The restoration of human dignity in Mitchell's Plain:

"The Mount Hope account"

By

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DECLARATION

By submitting this dissertation electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the owner of the copyright thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously, in its entirety or in part, submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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SUMMARY

The researcher's purpose for writing this paper is first to tell the story of one particular community of faith called the Mount Hope church. In doing so, the spotlight would be placed on the plight and challenges of the Mitchells Plain township life, conditions and ministry.

Secondly, the research was seeking to challenge the status quo of a serious lack of human dignity by showing how and why it needs to be restored.

Lastly, to then answer the research question: "**How does one minister to marginalized and outcast people in such a way that their human dignity is restored?**"

The researcher has furnished a definition and description of the background of the word township as well as follow four tasks of doing Practical Theology as reflected in the work of one scholar Richard R Osmer.

The descriptive empirical section has highlighted the researcher's life story as key to the research, provided statistical details of the research context as well as individual testimony accounts of lives that have been transformed.

The normative section has shown the importance of the prophetic mandate to discern the will of God for the research context.

In the interpretive section the researcher has facilitated a dialogue between the descriptive and the normative sections to clarify the importance of system sensitive leadership.

The pragmatic section is the last of the four sections where the researcher has shown the strategic output of the Mount Hope church through its leadership.

The researcher has concluded by bringing all the chapters together again for the purpose of answering the research question: "**How does one minister to marginalized and outcast people in such a way that their human dignity is restored?**" It is clear that once they discover the love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ and the acceptance and guidance of a faith community, they are on the road to restored human dignity.

OPSOMMING

Die navorser se doel met die skryf van hierdie artikel was om die verhaal van 'n geloofsgemeenskap, die Mount Hope gemeente, te vertel. Sodoende is die klem geplaas op die uitdagings van Mitchell's Plain se "township" lewe, toestande en die bediening. Tweedens was die doel van die navorsing om die ernstige gebrek aan menswaardigheid en die herstel daarvan, uit te beeld en aan te spreek.

Die navorsing was gefokus om die volgende vraag te beantwoord: **"Hoe bedien jy mense wat gemarginaliseer en verworpe is dat dit hul menswaardigheid herstel?"**

Die navorser verskaf 'n definisie en beskrywing van die agtergrond van die woord "township" sowel as vier take van Praktiese Teologie, soos weerspieël in die werk van die bekende praktiese teoloog, Richard R Osmer.

Die beskrywende gedeelte van die navorsing beklemtoon die navorser se lewensverhaal as sleutel tot die navorsing. Empiriese gegewens wat in statistiese besonderhede die navorsing-konteks verreken sowel as individuele getuienisse van mense wie se lewens getransformeer is, word vertel. Dit illustreer die praktyk van die herstel van menswaardigheid.

Die normatiewe afdeling het die belangrikheid van die profetiese mandaat om die wil van God vir die navorsing-konteks om te onderskei, aangetoon.

In die interpretasie-afdeling het die navorser as 'n dialoog tussen die beskrywende en die normatiewe gedeeltes gehanteer om die belangrikheid van die sisteem sensitiewe leierskap aan te toon.

Die pragmatiese artikel is die laaste van die vier afdelings waar die navorser die strategiese uitset van die Mount Hope gemeente deur sy leierskap aantoon en beskrywend vertel hoe mense opgevang, aanvaar en volgens bybelse beginsels ingeskakel word en op die wyse hulle menswaardigheid herontdek in die liefde van Jesus Christus en sy kerk.

Die navorser sluit af deur al die hoofstukke byeen te bring om die navorsings vraag te beantwoord: **"Hoe bedien jy mense wat gemarginaliseer en verworpe is dat dit hul menswaardigheid herstel?"**

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Mom, you taught me so much by the way you lived your life, which taught me commitment. I love you more than words can say.

Thanks to all who believed in me.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 A BRIEF REVIEW OF MITCHELL'S PLAIN AS A TOWNSHIP

In view of what this research ultimately is about, it would be most important for this research paper to provide a contextual description of what is referred to as the "township."

According to Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Township_South_Africa, assessed 17 October 2012), the words "township" and "location" have a specific meaning, particularly in the South African context. However, both words equally refer to a residential urban area, often underdeveloped, designated for non–whites. Furthermore, what is meant by "non–whites," is simply that these people are either black, coloured or Indian, which definitions and description emanate from the era of segregation in South Africa known as Apartheid.

As may already be obvious, the underdevelopment dynamic of the township will surely present apparent and formidable problems in the context that this research seeks to address. However, while a slight reference may be made to infrastructural, educational and socio–economic challenges applicable to the research context, it should be understood that they are not necessarily the main focus of this current research.

In the above summary, the extreme lack of human dignity in this situation is immediately clear. Therefore, it becomes imperative for this research to raise the critical question by asking: "In a township, how does one minister to marginalized and outcast people so that their human dignity is restored?" For anyone needing to know the reason for this specific question, and not any other, the answer is simple – the researcher's conviction is that this question is relevant and that advocacy for the subject of human dignity in this context is long overdue.

1.2 THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND RESEARCH QUESTION

This research proposes to anchor the answers to this research question and also meet the research objectives in the framework of a case study research. The research in itself is designed to showcase the journey of one fascinating community of faith, i.e. the Mount Hope Kingdom Life Christian Church, hereafter referred to as "Mount Hope" (www.mounthope.co.za, assessed 17 October 2012).

As stated above, this research seeks to place the spotlight on the plight and challenges of township life and ministry and will seek to achieve that aim by asking the simple question: **"In a township context, how does one minister to marginalized and outcast people in such a way that their human dignity is restored?"**

Invariably, in a township context, the majority of people feel marginalised and left out of the mainstream society, as could be expected in a polarized society that the conditions that led to the creation of townships, necessitated. In the sub-title of their book, *Systems–sensitive leadership*, Michael C Armour and Don Browning (2000) intimate that "we should empower diversity without polarizing the church." If this holds true for the church, it should by all means hold true for the entire society.

1.3   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher will follow a qualitative and quantitative method to meet the objectives of this research. In his book, *Studying congregations*, Jurgens Hendriks (2004:226) has this to say about qualitative and quantitative strategies: "In congregational studies, most of the information gathered in a resource analysis would be quantitative, while the cultural, identity and process analyses would be qualitative by nature. Quantitative states numerically; qualitative describes in order to understand human behaviour"

1.4   RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Within the context of this research, there are four main objectives to answering the research question "**In a township context, how does one minister to marginalized and outcast people in such a way that their human dignity is restored?"** These objectives echo four tasks to approaching Practical Theology by Richard R Osmer (2008:4), namely:

1. The Descriptive–empirical task. Here the question to be asked is: "What is going on?" *This section will describe the researcher's life story, the subsequent birth of Mount Hope and its context, the display of statistical information relevant to the research question, as well as a testimony account of lives that Mount Hope has transformed.*

2. The Interpretive task asks: "Why is this going on?" *This section will explain the situation on the ground by providing system-oriented theories on how to deal with it.*

3. The Normative task asks: "What ought to happen?" *This particular section will examine the theological description of the church, as a community of those living under the reign of God, with the prerogative to discern God's will prophetically.*

4. The Pragmatic task finally asks: "How might we respond?" *This section will lay out Mount Hope's strategic output in dealing with the situation on the ground.*

1.5   CHAPTER OVERVIEW

- **Chapter 2:**   Describes the researcher's life story in view of how human dignity becomes perpetual from his life into the life of what later becomes Mount Hope.

- **Chapter 3:**   This chapter uses statistical information and population demographics to provide a further description of the link between human dignity and contextual social factors. Woodlands and Lentegeur are focus areas to which the research has been limited.

- **Chapter 4:**   It closes the three chapters that make up the descriptive section of the research. It provides personal testimonies from individual members of Mount Hope, the human dignity of whom has been restored by Mount Hope's application of biblical theology for this exact purpose.

- **Chapter 5:**   This is the normative chapter and centres on the prophetic mandate of the church to discern the will of God with regard to the restoration of human dignity.

- **Chapter 6:**   This is the first of two chapters that fulfil the interpretive task of this research. Here, the preservation of human dignity is key to those individuals living in different paradigms or systems.

- **Chapter 7:**   This is the second and last of the two chapters that fulfil the interpretive task of the research. Chapter 7 brings the elements of systems three, four and five together with the aim of explaining the need for respecting the human dignity of each group, but also inducing them to cooperate.

- **Chapter 8:**   This chapter describes Mount Hope's strategy and hermeneutical approach in the restoration of human dignity.

- **Chapter 9:**   This final chapter brings everything together and answers the research question: "In a township context, how does one minister to marginalized and outcast

people in such a way that their human dignity is restored?" The strategic leadership applied in a township context will now become clear.

CHAPTER 2 THE DESCRIPTIVE EMPIRICAL TASK

2.1   INTRODUCTION

Robert Osmer (2008:4) has defined the descriptive–empirical task as "the gathering of the information that helps in discerning patterns and dynamics in particular episodes, situations or contexts." This definition will, therefore, illustrate a part of the answer to the research question, "**In a township context, how does one minister to marginalized and outcast people in such a way that their human dignity is restored?**" by presenting imperative characteristics of human dignity after it has been restored. The narratives of both the researcher and the congregation's life stories will illustrate this.

2.2   THE RESEARCHER'S LIFE STORY

As previously stated, this chapter will focus on providing an understanding of the purpose of this thesis by relating the researcher's life story as an integral part of the research's descriptive section.

The researcher, Alfonso Allen Schilder, has been married to Crystal Yolande for 20 years and they are blessed with two daughters Megan (18) and Micaela (15). Since its inception in 1994, he has been the founder and senior pastor of the Mount Hope Kingdom Life Christian Church.

His upbringing was in Rocklands, a residential section in Mitchell's Plain notorious for its poverty and gangsterism. At the age of 14, he was caught up in the gang culture partly because of an absent father who worked as a fisherman. In his absence, his father could never provide the much needed guidance through the researcher's adolescent years. Similarly, the majority of the researcher's peers also came from dysfunctional backgrounds, which meant only one thing – drugs and alcohol abuse, combined with other illegal activities that became the order of the day. **In precisely this set of circumstances, anyone's search for human dignity would yield absolutely nothing - and that is guaranteed!** Furthermore, this very set of circumstances is a perfect breeding ground for the continuation cycle of fatherless generations.

However, in September of 1984, at the age of 19, the researcher was confronted by the Gospel for the very first time. A lay preacher from a Pentecostal Church asked him the following question: *"Young man, if you should die tonight, where will you spend eternity?"*

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The researcher did not respond immediately, but went home only to be haunted during the whole night by this question and its implications, because he just did not have an answer to that very important question.

The following day, he frantically and relentlessly searched for the lay preacher until he found his house. Here, the researcher committed his life to Christ. Nonetheless, the researcher actually had underestimated the impact of his upbringing, so he struggled severely to adapt to his new life and its expectations. The struggle of adapting to this new identity was a tedious journey characterized by a fair share of rebukes, corrections and discipline from the church leaders.

Through this entire experience, he was introduced for the first time to a minister, ministering "**in a township context to marginalized and outcast people in such a way that their human dignity was restored**"!

It is critical that every dignified human being deserves to have someone whom they can call "Pappa, Daddy, or even Father." The restoration process started with the researcher being introduced to the Heavenly Father despite, his own fatherless background. It is also interesting that the newly found Father is One who would never leave, nor forsake him, as opposed to the earthly father that absconded and misappropriated himself. The researcher's earthly father has a limited time of life on earth, and is in charge of nothing concerning his lifetime. On the contrary, the newly found Heavenly Father is eternal and in charge of eternity itself. **Here, human dignity provides identity**.

A scriptural passage, such as Ecclesiastes 3:11: *"He [God] has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet when they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end,"* rightfully undergirds the researcher's experience.

One will notice that the researcher's restorative encounter with saving truth and grace, brought transformation to his thinking about self and God. *"A thinking system or worldview defines our sense of self, organises our lives, groups our priorities, structures our relationships, analyses our ideals, influences our spirituality and dictates our way of thinking"* (Hendriks 2004: 56).

The researcher's experience of salvation further illustrates the fact that **human dignity is contagious.** Irrespective of the difficult struggle of acclimatising to his new life in Christ, he

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still had a passion to effectively reach out to other young men whom the drug and gang culture had still ensnared, so that they could also become partakers in his newly found dignified life. As a result, numerous doors were flung open to his ministry.

In 1985, Marine Products employed the researcher as a personnel assistant without any formal qualification because of his positive outlook in life. After four and a half years in this position, the researcher resigned to commence theological training in 1989 at what was then known as the Cape College of Theology, and he graduated in 1992 with a BA degree in Theology. After graduating, and while living in Athlone with his family, he served as an intern pastor at the Westridge Assembly of God for two and a half years without a salary. During this time, the researcher's wife was the sole breadwinner who provided for his sustenance and that of their two year old daughter, as well as his daily ministry's travelling needs. Even so, in all these circumstances, the restoration of his own **human dignity brought him from insignificance without an education, to eminence with a degree and a position of influence.**

The researcher's responsibilities, inter alia, included social relief projects, as well as preaching and teaching, in the informal settlements bordering Mitchell's Plain. In 1994, he assisted illegal dwellers to obtain a more permanent property in an area called Heinz Park. Together with his family, he moved into the area and lived there for five years to continue the work of **restoring human dignity**.

