscious of the fact that the example of Christ's caring and compassionate ministry, calls us to stand, in the midst of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, where He stands: With those who are living with HIV/AIDS.

7.4 CONCLUSION

The researcher has provided material evidence in this last chapter to answer the research question: How can this research provide the leadership of the congregation with the necessary knowledge to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic while in the

process of addressing the pandemic move towards becoming a Missional congregation?.

The researcher has described the influence of HIV/AIDS as well as the role that the global and local context plays in it. The leadership can now understand something of a Missional calling and they are in the process of being empowered to take meaningful action. The interviewee's responses in chapter 5, are a cry of lament in the wilderness of which the Church of the triune God needs to take heed. In that respect, the following should be considered:

Social integration should work as a catalyst to open a channel for communication that should eventually lead to a spirit that encourages openness and creates a sense of trust among Church members while enhancing the Biblical imperative pronounced in the Epistle to Galatians 6:2 that says, "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ." This interaction should also permeate the sphere of the local community without any discrimination whatsoever. Highly symbolic deeds should work as a pivotal point to bring the Good News to people of the triune God who loves nature that He Himself created.

In essence, the knowledge provided through this thesis describes the implementation of the methodology implied and elucidated by the movement from the bottom to the top of the cross, describing the implementation of the program, plan, strategies and training, specifically, of the leadership. In this sense, knowledge to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the processes that lead towards becoming a missional congregation is of an essential nature and, therefore, occupies a central position in the activity of the missional Church.

7.5 FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the above, it is evident that the researcher aim to assist leadership to understand the influence of HIV/AIDS as well as the role that the global and local context plays in it. He also assists the leadership to help the congregation to listen to the suffering of people while they try to discern their missional calling. In the process they are empowered to take meaningful action. In all, the leadership should through reading of this study research be conscious of their divine calling regarding HIV/AIDS

as well as processes and initiatives that could exacerbate stigma within their congregation.

The researcher believes that this thesis will assist the leadership to have a clear understanding of what this pandemic entails and, therefore, create a more open Church community that is free from stigma, silence or denial about HIV and AIDS.

Furthermore, the issues that the researcher raised in this thesis pose a major challenge for theological consideration, preaching, liturgy, eucharistic practice and a positive leadership response to HIV and AIDS. In that sense, this research provides the leadership of Kwazakhele congregation with the necessary knowledge to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic and while in the process of addressing the pandemic move towards becoming a missional congregation.

These institutions and material resources will equip leadership in a remarkable way. Most are available in the Mandela Metropolitan area. Simultaneously, it is imperative to ensure that positive actions or support programmes do not, in any way, undermine the work of existing activities, such as ECHAAG, ATTIC and Hope Worldwide.

The researcher further advises that the congregations HIV/AIDS programmes need to be expanded even further so that, among others, they attend to the welfare predicament. Therefore, development programmes, such as those for food security should be integrated in this plan of action, while taking cognizance of the social ills of this context. Therefore, the question of unemployment that is related to poverty and abuse of women and children should also receive attention when dealing with the HIV/AIDS issue. This means that support groups within this congregation can assist members to meet for information-sharing and networking with the stakeholders who can provide resources, expertise and information.

This quantitative research work and the material resources referred shall essentially imparts a sense of self-reliance and participative mood that enables members to take control of their decision-making process that affects their lives, including the HIV/AIDS health dilemma. In a missional sense, this means that all members should accept the fact that they, indeed, are all gifted to be of service in the Triune God's Kingdom. This biblical notion motivates every member to be responsible, especially in matters regarding HIV/AIDS, as every family is affected in some way.

In a sense, this leads to a value-based system shall in the process enable all members to accept the same set of values that effect change structurally, or otherwise. In other words, a commitment to a common set of values will take shape in people's minds. In essence, the researcher believes that this critical research undertaking aim to trigger a sense of theological responsibility towards God's imperative regarding the destitute, the miserable, and vulnerable and also raises a missional urge that projects our calling in the light of the triune God's missional intent that seeks to transform the leadership's understanding and attitude regarding HIV/AIDS.

Public testing by the leadership should also be advocated with the intention of encouraging communication, trust and instilling counselling skills. The President of South Africa, Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma, has shown a good example, which the Church leadership should take into consideration. For instance, our regional Moderature should consider, publicly, doing the same. Fortunately, during the sitting of the URCSA regional Synod, from 27 September to 3 October 2010, members were encouraged to make use of the available services at the site, but the leadership could not do more than that.

However, the URC, specifically Kwazakhele, should consider officially making use of the counselling skills and expertise derived from the following basic resource material and institutions that the researcher has listed below:

- A practical guide for Church leaders: *Building your ability to deal with AIDS* prepared by Nehemiah Bible Institute, written by Dr Danie van Zyl and Mrs Logy Murray, P.O. Box 841, Wellington 7654, South Africa.
- A practical handbook: *The Church in an HIV+ world*, edited by Daniela Gennrich. This book can be obtained from P.O. Box 2400, Pine Street Pietermaritzburg 3201. Tel.033 345 9897 or email cluster@futurenet.co.za
- Books that the DRC prepared and are available from CLF Publishers, Bloemfontein 9300:
- *Pastoral accompaniment of a person who lives with HIV/AIDS* by Andre de la Porte (2003); and
- *The Church and HIV/AIDS – beacons along the way: Intervention: Meaningful initiatives for congregational leaders in their community*; as well as

- *Sermon-outline for adults (2004)*, by Sunette Pienaar.

The following institutions can also be employed to provide leadership training on HIV/AIDS:

- Christian Aids Bureau (CABSA)
P.O.Box 16, Wellington 7654
Tel. Fax: 27(0) 21 873 0028
Email: management@cabsa.co.za
- Hope Worldwide
Main Street, Port Elizabeth
Jerusalem Ministries
- Seaview (Ngqeberha),
Tel. (+27) 41581 7089
- Resource manual for Congregation of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa, Box 33, Silvertone 0127.
Tel.(012)805-4036
e-mail:askdd@lantic.net

APPENDIX 1

Ethnographic questionnaire used by the researcher during home visits to the members of Kwazakhele congregation.

1. Describe the congregation to a new person.
2. How do members learn what it means to be a follower of Jesus?
3. Tell a story about how you sense God's presence and activity in this congregation.
4. Describe an experience of profound worship that you have had.
5. Tell about how people fight in this congregation, about situations where you and others were involved in a problem at church, and how it was handled.
6. Tell about a memory that causes anxiety about the future of this congregation and about a memory that gives hope.
7. Tell how you and others feel about the changes in this congregation over the past 3 to 5 years.
8. Tell about how you and others feel about the changes over the past 3 to 5 years in this community.

APPENDIX 2

Questionnaire employed by the researcher during home visits to the families who lost their members through HIV/AIDS pandemic.

1. Please tell me how you became aware of the HIV status of?
2. What was his/her physical condition then?
3. What was his/her spiritual condition then?
4. When did he/she pass away?
5. Did you approach the church for help?
6. Were you at peace in communicating with the church council members?
7. What type of assistance would you say was most needed?
8. How do you think the church can assist in such cases?

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