2.3 THE MOUNT HOPE HISTORICAL ACCOUNT

In the year of moving to Heinz Park, the researcher and his family decided to go and live amongst the people. Shortly thereafter, by God's guidance, the researcher conducted a series of evangelistic tented meetings. With his evident call to ministry, the researcher had the impetus to respond to the social ills that plagued his community. His background in drugs and gangsterism were relevant to the ministry that he would deliver in this community. Despite his degree and a probable better position to succeed in the corporate world, the researcher abandoned all that to be with the marginalised, outcast people. In this, his ministry and the restoration of **human dignity, brought a sense of affirmation** in that the informal settlement's residents were no less human than he was, regardless of his better position.

In spite of all kinds of opposition, the Mount Hope Church was nonetheless founded. Subsequently, in 1995, the Westridge Assembly of God granted autonomy to this newly born

Church. This would be a new era in the researcher's life, as well as the birth of a new entity, as previously referred to in the preceding account. The young Church was not a means of financial support for the researcher's family, which, therefore, resulted in the researcher seeking part-time employment. A normal day's work entailed assessing at the Mitchell's Plain Regional court, chauffeur driving at Imperial Car Rental and, ultimately, the selling of fish and rice just before the evening service.

These circumstances prevailed for what seemed like an endless period until 1998, when the researcher received an invitation to be part of an exchange program to the United States of America. There, the researcher worked with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in gathering and disseminating valuable information in the area of social capacity building. The lessons learned during this time would prove to be a worthy contribution to address, practically, the community's drug-related needs.

The Mount Hope Church started with three families, the researcher, his wife and their two children and two other families who were prepared to cooperate. The task at hand was alarming, but he knew it was the assignment in which the Lord wanted them to engage. The conditions were similar to what Jesus experienced when he passed through all the towns and villages: "When He saw the crowds He had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd (Matthew 9:36). A definition of compassion is the following (www.thefreedictionary.com assessed 21 March 2011):

1. A deep awareness of and sympathy of another's suffering.
2. The humane quality of understanding the suffering of others and wanting to do something about it.

For the founding families of the Mount Hope Church, the drive to respond holistically (body, soul and spirit) to the needs of their context was their passion. Some of the people to whom they ministered were illiterate, so they had to start an adult literacy programme. Others were unemployed and could not feed their families, so they started a feeding scheme. Drugs infiltrated the communities, the children became addicted, so, they had to combat this by starting a drug awareness and recovery programme. The researcher knew the conditions were not unique to this area - there were others who faced similar conditions - and he regarded it as his responsibility to equip himself to then empower those who assisted him. He studied the Bible and other supporting material on the subject, and also networked with people and groups who were like-minded.

In effectively addressing his context, the researcher discovered that isolating himself would do more harm than good. Therefore, he embarked upon networking that is based on trust, not on control. Hendriks (2004:17) intimates that in a network "Relationship are important and an ethos of serving one another drives these relationships."

These relationships are:

… missional in their very being, vision driven, do not harbour a fixation on self and own survival, but reach out to others in their need and suffering, based on Kingdom values. As such, equipping and empowering are key words and key activities. Furthermore, delegation and diversification must take place in a process where the believers' gifts can develop as they reach out to address the challenges that confront their local society. Transparency and accountability are essential values (Hendriks 2004:17).

Mount Hope has developed strong local and international relationships since its inception.

Local partners:

- The YMCA, whose focus is youth at risk. They outsource some of their project funding for us.
- Mitchell's Plain Ministers Fraternal, who meet once a month for a time of prayer and fellowship. At these meetings, ideas and strategies are exchanged.
- Teen Challenge. They have a facility where young people are housed - especially those who want to come clean from drugs, alcohol and gangsterism.
- Churches in the immediate vicinity.
- Non-profit organisations, e.g. Jireh Projects, Grace Feeding Schemes, Foodbank, Woman Arise, Parenting Centre, etc.

International partners:

- Assemblies of God, Nevada District, USA - Dr Sam Huddleston
- Kingdom Life Christian Church, Milford, USA - Bishop Jay Rameriz
- Mount Hope Church, Michigan, USA - Pastor Dave Williams
- Emerald Bible Church, Seattle, USA - Pastor Harvey Drake
- Acts Christian Church, Croydon, England - Bishop Mark Nicholson
- Kingdom Life Christian Church, Namibia - Pastor M Shikonga
- Faith Ministries, Zambia - Bishop E Njobvu.

The researcher knew what he needed to do, but did not know how to minister effectively to the people, because their needs were more than spiritual. The more Gospel crusades (tent

meetings) they held, the bigger the work load became. At one point, he felt more like a social worker than a pastor. He became the chairperson of the community development forum and he had the task of the people's government representative, and also to ensure that their social ills were addressed. Ultimately, **human dignity is restored through social cohesion.**

At the time, their focus was more on *doing* more, than on *being* more. The doing became overwhelming to a point where the researcher developed an escape mentality. As, at this point, he needed to revisit what they were doing as a church. The people started to develop a dependency syndrome and were appealing to them to meet all their needs. They needed to redefine who they were and what they were called to do.

Guder (1998:4) states, "We have come to see that mission is not merely an activity of the church. Rather, mission is the result of God's initiative, rooted in God's purposes to restore and heal creation. 'Mission' means 'sending,' and it is the central biblical theme describing the purpose of **God's action** in human history."

2.4 THE DESCRIPTION OF THE MOUNT HOPE CHURCH

2.4.1   The people

The Mount Hope membership can be described as people who:
- Are confronted and challenged by the changes that take place in the micro-, meso- and macro-contexts.
- Are mostly labourers, semi-skilled, and a small percentage are skilled.
- Are not fully prepared for the changes that confront them in the new South Africa.

It can be said that they are a people who are optimistic about the future and have a strong faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but they are also not in denial about the odds that face them.

2.4.2   The structure

The Church has one full-time pastor. He also serves as the visionary of the Church and a team of leaders constitutes the Church's board. Each leader oversees a different department of the Church's life. There are nine life groups: a senior and junior youth group, a women's and men's department, the children's ministry department, a worship team and a financial board. The Church board meets once a month for evaluation and planning.

2.4.3 Interpersonal dynamics

Many of the congregants come from dysfunctional families and this, in itself, is a problem and a challenge. Congregants find it difficult to live and work together. Some can view this as a crisis, but we interpret it like the Japanese. "The Japanese character for crisis is a combination of the characters for danger and opportunities (or promise); crisis is therefore not the end of opportunity but in reality only its beginning, the point where danger and opportunity meet, where the future is in the balance and where events can go either way" (Bosch 1991:3).

Conflict is inevitable and the researcher never views it as something negative - he always regards it as an opportunity for learning.

As a pastor, the researcher believes that life is about relationships and everything else is mere detail. Where you live, what you drive, what you have is all detail. The Bible says we need to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our mind and with all our soul, and love our neighbour as ourselves. The researcher's understanding is of such a nature that relationships will always be threatened because of the congregants' backgrounds and upbringings, but everything possible should be done to equip those in relationships, and to guide them into maintaining healthy relationships.

It can be said that the congregants are people who are optimistic about the future and have a strong faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but are not in denial about the odds that they face.

2.5 HOW TO IDENTIFY THE PRESENCE OR LACK OF HUMAN DIGNITY

In view of the purpose of this research being finding an answer to the question: **"In a township context, how does one minister to marginalized and outcast people in such a way that their human dignity is restored?"** it is of paramount importance to illustrate what signs reveal the presence or lack of human dignity. The following are the researcher's observations while engaging his community and context.

2.5.1 The lack of human dignity manifests as follows:

1. The lack of basic infrastructure:
   - Proper sanitation
   - Proper running water
   - Proper electricity, etc.

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2. Deplorable economic conditions:

    - Lack of employment

    - Lack of access to financial institutions

3. Degrading social conditions:

    - The disintegration of the family structure, and

    - the absence of proper role models.

4. The escalation of moral decay:

    - The sharp increase in crime and corruption

    - The increase in teenage pregnancies and

    - the decrease in the age of these teenage mothers and fathers

5. The destruction of foundations for capacity building:

    - The escalation of school drop-outs at all levels

    - The unavailability of funding for academic training

    - And, eventually, a lack of access to academic institutions

6. The infringement upon the basic human rights of the poor by the powers that be and the upper classes of society.

2.5.2 The presence of human dignity manifests as follows:

1. Uninhibited access to infrastructure:

    - Properly serviced properties

    - Access to land suitable for habitation

2. Favourable economic conditions:

    - Unprejudiced economic participation

    - Feasible employment opportunities and

    - Unhindered access to financial services.

3. Constructive social conditions:

    - Healthy family structure and

    - Exemplary role models.

4. Moral regeneration:

    - Upright leadership

    - An effective justice system

    - Youth empowerment.

5. Affordable education:

- Skills development
- Academic mentorship programmes
- Recruitment opportunities.

6. Realized protection for the basic human rights of the marginalised and outcast people.

2.6 CONCLUSION

In a township context, it is imperative that anyone who aspires to minister to marginalised and outcast people in a manner that restores human dignity, should take into account patterns and dynamics in episodes and contexts that pertain to the people to whom are being ministered.

CHAPTER 3   CONTEXT THAT SHAPES IDENTITY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

"*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*" (Hendriks 2004: 27).

The critical aspect of being familiar with, and an understanding of, the contextual situation will be a central theme and the heart of the answer to the question that drives this research. This chapter will have a keen focus and an in-depth approach to exposing the link between context and identity.

Every person or group has an identity and lives in a culture. If we regard this as true, we will be more understanding and tolerant of what people do and say. Identity describes the personality, whereas culture describes the world, values, and ways of doing what we create for ourselves. It is very important to note that the research question: **"In a township context, how does one minister to marginalized and outcast people in such a way that their human dignity is restored?"** cannot be answered accurately and sufficiently without describing the relationship between human dignity and identity.

This chapter explains that neither identity nor culture is static; they are always in flux, always in the process of being affirmed, or very slowly being adapted or even recreated (Hendriks 2004:107). The local culture will always influence the relationship between the Gospel's message, the person of Jesus Christ and a given people.

To enable further theological reflection, the contextual analysis of the Mount Hope Church aims to investigate the empirical facts of this influence and reality.

Location:

The source of this information is the *Census 2001, Statistics South Africa*, extracted by urban policy of strategic information obtained in February 2008 (contact person: Mrs Janet Gie, Tel: 021 400 2526). It is important to note that the 2012 statistics were not available at the time of this research.

The 3120 hectares of Mitchell's Plain is located in the False Bay coastal area and is approximately 27 kilometres from Cape Town's central business district. It comprises various suburbs that accommodate a population of approximately 1.5 million people. The focus will be on the immediate areas surrounding the Church, namely Lentegeur and Woodlands (see map attached as an appendix).

Mount Hope is situated on the boundary of Mitchell's Plain, and is located on the corner of Artemis and Ajax Roads in Woodlands. The surrounding areas are Lentegeur, New Woodlands, Heinz Park, Colorado Park and Rondevlei Park. The sanctuary is still under construction, and is built on a piece of land that, according to City Council records, has been vacant since 1975.

Mount Hope's context greatly impacts upon it as a direct result of Mitchell's Plain being predominantly a previously disadvantaged area. Historically, the township was the brain child of the apartheid regime, which meant that some people were forced to relocate there. The absence of industry and employment opportunities imposes upon the people the inconvenience of commuting over long distances. This is all in search of survival and gives rise to children growing up without parental supervision.

The unemployment rate is alarming. People resort to crime for their existence. Church buildings that were once viewed as sacred, holy places have now also become the targets of burglars. This area has only one police station, which has to cover the whole area of approximately 3120 hectares of land.

The social ills prevalent in this context include, but are not limited to, substance abuse, the HIV/Aids pandemic, gangsterism, domestic violence, child abuse, poverty, unemployment, etc.

This context's economic aspect consists of mainly low to medium income groups that are yet to experience a brighter economic day as a result of now being confined to the residual effects of a more recent global economic recession. This means that the recession has only aggravated the circumstances that already prevailed prior to its occurrence.

3.2 FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE CONTEXT

- HIV is plaguing this community and the infection rates have increased considerably. Teenage pregnancy is also rife and school drop-outs are on the increase (this observation comes about by means of the researcher's active participation in the community).

- Many people in this context have not prepared themselves educationally for this post-apartheid era. As they now live in a democratic dispensation, it is impossible to comprehend why they don't qualify for access to opportunities brought about by this new dispensation.

  - Denominationalism is also losing its grip in this context. A chronic disease of "church hopping" is taking place at an alarming rate. Thus, as a result, the problem of people breaking away and starting their own churches escalates. These churches are established because of bitterness and revenge, but there are genuine cases where people leave the township to move to suburbs. Guder (1998:83) says that churches have become vendors of religion - which is extremely visible in this context.

  - In this context, pluralism is the enemy of the Church. Lesslie Newbigin (1989:1) says:

    Pluralism is conceived to be a proper characteristic of the secular society, a society in which there is no officially approved pattern of belief or conduct. It is therefore also conceived to be a free society , a society not controlled by accepted dogma but characterized rather by the critical spirit which is ready to subject all dogmas to critical (and even sceptical) examination.

Newbigin (1989:27) explains: "We are pluralist in respect of what we call beliefs but we are not pluralist in respect of what we call facts. The former are a matter of personal decision; the latter are a matter of public knowledge." The church has an awesome responsibility in communicating the facts. Newbigin (1989:33) adds: "There are not two separate avenues to understanding, one marked 'knowledge' and the other marked 'faith'. There is no knowing without believing, and believing is the way to knowing."

- **Civil wars in African countries:** We experience an influx of refugees coming into our Church. These people flee their countries, leaving family and friends behind, and the local church then becomes their family and community of support.

- **Fundamentalism** also has a great impact on our church community. People are not prepared to work together, especially those who confess to be part of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. The people in the church want answers for the fundamentalist reaction to their interpretation of the Gospel.

- **Capitalism** impacts negatively on the Church, especially economically. People become extremely materialistic and self-centred in this system, which many of our young people embrace and also base their values on this system.

3.3 POPULATION PROFILE

Area	Hectares	Population	Total households
Lentegeur	472 8589	38 871	7949
Woodlands	234 8258	21 261	4538

3.4 TYPES OF DWELLING

Area	Free-standing houses	Flats in blocks	Town-houses	Rooms in backyards	Shacks in backyards
Lentegeur	2144	18	4003	134	32
Woodlands	2662	499	618	81	10

3.5 EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Area	Unemployed (looking for work)	Employed	Other	Total	% Unemployed
Lentegeur	4314	11 753	10 387	26 453	16.3%
Woodlands	2558	6409	5383	14 350	17.8%

HOUSEHOLD INCOME PER ANNUM

0-R2400	R2400-R12 000	R12001-R30 000	R30 001-R54000	R54 001-R96000	R960001-R360000	R360001 Unspecified
L- 268	639	2137	1587	130	7	1032
W- 191	381	1351	1078	187	2	191

L=Lentegeur   W=Woodlands

3.6 LIST OF SCHOOLS

Area	Primary	Secondary
Lentegeur	5	2
Woodlands	2	1

3.7 FACILITIES

	Swimming pool	Community Hall	Library	Clinic	Recreation centre
Lentegeur	1	1	1	1	1 Sports complex
Woodlands	0	0	0	0	1 Sports complex

3.8 HEALTH STATISTICS

	Aids / Death in area	Low birth rate / area
Lentegeur	20	183

3.9 STATUS

	Married	Polygamous marriage	Living together
Lentegeur	11 847	12	6256
Woodlands	6256	6	226

	Never married	Widower/widow	Separated	Divorced
Lentegeur	22 985	1155	301	1152
Woodlands	12 479	710	168	598

3.10 EDUCATIONAL LEVELS

		EDUCATIONAL LEVELS				
	No schooling	**Grade 1-6**	**Grade 7**	**Grade 8**	**Grade 9-11**	**Grade 12**
Lentegeur	479 M	1423 M	1042 M	5698 M	33 M	1935 M

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	486 F	1684 F	1423 F	5942 F	45 F	2206 F
Woodlands	97 M	656 M	482 M	3022 M	42 M	1201 M
	104 F	818 F	792 F	3265 F	39 F	1322

F=Female   M=Male

	Diploma	**B.A Degree**	**Honours**	**Masters**
Lentegeur	129 M	24 M	6 M	3 M
	164 F	30 F	3 F	9 F
Woodlands	159 M	15 M	6 M	3 M
	175 F	15 F	0 F	12 F

F=Female   M=Male

3.11   THE MITCHELL'S PLAIN CRIME STATISTICSS

Crime Research and Statistics - South African Police Service
Crime in Mitchell's Plain (WC) for April to March 2007/2008 - 2011/2012
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Crime Category	April 2007 to March 2008	April 2008 to March 2009	April 2009 to March 2010	April 2010 to March 2011	April 2011 to March 2012
CONTACT CRIMES (CRIMES AGAINST A PERSON)					
Murder	57	59	54	64	66
Total sexual crimes	436	508	474	480	471
Attempted murder	110	107	89	169	141
Assault with the intent to inflict grievous bodily harm	795	745	762	862	823
Common assault	2 141	2 745	2 760	2 453	2 814
Common robbery	760	626	704	1 014	1 036
Robbery with aggravating circumstances	1 537	1 300	968	979	1 036
CONTACT-RELATED CRIMES					
Arson	53	35	32	46	43
Malicious damage to property	1 774	1 602	1 666	1 527	1 545
PROPERTY-RELATED CRIMES					
Burglary at non-residential premises	35	335	354	367	434
Burglary at residential premises	25 225	2 204	2 069	1 938	1 801
Theft of motor vehicle and motorcycle	888	781	545	454	375
Theft out of or from motor vehicle	1 867	1 721	1 844	1 774	2 162
Stock-theft	0	0	0	0	0
CRIMES HEAVILY DEPENDENT ON POLICE ACTION FOR DETECTION					
Illegal possession of firearms and ammunition	154	165	134	167	153
Drug-related crime	4 792	5 705	6 572	6 260	5 850
Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs	402	396	309	469	255
OTHER SERIOUS CRIMES					
All theft not mentioned elsewhere	6 370	6 844	6 088	5 795	6 136
Commercial crime	529	528	427	395	491
Shoplifting	1 987	1 888	2 018	1 476	1 720
SUBCATEGORIES FORMING PART OF AGGRAVATED ROBBERY ABOVE					
Carjacking	107	80	60	53	40
Truck hijacking	1	2	0	0	0
Robbery at residential premises	59	34	32	45	42
Robbery at non-residential premises	42	50	46	65	65
OTHER CRIME CATEGORIES					
Culpable homicide	47	36	26	36	28
Public violence	6	6	6	4	9

3.12 CONCLUSION

The statistical information in this chapter illustrates the seriousness of the context in which Mount Hope finds itself.

The situation in these two areas cannot become more humanly undignified as there is a population of approximately 39 000 and 22 000 in Lentegeur and Woodlands respectively, with not more than 5000 free-standing houses to each of the populations.

The levels of unemployment directly proportional to the level of education are heart-breaking.

The disparities reflected in the annual household incomes, compared to the cost of living, makes it urgent for **"ministering in this context in a manner that restores human dignity"** by presenting a message that will inspire a better identity than the one dictated by the current circumstances or context.

CHAPTER 4   TESTIMONIES

4.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on case studies that provide the practical aspect of the answer to the research question: "**In a township context, how does one minister to marginalized and outcast people in such a way that their human dignity is restored?"** The case studies referred to above will be in the form of personal testimonies by individuals, upon whom Mount Hope has impacted in one way or another. The testimonies will derive their pattern from a case study definition by Hendriks (2004:233): "A case study describes a current phenomenon in a real life situation."

These testimonies have been aired in special meetings and gatherings of both believers and unbelievers for the purpose of encouragement on both sides. The individuals, whose real names appear in their testimonies, have granted permission for their stories to be part of this study without any reservation (see attached signed consent forms).[1] In the researcher's context, it is a norm for people to testify in public about the things from which the Lord has delivered them.

4.2   CEDRIC DAVIDS

I am Cedric Davids, 28 years of age and proudly married to my wife Valene, and we have two beautiful daughters, Tyra (8) and Chesne (5). I grew up in a tavern (a shebeen, as it is commonly known in my context) in a suburb of Cape Town called Parkwood. The tavern was always riddled with brawls and fights between various and feuding gangsters who would be my only role models while growing up.

At the age of eight, we moved to Mitchell's Plain with my then unemployed mother. Soon after moving, due to her employment status, she resorted to prostitution as a way of making ends meet. Invariably, the demands of my mom's supposed occupation to provide for me also caused her always to be absent, thus driving me into a deep-seated hatred towards her. From there, I went in search for love in all the wrong places, and inevitably got entangled in the web of the worst that gangsterism and drugs could offer.

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[1] The original signed testimonies are kept in the researcher's locked safe-deposit box.

Following my enlisting in my new-found company, I literally moved in with a schoolmate whose parents sold drugs and later allowed us also to sell. However, to me, the attribute of drug peddling on the part of my friend's parents was quite normal and justifiable. After all, I came from a tavern. Furthermore, just as long as there was a "mom and dad" in the house, everything else was immaterial. The phenomena of "mom and dad" and a "functional family living together in a home" provided what I had always wanted and, to a large extent, needed.

I later met and married Valene, and we lived in a room at my mother's house. Despite already having a family with growing children, I was never at home – a trait I had learned well from my biological father. It always happened that, when I was present, I became grossly abusive and the end result was my landing in jail.

In the midst of all that, my wife was invited to Mount Hope where she committed her life to the Lord Jesus Christ after she had heard the Gospel. I, on the other hand, found myself longing so much for her and our kids, but we never really connected.

In 2006, I experienced a turning point when I walked into what was then the Mount Hope Worship Centre (now Mount Hope Kingdom Life Christian Church). Pastor Alfonso Schilder greeted me with a firm handshake and a hug. This hug was a first for me, but was strange because, in my background, men never hugged each other.

Already as an addict to tik (crystal meth, or methamphetamine), an absent father and an abusive husband, I was completely ignorant of how to be a good husband and father as I had no valid reference point due to also having had an absent father. But soon the man who gave me my first hug, Pastor Alfonso, began to instill values in me on how to be a dad and husband. In spite of all my impediments at the time which were so bad that my full commitment to the Lord came full circle only in September of 2008, Pastor Alfonso persisted.

He taught me that a dad and husband is not only a provider of finance and that, if he is not physically present, there won't be much order in the home. This was a point from which many things began to make sense - "lights went on," as Pastor Alfonso would often say. I now knew that, according to God's Word, I am the head of my family. Following my full commitment to the Lord in 2008 and all the sowing that Pastor Alfonso did, I became positive about life. I got the only job that I could get at that time - working as a labourer at a wire manufacturing company. With the help of the great God whom I serve, I bounced back

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from retrenchment to working as an office cleaner and eventually to being a Debtors Admin Clerk in one of the offices that I used to clean - all in just a few months!

In 2009, we moved out of my mother's house into our own, as God continued to work amazingly in my life, work, and marriage. To both my daughters, I bounced from being a zero to a hero to the extent that I even led my eldest daughter, Tyra, to Christ.

I therefore thank God for the day I first walked into Mount Hope, as they are really *"A people you can call family, A place you can call home and A place where dreams become a memory."*

Being on the streets taught me everything about how to destroy one's family, but, on the contrary, being in the church taught me much about how to build it up!

I have since become part of the leadership at Mount Hope where I continue to enjoy a father–son relationship with my Pastor, serve on the evangelistic team and the local church's media team, which provides the practical experience I require to complete a qualification as a computer technician.

Praise be to God for all He has done – whereas yesterday I would be the problem, today I'm part of the solution. THANK YOU JESUS!

4.3   DONOVAN LEANDER MANUEL

My name is Donovan Leander Manuel and I am the eldest of four children born to my parents in December 1975 in George, a town in the Southern Cape. When, in my childhood, I had matured enough to understand what was going on, my mother, a single parent, was raising myself and my siblings in our maternal granny's house.

The environment at my granny's house was verbally and physically abusive and led to my rebelling at an early age. In the midst of all that I still felt deeply that my mom neglected me and I was also haunted by a deep longing for my father to be present with me. At the age of fifteen I started using alcohol as an escape mechanism from the problems and hurt that I was facing.

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After matriculating in 1994, which, up to that time, was the best thing to ever happen to me, I moved to Cape Town to live with my father. It turned out that things were not what I had expected, as my father had started another family of his own. I felt like an outcast when faced with my two step-brothers and stepmother.

Nevertheless, I found relief when I began work as a prison warden at Pollsmoor Area Management with my father in 1996. My use of alcohol escalated due to my having chosen it as the only way of dealing with stressful conditions. As such, I quickly gained a bad reputation as my life exhibited a clear sense of no direction due to alcohol abuse and a promiscuous lifestyle.

After all my failed personal attempts to break free all on my own, I was admitted to the Crescent Clinic to be treated by psychologists and psychiatrists for post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and chemical dependency. This continued for five years and cost almost R130 000, and would be the only time I was ever clean. Things took a turn for the worst when I discovered the world's deadliest drug crystal meth (tik). Not long after, I lost everything: my job, family, and friends. It was only by God's grace that I did not go from prison warden to prisoner myself.

I was in denial of need for help and, aggravated by pride and stubbornness since 2005, I came knocking on the doors of the Hope Again Recovery Home. For somebody who was an atheist, the most amazing thing happened to me when I met my Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. At Hope Again Recovery Home I received a safe environment and the opportunity to deal with the root cause of my addictions. It was communicated to me that the drugs and alcohol were just the symptoms and that the spiritual component in my life was missing. I was told that prayer was the only medicine which they prescribe for detoxing and cravings, which I thought was ridiculous at the time. Surprisingly, when I looked back after two months, what they told me held true. And, from there and then, my life would never be the same again.

I have since grown into a strong believer in Jesus Christ and can also counsel others. In addition, the desire to help people in a similar situation like the one I came out of grows deeper each day.

At Hope Again I learned the fantastic detail of how conflict can be turned into an opportunity to solve a problem. On top of an upgrade to my life skills, I discovered my

purpose for living, who I really was, as well as how important I am to God and the current generation.

Jesus' mission on earth was to reconcile man to God. But, I found that He not only reconciled me to God but that, during my six months on the recovery program, reconciliation and restoration took place in the relations between myself, my family and friends.

Today, by the grace of God, I am in my second year of studies toward a B.A. in Bible and Theology, to be better equipped to assist the broken and the lost through a remedy called Jesus Christ!

4.4 GRANT BURGESS

My name is Grant Burgess, a 25 year old single male. My experience of growing up was pretty much average, to say the least. There's no heart-breaking story about a father who was never there or a single mother who had to work at two jobs just to make ends meet. I was a very happy and contented child, even spoilt to a certain extent. Both of my parents are still alive and have always been present all throughout my life. "He's a good kid. Never gives us any problems." That's what they always said. But they were in for a surprise!

I did well at school, but that was no big deal - as I was the teacher's son, it was expected. I didn't feel any pressure because it wasn't a struggle for me to do my schoolwork. I had the same group of friends throughout primary and high school and they were good guys - no bad influences to speak of.

After I matriculated, the trouble started. My school friends had gone their separate ways and I had to try to make new friends, as I was now on my own at a new school. (I was studying IT at the Cape Technicon.) I think this was when I learned how to isolate myself from the world around me. I found it hard to fit in, so, when I was in a social environment I felt very awkward and had no self-confidence. This was also the reason why I started using drugs, because it gave me the confidence that I needed. Drugs allowed me to be that person who could speak to people, who could be the life of the party - for a while at least.

As I fell deeper and deeper into the pit of substance abuse, I moved onto harder drugs until I used heroin. From that point on nothing else mattered, I didn't want to do anything else. I had found the perfect drug.

In the beginning, it was fun. Heroin made me feel like a superhero - like I could do anything. I was hooked. My addiction got to the point where I could no longer function without it being in my system and this meant having to use it every hour of every day. And the severe withdrawal symptoms saw me doing things I had never dreamed of doing, just to keep them at bay. Eventually, it all just became too much. I needed help.

Then began the vicious cycle of going to rehab, coming home, relapsing, life becoming unmanageable, and then back to rehab again. I must have gone through this routine more than ten times and each time it just became worse and the time between each "phase" became shorter.

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Eventually, I reached a point where I had nowhere to turn to. My parents had given up and wanted nothing to do with me. I ended up having to sleep outside because I just could not be trusted any longer and was not allowed in their home. I tried going back to some of the previous rehabs I had been at before, but even they said there was nothing more they could do for me.

I remembered that there was one place that my dad had told me about. It was based at a church and close to where I lived, within walking distance, so I decided to go there. The rehab was called Hope Again Recovery Home and it was at the Mount Hope Church in Woodlands, Mitchell's Plain. So, I went there, had an interview and was told to return the next day to start their out-client programme. I then went home to let my parents know what was happening and they actually let me back into their house, because someone from Hope Again had called my dad and told him that I had been there. Wow!

I did the out-client thing for about a week and was then told that I was going to be part of the live-in programme, which involved living in the church for six months. I had nothing better to do, so I gave it a shot. Now, because the rehab was in a church, this meant that we (the guys in the rehab) would become part of the Church. But, this was no ordinary church, at least not to me.

My family was Anglican and I grew up in the Anglican Church. That's where I was baptised, went to Sunday school, then Bible class and my confirmation. To my mind, this meant I didn't have to go to church anymore, except maybe for Christmas and Easter. At Mount Hope, it was nothing like the traditional Anglican Church with which I was familiar. In the beginning, I honestly thought that it was a cult using the word "church" to lure people in. I thought I would just pretend to go along with it until my time in the rehab had expired, and then I could go home. But here's the problem with pretending, you can only do it for so long and I'm not that good an actor.

Anyway, I stopped pretending, started to listen to what the cult people were saying and eventually did what they were advising me to try. I was saved and allowed God to take control of my life. And just like that, every aspect of my life started taking a turn for the better. My relationship with my family improved, and not just with my immediate family, but with my extended family as well. My self-confidence grew and it became easier to make friends and interact with others. I also found my spiritual home at Mount Hope. I felt that I

fitted in and decided to join their Church. God has blessed me in so many ways and I wish it could have happened sooner rather than later.

There was one difference between Hope Again and all the rehabs I had been to before. That difference was God. He is the reason why none of those other places ever worked and this is the reason for Hope Again's success. I came to realise this after handing my life over to Him completely - the best thing I could have done, ever.

Clearly the phenomena reflected in the testimonies of these men directly indicate a vicious cycle that is prevalent in the township context, as described in chapter 3 of this research. The stories told by these men are but a drop in the ocean of those yet to be told. For the sake of a balanced account of real life stories in the Mount Hope context, the women's stories must be told too.

4.5   FRANCIS PETERSEN

My name is Francis Petersen. I am a forty year old married woman with three children – two girls and one boy. I grew up not knowing my parents and was left to my granny to raise me. When she passed away, my aunt took over.

I met my mom for the first time after I had turned 18, and was filled with so much anger that I began to rebel against everyone. My anger was even directed at my granny, who had already died, because she was the only person from whom I could learn Godliness.

In the midst of all that, I met Alfred, my husband, who, at that time, was a gang leader and a user of substances. Irrespective of Alfred being in or out of prison, I persisted in the relationship until I was married to him at the age of 22. Soon thereafter our first lovely daughter was born and Alfred stopped using drugs but replaced the habit with alcohol abuse.

After losing the house we had bought in Strandfontein, Cape Town, in 1992, we now found ourselves in an informal settlement called Happy Valley at the time, and later Heinz Park. In my bitterness, I began to resent everyone including myself, as I was pregnant and my husband was not working. By then, I had begun a process of divorcing my husband due to having given up on my marriage to him.

Also around that same time, I was introduced to the Lord Jesus Christ by Pastor Alfonso's preaching of the Gospel in the Heinz Park Community. I was the type of a person who thought nothing of myself to the extent that I always believed that I was entitled to nothing

in this life. But then, I started to apply the principles that were taught to us at the Mount Hope Church and my life took a turn for the good. First, my husband found work because I then stood by him as I was taught at the Church - an occurrence that meant that I did not go through with the divorce.

I was taught how to be a mother to my kids, because I never had a mother figure from whom I could have learned lessons in parenting. After these events, I got back my self-esteem and self–respect. The teachings and principles that the Church gave me completely altered the angle from which I would see life from this time on. Furthermore, I continued to glean from offerings of a Focus on the Family programme on how to become a better wife for my husband and a mother who can be role model for my children. My husband and I now have a great relationship, and he had since stopped drinking 13 years ago and things have become better in our lives.

I was then challenged to equip myself. This led to my taking a class in computers. I went on to be trained as a social auxiliary worker. Currently, I'm now at Bible School in my second year.

After 17 years at Mount Hope, I currently serve in the capacity of a programme manager at Hope Again Recovery Home for women as well as on the Fundraising Committee. Hope Again Recovery Home is a programme based at Mount Hope and is designed to bring a solution to the community's struggle with substance abuse. In all truth, it is still hard for me to completely believe that I have turned out the way I did. Thank you Lord Jesus.

4.6 ROCHELLE GLYNIS PIENAAR

My name is Rochelle Glynis Pienaar and I'm a 28 year old female, recently married to Godfrey. I've been a member of the Mount Hope Kingdom Life Christian Church for the last eight years.

I grew up in a Christian (yet dysfunctional) family where my father was in adulterous relationships and a born-again mom, who played the role of both mom and dad for the past 20 years. I have three siblings and we're very close to each other and to our mom. Growing up as a young lady I lacked self-confidence, had a low self-esteem and feared people. I was hurting and suffered from an identity crisis. As a result, I became mentally delusional because of what happened in our family home for so many years. Despite being saved at the age of ten, I lacked significantly in my relationship with the Almighty God.

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Growing up in the church or church environment was all I knew and I never regret it for a moment. However, the principles of going to church, loving God, spending time in reading the Word, serving God and others, had been taught to me from home and they helped me to serve others in the kingdom of God. Growing up was very challenging, but I can truly say that I don't regret those days either, as, without those challenges, I would never have been who I am.

When I came to Mount Hope in 2002, I was saved but I was also hurting and broken from the things in the past and I just couldn't move forward. Just when I thought I did, it didn't happen, and God had to bring me to a point of making me realize that He wanted to have a relationship with me and also wanted to heal and set me free to worship Him.

At Mount Hope, various ministries and projects are running and one of them, which I personally attended, was **Cycle Breakers.** In essence, the word really means "breaking the cycles of the past." I attended these sessions for about a year and it has helped me to break cycles, be healed and be set free completely from past experiences. I now truly live my life to the fullest. After learning these tools in how to overcome, I have never looked back and today I'm moving forward; I have grown spiritually, mentally and I am emotionally stronger. Today, I am no longer just serving God, but have a relationship with Him and with people, and I am alive in Christ. Pastor Alfonso and I truly enjoyed the eight years that I've served, because I was stretched and challenged. I would say that, in that time of not having a relationship with my biological father, having to meet a wonderful man such as him was wonderful, but scary at first, not knowing what to expect because of where I had come from. But, over time, God did the healing and I've grown to love my dad, and today we have a wonderful relationship.

What I have learned in my home and in the Church made me the woman I am today. I am once again spiritually and emotionally stable. I am living life to the fullest in serving God with all that I am.

Zechariah 4:6 "'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty." Amen!

4.7 CONCLUSION

For Mount Hope to minister effectively in a township context to all these individuals in such a way that their human dignity was restored, it was imperative for the leadership to be empathetic, compassionate, decisive and relevant. Without these attributes, the preceding testimonies would have been impossible.

According to Rodney Stark (1996:80), "If we are Christians our faith does claim to have answers." Furthermore, "Faith makes life meaningful." In these testimonies, "Christianity is therefore a system of thought and feeling thoroughly adapted to a time of troubles in which hardships, disease and violent death may commonly prevail" (1996:81).

CHAPTER 5   THE NORMATIVE TASK

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In his discussion on the normative perspective, Osmer (2008:131) refers to the following important fact: "an ethic of equal regard, is a perspective in which all human beings are viewed as having equal moral worth and dignity." This statement undergirds the answer to the research question: **"In a township context, how does one minister to marginalized and outcast people in such a way that their human dignity is restored?"**

Nevertheless, it is the researcher's conviction that, without the involvement of the Holy Spirit, it would be entirely impossible to realize Osmer's normative approach to Practical Theology. Simply stated, a normative task is one with an element of a prophetic sense of discernment in which a community of faith must discern the will of God.

In this chapter, Mount Hope prophetically discerns the will of God for its context from the following perspectives:

5.2   PROPHETIC PURPOSE AND IDENTITY OF MOUNT HOPE

5.2.1   Purpose

The purpose of the church is to represent God's reign as its community, its servant and its messenger (Guder 1998:103).

- **Representing the reign of God as its community**

  Before the church is called to do or say anything, it is called and sent to be a unique community of those who live under the reign of God. "The church displays the first fruits of the forgiven and forgiving people of God who are brought together across the rubble of dividing walls that have crumbled under the weight of the cross" (Guder 1998:103). The variety of associations across all common dividing lines, i.e. class, colour, race, creed or even gender, in which Mount Hope is involved, sets Mount Hope apart as such a community.

- ### **Representing the reign of God as its servant**

Jesus' earthly ministry was one of serving. Thus, as the servant to God's passion for the world's life, the church represents the reign of God by its deeds (Guder 1998:105). This is befitting of Mount Hope, since it is known that "God our Saviour wants all people to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3-4). Furthermore, by the standard of Guder's extensive thesis on Jesus' servanthood and authority, it is essential to note that Mount Hope has exemplified a similar pattern. Guder (1998:105) maintains that one is in authority in so far as one is under authority! Similarly, under the authority of Jesus the Christ – the Son of the living God - Mount Hope has exercised its authority under the reign of God over all kinds of "brokenness, oppression, alienation and domination" in its immediate context, and the manifest result was restored dignity to all those who received ministry through Mount Hope. A quick glance at the preceding chapter will provide a perfectly matching picture.

- ### **Representing the reign of God as its messenger**

"Jesus believed it to be his mission to announce the presence of the reign of God, its implications and call. It was his mission to put into words what was true about his presence and his deeds" (Guder 1998:106). Osmer made reference to how the prophets of the Old Testament proclaimed prophetic messages to restore God's people into a covenant with God. In Jesus' approach of announcing the reign of God, there is a reflection of what the Old Testament did when they dealt with their context. Mount Hope also shares this missional role. Announcing the reign of God comes as a spontaneous expression of gratitude, humility and joy when it occurs in the context of being the forgiven community that embodies the divine reign and signals its character in actions of compassion, justice and peace. The sense of prophetic discernment for Mount Hope rests fully upon the call to be a harbinger announcing to the marginalised and outcast people of Mitchell's Plain that, according to Isaiah the prophet, their light has come and therefore they need to arise and shine!

5.2.2 Identity

The researcher maintains that Mount Hope's identity cannot be sought outside of the Word of God, nor can it be imposed by those outside the church wishing to define it illegitimately.

Mount Hope is a group of people called by God and sent by Him on a mission. They belong to God and He defines who they are in his Word. They are called children of God, witnesses, salt of the earth, light of the world, agents and instruments to represent God's reign, a foretaste and sign of his divine reign, and "ambassadors for Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:20). These are just a few of the metaphors to describe the identity of the church. Your identity is your unique personality that comprises a number of characteristics which distinguish you from other people (Hendriks 2004:105). In this same regard, the distinguishing factor of the Mount Hope Church is its passion to minister to marginalized and outcast people in such a manner that their human dignity is restored.

5.3   MOUNT HOPE AS A MISSIONAL COMMUNITY

According to Guder (1998:11), the word "missional" properly defined refers to "The essential nature and vocation of the church as God's called and sent people."

Since the church is a community of people called by God and sent on a mission, this could happen in any place or country. Guder (1998:82) says that mission is not something the church does as part of its total programme. "The church's essence is missional, for the calling and sending action of God forms its identity. Mission is formed on the mission of God in the world, rather than the church's effort to extend itself."

Mount Hope's understanding of the *missio Dei*, or God's mission, as presented by Guder, is frankly that the mission of God is not subservient to programmes that the church puts together, but that the church's programmes are drawn from it to serve it.

What Guder expresses in these sentiments about God's mission and partly the position of the church in relation to that mission, is the cornerstone of Mount Hope's intention to restore human dignity in its context. In essence, Mount Hope's efforts and ministry to the outcast and marginalised people is done in a manner that restores human dignity to them. They have found that all their efforts mean nothing if God's mission on earth did not undergird them.

The church's essence is always embodied in some tangible, visible form that is shaped by its particular time in history and its place in some specific human society (Guder 1998:86). As previously stated, in carrying out God's mission in its context, Mount Hope insists on the mission being seen, touched and encountered by especially the marginalised and outcast.

In the process of prophetically discerning the will of God in, and for, their context, Mount Hope needs to conform to a missional ecclesiology. As a missional community in the process of discerning the will of God, Mount Hope will use as its framework a sound missional ecclesiology. The researcher's personal understanding of Guder's thesis on a missional ecclesiology lies in his separation of the two words in order to seek individual understanding of each one's role in the existence of the church.

- Missional – says that the church exists out of God's mission and that the church exists for that same mission.
- Ecclesiology - says that the church is the *ekklesia*; the called-out ones. Therefore, ecclesiology is an understanding of who the church is called to be and also what the church is called to do.

5.3.1 Properties of a missional ecclesiology (Guder 1998:11-12)

A. **A missional ecclesiology is biblical.** Whatever one believes about the church, it has to be founded on what the Bible teaches. Moreover, these biblical perspectives must be made explicit. The biblical witness is appropriately received as a testimony to God's mission and the formation of God's missionary people to be the instruments and witnesses of that mission.

B. **A missional ecclesiology is historical.** When we shape our ecclesiology for a particular culture, we must take into consideration the historical development of other ecclesiologies. Today, this means carefully reading our Western history and the worldwide emergence of the church. As part of our catholicity, we are guided by the Christian church in all its cultural expressions, those that preceded us and those that are contemporary with us.

C. **A missional ecclesiology is contextual.** Every ecclesiology is developed within a particular cultural context. There is but one way to be the church, and that is incarnationally, within a specific concrete setting. The Gospel is always translated into a culture, and God's people are formed in that culture in response to the translated and Spirit-empowered Word. All ecclesiologies function relative to their context. Their truth and faithfulness are related both to the proclamation of the Gospel and to the witness they foster in every culture.

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D. A missional ecclesiology is eschatological. Our doctrine of the church must be developmental and dynamic by nature if we believe that the church is the work of the creating and inspiring Spirit of God and is moving toward God's promised consummation of all things. Neither the church, nor its interpretive doctrine, may be static. New biblical insights will convert the church and its theology; new historical challenges will raise questions never before considered; and new cultural contexts will require a witnessing response that redefines how we, as Christians, function and hope.

E. A missional ecclesiology is practical. The basic function of all theology is to equip the church for its calling. If that calling is fundamentally missional, then what we understand and teach about the church will shape God's people for their faithful witness in particular places. A missional ecclesiology serves the church's witness as it "makes disciples of all nations … teaching them to obey everything that I [Jesus] have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20).

5.4 MOUNT HOPE AS A FAMILY

Osmer has made use of ethical norms to approach the normative task of dealing with a dysfunctional adolescent. Almost similar to Osmer's thesis, Mount Hope has developed into a unique family. It is unique in the sense that formally dysfunctional people have been "evangelized and constituted" into a functional family unit, through spiritual and ethical norms. Now, the uniqueness of this family unit is further demonstrated in its capacity to discern the will of God.

The church has been regarded as a *place* and little emphasis has been placed on the church being a *people*. This could be one of the reasons why many Christians remain immature and never grow to maturity in Christ. The church is being re-conceived as a community, a gathered people, brought together by a common calling and vocation to be a sent people. Mount Hope has encapsulated this in its declarative slogan proclaimed in every Sunday morning worship service as follows: *"Mount Hope is a people you can call family and a place you can call home. It is a place where dreams become a memory."*

As important as it is for a church to strengthen families in order to become a domestic church, it is equally important for a congregation to become like a family (Strommen & Hardel 2000:157).

The divorce rate is escalating in this community, families are disintegrating and the impact is devastating. The church is faced with hurting people, a more psychologically scared youth and more fragmented families, as never before. More and more youth will never know close family life and the security of being loved and cared for. However, for them, a congregation can provide the experience of being part of a close family. Strommen and Hardel (2000:157) cannot say it more profoundly:

> Like no other institution, a congregation can become a family to its members. Through intergenerational activities a congregation can create opportunities for members to become surrogate parents, uncles, aunts, brothers or sisters to one another. A congregation is the only institution in a community that is open to all ages and is equipped in its programme and message to provide a family experience.

Mount Hope's solid stance on becoming a family is with the intention to minister to marginalized and outcast people in such a manner that their human dignity is restored. This stance is appropriately drawn from the words of the psalmist when, in Psalm 68:7, he says: "God sets the lonely in a family."

5.4.1 Qualities of a congregation that is a family

A hospitable climate

"The Effective Christian Education study found that a strong contributor to a congregational sense of family is the welcome that a congregation gives strangers" (Strommen & Hardel 2000:159).

Congregations with a hospitable environment acknowledge the presence and gifts of their children and youth. A warm climate not only disarms preconceptions, but also generates faith. Romans 12:13 states: *"Share with God's people who are in need and practise hospitality."* Hospitality will not happen accidentally – it must be taught and practised as Peter confirms this fact in 1 Peter 4:9 by admonishing as follows: "Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling."

A caring environment

Mount Hope serves a community where people are more concerned with how much one cares than how much one knows. With the church attracting many young people, it has been noticed that the younger generation is highly sensitive to a congregation's atmosphere. Tension caused by divisions and power struggles alienates them, but an atmosphere of

warmth, cohesiveness and exuberance attracts them. An operational style that is open–minded and offers freedom and warmth contributes greatly towards a caring climate, while preference for the status quo and self-protection convey carelessness. *"Congregations that are predominantly grace-oriented see God as personal and caring, and they live in a gracious, caring way. Those congregations that are predominently law-oriented tend to see salvation as something to be earned, and they tend to be concerned about how people live"* (Strommen & Hardel 2000:170).

Mount Hope has developed a non-judgemental environment, in which God's love that they share, leads people to repentance.

A thinking climate

Studies have shown that an environment that encourages people to think is very important in developing a sense of family. The Mount Hope leadership fosters an intellectually stimulating atmosphere through their approach to preaching and teaching that stimulates thought, encourages questions, and provokes inquiry. In the book of Acts 17:11, the Berean Church motivated this model: "Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true."

Families who help families

Acts 2:44-45 says, "All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to **anyone** as he had need." Mount Hope stresses the point that they are a family and are very observant to the needs of others, not only the needs of the church's families, but also to the needs of families in the communities. Hence our programmes to help families, e.g. the feeding scheme, drug recovery programme, cycle breakers, etc.

Emphasis on prayer

Christian circles have the popular saying: "A family that prays together, stays together." By implication, this statement suggests that Mount Hope is a united front both in faith and in spirit, and is directly connected to a corporate prayer environment. Furthermore, for this environment to be well cemented, Mount Hope combines praying together with studying the

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Scriptures together. This then becomes the environment where the family achieves the highest level of personal edification.

However, a strong emphasis on prayer is imperative in Mount Hope's context, given the picture drawn by this research's statistics in chapter 3. The victories that Mount Hope has achieved, and still continues to achieve, becomes scripturally affirmed when one refers to portions of Scripture such as: "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the power of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12). And "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

Prayer creates a form of fellowship that is fundamental to a community of believers. Prayer brings about a consciousness of God's presence, of who we are as his people, and of specific needs in the community. At Mount Hope the membership, as a family, embraces a belief in the power of prayer.

Intergenerational service efforts

Mount Hope encourages the bridging of the intergenerational gap that affects its members. The older women mentor younger women through engaging in various programmes together, and teaching them various life skills as well as acceptable Christian conduct.

The older men also mentor younger men by investing their time in them. This investment of time ranges from taking time for going out on excursions, e.g. hiking, mountaineering and playing all kinds of sport with the mentees.

Once every year, Mount Hope hosts a programme called Focus on the Family with a strict emphasis on fostering a reality of healthy and functional families.

A sense of mission

When a sense of mission is present in a congregation, it helps create a sense of family. It enables a congregation to affect the lives of its own people and all those who come into contact with them. When members feel that they are part of something bigger than

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themselves, they tend to bond and unite with the congregation. Mount Hope encourages people to participate in the mission regardless of their past. We present the whole Gospel through the **whole church.**

Congregations with a sense of family, in partnership with families that are close to one another and close to God, raise young people who have a committed faith in God.

5.5 CONCLUSION

In Mount Hope's normative approach, it has emerged that, for one to carry out any assignment, it is imperative that they understand who they are, as well as who enables them to fulfil the mission at hand. Consequently, the discovery of the prophetic purpose, the willingness to represent the reign of God, as well as following a solid missional ecclesiology, brought Mount Hope, in the township context, to a place of successfully ministering to the marginalised and outcast people in such a way that their human dignity was restored.

CHAPTER 6   SYSTEMS THEORY AND PARADIGMS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this interpretive part of the research, the descriptive empirical task and the normative approach will be in dialogue with one another for the purposes of answering the research question: **"In a township context, how does one minister to marginalized and outcast people in such a manner that their human dignity is restored?"**

Furthermore, the research question will be answered by demonstrating the link between thinking systems and paradigms. This chapter's conclusion will provide a brief illustration of the centrality of a systems-sensitive leadership role in preserving the dignity of individuals in different thinking systems.

At this stage, it is important to examine the definition of the interpretive task in the overall scope of this chapter's effort to address the implications of the research question. In Osmer's (2008:4) words, the interpretive task is: "Drawing on theories of the arts and sciences to better understand and explain why these patterns and dynamics are occurring."

To a large extent, the researcher draws inspiration from Osmer's thoughts expressed in his definition of the interpretive task. In the researcher's experience, through participative observation of his context, people in the townships are often criticised for how they think, what they do, and how they do it and all this without understanding the "why" factor. In the researcher's quest to establish reasons for his own father's abusive and irresponsible behaviour both as father and husband, he asked him: "Dad why did you do the things you did to us as a family?" His father's response was: "If I knew better I would have done better." The answer to the researcher's question implied that ignorance was the main reason for his father's actions.

In as much as ignorance must never become an excuse for all failure, it needs to be credibly noted that ignorance is not exclusive to people in a township context. Furthermore, it is the researcher's conviction that ignorance is the absence of truth in any context.

From all this, the researcher has reasonably concluded that people's actions are a direct result of their paradigm. A paradigm is a mind-set; a philosophical and theoretical framework of a scientific school or discipline within which theories, laws, and generalizations and the experiments performed in support of them are formulated (Hendriks 2004:19).

Paradigms are tough to take hold of, or to address, because of the following reasons:

- They are subconscious. Most of the time, few of us know we have them.
- They exercise power over us. Convictions of right and wrong are often anchored in our paradigms.
- They are an integral part of our identity.

Many people think they live by the saying: "Seeing is believing," but what they really live by is: "What you believe is what you see," which is a paradigm.

6.2 SYSTEMS OPERATIVE IN THE MOUNT HOPE CONTEXT

According to Armour and Browning's (2000:11-100) system theory, there are eight systems that govern how people view the world, namely:

System one: The world is capricious (impulsive, unpredictable) and uncertain, threatening my existence at any moment. Compelling drive: physical survival.

System two: The world is ruled by unseen forces of good and evil that control our well-being. Compelling drive: safety from the unseen.

System three: The world is a dog–eat–dog place, where only the tough survive. Compelling drive: power over the adversary.

System four: The world is governed by timeless principles and eternal absolutes. Compelling drive: transcendent truth and principles.

System five: The world is teeming with unlimited potential for personal success and fulfilment. Compelling drive: personal achievement.

System six: The world is so interdependent that every life–form and individual is a cherished treasure. Compelling drive: egalitarianism (equal rights for all) and ecology.

System seven: The world is a vast network of complex, often paradoxical, relationships, where ever–changing realities demand holistic approaches to life.

System eight: The world is a single planetary organism, an integrated whole in which boundaries between mind, matter and energy are elusive. Compelling drive: Holistic identity and convergence.

At this stage, it is important to note that this chapter will focus on systems three, four and five.

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"Every person has a system of thinking, a world view, and a set of ideas that form the frame of reference with which he or she interprets life and makes decisions" (Armour & Browning 2000:15-20).

In chapter 3, which is a critical part of the descriptive section of this research, one can clearly observe the contributing factors that shape these specific thinking systems. It must be mentioned that in the Mount Hope context, a small percentage of individuals are still stuck in system three, while the older folk have been found to be oriented in system four, and the young adults - both single and married - tend to lean significantly towards system five.

6.2 SYSTEM THREE

As per the discussion of the Mount Hope context, it was revealed that gangsterism and poverty are features that define some of the people in this context. According to the systems theory, system three is defined by the following world view: "The world is a dog–eat–dog place where only the tough survive" (Armour & Browning 2000:58). This world view is typical of gangsterism and poverty as they relate to the context of this research.

Weaknesses and limitations seen in this system (Armour & Browning 2000:60)**:**
- "Sees force as the solution to every problem
- Little is governed by principle
- Takes "unfair advantage" without pangs of conscience
- Exploits people and leaves them embittered
- Has a meagre sense of the future
- Does not consider long-range consequences
- Tends to dehumanize opponents and to humiliate the vanquished."

Visible traps in this system (Armour & Browning 2000:61)**:**
- "Excessive violence
- Cruelty
- Raw hedonism and overindulgence of pleasure
- Foolhardy lifestyle."

System three organizations take the form of a power pyramid with:
- "powerful decision makers at the top

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- trusted lieutenants surrounding the 'big boss' [This is also evident in drug and gang cultures in Mount Hope's context]
- everyone else arranged in a precise pecking order
- voiceless masses at the bottom" (Armour & Browning 2000:61).

6.3 SYSTEM FOUR (Armour & Browning 2000:65-74)

System four is built on a world view that says, "The world is governed by timeless principles and eternal absolutes." This system describes individuals who are uncomfortable with change applicable to a particular status quo. It is also typical of a leader in the church whose management style lacks flexibility and who rigidly uses "principles" and "laws."

The following characteristics of the older folk can clearly be observed in this system: their devotion to ideals, their strong moral codes and their faithful covenanting. They are individuals who demand hard work, truthfulness, integrity, and civilised behaviour.

These people react very negatively to undisciplined hedonistic lifestyles, wastefulness, dishonesty, laziness and disrespect for authority. The weakness of this system and its people lies in their tendency to see all things in black and white, eventually becoming bureaucratic and legalistic. Lastly, this system relies on feelings of guilt for motivation and finds it difficult to deal with change (Hendriks 2004:61). System four builds on systematic thinking and logical deductions.

System four organizations are hierarchical with
- "clearly defined layers of management
- decision making concentrated in the top echelon
- leaders chosen on the basis of
    1. their loyalty to the institution and its ideals
    2. their proven dedication and reliability
- extensive regulations with extensive bureaucracy to enforce them
- followers with a high sense of duty that can yield a compliant acceptance of leadership initiatives" (Armour & Browning 2000:70).

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6.4   SYSTEM FIVE (Armour& Browning 2000:75-85)

System five is based on the world view that "the world is teeming with unlimited potential for personal success and fulfilment."

System five regards options as freedom to choose, to tailor things to personal taste and preference and this system is particularly vulnerable to status-seeking – the right address, the right car, the right school for the kids.

Most of the young educated individuals in the Mount Hope context lean towards this system and their actions make this evident. The researcher's observations and interaction with those who are system-five dominant, support these findings.

Individuals in this system respond negatively to all forms of incompetence, uninformed leadership, cumbersome rules, regulations and slow decision-making processes. This system has many good traits to get a job done, but lacks the very integral parts that bind families and communities together, and those are the relational components.

> The system is so functional that it does not care, or does not have the time, to address the issues of those who cannot perform according to their standards. People are judged by what they do, not who they are. Ultimately, relationships are secondary; burnout and depression are the trademarks of system five together with broken marriages, unhappy children and a deep sense of insecurity coupled with a lack of self-esteem beneath loud outward appearances (Hendriks 2004:62).

6.3   SYSTEMS THEORY AS APPLIED TO CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

The researcher believes that one's understanding and response to congregational life has much to do with spiritual assumptions and attitudes in the same way as Gilbert R Rendle (1998) portrays in his book, *Leading change in the congregation*.

However, as he puts it, this is equally a spiritual issue as it is a conceptual one, wherein ideologies and language provide a focus and framework for one's understanding. These may often inhibit one from seeing beyond that same focus and framework.

As the systems theory provides a helpful, more organic language and system of ideas that brings about more appropriate responses, these responses certainly go beyond ordinarily solving problems and seeking control.

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A general systems approach allows a leader to understand congregations by looking through the lens of certain key ideas to see and understand how to respond to the whole congregation.

Such an approach does not invite leaders to control the congregation. Rather, leaders can take a much more organic approach towards understanding their congregation and determining an appropriate response that would enable the congregation to do what it naturally and faithfully is able to do in a time of change. The congregation is viewed as an organism in view of the following:

- It has interrelated and interconnected parts
- Its behaviour is less casual than connected
- It naturally seeks balance or equilibrium, and
- In itself, the parts and the whole interact.

These preceding thoughts of Gilbert Rendle (1998:51–55) illustrate a similar situation in which the Mount Hope Church finds itself.

6.4   SYSTEM SENSITIVE LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES

> System sensitive leadership implies the ability to understand that there are different worldviews and ways of living, and abilities to deal with them. One must understand that each system has its own unique characteristics, its own beauty and dangers, strengths and weaknesses.
> Each system has also its unique way of organising itself, of responding to crisis, of structuring relationships, family life and roles. Images of God, a sense of time, sin, salvation, spirituality, fear, leadership, learning styles and characteristic activities all differ in various systems (Hendriks 2004:56).

With all the different systems highlighted in their context, the Mount Hope leadership used their systems "know–how" to create a healthy multisystem church where all the systems work together in harmony, as Armour and Browning put it. Nevertheless, the creation of the healthy multisystem Mount Hope Church is built on a few important principles worth mentioning in this part of the research, i.e. principles of Inclusivity, Affirmation and Ownership.

6.4.1 Inclusivity

The Mount Hope context is one where no one is excluded, regardless of their thinking system or paradigm. There are individuals who long for the "good old days" at the expense of disregarding the value of modern days; those who still struggle with the mentality of the "survival of the fittest" without embracing the opportunity to thrive with others as a unit; as well as those who, in a world of endless opportunity and potential, are still without the wisdom of trying to exhaust the potential of the "what" without any due regard to the "who." All these individuals are treated as equally important and their contributions - great or small – are regarded as equally valuable.

6.4.2   Affirmation

In the context under discussion, there is a serious diversity of individuals who come from various walks of life. Directly alongside a clearly affluent group, who are endowed with achievements and material possessions of all kinds, are those who live from hand to mouth every day. The most relevant definition of affirmation in the Mount Hope context is one where affirmation is "the declaration that something is true" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Affirmation. The principle of affirmation, applied by a systems-sensitive leadership, is here aimed at affirming both the affluent and the non–affluent for the worth of their persons, regardless of what they have, or don't have, and regardless of their achievements, or lack thereof, following the scriptural assertion in the New Testament where Jesus Christ pronounced that "the life of a man does not consist in the abundance of the things he has" (Luke 12:15). Ultimately, the value of a person has nothing to do with what *they have*, but it has everything to do with *who they are*.

6.4.3   Ownership

Here, ownership refers to the overall task of ministry to the congregation, that sometimes becomes the sole and exclusive ownership of the leadership, and the congregation is often relegated to total spectatorship.

In the reality of the Mount Hope multisystem, the principle of ownership has been found to be critical. The leadership mandated all the small groups in the Church, known as life groups, to manage a significant part of the Sunday morning worship meetings, as well as initiating programmes for the Sunday evening services. By so doing, the members from

across the spectrum of systems are being challenged to perceive that they are not only good for receiving ministry, but to minister too! Similarly, the multisystem dynamic of all these life groups receives a sense of congregational ownership of the ministry task, alluded to by Armour and Browning (2000:105).

6.5   GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR A SYSTEMS-SENSITIVE LEADER

First, they view their congregation as several systems flowing side by side. A place where "win-lose" standoffs give way to a "win-win-win".

Second, systems–sensitive leaders focus on keeping all the streams in their congregation healthy. Unhealthy systems are unlikely to work collaboratively or appreciatively with other systems.

Third, systems–sensitive leadership knows when and where to adjust the balance with which various systems flow through congregational life. While it's vital to affirm all systems continually, there are times when some systems need more prominence than others.

Fourth, systems–sensitive leaders create numerous islands of expression and affirmation for the systems in their congregation (Armour & Browning 2000:104,105).

The application of these guidelines from Armour and Browning and the principles referred to earlier have added value to the Mount Hope leadership in answering the research question: **"In a township context, how does one minister to marginalized and outcast people in such a manner that their human dignity is restored?"**

6.6 CONCLUSION

After all has been said and done in this chapter, it can be seen here that systems three, four and five clearly create diversity with which the Mount Hope Church leadership needs to deal decisively, but yet sensitively. In meeting that need, the research question, **"In a township context, how does one minister to marginalized and outcast people in such a manner that their human dignity is restored?"** has been answered by making the descriptive empirical as well as the normative sections of this research speak to each other; but also by showing the link between people's paradigms and their context.

However, the above research question is more importantly answered by showing that, without a systems-sensitive leadership that decisively centralizes its function of preserving the dignity of the various people in different systems, the task of answering this research question remains extremely difficult, or even impossible. Here, a systems-sensitive

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leadership is viewed as preserving the dignity of various systems-oriented individuals by empowering the diversity of the individuals, without polarizing the community in which they exist.

As discussed in this chapter, this theme of a systems-sensitive leadership will continue in other aspects of its discussion in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 7

SYSTEM SENSITIVE LEADERSHIP DYNAMICS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

"When we empower people without providing a uniting vision, we are inviting them to pursue their own individual visions" (Armour & Browning 2000:138). In this, the last of two chapters that deal with the interpretive section of this research, the preceding quotation is one that has captured the ethos of answering the research question: "**In a township context, how does one minister to marginalized and outcast people in such a way that their human dignity is restored?**"

As this chapter continues, the discussion on systems-sensitive leadership from the previous chapter will do so by focusing on the systems having to work together. In doing so, the researcher will also drive the discussion on how compulsory it is in his context to have a system sensitive leadership function that aims at preserving the human dignity of all systems operating in that context.

Therefore, this chapter's starting point must be that of showing the critical role that visionary leadership plays in creating a unity in diversity within a multi–systems context.

Secondly, it will examine the outcome of creating a healthy systems environment – for the very systems to work together.

Finally, as to what leadership style is used in all this to achieve the restoration of human dignity will be discussed in brief.

7.2 ROLE OF VISIONARY LEADERSHIP IN CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT OF UNITY IN DIVERSITY

It was mentioned previously that the impact of a leader's vision within a multi-systems context, like that of Mount Hope, must be of such a nature that it unites the systems, as well as bring them together at a point far from their individual visions.

Armour and Browning challenge leaders to take vision-casting seriously. The seriousness of these leaders' casting of vision must be based on a solid foundation of a clear picture in their minds, identifiable key strategies that have become internalized in their hearts, tireless work

to explain the vision, as well as constant communication (Armour & Browning 2000:136-137). The Mount Hope leadership approaches their context fully informed by Proverbs 29:18 that, in the King James Version, simply states that "where there is no vision people perish." If, in this context, the leadership has no relevant vision cast, the individuals in systems three, four and five will perish.

It is also important to understand that the leadership must have the vision to see that these systems work together before they can take any action to literally pull them together.

It cannot be denied that, among other things, vision speaks about direction. The human dignity that each of these systems deserves cannot be restored without leaders who are passionate about vision.

7.2.1 Diversity

While "unity" is a word with which most people are familiar, in this chapter, the word that will often be mentioned alongside unity is "diversity." Before the discussion takes any amount of root on unity, it will be important to expound on how diversity relates to the context of this research.

Diversity: *"state of being varied, a range of different things"* (Oxford 2001): Diversity does not mean division, dissension or even detachment. Yet, the Mount Hope context has systems three, four and five that are fundamentally different and, if they are all left to themselves, these systems would only prefer to "pursue their own individual visions."

As previously shown in chapter six, the philosophies of each of these systems suggest that each system should reside in its own world where it would not be bothered by anyone or anything. Suffice it to say here that even if their value systems are so different that, if systems three, four and five were a musical choir on stage, their singing would be a terrible discord! However, it is not entirely a hopeless situation, because what a skilled musical conductor will mean to a choir singing in discord and off key, the same is exactly what a systems-sensitive leader would mean to systems three, four and five. A systems-sensitive leader will essentially commit to honour and build on diversity. Because, "If leaders are not willing to go on record as believing that diversity is a strength and not a threat there is no point in attempting systems–sensitive management" (Amour & Browning 2000:137).

7.2.2 Unity

When people are different, it definitely does not mean that they should be divided. Is it possible for any unity to be established in diversity? The researcher believes that, in addition to the analogy of a musical choir, the analogy of the body in 1 Corinthians 12:12–20 reflects solidly to the argument that divisions, dissensions and strife of all kinds are completely surmountable when there is a unifying factor for the different elements in the context.

As Paul intimates that the whole body cannot exclusively be a hand, foot, eye or ear, so it is in the researcher's context. Either of the systems three, four or five cannot be the only system to be reckoned with at the expense of the attribute of unity. It is generally agreed that information is better assimilated when it is acquired through all the senses. The more appeal is made to the overall senses of a learner, the better the learning. However, in following the same example as the others, the more common the vision becomes to the systems, the better they will function together. It is when they function together, that the restoration of human dignity ultimately becomes possible.

Furthermore, this element of togetherness effectively leads to meeting the need to have the human dignity of each group preserved.

Contrary to Armour and Browning's section on "Learning to accommodate new systems," in the Mount Hope context, the battle is not necessarily of system four trying to usurp authority over all the others. Mount Hope has a high degree of flexibility. The proof is in the fact that, as a congregation, Mount Hope congregants, without any inhibitions, are able to fellowship with individuals every day with a clear knowledge that these individuals previously were anti–societal characters. Mount Hope's struggle is not a system four carrying out a conservative agenda of pre–medieval historical times while the other systems are just quietly standing by and watching this one system's performance. There is a solid belief that an environment is key to most integration efforts. In the Mount Hope context, whether it is the survival mentality of system three, or the conservative mental drive of system four, or even the progressive nature of thinking typical of system five, all occupy the space in which they could create serious chaos if the leadership were "sleeping on the job." But, the leadership is wide awake and there is no such chaos. Whether an individual is a former addict to substances, in their 40s or 50s, or are well educated and leading a comfortable lifestyle, the Mount Hope stance is simply that all are valuable and are entitled to being treated with

dignity. Furthermore, each of these groups have a voice in the overall make-up of the Mount Hope Church and that is how the leadership at Mount Hope is able to focus its attention on preserving the human dignity of each group representing the system.

7.3 OUTCOMES OF A HEALTHY SYSTEMS ENVIRONMENT

Systems–sensitive leaders work to make each system healthy, because this building of health systems is aimed primarily at conflict *prevention* rather than at conflict *resolution*. "Conflict avoidance is a primary benefit, not the principal objective of systems–sensitive leadership. We pursue system approaches, first and foremost, to foster church health. In the process we create an environment that minimizes the risk of destructive tension" (Armour & Browning 2000:106).

If asked, "In a township, how does one minister to marginalised and outcast people in such a manner that their human dignity is restored?" the answer to the research question is straightforward: to minister with sensitivity towards the inherent systems of thinking with the objective to sow peace, even where potential conflict is evident. The notion that the kind of ministry discussed here will also bring about a safe environment that, in turn, flourishes with minimized destruction and tension, is exactly what the Mount Hope context receives. There is a consistent effort to create health for all the systems in this context, so that conflict between them may be dealt with, and that the human dignity inherent within each one of them may no longer recede to the back.

The researcher operates on the premise that the work of the vision that God has given him, is one designed to firstly unite people from all walks of life around God's purposes on earth, and then ultimately have as an outcome a win–win–win type of situation. A situation where the people win against divisions and dissensions, and the church, the medium through which the people participate in God's purpose and mission, wins and, ultimately, God also wins because his own people become devoted and dwell together in unity.

Just as the systems discussed by Armour and Browning appear to be competing and caught up in tensions, so are Mount Hope's systems. However, the researcher's goal is to allow the human dignity of each group to be affirmed as he takes his position to guide them into a peaceful flow alongside each other.

Therefore, it is clear that the outcomes of a healthy systems environment are reduced conflict and tension between the systems, and like the choir conductor referred to earlier, there is an outcome of a strong and orderly harmony of all the voices of the choir. The human dignity of these systems becomes more and more entrenched in the systems thinking patterns, because the systems–sensitive leader has dared to reject the worst form of a lack of dignity, i.e. polarization.

7.4   A SYSTEMS–SENSITIVE LEADERSHIP STYLE

This chapter has made no secret of the fact that a systems–sensitive leader is a key figure in the preservation of human dignity relating to a multi–systems environment.

At this stage, acknowledgement must be made that the discussion on all the aspects of systems–sensitive leadership will remain extremely incomplete without the crowning reference to leadership style.

In general, most commentators and writers agree on the fact that there is no optimal single leadership style above all other styles. Therefore, without harping on one single style as the optimal style of leadership, the researcher will reveal what leadership style has been proven ideal for his context.

By means of his discussion in the pragmatic section of his book, *Practical Theology: An introduction*, Richard R Osmer has made the best connection to this subject and chapter on leadership.

In this discussion, Osmer (2008:178) is explicit about whose focus is to lead change and, to quote him very briefly, "Leadership … can guide a congregation through a process of deep change." Although Osmer pursues the argument on inevitable and very necessary change that is guided by servant leaders, this researcher will draw from Osmer's discussion only to support an argument aimed at answering the research question: "**In a township context, how does one minister to marginalized and outcast people in such a way that their human dignity is restored?**"

This question will be answered by indicating a particular style of leadership found to be instrumental in the Mount Hope context in restoring, as well as preserving, the human dignity of individuals who emerge from very diverse systems of thinking.

7.5   OSMER'S THREE FORMS OF LEADERSHIP

The first of these is the Task Competence Leadership Style, followed by the Transactional Leadership Style, and lastly the Transforming Leadership Style.

7.5.1 The task competence leadership style

According to Osmer (2008:176), this style refers to "the ability to excel in performing the tasks of a leadership role in an organization." Although this style of leadership has connotations of a skilled leader who is not a lay person in what he does and, despite the fact of the Mount Hope context, does need skilled leadership, on its own, this style will not suffice to meet the context's need.

7.5.2   Transactional leadership style

This is a leadership style that Osmer (2008:176) regards as an ability to influence others through a process of trade-offs. But, because it takes the form of reciprocity and what the researcher believes will never be a mutual exchange, as the one who holds more bargaining power will have more say, it is a difficult style if things between the parties go sour.

Under this style of leadership, it is easy for the leader to be held to ransom if he should be the one with less bargaining power.

7.5.3   Transforming leadership style

To put it again in Osmer's (2008:177) words, this is the style of leadership that involves "deep change." It leads an organization through a process in which its identity, mission, culture and operating procedures are fundamentally altered.

The researcher previously mentioned that, regardless of there being just one leadership style for all kinds of situations; the transforming leadership style is the one that has been distinguished for the Mount Hope context. In so far as answering the research question, "**In a township context, how does one minister to marginalized and outcast people in such a way that their human dignity is restored?**" the leadership style required in this context, i.e. one that achieves outright on meeting the needs of the context, is the transforming leadership style.

7.3   CONCLUSION

This chapter has concluded the discussion on the research's interpretive task by answering the research question: "**In a township context, how does one minister to marginalized and outcast people in such a way that their human dignity is restored?**" through a series of important topics. However, even though the researcher has stated that there is no leadership style that over-arches the rest of the styles in terms of this context, the researcher is persuaded that there are situations where all these styles may be needed in operation one after the other. However, in this discussion, to restore and preserve the human dignity of systems three, four and five, systems–sensitivity played a central and precise role.

CHAPTER 8

MOUNT HOPE'S STRATEGY AND HERMENEUTICAL APPROACH

8.1   INTRODUCTION

The research question, **"In a township context, how to minister to the marginalized and outcast people in such a manner that their human dignity is restored?"** will be answered in this chapter first by an explicit assertion that the role that a relevant and contextual theology plays and a missional community practises, is central to how human dignity is ultimately restored. .

Secondly, this chapter will carefully highlight transformative action as the ethos of all ministry efforts designed to bring about the restoration of human dignity. The guidelines mentioned above, will reflect another perspective on strategic action that leadership has taken in addressing the needs of the Mount Hope context. A strategy is a plan of action designed to achieve a specific goal. Strategy is all about gaining (or being prepared to gain) a position of advantage over adversaries or best exploiting emerging possibilities. As an element of uncertainty about the future In a discussion exists, strategy is more about a set of options ("strategic choices") than a fixed plan. The word strategy" derives from the Greek *"στρατηγία"* (strategia), "office of general, command, and generalship" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strategy).

8.2   MOUNT HOPE'S HERMENEUTICAL APPROACH
TO RESTORING HUMAN DIGNITY

Jurgens Hendriks' discussion on "Theology defined" has assisted in the approach of a missional response to one's context through the mechanism of Theology.

In a postmodern era, where most scholars and influential thinkers pursue a somewhat mellow approach to address what may be the burning issues of the day, Hendriks (2004:24) pronounces boldly, but rightly so, and launches an unapologetic definition of Theology: "Theology is not a noun; it is a verb"! At the very outset, this definition of Theology immediately addresses all excuses why God's people should not stand up and take decisive action to fulfil the mandate and mission with which God has allowed them to live on earth. As a digression, the researcher wishes to explore a personal interpretation of the verb and

noun factors of Hendriks' definition of Theology. The researcher views the noun factor as that which tells why an individual cannot take any action towards restoring the dignity of the marginalised and outcast people in the context, but the verb factor states just the opposite.

- The verb defies all excuses even the justifiable and valid ones, for example: "Lord I am disabled and therefore I cannot go and minister to anyone" – the verb factor says you can! "You don't have hands and feet but you have a heart and a voice to call on God in prayer for the marginalised and outcast to hear and respond to the Gospel!"
- "Lord I'm not a trained theologian – I am not a pastor therefore I cannot" - the verb says you can! "God is not calling the able but the available!"
- "Lord I am only a woman and my society will castigate me if I tried to preach, so I cannot" -the verb says you can! "God's Spirit in the last days has not only been poured out on men servants and sons but also on women servants and daughters who by the way will also prophesy!"

At this stage, it should suffice to say that any situation that places people in a position of inferiority is tantamount to a lack of human dignity. Therefore, here the role of Theology will be to contribute to its full restoration. "Theology is not a noun but a verb"; the implications of this statement are far-reaching for the whole church.

Returning to the heading that guides this section's discussion, at this point, the researcher will establish that, for this discussion, "hermeneutics" refers to a biblical application to the task central to this research.

The hermeneutics mentioned here will also serve as an expression of an action theology confined to the Mount Hope context, and this will conform to the pattern set down by Hendriks (2004:23) in his discussion, "Theology defined."

8.3   THE THEOLOGY ABOUT GOD (Hendriks 2004:24)

"The essence of theology is to know God and to discern His will and guidance for the way we should live and witness" (Hendriks 2004:23). This statement provides a premise for the researcher's argument that God is better known when He is approached and encountered.

The Mount Hope strategy is described in the following four illustrations:
1. The woman with a tarnished reputation

2. The Kingdom of God envisions a situation of restored humanity

3. The importance of witnessing

4. A missional praxis of transformative action.

8.3.1 The woman with a tarnished reputation (Luke 7:36-50)

In this account, Jesus restores human dignity to a woman with a tarnished reputation at the point where she makes a connection beyond what happens in the synagogue. While this cannot be reduced to some mechanical and automatic sequential steps, some key ingredients related to this kind of worship can beneficially be taken into consideration. The operative word here will be "connection."

An intentional connection

This woman's meeting with Jesus is planned, not accidental; her action was intentional. She learned that Jesus was at Simon's house and set out in a deliberate fashion to meet with him. In Mount Hope's context, people who come as they are, but intentionally, enter into this kind of worship and their lives are never the same again.

An individual connection

In reaching Jesus, this woman was personal, not generic. She did not approach him in the way others might have done. For her, her approach was appropriate. She used her hair, her tears, and her body to express her love. It would not have been fitting for Simon; but this was worship. People have a tendency to think that those deep and personal times of worship will happen if they imitate what everyone else does. The situation lacks dignity if a person continues to believe that, after Jesus Christ has opened the way into God's presence, they still cannot approach God as an individual, but through a representative. To connect with God, one's worship must be personal, not generic.

A passionate connection

This woman's approach to Jesus was passionate, not restrained. This was not a half-hearted overture; she held nothing back as she expressed her feelings for the Lord. The uninhibited way she communicated her love is clearly evident.

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A priceless connection

The last observation to be made about this woman and her approach to Jesus is that it was precious, not cheap. For her to take this approach to Jesus was not easy, as it cost her something - the material cost of the perfume and the cost in the form of the time she put into arranging to meet with him. There must have been also an emotional cost – the risk of being rejected because someone was familiar with her past.

This illustration of the woman with a tarnished reputation is part of the Mount Hope strategy, they believe that one should not look down on tarnished people, but to welcome them and let them give and share what they have. They also believe that God is more concerned about a person's heart and motive than one's outward appearance.

8.3.2   The Kingdom of God envisions a situation of a restored humanity

Noteworthy about the Kingdom of God is its transcendence above all else. In Jesus' instruction on how we should pray, after calling to our Father in "Heaven," then only follows the plea to ask for his Kingdom to come! Here, the clear suggestion is that the One who rules the heavens is being petitioned to allow his rule to come to earth too! "Kingdom" refers to the rule and the reign of God. Praying for his rule and reign is part of the strategy that the Mount Hope Church employs. They believe the Scripture that says, "The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16 - KJV).

8.3.3   Witnessing and the way of life as a missional praxis

The essence of Theology is not only to know God, but, according to Hendriks (2004:30,33), while knowing, it is also to discern God's will and guidance for how we should live and witness.

According to the researcher's observation as per several portions of the New Testament, the topmost priority in the mandate Jesus gave his church was that of being witnesses. For instance, Acts 1:8 says, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

However, the researcher's conviction is that the most powerful form of witnessing is one where lifestyle or the way of life and testimony about one's faith are congruent to one

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another. This strategy that the Mount Hope leadership employs is clearly evident in the testimonies of the individuals in chapter 4 of this research. These individuals, and the rest of the Mount Hope Church members, are encouraged to share their testimonies whenever the opportunity arises.

8.3.4   A missional praxis and transformative action (Hendriks 2004:33)

The researcher's context cries out for freedom, not only from abject poverty, but from the factors that keep poverty alive in their context. A mentality of asking for hand-outs; survival by only seeking a job and not dreaming of owning a business; being dependent on governmental grants - all these amount to a dependency syndrome that keeps poverty alive and effectively robs people in this context of their God-given dignity. At Mount Hope, God's mission translates from theory to practice when the people described above are transformed from waiting for hand-outs to becoming useful, even if it is by volunteering, and from being unemployed to being self-employed and, ultimately, being employers themselves.

8.3.4.1 Upliftment instead of sustenance

The following is definitely not a way to go about ministry; this approach defies the goal of restoring human dignity and it actually pushes people deeper and deeper into a death trap and humiliates them even further.

In the context of this research, it has become quite common to find that most humanitarian organisations discharge the function of merely sustaining the environment. Mitchell's Plain is already weighed down by a begging mentality, a dependency syndrome, as well as poverty inclinations. There may be hungry people to be fed, but feeding schemes are only sustaining factors that will not take people to new dimensions.

The government of the day has not helped the situation by handing social grants to able-bodied people who could access decent money by earning it. The government simply helped to sustain the inclination of some poor people in this context to demand pity for their condition of misfortune. These so-called poor people already have no dignity, and, in their context, the last thing needed is the development of "a spirit of entitlement," because of their poverty. This act virtually says to them: "If you are poor, someone already owes you

something by virtue of your poverty." For this reason, Mount Hope believes that the situation needs uplifting, not sustenance.

8.4   SYSTEMATIC DESCRIPTION OF THE MOUNT HOPE STRATEGY

8.4.1   The leadership took a conscious lead in shaping the atmosphere and also the development of a dynamic that supports the presence of diverse elements within the Church. Mount Hope's leadership has learnt a crucial lesson from the errors that most leaders in the Church of Jesus Christ committed. They have learnt not to antagonize people who have a different thinking system, as that very act will prevent the prevalence of healthy diversity in the Church. They are also committed to resist the polarization of the Church at all costs.

8.4.2   Worship services are crucial in the Mount Hope context .They believe that prayer precedes and is part of preparing the place for God to be worshipped. Making people feel welcome is also a vital part of the worship service. The welcome takes place by any member who would be asked to welcome the people attending the services as follows: "Welcome to Mount Hope Church, we are a people you can call **family** and this is a place you can call **home** and it definitely is a place where dreams become a **memory.**" This is the kind of welcome one receives when attending their worship services. Spontaneous and expressive worship is lavished upon God in these services.

Many of the people come from dysfunctional families and Mount Hope creates an environment for the people to be part of something functional.

8.4.3   The primary diaconia service/welfare ministry is directed towards the drug addicts (male and female). The researcher believes that drugs are not the real problem, but they are a symptom. In his view, the root cause for addiction is called the "unspoken." Mount Hope started a program called Hope Again Recovery Home that created a safe environment in which these addicts could confront the causes of their addiction. These individuals already feel condemned when they enter the program, so the leaders believe that their clients should not be beaten up further. Scriptures such as, "for we all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), and "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous (Romans 5:19), are introduced to the clients, so that they can understand that the facilitators must recognise that they also were sinners at one time, and that they too have a need for God.

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The clients, as they are known, come into the program as *unbelievers*, but when they leave after six months, they leave as *believers*. Social workers, the police or magistrate courts either refer these clients to the program, or they are walk-ins. They are firstly assessed and tested to determine the kind of drugs to which they are addicted. If drugs are still to be found in their system, they are then referred to a detoxification centre before they are accepted into the program. About 30 male clients live in a dormitory set up at the church building and about 12 females live in a rented house. The program is faith-based and the Bible is the manual. Two Christian social workers, one auxiliary social worker, four pastors and four of the laity form part of the facilitators at the program, the focus of which is behaviour modification and spiritual renewal. This program differs from other institutions, because it entails life skills, Bible studies, personal counselling, group therapy and recreation. Many programs don't believe that clients can be delivered from their drug addiction; they believe once a drug addict, always a drug addict. Some of these programs take individuals off illegal drugs and make them dependent on their drugs. At this point, the question should be asked, "How can human dignity be restored if no hope is being offered?" Many of these institutions enrich themselves by further exploitation of these vulnerable people. Hope Again Recovery Home has produced many restored individuals who have become constructive, productive members of society.

8.4.4   *Koinonia*. The researcher believes that life is about relationships and all else concerning individuals are mere detail, e.g. where they live, what they drive, their bank balance and what they have or don't have are all mere detail. How they relate to God and their neighbour is the leadership's focus. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and, Love your neighbour as yourself'" (Luke 10:27) is one of the Scriptures that is continually communicated to the members. They are encouraged to join those individuals who are in need, without creating a hand-out environment. The employed members are encouraged to be on the look-out for employment opportunities for the unemployed. A caring and sharing environment is encouraged and fostered.

8.4.5   **Partnerships**. The Mount Hope leadership believes that the assignment of restoring human dignity cannot be fulfilled without forming strategic and like-minded partnerships. These partners are both local and international.

Hope Again Recovery Home's leadership join hands with their clients' caregivers, social workers and other statutory substance-abuse counselling organisations.

8.4.6   Teaching. The leadership regards teaching as an important strategy in restoring human dignity. Matthew 28:19-20: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of 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" supports their stance. New converts are encouraged to attend the 101-Discovering Membership new convert's class, which take place every Sunday morning before the combined worship service. Class 201-Discovering Maturity is a follow-on study for those who have completed 101. Class 301-Discovering Ministry is the last compulsory teaching for all members. The small-life groups continue with topical teaching that normally happens once a month in life groups. Members who feel the need to further their studies of the Word of God are also encouraged to pursue advance training at appropriate institutions. Trained ministers at Mount Hope do most of the teaching. Graduates of the recovery home are mentored to follow in the same footsteps. Annual conferences are held with the specific focus of equipping the believers and also to complement the on-going leadership training programs.

8.5 CONCLUSION

The missional praxis discussed in this chapter has, in so many ways, placed Mount Hope in a place of affirmation when reflecting on God's mission. However, this chapter had to stretch the conversation beyond mere reflection on God's mission into action mode regarding the same mission.

With theology helping the reflection, as well as providing the framework for action, the leadership's strategic engagement provides the nuts and bolts for the implementation of that action.

All in all, strategic missional and theological action means nothing if they don't amount to transformation which the researcher believes is the confirmation that human dignity has been restored.

CHAPTER 9

FINAL CONCLUSIONS

At the outset of this research, three aims were stated for this research to meet. In this final chapter, the researcher will revisit these stated aims of the research and restate the research question; review the findings of the research, and provide a final conclusion.

9.1   REVISITING THE AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

A. The very first aim of the research was to put the spotlight on the plight and challenges of township life and ministry.

B. The second aim was to draw from the scholarly work of published academics, some of whom are mentioned by name in the introduction, answers that will logically respond to the research question: "**In a township context, how is one to minister to marginalised and outcast people in such a manner that their human dignity is restored?"**

C. The third aim was to bring about a core social transformation, liberation, reconstruction as well as a sustainable development of faith communities that, on the one hand, will reproduce after their own kind. On the other hand, through the Holy Spirit, these communities should discern God's will in discovering creative and new ways of dealing with the realities of brokenness, pain and suffering.

9.2   REVIEWING THE FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

9.2.1   The researcher's life story and Mount Hope's historical account

Essentially, the researcher's life story reveals that, for a response to the Mitchell's Plain context, the call of God, firstly, had to be responded to. In addition, the response to God's call would imperatively have to be one of obedience and compassion.

It was also revealed that human dignity is fundamental to human existence; therefore, the effects of its lack or presence are always tangibly felt.

As observed in the micro-, meso- and macro-contexts of Mount Hope, if human dignity is removed from an individual or community, it must be restored to give validity to the reason

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for people living in the context of their existence. However, in the same context, it is clear that the restoration of human dignity does not necessarily have to start with the majority.

In Mitchell's Plain, one man answered the call of God to salvation and had his human dignity restored, but, from his account, it can be witnessed how others have been drawn in to benefit in the same way as he did.

Clearly, the restoration of human dignity to the marginalised and outcast people can never be the task of one man. Therefore, the partnership between an obedient man and God, and eventually between the missional community born out of that partnership is significant in answering the research question: **"How does one minister to marginalised and outcast people in such a manner that their human dignity is restored?"**

9.2.2   Context that shapes identity

In answering this research's question, this section revealed that pluralism, migration of refugees, religious fundamentalism, the HIV/Aids pandemic and a few others, when combined with a lack of a decent education, a decent livelihood, as well as economic freedom, a non-conducive context is formed. An undesirable identity develops precisely out of such a context.

However, if the context is understood, the people in the context can still be engaged in such a manner that they do not feel that anyone is making decisions for them because they are marginalised and outcast.

In answering the research question above, this section depended on the presentation of a message that will inspire the formation of a better identity.

9.2.3   Personal testimonies

Often, when questions, like the research question driving this paper, are asked, the answers start and end with good theory that, in a sense, is like an aeroplane in the air that does not know how to land.

This section of case studies of individuals, upon whom the ministry at Mount Hope had impacted, has revealed that the preached Gospel must translate from Word to life.

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When the message of the Gospel is preached to the broken, the effectiveness of the message must deal with brokenness in such a way that both the one who testifies and those in the audience acknowledge literal results. As per the analogy of the aeroplane, this section answers the research question by "landing the plane."

9.2.4   The normative task

The perspective from which the research question was answered in this chapter, revealed that the foundation of any missional community's effort to fulfil God's mission on earth must be nothing but discernment of God's will. In this regard, discerning the will of God would nonetheless be possible only through the involvement of the Holy Spirit.

When all is said and done, God's will would then be for Mount Hope to become the reign of God's representative who, like the prophets of old, would realign the people in their context with the covenant that God has made with them.

9.2.5   Systems theory

This section revealed that, in its context, systems three, four and five are Mount Hope's dominant thinking systems. More importantly, it revealed that there is a link between the said systems, the paradigms and the context itself.

This intermarriage between the thinking systems, the paradigms and the context, will prove crucial in enabling any leader to formulate relevant strategies when answering the research question that undergirds this whole research.

9.2.6   Leadership dynamics in restoring human dignity

This section's key approach to answering the research question, "How one must minister to marginalised and outcast people in such a manner that their human dignity is restored?" was that of giving pre-eminence to the role that leaders play in order to bring about change.

It was established that, whenever leaders take action in a situation like that in Mount Hope's question, change must take place.

However, the leadership pursued here does not like gentiles lording it over those who are already lorded over by a vast array of factors, as well as a leadership that is Theocratic in that it works with God.

9.2.7 Mount Hope's missional praxis in restoring human dignity

This section reveals how critical the strategy of doing theology is. Here, the research question is answered by a theology that is practical, relevant and missional.

It has been found that action theology that is relevant to the context, should be viewed as a verb and not a noun.

9.3 FINAL CONCLUSIONS

The third aim of this research was to bring about a core social transformation, liberation, reconstruction, as well as a sustainable development of faith communities that, on the one hand, will reproduce after their own kind. On the other hand, through the Holy Spirit, these communities should discern God's will to discover creative new ways of dealing with the realities of brokenness, pain and suffering.

This aim has been confirmed firstly in Mount Hope's growth out of three original families to what it is today, as well as the formation of all forms of structures that cannot be discussed justifiably in this research.

Finally, the researcher regards the issue of strategy as key in addressing any problem, whatever it may be.

Osmer says the following from a quote he obtained from a seminar that he was conducting some years ago: "Vision is a continuous conversation to define clearly the results a group of people want to create …. The vision in congregations needs to be about more than the results a group of people want to create."

This research is not the end all of this kind of conversation; like the definition above, it has joined the ranks of a continuous conversation.

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PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Do you have any objection in participating in this study?   No/ Yes

May I record/document this interview? No/ Yes

Would you object if I use your true name in any oral or written presentations directly emanating from this research? No/ Yes

Do you grant me permission to quote from this interview? No/ Yes

Read carefully:

I, the undersigned, understand that this research is intended for a study entitled "**Church planting and the restoring of human dignity in Mitchell's Plain: The Mount Hope account"** a research by Pastor Alfonso Schilder for the Master's degree in Practical Theology.

Subject to the conditions stated above, I herewith entrust my personal information to Pastor Alfonso Schilder to use it for the purposes of the study in all its spheres.

I understand that the use of this interview may be included in published works for academic purposes and thereto I grant my permission.

Name and Surname:

Age:

Status:

Address and contact details:

Signed: _____

Date: